

**DYNAMICS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN BAJAUR
AGENCY (1997-2018): AN ANALYSIS**



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A thesis submitted in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master Studies (MS) in Pakistan Studies at the Department of History & Pakistan Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, International Islamic University, Islamabad

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & PAKISTAN STUDIES
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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ISLAMABAD
2025**



Translation: In the name of Allah The Most Beneficent The Most Merciful

**For
My Lala
&
My Abai**

DECLARATION

I, Mr. Anees Ur Rahman Safi, bearing Reg. No.87-FSS/MSPS/F23, hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me as my original research work under the guidance and supervision of my supervisor, Dr. Safi Ullah Khan Marwat, Incharge (Academic Affairs), Department of History & Pakistan Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, International Islamic University, Islamabad. No portion of this research has been copied / plagiarized from any sources without giving reference of those sources which have been consulted for this research. This thesis has never been submitted before for any degree in this (IIUI) or any other degree awarding university or educational institution.

ANEES UR RAHMAN SAFI
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FORWARDING SHEET

The thesis titled as “*DYNAMICS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN BAJAUR AGENCY (1997-2018): AN ANALYSIS*”, has been completed under my supervision by **MR. ANEES UR RAHMAN SAFI** bearing Registration No. 87-FSS/MSPS/F23 in partial fulfillment for the award of the Degree of Master Studies (MS) in Pakistan Studies. The thesis is hereby forwarded for further necessary action as per the rules and procedure of the International Islamic University, Islamabad, and Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan.

Signature_____

Dr. Safi Ullah Khan Marwat
Incharge (Academic Affairs)
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	iii
GLOSSARY	iv
INTRODUCTION	v
CHAPTER-1	10
Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 1997-2002	14
1.1 Dismissal of National Assembly	15
1.1.1 Interim Government	16
1.1.2 Extension of Adult Franchise in FATA	17
1.1.3 Declaration of General Elections	18
1.1.4 Key Players	19
1.1.5 First ever Elections in FATA on Adult franchise base.	20
1.2 Election Campaign.	21
1.2.1 Election's Fairness.	22
1.2.2 Seats in National Assembly.	23
1.2.3 Tribal Area Bajaur Agency (NA-32)	24
1.2.4 Performance for their constituencies.	25
1.3 Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 1999-2002	26
1.3.1 Background	27
1.3.2 Imposition of Martial Law	28
1.3.3 Removal of President Tarar	29
1.3.4 Referendum 2002	30
1.4 General Elections 2002	31
1.4.1 Constitutional Developments	32
1.4.2 Political Parties Act 2002	33
1.4.3 Election Commission	34
1.4.4 Electoral Rolls	35
1.4.5 Final Publication of Electoral Roll	36
1.5 Key Players	37

1.5.1 Election campaign	38
1.5.2 Election's Fairness.	39
1.5.3 Seats in National Assembly.	40
1.5.4 Performance After Elections	41
1.5.5 Analysis	42
CHAPTER-2	43
Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 2002-2008.	44
2.1 By-Elections 2007	45
2.1.1 Declaration of By-Elections	46
2.1.2 Election Campaign	47
2.1.3 Election Results	48
2.2 Performance for Constituency	49
2.4 Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 2007-2008	50
2.4.1 Dismissal of National Assembly	51
2.4.2 Interim Government	52
2.4.3 Preparation of Electoral Rolls in Bajaur	53
2.5 Key Players	
2.6 Election Campaign	54
2.7 FOR NA-44	55
2.8 Election Fairness	56
2.9 Election Results	57
2.9.1 Election Results	58
2.10 Performance after Election	59
2.11 Analysis	60
CHAPTER-3	
Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 2008-2013.	62
3.1 Dissolution of National Assembly	63
3.1.1 Interim Government	64
3.1.2 Declaration of General elections	65
3.2 Preparation of Electoral Rolls	66
3.2.1 Extension of Political Parties Order 2002	67

3.3 Key Players	68
3.4 Election Campaign	69
3.4.1 For NA-43	70
3.4.2 For NA-44	71
3.5 Election Results	72
3.5.1 NA-44	73
3.6 Performance After Election	74
3.7 Analysis	75
3.7.1 Electoral Politics and Political Change in Bajaur Agency during the 2013 Elections: A Case Study of NA-43 and NA-44	76
 CHAPTER-4	
Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 2013-2018.	77
4.1 Dismissal of National Assembly	78
4.1.1 Interim Government	79
4.2 Declaration of General Elections	80
4.2.1 Preparation of Electoral Rolls	81
4.3 Key Players	82
4.4 Election Campaign	83
4.4.1 NA-40	84
4.4.2 NA-41	85
4.5 Election Results	86
4.5.1 NA-41	87
4.6 Performance After Election	88
4.7 Analysis	89
 CONCLUSION	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY	91

ABSTRACT

The Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency from 1997-2018 was an evolutionary period of electoral politics. It was a transition from Malakisim to a democratic set up based on adult franchise. It was a landmark in the politics of Bajaur Agency. This process of evolution started in 1996, whereas the people of Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in general and Bajaur in particular was given the right to choose their representatives on adult franchise base, and was for the first time exercised in the General Elections of 1997, wherein the general masses of Bajaur, who had computerized CNIC were allowed to elect representatives from their respective constituencies for National Assembly. But their role as representatives for their respective constituencies was symbolic. The research work furnishes the electoral dimensions, voting behavior and determinants of voting behavior that may be in the form of Religion, Biradari (clan), clientelism and ethnicity. This study focuses how the aforementioned determinants played their role in the dynamics of electoral politics in Bajaur Agency from 1997-2018.

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Countless thanks to ALLAH (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى), the creator of all of us. Worthy of all persons, who always guides in darkness and helps in difficulties.

Prime respects and honors to the absolute (Last & Final), the most beloved Prophet MUHAMMAD (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ) - the Prophet of Revolution and mercy for all of the worlds (Visible & Invisible), who enabled the man to recognize his Creator.

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Muhammad Hamidullah Library, International Islamic University, Islamabad and Departmental Library of the Department of History & Pakistan Studies, IIUI for their cooperation during my research.

ANEES UR RAHMAN SAFI

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANP	Awami National Party
BHUs	Basic Health Units
CM	Chief Minister
CNICs	Computerized National Identity Cards
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DECs	District Election Commissioners
ECP	Election Commission of Pakistan
FAFEN	Free and Fair Elections Network
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulations
GG	Governor General
HRCP	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRS	Human Rights Society
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
JUI(F)	Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl)
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MMA	Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MQM	Muttahida Qaumi Movement
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NA	National Assembly
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province

PA	Political Agent
PATA	Provincially Administered Tribal Areas
PCO	Provisional Constitutional Order
PCR	Punjab Crimes Regulation
PML(Q)	Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam Group)
PPA	Political Parties Act
PPP	Pakistan Peoples Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
QWP	Qaumi Watan Party
ROs	Returning Officers
RTS	Result Transmission System
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
UN	United Nations

GLOSSARY

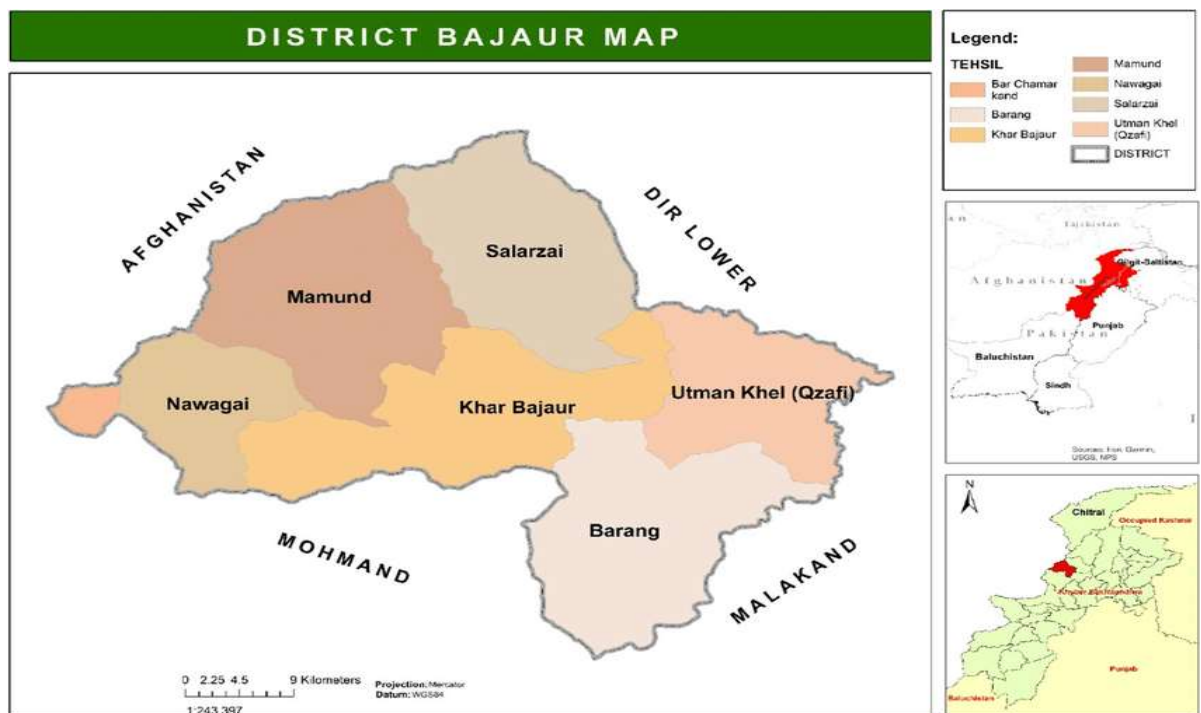
<i>Amir</i>	Head of State/Party or Group
<i>Bazar</i>	Market
<i>Bar</i>	Upper
<i>Daleel</i>	Argument
<i>Eman</i>	Faith
<i>Fiqh</i>	Islamic Jurisprudence based on the <i>Quran</i> , <i>Hadith</i> , <i>Qayas</i> and <i>Ijma</i> .
<i>Haram</i>	Forbidden, unlawful in Islam
<i>Hujra</i>	Guest House
<i>Jalsa</i>	Public gathering, for any special purpose
<i>Jirgah</i>	Reconciliation Council
<i>Kafir</i>	Infidel, non-believer
<i>Khassadars</i>	Tribal Local Force
<i>Lungai</i>	Turban
<i>Madrasah</i>	Religious School
<i>Majlis-i-Amal</i>	Action Committee
<i>Majlis-i- Shura</i>	The General Council
<i>Mashaikh</i>	Spiritual leader
<i>Mujahid</i>	Holy Worrier
<i>Mullah</i>	Cleric
<i>Masjid</i>	Holy Place of Muslim
<i>Nazim-i-A la</i>	The Secretary General
<i>Naib Nazim</i>	Deputy Mayor
<i>Nizam</i>	System
<i>Pakhtunwali</i>	Pakhtuns Code of Life

<i>Pir</i>	Sufi, master, guide
<i>Riwaj</i>	Custom, fashion, practice
<i>Roti, Kapra aur Makan</i>	Bread, Clothing and Shelter
<i>Shaikh</i>	Islamic Scholar
<i>Tarikh</i>	History
<i>Ulama</i>	Muslim Scholars
<i>Wara</i>	Small
<i>Wakeel</i>	Advocate

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Bajaur Agency was one of the tribal agencies of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) which was created in 1973 and merged as a separate settled 'District Bajaur' into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). It was the smallest in size of 1290 square kilometer.¹ It shares its border with Afghanistan's province of Kunar in the North-West and former Mohmand Agency to its West, District Dir to its North-East and former Malakand Agency to its South. Currently it has eight Tehsils, including Tehsil Barang, Tehsil *Bar* (Upper) Chamarkand, Tehsil Khar, Tehsil Wara Mamund, Tehsil Ghat Mamund, Tehsil Salarzai, Tehsil Utmankhel, and Tehsil Nawagai. Since 1901, this area was under the Malakand Agency.



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Bajaur-District-from-where-samples-are-collected-and-its-position-in-world-map_fig1_358116654

¹Agency Profile Bajaur Agency .Available at <https://nbdp.org.pk/smedaweb/system/public/filemanager/uploads/District%20Profile%20Bajaur%20Agency.pdf>. Accessed on 26 Sep 2024 at 9:30pm.

According to 2023-Census, it has a population of twelve lac, eighty seven thousand, nine Hundred and sixty with tribal composition drawing from the two main tribes of Utmankhel and Tarkalani.²

Utmankhel one of the major tribes in Bajaur Agency. Many Utmankhel also live in Malakand Agency, Mohmand Agency and as well as in District Mardan and District Dir of KP. Major clans of Utmankhel are Alizai, Ismailzai, Bimamarai, Mandal, Sanizai, Ghorai, Peghozai and Muttakai.³Tarkanri Tribe mostly lives in Bajaur, but many of them also live in Afghanistan (Kunar province) and Dir District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Major clans are Mamund, Salarzai, Isazai and Ismailzai.

In 1901, British separated the five districts including District Hazara, District Peshawar, District Kohat, District Bannu, and District Dera Ismail Khan (DIK) and five tribal agencies including Malakand Agency, Khyber Agency, Kurram Agency, North Waziristan Agency, and South Waziristan Agency from the province of Punjab, joined them together into a separate province, and named it as North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).In 2010, it was named as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁴

Administratively, British kept the whole province under a Chief Commissioner rather than a Governor; hence, it was also known as a Chief Commissionarate a Chief Commissioner Province instead of a Governor Province. Similarly, unlike a Governor Province, it had also not a Provincial Legislative Assembly, a Chief Minister, and his Provincial Cabinet as no constitutional reforms were introduced in it till 1935. Each district was under a Deputy Commissioner (DC) and each tribal agency was under a Political Agent (PA) who was directly responsible to the Chief Commissioner who himself was directly

²Pakistan Bureau of statistics. Available at https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/population/2023/tables/kp/dcr/table_1.pdf Accessed on 4th Oct 2024 at 12:05 am.

³FATA Tribes: Finally Out of Colonial Clutches? Past, Present and Future. Available at <https://crss.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/FATA-Tribes-Finally-Out-of--Clutches.pdf>. Accessed on 26 Sep 2024 at 11:56 pm.

⁴Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *North-West Frontier Province: History and Politics* (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2020), 11.

responsible to the Viceroy or Governor General (GG) in Calcutta (capital of British India) until 1911 and then onward in Delhi (capital of British India).⁵

It was in 1932, when this province was declared as a Governor Province by replacing the Chief Commissioner with a Governor. The new set up introduced a new administrative structure with a Provincial Legislative Assembly comprised of elected members from the settled districts of the province, a Chief Minister (CM) elected by majority of the elected members of the Provincial Legislative Assembly and a Provincial Cabinet selected by the Chief Minister (CM) from the elected members of the Provincial Legislative Assembly. However, the new set up did not alter the administrative structure in the tribal agencies of the province of who were still under the control of province who, like previously, were directly responsible to the Governor who, like former Chief Commissioner, was directly responsible to the Viceroy and GG.⁶ This set up under the British continued till 1947. Later on, in Pakistan, the number of tribal agencies was increased and was named as Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

The Administrative structure of former (FATA) and Enactment of Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR).

It was in 1893, when an agreement between Sir Mortimer Durand, a secretary of the British Indian government, and Abdur Rahman Khan, the Amir, or ruler, of Afghanistan was signed on November 12, 1893, in Kabul, Afghanistan. This agreement brought geographical changes on both sides British India, and Afghanistan. Thus after signing this agreement from both sides by rulers, the former FATA came under the British rule. It was comprised of 27220 square kilometers which constitutes 3.4 percent of the total land of today's Pakistan. It consisted of seven agencies Khyber Agency established in 1879, South Waziristan Agency in 1885, Kurram Agency in 1892, North Waziristan Agency in 1910, Mohmand Agency

⁵ *Ibid.*12.

⁶ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Province, 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4.

in 1951, Orakzai Agency in 1973, and Bajaur Agency in 1973, along with in 1901 six adjoining settled Districts of Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan and Tank.⁷

The British took a new step to control this region, promulgation of FCR in tribal areas which provides administrative, judicial and governance system. Initially, the FCR system was extended to the whole province of Punjab as a result of deteriorated law and order situations there. British promulgated it for the first time 1872, and in 1887 it was modified with certain amendments known as Punjab Crimes Regulation (PCR). In 1901 the PCR was replaced and introduced in KP and named as FCR. Since 1901, it was enforced in the whole of KP, Balochistan and tribal areas until 1956. In 1962 constitution these areas were given the title of tribal areas, and under 1972 interim constitution, it was bifurcated the tribal areas into ‘centrally administered tribal areas’⁸ (which in Article 246 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 was renamed as FATA) and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) which means the district of Chitral, Dir, and Swat (which includes Kalam) [the Tribal areas in Kohistan district,] Malakand protected area, the Tribal area adjoining [Mansehra] district and the former state of Amb; and in Balochistan Zhob District Loralai District (excluding Duki Tehsil), Dalbadin Tehsil of Chagai district and Marri and Bugti Tribal territories of Sibi district. The administration of tribal areas was as, subject to the Constitution, the executive authority of the Federation shall extend to FATA, and the executive authority of a province shall extend to the PATA⁹. Since 1973, FCR only became confined to FATA. In 2018, under the 25th Amendment in the Constitution of

⁷Safi Ullah Khan Marwat “From Pakhtūnistān to Khyber Pakhtūnkhwā: A Journey of Pakhtūn Nationalists from Separation to Integration” *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. XXXVIII, No.2 (2017):86. can be accessed by

[http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/38-](http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/38-2,2017/5.%20From%20Pakht%C5%A9nist%C3%A3n%20to%20Khyber,%20Safiullah.pdf)

[2,2017/5.%20From%20Pakht%C5%A9nist%C3%A3n%20to%20Khyber,%20Safiullah.pdf](http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/38-2,2017/5.%20From%20Pakht%C5%A9nist%C3%A3n%20to%20Khyber,%20Safiullah.pdf)

⁸*Interim Constitution of Pakistan 1972*, A 260.

1973, the administrative structure of FATA was changed, and merged into KP, and the executive authority of KP was extended to FATA like the settled districts.

Administrative and Justice System during British Era.

The British first interacted with tribal elders when they took over Malakand Fort in 1895. Since ruling the area directly was difficult for them, they chose to manage it indirectly. They started using PAs, who were usually British, to help run the area. To assist with this, the British created local police forces called *Khassadars*,¹⁰ made up of people from the region. To govern the local tribes, the British introduced a system called the *Malakisim*, or *Malaki* system. In this setup, a *Malik*¹¹ represented the tribe and shared power as part of the indirect rule. Meanwhile, the PA was responsible for protecting British interests. The *maliks* served as guardians of the local people and were part of a privileged group. Over time, the *maliks* and the Political Agents began to work together, running the administration through cooperation. If someone disagreed with the Political Agent's decision, they could challenge it at the commissioner's office and then take it to the home secretary or the FATA Tribunal, which was established in 2011.¹²

The History of Electoral Politics in FATA

Electoral politics is the basic tool at the disposal of the masses that can be used for their own well-being while living in a democratic set up. Electoral politics can be defined as the process by which people choose their representatives who later legislate for their

⁹*Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973*, Article 246,247

¹⁰*Khassadars* were local paramilitary forces in the tribal areas of Pakistan, particularly during the British colonial period. They were recruited from the local population and served to maintain law and order, assist British authorities, and enforce government policies in their communities. It played a key role in the British strategy of indirect rule.

¹¹*Malik* was an elder of his tribe and custodian of the general masses nominated by Political Agent. He was beneficiary of the Government privileges, and helped the government in resolving disputes. Political Agents grant *Malaki* or *Lungi* status with the consent of Governor and can withdraw the same status when he deems the individual is not serving his purpose.

¹²Khan, Sarfaraz and Abdul Hamid Khan, "The Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR): A Socio Political Assessment." *Central Asia Journal No. 70, summer (2012)*: 8-9. Can be accessed by

own constituencies. But unfortunately the representatives elected from tribal districts could not even legislate for their own territories rather they were sitting in the parliament only for voting in favour or against of legislation that was mostly in favour of the people who belonged to areas colloquially called main land Pakistan. Thus making them the best options for horse trading.

(1) The right to vote and adult franchise based election was not extended to FATA until 1996.

(2) Secondly the Political parties Act (PPA) was not extended to FATA till 2011.¹³ It was in 2011 when for the first time Political Parties Order 2002 was introduced in FATA. These rights were denied under the presidential order No 1 of 1975 under which the political agent registered only *Maliks* and these *Maliks* (*lungi* system) were to be considered as the Electoral College for the election of National Assembly. But the elected members of FATA had no role in the legislation for FATA. It was a symbolic representation. Political parties were not allowed to launch campaign for elections. But they contested elections on independently. However, the right to vote on adult franchise base was given for the first time in 1996 and was exercised for the first time in 1997 general elections. The monumental changes occur in the electoral politics came in 2011 when political parties order (PPO) of 2002 was extended to FATA and was enacted for the first time in the general elections 2013. This brought huge changes and strongly affected the influence of the affluent *Maliks*, *Khans* and religious groups that had long lasted influence in the region.

1 Problem Statement

The representative power sharing and electoral politics in former FATA generally and Bajaur Agency particularly has been passed through an evolution for decades. It portrays different phases like a tribal *Malaki* system, British indirect rule followed by

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2765291.

¹³Ullah, Altaf and Syed Umar Hayat, "The Recent Electoral Reforms in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA): An Appraisal." *Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 24, Issue - 2, (2017) : 351.

Pakistan and merger of Bajaur Agency into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and holding of general elections from 1997 and 2018 on the basis of adult franchise. This whole phenomenon is very complex in nature which needs to be addressed through an academic research. This research addresses how the political and constitutional developments took place and evolved into an electoral system under the 1973 constitution of Pakistan.

2. Significance of the Study

This research would provide an ample opportunity for the administrators, readers and researchers because this research traces the evolutionary history of electoral politics in district Bajaur would be helpful for understanding the electoral dynamic of Bajaur Agency. There is no comprehensive work on the phenomenon under discussion.

3. Research Objectives

- 1- To analyze the evolution of electoral politics focusing on key milestones and shifts.
- 2- To assess the factors influencing voting decisions in Bajaur Agency.
- 3- To investigate the integration of Bajaur's tribal society into a pluralistic society through the dynamics of party politics, electoral politics and constitutional reforms.
- 4- To evaluate the relationship between security situations and the electoral process in Bajaur Agency, focusing on voter turnout, candidate participation, and electoral outcomes.

4. Research Questions

- 1- How did the Electoral Politics transform in Bajaur Agency over the time?
- 2- What are the key determinants of voting behavior in Bajaur, and how do they impact electoral outcomes?
- 3- How did Party Politics, Electoral and Constitutional reform contribute to the transformation of Bajaur's Tribal society into a more inclusive and diverse society?

4- What role do security concerns play in shaping Electoral Politics and Party campaigns in Bajaur?

5. Delimitation(s) of the study

The current study is aimed to analyze the electoral politics in Bajaur. It is confined only to the general elections of the National Assembly in Bajaur since 1997 till 2018.

6- LITERATURE REVIEW

7. Review of Related Literature

There is a collection of local and British literature on history and politics of Bajaur. The history of electoral politics in Bajaur dates to 19th century. The literature review offers an in-depth examination of the main themes and academic discussions pertinent to the study of Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency since 1997 to 2018. By incorporating perspectives from historical context, electoral behavior, party politics, institutional changes, and media dynamics, security situations. This review lays the groundwork for comprehending the intricate interactions that influence electoral processes in Bajaur Agency.

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill in his book *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* 1898 discussed the battle of Malakand, Bajaur and how these areas were brought under the British administration. He in his book had highlighted the geographic and demographic profile of Bajaur.¹⁴

Lawrence Ziring in his book *Pakistan in the twentieth century*: Karachi. Oxford University Press: 1997, discusses the changing political dynamics of Pakistan but he did not mention the recent Electoral Dimensions of Pakistan in general and Bajaur Agency in particular.¹⁵

¹⁴ Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand field force* (Toronto the Copp Clark co., limited London Longmans Green, and Co, 1898)

¹⁵ Lawrence Ziring, *Pakistan in the twentieth century* (Oxford University Press, 1997)

Dr- Fakhr-ul-Islam in his book “*Khyber Pakhtunkhwa A Political History (1901-1955)*” traces the history of separation of NWFP from Punjab and its implications on the political landscape and its administrative structure, but he has not mentioned the recent electoral dynamics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa¹⁶.

Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah in book his *North-West Frontier Province: History and Politics* deals with the complex historical and political developments in the North-West Frontier Province of India before its partition and the establishment of Pakistan.¹⁷

Hamid Khan in his book “*Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*”: Oxford University Press: 2009, has discussed and had given a detailed explication of the evolutionary history of electoral politics in Pakistan and traced out its roots during British era. This book had insightful exploration of the journey from monarchy to democracy.¹⁸

Maulana Khan Zeb a native writer in his book “*Bajaur da Tareikh Pa Rhana Ki*: Mafkoora, 2020, discusses the expeditions of invaders and conquerors in this particular region. Along with that it traces the history of different tribes of Bajaur, History of its name, but it does not cover the recent electoral dynamics of Bajaur agency from 1997 till 2020.¹⁹

Anwar Nigar in his book “*Bajaur Tareikh, Kaltoor aw Adab*” Art Point Peshawar, 2022, a native writer, poet as well discusses in his book the geography, tribes, clans history of invaders, culture of Bajaur and evolutionary history of

¹⁶ Dr- Fakhr-ul-Islam, *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa A Political History (1901-1955)* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical & Cultural Research Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad Pakistan.

¹⁷ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *North-West Frontier Province: History and Politics* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical & Cultural Research Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad Pakistan 2020, 2020.

¹⁸ Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

¹⁹ Maulana Khan Zeb, *Bajaur da Tareikh Pa Rhana Ki* (Mafkoora, Peshawar, 2020)

Pushto literature. But he did not discuss the Party politics and electoral developments in Bajaur Agency.²⁰

Sultan -I- Rome in his book “*The North-West Frontier (KHYBER PUKHTUNKHWA) Essays on History*, Oxford University Press: 2022, Discusses the geography, historical aspects, the origin of pukhtuns, theories about the origin of pukhtuns, Referendum, Durand line Agreement, Constitutional Developments and Tribal Administration. But the author of the book has not discussed the dimensions of electoral politics in Bajaur Agency.²¹

Fozia Saeed and Saeed Khan in their article “*Reform Process in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Future of Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR): A Local Perspective*” discuss the amendments in FCR and recent electoral reforms in federally administered tribal area like extension of political parties act 2002.

Ahsan Ur Rahim In his book, *The Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Pakistan: A Study of the General Election 2008*, delivers a thorough analysis of the political environment surrounding the crucial General Election of 2008 in Pakistan. Rahim's work provides important insights into the electoral dynamics, voter behavior, and political processes that influenced the election's results. But this book does not cover the electoral dynamics of Bajaur agency.

Altaf Ullah and Syed Umar Hayat in their article “*The Recent Electoral Reforms in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA): An Appraisal 2017*” discuss the involvement of tribal people in party politics, electoral politics and introduction of election manifestoes in federally administered tribal area.

This study will utilize primary data sourced from in-depth interviews with elders,

²⁰ Anwar Nigar, *Bajaur Tareikh, Kaltoor aw Adab* (Art Point Peshawar, 2022)

candidates who contested elections during this specific time period providing firsthand accounts and invaluable insights. Other sites like <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/>, <https://www.pbs.gov.pk/>, <https://pildat.org/>, <http://www.internet.com/>, <https://fafen.org/>, <https://www.dawn.com/>, etc.

Research Gaps

Despite the considerable body of research on the topic still there are gaps and limitations in the existing literature. First thing is that most of the studies have focused on the specific aspects like tribes, invaders, peoples but none of the work has brought this topic under research, so there is a research gap. To fill this research gap and cover all aspects of electoral politics of Bajaur agency like its evolution, voting behavior, constitutional reforms, and implications of security situations, there is need to conduct a research to address it academically.

8- METHODOLOGY

A historical research of both qualitative and quantitative approach would be more appropriate to cover different aspects of electoral dynamics of Bajaur. As the research would be comprised of statistical data like voters turnout, number of candidates, and number of political parties. Similarly, in qualitative researchers it would be comprised of the historical background, electoral dynamics, voting behavior secular parties like Awami National Party (ANP) and religio political parties like Jamiat Ulema-e- Islam (F) etc. Conduct interviews focus groups and content analysis of political speeches, election manifestoes, party programs to gain insight and deep understanding of electoral politics in Bajaur Agency.

