

## Mapping Electoral Volatility in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan (1970-2018)

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### Abstract

*The province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in Pakistan is known for its unique electoral behavior. The results of many national and provincial assembly elections suggest that the voters in KP have changed their loyalties from election to election. Except for the 2018 elections, every election in KP province has witnessed major fluctuations in voter support for the incumbent parties. The study investigates the electoral volatility in KP province as well as in its four distinct regions based on the percentage of vote share in national and provincial assembly elections of the province. The study indicates that with fluctuating electoral results at the provincial level, the electoral volatility in KP is not evenly distributed among its well-known four distinctive regions, namely the Hazara Region, Malakand Region, Peshawar Valley, and South Region of KP. The regional electoral data suggests that Peshawar Valley remained the most volatile region of the KP province. However, this volatility has decreased in the 2018 elections, not only in Peshawar Valley but also in other regions of the province. The findings are verified by calculating Pedersen's Electoral Volatility (PEV) Index.*

**Keywords:** Electoral volatility, Party Identification, Ethno-Regional Parties; Electoral Support; Pakistan; KP politics; Peshawar valley

### 1. Introduction

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan has an unpredictable and volatile electoral history. Except for the 2018 elections, the election results demonstrate significant electoral fluctuation in the subsequent elections. After the 1970s elections, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), a newer political party dragged a considerable number of votes from the province to become an important political player in the province. Later on, the Political support for the PPP, Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) fluctuated during elections from 1988 to 1997. In a significant shift, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a religious coalition, won a majority of seats in the provincial and national assemblies in 2002, resulting in the establishment of a provincial government. The electorates switched again to the ANP and PPP in the 2008 elections. In another significant move, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) won elections in the province in 2013 and 2018.

The study comprehends these electoral fluctuations by investigating and mapping the electoral volatility as well as evaluating the electoral history of national and provincial Assembly elections in KP province from 1970 till the 2018 elections. The study examines political party vote shares to empirically quantify the electoral volatility across the province, as well as in each of the province's four distinct regions, to gain a deeper understanding of each political party's electoral share and the nature of volatility in each of the province's four distinct regions. Additionally, the paper highlights the various factors responsible for electoral volatility in the province. The aim is to show the volatility along the history of the province as well as in its four regions namely the Hazara Region, Malakand Region, Peshawar Valley, and South Region of KP. While investigating the volatility, the study indicates that in political parties ANP remained relatively stable in terms of vote share while Peshawar Valley is the most volatile region of the province.

In the literature, electoral volatility is determined by the change in the shares of votes for each party in the national and provincial assembly elections. Pedersen's Electoral Volatility (PEV) Index (Pedersen, 1979) is widely used in the applied empirical research on electoral volatility to verify the findings. The sum of the difference for all parties between two elections is divided by 2 while ignoring the plus-minus symbol of the difference. In the current study, Since 1988<sup>‡</sup>, seven PEV measurements have been calculated for KP province and for each of its regions to ascertain the electoral volatility index.

This study is divided into five main sections. Following the introduction, the second section discusses the province's short political history as well as its electoral geography. The article's theoretical underpinning is laid forth in the third section, which underlines numerous assumptions about electoral

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‡The regions electoral volatility is calculated for the elections since 1988 till 2018. The regional data was not possible to be calculated for the 1970 elections.

volatility. The fourth segment describes the electoral fluctuation while examining the elections from 1970 to 2018. The section also highlights the numerous factors that possibly influenced the electoral volatility in the country as well as in the province. The fifth section deals with political parties' electoral support and electoral volatility in the province and its four distinct regions using the PEV Index. The following section draws the paper to a conclusion.

## 2. KP Political Parties and Electoral Geography

KP is the smallest province in terms of geography and third among the four provinces in terms of population. Historically it was The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of British India and later of Pakistan that was renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in 2010.<sup>§</sup>

According to the 2018 delimitation, KP province is divided into 39 national assemblies (NA) seats out of a total of 272 in Pakistan, while provincial assembly constituencies are 99. The province is divided into four separate regions: The Hazara Region, Malakand Region, Peshawar Valley, and South KP. This regional division has been made considering various factors including, geographical boundaries, official district, and divisional borders, voting behavior, regional socio-economic differences, land variations, and historical socio-political experiences (Ahmad, 2010).

There are evidently three categories of political parties in Pakistan as well as in the province of KP (Wu & Ali, 2020). The mainstream parties; like Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) (and its breakaway groups,) the PPP (along with its offshoot groups), and PTI, the second is the religious parties; which mainly include JUI-F and Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP), and the third is the regional/nationalist parties; the Awami National Party (ANP) (Formerly known as National Awami Party-Wali (NAP-Wali) and Khudai Khidmatgar) and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP)(Nazar, 2016; Siddiqi, 2020).

Before the creation of Pakistan in 1947, the Indian National Congress and the Khudai Khidmatgar - a Pashtun nationalist movement under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan- had attracted sizeable electoral support. Equally, the All-India Muslim League had popular support in the Hazara region and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (JUH) in the southern region of the province, especially in the district of Dera Ismael Khan.

In the aftermath of partition, the Pashtun nationalists under the banner of National Awami Party-Wali (NAP-W) and then the Awami National Party\*\* (ANP) held stable electoral support in many elections, particularly in the Peshawar valley. However, the electoral support for ANP in the non-Pashtun region either has been insignificant or did not last (Mushtaq, 2018). Similarly, numerous groups of the Muslim League<sup>††</sup> were able to acquire significant electoral support in various elections, particularly in Hazara and the South (Rauf & Ayaz, 2011; Rizwan, 2014). PPP, which was founded in 1967 became another political player in the province. It has certain geographic pockets of electoral support in the province, especially in the Peshawar Valley and Malakand region (Ahmad, 2010; Ayoob, 1972). The PTI, a newly emerged political party has earned stronger electoral success in the province than other parties by winning two successive elections in 2013 and 2018. Though, historically the electoral support for religious parties has fluctuated widely, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA<sup>‡‡</sup>), an alliance of religion-political parties swept the elections of 2002 in KP (Khan, 2014). The two popular parties, the JUI-F and Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) have pockets of electoral support all over the province, especially in the South, and Malakand region. The presence of a multi-party system in KP province not only divides the political affiliations of electorates in the province but also fluctuates their loyalties in the subsequent elections.

