

## Candidate Voters in Pakistani Punjab

*How Belief, Utility, and Strategy Work*

### ABSTRACT

Candidate voters are a significant percentage of the electorate in Pakistani Punjab. Consideration of the last three National Assembly elections shows a consistent attitude: Punjabi voters care more about candidates than they do about political parties. Political parties attract voters in urban districts, but they rely on “electables” (candidates with strong personality and loose party affiliation) in semi-urban and rural districts.

**KEYWORDS:** Punjab, electable, constituency, political party, candidate voter

PAKISTAN’S PRIME MINISTER IMRAN KHAN’s approach to “electables” began to change ahead of the 2018 election in Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> His new approach not only brought criticism from opposition parties; some stalwarts in his own party were dismayed by their leader’s electoral strategy and his apparent compromise on the ideals he had stood for.<sup>2</sup> Khan’s dilemma was clear: welcoming

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1. “Electables” in Punjab can be generally defined as politicians with a stable vote bank but unstable party affiliation. Azam Chauhdri defines them as candidates who are able to become members of parliament without strict party affiliation. Asma Faiz and Shandana Mohmand consider them politicians who have patronage power and engage in clientelism: Shandana Khan Mohmand, “Losing the Connection: Party-Voter Linkage in Pakistan,” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 52:1 (2014): 7–31. Aqil Shah calls them opportunistic politicians who swing their reliable vote banks across elections: Aqil Shah, “Pakistan: Voting under Military Tutelage,” *Journal of Democracy* 30:1 (2019): 128–42.

2. Many prominent members of the PTI (Hamid Khan, Wajihuddin Ahmed, and Fauzia Kasuri) left the party due to disagreements with Imran Khan. Fauzia Kasuri vocally opposed Khan’s

the electables implied a compromise on party ideals, but ignoring them might lead to defeat.<sup>3</sup> He eventually chose the first option; and this choice enabled his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), to triumph in the electoral race in 2018. Presumably many factors led to this victory, but the electables were one of the most important, especially in Punjab.

In Punjab, the inclinations of voters, political parties, and candidates toward personalized politics promote individualism. These three types of actors have been working toward different goals for at least two decades. Voters seek personal utility, political parties aim to dominate the political process (at both provincial and national levels), and candidates work to maintain valence and electability in their constituency.<sup>4</sup> The nexus of these three thus supports, promotes, and strengthens personalized politics in the province, through the local political culture, narratives, and attitudes. And it fosters voters' attention to the candidate rather than the party. The Punjabi voter, who seeks personal utility, thus prefers to develop patronage relations with a candidate.

Thus, Punjabi voters' preferences—in addition to political culture, political developments, and the hype of personalized politics—contribute to the existence and persistence of candidate voting (rather than party voting) in the province.<sup>5</sup> The electoral history of Punjab illustrates this, as do the results of the last three National Assembly (NA) elections (2002, 2008, and 2013). In the districts of our study, candidate voters outnumbered party voters. To begin, we answer a fundamental question: how is the candidate voter defined in the context of Punjab? Once the context is set, we strive to explain the

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strategies. Fauzai Kasuri, "PTI's Inconvenient Truth," *Express Tribune*, March 27, 2018, <<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1669828/6-an-inconvenient-truth/>>, accessed August 20, 2018.

3. Electables played a prominent role in the recent elections. Some of the electables in Punjab (for NA seats) are Ghulam Bibi Bharwana, Khusro Bakhtiar, Awais Leghari, Aamir Sultan Cheema, Tahir Sadiq, Basit Sultan Bukhari, Tahir Iqbal, Raza Hayat Harraj, and Akhtar Kanju.

4. We use "valence" to refer to the effectiveness of a candidate (in actuality as well as in the perception of voters) in solving the social issues of voters in their daily lives. Valence increases the electability of a candidate. We use "constituency" in the British sense of an area whose residents vote for a single representative. The constituencies are assigned numbers (country-wide). For instance, the constituencies in our study are NA-50, NA-105, NA-170, and NA-176.

5. "The Punjabi voters exchange their vote for goods and services, and at each election, evaluate either a candidate's delivery record or their potential for delivering during the next term, and then vote accordingly." P. E. Keefer, A. Narayan, and T. Vishwanath, *The Political Economy of Decentralization in Pakistan* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003). Simply put, the candidate voter in Punjab votes for an individual candidate, prefers individual benefits, and chooses the candidate with the greatest electability who can meet his social needs and help him in daily affairs.

persistence and entrenchment of the candidate voter in Punjab with evidence from the last three elections. Our study focuses on four districts of Punjab: Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Vehari, and Muzaffargarh.

We selected these districts for their levels of urbanization, as well as for geographical, socioeconomic, and political reasons. Of the four, Rawalpindi is the most urban, and Muzaffargarh the least. Vehari is semi-urban; Gujrat is more urban than Vehari and Muzaffargarh but less than Rawalpindi. In the geographical realm, these four districts cover all three parts of the province into which Punjab is generally divided: north, center, and south. In the socioeconomic domain, these districts can be categorized as developed, semi-developed, or underdeveloped. Rawalpindi is the most developed, and Muzaffargarh the least. Vehari is semi-developed; Gujrat is more developed than Vehari and Muzaffargarh but less than Rawalpindi.<sup>6</sup> In the political realm, these districts are strongholds of some of the most prominent politicians in the province.

After selecting the districts, we selected one constituency in each district to collect evidence. We then used a three-step approach. The first step was to analyze the electoral history of the four districts (over the last three elections), the vote banks of the electables, and the impact of national politics on local politics. In the second step, we distributed 100 questionnaires among voters in each of the four constituencies. Only those respondents were asked to fill out questionnaires who had voted in at least two of the last three elections. The third step consisted of interviews with candidates.<sup>7</sup> Again, the candidates were approached carefully. Only those who had run in at least two of the last three elections were interviewed.

#### SETTING THE CONTEXT: ELECTABLES, PARTY, AND POLITICS

Individuals with vibrant, dominating personalities exist in all societies, but in Punjab they have been exceptionally dominant over the years. They dominated pre-Partition politics. Jinnah's Muslim League was able to win the 1945 election in the province only with the help of Punjabi landlords and

6. The four districts differ visibly in development and urbanization. Bureau of Statistics Lahore, Punjab Development Statistics 2013, December 31, 2012, <<http://121.52.153.178:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/13023/2013.pdf>>, accessed November 23, 2017.