Research Design

This research will be based on historical sources and events and to analyze the events

²¹ Sultan -I- Rome, *The North-West Frontier (KHYBER PUKHTUNKHWA)* Essays on History (Karachi

on the basis of statistical data.

Population

This research aims to collect data from different sources including, general public, voters, candidates, leaders, speeches, interviews with candidates, newspapers, focus discussions with people of different ages and professions.

Sampling

The sampling of this study from the primary sources will be election commission office of Pakistan, interviews of the candidates, while secondary sources will include newspapers, articles and reports.

Data Collection

The sources for data collection will be included such as official records, candidates interviews, general masses interviews, party documents, party programs, manifestoes, newspaper will be collected, Election commission office, District Population office, PILDAT, GALLUF, FAFEN and Bureau of statistics are to be visited.

Data Analysis

It is qualitative and quantitative research and data collection will be through primary and secondary sources and on the basis of quantitative data, it will be analyzed.

Ethical consideration

It is important to mention that the following instructions and limitations should be followed by the researcher.

- (1) The researcher would try to avoid the abusive and offensive language.
- (2) No biasness will be showed by the researcher with any political party or group.
- (3) Sources consulted by the researcher would be authentic and reliable.
- (4) Researcher would give priority to validity and reliability.

Organization of Study

This research would be comprised of an introduction, Main Body (Four Chapters), A Conclusion and Bibliography.

First Chapter: Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 1997-2002.

Second Chapter: Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 2002-2008.

Third Chapter: Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 2008-2013.

Fourth Chapter: Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 2013-2018.

CHAPTER-1

DYNAMICS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN BAJAUR AGENCY 1997-2002

1.1 Dismissal of National Assembly

The last decade of the 19th century was the period of Political uncertainty in Pakistan. None of the government completed its tenure and frequent dissolution of National Assembly under 58(2) (B) resulted Elections after Elections. This section was a result of 8th Amendment in the constitution of Pakistan 1973, in which the president was empowered to dissolve the National Assembly and provincial Assemblies by Governor. The same happened with Benazir Bhutto second tenure where the President Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari with the support of Army Chief General Jahangir Karamat dismissed Benazir's Government on the allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and attempts to destroy the independence of judiciary, and economic collapse on November 5, 1996. Followed by dissolution of the Provincial Assemblies by the Governors on November 7 (Sindh), November 8 (Balochistan), November 12 (Pakhtunkhwa) and November 17 (Punjab). Followed by dissolution of the Provincial Assemblies by the Governors under the article 112 (2) (b) of the Constitution on November 7 (Sindh), November 8 (Balochistan), November 12 (NWFP) now (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and November 17 (Punjab).²²

1.1.1 Interim Government

As a result of dissolution of National Assembly Malik Meraj Khalid was appointed as the care taker Prime Minister under the Article 48(5) of the constitution of Pakistan 1973, to look the country's affair and to conduct free and fair Election. Following the constitutional criteria, a commission was constituted comprised of the chief election

²² "Free and Fair Elections Network (FAFEN), *National Assembly Elections in Pakistan 1970-2008*, A

commissioner and two judges of the high court Mr. Justice Rashid Aziz Khan of the Lahore High Court and Mr. Justice Hamid Ali Mirza of the Sindh High Court under the Article 218 of the constitution on Nov 30, 1996. General Elections were announced to be held on February 3, 1997 under the aforesaid article of the constitution of Pakistan. Elections for the four provincial assemblies that were dissolved on the specified dates were also scheduled to take place on that day. Key players in this election were Pakistan people's party and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz. Key issues addressed in this election were Pakistan peoples party highlighted the governance issue, on the other hand Islamic political parties the Islamic themes and promulgation of Islam.²³

1.1.2 Extension of Adult Franchise in FATA

It has already been mentioned in the introduction that the right to vote on the adult franchise base was given to the people of FATA by the President Farooq Ahmad Leghari, for the First time in December 14, 1996. To exercise their right to vote, the elections commission prepared electoral roll for General Elections. According to Statistics the total number of registered voter in FATA in General was 1,595,220 and in Bajaur in particular were 78,785. Of which 360 were female and 48 were non-Muslims. The number of national assembly was eight for which 298 candidates contested elections. However, it was for the first time where the adult franchise exercised their democratic right. Before the extension of this right very limited people were having this right this particular individual was popularly known as Malik and the

compendium of elections related facts and statistics :415.

²³ "The First 10 General Elections of Pakistan" (PILDAT) "*A Story of Pakistan's Transition from Democracy Above Rule of Law to Democracy Under Rule of Law: 1970-2013*" (August 2013), 26, Accessible on file:///D:/books%20Electoral%20Politics%20%20in%20District%20Bajaur/First10GeneralElectionsofPakistan_August2013.pdf

system was called as a Malakisim.²⁴ This limited group was having the distinction of Lungi in Pushto (Lungai)²⁵ holders. But the main question here arises in the mind is that, why this particular right was not guaranteed to the people of FATA? In the response of this question I investigated that there were different reasons which prevented these people from this right but the main hurdle in this journey was the FCR was a draconian law which treated them very harshly consisting of several features like collective punishment under section 40 of the frontier crimes regulations. Secondly the tribal people, since the British Raj had been deprived from their basic Human Right followed by Pakistan. Even it was being mentioned in the Article 246-47 of the Constitution of Pakistan Sidelined the tribal people and their elected representatives (MNAs) from legislation or from the circle of parliament and secondly from judicial right of Appeal, *Wakeel* (Advocate) and *Daleel* (Argument) only the third pillar of the state the executive was over there, but the executive was having the maximum powers of judiciary as well. In a nutshell in modern states to protect the rights of the people, legislature is very necessary to make laws, which was not given to the people of FATA prevented them to legislate for adult franchise.

1.1.3 Declaration of General Elections

There were two general elections held in the political and electoral politics of Pakistan. One was the general elections of 1970, and another one was that of 1997 which completely shifted the paradigm of electoral politics. In other words, in terms of electoral politics it may be referred as “critical elections” means the election which could change the political culture and a shift in the loyalties of various groups. The 1970 elections were the first ever general elections in the electoral history of Pakistan

²⁴ Sultan -I- Rome, *The North-West Frontier (KHYBER PUKHTUNKHWA)* Essays on History (Karachi Oxford University Press: 2022), 357

²⁵ A Cultural turban and a distinction, granted to a limited group of tribal elders by Political Agent on the consent of Governor.

and this period was the emergence of Bhuttoism. On the other hand the general elections of 1997 were significant because of the paradigm shift from Bhuttoism to Sharifism.²⁶ As a result of it political polarization occurred in Pakistan the other political parties came in competition to make a place in the National Assembly of Pakistan.

After the announcement of the general elections, many challenges and responses emerged in Bajaur, a region where the populace was not familiar with the electoral system. Additionally, given that the elections in the late nineteenth century were neither free nor fair, the military establishment played a significant role in supporting one political party while undermining another. Political parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan referred to the process as “selection” rather than genuine elections. In this society, politics was often perceived as a crime, and politicians who engaged in national-level politics were not permitted to participate in FATA. Furthermore, the Political Parties Act had not been extended to adequately represent public sentiments.

The Election Commission of Pakistan according to Constitution, Article 219 is bound to prepare electoral rolls, so the Election Commission of Pakistan started revising and updating the existing electoral roll which were already prepared in 1986-87 under which General Elections of 1988, 1990 and 1993 held respectively.²⁷ The number of registered voters in FATA as per previous electoral rolls was 35,709 and was updated in the fresh electoral rolls as 15, 95,220. The abrupt increase in the Electoral College was due to the extension of right to vote on adult franchise base. The campaign for inviting additions, deletions and corrections ran from November 5,

²⁶ Gallup Pakistan, *Pakistan at the Polls 1997* :4, Accessible on [file:///D:/books%202/Electoral%20Politics%20%20in%20District%20Bajaur/1997ElectionStudies%20\(1\).pdf](file:///D:/books%202/Electoral%20Politics%20%20in%20District%20Bajaur/1997ElectionStudies%20(1).pdf)

1996 to December 15, 1996 and it made a net addition of 2.2 million voters. However, the number of casted votes was 536,809 and its percentage was 33.69%. Electoral rolls in the whole country were updated, however the electoral rolls in FATAs were revised due to extension of political parties Act 1962, under which Adults can cast their vote which was previously confined only to *Maliks*, and *Lungai* allowance holders and now extended to all eligible adults. Moreover, with the extension of Political Parties Act 1962 the Government did not allow political parties to function in those areas. The candidates had to contest Elections on independent capacity backed by Political Parties.

1.1.4 Key Players

The key players in the general elections were Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) Nawaz and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Pakistan Muslim League was further bifurcated into Nawaz Group and Junejo Group before the General Elections of 1993, followed by the further bifurcation of Junejo Group into PML (Junejo) and PML (Chattha) Group. Before the Election of 1997 Pakistan people's Party was divided into two factions Benazir Bhutto Group and Murtaza Bhutto (Shaheed Bhutto Group), the brother of Benazir Bhutto. However, Murtaza Bhutto was shot dead between his supporters. After his death his mission was continued by his widow wife Ghinwa Bhutto who actively participated in the 1997 General Elections. Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) led by Altaf Hussain contested Election with the title Ham Parast Group and its separated faction contested with the title of Mohajir Qaumi Movement (Haqiqi). However Jamaat-e-Islami boycotted the election 1997 and demanded for accountability within parties before election, similarly Tehreek-e-Insaf also took part

²⁷ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan 1973, Article 219

in this Election.²⁸ On the other hand in Bajaur Agency as already negated in the introduction the Political Parties Act was not yet extended to FATA. Hence the candidates backed by Political Parties took part in the Election on independent Capacity. Among the candidates who contested elections, the following candidates were backed by political parties who highlighted the issues who addressed these issues as their election manifesto. As there was no technological advancement in the electoral process. Public opinion was to be shaped through the election campaign, including door-to-door outreach, rallies, and *Jalsas*. However, the candidates supported by political parties emphasized issues even though there was no formal written manifesto. Very rare political parties published its manifestoes in written form. The politicians only gave political statements in public gatherings, rallies in *Jalsas*.

1.1.5 First ever Elections in FATA on Adult franchise base.

It should be noted that this right was exercised for the first time, as they chose their representatives based on adult franchise. The tribal people showed great interest in these elections, as evidenced by the fact that thirty candidates submitted nominations for a single seat from Khyber Agency. According to provincial election commission 298 candidates participated in this race for 8 FATA NA seats, while 27 were in run from NA-32, Bajaur Agency. Initially the Ulema-e-Ittehad-e-Qabail (A group of religious leaders of tribal) called a *Jirga* not to allow women to cast their vote on adult franchise base in FATA, but later on due to some pressure, they softened their stance.²⁹ According to statistics shared by provincial election commission a total 1563009 tribal people comprised of women 469620 had been given the right to votes,

²⁸ Free and Fair Elections Network, *National Assembly Elections in Pakistan 1970-2008 A compendium of elections related facts and statistics*.427

of them 889 were non-Muslims. Male and female in Bajaur NA-32 including non-Muslims were 78377, while 127 polling booths in 37 polling stations were established over there.³⁰ A key question arises about the initial challenges in this process. After thorough research, the investigator spoke with tribal elders and concluded that while the introduction of electoral politics was a positive and welcomed change in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), it also faced cultural obstacles. The tribal communities had followed their own traditional system of governance for centuries, guided by Pukhtunwali—a deeply rooted code of conduct. Although democratic participation brought new opportunities, it also clashed with established social norms. One major issue was the restriction on women’s voting rights. Due to cultural and social constraints, many tribal families did not allow their women to cast their votes, resulting in a significantly low female turnout.

Secondly, the lack of political awareness and an institutional framework posed a significant challenge. Due to the long-standing draconian Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), the people of FATA were largely unfamiliar with democratic principles. Similarly, the modern judicial system was not extended to FATA until July 2018. Unlike other regions of the country, FATA had no representation in provincial assemblies, further limiting its political integration.

Thirdly, security concerns and political instability remained a major obstacle. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the region became a fertile ground for militancy and the training of Mujahedeen³¹, leading to prolonged instability that hindered democratic development.

²⁹ Muhammad Khurshid, “Tribal areas humming with electoral activity,” *The Frontier Post Peshawar*, 16 Jan, 1997, 2.

³⁰ Islamabad (PPI), “298 candidates in the run for 8 FATA NA seats,” *The Frontier Post Peshawar*, 20 Jan, 1997, 4.

³¹ (Mujahedeen meaning "holy warriors" in Arabic, refers to Muslim guerrilla fighters engaged in jihad, or struggle, for the cause of Islam)

Fourthly, weak political representation and integration into the national framework further complicated the electoral transition. The lack of political maturity among both politicians and voters remained a major challenge in FATA's evolving democratic journey, particularly in Bajaur, where political participation faced additional hurdles. Similarly, sectarian issues in Kurram Agency was the grave challenge in the election Process.³²

Another interesting aspect of the FATA election was its impact on the Pakhtoon tribes west of the Durand Line. In many cases, the same tribe was experiencing the election process in FATA just as the Taliban Islamic Militia was launching its own campaign of Islamization in Afghanistan. Predicting how these two currents would influence each other was difficult, but there was no doubt that it was an exciting and significant time for the people of FATA.³³

1.2 Election Campaign.

The election campaign was in full swing, and people were highly enthusiastic about this development. Their tendency toward modern democracy can be observed through the election campaign, even during this early phase. As it had already mentioned that there was no such election manifesto in documented form but people prefer door to door campaign, campaign through *Masajid* plural of Masjid.³⁴ Because in 1997, Election Commission of Pakistan prohibited poster, banners the use of these means of Election Campaign.

1. Akhunzada Chattan (NA-32)

³² Ajab Khan (A tribal elder and a close associate of MNA Haji Lal Karim Interviewed by Author. Venue Civil Colony Khar. Date 05/03/2025, Time 10:00am.

³³ Afrasiab Khattak, "Elections in FATA" *The Frontier Post Peshawar*, 24 Jan, 1997, 6.

³⁴ Masjid is a holy place of worship for Muslims, where they perform their daily prayers and engage in spiritual connection and reflection.

Akhunzada Chattan backed by Pakistan people party took active parts in the general elections 1997. He highlighted different issues like:

- Eradication of corruption, and criticizing policies of previous Government.
- Creating job opportunities and Poverty alleviation.
- Highlighted the women rights, women empowerment and the rights of marginalized communities.
- Commitment of better and access to quality education.
- Separation of executive from Judiciary.
- Increasing representation of women in National Assembly.
- Five years plan 1997-2002 and taking strict actions against the money launderers. Similarly, reduction in tax ratio, last but not least building confidence of foreign investors.³⁵

2. Said Abdul Manan Jan (NA-32)

Said Abdul Manan Jan an independent candidate highlighted the following issues during the Election Campaign.

- Advocating for maximum autonomy and representation for FATA within the national framework.
- Development Initiatives. He promised for developmental initiatives in terms of education, healthcare in Bajaur.
- Struggle for peace and stability resolving tribal conflicts.
- Addressing the issue of electricity in Bajaur Agency.

³⁵ Rawalpindi, "Pakistan People's Party ka Manshoor Baraye Intekhabaat 1997" *Roz Nama Jang Rawalpindi*(ii) 21 Jan, Tuesday, 1997.

- Struggle for own resources to gain maximum control over them.
- Provincial Autonomy and social justice.

3. Haji Lal Karim (NA-32)

With election symbol *Charpai* mean bed, Haji Lal Karim an independent candidate who took participation in the general election in 1997 and became the winner of the NA-32 highlighted the following issues during the election campaign.

- Improving infrastructure and building of Road, Hospitals and Schools.
- Highlighted the issue of electricity shortage.
- Economic opportunities will be created for the people of Bajaur Agency.
- Eradication of corruption from Bajaur Agency.
- Establishment of good governance and minimization of inflation.
- Job Opportunities will be created for the young generation in Bajaur.
- Eradication of Corruption.³⁶

4. Shahabuddin Khan (NA-32)

Apparently an independent candidate but backed by Awami National Party who contested election from the respective constituency of NA-32. During the Election campaign the following issues were being highlighted and promised for the following developments.

- He highlighted the social justice and equality for the people of Bajaur in his speeches.

³⁶ Ajab Khan (A tribal elder and a close associate of MNA Haji Lal Karim Interviewed by Author. Venue Civil Colony Khar. Date 05/03/2025, Time 10:00am.

- Maximum autonomy for the province of NWFP, and renaming NWFP into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Abolition of FCR from FATA and its merger into NWFP Now (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).
- Reforms in health and education sector, building of primary schools and Basic Health Units (BHUs).
- Eradication of favoritism and nepotism.³⁷

5. Malik Daud Khan (NA-32)

Malik Daud Khan, an independent candidate highlighted the following issue and promised for the following infrastructural developments. He addressed in a Public Meeting, that if he was given a chance by the people of Bajaur, he will strive to the best of his capabilities for the prosperity. He further added that that the people should cast their votes to the honest and sincere people who are the keen observers of the problems of Bajaur.³⁸

- Creating jobs and boosting the local economy through small business hubs.
- Ensuring affordable healthcare for every citizen, through Basic Health Units.
- Improving education and making quality schooling accessible to all, specially focusing on primary schools.
- Reforming criminal justice to ensure fairness and safety for all communities.
- Fighting for equality and civil rights, because every voice matters.
- Abolition of FCR and merger of FATA into NWFP.

6. Bismillah Khan (NA-32)

³⁷ Shahabud Din Khan, face to face interview with author, April 15, 2025, at *Pashat Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 11:00 am.

³⁸ F.P Report, "N.A Candidate Addresses in a Public Meeting," *The Frontier Post Peshawar*, 17 Jan, 1997.

Bismillah Khan, an independent candidate from Bajaur highlighted the following issues and promised for the following development in terms of development.

- Establishment of local health facilities.
- Building of roads to the rural areas of Bajaur Agency to make far flung areas accessible.
- Merger of FATA into North West Frontier Province.

Apart from that, the remaining candidates were not very active in the election campaign and lacked support from political parties.³⁹

1.2.1 Election's Fairness

Election Fairness, can be observed from the reports of national and international organizations. Different organizations like South Asian Association for Regional Organization (SAARC), The European Union (UN), United States National Democratic Institutes (NDI) and another organization SOLACE, Japan and the UK-based Organization also participated to inquire the fairness of the 1997 General Elections. Additionally, some of the National Organizations like Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Human Rights Council (HRC) and Human Rights Society (HRS) also vigilantly observed this Election. In the light of the aforementioned organization's and the final reports issued by all of these observers both National and International, the elections were generally fair and free. These foreign observers used different methodologies to check the fairness of the election. For that purpose, they did meetings, random calls and met with the head of major political parties. Furthermore, the Election Commission of Pakistan cooperated with both National and International teams. Moreover, the common wealth observer also

³⁹ Bismillah Khan, face to face interview with author, May 02, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil Nawagai, Time 11:00 am.

presented its report, which shows some reservations regarding Electoral Polls, Election Campaign and political parties processions. They issued a detail report and also showed their concerns about the aforesaid problems like ban on electoral campaign, *Jalsas*, flags loudspeakers and banners etc. Elections in such a restricted environment created uncertainty among democrats. However, in its final issued the following comments over the election.

1. The general election was credible and the conditions existed for a free expression of will by the people of Pakistan.
2. The Committee appreciated the care taker government the decision of extending the universal franchise to the people of FATA.
3. The procedures were generally understood and respected.
4. The election was conducted in a peaceful environment.

Similarly, the European union observer group also sent its team comprised of Forty-One representatives from seven European union countries visited Pakistan, highlighted key issues in the electoral process.

1. The observer group stressed on conducting population census, because the rapid increase in the population had led to distortion and imbalances in many constituencies.
2. The observer group expressed its satisfaction over the access to polling stations, and polling activities in a peaceful environment.
3. The Committee also expressed its satisfaction on the security provided to them.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Election Commission of Pakistan, *1997 General Elections report volume I*. 245,246,247. Can be accessed on.
General Election Report-- Vol-I--1997 (1).pdf.

On the basis the above reports issued by both National and International Observers it can be said that the Election were generally free and fair.

1.2.2 Seats in National Assembly.

In the 1997 general elections, a total of 217 seats were up for grabs in the National Assembly. Of these, 207 were set aside for Muslim representatives, while the remainder was allocated to Non-Muslims. In Bajaur Agency, home to a population of 595,227, just one seat (NA-32) was designated for this election. Despite the large population, there were only 78,785 registered voters in Bajaur. Recognizing the challenges faced by the people of FATA, the government waived the requirement for a national identity card, as many residents lacked computerized IDs, making it difficult for the authorities to issue these cards quickly. This decision aimed to ensure that everyone in the region had a chance to participate in the democratic process.⁴¹ So general elections were held on the same date which was fixed by the interim Government without any delay. Following candidates contested election from NA-32 Bajaur Agency.

1.2.3 Tribal Area

Bajaur Agency (NA-32)

Registered voters	778,736		
Total Votes Polled	51,408	Turnout	65.3%
Valid Votes	50,089	Rejected votes	1,319

⁴¹ Ibid.425

1.	Haji Lal Karim	IND	14519
2.	Mian Shah Jehan	IND	8,009
3.	M. Dawood Khan	IND	5,631
4.	Bismillah Khan	IND	5,380
5.	Shahabuddin Khan	IND	3,748
6.	Haji Gul zada	IND	2,433
7.	Molvi Abdul Haleem	IND	2,388
8.	Akhunzada Chattan	IND	487
9.	Adam Khan	IND	170
10.	Engg: Afsar Khan	IND	535
11.	Burhan Din Khan	IND	484
12.	Bashirullah	IND	191
13.	Haji Rahman	IND	254
14.	Hazrat Rasool	IND	247
15.	Hafiz Muhammad Jan	IND	177
16.	Haji Gul Zada	IND	2433
17.	Khaista Gul	IND	307
18.	Shahabud Din Khan	IND	3748
19.	Sahibzada Bahauddin	IND	142
20.	Umar Khitab Sharif Khanvi	IND	566
21.	Muhammad Ihsanullah	IND	257
22.	Muhammad Akbar	IND	727
23.	Engg: Fazli Karim	IND	400
24.	Muhammad Rahim	IND	179
25.	Malik Khan Zeb	IND	145
26.	Muhammad Nawaz Khan	IND	565
27.	Syed Abdul Manan Jan	IND	1089
		Valid Votes	50089
		Rejected Votes	1319
		Total Votes	51408
		Registered Votes	78736
		% of Votes Polled to Registered: Voters ⁴²	65.29

1.2.3 Tribal Area Bajaur Agency (NA-32)

Registered voters	778,736		
Total Votes Polled	51,408	Turnout	65.3%
Valid Votes	50,089	Rejected votes	1,319

⁴² District Election Commission Bajaur, *General Elections 1988–2018* (unpublished report, Bajaur: Election Commission of Pakistan, 2019)3.

1.2.4 Performance for their constituencies.

There different main reasons for the backwardness of the erstwhile FATA in General and Bajaur in particular. But among them the most prominent reasons were FCR system a draconian law, Lack of Education comparatively the literacy rate in FATA is still very low as compare to the settle districts. The 1997 elections in Pakistan's in general and Bajaur in Particular marked a significant shift in the region's political landscape. After the elections, tribal MNAs played crucial role in representing their constituencies.

In terms of developments and infrastructure tribal MNAs faced significant challenges in delivering development and infrastructure projects to their constituencies. However, some MNAs worked to improve education, healthcare and infrastructure in the areas. For example, efforts were made to increase access to clean drinking water, build schools and establish healthcare facilities. Particularly in Bajaur Agency, tribal MNAs faced unique challenges due to the region's strategic location Along with Pak-Afghan border. The area was vulnerable to militant activity, and the MNAs had to navigate complex tribal dynamics. Despite these challenges, Haji Lal Karim worked to promote education in the form of establishment of primary schools, middle, high schools and as well as he focused on economic and developmental works. But due to illiteracy he was not well qualified he could not deliver very well as it was required. Another major cause was that both general masses and our politicians were no politically matured. Last but not least the politically strong government in the history of Pakistan having majority of two third and its short tenure soon followed by military ruler or martial law an about two years later after elections did not let the political government in general and Bajaur (A tribal backward area in terms of

infrastructure, education and health) in Particular. Resultantly the politicians and elected representative from Bajaur did not meet the public Expectations.⁴³

1.3 Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 1999-2002

1.3.1 Background

Crises over the Kargil issues aroused between Civil and Military leadership, Musharraf, who was the mastermind of the Kargil plan kept the elected government on side and did not take them into confidence. On the other hand, Nawaz Sharif wanted normalization with India. The Civil-Military Relations further vitiated. It was also rumored that Nawaz Sharif was preparing to appoint an Army Chief of his own choice Lt. Gen. Zia ud Din. The formalities of the appointment were somewhat carried out but the Army Corps Commanders did not allow him to assume the charge as Army Chief. In the Middle of such rumors the fateful day of 12th Oct 1999 arrived. A day before this whole Pervez Musharraf was in Sri Lanka on an official visit, on returning back to country Nawaz Sharif made an attempt not to allow PIA Plane to land on Pakistan's Territory. In meanwhile the military leadership was in direct contact with Musharraf and the PIA Plane was diverted to Nawabshah wherein all arrangements were made on emergency basis for landing and on the mid night Pervez Musharraf proclaimed Emergency while disguising Martial law.⁴⁴

1.3.2 Imposition of Martial Law

On 12th Oct Gen. Pervez Musharraf imposed martial law called it as emergency. Musharraf addressed the nation on 13th Oct and suspended the Constitution of Pakistan. He issued an order called Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) on 14th

⁴³ Ajab Khan (A tribal elder and a close associate of MNA Haji Lal Karim Interviewed by Author. Venue Civil Colony Khar. Date 05/03/2025, Time 10:00am.

⁴⁴ Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2009, 472-73.

October. Whenever a military dictator imposes martial law, he issues a detail order to run the state affair through that order instead of constitution, Pervez Musharraf did the same assuming the charge as Chief Executive. The Government in National and Provincial assemblies were dismissed, Constitution was kept in abeyance. However, the president was allowed to continue his assignment. The military government initially promised that they will not intervene in the supreme judiciary. But later on deviated from its decision. On Jan 25, 2000, oath of office (Judges) Order 2000 was promulgated whereby the fresh judges were bound to take oath under PCO. And after that they will perform their duties accordingly. Chief Justice and five seniors most judges refused to take oath under PCO. The seventh among the seniors Justice Irshad Hassan Khan was appointed as the new Chief Justice. Nawaz Sharif and other persons challenged martial law. The supreme court accepted their petition. Thus the court fixed January 31, 2000 for hearing this case. The bench comprised by twelve members headed by Chief Justice disposed the petition. Thus the bench validated the martial law imposed by Pervez Musharraf on 12th Oct 1999 and provided a legal cover to military takeover. The court also noted that there is need of a revised and fresh electoral rolls before fresh election. As per the report of the Election Commission that a period of two years would be required to fulfill all legalities, thus allowed Pervez Musharraf to retain for another three years.

1.3.3 Removal of President Tarar

The military government slowly and steadily gained its strength and powers and on 20th June Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf proclaimed the President's succession order 2001. In which it was declared the office of the president may be vacated at any time whenever it is required to the Chief Executive for any reasons. Thus under the aforementioned order President Tarar was removed from his office although neither

had he resigned nor had his term of office completed. This paved the way to Musharraf to assume the office of the President. After that Justice Irshad Administered the oath of the office of the President to Musharraf and he became the President.

1.3.4 Referendum 2002

To follow his military predecessors Gen. Ayub Khan and Zia ul Haq President Musharraf did the same to legitimize himself and to give a legal cover to his military rule or Martial Law, he decided to hold a referendum on 30th April to continue the office of the President. Following was the referendum question: For continuation of local government system, restoration of democracy; sustainability and continuity of reforms, elimination of sectarianism and extremism and for the completion of Quaid-i-Azam's concept; Do you want to elect President General Pervez Musharraf for the next five years as President of Pakistan? Following were the results announced by the EC and reported by the press.⁴⁵

Areas	Yes	No	Invalid
Federal Capital	194,733	15,417	1,387
Pakhtunkhwa	3,705,991	104,555	21,885
FATA	722,715	38,980	6,024
Punjab	25,300,819	38,980	140,140
Sindh	10,144,209	188,899	90,538
Balochistan	2,554,844	39,143	21,766
Overseas	180,823	4,510	1,197
Total	42,804,134	883,681	282,937

Thus Gen. Pervez Musharraf got 97.35 percent Public favor. To further democratize himself General Pervez Musharraf decided to hold General Elections.