The political activities have long remained in the province. It was since 1932 when the province was elevated to the status of Governor's province under British control and the provisions of the Government of India Act 1919 were applied. A 40-member provincial legislative council was constituted, with 28 members being elected and 12 being nominated. The elections for a 50-member

<sup>§</sup> The province was renamed as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as part of the 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment to Pakistan 1973 constitution.

<sup>\*\*</sup> NAP was banned in 1975 after so-called allegations of being involved in anti-state activities. Then the Pashtun nationalists organized ANP in 1986.

<sup>††</sup> While PML (Qaiyum group) appeared as a major party in the 1970s elections, PML-N and PML-Q have witnessed stable electoral support in certain regions of the province since the restoration of electoral democracy in 1988.

<sup>‡‡</sup> MMA included six religio-political parties, namely Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (F), Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (S), Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan, Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith Pakistan, and Islami Tehrik-i-Pakistan.

Provincial Assembly were held in 1937 and 1946 on a limited franchise basis under the Indian Act 1935 and were even more important in the pre-partition era for imparting political consciousness of representative institutions in NWFP (Bashir, 2013). General elections were held for the first time in 1970, after which they were held in 1977, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2013, and 2018.

### 3. Electoral Volatility

Electoral volatility (EV) is one of the important concepts in electoral studies as well as in understanding the party system in a democratic order. It is defined as “the net change within the electoral party system resulting from individual vote transfers”(Pedersen, 1979). In the literature, electoral volatility has been studied in various ways.

Pederson's work is the first work that calculated volatility using the electoral volatility index later known as the Pederson Electoral Volatility Index (PEV). The work demonstrated how European party systems in terms of electoral volatility are drifting away from each other. And that “electoral volatility is a function of the format of the party system and of short-term changes in that format”(Pedersen, 1979). Chung has discussed the contributing factors of electoral volatility in four new democracies where the ratio is high and has concluded that each country has quite a different set of factors contributing to electoral volatility (Chung, 1996).

Dalton has particularly described how dealignment in modern society has caused electoral volatility (Dalton, 2007, 2014a, 2014b). Likewise, Plescia and colleagues enumerate the retrospective evaluation as one of the significant factors that cause electoral volatility (Plescia & Kritzing, 2017). Lee and colleagues' work is important in identifying the historical legacies as well as conventional factors as determining factors of electoral volatility (Lee & Casal Bertoa, 2021). Similarly, Mainwaring and colleagues have hypothesized various other factors that influence electoral volatility in old and new democracies. The authors demonstrate that “competitive regimes inaugurated in earlier periods have much lower electoral volatility than regimes inaugurated more recently”(Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007b).

Working on the “within- and extra-system volatility” Mainwaring and colleagues have demonstrated remarkably different sets of determinants of electoral volatility for new versus established parties (Mainwaring et al., 2016). Dassonneville demonstrates that at the individual level, the voters react to economic indicators to hold incumbents responsible for the performance of the economy which leads to electoral volatility (Dassonneville & Hooghe, 2015). Similarly, Mair emphasized the role of the openness of the Dutch party system which is mainly responsible for electoral volatility (Mair, 2003). Likewise, Dalton and Willocq's studies (Dalton, 2000; Willocq, 2016) have related electoral volatility with the moderate and highly democratic electorates while others (Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007a; Tavits, 2005) are of the view “that a stable party system is a key element in overall democratic stabilization” as it fosters more effective programmatic representation and reduces uncertainty.

Based on these and other studies, there are three schools of thought that categorize the various factors that influence electoral volatility. One school of thought considers economic voting and the impact of retroactive assessments of a party's economic success on electoral volatility (Roberts & Wibbels, 1999). The approach posits that voters penalize, or reward political parties based on their relative economic gain and success, either retrospectively or prospectively (Healy & Malhotra, 2013; Plescia & Kritzing, 2017). Strong party identification is one of the factors that can reduce the impact of economic indicators on voters (Lewis-Beck, et. al, 2008). The greater the role of economic issues on electoral behavior, the higher will be the electoral volatility while the weaker will be the level of party identification and vice versa.

Secondly, a number of social cleavages have a substantial impact on citizens' political behavior, attitude, opinion, and vote choice. It is a widely held belief that social structure and identities affect political values (Andersen & Heath, 2003; Bittner, 2007; Karvonen & Kuhnle, 2003). Various other studies maintain that “party formation and competition take place along various cleavage lines ranging from age, education, or professional background to religion, ethnicity, and social class”. It has been asserted that “elections are a measure of social divisions”. They “provide information on the extent to which society is organized and divided by such factors as religion, class, and ethnicity”. Hence, the cleavage structure and voting behavior are closely associated. In such a situation, social characteristics determine electoral volatility. The presence of strong “social cleavages tend to electoral stability and the

absence of cleavages causes swings and volatility” (Harrop et al. 1987).

Third, electoral volatility is determined by the institutional factors of party competition, as well as their role in shaping party and voter preferences. It is argued that “when voters have many available alternatives among the parties running in elections, there is a general tendency towards high rates of electoral volatility” (Gherghina, 2015). Hence, the higher level of electoral volatility might be due to the relatively high degrees of electoral competitiveness. Most new democracies, where new parties with radical political agendas emerge, have a high level of electoral volatility, which impedes the democratic consolidation process in these countries, according to empirical evidence (Chung, 1996). Likewise, a greater degree of electoral volatility has a detrimental effect on political parties and political systems (Mainwaring, et. all, 2016; Mainwaring and Zoco 2007a). In short, the more a political party system is experiencing institutional changes, the higher the chances of electoral volatility in the political system.

The electoral volatility has received a lot of scholarly attention throughout the world (Casal Bértoa et al., 2017; Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007a; Pedersen, 1979; Sarkar & Dash, 2019) the literature on electoral politics in Pakistan (Adeney, 2009; Mujahid, 1971; Rais, 1985; Syed, 1991; Waseem, 2006; Weinbaum, 1977; Wilder, 1999; Ziring, 1993) particularly in KP province (Ahmad, 2011; Ahmad et al., 2014; FarmanUllah, 2014; FarmanUllah & Fakhr-ul-Islam, 2014; FarmanUllah & Islam, 2019; FarmanUllah & Jan, 2016) although have largely discussed other concepts like electoral behavior, electoral turnout, and floating voters phenomenon yet miss the debate on the electoral volatility. Although Shah and Colleague’s work identified a significant ratio of floating voters in the province through the statistical analysis of data but not specifically deal with the phenomenon of electoral volatility (Shah et al., 2019).