7. A limitation we faced throughout our study was to maintain a balance between male and female voters and male and female candidates. We use 'he' for both voters and candidates because all the voters who filled out questionnaires were men, as were all the prominent candidates in the four constituencies we studied.

ex-members of the Unionist party.<sup>8</sup> The Muslim League could not stand out as a party,<sup>9</sup> and its dependence on a few individuals grew with time. The patronage groups in the Muslim League weakened the position of political actors in Pakistan. Fragile institutions and a divided party contributed to the rise of bureaucracy, military, and electables in political decision-making.<sup>10</sup> And because Punjab was a large province, and perhaps the most influential, people with power there shaped the course of national politics as well.

At the same time, the electables, with their patronage circles and their popularity, assumed a central position in the electoral domain. (They did not necessarily support any particular party, or even care about the democratic process itself.) Most were from affluent families, and they had effective patronage relations with locals, a vote bank, valence, and dominating personality in their areas. The 1951 provincial election in Punjab proved their significance: the election exposed the tussle between two landlords, Iftikhar Hussain Mamdot and Mumtaz Khan Daultana, who represented an array of influential individuals.<sup>11</sup> The election results highlighted the significance of electables in the politics of Punjab. They were also valuable in the Ayub (1958–69) and Bhutto (1971–77) eras.

Electables' individualism and patrimonialism flourished.<sup>12</sup> (The results of the first general election, in 1970, did not alter the political status quo.)

8. Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Pakistan: The Formative Phase 1857–1948* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1968); Ilhan Niaz, *Culture of Power and Governance in Pakistan 1947–2008* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010).

9. See religious scholar Javed Ahmad Ghamidi on the role of the establishment in Pakistan: "Why and How Establishment Controls Pakistan," *YouTube*, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AybdMQ8vZs>>, accessed September 23, 2018; Maya Tudor, *The Promise of Power: The Origins of Democracy in India and Autocracy in Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2013): 1–2.

10. Ilhan Niaz, "Provincial Administration in Pakistan and the Crisis of Order and Development," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 34:2 (2011): 234–35; Mohammad A. Qadeer, *Pakistan: Social and Cultural Transformation in a Muslim Nation* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Khalid bin Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan: The Nature and Direction of Change* (Lahore: Peace, 1980).

11. Mumtaz Daultana was supported by landlords of Multan, Sargodha, and Rawalpindi. Nawab Sajjad Ali Khan and Sardar Shaukat Hayat Khan were also in his camp. Former acting chief secretary Khawaja Abdul Rahim, Pir Ahsan Gillani, and Hameed Nizami were prominent supporters of Iftikhar Mamdot. Later, Daultana was able to dissuade some of the supporters of Mamdot, including the Nawabzadas of Gujarat, the Sayyids of Jhang, and the Sardars of Mazaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan. M. Rafique Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan: 1947–1958*, vol. I (Islamabad: NIHCR, 2002); Tahir Kamran, "Early Phase of Electoral Politics in Pakistan: 1950s," *South Asian Studies* 24:2 (2009): 257–82.

12. Gerald A. Heeger, "Politics in the Post-Military State: Some Reflections on the Pakistani Experience," *World Politics* 29:2 (1977): 260.

Although the prospects of popular politics grew in the province, this trend also strengthened political families and individuals, and patronage politics.<sup>13</sup> General Zia's attempt to change the political landscape and form a new political class—business and agribusiness class—through a non-party-based election in 1985 further weakened the political parties.<sup>14</sup> And it gave the electables a chance to join the new ruling elite. (For the first four decades, Punjabis protected their political culture through their electoral choices: they supported the electables and promoted patronage politics.) For this reason, political parties could not dominate provincial politics in the post-Zia elections. Electables had become a necessity for them.

In the decade after Zia's military rule (1988 to 1997), four general elections were held. These electoral rehearsals did not strengthen democratic norms, nor did they change the political culture. The elections nonetheless popularized two political families: Sharif and Bhutto. Punjab became a stronghold of the Sharif family, but it was the family rather than the party that held the levers of power. The head of the family, Nawaz Sharif, garnered the support of the electables in most of the districts of the province, and his party ruled the province three times (1988, 1990, and 1997). Even the ouster of the Sharif family from politics in a *coup d'état* by Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf did not substantially alter the landscape of electoral politics in Punjab. Despite some changes in political arrangements—local government elections, delimitation of constituencies, and changes in electoral laws—the voters' narrative and politicians' attitude held firm.

An important reason for this stasis was personalized politics and patronage relations. Sharif's close allies among the electables left his party for the new king's party (referring to the favorite party of the establishment in Pakistan), the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q).<sup>15</sup> Yet, this did not substantially affect their vote bank. They enjoyed perks for the next five

13. In a field survey of Lahore District, Philip Jones described the new entrants in PPP from July to December 1970. According to Jones, traditional entrants, interest group leaders, and biradari leaders outnumbered the old guard of the party in Lahore. Philip E. Jones, *The Pakistan's People's Party: Rise to Power* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

14. Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2005).

15. Mian Muhammad Azhar, the Chaudharies of Gujrat, and other electables in most of the districts in Punjab left the Nawaz League. Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2002, Report Volume II, 231–93, <<https://www.ecp.gov.pk/ge/ge2002vol2.pdf>>, accessed January 23, 2018.

years—and in 2007, the Sharif family returned to politics after securing eligibility from the courts. Anticipating the political doom of the PML-Q, several electables rejoined the Sharif-led Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in 2008. (Many rejoined the PML-N before the 2013 election, given the poor performance of the Pakistan People's Party [PPP] in the center and the PML-N's growing popularity in Punjab.) Again, their party switching did not substantially affect their vote bank or their influence in their constituencies.

With its new strength and the help of the electables, the PML-N won 118 out of 148 NA seats in Punjab in 2013. Electables who had left Sharif in 2002—especially those from Vehari, Muzaffargarh, Multan, and Gujranwala Districts—won seats on PML-N tickets.<sup>16</sup> Everything seemed in order for the PML-N, until the Panama Papers revealed the offshore companies of the Sharif family in 2016.<sup>17</sup> Sharif's archrival Imran Khan took the case to the Supreme Court, which later disqualified Sharif and referred his case to the National Accountability Bureau. Once again, astute electables began to think about switching parties. In the last days of the PML-N government, about 40 members of the NA and the Punjab Assembly (PA) left the party.<sup>18</sup> Khan's PTI appeared to be one of the most suitable choices. And this choice became more lucrative when the party also showed flexibility for newcomers. In retrospect, electables were perhaps confident that switching parties would not significantly affect their political prospects.