1.4 General Elections 2002

1.4.1 Constitutional Developments

⁴⁵ Free and Fair Elections Network, *National Assembly Elections in Pakistan 1970-2008 A compendium of elections related facts and statistics*. 486,487.

It had already mentioned that the constitution of 1973 was kept in abeyance. Musharraf run the country through different Orders like PCO and so on. Similarly, on 27th February 2002 an another order was passed called Conduct of General Elections Order, 2002. The Election Commission of Pakistan on 16th August fixed date for General Elections. The Elections were scheduled to be held on 10th Oct 2002. Along with that, Musharraf also raised the Number of National Assembly from 207 to 272, among them 60 seats were reserved for women and 10 seats for Non- Muslims. Furthermore, the qualification limit of Bachelor (B.A) or Higher was fixed for the Members of both National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies.⁴⁶

1.4.2 Political Parties Act 2002

Like his predecessors Pervez Musharraf initially banned Political Activities and suppressed politicians. In this regard he abrogated the political Parties Act 1962 which was promulgated by Gen. Ayub Khan. General Zia ul Haq did further amendments in that Act. As Musharraf gain strength he abrogated the 1962 Political Parties Act and Enacted another Political Parties Order (PPO) (Chief Executive Order) 2002.⁴⁷

1.4.3 Election Commission

Under the Article 218 of the constitution of Pakistan, the Election commission of Pakistan is bound to hold Elections honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with the provision of law and to guard against rigging and corrupt practices. Moreover, under the Article 220 all the executive authorities in Federation and Federating Units have

⁴⁶ European Parliament, *EU Election Observation Mission Final Report on Pakistan National and Provincial Assembly Elections, 10 October 2002* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2002), 24.

⁴⁷ "Pakistan, *Chief Executive's Order No. 18 of 2002: Political Parties Order, 2002*, Gazette of Pakistan, Extraordinary, Part I (Islamabad: Ministry of Law, Justice, Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs, June 28, 2002)." Accessible on <https://www.civiceducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Political-Parties-Order.pdf>

to assist Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). But this time the President changed the rules through PPO. Under which the president was having the discretionary powers to appoint Chief Election Commissioner, four members each of whom shall be the Judge of the High Court of each Federating Unit. But all of the above measures were to be taken in Consultations with Chief Election Commissioner and Chief Justices of the High Courts. Chief Justice (R) Irshad Hassan Khan was appointed as the New Chief Election Commissioner and took oath under PPO.

1.4.4 Electoral Rolls

Election commission of Pakistan started revising and updating the already existing electoral rolls. The existing electoral roll which were prepared for the local government election were revised. Similarly, the voters' lists were also undated because the eligibility of casting vote under PPO was twenty-one years which was lowered to Eighteen years for the Elections of National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies under the Article 7A of the General Elections Order 2002. NADRA was directed to provide the list of the voters whose age is 18 years or above 18 years but not above then 21 years on 1st Jan 2002.⁴⁸

The following table will indicate the total votes registered as a result of aforesaid exercise.

Sl. No	Name of province /Area	(18 to 28 Years)					
		No of Voters on Draft Electoral Rolls			No of Voters on Electoral Rolls		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Islamabad	20658	18060	38718	19342	17051	36393
2	Punjab	1567720	1373795	2941515	1522217	1336112	2858329

⁴⁸ Election Commission of Pakistan, *Report on the General Elections 2002* (Islamabad: Election Commission of Pakistan, 2002), 10.

3	Sindh	632328	503435	1135763	645195	510552	1155747
4	N-W.F.P	422478	326758	749236	410269	318819	729088
5	FATA	71658	35406	107064	80542	38819	119361
6	Balochistan	196490	152120	348610	173044	128861	301905

Total	2911332	2409574	5320906	2850609	2350214	5200823
CRORE	29 Lac, 11 Th & 332	24 Lac, 9 Th & 574	53 Lac, 20 Th & 906	28 Lac, 50 Th & 809	23 Lac, 50 Th & 214	52 Lac, 823
MILLIONS	2.9	2.4	5.3	2.9	2.4	5.2

1.4.5 Final Publication of Electoral Roll

Election Commission of Pakistan prepared Electoral Rolls with the names of those whose age was Twenty-One or above and those containing Names of voters of 18-20 years were merged. After that the final Electoral Rolls Were Published on 05-08-2002 throughout the country. Following lists were shared as final Electoral Rolls.

Sl. No	Name of province /Area	Total No. of (18 Years and Above)		
		Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1	Islamabad	203900	180170	384070
2	Punjab	21874446	19379412	41253858
3	Sindh	8765729	7375837	16141566
4	N-W.F.P	4971778	3954030	8925808
5	FATA	813863	467842	1281705
6	Balochistan	2124021	1802822	3926843

Total	38753737	33160113	71913850
CRORE	3 Crore, 87 Lac, 53 Th & 737	3 Crore, 31 Lac, 60 Th & 113	7 Crore, 19 Lac, 13 Th & 850
MILLIONS	38.8	33.2	71.9

The Electoral Rolls were finally Published on 4/8/2002 and elections were scheduled to be held on 16/8/2002. Some of the individuals due to slackness remained unregistered and requested the Election Commissioner. Upon receiving several request who were intended to contest Election on the National Assembly

Constituency and Provincial Assemblies, the Election Commission (EC) included them in the Electoral Race.⁴⁹

1.5 Key Players

Key players in this elections were Pakistan Muslim League (Q) PML(Q), Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentary (PPP-P) *Mutihida Majlis-e-Amal* (MMA), Pakistan Muslim League(N) and Independents. PML(Q), the king party Backed by Inter-Services intelligence (ISI) gathered and persuaded the dissenters from PML(N) and PPP-P to join the king party PML(Q). Similarly, an electoral alliance of six religious political parties including Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat-i-Ulema-e-Islam called itself, *Mutihida Majlis-e-Amal* (MMA) was also made to minimize the influence of PML(N) and PPP-P. This electoral alliance got momentum specially in the province of NWFP, Ex-FATA and Balochistan and adopted anti American stance during election campaign.⁵⁰ Other than the aforementioned Political Parties, small and regionalist Political Parties like, *Awami National Party* (ANP), *Mutihida Qaumi Movement* (MQM), PPP- Sherpao, National Alliance and others also participated in these Elections. Besides all MMA Played a significant role in the Electoral Dynamics of NWFP in general and Bajaur, an Agency of FATA in Particular.

1.5.1 Election campaign

As the number of seats raised in the country, Bajaur was also a beneficiary. The Number of seat in the National Assembly was raised from one to two. The candidates contested elections from two constituencies from (Na-43) and (NA-44) respectively.

Mulvi Muhammad Sadiq (NA-43)

⁴⁹ Election Commission of Pakistan, *General Elections 2002 Reports Vol-I*, 61,62. Can be accessed on <file:///D:/books%202/Electoral%20Politics%20%20in%20District%20Bajaur/ge2002-v1.pdf>

Mulvi Muhammad Sadiq an Independent candidate backed by *Mutihida Majlis-e-Amal* (MMA). He was a religious leader highlighted the following issues during his Election campaign.

- Struggle for Islamic system and promulgation of Islamic Laws. Wherein the life is according to the injunction of Islam.
- Anti-American Stance, raised voice against the American interference in Pakistan.
- Eradication of FCR system and establishment of Modern Judicial system.
- Establishment of Primary, Middle and High Schools.
- Building of Roads to the remote areas of Bajaur Agency.
- Eradication of Corruption, Nepotism and sectarianism.

Shaukatullah Khan (NA-43)

Shaukatullah Khan who was an independent candidate, contested election from NA-43 Bajaur Agency. He addressed the following issues during his Election campaign to be addressed.

- Providing accessible and affordable healthcare unit in the form of Basic Health Units.
- Water supply schemes to the remote areas of Tehsil Nawagai Bajaur Agency.
- Advocating for equality and civil rights, Political Rights to the people of FATA.
- Enhancing education and ensuring equal access to quality schooling.
- Abolition of FCR and merger of FATA into NWFP now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Hamid Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan* (Karachi), Oxford University Press, 2009, 490.

⁵¹ Shaukatullah, face to face interview with author, May 02, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil Nawagai,

Sheikh Jehanzada (NA-43)

Sheikh Jehanzada apparently an independent MNA, but backed by Awami National Party contested Election from NA-43 Bajaur. He highlighted the following issues during Election.

- Peace and stability in the NWFP in general and Bajaur (FATA) in Particular.
- Education is light, Education for all, establishment of primary schools in rural areas.
- Creating job opportunities, in both government and private sector.
- Promotion of inter-cities transport and trade facilities.
- Improving health facilities in the far flung areas of Bajaur.
- Abolition of FCR System and merger of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.⁵²

Other than above mentioned candidates, Salahuddin Khan, Muhammad Akbar and Hayat Muhammad Ghalji also took participated from NA-43 in these election but they were not so active.

Haroon Rashid (NA-44)

Haroon Rashid an independent candidate from NA-44 Bajaur and became the winner of this constituency. He belongs to Jamaat-e-Islami, supported in this election by MMA. He highlighted the following issues during his election campaign.

- Raised a staunch advocate against the military operations.
- Implementation of Sharia Law, and religious agenda.
- Development and welfare.
- Criticized the FCR which was a draconian law, a legacy of British imperialism.

Time 10:00 am.

⁵² Sheikh Jehanzada, Telephonic interview with author on May 02, 2025, Time 02:00 pm.

- Corruption free Bajaur, justice and equality for all.
- Promotion of health facilities and ensuring availability of paramedical staff.
- Promotion of Education, providing technical skills to the youth.
- Struggle for the promulgation of the injunctions of Islam.⁵³

Shahabuddin Khan NA-44

Shahabuddin Khan an independent candidate from Bajaur NA-44 took part in these Elections. Following issues were promised to be addressed during election campaign.

- Abolition of FCR and merger of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Economic development and job opportunities to the people of Bajaur Agency.
- Infrastructural development (roads, transportation)
- Security and law enforcement.
- Eradication of corruption and nepotism from Bajaur.
- Access to basic services like water, electricity, and sanitation.⁵⁴

Mian Said Ahmad Jan (NA-44)

Mian Said Ahmad Jan was an independent candidate from NA-44 Bajaur. He took participation on independent capacity. He promised the following issues to be addressed during election campaign.

- Anti-American stance, he criticized using Pakistani territory for its own gains.
- Developmental and welfare Projects if he succeeded.
- Improvement in Education and Health projects.
- Criticized FCR as a major hurdle in the way of development and prosperity of FATA.

⁵³ Haroon Rashid, face to face interview with author, April 03, 2025, at Gang Hujra Tehsil Salarzai, Time 10:00 am.

⁵⁴ Shahabud Din Khan, face to face interview with author, April 15, 2025, at Pashat Hujra Tehsil Salarzai, Time 11:00 am.

- Creating job opportunities for the local people of FATA.
- Eradication of corruption and nepotism from Bajaur Agency.

Other than that Hafiz ur Rahman, Said Wahid, Gul Dad Khan, Muhammad Ihsan Ullah, Muhammad Dawood Khan and Mian Said Ahmad Jan were also Participant in these Elections but they were passive during Electoral campaign.

1.5.2 Election's Fairness.

Like previous elections different observers both national and international, observed the fairness of these elections then published its report. For example, Pakistan observer published its report on 11th Oct, 2002 stated that, the majority of the participants including voters and candidate expressed satisfaction on the fairness of these elections. Similarly, commonwealth delegation had viewed about elections in the daily "The Nation" the Chairman of commonwealth observers, Tan Sri Musa Hitam declared it free and fair, he added that the elections were well organized. Moreover, the SAARC team also give its comments. Stated that, consisting of 13-members monitored and observed keenly resultantly the election process was transparent. They also appreciated the counting process. Similarly, the Asian Network for free Network also declared in its final report as "there was a positive atmosphere at most polling stations across the country. Public, polling officers and security officers cooperated with observers. Election commission of Pakistan also received positive responses from general masses. Last but not least European Union Observers Team, his chief observer in its report on 12th Oct had expressed satisfaction on

Election process and also expressed that no rigging was reported from across the country.⁵⁵

1.5.3 Seats in National Assembly.

It is worthy to mention here that the number of seats for National Assembly was raised from 217 to 272. According to the census report of 1998 shared by Bureau of statistics, the population of Bajaur was 595,227. The number of seats was raised from one to two. Of them the number of registered voters in NA-43 was 114139 and NA-44 was 131926 respectively. Elections held on 10 Oct across the country. Like the other parts of the country General elections also held in Bajaur. Following were the election results.

General Elections 2002 (NA-43)			
1	Hayat Muhammad Ghalji	Independent	403
2	Shaukatullah Khan	Independent	6885
3	Sheikh Jehanzada	Independent	2413
4	Salahuddin Khan	Independent	3599
5	Muhammad Akbar	Independent	228
6	Mulvi Muhammad Sadiq	Independent	13097
		Valid Votes	26625
		Rejected votes	748
		Total Votes	27373
		Registered Votes	114139
		%of polled to Registered: Votes ⁵⁶	23.89

Following were the Election results of NA-44

General Elections 2002 (NA-44)			
1	Hafiz ur Rahman	Independent	66
2	Said Wahid	Independent	905
3	Shahabuddin Khan	Independent	8465
4	Gul Dad Khan	Independent	1015
5	Muhammad Ihsanullah	Independent	418
6	Muhammad Dawood Khan	Independent	2511
7	Mian Said Ahmad Jan	Independent	1277
8	Haroon Rashid	Independent	13389

⁵⁵ Election Commission of Pakistan, 2002 *General Elections report volume I*. 240-42. Can be accessed on General Elections 2002, Report. Volume I.pdf.

⁵⁶ District Election Commission Bajaur, *General Elections 1988–2018*, 4.

		Valid Votes	28046
		Rejected Votes	923
		Total Votes	28969
		Registered: Voters	131926
		% of polled to Registered: Votes	21.96

1.5.4 Performance After Elections

It is worthy to mention that this time two members were elected from Bajaur NA-43 and NA-44 from Bajaur. But slowly and gradually people became familiar with the democratic values. As the tribal MNAs was having no role in the legislation for their own constituencies. But this time the elected representatives delivered up to great extent what they portrayed during election as there was no written manifestoes from the candidates. Both of the elected representatives were from religious political parties a Mulvi Muhammad Sadiq was backed by Jamiat Ulema e Islam and Haroon Rashid was backed by Jamaat e Islami. Their focus during the National Assembly debates was Islam, Anti American Stance.

Despite the fact that the elected members from FATA under the FCR system were to sit on Government benches Haroon Rashid from NA-44 was the sole representative from FATA who used to sit on opposition benches. He openly criticized the dictatorial policies of the government. Before that none of the tribal Member of National Assembly (MNA) use to sit on opposition benches.

In terms of education during this period the upgradation of Government Degree College Khar to Post graduate level, upgradation of technical college Inayat Kalley from inter level to post graduate level, establishment of Government Girls Degree College Khar, upgradation of four primary schools to middle schools and four middle schools to High Schools, establishment of two higher secondary schools. Similarly, in terms of health the upgradation of District Headquarter Hospital from C

category to B category as a result of that new building was built. To meet the requirement of B category doctors, paramedic staff were also recruited furthermore three hundred grade IV were also recruited on merit bases. Similarly, BHUs were also established in Arang, Salarzo and Ghar Shamoza. In terms of communication there was only one telephone exchange in Bajaur, two new exchanges were installed one in Salarzo and Barang. Furthermore, about 250 kilometer small roads were built in sides and in rural areas, an about 40 kilometer Black top road was built. Furthermore, twelve hundred hand pumps were distributed among the people. Eight hundred people were recruited in Levis purely on merit basis. Resultantly this period was more progressive for the people of Bajaur as compared to the previous MNAs who were nominated through *Lungi* system. But unfortunately this progressive era remained incomplete due to drone strike in Mamund and earlier resignation of Haroon Rashid from NA-44 National Assembly. Resultantly Haroon Rashid in Protest resigned from his seat.⁵⁷

1.5.5 Analysis

Bajaur Agency's 1997–2002 electoral dynamics reflect the complex relationship of changing democratic involvement, sociopolitical restraints, and structural reforms. the beginning of Bajaur's participation in Pakistan's election process was made possible by the significant 1996 extension of the adult franchise to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). In the 1997 elections, Bajaur's NA-32 seat recorded a 65.3% turnout, and voter registration increased from 35,709 (1986–87) to 1,595,220. But cultural barriers remained, reflecting long-standing patriarchal attitudes, especially those related to women's voting rights. The large number of independent candidates,

⁵⁷ Haroon Rashid, face to face interview with author, April 03, 2025, at Gang *Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 10:00 am.

who were quietly supported by national parties such as the PPP and PML-N, brought attention to the lack of official political party involvement as a result of the Political Parties Act's cancellation. Because of structural inefficiencies made worse by the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), political inexperience, and illiteracy, elected officials like Haji Lal Karim found it difficult to bring about significant progress, even if international observers found the elections to be legitimate. Additional reforms were brought in in the 2002 elections, which were held under the military rule of Pervez Musharraf. These included reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 and increasing the number of NA seats from 1 to 2 for Bajaur. With turnouts of 23.89% and 21.96% in Bajaur's NA-43 and NA-44 constituencies, respectively, voter registration in FATA increased to 1.28 million. The Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of religious groups that took advantage of anti-American feeling and calls for Sharia rule, changed the electoral landscape. Despite being declared independents, candidates like Mulvi Muhammad Sadiq (NA-43) and Haroon Rashid (NA-44) received support from the MMA, demonstrating ideological polarization. Even though observers declared these elections to be free, Musharraf's authoritarian policies, like the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), called into question their legitimacy. Following the election, MMA participants made some small progress, such as improving health facilities and schools, but their term was short-lived due to ongoing instability and resignations (such as Rashid's protest against drone strikes). Quantitative data highlight significant differences: development achievements were unequal, and female voter participation was still very low (360 female registrations in Bajaur, 1997). Tribal elders' qualitative observations highlight the conflict between imposed electoral systems and traditional government, or Pukhtunwali. The severe requirements of the FCR suppressed political agency, and Bajaur's assimilation into

national politics was made more difficult by the militarism that followed 9/11. The period between 1997 and 2002 ultimately revealed the limitations of FATA's election reforms, since formal democratic gestures were not enough to sustain marginalization due to structural exclusion and militarized government. According to the data, electoral participation by itself is unable to bring about revolutionary political agency until systemic injustices are addressed, such as gender inequality and the collective penalties of the FCR.

CHAPTER-2

DYNAMICS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN BAJAUR AGENCY 2002-2008.

2.1 By-Elections 2007

By-Elections are the special elections held to fill vacant seats in government bodies, such as parliaments or legislative assemblies, between general elections. it aims to fill vacancies caused by the resignation, death, or incapacitation of an elected representatives, ensuring the affected constituency remains represented. For that purpose, the government holds by election so that the representative from that constituency may take part in legislation and decisions.

On January 13, 2006, American drones carried out strikes and bombardments on a *Madrassa* in Damadola, a village in Tehsil Mamund, Bajaur, resulting in the indiscriminate killing of eighty innocent people, including women, children, and civilians. He in his speeches emphasized that the incident spot was just a kilometer away from his home. There were no such activities over there even a single knife was not excavated from there. This caused uncertainty in the region and was a big question on the sovereignty of Pakistan and a seed sown for terrorism in the Tribal areas. The Pakistani officials declared it a tribal conflict. But later on the Americans owned this attack. People protested in *chowks* (A juncture point between two roads) in a protest Sahib Zada Haroon Rashid (MNA, NA-44) in a protest rally promised the nation that he would record a protest on the floor of National Assembly and will resign from his seat for the people of Bajaur, for the people of Pakhtunkhwa and for the people of Pakistan. This incident in Damadola and another in *Inam Khwaro Chinagi* led to resignation of Haroon Ur Rashid from National Assembly. He challenged the incident to be investigate and a commission should be constitute to

collect evidences and to reach to the facts. The government did not give any satisfactory explanation about this incident, there was a clear contradiction in Pakistani officials' statements and American Government resultantly on 14-11-2006 Haroon Ur Rashid addressed the grievances and presented the realities before his parliamentary colleagues and speaker of National Assembly. Then after that he formally resigned from his seat and his seat fall vacant.⁵⁸

2.1.1 Declaration of By-Elections

Election commission of Pakistan announced By-Election on the vacant seat to be held on 10 Jan, 2007 to fill the vacant seat. This time the election commission of Pakistan due to tribal restrictions separated women polling station but did not exclude women from electoral process. As the electoral activities were not proactive like the general elections. Both candidates and voter were not so enthusiastic as it can be evinced from the participation of candidates very few took part. The main reason of this low participation was that the region faced significant security challenges with frequent attacks and skirmishes between militants and security forces. The militants targeted security forces politicians and civilians. Another major reason was that the people and politicians were fed up from the party politics, legislature as parliament did not give a detail and satisfactory report to the Tribal MNAs that who were responsible for the Damadola incident.

The election commission of Pakistan started revising and updating of the electoral rolls to ensure eligible could participate. Polling stations and necessary infrastructure, such as voting booths and ballot boxes were ensured. Candidates nominations were scrutinized and processed for further action. The number of

⁵⁸ Haroon Rashid, face to face interview with author, April 03, 2025, at *Gang Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 10:00 am.

registered voters was (1,31,000) one lac thirty-one thousand. Sixty-one polling stations were established of which one hundred eighty-six were polling booth. The Election staff was comprised of four hundred (400) of the one hundred two were women.⁵⁹ The election commission of Pakistan was warned by the politicians specially Jamaat-e-Islami, that the security situations in Bajaur in Bajaur is much deteriorated hence it's not the right time to hold by-elections on that constituency. This election could not play a pivotal role as it was limited only to a single constituency. Secondly the members of national assembly of FATA had not much role for their constituency in terms of legislation despite the promulgation of political parties act 2002 but yet it was not extended to FATA. The time for upcoming general election was coming near that's why, the candidate supposed to be the winner of by-elections was MNA for only few months.

2.1.2 Election Campaign

Election campaign was started; the following candidates took participation.

Shahab ud Din Khan

Shahab ud Din Khan apparently an independent candidate but backed by Awami National party (ANP) who later on became the winner of this election promised the following issues to be addressed. The election campaign was in full swing. Abdul Manan who was affiliated with ANP and spokesperson, said in public gathering in *Mula Kalay* that the people of Bajaur had rejected gun culture. He further added that get ridding of FCR system is our Mission. He added that the economic disparity should be abolished, reforms in the system must be brought, in this system rich becomes richer and the poor becomes poorer. Moreover, he added that it is the right time to decide the future of Bajaur. As the country's leadership focused on the By-

⁵⁹ *Ajj* Newspaper Report, "Reporter interview with Assistant Political Agent Nawagai (Mazhar Zeb

Election of Bajaur ANP provincial General Secretary Mian Iftikhar Hussain Said in a Public gathering in District Nowshera on 8th Jan that ANP will get success in the By-Elections of Bajaur.

- Security and terrorism he emphasized the need to address terrorism, militancy and promoting peace and stability in Bajaur.
- Provincial Rights and Autonomy. As a party with strong roots in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he emphasized the importance of provincial autonomy and rights, including the name of North West Frontier Province to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Shahab ud Din Khan highlighted issues related to social justice, Human Rights and Protection of Citizens' rights Particularly in the context of security check posts and treatment of people at check points.
- FATA's Merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Shahab ud Din Khan actively played his role at every forum addressed the integration of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Abolition of FCR system.
- Developmental Projects for the constituency including schools, colleges, and hospitals.
- He highlighted the imprisonment of his brother and then his death during his prison gained public sympathy.⁶⁰

Said Badshah

Khan),” *Ajj* Newspaper, Urdu, Peshawar, 10 Jan, 2007. P 01, 06.

⁶⁰ Shahabud Din Khan, face to face interview with author, April 15, 2025, at *Pashat Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 11:00 am.

Said Badshah an independent candidate backed by leading party Pakistan Muslim League (Q) PML (Q) with electoral symbol Bicycle was the runner up of Shahab ud Din Khan promised the following issues to be addressed.

- Said Badshah emphasized on the Economic Development as the need of the time for the upliftment of the people of Bajaur.
- Security and terrorism. He raised concerns about terrorism which was big problem to the people of FATA and a persistent issue. He promised that he will take some steps to stop terrorism.
- Governance and Accountability. Said Badshah highlighted the importance of good governance transparency and accountability.
- Protection of civil political rights to the people of Bajaur.
- Education and Healthcare. Ensuring health facilities to the far flung areas of Bajaur Agency.
- Job creation and employment opportunities for the youth in Bajaur.
- Youth Development. Said Badshah highlighted initiatives to engage and empower youth such as vocational training programs, Jobs creation schemes, and opportunities for youth participation in governance.⁶¹

Muhammad Ihsanullah

Muhammad Ihsanullah an independent candidate promised the following issues to be addressed.

- Muhammad Ihsanullah stressed on highlighting the security situation to show the people the real face and life standard of the people of Bajaur and also talked to reach to a national Dialogue.

⁶¹ Said Badshah, face to face interview with author, May 08, 2025, at Khar *Chaman Hujra* Tehsil Khar, Time 10:00 am.

- He highlighted the impacts of military operations including displacement and human rights abuses in FATA and their impact on local people.
- Development and infrastructure. He promised the if he succeeded he must do better for the betterment in terms of infrastructure like roads building, tourist spots, and water management.
- FCR as major hurdle in the way of development, he promised the he will raise voice for the abolition of FCR system.
- He highlighted the rising curse of corruption that our first priority would to that to eradicate corruption from Bajaur.
- Bajaur is a backward area in terms of education and health the conditions of both these departments will be improved.⁶²

2.1.3 Election Results

It is worthy to mention the Jamaat-e-Islami at that time was in coalition with other political parties like Jamiat Ulema Islam (F) and other boycotted from these elections and also pressurized government about the security situation that were worsening day by day. In public speeches and press conferences the leader of MMA, Qazi Hussain Ahmad expressed grave concerns about the security situations. He further added that there would be serious implications of these elections over the country situations and the people of Bajaur are not ready to exercise their democratic right due to security situations.⁶³

Similarly, in Nowshera in a *Jalsa* on 9th January 2007, the militants did three explosions in which ten people wounded. He criticized the incompetency of

⁶² *Ajj* Newspaper Report, "Election campaign is in full swing" *Ajj* Newspaper, Urdu, Peshawar, 08 Jan, 2007. P 03.

⁶³ *Ajj* Newspaper Report, "Reporter coverage from Islamabad), *Ajj* Newspaper, Urdu, Peshawar, 07 Jan, 2007. P 01.

government in maintenance of peace and stability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in General and Bajaur in particular. He further added that the people of Bajaur will remember the martyrs of Damadola so they will boycott from by-elections.

On 10th of Jan 2007 the day of election came where people cast their votes and exercised their democratic right. The following were the election results.

S.No	Candidates	Status	Obtained Votes
1.	Shahabud Din Khan	IND	15322
2.	Said Badshah	IND	4924
3.	Muhammad Ihsan Ullah	IND	58
		Total registered votes	1,31,000
		Votes polled	20,304

2.2 Performance for Constituency

During his relatively short tenure of approximately nine months as the elected representative of NA-44 (Bajaur), Shahab-ud-Din Khan demonstrated a proactive and visionary approach to addressing the longstanding issues faced by his constituents. Despite the limited timeframe, he prioritized development in key sectors such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and legal reform, reflecting a deep understanding of the region's socio-economic challenges. One of his notable achievements was the establishment of Basic Health Units (BHUs) to provide essential medical services to the local population, which had long suffered from a lack of accessible healthcare facilities. Among these, a BHU was set up in Tangay and another in Khar, offering much-needed relief to residents who previously had to travel great distances for even basic medical treatment. These health units served as a crucial step in improving maternal and child health, vaccination outreach, and emergency care in the region.

In the realm of education, Shahab-ud-Din Khan initiated the establishment of several primary schools, recognizing education as the cornerstone for long-term development and social uplift. These schools were opened in underserved and often

neglected areas such as Pashat, Salarzo, and surrounding villages, enabling children—especially girls—to access formal education closer to home. By investing in early education infrastructure, he laid the groundwork for a better future for the youth of Bajaur.