This study is the first attempt to investigate electoral volatility by employing the Pederson Electoral Volatility (PEV) index. As a pioneering attempt the study also empirically quantifies electoral volatility in a Pakistani context. The electorates in the KP province of Pakistan have supported a variety of parties, including mainstream, ethno-regional, and religious parties. This study investigated the KP electoral history to determine and empirically quantify the electoral volatility in the province and its four distinctive regions. Although the causes and the consequences of electoral volatility in the Pakistani context are numerous and their identification is a positive addition to the electoral studies of the country, this specific study is limited to the evaluation and quantification of electoral volatility. The study on the determinants or the consequences of electoral volatility can be dealt with in other related works.

The study is significant in that for the first time, an empirical value of electoral volatility is calculated in the Pakistani electoral context. Similarly, the parties’ electoral share is determined to demonstrate the relative strength and consistency of the parties. Additionally, the study is meaningful for understanding the electoral volatility in each of the KP province’s four regions as well as the relative strength of each political party in concerned regions. It is assumed that similar studies in the Pakistani context will be a positive addition to the concepts of electoral support and electoral volatility.

#### **4. The Fluctuating Electoral History of KP Province (1970-2018)**

The KP electoral history since 1970 demonstrates a changing fortune of political parties. This section dealt with elections and analyzed the changing electoral support for various political parties in the general elections held from 1970 to 2018. Additionally, the section describes the various contributing factors and causes responsible for the fluctuation in the share of the vote of the various political parties in the election. The aim is to understand electoral volatility as well as the factors that drive the change in political attitude towards parties that cause electoral volatility. The four sub-sections in this section cover the 1970 election, the election from 1988 to 1997, the 2002 and 2008 elections, and the 2013 and 2018 elections.

##### **4.1. The 1970 Elections**

The election of 1970 marked a pivotal moment in Pakistan’s electoral history. The country had been under a direct military dictator since 1958 and more importantly, no general elections were held since partition in 1947 (Baxter, 1971; Rizvi, 2000).

According to Shaikh, the 1970 elections were the most acrimonious because there were too many political groups competing on too many subjects (Shaikh, 1986). There was no robust party system in Pakistan, except for some regional parties and Pakistan Muslim League with its divided factions but

the crisis leading to elections created two powerful political parties. The Awami League (AL) by Sheikh Mujib ur Rehman in the East wing of Pakistan, and PPP by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, an ex-minister in Ayub Khan's cabinet in West Pakistan.

National Awami Party-Wali (NAP-W) (Formerly Khudai Khidmatgar) entered the elections, as the most prominent political party of the province under the leadership of Khan Abdul Wali Khan. Similarly, the JUI under the leadership of Maulana Mufti Mehmood and Pakistan Muslim League-Qaiyum (PML-Q), under the auspices of Qaiyum Khan in the province played a dominating role in the provincial chapter of the elections of 1970.

Resultantly the NAP-W, the PML-Q, and JUI emerged as the major parties in the then NWFP province where JUI formed a coalition government with NAP-W. PPP emerged as a new political player, especially in the Peshawar Valley and Malakand region of the province securing 14 percent of the total cast votes of the province (Rizwan, 2014). In an already nationalist-dominated region, the advent and popularity of the PPP, particularly in the Peshawar valley, was a major development in terms of electoral volatility.

Mujahid denotes three factors that mobilized the voters in favor of the political parties in the 1970 election. The introduction of PPP as a new party in the already multiparty system, the political campaign of socio-economic reforms by the political parties, especially the slogan of *Roti, Kapra, and Makaan* (Bread, cloth, and Shelter) by PPP, and the mobilization of newly political activists as well as the deserted partisans and independent voters by the newly emerged political parties (Mujahid, 1971). Rizwan has attributed the support for nationalist NAP-W to the socio-political and historical role of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan), the father of Khan Abdul Wali Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar (KK) prestige and legacy before and after the independence. For the religious JUI, It was the confused division of voters between two major political parties the NAP-W and PML-Q, the alliance of nineteen religious parties and minor organizations, and the religious appeal to the masses by influential Ulemas (Religious Leaders) that benefited it in the election of 1970. (Rizwan, 2014). The analysis of the various studies (Baxter, 1971; Burki & Baxter, 1975; Mujahid, 1971; Rizwan, 2014) demonstrates that although social cleavages played a pivotal role, party identification stood as a strong determinant of electoral behavior.

Shortly stated that the entry of the new party in the form of PPP under the charismatic leadership of ZA Bhutto along with its socio-economic slogans of reforms remain a significant factor in the electoral volatility in the province as well as in the Peshawar region and Malakand region.

The second general elections were held in 1977 and the opposition refused to accept the results of the national assembly elections. As a protest, it boycotted the provincial assembly elections. Following the agitation by the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), martial law was imposed in July 1977 that barred general elections till 1985 (Ali, 1977; Weinbaum, 1948). The general elections of 1985 were held on a non-party basis (Burki, 1988) and therefore are not part of this analysis.