### CANDIDATE VOTERS IN PUNJAB

In psephology, models and theories of candidate evaluation generally emphasize two points. First, they assess the influence on the candidate's evaluation of voters' political norms, culture, memory, socioeconomic condition, and patron-client relations. Second, they measure the impact of the candidate's valence and electoral strategies on voters' decisions. The prominent models

16. "146 Get PML-N Tickets, Though They Quit Party after Coup," *The News* [Pakistan], April 30, 2013, <<https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/427308-146-get-pml-n-tickets-though-they-quit-party-after-coup>>, accessed January 19, 2018.

17. Supreme Court of Pakistan, "Constitution Petition No. 29 of 2016," April 27, 2017, <[http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/user\\_files/File/Const.P.\\_29\\_2016.pdf](http://www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/user_files/File/Const.P._29_2016.pdf)>, accessed January 16, 2018.

18. More than 50 PTI candidates in the 2018 elections were ex-members of the Nawaz League. "The List of PTI Candidates for General Election 2018," Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, June 24, 2018, <<http://www.insaf.pk/public/insafpk/pti-candidates-election-2018>>, accessed July 16, 2018.

and theories of voting behavior (sociological models, social-psychological models, and rational choice theory) are memory-based models, where voters' memory influences their voting decision.<sup>19</sup> Voters' attitude to voting is therefore a combination of belief and evaluation (a two-step process).<sup>20</sup> Punjabi candidate voters' decisions are also shaped by their belief. They derive their belief from the norms of local political culture; they rationalize their vote through the process of evaluation.<sup>21</sup>

The Punjabi voter does not make his political decision in a vacuum; his socialized predispositions are at play.<sup>22</sup> His family background, social location, attitude to the present political situation, and societal ethos—all norms of the local political culture—shape and strengthen his belief regarding the candidate. He develops an association with the chosen candidate. (Related factors, such as social bonding, also influence his voting behavior and help him select a like-minded candidate.) In the beginning, therefore, the voter develops a belief-based proximity to the candidate. Based on this belief, his voting decision is relatively permanent, and he chooses a like-minded candidate.

In the second step, the voter evaluates the candidates chosen according to his belief process.<sup>23</sup> This evaluation is shaped by the candidates' electability,

19. Milton Lodge, Patrick Stroh, and John Wahlke, "Black-Box Models of Candidate Evaluation," *Political Behavior* 12:1 (1990): 11.

20. Samuel Merrill III and Bernard Grofman, *A Unified Theory of Voting: Directional and Proximity Spatial Models* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); M. Visser, *Five Theories of Voting Action: Strategy and Structure of Psychological Explanation* (Enschede: Twente University Press, 1988); Edward C. Tolman, "A Psychological Model," in T. Parsons (ed.), *Towards a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951); A. Kornhauser and Paul Lazarsfeld, "The Analysis of Consumer Actions," in *The Language of Social Research* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1955): 395–98; Michael Tomz and Robert Van Houweling, "Candidate Positioning and Voter Choice," *American Political Science Review* 102:3 (2008): 303.

21. As in Pakistani Punjab, most voters in India vote by their personal choices. Milan Vaishnav, *Understanding the Indian Voter* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015). On voters' preferences and their willingness to vote for regional parties and candidates with criminal records, see Milan Vaishnav and Reedy Swanson, "Does Good Economics Make for Good Politics? Evidence from Indian States," *India Review* 14:3 (2015): 279–311; Trilochan Sastry, "Towards Decriminalisation of Elections and Politics," *Economic and Political Weekly* 49:1 (2014): 34–41. On social biases, see Center for the Study of Developing Societies, *India National Election Study*, New Delhi, 2014.

22. The voter is born with personalized predispositions. He uses these dispositions in the political realm and develops affiliation with a group or individual. Thomas J. Leeper and Rune Slothuus, "Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Public Opinion Formation," *Advances in Political Psychology* 35:1 (2014): 131.

23. Merrill and Grofman, *Unified Theory of Voting*, 24–25.

the voter's memories of the candidates, the social and political utility of voting, perceived fears, and candidates' patronage relations with him. Candidates' electability is one of the most important factors. Punjabi voters prefer to vote for the candidate who has the best chance of winning. Related factors such as the memory of the candidate—based on the voter's personal experience—and social and political utility also influence his evaluation, because he wants maximum benefits with minimum costs. For social utility, he focuses on patron-client relations with the candidate. Good and strong patronage relations strengthen his inclination toward the candidate.

The candidate's electoral strategies also influence voting behavior in Punjab. His patronage relations with voters, election campaign tactics, bonding strategies,<sup>24</sup> valence, and assessment of the present political situation increase his chances of winning. A strong candidate helps voters with social affairs (job seeking, police and court issues, and other problems) and attends public gatherings: village councils (*panchayat*), weddings, funerals (*janaza* and ensuing *fatehkhwani*). His active, effective network of political workers (paid or devoted workers who report to him on the issues and events in the constituency), appropriate election campaign tactics (network of election offices, public meetings, impressive gatherings, election posters, banners, etc.), and election-day management (presence of workers at polling stations and coercive measures, such as threatening and quarrelling, to control opponents) attract voters and create favorable conditions for him.

A good candidate attracts specific segments in the constituency.<sup>25</sup> However, his political association, depending on his prediction of the political situation in the country, also matters. (For this reason, candidates often change parties just before elections.) All his strategies work better when he has closer affinity with the norms of the local political culture. Thus, in Punjab, three phenomena mainly determine election results: voter's belief,

24. Pippa Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Nicolas Martine, *Politics Landlords and Islam in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016); Asfa Hussain, *Elite Politics in an Ideological State: The Case of Pakistan* (Kent: Dawson, 1979).

25. Candidate characteristics are also of central importance in India. Candidates' strengths and weaknesses affect elections. Their political background, experience, holding of a high-level office, and nativity are determining factors. Adam Ziegfeld, "Candidate Characteristics in Indian Elections: Who Wins Votes?" *Asian Survey* 55:5 (2015): 1018–43; Vaishnav, *Understanding the Indian Voter*: 26; Kanchan Chandra, "Hardly the End of Dynastic Rule," *Economic and Political Weekly* 49:28 (2014): 25–28.

utility of his vote, and the candidate's electoral strategies. But a closer look at these three phenomena in the context of Punjab shows that personalization that does not exist in the party–voter relationship.