Infrastructure development also remained high on his agenda. He facilitated the construction of small but strategically significant roads that connected remote villages with main towns and trade routes. These included roads in regions such as *Pashat*, *Salarzo*, *Khar*, and *Tangay*, which not only improved mobility for local residents but also helped stimulate economic activity by easing access to markets, educational institutions, and healthcare centers.⁶⁴

Beyond physical development, Shahab-ud-Din Khan earned widespread respect for his principled stance against the draconian Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) system—a colonial-era legal framework that denied the people of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) basic constitutional rights and legal protections. He was one of the few political voices from the region who consistently and courageously spoke out against the injustices perpetuated by the FCR. In various forums, including parliamentary discussions, he advocated for its complete abolition and strongly supported the integration of FATA into the constitutional and administrative mainstream of Pakistan. His advocacy contributed to the broader national discourse that eventually led to the historic merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In summary, Shahab-ud-Din Khan's nine-month performance as MNA from NA-44 may have been brief in duration, but it was impactful in substance. Through his efforts in establishing health and education facilities, improving local

infrastructure, and challenging an unjust legal system, he set a positive precedent for future leadership in Bajaur. His contributions remain a testament to what can be achieved with commitment, vision, and an unwavering dedication to public service.⁶⁵

2.2 Analysis

Shahab-ud-Din Khan's success in the 2007 by-elections for NA-44 (Bajaur) can be understood through a multi-faceted analysis of political, emotional, structural, and socio-economic dimensions. One of the most compelling factors was the sympathy wave he garnered due to the tragic death of his brother in prison, which deeply resonated with the local populace. In a region already mired in military operations, aerial strikes, and civilian casualties—such as the Damadola drone attack—his personal loss was perceived as part of a broader pattern of state injustice, and it humanized him in the eyes of the electorate. This emotional connection translated into a significant vote bank, particularly among communities frustrated with state apathy and systemic abuse. In addition to this, the boycott by Jamaat-e-Islami and its allied parties under the Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) created a major shift in the electoral dynamics. Jamaat-e-Islami, which traditionally held substantial influence in the tribal belt, chose to boycott the elections over deteriorating security and the government's failure to hold accountable those responsible for civilian deaths in Bajaur. Their withdrawal not only reduced competition but also disoriented their voter base, many of whom either abstained or shifted support to a candidate who echoed their sentiments of grievance and reform—namely, Shahab-ud-Din Khan.

⁶⁴ Shahabud Din Khan, face to face interview with author, April 15, 2025, at *Pashat Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 11:00 am.

⁶⁵ Author interview with Shahabud Din Khan.

Another critical dimension was Shahab-ud-Din Khan's association with the Awami National Party (ANP), which, although not overtly contesting under its banner, offered him organizational backing, political capital, and ideological alignment. ANP's longstanding stance on Pashtun rights, provincial autonomy, the abolition of the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), and integration of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa strongly aligned with the aspirations of the local population. In his campaign, Shahab-ud-Din Khan effectively captured these aspirations, emphasizing human rights, development, and peace, as well as challenging the militarization of the tribal areas. His campaign speeches, backed by ANP's provincial leaders, offered a hopeful narrative amidst the despair that had engulfed Bajaur due to years of conflict, economic marginalization, and political neglect.

Additionally, the security situation itself, while a point of concern, paradoxically contributed to Shahab-ud-Din's victory. The constant fear of militant attacks, government inaction, and limited mobility discouraged large-scale political activity, leading to lower participation among rival candidates and voter apathy. With only three candidates seriously contesting and a turnout of merely 20,304 votes out of 131,000 registered, the low electoral competition meant that even a moderately mobilized base could secure a win. Moreover, the voters' disillusionment with mainstream party politics and the federal legislature, particularly after the Parliament failed to hold a transparent inquiry into the Damadola strike, made independent candidates with clear local commitments more appealing. Shahab-ud-Din, though officially independent, projected himself as a reformist tribal leader with a clear agenda, thereby gaining credibility.

Furthermore, Shahab-ud-Din effectively tapped into socio-economic grievances by addressing the lack of infrastructure, education, healthcare, and employment opportunities in his manifesto. His focus on abolishing FCR, promoting human dignity, improving roads, building schools and hospitals, and eradicating corruption offered tangible solutions to long-standing issues. He positioned himself as a voice for the voiceless, especially the youth, women, and displaced populations affected by military operations. This developmental vision stood in sharp contrast to the vague or party-controlled narratives of his opponents. His efforts were further validated during his short tenure through the establishment of Basic Health Units (BHUs) in Tangay and Khar, construction of roads in remote areas, and the initiation of educational institutions, particularly for girls. These concrete actions reinforced his credibility and differentiated him from other leaders who often failed to deliver even during full terms.

Another overlooked but critical dimension was Shahab-ud-Din's principled political stance, particularly his opposition to the FCR and his advocacy for FATA's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In an era when few dared to openly oppose the FCR due to fear of retaliation or loss of political capital, his bold speeches and consistent efforts at multiple forums portrayed him as a courageous and visionary leader. His alignment with the broader Pashtun nationalist movement, coupled with grassroots respect, earned him not only votes but admiration. His narrative found additional strength as ANP leaders like Mian Iftikhar Hussain publicly predicted and supported his win, further elevating his visibility.

In conclusion, Shahab-ud-Din Khan's victory in the 2007 by-election was not a result of a singular event but rather a culmination of emotional resonance, political vacuum, security-driven electoral shifts, progressive policy vision, and grassroots

connection. Each of these dimensions, whether rooted in tragedy, boycott, ideology, or reform, played a role in not only ensuring his electoral success but also in cementing his legacy as a responsive and transformative leader during a time of great turmoil in Bajaur.

2.4 Dynamics of Electoral Politics in Bajaur Agency 2007-2008

2.4.1 Dismissal of National Assembly

The dissolution of the National Assembly in 2008 marked a significant moment in Pakistan's democratic transition, signaling the end of an era dominated by military influence and the beginning of a renewed parliamentary process. The 12th National Assembly, elected during the military-led government of General Pervez Musharraf in October 2002, completed its constitutionally mandated five-year term on 15 November 2007. In accordance with Article 52 of the Constitution of Pakistan, the Assembly was dissolved on the same date, leading to the formation of a caretaker government under Prime Minister Muhammad Mian Soomro.⁶⁶ This interim administration was tasked with overseeing the upcoming general elections. The political landscape during this period was deeply unstable and marked by constitutional upheaval. Just days before the dissolution, on 3 November 2007, Musharraf declared a state of emergency, suspended the Constitution, and dismissed the superior judiciary, including Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry. This extraordinary move was widely perceived as an attempt to pre-empt a possible judicial verdict against Musharraf's controversial re-election as President by the sitting assemblies in October 2007, while he still held the position of Army Chief.

⁶⁶ *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973*, Article 52 (Islamabad: National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012), 27–28. Accessible on <https://www.pakp.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Constitution.pdf>

The emergency rule drew widespread condemnation, both domestically and internationally, and intensified demands for a return to civilian democratic rule. In this volatile environment, political activity was severely restricted, and civil liberties were curtailed. The assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on 27 December 2007 in Rawalpindi further plunged the country into grief and chaos, prompting the Election Commission of Pakistan to postpone the general elections initially scheduled for 8 January 2008. The elections were subsequently held on 18 February 2008. The results marked a dramatic shift in Pakistan's political direction, as the pro-Musharraf Pakistan Muslim League (Q) suffered a significant defeat, while opposition parties, particularly the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), emerged as the dominant forces in the new Assembly.⁶⁷

This electoral outcome led to the end of military-backed political dominance and ushered in a new coalition government under the PPP, which later facilitated the resignation of Pervez Musharraf in August 2008. The 2008 transition was a pivotal chapter in Pakistan's political history, reflecting a public rejection of authoritarianism and a collective desire to restore democratic institutions. The peaceful transfer of power following the elections signaled a reaffirmation of parliamentary sovereignty and set the stage for major constitutional and institutional reforms in the years to follow.

2.4.2 Interim Government

In the months leading up to Pakistan's 2008 general elections, the country was caught in a storm of political uncertainty, public unrest, and deep constitutional challenges. As the five-year term of the National Assembly came to an end on November 15, 2007, the Constitution required that a caretaker government be put in place. The idea

⁶⁷ Griff Witte, "Bhutto Assassination Sparks Chaos," Washington Post, December 27, 2007.

behind this provision was to ensure that elections would be held fairly, without the ruling party using government resources to tilt the results in its favor.

The very next day, on November 16, President Pervez Musharraf appointed Mohammad Mian Soomro, a respected former banker and then Chairman of the Senate, as the Caretaker Prime Minister. His main job was to guide the country through this sensitive period and make sure the elections were held smoothly and transparently. His cabinet, mostly made up of technocrats and non-political figures, was expected to act impartially. But not everyone was convinced. Many in the opposition raised concerns that the setup wasn't entirely neutral, especially since Soomro had ties to the Pakistan Muslim League (Q)—the party that had supported Musharraf during his time in power.⁶⁸

This transition to the caretaker government happened in a highly volatile atmosphere. Just weeks earlier, on November 3, 2007, Musharraf had declared a state of emergency. He justified it by pointing to rising militant threats and what he described as judicial interference. During this time, he suspended the Constitution, sacked dozens of judges—including Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry—and clamped down on media and civil liberties. These actions sparked massive protests across the country, led by lawyers, opposition parties, and civil society, all demanding the restoration of democratic norms and an independent judiciary.

Things took a tragic turn on December 27, 2007, when Benazir Bhutto, the charismatic leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and a former Prime Minister, was assassinated during an election rally in Rawalpindi. Her death sent shockwaves through the country. Riots broke out in many cities, lives were lost, and public

⁶⁸ International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), *Pakistan General Elections 2008: Final*

infrastructure suffered. In this atmosphere of grief and chaos, the Election Commission, along with the caretaker government and political parties, decided to postpone the general elections, moving them from January 8 to February 18, 2008.⁶⁹ Despite all the challenges—fear of violence, doubts about transparency, and deep political divisions—the elections went ahead under Soomro’s caretaker leadership. Turnout was relatively high, and international observers generally regarded the polls as credible, though they did note some isolated irregularities. The outcome was a clear rejection of the pro-Musharraf establishment. The PPP, buoyed by a wave of public sympathy after Bhutto’s assassination, emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly. The PML-N, led by Nawaz Sharif, also made significant gains. Together, these parties formed a coalition government, signaling a shift in the country’s political direction.

On March 25, 2008, Yousaf Raza Gillani of the PPP was sworn in as Prime Minister, officially marking the end of Soomro’s caretaker administration. This peaceful handover was a significant moment in Pakistan’s political journey. It didn’t just mark the end of another election—it symbolized the country’s gradual shift away from military-led governance and back toward civilian rule and democratic principles. The 2008 elections and the role of the interim government laid the foundation for key national conversations—on judicial independence, the balance between civilian and military power, and the future of democratic governance in Pakistan.

2.4.3 Preparation of Electoral Rolls in Bajaur

Electoral rolls in Pakistan form the foundation of the country’s democratic process, ensuring that only eligible voters participate in elections and that the process remains

Report, 2008. P.10-15. Accessible on https://www.eods.eu/library/eu_eom_pakistan_final_report.pdf

⁶⁹ Election Commission of Pakistan, “Notification on Postponement of General Elections,” January 2008. Can be Accessed on

transparent and credible. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is responsible for compiling, updating, and maintaining these rolls. Over time, the ECP transitioned from manually prepared paper-based voter lists to a computerized system, which significantly improved the accuracy and management of voter data. This transformation involved extensive data collection, digitization of records, and integration with the computerized National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) national identity card (CNIC) database, helping eliminate duplicate and fraudulent entries. By the 2008 general elections, the Final Electoral Roll (FER) included approximately 80.9 million registered voters nationwide.⁷⁰

Despite these advances, Pakistan's electoral rolls faced challenges, particularly in the under-registration of women, minorities, and populations in remote or conflict-affected areas. The ECP provides a public verification and revision period before elections, allowing citizens to confirm their registration and request corrections. This transparency process was vital for increasing public confidence and correcting errors. However, geographical barriers, socio-economic issues, administrative complexities, and cultural factors continued to impede full registration, especially in rural and tribal regions.

Bajaur Agency, formerly part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018, exemplifies these complexities. Bajaur's difficult terrain, security concerns, and low literacy rates posed significant obstacles to effective voter registration and verification. At the time of the 2008 elections, Bajaur's electoral roll comprised two National Assembly constituencies: NA-43 (Tribal Area-I) and NA-44 (Tribal Area-II). NA-43 had

<https://ecp.gov.pk/extend-date-of-general-elections-is-18-02-2008>

⁷⁰ National Database and Registration Authority. *Annual Report 2007-2008*. Islamabad: NADRA, 2008. P 10-20

approximately 255,000 registered voters, while NA-44 had about 280,000, representing a sizable electorate despite the area's challenges.⁷¹

The voter registration process in Bajaur followed similar verification procedures as the rest of the country but faced greater difficulties due to limited registration centers, low public awareness, and poor infrastructure. Integration of the CNIC database with electoral rolls was less complete here than in other regions, affecting accuracy and completeness. Additionally, cultural traditions and restrictions significantly limited female voter registration, keeping it well below the national average, despite efforts by the ECP and civil society to enhance women's participation.

To facilitate the voting process, around 350 polling stations were established in Bajaur for the 2008 elections, strategically distributed to cover both urban and remote mountainous areas. Each polling station had multiple polling booths staffed by trained election officials and supported by security personnel to maintain order and voter confidence. Nonetheless, challenges remained in fully reaching marginalized voters and ensuring their effective participation.

In a nut shell, while Pakistan's electoral roll system had made important technical and procedural progress by 2008, Bajaur's experience highlighted ongoing disparities in voter registration, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies to ensure comprehensive and representative electoral participation.

2.5 Key Players

The general elections of 2008 were held during a highly sensitive and transitional period for Pakistan. After nearly a decade of military rule under President Pervez Musharraf and just weeks after the tragic assassination of former Prime Minister

⁷¹ Election Commission of Pakistan. *Statistical Report on General Elections 2008*. Vol.II, Islamabad:

Benazir Bhutto, the country was plunged into shock, grief, and uncertainty. Her death not only devastated the nation but also completely reshaped the electoral atmosphere. Her party, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), now led by her son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and husband Asif Ali Zardari, emerged as the largest political force in the National Assembly, largely due to a strong wave of public sympathy and renewed hopes for democracy. On the other hand, Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) made a powerful political comeback, especially in Punjab, by appealing to voters with calls for judicial independence and civilian supremacy.⁷² In urban Sindh, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) retained its traditional stronghold, while religious parties—particularly the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which had performed well in 2002—suffered a major loss of public support due to their perceived closeness to the military regime.⁷³

However, the electoral environment in the tribal regions—especially in Bajaur Agency—was markedly different. At the time, Bajaur was part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where colonial-era laws were still in place and political parties did not have full access or legal rights to operate. The situation was further complicated by growing militancy and unrest; Bajaur had become a frontline battleground between the Pakistani military and the outlawed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). For many local residents, daily life was dominated by fear, displacement, and insecurity. Political campaigns were either severely limited or entirely suspended, and voter participation was significantly affected. Despite these challenges, some influential figures emerged—mainly independent tribal leaders and religious personalities, especially those affiliated with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), who

ECP, 2008. P. 70-85

⁷² Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 182–184.

⁷³ Haider Syed Karim and Sheikh Shaukat Ali, “Impact of Benazir Bhutto Death on Performance of

maintained strong local influence due to their deep-rooted presence in the community.⁷⁴

Mainstream political parties like the PPP and the Awami National Party (ANP) also tried to establish their presence in the region, often emphasizing peace, reforms, and the integration of FATA into the national political system. However, their reach remained constrained due to the volatile security environment and the traditionally conservative social structures. Still, the 2008 elections sparked an important national dialogue about the political rights of FATA's residents and brought increasing attention to their long-standing exclusion. The electoral experience of Bajaur symbolized the broader struggle of Pakistan's tribal areas—caught between tradition and change, conflict and peace, repression and democracy. These elections ultimately helped lay the groundwork for FATA's historic merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018, marking a slow but significant step toward political inclusion and representation.

2.6 Election Campaign

The following candidates contested election from NA-43 apparently on independent basis but backed by political parties.

1. Bashir Muhammad (NA-43)

Bashir Muhammad, running as an independent candidate, actively participated in the 2008 general elections and focused on the following key issues during his campaign:

- Tackling corruption and promoting transparency in local governance.

PPP and Electoral Politics of Pakistan 2008–2013,” *Pakistan Vision* 19, no. 1 (2018): 6.

⁷⁴ Ullah, Kiramat, Muhammad Ayaz Khan, and Tariq Anwar Khan. “Jihadi Militancy in Bajaur Agency and Its Impact in the Area.” *Pakistan Journal of Social Research* 3, no. 2 (2021): 15–22. Accessed June 19, 2025.

- Creating sustainable employment opportunities and reducing poverty through skill development programs.
- Highlighting women's rights, empowerment, and support for marginalized tribal communities.
- Commitment to improving access to quality education in remote areas.
- Advocating for the separation of executive powers from judiciary for better governance.
- Increasing women's representation in local and national decision-making bodies.
- Presenting a five-year development plan focused on infrastructure growth and economic stability.
- Encouraging foreign and domestic investment by building investor confidence.⁷⁵

2. Haji Akbar Jan (NA-43)

Haji Akbar Jan, an independent candidate, highlighted the following issues during his election campaign:

- Advocating for greater administrative autonomy and political representation for Bajaur within the national framework.
- Promising development initiatives in education, healthcare, and infrastructure across Bajaur Agency.
- Striving for peace and conflict resolution among tribal communities.
- Addressing the critical electricity shortage in Bajaur Agency.
- Fighting for local control over natural resources to benefit the tribal population.

⁷⁵ “Bashir Muhammad ka 5 Saala Taraqqiati Plan: Taleem, Khawateen ke Huqooq aur Karobari

- Supporting provincial autonomy and social justice for all communities.
- Supporting abolition of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) and merger of FATA into NWFP.

3. Habib Rasool Safi (NA-43)

Habib Rasool Safi, an independent candidate who contested the 2008 general elections, emphasized the following points:

- Improving infrastructure including roads, hospitals, and schools in Bajaur.
- Highlighting the urgent issue of electricity shortage in the region.
- Promising to create economic opportunities for the people of Bajaur Agency.
- Eradicating corruption and promoting good governance.
- Working towards controlling inflation and stabilizing prices of essential goods.
- Committing to generate job opportunities for the youth.⁷⁶

4. Hayat Muhammad (NA-43)

Hayat Muhammad, an independent candidate backed by a political party, raised the following points during his campaign:

- Advocating social justice and equality for the people of Bajaur.
- Calling for maximum autonomy for the province and renaming NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Supporting abolition of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) and merger of FATA into NWFP (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).
- Promising reforms in health and education, including building primary schools and Basic Health Units (BHUs).

Istehkaam Par Zor,” *Daily Express* (Peshawar), February 14, 2008), 5.

⁷⁶ Habib Rasool Safi, “Iqtisadi Mawaqe aur berozgari ka khatma,” *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Peshawar), February 2, 2008.

- Fighting nepotism and favoritism to ensure fair governance.⁷⁷

5. Saeed ur Rahman (NA-43)

Saeed ur Rahman, an independent candidate, committed to the following during his election campaign:

- Creating jobs and boosting the local economy by supporting small business hubs.
- Providing affordable healthcare services through the establishment of Basic Health Units.
- Improving education, with special focus on primary schooling and quality standards.
- Reforming the criminal justice system to ensure fairness and security for all.
- Fighting for equality and civil rights for every citizen.

6. Shaukatullah Khan (NA-43)

Shaukatullah Khan, contesting as an independent candidate in the 2008 general elections, emphasized a comprehensive development agenda aimed at transforming Bajaur Agency. He became the winner of this constituency. His campaign focused on:

- Abolition of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR): Advocating for the repeal of FCR to ensure equal rights and justice for tribal communities, aligning with national legal standards.
- Infrastructure Development: Prioritizing the construction and maintenance of roads to enhance connectivity between remote villages and urban centers, facilitating trade and access to services.

⁷⁷ Hayat Muhammad, "FCR, Taraqi ki Raah Ma Aik Nasoor Ha," *AJJ* (Rawalpindi), February 8, 2008.

- **Healthcare Accessibility:** Establishing and upgrading health facilities in rural areas to provide quality medical care, reducing the need for travel to distant hospitals.
- **Educational Advancements:** Building and renovating schools, with a focus on female education, to promote literacy and skill development among the youth.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Implementing programs to support local businesses and agriculture, aiming to boost the local economy and create employment opportunities.
- **Security and Stability:** Collaborating with law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety of residents and the restoration of peace in the region.
- **Youth Engagement:** Developing vocational training centers to equip the youth with skills necessary for employment and self-reliance.⁷⁸

7. Sheikh Jehanzada (NA-43)

Sheikh Jehanzada, an independent candidate, emphasized the following issues during his campaign:

- Promoting women's political participation and social empowerment.
- Establishing modern educational institutions focused on female literacy.
- Addressing tribal land disputes and working towards peace and stability.
- Improving infrastructure for clean water supply and sanitation.
- Advocating transparent governance and community involvement.⁷⁹

8. Inayat ur Rahman (NA-43)

⁷⁸ Shaukatullah, face to face interview with author, May 02, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil Nawagai, Time 10:00 am.

⁷⁹ Sheikh Jehanzada, Telephonic interview with author on May 02, 2025, Time 02:00 pm.

Inayat ur Rahman, an independent candidate, highlighted these priorities during his campaign:

- Promoting community-led development to reduce poverty.
- Improving maternal and child health through better healthcare services.
- Removing administrative barriers delaying development projects.
- Enhancing supply of clean water and electricity in rural Bajaur.
- Ensuring fair distribution of government resources among all tribal groups.

9. Mufti Israr Ahmad (NA-43)

Mufti Israr Ahmad, participating as an independent candidate, focused on the following issues:

- Supporting educational reforms that combine religious and modern curricula.
- Promoting peace and harmony among tribal communities.
- Strengthening health infrastructure including vaccination and emergency services.
- Advocating judicial reforms to protect vulnerable groups from exploitation.
- Encouraging youth participation in political and community development.
- Agriculture Support: Providing farmers with modern tools, seeds, and training to boost agricultural productivity.
- Youth Empowerment: Creating opportunities for the youth through education, sports, and employment programs.

5. Shahab ud Din Khan

Shahab ud Din Khan contested the 2008 elections as an independent candidate. His campaign focused on:

- Abolition of FCR: Calling for the end of the FCR to ensure equal rights and opportunities for the tribal people.
- Education: Establishing schools and providing scholarships to students, especially girls.
- Healthcare: Improving healthcare facilities and ensuring access to medical services in underserved regions.

2.7 FOR NA-44

1. Al Hajj Muhammad Din Khan NA-44

Al Haji Muhammad Din Khan contested the 2008 elections as an independent candidate. His campaign focused on:

- Abolition of FCR: Advocating for the elimination of the FCR to ensure equal rights and justice for the tribal people.
- Education: Establishing schools in remote areas and promoting female education.
- Healthcare: Improving healthcare facilities and ensuring access to medical services in underserved regions.
- Infrastructure Development: Constructing roads and bridges to connect isolated areas, facilitating trade and communication.
- Water Supply: Implementing water supply schemes to provide clean drinking water to communities.
- Agriculture Support: Providing farmers with modern tools and training to enhance agricultural productivity.
- Youth Empowerment: Creating vocational training centers to equip the youth with skills for employment.

2. Haji Rahat Yousaf NA-44

Haji Rahat Yousaf, another independent candidate, emphasized:

- Abolition of FCR: Calling for the repeal of the FCR to integrate the tribal areas into the mainstream legal framework.
- Education: Building schools and providing scholarships to students, especially girls.
- Healthcare: Establishing health centers and ensuring the availability of essential medicines.
- Infrastructure Development: Developing roads and communication networks to boost economic activities.
- Water Supply: Constructing dams and water channels to support agriculture and provide drinking water.
- Agriculture Support: Introducing modern farming techniques and providing subsidies on seeds and fertilizers.
- Youth Empowerment: Setting up sports facilities and youth clubs to engage the young population.

3. Zir Muhammad NA-44

Zir Muhammad's campaign was centered around:

- Abolition of FCR: Advocating for the end of the FCR to ensure the fundamental rights of the tribal people.
- Education: Promoting literacy by establishing schools and adult education programs.
- Healthcare: Improving existing health facilities and establishing mobile health units in remote areas.

- Infrastructure Development: Focusing on the construction of roads, bridges, and communication networks.
- Water Supply: Implementing water filtration plants and irrigation systems.
- Youth Empowerment: Organizing skill development workshops and employment fairs.

4. Syed Akhun Zada Chattan NA-44

Syed Akhun Zada Chattan won the 2008 election as an independent candidate became the winner of this constituency. His key initiatives included:

- Abolition of FCR: Strongly advocating for the repeal of the FCR to ensure justice and equality for the tribal communities.
- Education: Establishing schools and vocational training centers to enhance literacy and skills.
- Healthcare: Improving healthcare infrastructure and ensuring the availability of medical staff and medicines.
- Infrastructure Development: Developing roads, bridges, and communication networks to facilitate trade and connectivity.
- Water Supply: Implementing water supply schemes and sanitation projects to improve public health.
- Infrastructure Development: Constructing roads and bridges to connect isolated areas, facilitating trade and communication.
- Water Supply: Implementing water supply schemes to provide clean drinking water to communities.

- Youth Empowerment: Creating vocational training centers to equip the youth with skills for employment.⁸⁰

6. Gul Dad Khan NA-44

Gul Dad Khan, representing the Awami National Party, focused on:

- Abolition of FCR: Advocating for the repeal of the FCR to integrate the tribal areas into the national legal framework.
- Education: Establishing schools and providing scholarships to students, especially girls.
- Healthcare: Improving healthcare facilities and ensuring access to medical services in underserved regions.
- Infrastructure Development: Constructing roads and bridges to connect isolated areas, facilitating trade and communication.
- Water Supply: Implementing water supply schemes to provide clean drinking water to communities.
- Agriculture Support: Providing farmers with modern tools and training to enhance agricultural productivity.
- Raised voice for provincial autonomy.

7. Muhammad Fazil NA-44

Muhammad Fazil contested the 2008 elections as an independent candidate apparently backed by JUI (F). His campaign emphasized:

- Abolition of FCR: Advocating for the elimination of the FCR to ensure equal rights and justice for the tribal people.

⁸⁰ Syed Akhunzada Chattan, face to face interview with author, April 08, 2025, at *Haji Lawang Hujra* Tehsil Khar, Time 02:00 pm.

- Education: Establishing schools in remote areas and promoting female education.
- Healthcare: Improving healthcare facilities and ensuring access to medical services in underserved regions.
- Infrastructure Development: Constructing roads and bridges to connect isolated areas, facilitating trade and communication.
- Water Supply: Implementing water supply schemes to provide clean drinking water to communities.
- Agriculture Support: Providing farmers with modern tools and training to enhance agricultural productivity.
- Allocation of funds for religious Madrasas.⁸¹

8. Mufti Israr Ahmad NA-44

Mufti Israr Ahmad, representing the (JUI-F), focused on:

- Abolition of FCR: Advocating for the repeal of the FCR to ensure justice and equality for the tribal communities.
- Education: Establishing schools and promoting religious education.
- Healthcare: Improving healthcare facilities and ensuring access to medical services in underserved regions.
- Infrastructure Development: Constructing roads and bridges to connect isolated areas, facilitating trade and communication.
- Water Supply: Implementing water supply schemes to provide clean drinking water to communities.
- Agriculture Support: Providing farmers with modern tools and training to enhance agricultural productivity.

⁸¹ JUI ka Intikhabi Manshoor 2008: Islami Nizam ka Nafaz aur Qaumi Yakjehti,” *Jang* (Lahore),

- **Youth Empowerment:** Creating vocational training centers to equip the youth with skills for employment.

9. Maulana Fazal Manan NA-44

Maulana Fazal Manan highlighted the following issues during his electoral campaign.

- **Infrastructure Development:** Improving roads, bridges, and basic infrastructure to enhance connectivity and facilitate economic growth.
- **Education and Healthcare:** Enhancing access to quality education and healthcare facilities, addressing the shortage of schools, hospitals, and medical professionals.
- **Employment Opportunities:** Creating jobs and promoting economic development, possibly through initiatives like industrial zones, vocational training, or support for local businesses.
- **Security and Stability:** Ensuring a safe environment for residents, addressing concerns related to militancy, and promoting peace and stability in the region.
- **Water and Electricity:** Providing reliable access to clean water and electricity, essential for daily life and economic activities.
- **Tribal Rights and Representation:** Advocating for the rights and interests of tribal communities, ensuring their representation in government, and addressing historical grievances.
- **Merger Integration:** Addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from the merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ensuring smooth integration and benefits for the local population.

February 10, 2008.

- Youth Empowerment Focusing on the needs and aspirations of the youth, including education, skill development, and opportunities for political and economic participation.