#### **4.2. Four General Elections: 1988 through 1997**

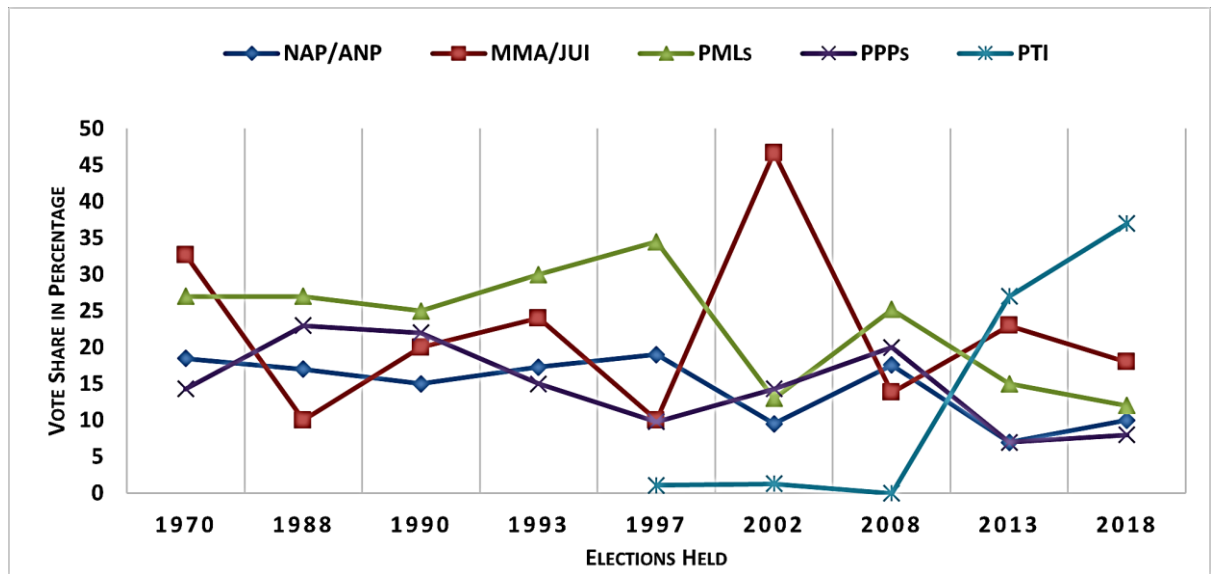
After the demise of President Zia-ul-Haq in a plane crash on August 17, 1988, electoral democracy was restored in Pakistan. In the general elections of 1988, political parties were permitted to contest the parliamentary elections along party lines (Khan et al., 2018). However, in turbulent events of history, Pakistan witnessed four parliamentary elections in a short period between 1988 and 1997. During this period, the assemblies were dissolved before the completion of the parliamentary term every time. Therefore, new elections were held in 1990, 1993, and 1997.

During these four consecutive elections, the province KP witnessed the growth and existence of the multiparty system with the majority of the vote share secured by PMLs<sup>§§</sup> as indicated in Figure 1. The two mainstream parties, PML-N and PPP successfully made inroads into certain regions of the province. ANP maintained its electoral support in its traditional stronghold of Peshawar Valley. Religious parties such as Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) and JIP sustained considerable electoral support in the southern part of the province, and the Malakand region. It is noteworthy, however, that most of the parties entered pre-electoral coalitions and made seat adjustments with other parties in almost

<sup>§§</sup> The PMLs denote, PML-Qaiyum, PML-N, PML-Quaid

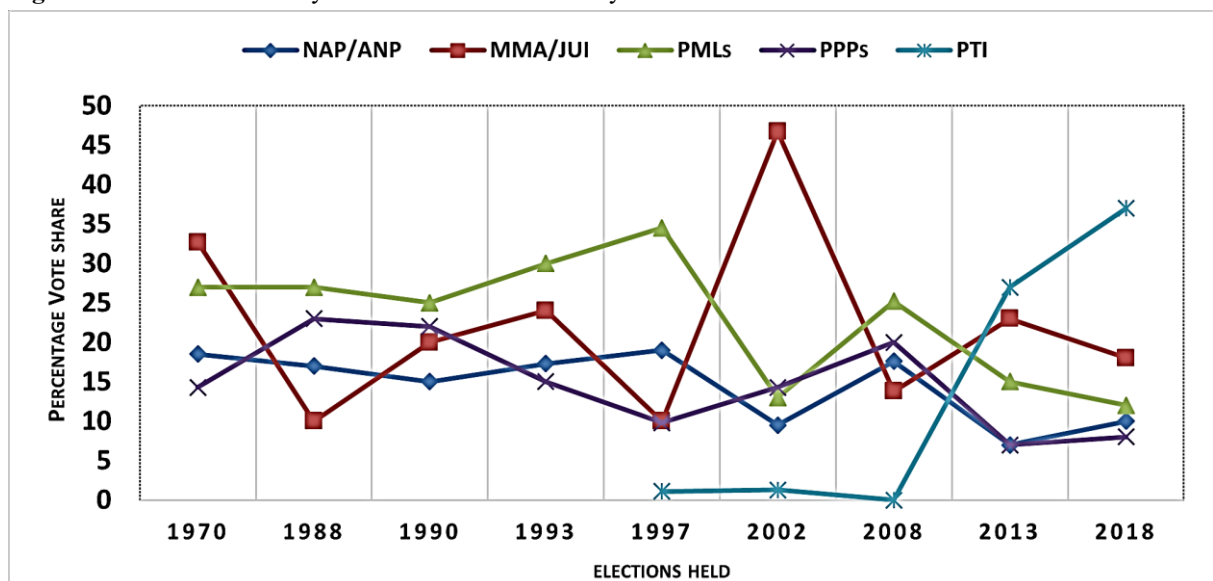
every election.

**Figure 1:** Electoral Volatility in KP National Assembly Elections, 1970–2018<sup>\*\*\*</sup>



Though ANP did not join any coalition during these elections, it made seat adjustments with PML-N, especially in the elections of 1993 and 1997. PML-N as part of Islami Jamhoori Ittihad (IJI) in the elections of 1988 and 1990 played a leading role in the success of the alliance in this province. Likewise, the PPP stayed an important player in the electoral politics of KP during this period. All four elections brought different electoral outcomes with alternative mandates each by PPP, PML-N, religious groups, and the ANP.

**Figure 2:** Electoral Volatility in KP Provincial Assembly Elections 1970–2018<sup>†††</sup>



In his seminal work on electoral politics in NWFP from 1988 to 1998, Ahmad (Ahmad, 2010) pointed out four categories of voters in the province during this specific era. These are civic voters or party voters, client voters, maverick voters, individualistic voters, and primary or identity-based voters. The study also pointed out that party and party leaders strongly influence the voter but through the means of Baradari or factions, patronage, developmental work, jobs for the locals, local issues, and the past performance of the party in urban as well as in rural areas. Rais considers the formation of the alliance

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Electoral data is retrieved from the official website of the Election Commission of Pakistan (<https://www.ecp.gov.pk/>). The votes share of political parties is calculated by the authors.

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of Islami Jamhoori Ittihad (IJI) as a strong factor that mobilized new voters apart from the already Muslim league stronghold, especially in the 1988 elections (Rais, 1989). Similarly, it was the political mobilization of PPP workers and Benazir Bhutto's charismatic leadership in 1988 that garnered PPP more votes than was expected during these elections (Khalid & Sajid, 2021). The contemporary issues and the role of the establishment in all four elections resonated with the electoral outcomes, and the retrospective evaluations of the electorates did punish the incumbent government at the central level, but its impact was less marked on the provincial electoral outcome in KP province (Asif et al., 2021).