### CANDIDATE VOTERS IN RAWALPINDI

Candidates from Rawalpindi District have long been prominent in national politics. In each government from 2002 to 2013, winners from Rawalpindi have won central positions in federal and provincial cabinets. Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, and Sheikh Rashid Ahmad have held important portfolios in the federal cabinet. Given the electoral history of the district, three observations stand out. First, though it is a metropolitan area of Punjab and a hub for political parties, outsiders have managed to win only one NA seat from the district in each election. Second, winners and runners-up do not change in approximately 80% of constituencies, or they belong to the same *biradari* (caste/sub-caste).<sup>26</sup> Third, the popular political parties (PML-N, PPP, PML, PTI) prefer electables (strong candidates).

Virtually all political parties have won NA seats in Rawalpindi, mostly with the candidates who have a vote bank and patronage relations with voters. For instance, in NA-50, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and Ghulam Murtaza Satti, leading contenders in the last three elections, have managed to maintain stable vote banks and patronage relations. G. M. Satti won in 2002; Shahid Khaqan won in 2008 and 2013. Their relative percentage has varied, but they both have stable vote banks. Together, the two took 80% of the votes in the 2002 national election, 84% in 2008, and 68% in 2013. In 2013, another candidate from Abbasi biradari, Sadaqat Ali Abbasi, took 19%.

#### NA-50 Rawalpindi I

Survey findings demonstrate the impact of cultural norms on voting behavior, and thus show that voting patterns do not change significantly (Table 1). In NA-50, 68% of the respondents underlined the impact of their social location on their voting choice; 64% emphasized the impact of their family

26. Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2002, Report Volume II: 271–93; Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2008, Report Volume II: 3–19, <<https://www.ecp.gov.pk/Documents/General%20Elections%202008/Report,%20General%20Election%202008,%20Vol-II.pdf>>, accessed January 27, 2018; Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2013, Report Volume II, 41–III.

TABLE 1. Voter Survey Results by Constituency (NA-51: Rawalpindi I; NA-105: Gujrat II; NA-170: Vehari IV; NA-176: Muzaffargarh I; all numbers are percentages)

<i>Yes-or-no questions (percentage of “yes” answers)</i>	<i>NA-51</i>	<i>NA-105</i>	<i>NA-170</i>	<i>NA-176</i>
Did your social location influence your [voting] choice?	68	74	75	77
Did your family/extended family/biradari influence your choice?	64	69	71	73
Did you vote for a candidate from your biradari?	25	35	18	17
Did your candidate’s biradari influence your choice?	31	61	69	71
Did your candidate’s personality influence your choice?	53	71	72	69
Did your candidate’s election strategies influence your choice?	63	77	76	73
Did your candidate’s valence in public office influence your choice?	72	79	78	72
Did your candidate’s patronage relations with you influence your choice?	71	77	71	69
Did your candidate’s political party influence your choice?	41	21	21	26
Was your voting choice appropriate?	69	72	74	71
Did you have easy access to the candidate before the election?	66	73	66	64
Did you have easy access to the candidate after the election?	45	65	61	60
Did your [chosen] candidate help you in daily/social affairs?	76	77	77	69
Did your candidate fulfill the promises made during the campaign?	68	70	77	69
<i>Multiple-choice questions</i>				
How many times did you meet the candidate after the election?	Never	7	6	7
	1	32	31	37
	2	31	33	29
	3	15	18	15
	4 or more	15	12	11
Where did you last meet the candidate?	Funeral ( <i>fatehkhwani</i> )	20	23	26
	Wedding	15	11	12
	Public meeting	23	26	23
	His/her office	25	23	24
	All of these	10	11	10
	Nowhere	7	6	5
What kind of help did he offer you?	None	24	23	22
	Job quest	21	29	9
	Police station	20	23	30
	Local court	17	11	24
	All of these	18	14	15

SOURCE: By authors.

and extended family; 25% cast a vote because the candidate belonged to their biradari; and 31% emphasized the impact of the candidate's biradari. The candidate's personality influenced the voting choice of 53%; his electoral strategies, 63%; his valence in public office, 72%; his patronage relations with voters, 71%; and his political party, 41%. Sixty-nine percent expressed satisfaction with their voting choice.

In the second section of the questionnaire, 66% of the respondents affirmed that they had easy access to their candidate before elections. This dropped to 45% after elections. Only 7% had never met the candidate; 32% had met him once, 21% twice, 15% thrice, and 15% four or more times. Twenty percent met the candidate at a funeral, 15% at a wedding, 23% at a public meeting, 25% at the candidate's public office, and 10% at all of these. Seventy-six percent benefitted from their voting choice and received favors from their candidate. Twenty-one percent benefitted in a job quest, 20% in a police station, 17% in a local court, and 18% in all of these. Sixty-eight percent affirmed that their candidate (if elected) fulfilled promises made during the campaign.

#### CANDIDATE VOTERS IN GUJRAT

Candidates from Gujrat have a dominant footprint in national and provincial electoral politics. Chaudhary Zahoor Elahi's family is one of the most influential political families in the district. The family members have served in virtually all political positions, including prime minister, chief minister (Punjab), deputy prime minister, federal interior minister, speaker of the assembly (Punjab), opposition leader (Punjab), and district *nazim* ("nazim" replaced "chairman" in the implementation of a local government system in 2001). And they have been consistently winning NA and PA seats since the 2002 election. In NA-105, the Chaudhary family has won twice in the last three elections. Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhary Pervaiz Elahi won in 2002 and 2013. In all three elections, the Chaudharys' opponent was Chaudhary Ahmad Mukhtar, who won in 2008. At least twice in the last three elections, the two sides attracted a dominating majority of the voters. Shujaat and Ahmad Mukhtar took 69% of the votes in 2002 and 99% in 2008.<sup>27</sup>

27. Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2002, Report Volume II: 281–93; Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2008, Report Volume II: 67–119.

In 2013, Mubashar Hussain, also a nephew of Chaudhary Shujaat,<sup>28</sup> and Pervaiz Elahi took more than 71%.