2.8 Election Fairness

The 2008 General Elections in Pakistan marked a pivotal moment in the country's democratic trajectory, taking place in the aftermath of political unrest and the tragic assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Despite the tense pre-election environment, both national and international observer missions widely concurred that the elections were largely free, fair, and credible, allowing the electorate to meaningfully exercise their democratic rights. The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), which deployed over 130 observers across various regions, concluded that while the pre-election period was marred by unequal access to state media and administrative imbalances, the overall electoral process allowed genuine political competition, and election day proceedings were conducted peacefully and transparently.⁸² Similarly, the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) acknowledged notable improvements in electoral conduct, praising the peaceful atmosphere and voter participation, though it highlighted the need for continued reforms, particularly to strengthen the autonomy and efficiency of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).⁸³ On the domestic front, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) recognized several procedural and administrative shortcomings—such as late delivery of materials and limited campaign freedoms in some areas—but affirmed that these did not significantly compromise the legitimacy

⁸² European Union Election Observation Mission, *Pakistan 2008 Final Report: National and Provincial Assembly Elections, 18 February 2008* (Islamabad: EU EOM, April 16, 2008), 2–4.

⁸³ Commonwealth Observer Group, *Interim Statement on Pakistan General Elections* (Islamabad: Commonwealth Secretariat, February 10, 2008), 3–6.

of the electoral outcomes. Furthermore, the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), Pakistan’s leading domestic election monitoring body, deployed thousands of trained observers across the country. In its post-election report, FAFEN confirmed that while instances of irregularities, including underage voting and unauthorized personnel in polling stations, were observed, these did not appear to be systematic or widespread enough to affect the overall integrity of the elections. FAFEN also praised the relatively transparent vote-counting process and accessibility of polling stations to the general public. Collectively, the findings of these observer missions—both national and international—underscore that the 2008 elections represented a significant improvement over previous electoral exercises, and were widely regarded as a credible expression of the people’s will, reaffirming Pakistan’s commitment to democratic governance.

2.9 Election Results

General Elections 2008 (NA-43)			
S. No	Name of Candidate	Party	Votes Polled
1	Bashir Muhammad	Independent	3009
2	Haji Akbar Jan	Independent	290
3	Habib Rasool Safi	Independent	65
4	Hayat Muhammad	Independent	53
5	Saeed ur Rahman	Independent	568
6	Shaukatullah Khan	Independent	7428
7	Sheikh Jehanzada	Independent	3079
8	Inayat ur Rahman	Independent	171
9	Mufti Israr Ahmad	Independent	247
		Valid Votes	14910
		Rejected Votes	392
		Total Votes	15302
		Registered Votes	119088
		% of votes polled to registered votes ⁸⁴	12.85

⁸⁴ District Election Commission Bajaur, *General Elections 1988–2018* (unpublished report, Bajaur: Election Commission of Pakistan, 2019), 4.

2.9.1 Election Results

General Elections 2008 (NA-44)			
S. No	Name of Candidate	Party	Votes Polled
1	Al Haji Muhammad Din Khan	Independent	51
2	Haji Rahat Yousaf	Independent	2348
3	Zir Muhammad	Independent	1264
4	Syed Akhun Zada Chattan	Independent	6257
5	Shahab ud Din Khan	Independent	5203
6	Gul Dad Khan	Independent	4648
7	Muhammad Fazil	Independent	1586
8	Mufti Israr Ahmad	Independent	602
9	Maulana Fazal Manan	Independent	1262
		Valid Votes	23221
		Rejected Votes	847
		Total Votes	24068
		Registered Votes	136052
		% of votes polled to registered votes ⁸⁵	17.69

2.10 Performance after Election

Akhunzada Chattan, the elected MNA from NA-44 Bajaur and a prominent leader of the Pakistan People Party, made significant contributions to the development of his constituency during his term. In the education sector, he played a crucial role in improving student transportation by allocating and providing four buses to Degree College Khar, Girls Degree College Khar, and the Government Commerce College, making it easier for students to access their institutions. He also worked to establish two government high schools—one in Tangi and another in Tehsil Utmankhel—offering better educational opportunities in underserved areas. His efforts extended to the health sector, where he was involved in the hiring of medical staff and the provision of employment through the departments of health, education, and WAPDA, resulting in jobs for over 150 individuals. At the national level, Chattan actively supported the 18th Constitutional Amendment, which restored democratic balance

and enhanced provincial autonomy. He was a strong advocate for the rights of the people of FATA, frequently raising his voice in the National Assembly against drone attacks and for the integration of the tribal areas into the national mainstream. In terms of infrastructure, he initiated the construction of several small roads in remote villages across Salarzai Tehsil, Tehsil Khar, and Tangi, improving access to essential services.⁸⁶

Shaukatullah Khan, the MNA from NA-43 Bajaur, representing the areas of Tehsil Wara Mamund, Ghat Mamund, and Nawagai, focused his term on local development and essential public services. In education, he facilitated the construction of two new government primary schools—one in *Ghat Mamund* and the other in Nawagai—to meet the urgent need for educational infrastructure in these regions. He also contributed to the upgrading of existing school buildings and the provision of teaching staff. In healthcare, he played a pivotal role in establishing one Basic Health Unit (BHU) in Wara Mamund, which now serves several surrounding villages with basic medical care and maternal health services. Shaukatullah supervised the construction and rehabilitation of over 10 kilometers of link roads, particularly in mountainous and hard-to-reach villages, which improved transportation and emergency access. He also supported small-scale irrigation projects in Nawagai, helping local farmers boost crop yields through better water management. Throughout his tenure, he maintained regular engagement with community elders and participated in *Jirgas* ensuring that development efforts were in line with the needs and cultural context of the local

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Syed Akhunzada Chattan, face to face interview with author, April 08, 2025, at *Haji Lawang Hujra* Tehsil Khar, Time 02:00 pm.

population. His approach combined infrastructure development with social uplift, leaving a lasting impact on his constituency.⁸⁷

2.11 Analysis

The 2008 general elections in Bajaur, which included constituencies NA-43 and NA-44, present a clear picture of voter behavior in tribal areas, shaped by emotions, tribal loyalties, and hopes for development. The central question of this analysis is: who voted for whom, and what factors influenced these decisions? In NA-44, Syed Akhunzada Chattan's victory was largely due to a nationwide wave of sympathy following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in late 2007. Although political parties were banned in FATA at the time and Chattan ran as an independent candidate, he was widely considered affiliated with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Voters in NA-44 cast their ballots both out of emotional sympathy and hope that Chattan would bring real change to their area. After the election, Chattan focused on improvements in education, healthcare, and infrastructure, especially in Salarzai and Khar, which strengthened voters' belief that their vote was well-placed.

On the other hand, the electoral dynamics in NA-43 revolved around tribal traditions and personal relationships. Shaukatullah Khan's success depended largely on his tribal status within the Mamund clan and the strength of his biradari (clan) network. His campaign was mostly based on clientelism, where political support was exchanged for benefits like building schools, repairing roads, and establishing a Basic Health Unit in Wara Mamund. Voters in NA-43 viewed these services as personal favors rather than government rights. Shaukatullah's active participation in tribal

⁸⁷ Shaukatullah, face to face interview with author, May 02, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil Nawagai, Time 10:00 am.

Jirgas further solidified his leadership role and highlighted the importance of traditional governance systems.

Voter turnout was low in both constituencies—about 12.85% in NA-43 and 17.69% in NA-44—likely due to security concerns and political apathy. Because political parties were banned in FATA, most candidates ran as independents, and votes were mostly influenced by personal ties and tribal affiliations rather than party ideologies. After the election, Chattan and Shaukatullah adopted very different approaches reflecting their voters' expectations. Chattan focused on legislation and development projects, signaling a move toward reform and modernization, while Shaukatullah maintained traditional leadership, emphasizing local service delivery and direct involvement in tribal dispute resolution.

In summary, the 2008 elections in Bajaur reflect a complex blend of emotions, tribal loyalties, and practical needs. Chattan's victory was driven by national sympathy and the desire for development, while Shaukatullah's success was rooted in tribal authority and personal networks. These contrasting approaches show how modern political trends and longstanding tribal loyalties coexist, shaping Bajaur's unique electoral landscape.

CHAPTER-3

DYNAMICS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN BAJAUR AGENCY 2008-2013.

3.1 Dissolution of National Assembly

On March 16, 2013, Pakistan's 13th National Assembly was automatically dissolved upon completing its constitutionally mandated five-year term, as per Article 52 of the 1973 Constitution—a milestone marking the first peaceful end to a full civilian government's tenure without military intrusion. This procedural dissolution followed intensive behind-the-scenes negotiations between the ruling PPP and opposition PML-N through February and early March 2013 to ensure simultaneous dissolution of both national and provincial assemblies on the same date to streamline the electoral process. Provincial assemblies in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan were accordingly dissolved between March 16–20, following constitutional advice and gubernatorial actions.⁸⁸

Immediately after dissolution, a caretaker government framework was implemented under Article 224-A, forming a non-partisan transitional cabinet. Justice (Retd.) Mir Hazar Khan Khoso was appointed Caretaker Prime Minister after consultation between the outgoing PM and opposition leader, in line with constitutional processes, to manage state affairs and assist the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) within the 90-day election timeline. Despite its constitutional legitimacy, the caretaker setup in 2013 faced significant judicial scrutiny: The Supreme Court later invalidated over 400 appointments and transfers made by this interim government, ruling they exceeded its limited administrative mandate.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Election Commission of Pakistan, *Report on General Elections 2013*, vol. 1 (Islamabad: ECP, 2013), 5–6.

⁸⁹ *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*, 1973, art. 52; art. 224-A.

This orderly dissolution was anchored in a broader legal evolution: after the abolition of presidential dissolution authority via the 18th Amendment (2010), and the institutionalization of caretaker protocols by the Eighth and Seventeenth Amendments, this episode became a model of constitutional maturity. By adhering to the letter of the law, negotiating across party lines, and invoking judicial oversight to restrain excesses, the 2013 dissolution represented a precedent-setting transition—not merely for its democratic symbolism but for solidifying the procedural mechanics that safeguard civilian rule in Pakistan’s parliamentary system.

3.1.1 Interim Government

The Interim Government of 2013 in Pakistan was a significant political development aimed at ensuring a fair and impartial transfer of power after the completion of the elected government's term. On March 16, 2013, the National Assembly of Pakistan completed its five-year term, marking the first time in the country's history that a civilian government had completed its tenure. Following this, a caretaker interim government was established to oversee the general elections scheduled for May 11, 2013. After consultations between the outgoing government and opposition parties—and the failure of the parliamentary committee to reach a consensus—the Election Commission of Pakistan appointed Mir Hazar Khan Khoso, a retired judge and former Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court, as the interim Prime Minister on March 24, 2013.⁹⁰ This caretaker cabinet consisted of technocrats and non-political members, whose primary responsibilities were to maintain law and order, assist the Election Commission, and ensure a neutral environment for conducting fair elections. The interim government successfully facilitated a peaceful and orderly transfer of power

⁹⁰ *Dawn News*, “ECP Selects Mir Hazar Khan Khoso as Caretaker PM,” *Dawn*, March 24, 2013, 1.

to the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) after their victory in the elections. This transition was widely regarded, both domestically and internationally, as a historic step toward the continuity of democracy in Pakistan.

3.1.2 Declaration of General elections

The 2013 general elections in Pakistan represent a landmark event in the country's political and democratic history, marking the first successful completion of a constitutionally mandated five-year term by a civilian government and a peaceful, democratic transfer of power—an achievement that had eluded Pakistan since its independence in 1947 due to repeated military interventions and political instability. The 13th National Assembly, formed after the 2008 elections which ended General Pervez Musharraf's military rule, completed its term and was constitutionally dissolved at midnight on March 16, 2013, in accordance with Article 52 of the Constitution of Pakistan. This constitutional provision mandates that the National Assembly's term lasts five years from its first sitting unless dissolved earlier. Accordingly, under Article 224(1), general elections were required to be held within sixty days of the dissolution to ensure continuity of democratic governance and uphold the electoral mandate of the people. Following this constitutional framework, President Asif Ali Zardari signed a presidential summary on March 20, 2013, formally announcing May 11, 2013, as the date for general elections for the National Assembly and all four provincial assemblies—Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan.⁹¹ This announcement was also supported by provisions of the 18th and 20th Constitutional Amendments, which introduced key reforms aimed at

⁹¹ Fakir Syed Iqtidaruddin, "President Zardari Signs Summary: Election to Be Held on May 11," *Business Recorder*, March 20, 2013.

strengthening democratic institutions and the electoral process.⁹² Notably, these amendments enhanced the independence and authority of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), empowering it to oversee free, fair, and transparent elections and instituting the caretaker government system to neutrally manage state affairs during the election period. The political environment leading up to the elections was tense, particularly concerning the appointment of the caretaker prime minister—a process intended to be impartial to ensure equal opportunity for all contesting parties. After prolonged negotiations failed, the ECP exercised its constitutional authority under Article 224A and appointed retired Chief Justice of the Federal Shariat Court, Justice Mir Hazar Khan Khoso, as caretaker prime minister on March 24, 2013. Khoso, a widely respected jurist from Balochistan known for his impartiality, took the oath of office on March 25 and by April 2 had formed a 14-member caretaker cabinet composed of technocrats and non-partisan figures from across Pakistan's provinces to administer government affairs neutrally and with integrity during the electoral period. Meanwhile, the ECP announced a detailed election schedule with key milestones: candidate nomination submissions from March 24 to 29, scrutiny and verification of nominations from March 30 to April 5, followed by a period for appeals and withdrawals, culminating in the publication of the final list of candidates by April 18 or 19. To address ongoing electoral challenges and modernize the voting process, the ECP partnered with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and received technical and financial support from international organizations such as the European Union and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). One significant achievement was the comprehensive revision and digitization of the

⁹² *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*, Articles 52, 224, 224A; 18th and 20th Amendments, accessed June 24, 2025, can be accessed on, <https://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/>.

electoral rolls, removing over 37 million invalid and duplicate entries while adding approximately 36.7 million eligible voters verified through Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs). This strict verification substantially reduced the potential for fraud and manipulation. Additionally, for the first time, voter photographs were printed on electoral rolls to prevent impersonation and ensure authenticity at polling stations. Voters were also empowered through an innovative SMS verification system allowing them to remotely confirm registration status and polling station information; this service was reportedly accessed over 50 million times, demonstrating broad engagement. Special initiatives targeted increasing female voter registration and inclusion of marginalized groups, including deployment of mobile CNIC registration units in rural and underserved areas. Despite these efforts, structural obstacles remained, such as underrepresentation of women, who accounted for only about 44% of registered voters, and logistical difficulties in providing access to remote or conflict-affected regions.⁹³ On election day, May 11, 2013, a massive nationwide exercise took place across over 69,000 polling stations staffed by more than 800,000 polling and security personnel to maintain order. While the overall voting process was largely peaceful and orderly, isolated violent incidents occurred, including coordinated bombings in Karachi and parts of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, highlighting ongoing security challenges and the complex political climate. Voter turnout increased significantly to about 55%, up from 44% in 2008, indicating growing public confidence and participation in the democratic process. Politically, the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), led by veteran politician Nawaz Sharif, won a decisive victory with 166 of 342 National Assembly seats, allowing it to form a government independently without coalition support. The Pakistan People’s Party

⁹³ Dawn. “Fafen Terms Voter Turnout in 2013 Polls Encouraging for Democracy.” *Dawn (Karachi)*,

(PPP), which had governed previously, suffered significant losses, winning only 42 seats, while the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by Imran Khan and contesting nationally for the first time, emerged as a major force with 35 seats, positioning itself as a key opposition party. Nawaz Sharif's election as prime minister marked the first democratic transition of power between two civilian governments in Pakistan's history, signaling a potential consolidation of democratic norms.

3.2 Preparation of Electoral Rolls

In preparation for the landmark general elections held on May 11, 2013, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), in collaboration with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), undertook a comprehensive reform of the country's voter registration system. For the first time in Pakistan's electoral history, a fully computerized electoral roll was developed, based on national identity card (CNIC) data and including photographs of voters. This initiative aimed to minimize opportunities for fraud and enhance the transparency of the democratic process. The final voter list included 86,189,835 registered voters, of whom 48,592,492 were men and 37,597,343 were women, meaning that women represented only about 43.6% of the electorate.⁹⁴ This revealed a significant gender gap of around 11 million women, largely due to lower rates of CNIC acquisition among women—especially in rural and underserved areas. According to NADRA, about 90% of eligible men had CNICs compared to only 79% of eligible women.⁹⁵

February 21, 2014.

⁹⁴ European Union Election Observation Mission, *Final Report: General Elections 11 May 2013* (Islamabad: EU EOM, 2013), 4

⁹⁵ Election Commission of Pakistan, *Report on the General Elections 2013*, vol. 1 (Islamabad: Election Commission of Pakistan, 2013), 16.

There were noticeable regional disparities in the gender data. In Balochistan, women constituted only 42.6% of registered voters, while in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the figure was as low as 34.3%. Sindh had the highest female voter registration, at 44.7%. To encourage voter participation and improve access to electoral information, the ECP introduced a new mobile phone verification service. The SMS-based “8300” service allowed citizens to instantly confirm their voter registration status and polling station locations. This service was widely used, receiving more than 50 million SMS queries, indicating growing public trust in the electoral process.

Despite the technological advancements and better data management, the voter verification process had some limitations. Due to time constraints and logistical challenges, the ECP was unable to verify about 30% of the entries through its planned door-to-door field verification. Nevertheless, these reforms were widely credited with restoring public confidence in the electoral system. The updated electoral rolls contributed significantly to a voter turnout of approximately 55%, the highest in Pakistan since the 1977 elections and a substantial increase from the 44% turnout in the 2008 elections. Notably, 2013 also marked the first time the ECP tracked voter turnout by gender, reflecting a growing institutional commitment to inclusivity and democratic accountability.

While the implementation of a digitized electoral roll was a major step forward, the ongoing under-registration of women highlighted enduring social, cultural, and systemic barriers. Civil society organizations and international observers—such as the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM)—

stressed the need for continued efforts to close the gender gap and expand grassroots voter education campaigns.⁹⁶

3.2.1 Extension of Political Parties Order 2002

The extension of the Political Parties Order, 2002 to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in August 2011 marked a significant milestone in Pakistan's political history. For many decades, FATA remained politically and legally isolated from the rest of the country. The main reason for this was the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), which deprived the people of FATA of fundamental rights, including political representation and access to an independent judicial system. Unlike other parts of Pakistan, where citizens enjoyed constitutional protections and democratic participation, FATA was governed directly by federally appointed Political Agents who were not accountable to the local population. Because of this, political parties were banned from operating in the region, and elections were held on a non-party basis, meaning candidates contested as independents. Thus, FATA remained outside Pakistan's mainstream political and legal systems, limiting the voice and participation of its people in national affairs.

This political isolation caused many problems. The lack of political rights and participation led to weak governance and hindered development. Moreover, the absence of organized political structures allowed traditional tribal leaders and later militant groups to fill the power vacuum. After the events of 2001 and the rise of militancy, it became urgent to politically and legally integrate FATA into Pakistan's mainstream system. In this context, on 12, August 2011, then-President Asif Ali Zardari issued a presidential order under Article 247 of the Constitution, formally

⁹⁶ Muddassir Rizvi, "Revision of Electoral Rolls," *Dawn* (Karachi), August 15, 2016

extending the Political Parties Order, 2002 to FATA. This order legally allowed political parties to establish offices, campaign, and participate in elections in FATA for the first time.⁹⁷

The impact of this reform was evident in the 2013 general elections. Major political parties such as the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) actively participated in elections in FATA and engaged with voters. This increased voter turnout and particularly encouraged youth participation, who had been excluded from formal political processes before. The inclusion of political parties gave local people the opportunity to express their concerns in an organized way and demand better governance and development. This was an important shift from a system dominated by tribal leaders and independent candidates to a more democratic and representative system.⁹⁸

However, the introduction of political parties and democratic processes faced many challenges in FATA. Many traditional tribal leaders were worried about losing their power and influence. Additionally, ongoing security problems, military operations, and militant activity limited political activities in some areas. Low literacy rates, weak infrastructure, and limited media access also hindered political awareness and participation. Despite these difficulties, the permission for political parties was a crucial step toward democratic inclusion.

⁹⁷ Dawn (Islamabad), "*Major changes made in FCR: Fata people get political rights*," 12 August 2011. P 1.

⁹⁸ Asad Zia, "Shortcomings of Political Parties Act: FATA Politicians Call for Quick Reforms Before Polls," *The Express Tribune*, March 16, 2013. Can be accessed on <https://tribune.com.pk/story/521534/shortcomings-of-political-parties-act-fata-politicians-call-for-quick-reforms-before-polls>

This reform also laid the foundation for further constitutional changes. In May 2018, the 25th Constitutional Amendment merged FATA with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). This amendment ended FATA's special legal status and integrated it into Pakistan's mainstream legal and political system. The Supreme Court and High Courts' jurisdiction extended to FATA, and residents were given the right to elect representatives to the KP Provincial Assembly for the first time. This was aimed at providing equal political rights and better governance opportunities for the people of FATA.⁹⁹

Although the merger and reforms have been significant, challenges remain. Security concerns still exist, and administrative integration is complex due to weak institutions and opposition from some local groups. Decades of political exclusion and conflict have weakened public trust in government institutions, which cannot be restored easily. Sustainable peace and democratic governance require continued efforts to improve security, strengthen institutions, and invest in education and economic development. Political empowerment must go hand in hand with social and economic inclusion.

In a nutshell, the extension of the Political Parties Order to FATA ended a long period of political isolation. It allowed political parties to participate in elections and increased democratic engagement. The merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa further ensured constitutional inclusion. However, realizing the full benefits of these reforms requires ongoing commitment from the state, improvements in security, and empowering the local population economically and politically.

⁹⁹ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Twenty-Fifth Amendment, 2018, Can be accessed on https://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1528343985_133.pdf

3.3 Key Players

The 2013 general elections in Pakistan marked a significant milestone in the country's democratic history, as it was the first peaceful and constitutionally sanctioned transfer of power from one elected civilian government to another. At the national level, the contest was primarily among three major political parties: The Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Led by Nawaz Sharif, the PML-N capitalized on widespread public dissatisfaction with the PPP's governance, campaigning on promises of economic recovery, energy sector reform, and infrastructure development. In contrast, the PPP, under Asif Ali Zardari, faced heavy public criticism due to issues of corruption, inflation, and deteriorating law and order. Meanwhile, Imran Khan's PTI emerged as a new political force, gaining strong traction among youth and middle-class voters through its call for a "New Pakistan." Although PTI could not form the federal government, it managed to secure power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, marking a major regional political shift.

In this broader national context, the electoral environment in Bajaur Agency, then part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), was shaped by distinct local dynamics. Despite the passage of the Political Parties Act in 2011, which allowed formal political activity in FATA for the first time, politics in Bajaur continued to revolve around tribal structures, personal influence, and traditional leadership.¹⁰⁰ The region, divided into two constituencies (NA-43 and NA-44), still saw tribal loyalties and customary authority outweigh party affiliations or ideological platforms, particularly due to ongoing security concerns and weak state presence.

¹⁰⁰ Raheem ul Haque. "Pakistan's General Elections 2013: Actors, Dynamics and Results." *Pakistan*

In NA-44, which includes Khar Tehsil, Utman Khel, Barang, and Salarzai, political party affiliation mattered less than tribal identity and personal reputation. Shahabuddin Khan, the PML-N candidate, former MNA, and head of the Salarzai pro-government militia, emerged as a front-runner due to his strong tribal base and prior service. Akhunzada Chattan, the PPP candidate who had won in 2008 as an independent, lost significant support due to unmet promises—particularly the failure to resolve the electricity crisis despite inaugurating a 132-kilovolt grid station in Khar. Other notable candidates included Gul Dad Khan (PTI), Gul Afzal (ANP), Haji Sardar Khan (JI), Maulana Abdur Rasheed (JUI-F), and Haji Bahadur Khan, a strong independent with deep local roots.

PTI, initially considered a strong contender in NA-44 due to youth support and a national reformist wave, faced internal division after Nawabzada Anwarzeb Khan and Jalal Uddin—two influential local figures—left the party and supported ANP, fragmenting PTI’s vote bank. Religious parties like JI and JUI-F maintained influence in certain areas, but JI’s traditional stronghold in Utman Khel shifted its support to independent candidate Haji Bahadur, further weakening the party’s chances. A notable development was the candidacy of Badam Zari, the first woman from tribal area to contest elections from NA-44.¹⁰¹ Despite her symbolic significance and her advocacy for female education and reform, her campaign was constrained by deep-rooted gender norms, limited outreach, and logistical hurdles.¹⁰²

Journal of Social Sciences 33, no. 1 (2013): 1–11.

¹⁰¹ “Badam Zari Makes History as First Woman Candidate from FATA.” *Dawn* (Karachi), April 1, 2013.

¹⁰² “Post-election allegations: Bajaur candidates accuse political administration of rigging,” *The Express Tribune*, May 12, 2013. Can be accessed on <https://tribune.com.pk/story/548388/post-election-allegations-bajaur-candidates-accuse-political-administration-of-rigging>

In NA-43, which includes Mamund Tehsil, parts of Khar (from Sadiqabad to Zoor Bander), Nawagai, Charmang, and upper Chamarkand, the political competition was equally complex. While all major parties fielded candidates, independent contenders remained dominant due to entrenched tribal allegiances and security-related challenges to organized political activity. Haji Bismillah Khan, an independent candidate and father of then-Governor Shaukatullah Khan, gained a strong advantage after ANP's Sheikh Jan Zada withdrew in his favor. The situation was further influenced by internal conflict within PTI. Local party president Dr. Khalil was denied a ticket, which went instead to Zafar Khan. This decision led Dr. Khalil and hundreds of PTI workers to form a splinter group, PTI-Nazriyati, which pledged support to Haji Bismillah, significantly strengthening his position.

Other prominent candidates included Haroon Rasheed (JI), a former MNA and JI FATA chief, Maulana Muhammad Sadiq (JUI-F), Abdullah (PML-N), Saeed ur Rahman (PPP), and several independents such as Fateh ur Rahman, Muhammad Iqbal, and Haji Fazal. JI had substantial grassroots support in conservative and conflict-affected areas where it campaigned freely, unlike other candidates who were restricted due to security threats. Despite this, Haji Bismillah's campaign drew criticism from rivals who accused him of using government resources, turning the Governor House into an election office, and influencing tribal elders with bribes. Candidates alleged that the political administration, under the governor's influence, manipulated the electoral process by tearing down flags and posters of opponents and facilitating Bismillah's outreach.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ "Bajaur political diary: Electioneering in FATA's smallest agency," *The Express Tribune*, May 7, 2013. Can be accessed on <https://tribune.com.pk/story/545786/bajaur-political-diary-electioneering-in-fatas-smallest-agency>

While the 2013 elections introduced formal party politics to Bajaur, tribal loyalties, patronage networks, and personal connections continued to drive electoral behavior. Structural weaknesses such as poor electoral transparency, administrative bias, and a lack of public trust in state institutions persisted. Voter turnout among women remained especially low due to cultural constraints, limited access to polling stations, and the prevalence of proxy voting in many areas including Salarzai, Mamund, and Barang.

In conclusion, the elections in Bajaur Agency showcased the limits of institutional reforms in areas where customary tribal authority and informal political systems continue to dominate. Despite the presence of national parties, real power remained localized and personality-driven. Bajaur's case highlights the broader challenges of democratic consolidation in post-conflict and transitional regions of Pakistan. Moving forward, ensuring institutional neutrality, expanding voter education, and strengthening local governance structures will be crucial for building a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable democratic culture in such peripheral regions.

3.4 Election Campaign

3.4.1 For NA-43

1. Sahib Zada Haroon ur Rashid (JI) NA-43

As a candidate of Jamaat-e-Islami, Sahib Zada Haroon ur Rashid promised for the following issues to be addressed.

- Corruption and Accountability – A promise to eliminate corruption and establish transparent, accountable governance.
- Islamic System of Government – A call for the implementation of Shariah and the establishment of an Islamic welfare state.

- Educational Reforms – Emphasis on providing free, quality, and uniform Islamic curriculum.
- Justice and Rule of Law – A commitment to provide speedy and equal justice for all citizens.
- Economic Self-Reliance – Opposition to IMF loans, and a plan to promote interest-free Islamic banking and support local industries.
- Energy Crisis – A promise to resolve electricity and gas shortages through renewable energy and dam construction.
- Social Welfare – A proposal to establish a welfare system based on healthcare, pensions, and Islamic principles like Zakat and Waqf.¹⁰⁴

2. Bismillah Khan NA-43 (Independent)

Bismillah Khan's campaign centered around the following issues during his election campaign.