Likewise, in all four provinces, the leadership remained significant in stabilizing the electorates' affiliation with the parties. The PML-N, under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif versus the PPP under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto, with the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto legacy countrywide played a significant role in the provincial politics of KP. Similarly, the religious party Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) under the leadership of Fazlur Rehman and the Nationalist/regionalist party, the Awami National Party (ANP), a successor of NAP-W under the leadership of Khan Abdul Wali Khan were instrumental in influencing the provincial electoral politics and party identification. (Samad, 2017; Sekine, 2014; Ziring, 1991)

It is evident that throughout these four elections, electorates remained committed to their parties through party identification and a low level of electoral volatility has been witnessed (Figures 1 and 2) mainly due to the stabilizing role of leadership as well as the consistent and non-revolutionary political agendas of the political parties. However, due to the incumbent political parties' prospective and retrospective evaluations, the low level of electoral volatility remained obvious.

#### **4.3. 2002 and 2008 Elections**

The political government was rolled back in 1999 and since then the country has been under the direct or indirect control of the Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf (Kumar, 2001). A major shift in the 2002 election in Pakistan especially in KP province was the victory of the religious party alliance, MMA with the vast majority (Shah et al., 2021). The MMA also swept the Peshawar valley against the strong ANP. It was a significant swing as earlier the religious parties had a presence only in southern and northern regions of the province, while Peshawar valley was a stronghold of Nationalist ANP and PPP.

The emergence of MMA and its religious appeal were the leading factors responsible for this greater electoral volatility in KP province. Although it was not the first time that voters were appealed to through religious sentiments, the American presence in Afghanistan and the emerging militancy in KP province and tribal areas adjacent to KP heightened the importance and role of religious parties in society. (Talbot, 2003; Zaidi, 2002)

Rauf and Ayaz indicate that The leaning of the caretaker government towards the PML-Q and the MMA, as well as the media's comparatively favorable coverage, strengthened MMA's election popularity, particularly in rural areas of KP (Rauf & Ayaz, 2011). In these circumstances, MMA not only garnered the religious vote but also the Pashtun ethnic vote. Similarly, the newly mobilized voters found their expression in the electoral promises made by the religious parties' alliance.

The 2008 elections were held also under the patronage of the military president but fairer and freer than the 2002 election. ANP secured the highest number of seats against MMA and other parties. The overwhelming victory of ANP can be attributed to the insignificant performance of the MMA government in the province and the wrath of people against MMA for supporting President Musharraf in constitutional amendments and presidential elections. But more importantly, the lawyer's movement against President Musharraf's deposition of supreme court judges and imposition of emergency in 2007 substantially popularized the secular forces in the election 2008, including those of ANP and PPP (Chandran & Chakravarthi, 2008; Quraish & Fakhr-ul-Islam, 2018).

The election of 2008 once again revived the PPP electoral support not only countrywide but also in KP province. The PPP mobilization of its workers throughout the country for its anti-imperialist and anti-Musharraf agenda, and more precisely the assassination of Benazir Bhutto just before the elections deteriorated the political atmosphere and postponed the elections for about a month but elevated the vote share by adding a sympathetic vote to PPP (Adeney, 2009; Nelson, 2009).

The electoral trends demonstrate the fluctuating behavior of voters in both elections. In 2002 people had voted for religious parties in the form of MMA, seeing it as a major shift in politics and expecting

the reforms prospectively. The institutional element in the form of a new political party, the media, and the party promising slogans significantly favored the appeal of the religious parties alliance, especially in KP province. In the 2008 elections, a partisanship shift occurred prospectively and retrospectively in the wake of the perceived bad performance of MMA while in power. But at the same time the current issues especially, the energy crisis, the heightened militancy, the drone strikes by the US in tribal areas of Pakistan, the 2007 emergency in Pakistan, and other political crises highlighted by the newly established electronic media in Pakistan drastically affected the political attitudes. Electoral volatility stemmed from voters' prospective and retrospective evaluations in both elections.

#### 4.4. 2013 and 2018 Elections

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI)<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, a newly popularized political party, emerged as the strongest party in both the 2013 and 2018 elections in KP. The party won 17 out of 28 total seats of the national assembly secured countywide in the 2013 elections. In 2018 besides majority seats countrywide PTI broke the records of sweeping all four regions of KP, by winning 30 seats out of 39 total seats of the national assembly from KP.

Faruqi maintained that parties (especially PTI) mobilized the masses on inflation, energy crisis, and unemployment and that the main slogan raised by PTI in the 2013 election was “*gas, bijli aur paani ki pareshani*” (Gas, electricity, and water issues) and not specifically *Roti Kapra aur Makaan* (Bread, cloth, and shelter) (Faruqi, 2018). Cookman argued that the leadership charisma of Imran Khan, and the criticism of PPP and PML-N party leaders in Pakistan as well as a devoted social media campaign, with the promise of “*Tabdeeli*” (Change), largely affected the electorates. More importantly, the party leaders of PTI demanded to halt the American counterterrorism operations in tribal areas of Pakistan, which resonated in KP province (Cookman, 2013).

The overwhelming support of PTI in national and provincial assemblies of KP was also the catch-all policy of change, the movement against corruption, and the heightened promises of revolutionary economic reforms. An effective electoral campaign that resonates with voters makes a sound difference. They lauded the slogan of “*Naya Pakistan*” (a new Pakistan) and ran an effective social media campaign parallel to traditional campaign activities. The PTI had a relatively scandal-free term in office from 2013 to 2018, which benefited them a lot in the electioneering. The policy of the acceptance of electives to the party also enhanced the winning chances (Mufti & Javid, 2018). The emergence of PTI's sudden rise in a two-party Pakistani political system has been described by some observers as the combination of “*fortuitous timing, an effective narrative that echoed with a discontented citizenry and a charismatic leader who had finally hit his stride*” (Wu & Ali, 2020).

It is pertinent to mention that during these two elections, the slogan of change, retrospective, and prospective voting, personal and community economic benefits, the party affiliation of the factions especially in rural areas, the electoral campaign especially the social media campaign, the reforms agendas, and the corruption-free Pakistan slogan remained significant that motivated the individuals to retain or switch the party identification.