#### **NA-105 Gujrat II**

Of the respondents in this constituency, 74% underlined the impact of their social location on their voting choice; 69% emphasized the impact of their family and extended family; 35% cast their vote because the candidate belonged to their biradari; and 61% emphasized the impact of the candidate's biradari. The candidate's personality influenced the voting choice of 71%; his electoral strategies, 77%; his valence in public office, 79%; his patronage relations, 77%; and his political party, 21%. Seventy-two percent expressed satisfaction with their voting choice.

Seventy-three percent of the respondents had easy access to their candidate before elections; this dropped to 65% after elections. Only 6% had never met the candidate; 31% only once, 33% twice, 18% thrice, and 12% four or more times. Twenty-three percent met the candidate at a funeral, 10% at a wedding, 26% at a public meeting, 23% at the candidate's public office, and 11% at all of these. Seventy-seven percent benefitted from their voting choice and took favors from their candidate. Twenty-nine percent benefitted in a job quest, 23% at a police station, 11% in a local court, and 14% in all of these. Seventy percent affirmed that the candidate fulfilled promises made during the campaign.

#### **CANDIDATE VOTERS IN VEHARI**

Electoral politics in Vehari has features of both the central and southern parts of Punjab. Urban areas have party votes, as in the urban areas of central Punjab, but political dynasties also have a strong presence in both rural and urban areas, as in south Punjab. Candidates—runners-up and winners—do not change swiftly. Political parties, therefore, find it necessary to attract electables—candidates from the Daultana, Khichi, Manais, Mian, Khan, and Shah families—because they have strong backgrounds, influence, vote banks, and relations with the military and the bureaucracy. Of these six, the Daultana are probably the most successful. This family has managed to win

28. Waseem Ashraf Butt, "PML-N in a Fix over Choice for NA-69," *Dawn*, May 27, 2018, <<https://www.dawn.com/news/1410187>>, accessed March 24, 2018.

at least one NA or PA seat in each election since 2002. After Daultana, the Khichi and the Manais are the most noteworthy. The Khichis have a notable vote bank in the rural belt. The Manais family also has a good record of electoral success. It has won the PA seat (PP-238) six times since 1988. In 2013, Saeed Ahmad Manais and his son Asif Saeed won NA and PP seats, respectively.

In the constituency we selected, the Khichis, Manais, and Khans (local Pathans) were the leading political contenders. In the 2002 and 2008 elections, the Khichis and the Khans led. In 2002, Azhar Khan and Aurangzaib Khichi took 94% of the votes.<sup>29</sup> In 2008, Mehmood Khan and Aurangzaib Khichi took 93%. In 2013, Saeed Ahmad, running on the PML-N ticket, emerged as the winner in NA-170. The top three contenders—Khichi, Manais, and Khan—took 93% of the votes.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, the PML-N won the seat for the first time in 2013—only when it had an electable with a personal vote bank. It was evident that party mattered only to a limited extent in NA-170; the candidate's personal votes mainly determined the election result.

#### NA-170 Vehari IV

In this constituency, 75% of the respondents underlined the impact of their social location on their voting choice; 71% emphasized the impact of their family and extended family; 18% cast their vote because the candidate belonged to their biradari; and 69% emphasized the impact of the candidate's biradari—probably due to the landed-elite candidates in the constituency. The candidate's personality influenced the voting choice of 72%; his electoral strategies, 76%; valence in public office, 78%; and his patronage relations with voters, 71%. Only 21% were influenced by the candidate's political party, while 74% expressed satisfaction with their voting choice.

Sixty-six percent of the respondents had easy access to their candidate before elections; this dropped to 61% after elections. Only 7% had never met their candidate, 37% only once, 29% twice, 15% thrice, and 12% four or more times. Twenty-six percent met their candidate at a funeral, 12% at a wedding, 23% at a public meeting, 24% at the candidate's public office, and 10% at all of these. Seventy-seven percent benefitted from their voting

29. Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2002, Report Vol. II: 76.

30. Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2013, Report Vol. II: 99.

choice and took favors from their candidate. Nine percent had benefitted in a job quest, 30% at a police station, 24% in a local court, and 15% in all of these. Seventy-seven percent affirmed that their candidate fulfilled promises made during the campaign.

#### CANDIDATE VOTERS IN MUZAFFARGARH

Five families—Khar, Bokhari, Qureshi, Hanjra, and Jatoi—have dominated electoral politics in Muzaffargarh since 1970. Of these five, the Khar have been the most prominent. But candidates from the Khar family have also switched their loyalties frequently: they have run on the platforms of almost all the popular political parties.<sup>31</sup> In each election since 2002, at least one family member has reached NA or PA. The Bokharis have a similar level of influence. Makhdoom Abdullah Bokhari won a PA seat five times (from 1977 to 1996), and his son Syed Basit Sultan won an NA seat twice (in 2002 and 2013). Another member of the Bokhari family, Haroon Ahmed Sultan, won a PA seat twice (in 2002 and 2013).<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Qureshis—Khalid Mohsin and Shahid Jamil Qureshi—won NA seats twice (in 2002 and 2008, respectively). Hanjras won NA and PA seats in 2013: Sultan Mehmood won an NA seat in 2013, and his nephew Ahamd Yar won a PA seat for the third time in 2013.

Like the other constituencies under consideration, NA-176 was dominated by electables in the last three elections. Political parties also tried to attract electables and avoided bold decisions—the winners and runners-up, therefore, rarely changed. In NA-176, Qureshis have won twice (2002 and 2008), and Hanjras were runners-up both times. In 2002, Khalid Mohsin Qureshi won, and Ghulam Qasim Hanjra was the runner-up. Together, the two candidates secured 88% of the votes. In 2008, Mohsin Ali Qureshi won, and Ghulam Qasim Hanjra was the runner-up. In 2008, another candidate from the Qureshi family, Arshad Ali Qureshi, ran on the PML-N ticket. The three candidates took 98% of the votes. In 2013, Sultan Mehmood Hanjra won the

31. From People's Party to Nawaz League to Q-League to PTI, the family ran in the elections on the tickets of all political parties. Ghulam Mustafa Khar, his brother Ghulam Rabani Khar, and his niece Hina Rabani Khar, ran in the last three national elections for different political parties. Elections Commission of Pakistan, General Elections 2013, Report Vol. II, 100–01.