- Securing full constitutional rights for Bajaur residents.
- Pressing for reconstruction of war-affected homes and infrastructure.
- Emphasizing practical solutions for unemployment among youth.
- Urging for a locally driven model of tribal development.
- Enhancing road connectivity in remote villages.
- Ensuring availability of clean drinking water and basic health services.¹⁰⁵

3. Habib Rasool Safi NA-43 (Independent)

¹⁰⁴ Haroon Rashid, face to face interview with author, April 03, 2025, at *Gang Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 10:00 am.

¹⁰⁵ Bismillah Khan, face to face interview with author, May 02, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil Nawagai, Time 11:00 am.

Habib Rasool Safi's campaign highlighted these priorities:

- Improving healthcare access by building hospitals and BHUs.
- Addressing illegal detentions and restoring civil liberties.
- Strengthening local governance through grassroots empowerment.
- Revamping outdated infrastructure in educational institutions.
- Raising voice for early integration of FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Creating job quotas for tribal youth in public departments.

4. Taj Muhammad NA-43 (Tehrik Ittehad Ummat Pakistan)

Taj Muhammad addressed the following issues during his election campaign.

- Representing a lesser-known party, Taj Muhammad focused on:
- Promoting sectarian harmony and religious unity across tribal lines.
- Introducing moral and spiritual education reforms.
- Establishing microfinance programs for local businesses.
- Strengthening bonds between tribal customs and modern governance.
- Advocating a peaceful resolution to internal tribal disputes.
- Working towards better coordination between tribes and the federal government.

5. Muhammad Sadiq NA-43 (JUI-F)

As a Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) candidate, Muhammad Sadiq campaigned on:

- Protection of Islamic Identity and Shariah – Advocated for an Islamic legal system and preservation of Pakistan’s religious character.
- Support for Madrassahs and Religious Education – Defended madrassah independence and promoted religious education.
- Reduction in tax ratio.
- Opposition to U.S. Drone Strikes and Foreign Interference – Condemned drone attacks and called for an independent foreign policy.
- Protection of Tribal and Pashtun Rights – Focused on development and political inclusion of tribal and Pashtun communities.¹⁰⁶

6. Muhammad Iqbal NA-43 (Independent)

Muhammad Iqbal focused his campaign on.

- Advocating transparency and accountability in public spending.
- Prioritizing access to electricity and gas for rural homes.
- Demanding fair compensation for military operations' victims.
- Pushing for a dedicated tribal youth employment policy.
- Seeking international aid for development without foreign control.
- Ensuring fair allocation of development funds to each tehsil.¹⁰⁷

7. Nawab Zada Shahid NA-43 (Independent)

Nawab Zada Shahid addressed the following campaign points:

- Empowerment of local tribal elders in policymaking.

¹⁰⁶ JAMIAT ULEMA ISLAM'S MANIFESTO FOR 2013 ELECTIONS

- Opposing bureaucratic control from Islamabad.
- Launching scholarships for students from remote areas.
- Building dams and water storage schemes for agriculture.
- Advocating for Bajaur's representation in national decision-making.
- Calling for reconciliation policies for internally displaced persons.¹⁰⁸

8. Khalil ur Rahman NA-43 (Independent)

Khalil ur Rahman raised these campaign issues:

- Accelerating the integration of Bajaur into KP for equal rights.
- Promoting literacy among girls through school establishment.
- Ensuring efficient transport and communication facilities.
- Pressing for more inclusion of tribal members in national institutions.
- Demanding the withdrawal of paramilitary forces from civilian zones.
- Proposing welfare schemes for widows and orphans of conflicts.

9. Fazali Rahman NA-43 (Independent)

Fazali Rahman focused on these issues during campaign.

- Fazali Rahman's key campaign goals were comprised of the following issues.
- Removing social inequality and promoting equal opportunity.
- Initiating rural electrification and road paving projects.
- Offering business start-up incentives for tribal youth.

¹⁰⁷ "NA-43 ke Azad Umeedwar Muhammad Iqbal ka Wazeh Ilaan: Har Tehsil ke Liye Barabar Fund, Bijli aur Gas Ko Awliyat," *Daily Mashriq* (Peshawar), April 29, 2013, 5.

¹⁰⁸ "IDPs Ke Liye Aam Mafahmat Ki Policy Zaroori Hai—NA-43 Ke Candidate Nawabzada Shahid." *Khabrain* (Peshawar), May 1, 2013.

- Improving women's access to health and maternity services.
- Promoting vocational training centres to reduce joblessness.
- Demanding compensation for crop destruction during operations.

10. Muhammad Rahim NA-43 (Independent)

Muhammad Rahim's focused on the following issues.

- Advocating for tribal students' reserved seats in universities.
- Ensuring peace and law enforcement through local policing.
- Providing support to returning IDPs in housing and schooling.
- Upgrading medical dispensaries to full-service health centers.
- Supporting inter-tribal cooperation for development.
- Opposing any decision on Bajaur without local consent.

11. Naushad Khan NA-43 (Independent)

- Naushad Khan emphasized on the following issues during his election campaign to be addressed
- Eliminating drug abuse and smuggling through education.
- Rehabilitating damaged schools and religious institutions.
- Encouraging youth participation in political processes.
- Promoting small-scale industries to reduce unemployment.
- Campaigning for better mobile and internet connectivity.
- Restoring trust between local communities and administration.

12. Fateh ur Rahman NA-43 (Independent)

- Fateh ur Rahman's campaign was based on:
- Prioritizing justice and human rights for tribal residents.
- Building bridges and access roads in mountainous villages.
- Supporting the rights of minority tribes within Bajaur.
- Calling for removal of land mines and rehabilitation of affected zones.
- Abolition of FCR system MERGER of FATA into KP.
- Demanding local participation in FATA reforms.¹⁰⁹

13. Zaffar Khan NA-43 (PTI)

As a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf candidate, Zaffar Khan advocated:

- Ending Corruption and Transparent Governance – A promise to eliminate corruption and ensure transparency.
- Justice and Rule of Law – Commitment to an independent judiciary and equal justice for all.
- Education Reforms – Support for uniform and quality education nationwide.
- Solving the Energy Crisis – Plans to end power shortages through new energy projects.
- Youth Empowerment and Job Creation – Focus on creating employment opportunities for youth.¹¹⁰

14. Abdullah NA-43 (Independent)

¹⁰⁹ Fateh Rahman, face to face interview with author, May 13, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil Nawagai, Time 11:00 am.

¹¹⁰ Pakistan Tehreek Insaf Manifesto 2013 Election. Accessible on <https://electionpakistan.com/wp-content/themes/dt-the7/ManifestosPoliticalParties/2013%20Manifesto%20PTI.pdf>

Abdullah focused his campaign on following issues during his electoral campaign.

- Strengthening traditional Jirga systems with legal recognition.
- Opposing enforced disappearances in the name of security.
- Promoting inter-tribal harmony and coexistence.
- Developing local infrastructure like bridges and link roads.
- Advocating for compensation to families of conflict victims.
- Promoting literacy through night schools and mobile units.

15. Saeed ur Rahman NA-43 (Pakistan People's Party PPP)

As a PPP candidate, Saeed ur Rahman campaigned on:

- Continuation of Democratic Process – Promised to strengthen democracy and complete the transition of power.
- Economic Development and Poverty Reduction – Focused on poverty alleviation and economic growth through social welfare programs.
- Energy Crisis Resolution – Committed to addressing electricity shortages with new projects.
- Social Welfare and Health Programs – Expanded healthcare initiatives like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and health insurance.
- Infrastructure Development – Promoted large-scale infrastructure projects including roads, dams, and power plants.

16. Abdullah NA-43 (PML-N)

Abdullah, affiliated with PML-N, focused on:

- Economic Growth and Job Creation – Promised to strengthen the economy and create employment opportunities.
- Energy Crisis Resolution – Committed to ending load shedding through new energy projects and infrastructure development.
- Improvement in Law and Order – Focused on restoring peace and strengthening law enforcement agencies.
- Infrastructure Development – Planned large projects including motorways, highways, and power plants.
- Good Governance and Accountability – Pledged transparency, merit-based appointments, and elimination of corruption.¹¹¹

3.4.2 For NA-44

1. Maulana Gran Badshah NA-44 (Independent)

Maulana Gran Badshah highlighted the following issues during his election campaign.

- Sharia-based governance and enforcement of Islamic laws.
- Reforms in the tribal dispute resolution through *Jirgas*.
- Development of religious educational institutions.
- Protection of tribal customs and traditions.
- Advocacy for merging Bajaur into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with guaranteed constitutional rights.¹¹²

¹¹¹ PMLN Manifesto 2013 Election. Accessible on <https://www.scribd.com/doc/130910840/PMLN-Manifesto-2013-Urdu>

¹¹² Maulana Gran Badshah, face to face interview with author, April 30, 2025, at *Gang Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 9:30 am.

2. Nasar Khan NA-44 (Independent)

Nasar Khan highlighted the following issues during his election campaign.

- Strengthening peace and regional stability.
- Establishing skill development centers for youth.
- Building link roads in remote areas.
- Promoting local business and facilitating trade.
- Protection of tribal rights under constitutional safeguards.

3. Zair Muhammad NA-44 (Independent)

Zair Muhammad's electoral campaign focused on the following issues.

- Establishing Basic Health Units (BHUs) in underdeveloped regions.
- Promoting technical education and youth employment.
- Ensuring protection of tribal land rights.
- Building girls' schools and supporting literacy for females.
- Opposing external interference in local affairs.

4. Sher Wali NA-44 (*Qaumi Wattan Party*)

Sher Wali presented the following issues as his party manifesto.

- Economic development and job creation via industrial projects.
- Institutional reforms to integrate tribal areas.
- Allocation of special infrastructure development funds.
- Support for decentralization and empowerment of local governments.
- Strengthening law enforcement in tribal districts.

4. Sardar Khan NA-44 (Jamaat-e-Islami)

Sardar Khan a candidate from Jamaat-e-Islami presented the following promises before general masses as his party manifesto.

- Corruption and Accountability – A promise to eliminate corruption and establish transparent, accountable governance.
- Islamic System of Government – A call for the implementation of Shariah and the establishment of an Islamic welfare state.
- Educational Reforms – Emphasis on providing free, quality, and uniform Islamic curriculum.
- Justice and Rule of Law – A commitment to provide speedy and equal justice for all citizens.
- Economic Self-Reliance – Opposition to IMF loans, and a plan to promote interest-free Islamic banking and support local industries.
- Energy Crisis – A promise to resolve electricity and gas shortages through renewable energy and dam construction.
- Social Welfare – A proposal to establish a welfare system based on healthcare, pensions, and Islamic principles like Zakat and Waqf.
- to reduce unemployment.

5. Bismillah Khan NA-44 (Independent)

Bismillah Khan an independent candidate focused on the following issues during his campaign.

- Immediate abolition of FCR.
- Merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

- Water projects for agriculture and clean drinking water.
- Increased federal and provincial funding for Bajaur.
- Infrastructure development in mountainous regions.¹¹³

6. Bahadar Shah NA-44 (Independent)

Bahadar Shah an independent candidate from Bajaur NA-44 highlighted the following issues as his electoral manifesto.

- Strengthening the traditional Jirga system through legal reforms.
- Free education and healthcare for the poor.
- Construction of irrigation canals for local farmers.
- Preserving tribal identity while integrating into the national framework.
- Rehabilitation of war-affected areas.¹¹⁴

7. Amir Muhammad NA-44 (Independent)

Amir Muhammad an independent candidate from Bajaur addressed the following issues in his campaign

- Promotion of peace and stability.
- Demanding full Islamic rule in tribal areas.
- Rejection of democracy in favor of Sharia.
- Withdrawal of military presence.
- Autonomy from state influence.

¹¹³ Bismillah Khan, face to face interview with author, May 02, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil Nawagai, Time 11:00 am.

¹¹⁴ “Bahadar Shah ka Intikhabati Ilaan: Jirga Nizam ka Taqviya, Muft Taleem aur Sehat, Qabaili Pehchan ka Tahaffuz,” *Daily Mashriq* (Peshawar), May 2, 2013, 5.

8. Haji Bahadar Khan NA-44 (Independent)

Haji Bahadar Khan from Bajaur focused on the following key issues.

- Road construction and infrastructure development.
- Relief for internally displaced persons (IDPs).
- Scholarships for students from Bajaur.
- Electrification and clean water in rural areas.
- Peace restoration through community participation.

9. Gul Dad Khan NA-44 (PTI)

Gul Dad Khan from PTI addressed the following issues during his campaign.

- Ending Corruption and Transparent Governance – A promise to eliminate corruption and ensure transparency.
- Justice and Rule of Law – Commitment to an independent judiciary and equal justice for all.
- Education Reforms – Support for uniform and quality education nationwide.
- Solving the Energy Crisis – Plans to end power shortages through new energy projects.
- Youth Empowerment and Job Creation – Focus on creating employment opportunities for youth.

10. Muhammad Ihsan Ullah NA-44 (Independent)

Muhammad Ihsan Ullah focused on the following key issues during his election campaign.

- Modern educational institutions for boys and girls.
- Employment through CPEC-linked local projects.
- Supporting agriculture and livestock sectors.
- Upgrading roads and bridges.
- An independent voice for Bajaur in Parliament.

12. Gul Afzal NA-44 (ANP)

Gul Afzal who was nominee of ANP focused and presented the following issues as their manifesto.

- Counter-Terrorism and Peacebuilding.
ANP expressed its commitment to restoring peace through a strategy based on both dialogue and force.
- Implementation of the 18th Constitutional Amendment. The party pledged to ensure provincial autonomy and fair distribution of resources.
- Education for All: ANP focused on rebuilding educational institutions, increasing funding, and promoting girls' education.
- Economic Development and Employment Opportunities: The party proposed establishing special economic zones and infrastructure development to generate jobs.
- Abolition of FCR system and merger of FATA into KP.¹¹⁵

13. Muhammad Haseeb Khan NA-44 (Independent)

During his electoral campaign he focused on the following issues.

¹¹⁵ Gul Afzal, face to face interview with author, May 11, 2025, at *Haji Lawang* Tehsil Khar, Time 10:30 am.

- Expansion of irrigation and water storage projects.
- Construction of technical training institutes.
- Fair distribution of development funds.
- Representation of tribal people in civil services.
- Promoting inter-tribal harmony and coexistence.

14. Muhammad Shahid Khan NA-44 (Independent)

Muhammad Shahid Khan an independent candidate from NA-44 focused on the following issues during his campaign.

- Reconstruction of conflict-damaged infrastructure.
- Establishment of new BHUs and maternity centers.
- Scholarships for university students.
- Encouraging inter-district trade with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Upgrading mobile and internet services.

15. Shahabud Din Khan NA-44 (PML-N)

As a nominee from PMLN Shahabud Din Khan presented his party manifesto as.

- Granting constitutional rights through FATA reforms.
- Development initiatives under the federal PSDP.
- Upgrades in health and education sectors.
- Advocacy for abolition of FCR.
- Mainstreaming for peace and integration.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Shahabud Din Khan, face to face interview with author, April 15, 2025, at *Pashat Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 11:00 am.

16. Maulana Abdur Rasheed NA-44 (JUI-F)

As a party nominee, Maulana Abdur Rasheed NA-44 JUI-F promised the following issues to be highlighted.

- Enforcement of Islamic law through democratic processes.
- Integration of Madrasah and modern education.
- Preservation of cultural and tribal identity.
- Opposition to forced assimilation policies.
- Water and sanitation projects in remote areas.

17. Said Badshah NA-44 (Pakistan Muslim League Qaaf PMLQ)

Said Badshah from (PMLQ) focused on the following issues.

- National integration while preserving tribal values.
- Establishment of special economic zones in tribal areas.
- Tax exemptions to attract investment.
- Educational uplift through “Education for All” initiative.
- Strengthening traditional systems alongside state institutions.¹¹⁷

18. Sahib Zada NA-44 (Independent)

Sahib Zada an independent candidate focused on the following issues.

- Voice for neglected and impoverished tribes.
- Emergency relief for war-affected households.

¹¹⁷ Said Badshah, face to face interview with author, May 08, 2025, at Khar *Chaman Hujra* Tehsil Khar, Time 10:00 am.

- Advocacy for increased government job quotas.
- Solar energy for remote villages.
- Demand for a tribal university in Bajaur.

19. Muhammad Asghar NA-44 (Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, PMAP)

Muhammad Asghar from Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party presented his party manifesto during his election campaign.

- Advocacy for Pashtun rights and cultural preservation.
- Promotion of mother tongue education.
- Political reforms in tribal regions.
- Infrastructure expansion under PMAP's rural development policy.
- Resistance to religious militancy.

20. Fazal Hameed NA-44 (Independent)

An independent candidate, Fazal Hameed from Bajaur addressed the following key issues during his election campaign.

- Flood protection projects for riverbank areas.
- Free access to government healthcare.
- Promotion of local agriculture and small businesses.
- Reconstruction of damaged schools and roads.
- Promoting non-political tribal leadership.

21. Gul Hussain NA-44 (Independent)

Gul Hussain an independent candidate from Bajaur addressed the following issues.

- Expansion of communication networks across Bajaur.
- Government-supported community health programs.
- Relief and rehabilitation for disaster-affected families.
- Establishment of cultural centers for youth engagement.
- Regularization of temporary teachers and workers.

22. Syed Akhunzada Chattan NA-44 (PPP)

Syed Akhunzada Chattan from PPP focused on the following issues.

- Strengthening democratic institutions in tribal areas.
- PPP commitment to FATA merger and FCR abolition.
- Expansion of BISP in Bajaur.
- Greater access to higher education for girls.
- Protection of human rights in conflict zones.¹¹⁸

23. Malik Umar Wahid NA-44 (Independent)

Malik Umar Wahid Candidate from NA-44 Bajaur focused on the following issues.

- Construction of link roads to disconnected villages.
- Youth training centers and international scholarships.
- Upgrading electric supply and grid stations.

¹¹⁸ Syed Akhunzada Chattan, face to face interview with author, April 08, 2025, at *Haji Lawang Hujra* Tehsil Khar, Time 02:00 pm.

- Transparent land registry and revenue systems.
- Special development plans for Salarzai and Mamund regions.

24. Muambar Khan NA-44 (Independent)

Muambar Khan, Candidate from NA-44 Bajaur addressed the following key issues.

- Expansion of digital literacy and mobile networks.
- Improved facilities at local hospitals.
- Construction of government colleges.
- Transparency in public hiring.
- Federal-level representation of tribal concerns.

25. Juma Said NA-44 (Independent)

Juma Said an independent candidate highlighted the following issues during his electoral campaign.

- Encouraging women's participation in education.
- Microfinance schemes for poor families.
- Electrification of off-grid areas.
- Land reform and conflict resolution programs.
- Opposition to political interference in tribal customs.

26. Badam Zari NA-44 (Independent)

Badam Zari the first lady from FATA who contested election from NA-44 Bajaur promised for resolving the following key issues during her election campaign.

- Advocacy for women's rights in education and healthcare.
- Encouragement of female literacy and school enrollment.
- Establishment of women's vocational training centers.
- Inclusion of women in political and social dialogue.
- Ending patriarchal restrictions on tribal women.

3.5 Election Results

General Elections 2013 (NA-43)			
1	Sahib Zada Haroon ur Rashid	JI	10023
2	Bismillah Khan	Independent	13929
3	Habib Rasool Safi	Independent	116
4	Taj Muhammad	Tehrik Ittehad Umat Pakistan	256
5	Muhammad Sadiq	JUI(F)	3613
6	Muhammad Iqbal	Independent	364
7	Nawab Zada Shahid	Independent	230
8	Khalil Ur Rahman	Independent	58
9	Fazali Rahman	Independent	2191
10	Muhammad Rahim	Independent	62
11	Naushad Khan	Independent	1863
12	Fateh ur Rahman	Independent	227
13	Zaffar Khan	PTI	6948
14	Abdullah	Independent	634
15	Saeed ur Rahman	PPP	697
16	Abdullah	PMLN	1690
		Valid Votes	42901
		Rejected Votes	1378
		Total Votes	44279
		Registered Voters	168514
		% of polled votes to Registered: Voters ¹¹⁹	26.27

3.5.1 NA-44

General Elections 2013 (NA-44)			
1	Maulana Gran Bacha	Independent	177
2	Nasar Khan	Independent	433
3	Zair Muhammad	Independent	85
4	Sher Wali	Qaumi Wattan Party	108
5	Sardar Khan	JI	11972
6	Bismillah Khan	Independent	170

¹¹⁹ District Election Commission Bajaur, *General Elections 1988–2018* (unpublished report, Bajaur: Election Commission of Pakistan, 2019) 6.

7	Bahadar Shah	Independent	668
8	Amir Muhammad	TTP	361
9	Haji Bahadar Khan	Independent	6549
10	Gul Dad Khan	PTI	7069
11	Muhammad Ihsan Ullah	Independent	129
12	Gul Afzal	ANP	1378
13	Muhammad Haseeb Khan	Independent	91
14	Muhammad Shahid Khan	Independent	79
15	Shahabud Din Khan	PMLN	15114
16	Maulana Abdur Rasheed	JUI	6249
17	Said Badshah	PMLQ	756
18	Sahib Zada	Independent	145
19	Muhammad Asghar	PMAP	282
20	Fazal Hameed	Independent	16
21	Gul Hussain	Independent	158
22	Syed Akhunzada Chattan	PPP	4127
23	Malik Umar Wahid	Independent	29
24	Muammar Khan	Independent	490
25	Juma Said	Independent	2182
26	Badam Zari	Independent	142
		Valid Votes	58959
		Rejected Votes	1502
		Total Votes	60461
		Registered Votes	185040
		% of votes Polled to Registered Voters. ¹²⁰	32.67

3.6 Performance After Election

After the 2013 general elections, the elected members of the National Assembly from Bajaur, Bismillah Khan (NA-43) and Shahabud Din Khan (NA-44), launched comprehensive development initiatives that focused on addressing the multifaceted challenges of their constituencies. These efforts took into account the longstanding underdevelopment, infrastructural deficiencies, and institutional weaknesses in the tribal areas. Their different approaches reflected grassroots problem-solving combined with strategic policy advocacy, providing an important model for

¹²⁰ Ibid, 7.

researchers studying post-conflict rehabilitation, decentralized governance, and rural development in Pakistan's former FATA regions.

Bismillah Khan, elected as an independent from NA-43, centered his development strategy on three tehsils: Nawagai, Wara Mamund, and Ghat Mamund. Understanding education as key to long-term socio-economic progress, he established four new primary schools in underserved and remote villages. Two schools were built in *Sagi* and *Damadola* (Nawagai), where female literacy was very low, and two more in *Zagai* and *Shinkot* (Wara Mamund). These initiatives were not only to meet immediate educational needs but also aligned with human capital development theories, recognizing early education as foundational for community strength and economic productivity. In health, he established three Basic Health Units (BHUs) in *Chargo*, *Dabar*, and *Darra* to provide primary care, maternal and child health services, and vaccination programs locally. Notably, the Nawagai Rural Health Centre was renovated with solar power, vaccine storage, and women-specific facilities, improving health outcomes.

To address water scarcity, a serious issue in Bajaur's mountainous areas, he installed six solar-powered tube wells in *Badan*, *Manogai*, *Sewai*, *Tangrai*, *Kaga*, and *Shago*, which not only provided clean water but also reduced reliance on costly and polluting diesel generators, consistent with sustainable development principles. Additionally, solar streetlights were installed in *Inayat Killi*, *Tarkhoo*, and *Loy Mamund* to improve safety during nighttime. Infrastructure-wise, Bismillah Khan constructed over 15 kilometers of link roads including *Sewai–Tani*, *Nawagai–Chargo*, and *Mamund–Zagai*, improving mobility, saving time, and boosting local trade. Bridges and culverts on seasonal streams enhanced transportation resilience. To

combat youth unemployment and skill deficits, three vocational training centers were established in *Nawagai*, *Shinkot*, and *Ghat Mamund*, offering training in tailoring, carpentry, and electrical work to help locals secure dignified employment. Furthermore, over 80 Class-IV jobs were provided in rural centers, schools, and municipal bodies, prioritizing orphans, widows' children, and deserving youth. His development strategy was grounded in modern concepts of human capital and sustainable service delivery.¹²¹

In contrast, Shahabud Din Khan, elected from NA-44 on the Pakistan Muslim League-N ticket, implemented wide-ranging development projects while also actively advocating nationally for the abolition of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) and the merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. His constituency included Tehsil Khar, Salarzai, Pashat, Haji Lawang, Raghagan, Tangai, and Yousaf Abad. He prioritized higher education by establishing the Government Degree College in Pashat (Salarzai), enabling youth to pursue tertiary education locally. He upgraded three high schools (*Khar*, *Raghagan*, *Tangai*) to higher secondary level, extending educational opportunities. He also built five new primary schools in *Haji Lawang*, *Gat Agra*, *Mulla Khel*, *Yousaf Abad*, and *Salarzai*, expanding access in remote areas.

In health, he established four new BHUs in *Raghagan*, *Tangai*, *Bar Kamar*, and *Salarzai*, and upgraded the District Headquarters Hospital in Khar by adding female doctors, surgical facilities, and modern beds—essential improvements given prior limited specialized services. To resolve water and energy shortages, he installed eight solar-powered water schemes across *Yousaf Abad*, *Pashat*, *Tangai*, *Loye Sar*, *Gat Agra*, *Chamer Kand*, and *Mulla Said Banda*, and put up solar streetlights in *Khar*

¹²¹ Bismillah Khan, face to face interview with author, May 02, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil

Bazaar, Salarzai Bazaar, and Raghagan. Road development included more than 20 kilometers of link roads such as *Raghagan–Tangai* and *Khar–Yousaf Abad*. Flood control and drainage projects were also completed in *Haji Lawang, Mulla Khel, and Bar Kamar.*

Recognizing the energy deficit, he initiated micro-hydel power plants in *Upper Salarzai* and *Pashat*, providing 24-hour electricity to many households and enabling economic activities. To address unemployment, Shahabud Din provided over 120 Class-IV government jobs targeting youth and marginalized groups. Complementary social welfare efforts included scholarships, internships, and interest-free loans, distributed through NGOs to support small traders and entrepreneurs in *Khar, Pashat, and Raghagan.*

Together, the performances of these two MNAs highlight the crucial role of local representation in resolving complex challenges in tribal areas. Their work aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including quality education, clean water and sanitation, affordable clean energy, decent work and economic growth, and reduced inequalities. Bismillah Khan's focus on local infrastructure and skills training, combined with Shahabud Din Khan's institutional reforms and political activism, together lay a foundation for sustainable development and prosperity in Bajaur. Their tenure offers valuable lessons for Pakistan and beyond on how elected representatives can simultaneously deliver tangible development and dismantle archaic governance structures in fragile regions.¹²²

Nawagai, Time 11:00 am.

¹²² Shahabud Din Khan, face to face interview with author, April 15, 2025, at *Pashat Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 11:00 am.

3.7 Analysis

3.7.1 Electoral Politics and Political Change in Bajaur Agency during the 2013 Elections: A Case Study of NA-43 and NA-44

The 2013 general elections in Bajaur Agency took place at a time of quiet but significant transformation. Bajaur, as part of Pakistan's former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), had long been excluded from the country's mainstream political and constitutional framework. Under the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), political parties were banned from operating, and authority remained concentrated in the hands of tribal elders and state-appointed political agents. However, a major turning point came in 2011, when the Political Parties Order 2002 was extended to FATA. This allowed political parties to campaign, organize, and field candidates for the first time. While this legal reform may seem modest, it opened up a new space in tribal society for political awareness and participation. The 2013 elections were conducted in this evolving context, signaling that politics in Bajaur was no longer defined solely by tribal relationships or personal influence.

In NA-43, the victory of Bismillah Khan as an independent candidate illustrated how deeply entrenched traditional practices still were. His success was built on a network of personal connections, tribal alliances, and administrative access. Being the father of then-Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shaukatullah Khan, gave him direct access to state resources. During his campaign, development projects were reportedly launched in areas like Mamond, Khar, and Chamarkand to gain voter support. In addition, multiple reports emerged of electoral irregularities—such as the

disappearance of ballot boxes from PTI and Jamaat-e-Islami strongholds, and the removal of their campaign posters.