As evident in Figures 1 and 2, throughout the electoral period, great variations in the electoral support of parties between the elections are witnessed. Although not a single party dominated the election till 1997, the religious party share in 1970 and 2002, and the PTI electoral victory in 2013 and 2018 demonstrates greater inconsistency for religious parties and PTI<sup>§§§</sup> while relative consistency for the ANP, PMLs, and PPP for both national and provincial assembly elections. However, this variance of electoral support of the parties and among the parties is not evenly distributed in all regions of the province. Therefore, the next section of this paper is devoted to analyzing the electoral volatility and the variance of parties' support along the four regions of KP using national and provincial assembly elections data.

### 5. Regional Patterns of Electoral Volatility in National and Provincial Assembly

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> PTI was formed in 1996 By Ex-Cricketer turned politician Imran Khan. The party remained active in politics till date about it was only in 2013 that the party secured considerable seats in the parliament.

<sup>§§§</sup> This finding is based on the electoral outcome of PTI since 1997 elections. However, PTI has earned more consistent support since the 2013 elections.



## Elections

KP demonstrates a varying degree of electoral consistency and volatility across the regions. This section examines the electoral volatility along its four regions, namely the Hazara Region, Malakand Region, Peshawar Valley, and South KP. The goal is to determine the variances across the regions and to determine which part of KP is more electorally volatile. Each region's electoral support trend is investigated independently in the following four subsections.

### 5.1. Peshawar valley

Among the four regions, Peshawar Valley which is the central region of KP province appears to be the most volatile region. The primary data in figures 3 and 7 demonstrate that till 1997 and then in 2008, ANP enjoyed considerable support, in the 2002 elections the MMA; a religious parties alliance swept the elections while in the elections of 2013 and 2018, PTI dominated the region in national assembly elections. Figure 4 further indicates the highest number of vote shares for ANP in the 2018 provincial assembly election, but the number of seats was far less. Historically, the region has remained a stronghold of ANP where it fields a candidate in each constituency. Till the 2008 elections, PPP and ANP were competing against each other, where ANP's success is inversely linked with that of PPP. Although the party suffered a humiliating defeat in the 2002 elections, it not only won the region in the elections of 2008 but also returned to power in the province.

The primary data suggests a decline in party support for ANP, PPP, and religious parties while growing support for PTI since the 2013 elections. The fluctuating vote share of ANP, PPP, religious parties, and then PTI shows the relatively higher volatility of the Peshawar Valley and renders it an unpredictable region of KP that creates an opportunity for the leading political parties to struggle and compete in each election. Due to its centrality as well as its highest number of seats (14 out of 39 national assembly seats and 37 out of 99 provincial assembly seats), the volatile nature and the presence of floating votes make it the swing region of the KP province.

### 5.2. Malakand Region

Malakand region is in the northern part of the province. The region has witnessed wide fluctuations in the electoral support for various parties across the elections. The region exhibits a multiparty system with no straightforward majority for a single party except in the elections of 2002 for MMA and 2018 for PTI. The primary data suggest that between the 1988 and 1997 elections, PPP and PMLs were the leading political players in the region. In 2002, the religious alliance, MMA swept the region. In the election of 2008, the vote and seat shares were almost evenly distributed among ANP, PMLs, and MMA\*\*\*\* with the leading share by PPP. However, after the 2013 elections, the PTI displaced the PMLs and the PPP, and the religious vote bank shrunk marginally. The evidence suggests greater support for PTI with sporadic support for ANP, religious parties, and PPP in the region.

### 5.3. South Region

Although the South region of KP is always associated with religious parties. But the data depicts that till the 2008 elections both PMLs and religious parties enjoyed steady and consistent support as major contenders. At the same time, the PPP also secured the highest number of votes in the 2008 National Assembly elections. However, since the 2013 elections, PTI has replaced the PMLs as a leading player in this region. While PTI appeared as the second-largest party in the elections of 2013, it won the 2018 national and provincial assembly elections in this region. Unlike the Peshawar and Malakand regions, one of the most interesting characteristics of the South region is the existence of support for independent candidates, especially in the provincial assembly elections. Interestingly, the shares of independents votes have steadily decreased since the 2008 elections for national assembly elections but remained stable in the provincial assembly elections.

### 5.4. Hazara Region

Since independence, the Hazara region has been the stronghold of PMLs (Ahmad et al., 2014). The primary data indicates that besides overwhelming support for PML-N, independent candidates also find support in the Hazara region. However, since the 2013 elections, PTI has emerged as an important

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\*\*\*\* Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP), which is a leading religious party in Malakand region boycotted in 2008 election and was not part of MMA alliance.

political player in this region that has largely contributed to the decline of electoral support for independents. Similarly, the PMLs' vote shares dropped marginally in the 2018 elections.

The analysis of regional patterns of electoral support in the general elections held since 1988<sup>†††</sup> suggests that all four regions demonstrate a different scenario concerning parties' support. While the Hazara and South KP appear as the strongholds of PMLs and religious factions, where currently PTI is the strong contender, the Malakand region mainly distributes the mandate among the major parties such as PPP, PMLs, and religious factions with PTI as the leading vote shareholder in 2018 elections. Concerning electoral support, it is the Peshawar valley that has witnessed sharp fluctuations and larger swings than the other regions. The analysis of vote share across the regions suggests that Peshawar Valley is the most electorally volatile region of KP. However, to verify these findings the study measured the electoral volatility of the four regions of KP using the Pederson Electoral Volatility Index.

### 5.5. Measuring the Electoral Volatility

Electoral volatility is calculated from 1988 till the 2018 election of the national and provincial assembly for the whole province as well as for the four regions of the province using the Pederson Electoral Volatility Index. Comparing the electoral volatility for the four regions of KP, it has been found that among the four regions, Peshawar Valley is the most electorally volatile region in KP. Evidence (Table 1) suggests that the Peshawar Valley comes out as the region in which average electoral volatility is the highest. Four out of seven PEV index is high for Peshawar Valley among the four regions (Table 1). The greater value of Standard Deviation (SD) and Coefficient of Variance (CV) of Peshawar Valley (national assembly, SD=20.71, CV=0.60, and provincial assembly SD=13.74, CV=0.61) attest to the highest electoral volatility of the region among the four regions in KP for national and provincial assembly elections. The descending trend in figure-11 also indicates that electoral volatility has decreased in the 2018 election as compared to earlier elections. The decreasing trend demonstrates a relatively stable partisanship among the voters.