32. Provincial Assembly of the Punjab, "Member Profile," <<http://www.pap.gov.pk/index.php/members/profile/en/9/282>>, accessed March 28, 2018.

seat, and Ghulam Mustafa Khar was the runner-up. These two candidates secured 80% of the votes. In this way, from 2002 to 2013, only three families dominated the constituency, partly because most of the voters had voted for their candidates.

#### **NA-176 Muzaffargarh I**

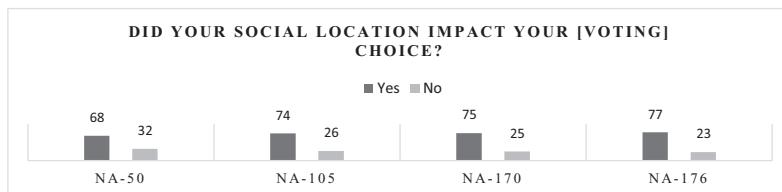
As in the other constituencies under consideration, respondents in Muzaffargarh had their beliefs and preferences. And the influence of political party on their vote was virtually insignificant. In NA-176, 77% underlined the impact of their social location over their voting choice; 73% emphasized the impact of their family and extended family; 17% cast their vote because the candidate belonged to their biradari; and 71% emphasized the impact of the candidate's biradari. The candidate's personality influenced the voting choice of 69%; his electoral strategies, 73%; his valence in public office, 72%; and his patronage relations with voters, 69%. Only 26% were influenced by candidate's political party. Overall, 71% expressed satisfaction with their voting choice.

Sixty-four percent of the respondents had easy access to their candidate before elections; this dropped to 60% after elections. Eleven percent had never met their candidate, 39% only once, 24% twice, 15% thrice, and 11% four or more times. Thirty-one percent had met their candidate at a funeral, 11% at a wedding, 19% at a public meeting, 23% at the candidate's public office, and 5% at all of these. Sixty-nine percent benefitted from their voting choice and took favors from their candidate. Eleven percent had benefitted in a job quest, 26% at a police station, 22% in a local court, and 12% in all of these. Sixty-nine percent affirmed that their candidate fulfilled promises made during the campaign.

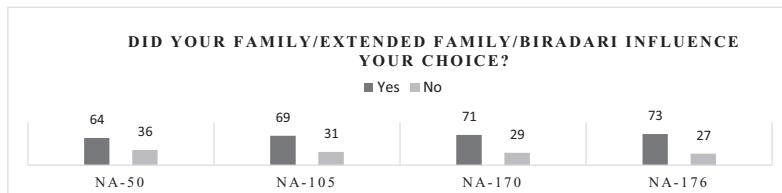
#### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CONSTITUENCIES**

Voting patterns in urban, semi-urban, and rural districts were not entirely different. In some cases, however, the constituencies of semi-urban and rural districts (Gujrat, Vehari, and Muzaffargarh) had more similarities with each other. The impact of social location and the influence of family / extended family / biradari were higher in the constituencies in semi-urban, rural districts (NA-105, NA-170, NA-176) than in the constituency in the urban district (NA-50, Rawalpindi) (Figure 1, *a* and *b*).

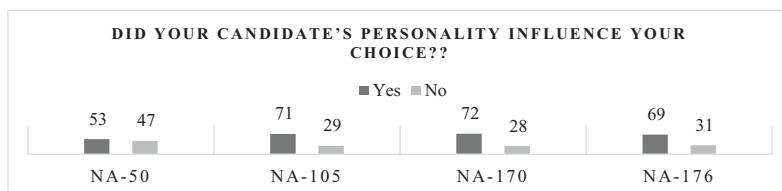
FIGURE 1. Survey Responses (NA-50: Rawalpindi I; NA-105: Gujrat II; NA-170: Vehari IV; NA-176: Muzaffargarh I; all numbers are percentages)



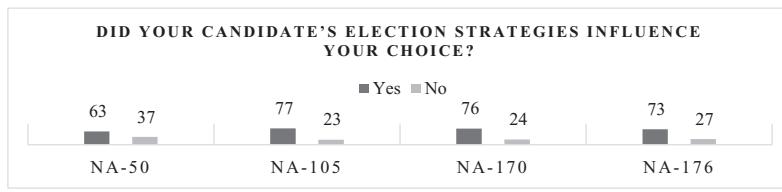
a. Did your social location influence your [voting] choice?



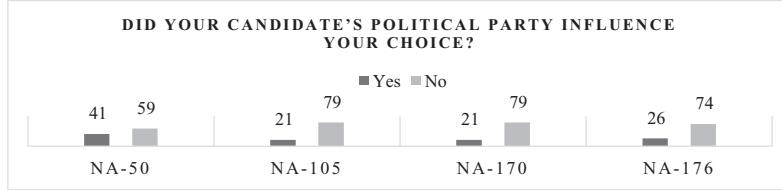
b. Did your family / extended family / baradari influence your choice?



c. Did your candidate's personality influence your choice?



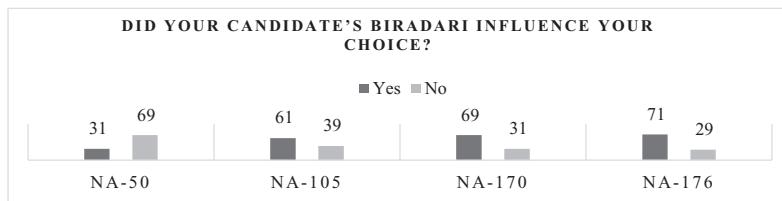
d. Did your candidate's election strategies influence your choice?



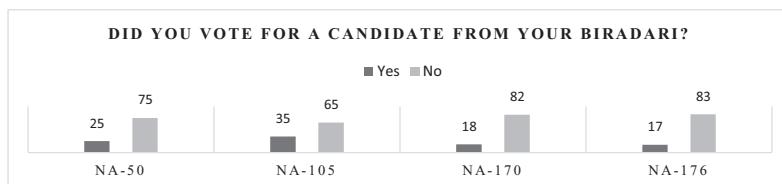
e. Did your candidate's political party influence your choice?