Yet Bismillah Khan's success was not solely the result of state support—it was also anchored in *Biradari* (tribal and kinship) politics. His electoral strategy relied heavily on tribal identity and the authority of local elders. Since political parties were still new and relatively weak in the region, most voters made decisions based on their tribal affiliations and the direction of community leaders. Bismillah forged alliances with influential figures from his own Mamond tribe to secure bloc voting. This shows that while legal reforms had taken place, traditional structures of power remained firmly in control, especially in areas where literacy was low and the state had a minimal presence.

In contrast, the electoral story of NA-44 pointed toward a different kind of political momentum. Here, Shahab Uddin Khan, running on a Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N) ticket, offered more than tribal ties—he offered a reform-oriented vision. His campaign directly addressed long-standing grievances in FATA: the injustices of the FCR, the region's constitutional exclusion, and the lack of basic rights. His clear and vocal promises to abolish the FCR and integrate FATA into Pakistan's mainstream legal framework resonated especially with younger and educated voters, who had grown frustrated under the oppressive and outdated system.

Shahab Uddin's success stemmed from his ability to bring together two distinct sources of legitimacy. On one hand, he had deep tribal roots, especially in the powerful Salarzai tribe, which earned him respect among traditional power brokers. On the other hand, his affiliation with the PML-N gave him access to campaign resources, organized party workers, and national visibility. This balance between

tribal credibility and party strength proved vital to his victory. His position was further strengthened by a divided opposition—with PTI, PPP, JI, and several independents contesting separately, no single rival could mount an effective challenge. While some allegations of administrative bias were raised by his opponents, they were less severe than those in NA-43. More importantly, Shahab’s campaign felt different—it appealed not just to a tribe, but to a broader political imagination that connected Bajaur to national narratives of reform and justice.

When both constituencies are viewed together, it becomes clear that Bajaur was undergoing a transitional phase. In NA-43, clientelism, tribal loyalty, and administrative influence remained dominant. In NA-44, however, party politics, reform discourse, and civic engagement began to take root. While traditional tribal structures still shaped much of the region’s politics, the entry of national political parties after 2011 introduced new forms of competition and allowed voters to think beyond kinship alone. It also created space for emerging political voices, particularly those advocating for constitutional rights and mainstream inclusion.

These changes were gradual and inconsistent—not all areas were affected equally, and in many places, older ways of doing politics continued to win. But the direction of change had become visible. Debates around the FCR, the presence of political parties, and increased youth participation all signaled the emergence of a more open and inclusive political culture. Politics was no longer just about what a tribal elder promised; it began to include questions of justice, education, development, and identity.

Ultimately, the 2013 elections in Bajaur were more than just a race for parliamentary seats—they represented the beginning of a political awakening. Bismillah Khan’s

victory showed the enduring strength of traditional power systems, but Shahab Uddin Khan's campaign revealed that the tide was starting to turn. Tribal society was slowly moving toward a political space where more voices could be heard and where the desire for inclusion in the national mainstream was growing.

This process was slow, but it laid the foundation for deeper reforms—culminating in the 2018 merger of FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The 2013 elections in Bajaur set in motion a transformation that made local politics more diverse, participatory, and representative, reflecting the changing aspirations of a society long excluded from the national conversation.

CHAPTER-4

DYNAMICS OF ELECTORAL POLITICS IN BAJAUR AGENCY 2013-2018.

4.1 Dismissal of National Assembly

The dissolution of Pakistan's 14th National Assembly on May 31, 2018, following the completion of its constitutionally mandated five-year tenure, represents a significant milestone in the country's ongoing democratic evolution.¹²³ This Assembly was constituted as a result of the general elections held on May 11, 2013, in which the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) secured 166 seats out of a total 342, enabling Nawaz Sharif to assume the office of Prime Minister for a historic third term. This electoral outcome was widely regarded as a major development in Pakistan's political history because it marked the first time that one civilian government peacefully transferred power to another civilian government through a transparent electoral process. Given Pakistan's political history, which has been punctuated by recurrent military interventions, judicial dismissals of elected governments, and systemic institutional imbalances, this event was viewed as a crucial step toward democratic consolidation.¹²⁴

According to Article 52 of the Constitution of Pakistan, the term of the National Assembly automatically expires five years after its first session. It was under this constitutional provision that the 14th National Assembly was dissolved. Importantly, this dissolution occurred peacefully, procedurally, and without any

¹²³ Nadir Guramani, "National Assembly stands dissolved as second successive democratic government completes five-year term," *Dawn*, May 31, 2018. Accessible on <https://www.dawn.com/news/1411167>

¹²⁴ Hammad Bashir, Abdul Basit Khan, and Muhammad Javed Ashraf, "Constitutional and Political Development in Pakistan: A Review of the Legislative Performance of the 14th National Assembly (2013–2018)," *Annals of Human and Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (April–June 2024): 840. Accessible on file:///C:/Users/Muhammad%20Husnain/Downloads/76.+Constitutional+and+Political+Development+

undue interference from the judiciary, military, or presidential office, signaling an increased adherence to constitutionalism within Pakistan's hybrid democratic system.

Nevertheless, the tenure of this Assembly was marked by considerable political turbulence. Challenges to civilian supremacy, strained civil-military relations, judicial activism, and vibrant opposition movements characterized this period. A particularly significant and contentious event was the disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on July 28, 2017, by a five-member bench of the Supreme Court in connection with the Panama Papers case. This ruling was grounded in Articles 62(1)(f) and 63 of the Constitution, which require elected representatives to be “truthful” (*Sadiq*) and “trustworthy” (*Ameen*). While opposition parties, especially Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), welcomed the verdict, it also raised serious questions about judicial impartiality and the increasing political role of unelected institutions—an issue extensively discussed in scholarship on Pakistan's judicialization of politics.¹²⁵ Following Nawaz Sharif's removal, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi was elected as Prime Minister and led the government through the remainder of the Assembly's tenure. Under his leadership, the Assembly continued its legislative functions, passing significant laws such as the Elections Act 2017, which consolidated electoral legislation and enhanced the powers of the Election Commission of Pakistan, and the 25th Constitutional Amendment, which was a historic and constitutional reform facilitating the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

in+Pakistan+A+Review+of+the+Legislative+Performance+Of+the+14th+National+Assembly(2013-2018).pdf

¹²⁵ Haseeb Bhatti, “Nawaz Sharif Steps Down as PM after SC's Disqualification Verdict,” *Dawn*, July 28, 2017.

Despite successfully completing its term, the Assembly was criticized for weak legislative productivity, limited parliamentary oversight, and failure to strengthen critical governance institutions. Parliamentary watchdogs observed that the majority of legislation was introduced by the executive rather than through private members' bills or bipartisan parliamentary consensus, reflecting the persistent dominance of the executive branch in Pakistan's parliamentary process. Furthermore, institutional friction between civilian leadership and the military establishment remained a defining feature of this period. Many analysts argue that Nawaz Sharif's efforts to expand civilian autonomy in foreign policy and security matters contributed to his political downfall. Ultimately, the Assembly was dissolved without any constitutional crisis, and a caretaker government was appointed under the leadership of former Chief Justice Nasirul Mulk. His impartiality and neutrality were widely accepted by major political parties. The formation of this caretaker setup was carried out in accordance with Articles 224 and 224A of the Constitution, part of Pakistan's evolving electoral framework designed to ensure transparent and impartial general elections, which were subsequently held on July 25, 2018.¹²⁶

From a comparative democratic development perspective, the procedural dissolution of the 14th National Assembly symbolizes Pakistan's gradual but steady progress toward democratic consolidation. Although the tenure of this Assembly did not fully escape the legacies of authoritarianism and elite-driven politics, its completion of a full term, peaceful transfer of power to a caretaker government, and the holding of fresh elections constitute important steps toward institutionalizing electoral democracy and upholding constitutional norms. Nonetheless, fundamental

¹²⁶ Kamil Ahmed, "Caretaking Pakistan through Elections," *The Friday Times*, June 22, 2018. Accessible on <https://thefridaytimes.com/22-Jun-2018/caretaking-pakistan-through-elections>

institutional challenges—including weak political party structures, personalized leadership styles, judicial politicization, and an imbalance between civilian and military institutions—continued to hamper deeper democratic development. The period from 2013 to 2018 thus presents a complex case for scholars studying constitutional and democratic transitions in post-authoritarian states, where formal democratic procedures coexist with informal power structures and institutional asymmetries. The 2018 dissolution of the National Assembly was more than a mere constitutional formality; it was a moment reflecting both the promise and the fragility of democratic governance within Pakistan’s hybrid political system.

4.1.1 Interim Government

In accordance with Article 52 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the 14th National Assembly was dissolved on May 31, 2018, after completing its constitutional five-year term. This dissolution activated the provisions of Article 224A, requiring the formation of a caretaker government to oversee general elections within 60 days. Following several rounds of consultations between the outgoing Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Opposition Leader Syed Khurshid Shah, consensus was reached on the nomination of Justice (Retd.) Nasirul Mulk. Justice Mulk, who had served as the 22nd Chief Justice of Pakistan from July 2014 to August 2015, was widely respected for his judicial independence, integrity, and his role as the head of the judicial commission that investigated alleged rigging in the 2013 general elections. He was sworn in as Caretaker Prime Minister on June 1, 2018, by then-President Mamnoon Hussain.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ APP “Nasirul Mulk Named Caretaker Prime Minister,” *Dawn*, May 28, 2018, Accessible on <https://www.dawn.com/news/1410523>

Justice Mulk's appointment was seen as a consensus-driven step to ensure neutrality during a politically sensitive transition. His six-member caretaker cabinet, comprised entirely of technocrats and non-political professionals, reflected a deliberate policy of avoiding partisanship. Key ministers included Dr. Shamshad Akhtar (former Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan and UN Under-Secretary-General) as Minister for Finance and Planning, Abdullah Hussain Haroon (former UN ambassador) as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defense, and Syed Ali Zafar (constitutional expert and former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association) as Minister for Law and Justice. The caretaker government also initiated administrative reshuffles, including changes in senior civil and security appointments, to reinforce institutional impartiality.

Bound by constitutional and legal restrictions, the interim setup was not permitted to make major policy decisions, initiate long-term projects, or enter into binding international agreements. Its primary responsibility was to facilitate the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in ensuring free, fair, and transparent general elections, scheduled for July 25, 2018. Over 370,000 military and paramilitary personnel were deployed across the country to maintain law and order, with military forces granted magisterial powers in certain sensitive polling areas. Although the Mulk-led caretaker administration was generally commended for maintaining neutrality and stability, observers such as the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) raised concerns over pre-election conditions, media restrictions, and unequal campaign opportunities.

Despite institutional limitations, the 2018 caretaker government succeeded in executing a constitutional and peaceful transition of power. The elections yielded a

majority victory for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by Imran Khan, who was sworn in as Pakistan's 22nd Prime Minister on August 18, 2018. This marked only the second consecutive full-term civilian transition in Pakistan's history—a milestone interpreted by scholars as a significant, albeit still fragile, step toward democratic continuity.¹²⁸

4.2 Declaration of General Elections

The General Elections of 2018 in Pakistan were officially initiated on May 26, 2018, when the President of Pakistan, Mamnoon Hussain, formally announced July 25, 2018, as the date for nationwide polling. This declaration followed a recommendation from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) dated May 21, made under the authority of Section 57(1) of the Elections Act, 2017, which governs the scheduling of general elections. The timing of this announcement was constitutionally aligned, as the five-year term of the National Assembly was set to expire on May 31, while the terms of the provincial assemblies in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan were due to end on May 28. According to Article 224 of the Constitution of Pakistan, general elections must be conducted within 60 days following the dissolution of the assemblies. The presidential notification marked the formal commencement of the electoral process, prompting the ECP to release a complete election schedule that included deadlines for submission of nomination papers, scrutiny, withdrawals, allocation of electoral symbols, and the official campaign timeline.

The 2018 elections were held under the provisions of the Elections Act, 2017, a landmark legal reform that consolidated and modernized prior election laws into a unified framework. This legislation introduced significant reforms, including

¹²⁸ Iltaf Khan, Farman ullah, and Riaz Khan, "The Continuation of Democracy in Pakistan: An

improved transparency in candidates' financial disclosures, pilot projects for biometric voter verification, stricter scrutiny of nomination papers, and—most notably—a requirement that each constituency achieve at least a 10% female voter turnout to validate its results. This was an unprecedented effort to ensure women's electoral inclusion. Approximately 106 million registered voters participated in these elections, including 59.2 million men and 46.7 million women, and over 85,317 polling stations with 2,42,088 polling booth were established across the country for 272 National Assembly and 577 Provincial Assembly constituencies. The deployment of 371,000 forces was evident to conduct elections in a peaceful environment. Despite administrative improvements, including the deployment of the Result Transmission System (RTS) for real-time reporting of results, the electoral process faced significant challenges. On election night, technical failures in the RTS system delayed the transmission of preliminary results, raising concerns about transparency and reliability. Multiple election monitoring organizations, such as the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) and international observers like the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), acknowledged operational progress but also highlighted serious pre-election concerns. The elections were influenced by factors such as restrictions on freedom of expression, unequal access to media, and alleged interference by unelected institutions, all of which affected the perception of a fair playing field. Although election day was largely peaceful and well-organized, voter turnout stood at approximately 53.3%, slightly lower than the 55% recorded in 2013. Despite this, irregularities and post-election complaints led to widespread calls for electoral reforms. Punjab recorded the highest voter turnout at 59%, followed by

Analysis of 2018 General Elections,” *Global Political Review* 7, no. 2 (2022): 31.

Sindh at 47.7% and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at 43.6%, while turnout in Balochistan and FATA remained steady at 39%.¹²⁹

In conclusion, the 2018 general elections represented a complex and multifaceted democratic exercise, marking only the second consecutive peaceful transfer of power in Pakistan's history. The process reflected a maturing electoral system and improved institutional capacities, particularly in legal reforms and voter engagement. However, it also exposed persistent structural issues such as political polarization, media inequality, and technological vulnerabilities in result management. These elections offered valuable lessons for strengthening democratic governance in Pakistan—particularly with regard to ensuring electoral transparency, institutional independence, and inclusive participation in future electoral cycles.

4.2.1 Preparation of Electoral Rolls

In preparation for Pakistan's 2018 General Elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) launched a nationwide initiative to modernize and expand the country's voter registration system—an effort that became one of the largest and most data-driven electoral roll reforms in the nation's history. In 2013, the number of registered voters stood at approximately 86.1 million. With the passage of time, natural population growth, and a commitment to strengthen democratic participation, the ECP conducted a series of updates in 2015, 2016, and finally a major revision between December 2017 and April 2018. As a result, nearly 20 million new voters were added, bringing the total number of registered voters to 105.95 million for the 2018 elections. This achievement was more than just a statistical increase—it was a

¹²⁹ Free and Fair Election Network. *General Election 2018 Report: FAFEN's Preliminary Observation*. Islamabad: FAFEN, July 2018.1,2. Accessible on

deliberate step toward ensuring that every eligible Pakistani had a voice in the democratic process, and that the electoral rolls were both inclusive and accurate.¹³⁰

A major part of this modernization effort was the implementation of a "one-window" registration system, introduced in collaboration with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) under Section 25 of the Elections Act, 2017. This new system allowed citizens to be automatically registered as voters upon the issuance of their National Identity Card (NIC). NADRA also revised its NIC application form to include an option allowing individuals to register their vote at either their permanent or temporary address, giving voters more flexibility and choice. NADRA regularly shared new NIC data with the ECP, enabling the Commission to register these individuals quickly and accurately in their relevant constituencies. To support this process, the ECP rolled out the Computerized Electoral Rolls System (CERS), which became fully functional across all district and provincial offices by January 2018. This system was directly linked to NADRA's database and allowed District Election Commissioners (DECs) and Returning Officers (ROs) to update voter records in real-time—greatly improving the efficiency, accuracy, and transparency of the voter registration process.¹³¹

An additional layer of complexity arose from the changes introduced by Pakistan's 6th Population Census in 2017. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics had increased the number of census blocks from 139,933 to 163,694, requiring the ECP to align its voter data with the new structure. The Commission developed a new census block coding scheme, redistributed voters affected by the new census layout, added

<https://fafen.org/fafens-preliminary-election-observation-report/>

¹³⁰ Election Commission of Pakistan, *Annual Report 2018* (Islamabad: Election Commission of Pakistan, 2018), 18

¹³¹ *Ibid* 19.

newly eligible voters (especially those turning 18), and removed ineligible voters, including the deceased, those who had renounced Pakistani nationality, or whose NICs had been canceled. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of this massive update, the ECP conducted a comprehensive door-to-door verification campaign, allowing field teams to validate both additions and deletions from the electoral rolls.

Alongside these administrative and technological reforms, the ECP placed significant emphasis on public engagement through a robust voter education and awareness campaign. The Commission issued repeated public notices in both national and regional newspapers and published nine half-page voter awareness advertisements, which appeared a total of 34 times. In addition to print media, the campaign was extended to television and cable channels to inform citizens about the revised voter lists and encourage them to check and correct their registration details. To facilitate this process, the ECP established display centers across the country where citizens could view the preliminary voter lists and submit claims, objections, or correction requests.

Despite operating under strict timelines, the ECP executed every stage of this large-scale operation—from census block adjustments and voter data integration to printing revised rolls and managing public feedback—with thorough planning and a disciplined approach. The result was the most comprehensive, accurate, and inclusive voter list in Pakistan’s electoral history. This achievement marked a major milestone in improving institutional capacity, embracing technological innovation, and broadening democratic participation. It also laid a strong foundation for transparent and credible elections in 2018 and signified a historic leap forward in the evolution of Pakistan’s democratic infrastructure.

Focusing on the electoral rolls in the general elections held on July 25, 2018, the Election Commission established a total of 336 polling stations in Bajaur across two National Assembly constituencies—175 in NA-40 Bajaur and 161 in NA-41 Bajaur. Of these, 233 stations were declared “sensitive” or “most sensitive” due to security concerns: 40 sensitive and 41 most-sensitive in NA-40, and 49 sensitive and 103 most-sensitive in NA-41. According to the electoral rolls, Bajaur had a total of 492,732 registered voters, including 288,958 men and 203,774 women. NA-40 had 255,579 voters (148,400 men and 107,179 women), while NA-41 had 237,153 voters (140,558 men and 96,595 women).¹³²

Women’s participation was historic: 54,535 female voters cast their ballots—27,856 in NA-40 and 26,679 in NA-41—which marked a significant increase compared to just 2,800 women voters in 2013. This represented the highest female voter turnout in the former FATA region since adult franchise was introduced in 1997.¹³³

4.3 Key Players

In the general elections held on July 25, 2018, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) officially recognized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) as the largest party in the National Assembly. PTI decisively surpassed traditional political powerhouses such as the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), religious alliances like the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), as well as various regional parties and independent candidates.¹³⁴ The

¹³² “60pc of Bajaur Polling Stations Are ‘Sensitive’,” *The Nation*, July 25, 2018, Accessible on <https://www.nation.com.pk/25-Jul-2018/60pc-of-bajaur-polling-stations-are-sensitive>

¹³³ Anwarullah Khan, “High women voter turnout witnessed in Bajaur,” *Dawn*, August 1, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1424088>

¹³⁴ Danyal Adam Khan et al., “The new old order: Elections 2018 in Islamabad and Punjab,” *Dawn*,

elections were held under the security cover of approximately 371,000 personnel, whose deployment alongside the administrative efforts of the ECP contributed to largely peaceful polling conditions across most parts of the country. However, isolated violent incidents did occur in sensitive regions such as Quetta and Mastung, indicating ongoing security challenges.¹³⁵

PTI's victory was grounded in its campaign's strong focus on anti-corruption, promises of systemic reforms, and the effective mobilization of youth and urban voters through social media and grassroots networks. PTI's fundraising efforts outpaced those of all other parties, reportedly raising over Rs 600 million, including significant donations from overseas Pakistanis.

National leaders such as Imran Khan, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, and Asad Umar emerged as the faces of PTI's reformist agenda, while strategists like Jahangir Tareen played a critical role in consolidating PTI's voter base in Punjab through skilled coalition-building and managing defections.

In contrast, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, under the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif following Nawaz Sharif's disqualification, maintained its stronghold in central Punjab but struggled to expand its appeal nationally. This was largely due to leadership crises and election fatigue among its traditional support base. Meanwhile, the Pakistan People's Party, led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, retained dominance in rural Sindh, particularly in areas historically loyal to the Bhutto family, but failed to

October 4, 2018 Accessible on
<https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398596>

¹³⁵ Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), "FAFEN's Preliminary Election Observation Report," July 2018, Accessible on
<https://fafen.org/fafens-preliminary-election-observation-report/>

replicate this success in other provinces despite attempts to rejuvenate its image through youth engagement and social welfare initiative.

Religious parties made a modest but notable impact: the MMA, a coalition of Islamist parties, garnered support mainly in conservative areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Meanwhile, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, a new political force with a hardline religious stance, secured its first national seats, signaling a shift in Pakistan's religio-political landscape.¹³⁶ Regional parties such as the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) in urban Sindh, the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), and the Awami National Party (ANP) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa played key kingmaker roles by forming alliances and influencing provincial assemblies, illustrating Pakistan's increasingly fragmented political environment.

Despite generally well-managed polling processes, both PILDAT and FAFEN raised concerns regarding the Result Transmission System (RTS), which experienced delays and inconsistencies in uploading polling results. These issues cast doubts on the transparency of vote counting and result declaration phases. Gender-based disparities in voter turnout were also evident, with numerous constituencies reporting significantly lower female participation due to lingering social and logistical barriers, despite reforms aimed at increasing inclusivity.

Regarding Bajaur, the 2018 elections symbolized more than just a local electoral contest; they marked a historic transformation, deeply acknowledged by the ECP and Dawn. Under the previous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) system, women's participation in elections was almost negligible. However, electoral reforms and awareness campaigns prior to the 2018 polls led to a remarkable increase

in female voter turnout in NA-40 and NA-41. FAFEN confirmed that no polling stations barred women from voting, representing a significant departure from the near-total exclusion experienced in the 2013 elections. PTI candidates succeeded in overcoming entrenched tribal elites, PPP's Akhunzada Chattan, PML-N loyalists, and religious contenders from MMA and Jamaat-e-Islami. This was a clear indication of Bajaur's political shift towards national currents and mainstream democratic accountability. The victories represented a decisive break from traditional biradari (clan) and tribal loyalties, firmly establishing Bajaur as a constituency aligned with the broader national momentum under PTI's "Naya Pakistan" vision, which centers on institutional reforms, expanded female participation, and enhanced electoral transparency.

4.4 Election Campaign

4.4.1 NA-40

1. Israr ur Din Khan NA-40 (Independent)

As a candidate, his platform centered around specific concerns.

- He promised to repair and pave rural roads and bridges to improve connectivity and promote local trade.
- He pledged to build new schools and deploy staff to increase education enrollment in neglected villages.
- He committed to equipping Basic Health Units (BHUs) in remote areas with medicines and staff.
- He vowed to install water pipelines and filtration systems to ensure clean drinking water.

¹³⁶ Ibid

- He focused on establishing community vocational training centers to skill the youth.
- He advocated for transparent public expenditure and committed to making development funds accountable through local oversight.

2. Javid Mian Dad NA-40 (Independent)

He focused on the following issues.

- He announced to establish primary health centers in each major village to make medical facilities accessible.
- He promised to rehabilitate and modernize old and dilapidated government school buildings.
- He pledged to build link roads to connect remote settlements to main markets.
- He supported launching local employment schemes to reduce youth unemployment in his area.
- He committed to setting up reliable piped water systems in villages for clean water access.
- He proposed to introduce a local grievance redressal system for timely resolution of citizen issues.

3. Sardar Khan NA-40 (JI)

Sardar Khan JI promised the following issues to be resolved and addressed after success.

- He promised the construction and repair of rural roads and uninterrupted electricity supply.

- He pledged to improve education standards through scholarships and recruitment of qualified teachers.
- He committed to providing free medicines at rural dispensaries to reduce health burdens.
- Abolition of FCR system From FATA and its merger into KP.
- Provision of Quran and Sunnah.
- He emphasized transparent audits of development spending to ensure accountability.¹³⁷

4. Syed Akhunzada Chattan NA-40 (PPP)

Syed Akhunzada Chattan addressed the following key issues during election campaign.

- He pledged to build and modernize rural hospitals and BHUs to expand healthcare access in underdeveloped areas.
- He committed to initiate crop insurance and subsidies under the “Benazir Kissan Card” to support small farmers.
- He vowed to recruit teachers on merit and improve school infrastructure to raise education standards.
- He supported land and tax reforms to empower sharecroppers and reduce rural poverty.
- He endorsed national social protection programs like BISP to uplift women and other vulnerable groups.

¹³⁷ Sardar Khan, face to face interview with author, April 19, 2025, at *Madrasa Ihya ul uloom Farsh* Tehsil Khar Bajaur, Time 09:00 am.

- He supported environmental legislation including a national climate action plan.¹³⁸

5. Said Badshah NA-40 (Independent)

Said Badshah focused on the following issues.

- He aimed to connect remote communities by paving inter-village roads.
- He proposed mobile schools and adult literacy classes to fill educational gaps.
- He promised to organize regular health camps in remote areas for basic medical services.
- He vowed to install hand-pumps and tube-wells to ensure regular access to clean water.
- He envisioned short-term vocational training programs to make youth economically self-reliant.
- He insisted on forming community oversight councils to monitor local development expenditures.¹³⁹

6. Shaukatullah NA-40 (Independent)

An independent candidate Shaukatullah addressed the following issues.

- He committed to rehabilitating rural roads to ease transport and trade.
- He pledged to equip schools with necessary furniture, books, and classrooms.

¹³⁸ Syed Akhunzada Chattan, face to face interview with author, April 08, 2025, at *Haji Lawang Hujra* Tehsil Khar, Time 02:00 pm.

¹³⁹ Said Badshah, face to face interview with author, May 08, 2025, at *Khar Chaman Hujra* Tehsil Khar, Time 10:00 am.

- He promised to appoint doctors at rural BHUs for regular medical care.
- He vowed to repair water pipelines for household access to clean water.
- He supported setting up skill centers for trades like tailoring and carpentry.
- He advocated for quarterly public budget hearings to ensure transparency.¹⁴⁰

7. Gul Afzal NA-40 (ANP)

Gul Afzal from Awami National Party addressed the following issues.

- He emphasized large-scale water conservation and irrigation projects to double agricultural output in underdeveloped areas.
- He committed to enhancing food security through farm loans, cold storage, and farm-to-market roads.
- He pledged to raise the minimum wage to Rs. 25,000 and expand rural job opportunities.
- He aimed to modernize education by establishing Danish-style schools and computer labs in all secondary schools.
- He advocated for stronger provincial autonomy under the 18th Amendment.
- He called for judicial and police reforms to restore public trust in tribal regions.¹⁴¹

8. Gul Dad Khan NA-40 (PTI)

Gul Dad Khan PTI focused on the following issues.

- He promised to reform and empower institutions like FBR, FIA, SECP, and

¹⁴⁰ Shaukatullah, face to face interview with author, May 02, 2025, at *Nawagai Hujra* Tehsil Nawagai, Time 10:00 am.

¹⁴¹ Gul Afzal, face to face interview with author, May 11, 2025, at *Haji Lawang* Tehsil Khar, Time 10:30 am.

NAB.

- He pledged to create 10 million jobs in five years, with targeted youth employment drives in NA-40.
- He committed to universal health coverage, improvement of BHUs, and upgrading secondary and tertiary hospitals.
- He aimed to construct five million low-cost homes across the country.
- He pledged to build modern storage warehouses to assist farmers.
- He supported national education reforms including a uniform curriculum, digital schools, and skill training.

9. Muhammad Israr NA-40 (PSP)

Muhammad Israr focused on the following issues.

- He emphasized empowering local councils and strengthening grassroots governance.
- He committed to basic health facilities in every union council.
- He advocated equal education opportunities across genders and regions.
- He promised piped water supply in underserved areas.
- He supported economic justice policies including interest-free loans for youth entrepreneurs.
- He backed transparency and anti-corruption reforms in public spending.

10. Muhammad Asghar NA-40 (Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party – PMAP)

Muhammad Asghar Candidate of PMAP focused highlighted the following issues.

- He focused on promoting Pashtun culture and preserving regional heritage.
- He pledged to modernize tribal schools and ensure comprehensive educational access.
- He committed to expand BHU networks into tribal and FATA areas.
- He supported provincial autonomy and advocated for decentralized decision-making.
- He backed fair natural resource sharing so tribal areas benefit from local resources.
- He emphasized complete integration of tribal districts into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

11. Muhammad Akbar Khan NA-40 (PML-N)

Muhammad Akbar Khan Focused on the following issues.