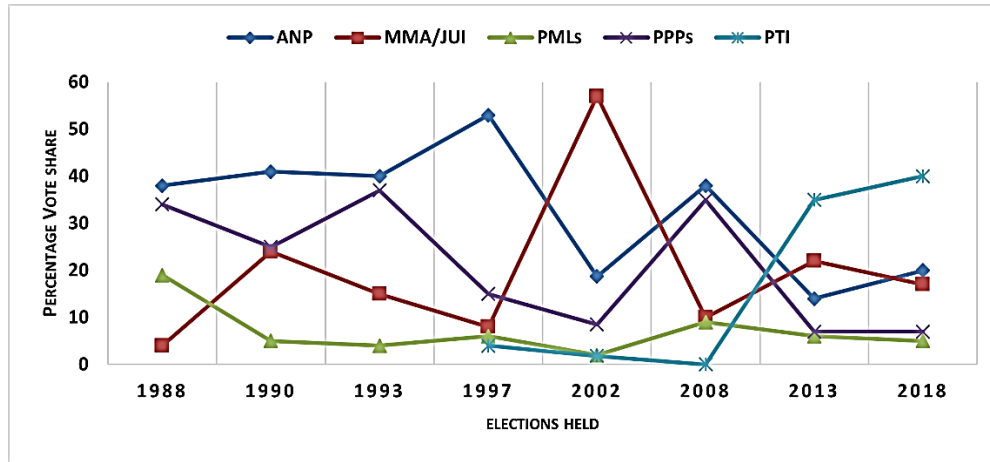
**Table 1:** Pederson Electoral Volatility (PEV<sup>††††</sup>) Index results

<i>PEV<sup>n</sup></i>	PEV-1	PEV-2	PEV-3	PEV-4	PEV-5	PEV-6	PEV-7	Mean	SD	CV
Region	1988-1990	1990-1993	1993-1997	1997-2002	2002-2008	2008-2013	2013-2018			
Electoral Volatility in National Assembly										
All KP	11.0	13.3	19.2	42.2	33.9	36.2	14.0	24.26	12.81	0.53
Peshawar	23.0	12.0	29.0	50.8	58.7	56.9	11.0	34.49	20.71	0.60
Malakand	17.0	19.0	27.0	47.6	55.0	45.0	16.0	32.37	16.41	0.51
South	26.0	24.0	17.0	21.5	35.7	33.0	26.0	26.17	6.43	0.25
Hazara	18.6	38.0	25.0	32.0	46.1	50.0	11.0	31.53	14.30	0.45
Electoral Volatility in Provincial Assembly										
All KP	6.3	8.3	16.1	33.6	18.3	33.4	12.5	18.36	11.14	0.61
Peshawar	12.2	7.7	20.3	37.6	22.5	44.8	13.7	22.69	13.74	0.61
Malakand	9.9	29.0	35.5	46.4	31.6	41.0	17.2	30.09	12.86	0.43
South	14.4	21.4	8.7	26.9	28.9	24.0	18.8	20.44	7.12	0.35
Hazara	17.3	13.4	19.3	23.1	13.8	26.6	12.0	17.93	5.43	0.30

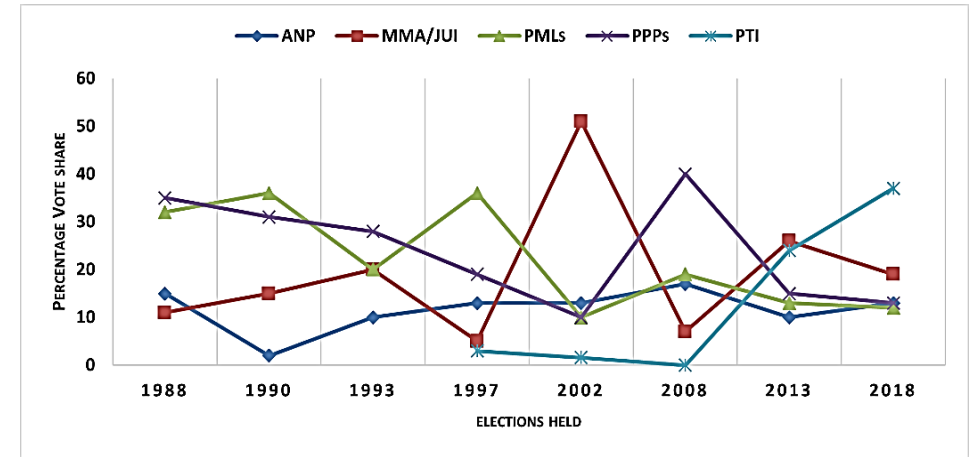
<sup>†††</sup> The data for the regions in 1970 election has not been calculated due to lack of specific data of the regions.

<sup>††††</sup> Note: PEV mean Pederson Electoral Volatility as calculated by authors according to PEV formula.

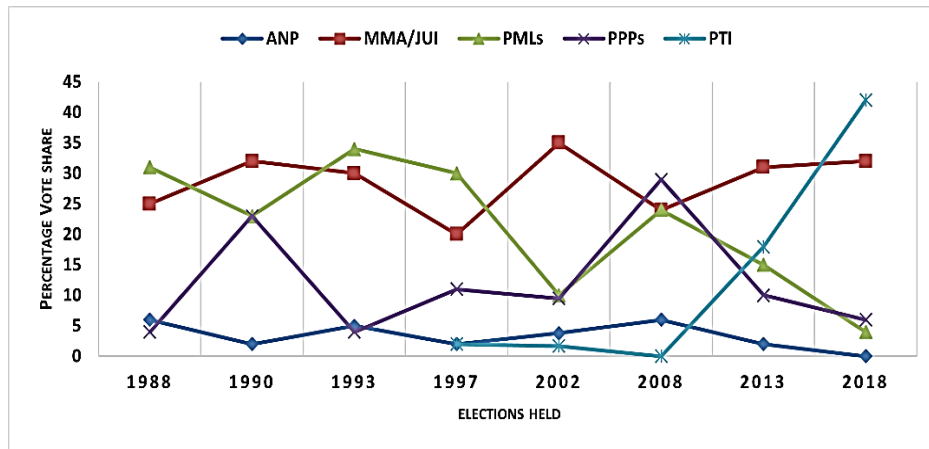
**Figure 3:** Electoral Volatility in Peshawar Valley National Assembly Election