*(continued)*

FIGURE I. (continued)



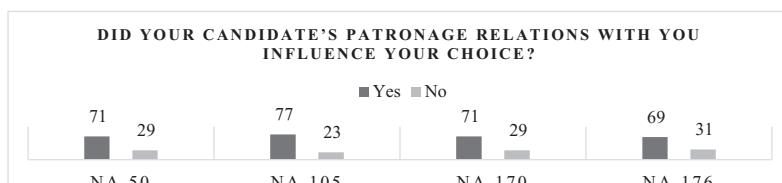
f. Did your candidate's biradari influence your choice?



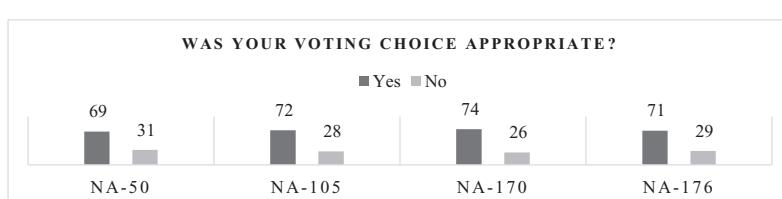
g. Did you vote for a candidate from your biradari?



h. Did your candidate's valence in public offices influence your choice?



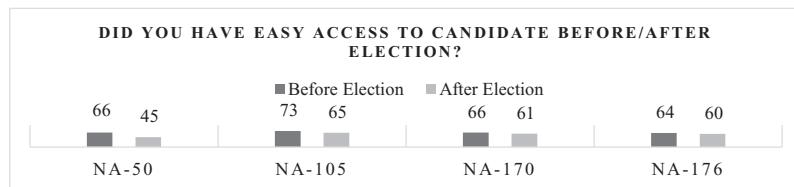
i. Did your candidate's patronage relations with you influence your choice?



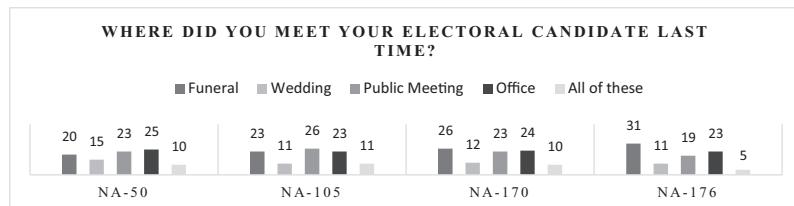
j. Are you happy with your choice?

(continued)

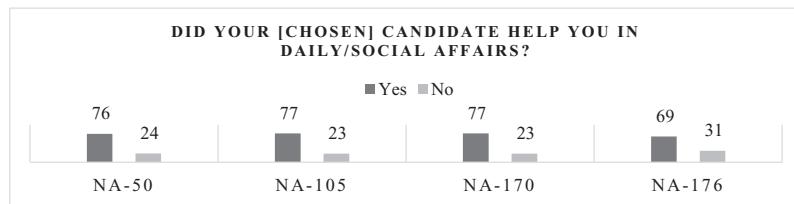
FIGURE I. (continued)



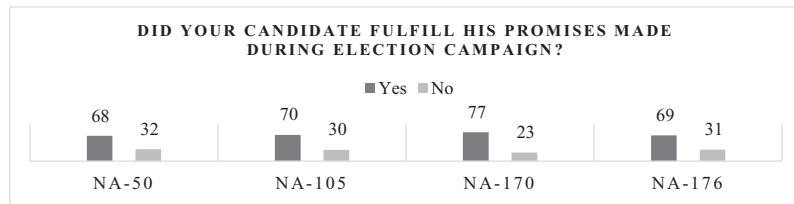
k. Did you have easy access to the candidate before/after the election?



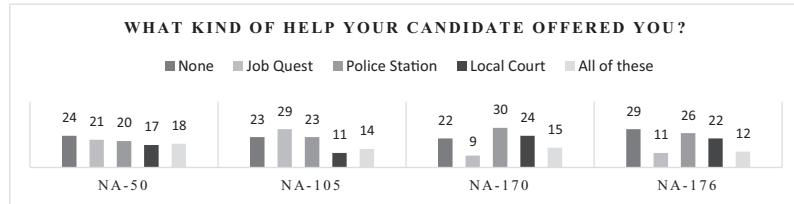
l. Where did you last meet your candidate?



m. Did your chosen candidate help you in daily/social affairs?



n. Did your candidate fulfill the promises he made during the campaign?



o. What kind of help did your candidate offer you?

Similarly, the candidate's personality and his election strategies had more impact in NA-105, NA-170, and NA-176 than in NA-50 (*c* and *d*).

The difference between the constituencies in urban versus semi-urban or rural districts was apparent in two aspects: the influence of the candidate's political party and of his biradari. In NA-50, party affiliation influenced voters, and they cared less about the candidate's baradari (*e* and *f*).

The next three charts (*g*, *h*, and *i*) show mixed trends; no clear pattern is evident. In *g*, the constituencies of urban and semi-urban districts look more similar. Here demography can help. In some constituencies, the biradari vote is important only because of numbers. But in others, candidates with a few thousand biradari votes can win elections.

The candidate's characteristics were important in all constituencies. Charts *h* and *i* show that characteristics were pivotal across space—in this study, constituencies in Punjab. These figures help us understand why electables have survived for so long, and why people vote for the same candidates repeatedly—even candidates who switch parties. Voter satisfaction was also similar across space: most voters considered their voting choice appropriate (*j*).

The constituencies in urban, semi-urban, and rural districts were mostly similar. The exception is access to the candidate after elections, which was lower in NA-50 than in NA-105, NA-170, and NA-176 (*k*).

Chart *l* shows similarities and a pattern. For voters and candidates of constituencies in semi-urban and rural districts, funerals were more important. Overall, in all constituencies of the study, voters were able to access their candidates at public meetings and at their offices.

Generally, most voters were comfortable with their candidate choice (*j*). It is possible that voter satisfaction indicates flexibility—that is, help from the candidate in one important matter may assuage concerns and complaints regarding other matters. And most respondents acknowledged receiving such help (*m*). They also reported that their candidates fulfilled their campaign promises (*n*). For most of the voters in Punjab prefer individual benefits to collective benefits.

In some aspects, the constituencies in urban and semi-urban districts were more similar. For instance, in NA-50 and NA-105, candidates were of more help with employment but less in court matters (*o*). Literacy rates, landownership, and the law-and-order situation help explain these similarities. In Punjab, most of the court matters (especially *deewani*, civil matters) have

to do with agricultural lands, while urban areas have better educational and employment opportunities.