- He pledged to build Diamer Bhasha and Mohmand dams to address water shortage and produce 4,500+ MW of hydropower.
- He promised to increase health expenditure to 2% of GDP, launch family health cards, upgrade district hospitals, and provide mobile clinics.
- He committed to raise education funding to 4% of GDP, ensure universal enrollment, lab-equipped schools, and scholarships.
- He aimed to boost agriculture growth to 4% per year and double farmers' income.
- He proposed a minimum wage of Rs. 15,000/month and three million jobs in public and private sectors.

- He vowed to build affordable housing and invest in agro-industrial zones to balance rural-urban growth.¹⁴²

12. Moambar Khan NA-40 (Independent)

Moambar Khan an Independent Candidate focused on the following issues.

- He pledged to launch mobile health units to deliver basic health services to remote regions.
- He committed to construct new middle schools and upgrade existing primary schools in neglected villages.
- He promised to build flood protection walls and drainage systems to combat seasonal disasters.
- He aimed to provide solar power to off-grid homes for reliable electricity.
- He supported launching interest-free microfinance schemes for women-led home businesses.
- He advocated for creating a public complaint cell for timely redressal of community issues.

13. Naseer Khan NA-40 (Qaumi Wattan Party – QWP)

Naseer Khan of QWP focused on the following issues.

- He championed immediate FATA merger to secure constitutional rights and political inclusion for tribal people.
- He vowed to ensure KP receives its fair share of CPEC projects and economic zones.
- He committed to vocational centers in tribal districts to enhance youth

¹⁴² Pakistan Muslim League N Manifesto 2018 Election. Accessible on

employability.

- He promised to activate BHUs in every union council for maternal and child healthcare.
- He advocated for reinstating elected local governments with full financial powers.
- He supported civilian oversight and training for Levies and police to ensure post-merger security.

14. Hidayat Ullah NA-40 (Independent)

Hidayat Ullah focused on the following issues.

- He pledged to electrify remote hamlets for consistent electricity supply.
- He committed to renovate classrooms and sanitation systems in rural schools.
- He promised to equip BHUs with ambulances and essential medical gear.
- He supported aquifer drilling and treatment plants to supply safe drinking water.
- He backed youth career centers to offer vocational and technical skills.
- He proposed monthly town hall meetings to involve citizens in local decision-making.

4.4.2 NA-41

1. Hafiz ur Rahman NA-41 (Independent)

Hafiz ur Rahman highlighted various developmental and social issues during his election campaign.

- Emphasized improving local infrastructure—including roads, water supply, and sanitation.
- Supported better access to primary healthcare and vaccination campaigns in rural areas.
- Advocated for ensuring enrollment and attendance in schools across tribal areas.
- Backed livelihood initiatives like vocational training and micro-business support.
- Called for youth engagement through sports facilities and community centers.
- Championed tribal rights including land registration and access to justice.

2. Sultan Zeb Khan NA-41 (Independent)

Sultan Zeb Khan focused his campaign on practical reforms in agriculture, education, and local governance.

- Focused on agricultural development through irrigation improvements and farmer subsidies.
- Aimed to modernize local schools and hire trained teachers.
- Called for the establishment of Basic Health Units (BHUs) in every union council.
- Emphasized the construction of small-scale infrastructure like bridges, roads, and drainage systems.
- Supported vocational programs to train youth in technical trades.
- Advocated for the inclusion of women through local female councils and health outreach.

3. Syed Akhunzada Chattan NA-41 (PPP)

Syed Akhunzada Chattan underscored PPP's national vision, with a strong local focus on welfare, equity, and autonomy.

- Promised to raise education spending to around 5% of GDP and provide free, compulsory primary education.
- Committed to universal primary healthcare and expanding Benazir Income Support-style safety nets.
- Supported launching Benazir Kisan Cards with subsidized fertilizers and crop insurance for farmers.
- Called for tackling hunger and climate change through a National Action Plan and Climate Change Act.
- Backed reforms in state-owned enterprises to reduce inefficiency and protect jobs.
- Advocated legislation to empower women and minorities and appoint them to public offices.¹⁴³

4. Shahab ud Din Khan NA-41 (Independent)

Shahab ud Din Khan emphasized grassroots development and essential services in health, education, and infrastructure.

- Called for healthcare coverage through mobile clinics and district hospital upgrades.
- Advocated rehabilitation of schools including textbooks, labs, and teacher incentives.

¹⁴³ Syed Akhunzada Chattan, face to face interview with author, April 08, 2025, at *Haji Lawang Hujra* Tehsil Khar, Time 02:00 pm.

- Pushed for water conservation and local dam-building initiatives.
- Focused on youth training through technical schools and apprenticeship programs.
- Supported input subsidies and agricultural assistance for small farmers.
- Championed full integration of tribal areas including legal access and infrastructure.¹⁴⁴

5. Sher Ahmad NA-41 (Independent)

Sher Ahmad addressed key public concerns by prioritizing better health, education, and economic support.

- Proposed building basic health units and launching maternal and child health programs.
- Called for construction of rural roads and market connectivity infrastructure.
- Supported free primary education and the provision of textbooks.
- Promoted vocational training to equip youth with practical skills.
- Advocated clean water access through village-level filtration systems.
- Backed local environmental initiatives such as community forestry and conservation.

6. Salah ud Din NA-41 (Allaho Akbar Tehrik)

Salah ud Din campaigned on an Islamic welfare model, focusing on education, justice, and community uplift.

- Prioritized the provision of free religious and basic education.

¹⁴⁴ Shahabud Din Khan, face to face interview with author, April 15, 2025, at *Pashat Hujra* Tehsil Salarzai, Time 11:00 am.

- Promoted a Zakat-based Islamic welfare system for the needy.
- Opposed discrimination and called for fair tribal representation in legislative bodies.
- Supported the establishment of local Sharia courts aligned with state law.
- Proposed mosque-based healthcare awareness and preventive care programs.
- Emphasized vocational training in religious seminaries for youth development.

7. Abdur Rashid NA-41 (MMA – MMAP)

Abdur Rashid aligned with MMA's platform, emphasizing Islamic values, rural development, and institutional reforms.

- Supported integrating madrassas with vocational training centers.
- Advocated expansion of mobile clinics and Basic Health Units.
- Called for rural electrification and provision of clean drinking water.
- Highlighted tribal land rights and access to the judicial system.
- Promoted provincial autonomy and strengthening local governance.
- Urged implementation of Islamic principles with transparency in public service.

8. Abdul Majid NA-41 (Independent)

Abdul Majid focused on providing basic facilities and enhancing local economies through education and agriculture.

- Planned to upgrade schools with science labs and mid-day meals to reduce dropout rates.
- Called for mother-and-child health centers and expanded vaccination drives.

- Supported irrigation improvements through small reservoirs and canal lining.
- Backed technical training centers and apprenticeship programs for youth.
- Advocated feeder road construction to link farming areas to markets.
- Emphasized tribal welfare, land ownership rights, and employment quotas in government jobs.

9. Gul Zada NA-41 (ANP)

Gul Zada echoed ANP's secular and decentralist vision with an inclusive approach to development in tribal districts.

- Committed to raising the education budget and ensuring universal primary enrollment.
- Advocated secular schools equipped with labs, libraries, and computer facilities in each district.
- Supported establishment of BHUs in every union and provision of mobile health units.
- Aimed for 4% annual agricultural growth through subsidies and technology promotion.
- Supported provincial rights and devolution of powers per the 18th Amendment.
- Pledged support for small dam projects and rural infrastructure development.

10. Gul Zafar Khan NA-41 (PTI)

Gul Zafar Khan emphasized PTI's reform agenda centered on institutional change, environmental protection, and public service delivery.

- Promised to raise education expenditure to 4% of GDP with universal school enrollment and modern laboratories.
- Committed to doubling health spending, establishing BHUs in every village, and expanding immunization campaigns.
- Supported dam construction and implementation of a national water policy.
- Championed the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami and community forest programs in KP.
- Proposed launching telemedicine initiatives and nutrition programs in rural areas.
- Encouraged youth through district-level universities and sports infrastructure.¹⁴⁵

11. Muhammad Ayaz NA-41 (PML-N)

Muhammad Ayaz promoted PML-N's national development plan, focusing on infrastructure, education, and employment.

- Pledged to raise education expenditure to 4% of GDP, ensure 100% enrollment, and equip schools with labs.
- Promised to increase health spending to 2% of GDP, issue health cards, and provide mobile health services.
- Set a goal of 4% annual agricultural growth and doubling of farmer incomes.
- Promised creation of 3 million jobs and a minimum wage of Rs. 15,000/month.

¹⁴⁵ Gul Zafar Khan, face to face interview with author, May 25, 2025, at Civil Colony Tehsil Khar Headquarter, Time 10:30 am.

- Backed completion of Diamer-Bhasha and Mohmand dams to resolve water and energy crises.
- Supported IT sector development, including ICT centers and SME job creation.

12. Wahid Zaman NA-41 (PSP)

Wahid Zaman echoed PSP's reformist stance, prioritizing good governance, healthcare, and social inclusion.

- Emphasized anti-corruption and strengthened local governance mechanisms.
- Advocated clean drinking water supply and improved urban sanitation systems.
- Called for educational reform through better public schools and teacher training.
- Supported universal healthcare, free clinics, and maternal health initiatives.
- Encouraged youth employment through small industries and entrepreneurship.
- Promoted gender equality and minority rights at the local level.

4.5 Election Results

	General Elections 2018 (NA-40)		
1	Israr ud Din Khan	Independent	263
2	Javid Mian Dad	Independent	127
3	Sardar Khan	JI	17850
4	Syed Akhunzada Chattan	PPP	12906
5	Said Badshah	Independent	4300
6	Shaukatullah	Independent	16845
7	Gul Afzal	ANP	14304
8	Gul Dad Khan	PTI	34616
9	Muhammad Israr	PSP	165
10	Muhammad Asghar	PMAP	275
11	Muhammad Akbar Khan	PML N	263
12	Moambar Khan	Independent	106
13	Naseer Khan	QWP	352
14	Hidayatullah	Independent	317

	Valid Votes	102689
	Rejected Votes	1888
	Total Votes	104577
	Registered Voters	255579
	% of polled votes to Registered: Voters ¹⁴⁶	40.92

4.5.1 NA-41

General Elections 2018 (NA-41)			
1	Hafiz ur Rahman	Independent	1863
2	Sultan Zeb Khan	Independent	8387
3	Syed Akhunzada Chattan	PPP	4016
4	Shahab ud Din Khan	Independent	8768
5	Sher Ahmad	Independent	262
6	Salah ud Din	Allaho Akbar Tehrik	56
7	Abdur Rashid	MMA	11415
8	Abdul Majid	Independent	14792
9	Gul Zada	ANP	4765
10	Gul Zafar Khan	PTI	22730
11	Muhammad Ayaz	PML N	11234
12	Wahid Zaman	PSP	151
		Valid Votes	88439
		Rejected Votes	2073
		Total Votes	90512
		Registered Voters	237153
		% of polled votes to Registered: Voters ¹⁴⁷	38.17

4.6 Performance After Election

After the 2018 general elections, two Members of the National Assembly from Bajaur—Gul Dad Khan (NA-40) and Gul Zafar Khan (NA-41), both representing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)—assumed office at a crucial moment when the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were undergoing a historic merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Their positions were the focal point of public expectations, as the people of Bajaur—long deprived of development and modern public services—looked to their elected representatives for progress in infrastructure, healthcare, and

¹⁴⁶ District Election Commission Bajaur, *General Elections 1988–2018* (unpublished report, Bajaur: Election Commission of Pakistan, 2019), 7.

legislative action. Gul Dad Khan, who won with more than 34,000 votes, focused on fundamental but urgently needed development in Tehsil Barang and its surrounding areas.¹⁴⁸ His initiatives included the construction of two kilometers of link roads within Barang, and additional road work in the Tangi Farsh Balolai area, which improved internal connectivity. One of his most remarkable undertakings was initiating groundwork for the “Barang Tunnel,” a major infrastructure project aimed at linking Khar, the administrative capital of Bajaur, to District Malakand. Upon completion, this tunnel would drastically reduce travel time, open trade routes, and deeply integrate tribal areas with the provincial economy.¹⁴⁹

Beyond infrastructure, Gul Dad Khan directed significant focus on water and health services. He oversaw the installation of six tube wells across Barang, helping to ease the acute water shortage faced by the local population. He also facilitated the establishment of two Basic Health Units (BHUs), which provided critical medical access to remote and underserved communities. Recognizing the role of agriculture and livestock in the local economy, Khan supported veterinary services and participated in a free veterinary medical camp held in the Jannat Shah area. His visits to the diagnostic lab at Khar and the Model Dairy Farm were evidence of his dedication to livestock care and the modernization of farming practices. Additionally, he collaborated with the provincial government to promote olive cultivation and poultry farming under national agricultural schemes—aligned with PTI’s broader post-merger development agenda. His legislative involvement leaned more towards advocacy—securing federal funds, facilitating PC-1 approvals, and raising

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 7.

¹⁴⁸ District Election Commission Bajaur, *General Elections 1988–2018*, 7.

¹⁴⁹ Dawn, “PTI wins both NA seats in Bajaur,” *Dawn*, July 27, 2018.

development issues in Parliament—than authoring bills, a pattern common among MNAs from newly merged districts during the transition phase.¹⁵⁰

Meanwhile, Gul Zafar Khan (NA-41), who received more than 22,000 votes, also contributed to his constituency's development, although his term was a mixture of achievement and controversy. He led the construction of a six-kilometer blacktop road and an additional two-kilometer link road connecting the village of Gang, significantly improving transport and access in mountainous terrain. These road projects helped remote villages connect to markets, schools, and health facilities. Zafar also made progress in healthcare by establishing new BHUs and upgrading the Lar Kali Hospital from a C-category to a B-category facility, enabling emergency services, diagnostic equipment, and the presence of trained staff that had long been lacking. He also played an active role in supporting agriculture, especially through the National Agriculture Emergency Program, which promoted olive farming, poultry rearing, seed distribution, and road linkages to the Swat Motorway—initiatives that revitalized the local economy.¹⁵¹

However, his term was marred by accusations of favoritism, misuse of power, and interference in administrative matters. Several reports highlighted irregularities in the recruitment of public-sector employees and the awarding of development contracts. In 2023, he was arrested by the Anti-Corruption Department on charges related to the misuse of development funds and illegal appointments.

¹⁵⁰ Gul Dad Khan, face to face interview with author, April 24, 2025, at Insaf House Shanday Mor Patak, Time 10:00 am.

¹⁵¹ Gul Zafar Khan, face to face interview with author, May 25, 2025, at Civil Colony Tehsil Khar Headquarter, Time 10:30 am.

Despite these controversies, Gul Zafar Khan also backed several positive projects such as installing solar-powered water pumps, constructing small rainwater storage systems, and distributing sewing machines and toolkits to enable economic self-reliance among youth and women. He also supported vocational training schemes for low-income families. However, the impact of these programs was often diminished due to perceptions of favoritism and selective distribution—especially in resource allocation and hiring for government posts. While he did support tribal districts’ development funding in Parliament and aligned with PTI’s merged-district reforms, his overall tenure remained controversial.

Together, the efforts of Gul Dad Khan and Gul Zafar Khan present a clear reflection of both the promise and the complexity of governance in newly merged tribal districts. Both played essential roles in initiating and executing critical development works in Bajaur—road construction, tube well installations, health facility expansion, and agricultural support. Their coordination with federal and provincial institutions helped ensure that Bajaur received its share of development funds under PTI’s larger agenda of tribal integration. However, where Gul Dad Khan is generally remembered for consistently delivering public services with transparency, Gul Zafar Khan’s developmental record was undermined by corruption allegations and interference in state affairs. Legislatively, neither MNA introduced major laws, but both played pivotal roles in budget advocacy, project execution, and local-level governance.¹⁵²

Their terms offer an insightful lens into the post-FATA political evolution of Bajaur. In areas long plagued by marginalization and underdevelopment, even small

improvements in infrastructure, water supply, health, and agriculture can significantly impact daily life. Yet, the presence of favoritism, weak accountability, and ethical failings undermines the very progress these developments aim to deliver. For many people in Bajaur, their MNAs' tenure brought visible improvements, but it also highlighted the urgent need for governance that is not only effective and action-oriented but also just and accountable. The public's aspirations extend far beyond roads and hospitals—they seek fairness, equal opportunity, and clean governance. The performance of Gul Dad Khan and Gul Zafar Khan—full of nuance—offers a portrait of a region in transition: caught between hopes for a new constitutional reality and the unfinished business of public trust, equality, and democratic maturity.

4.7 Analysis

Between 2013 and 2018, Bajaur witnessed a significant transformation in its electoral landscape, which was primarily influenced by the national rise of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its leader, Imran Khan. In the 2018 general elections, the victories of Gul Dad Khan (NA-40) and Gul Zafar Khan (NA-41) represented a departure from traditional tribal and religious politics and symbolized a new political trend. Particularly, both candidates did not possess strong personal political backgrounds or deep local influence. The real reason for their electoral success was their affiliation with PTI and the personality of Imran Khan, whose slogans of “change,” accountability, and anti-corruption won the hearts of the youth and marginalized segments of Bajaur. The voters did not prefer the individuals themselves but rather the nationally popular slogans and personalities associated with them. For example, Gul

¹⁵² Malik Muhammad Hussain (A tribal elder and a senior Political Activist Interviewed by Author. Venue Head quarter Khar. Date 07/03/2025, Time 10:00am.

Zafar Khan, who was once a hotel waiter, succeeded because he emerged as a symbol of PTI's merit-based and people-friendly ideology. His success reflected a new political awareness in Bajaur, which was now driven not by traditional tribal or religious loyalties but by a reformist mindset.¹⁵³

Although PTI's narrative energized the electoral environment in Bajaur, the 2018 elections were heavily overshadowed by security concerns, which had a significant impact on the electoral process. Due to Bajaur's proximity to the Afghan border and its history of being affected by militancy, a strong sense of insecurity prevailed among the local population. This atmosphere also affected the campaigning of political parties, where candidates avoided holding large public gatherings. Because of the fear of attacks, political parties confined their campaigns to behind closed doors, within *hujras*. According to reports, the law and order situation was so fragile that ordinary citizens refrained from participating in political activities. Attacks across the country—like those in Mastung and Bannu—further worsened the situation, prompting the state to deploy approximately 371,000 security personnel on election day.

This security situation clearly influenced voter participation, particularly in Bajaur. Although the number of registered voters in the region increased, and women's participation improved—from only 2,800 women casting votes in 2013 to over 54,500 in 2018—overall voter turnout remained lower than the national average. According to data from FAFEN and the Election Commission of Pakistan, voter turnout in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (including former FATA) was approximately 43.6%, while the national average stood at 53.3%. One major reason for this low participation

¹⁵³ Raja Qaiser Ahmed, Mohammad Ishaq, and Muhammad Shoaib, "The Changing Political Trends in

was the sense of insecurity. Residents of remote and at-risk areas avoided leaving their homes on election day, even though the presence of military and paramilitary forces did somewhat restore confidence. However, the ongoing fear of danger and long-standing distrust in the system continued to block the path to voting. Furthermore, restrictions on election campaigning kept voters distant from the manifestos and goals of candidates, which also affected electoral enthusiasm.¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, the impact of the security environment extended beyond just physical safety—it had deep psychological and practical effects on voters. In many parts of Bajaur, especially in rural and mountainous regions such as Salarzai, Mamund, and Chamarkand, voters had to travel long distances to reach polling stations, as many were established far from population centers due to security protocols. The presence of armed personnel at polling stations, although intended for safety, created an atmosphere of surveillance and control that frightened voters—especially women and the elderly. According to FAFEN and local journalists’ reports, in several polling stations, particularly those designated for women, polling staff did not arrive on time, and voter education remained critically low—a result of the fragile law-and-order situation and the limited access of political parties. These compounded problems led to frustration, and many voters, despite standing in line, left without casting their votes, further reducing turnout.¹⁵⁵

Erstwhile FATA: A Study of the Last Three Elections,” *International Area Studies Review* 24, no. 4 (October 2021): 338–39.

¹⁵⁴ Free and Fair Election Network, *General Election 2018 Preliminary Observation Report*, 12 August 2018, 8–9.

¹⁵⁵ Free and Fair Election Network, *General Election 2018 Report: FAFEN’s Preliminary Observation* (Islamabad: FAFEN, 2018), 8–9.

Another key aspect was the lack of equal opportunities among candidates due to security restrictions. Independent candidates and smaller parties were often deprived of the resources and staff needed to maintain security or even reach remote areas, while larger parties such as PTI were able to engage voters through intermediaries or limited social media campaigns. This unequal access distorted electoral competitiveness and placed more emphasis on party identity rather than local candidate visibility. In such a context, Imran Khan's national popularity and media presence filled the vacuum created by inactive ground campaigns, particularly in Bajaur, where local candidates like Gul Dad Khan and Gul Zafar Khan emerged as representatives of the broader national message.

Moreover, historical psychological trauma from previous elections and counterterrorism operations contributed to voter apathy. Bajaur was the central battleground of the 2008 military operation "Operation Sherdil," and many families still face the psychological consequences of displacement, loss, and uncertainty. In such communities, where rebuilding was still ongoing in 2018, elections were often not seen as a priority. Voters questioned whether their participation would really bring change, or whether the elected representatives would even return to address their problems—and this concern was further reinforced when candidates failed to engage directly with the public before the elections.¹⁵⁶

It is also worth noting that PTI's electoral success in Bajaur under these circumstances demonstrates how a national party's narrative can surpass traditional local power structures. When election campaigns are restricted, voters tend to rely more heavily on party identity. PTI's message of "change," justice, and anti-elitism—

¹⁵⁶ Raja Qaiser Ahmed et al., "The Changing Political Trends in Erstwhile FATA," *International Area*

presented through Imran Khan's personality—emerged as a powerful motivator. A disappointed and marginalized voter base, long ignored, placed its hopes for improvement in a national-level party led by Imran Khan. In such conditions, the victories of Gul Dad Khan and Gul Zafar Khan were the result of a broader political transformation rather than any local political dominance.¹⁵⁷

In the end, the 2018 elections in Bajaur were shaped by two primary factors: on one hand, PTI's reformist national narrative and the charismatic personality of Imran Khan, and on the other hand, the persistent security concerns that influenced the electoral process and public participation. The increasing inclusion of women signaled a promising shift in the system, but overall, the security situation remained a major barrier to democratic engagement. The electoral outcomes in Bajaur illustrated how, in a volatile and marginalized region, the strategies of national parties and prevailing security dynamics can shape electoral trends and public behavior. This scenario not only represents a significant turning point in the electoral evolution of former FATA, but also provides crucial insights into the future of democracy in such areas. For Bajaur and other former FATA districts, sustainable electoral development depends not only on improved security but also on political integration, civic education, and inclusive governance that takes into account both the fears and aspirations of its historically neglected population.¹⁵⁸

Studies Review 24, no. 4 (2021): 338.

¹⁵⁷ "Pakistan's elections and its implications," *Review of Democracy* (Central European University), March 11, 2024

¹⁵⁸ A Correspondent, "PTI Wins Both NA Seats in Bajaur," *Dawn* (Khar), July 27, 2018. P1.

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, the electoral developments in Bajaur Agency between 1997 and 2002 highlight a critical turning point in the broader trajectory of FATA's political transformation. This era was symbolically important as it marked the beginning of formal electoral participation in the region, but ultimately it underscored the deep tension between imposed democratic frameworks and longstanding tribal traditions. The 1996 extension of adult franchise to FATA enabled Bajaur's first real engagement with national elections, and the 1997 elections witnessed a considerable rise in voter registration and participation. Yet beneath this surface of political inclusion lay entrenched cultural and institutional barriers—most notably, the near-complete exclusion of women, the absence of political party structures, and the continued control of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR). The vacuum created by the suspension of the Political Parties Act was filled by independent candidates quietly supported by national parties, though they lacked the institutional support required for sustainable governance. Even though international observers declared the elections credible, the ground realities remained unchanged: elected representatives such as Haji Lal Karim functioned within a flawed and limited system and failed to achieve substantial development outcomes. The 2002 elections saw some reforms such as a reduction in voting age and increased representation, yet political participation failed to revive; voter turnout declined, and power shifted to religious forces—especially the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). While their emergence reflected a shift in ideological trends, it also revealed the fragility of political structures in Bajaur. Despite limited developmental efforts, core issues—such as gender exclusion, FCR dominance, and increasing militarization—remained unresolved. This period highlights that electoral participation alone cannot ensure

meaningful political empowerment without addressing the deep inequalities entrenched in FATA's system of governance.

In the second phase of the 2008 general elections, which included Bajaur's constituencies NA-43 and NA-44, it became evident that voter behavior in tribal areas was driven by emotional association, tribal loyalty, and hopes for development. In NA-44, Syed Akhunzada Chattan secured victory largely due to the national wave of sympathy following Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Although political parties were banned in FATA at the time and he contested as an independent, he was widely perceived as aligned with the Pakistan People Party (PPP). His win was based on both public sentiment and the desire for development. After the election, he focused on education, health, and infrastructure, especially in Salarzai and Khar, which validated the public's trust. Conversely, NA-43 reflected a more traditional model. Shaukatullah Khan gained success through his tribal standing in the Mamund tribe and community connections. His campaign functioned on clientelism, offering tangible services like school construction and health units in return for votes, which were regarded as personal favors rather than state entitlements. His continued involvement in tribal Jirgas further solidified his leadership under the traditional system. Due to security concerns and political disengagement, voter turnout remained low—12.85% in NA-43 and 17.69% in NA-44. Since political parties were absent, voters relied on personal and tribal connections rather than ideologies. Chattan emphasized legislative reform and development, while Shaukatullah maintained traditional authority and service delivery. The 2008 elections exposed a dual reality—on one side, the emergence of modern political aspirations, and on the other, the entrenched grip of tribal loyalties.

The 2013 general elections signified a transitional phase in Bajaur Agency's political development. Following the extension of the Political Parties Order to FATA in 2011, these were the first elections in which political parties officially participated, offering an alternative to the traditional tribal power structure. Though old influences persisted, signs of political awareness also emerged. In NA-43, Bismillah Khan's independent victory reflected the continued dominance of tribal affiliations, biradari loyalties, and administrative influence. As the father of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's governor, his campaign leveraged state resources and development schemes, while also facing accusations of electoral irregularities. His success depended on strong tribal alliances, especially among the Mamund, which indicated how deeply rooted traditional politics remained. In contrast, NA-44 showed glimpses of political change. Shahab Uddin Khan of the Pakistan Muslim League-N combined tribal credibility with a reformist agenda, advocating for the abolition of FCR and the integration of FATA into the national mainstream. Backed by educated youth and access to party resources, he gained advantage over a fragmented opposition. Both constituencies illustrated Bajaur's shifting political scene: while NA-43 held on to the past, NA-44 offered a vision of a future led by party politics, civic inclusion, and reform. The 2013 elections marked the beginning of a slow but meaningful transformation, ultimately paving the way for FATA's merger into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018.

Between 2013 and 2018, Bajaur's political landscape transformed significantly, mainly due to the rising popularity of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Imran Khan's reformist vision. In the 2018 elections, Gul Dad Khan (NA-40) and Gul Zafar Khan (NA-41) emerged victorious, not due to personal political strength, but largely because of PTI's popularity and Imran Khan's public appeal. Their rise symbolized a break from tribal and religious politics, and voters—especially youth and

marginalized groups—supported PTI on the basis of promises for accountability and the eradication of corruption. However, these elections were heavily influenced by security concerns. Bajaur’s unstable border setting and history of militancy restricted election campaigning, created a tense environment, and reduced voter enthusiasm. Public rallies were minimized, and campaigns shifted indoors due to fear, affecting candidates’ outreach. Although female voter participation rose significantly—from 2,800 in 2013 to over 54,500 in 2018—overall turnout remained below the national average. Long distances to polling stations, the presence of armed security forces, and poor voter education further discouraged participation. Security limitations also created unequal conditions for candidates. Larger parties like PTI were able to campaign through intermediaries and media, whereas independents and smaller parties fell behind. Imran Khan’s national appeal overshadowed local political dynamics. Moreover, traumas from past military operations, such as the 2008 “Operation Sherdil,” continued to contribute to political disillusionment. Consequently, the 2018 elections reflected a balance between PTI’s national message and the constraints of the security environment. The results signaled a shift in political awareness—from traditional loyalties toward a reform-oriented mindset—while also highlighting the need for lasting peace, civic education, and inclusive governance in the former FATA regions.

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