### INTERVIEWS WITH CANDIDATES

Interviews with candidates were an important part of our research on the electoral politics of Punjab. They helped clarify the candidate's position in the voter–candidate bond. Because a candidate's electoral strategy and valence in public office constitute the third element in the bond, the candidate's views on the voter and the voter's preferences help him relate his position with that of voter. Candidates interviewed for this study affirmed that they choose electoral strategies in accordance with local political norms. Virtually all of them emphasized the voter, and that their electability depends on their patronage relations, their valance, and an effective political campaign.

When asked about the main reasons for their success, the candidates' responses did not differ substantially from voters'. One slight difference was candidates' reference to the "political group" supporting them.<sup>33</sup> The other reasons given were similar: relations, connections, the support of voters in their social lives, and development work such as roads, educational institutions, health facilities, parks, and sewerage. (Roads, educational institutions, and health facilities were the hallmark of the candidates' terms.) Interviewees from Rawalpindi emphasized political party affiliation, whereas the candidates from the other three districts considered their family (and caste) the important factors. On their attraction for voters, most candidates responded that they helped people in times of difficulty, so people voted for them.

On the importance of political party, candidates from Gujrat, Vehari, and Muzaffargarh rated it as 20–30% of their vote bank; in Rawalpindi, they said 35–40%. Only the candidates from Rawalpindi emphasized the importance of a party agenda; candidates from the other three districts focused on their record, their success stories, and their future projects. Most of the candidates said that a party ticket would increase their chances of winning, but approximately 50% were confident about winning elections as independents. Most

<sup>33</sup>. That is, a group of politically influential people who support the candidate and, in most cases, finance the campaign. Interview with a candidate, July 5, 2018.

said that if their party did not nominate them in the coming election, they would run as independents.

Like the voters, candidates assigned extraordinary importance to family, kin, and caste. For instance, covering candidates for almost 90% of the interviewees were their close relatives: son, brother, nephew, or cousin.<sup>34</sup> An important reason for nominating one's political successor from within the family is the firm belief in the importance of family, kin, and caste in Punjab's electoral politics. More than 80% of the candidates thought that their family, kin, and caste (*biradari* or *zaat*) played a vital role in their success and that their support was crucial to winning the election. Conversely, virtually all candidates pointed to the loss of support of their *biradari* as a significant factor in their defeat (if it should happen).

## CONCLUSION

Questionnaires and interviews show the significance of candidate voting in election results in Punjab. The typical voter cares much more about the candidates themselves than about their party affiliation. A party may rise or fall, and its vote bank swell or shrink, over a relatively short period, as the last three elections show. Thus, its strength in a given constituency may not be as enduring as that of a given candidate—see the rise and fall of the PML-Q between 2002 and 2013, and the concurrent fall and rise of the PML-N. It is candidates and their families that are seen as crucial. Candidates may switch parties as needed—or cede power to others in their family—and their support among voters remain stable.

Survey responses from the four constituencies we focused on were roughly similar. In general, these Punjabi voters seem to follow the same considerations. Our study of the last three elections shows that the voter's family, social background, and social location shape his belief regarding the candidate and strongly influence his vote. And the voter's purpose in voting is to meet his social needs, especially with respect to employment, police matters, bureaucracy, and the courts. The candidate's effective electoral strategies do the rest;

34. The covering candidate, selected by the party or the main candidate, becomes the main candidate if the latter is disqualified. Because nomination papers are scrutinized after the submission date, parties and candidates prefer to designate a second choice. Legally, the covering candidate is also a candidate, and his/her name appears on the ballot paper.

his valence and campaign tactics enhance electability. His political party is a factor in his success or defeat, but a lesser one.

A candidate in Punjab may leave a party, particularly when party faces a crisis, and join another. If the first party is a favorite in the upcoming election, he may return. And, surprisingly, the party leadership may welcome him back. The key is the centrality of electables in Punjab. In all four constituencies and districts we focused on, political parties depend on candidates with strong financial, social, and political backgrounds. In most cases, only electables with stable vote banks have a good chance to win the election. Therefore, party stalwarts and long-time workers may not run; rather, tickets may be given to a candidate with little concern for the party platform—yet with the hope that the electable may win a seat for the party.

The electables' centrality in the electoral politics of Punjab underscores the voter–candidate bond, which is based on voters' beliefs and needs and the candidate's electoral strategies and valance. And this provides insight into the political parties' relatively weak position, which forces the leadership to make compromises on party ideals and appease the electables. For instance, both Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan have reversed their positions on turncoats and independent candidates. For the last three elections have shown that a party with electables has a fair chance to form a government. More electables means more seats in the assembly. Thus, Imran Khan has found it wise to compromise on his initial position and welcome the turncoats and independents. (In fact, several were given ministries after the 2018 election.)

The PTI's 2018 victory, like that of the PML-Q and the PML-N in the last three elections, substantiates the voter–candidate bond argument. For instance, the winners and losers in the chosen constituencies did not change. In NA-50 (now NA-57 after delimitation), the top two candidates (both from the Abbasi clan) took 81% of the votes in the 2013 election. In NA-105 (now NA-69), the Chaudhry family continued to dominate; the top two candidates, Pervaiz Elahi and Mubashar Hussain, took 80%. In NA-170 (now NA-165), the top two candidates, Aurangzaib Khan Khichi and Saeed Ahmad Manais, took 77%. And in NA-176 (now NA-181), candidates from the Qureshi, Hanjra, and, Khar families—Shabbir Qureshi, Sultan Mehmood Hanjra, and Ghulam Mustafa Khar—took 85%. In all four constituencies, as discussed above, there was little space for a newcomer from a modest family. Thus, in this fourth election, the winners and losers were about the same as in the previous three.

Given the 2002 and 2018 election results in these four constituencies, one may deduce that the candidate voter is one of the most important determinants of electoral politics in Punjab; party voters are the minority. The candidate voter strives to strengthen his relations with the candidate. Because the selected districts differed in urbanization and other geographical, socio-economic, and political domains, one may argue that the findings of our questionnaires and interviews represent Punjab's diversity. The norms of the local political culture shape voting choices in Punjab. Most voters vote for a candidate rather than a party; the voter–candidate bond is one of the most visible trends; and electables are an inevitable reality of electoral politics. These findings may be generalized in the future to initiate a Punjab-wide study that covers both NA and PA constituencies.