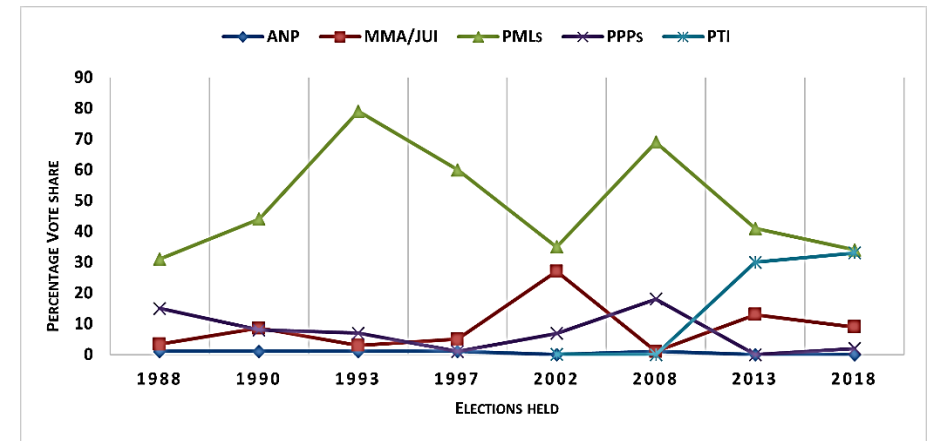
**Figure 4:** Electoral Volatility in Malakand Region National Assembly Election



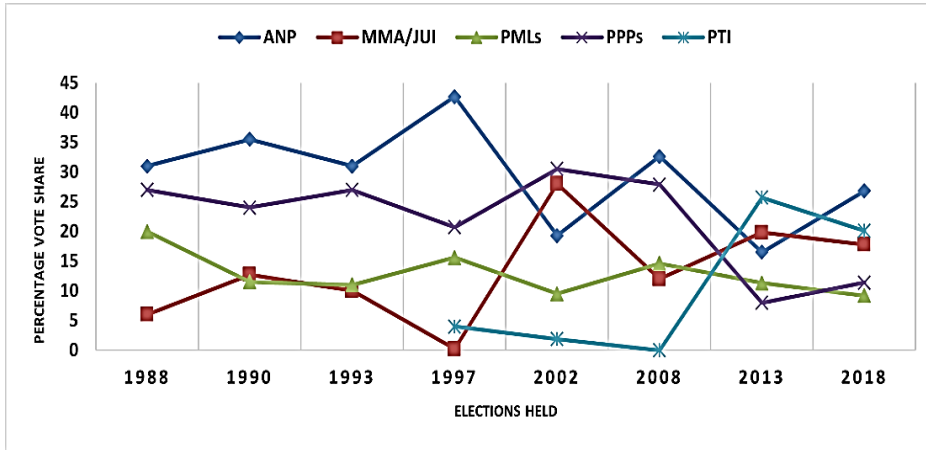
**Figure 5:** Electoral Volatility in South Region National Assembly Election



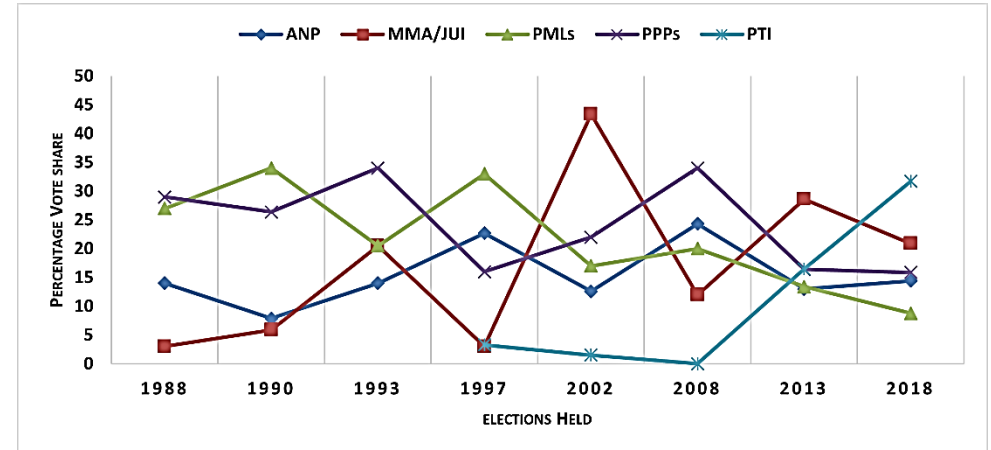
**Figure 6:** Electoral Volatility in Hazara Region National Assembly Election



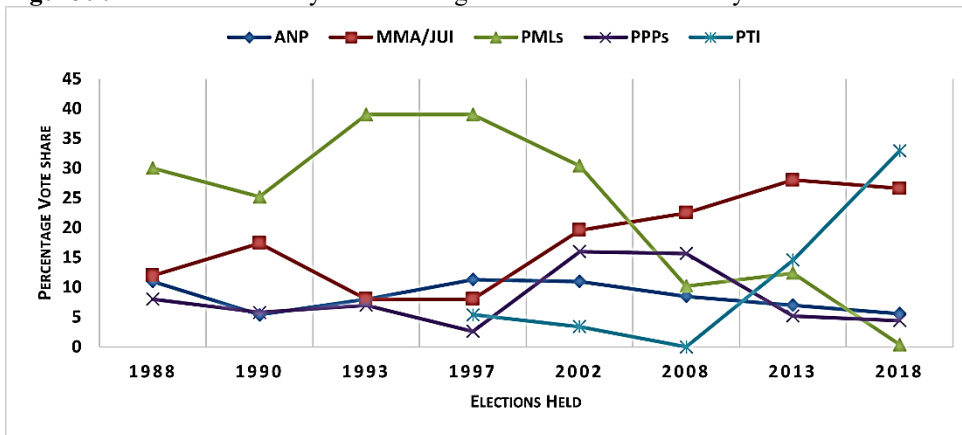
**Figure 7:** Electoral Volatility in Peshawar Valley Provincial Assembly Election



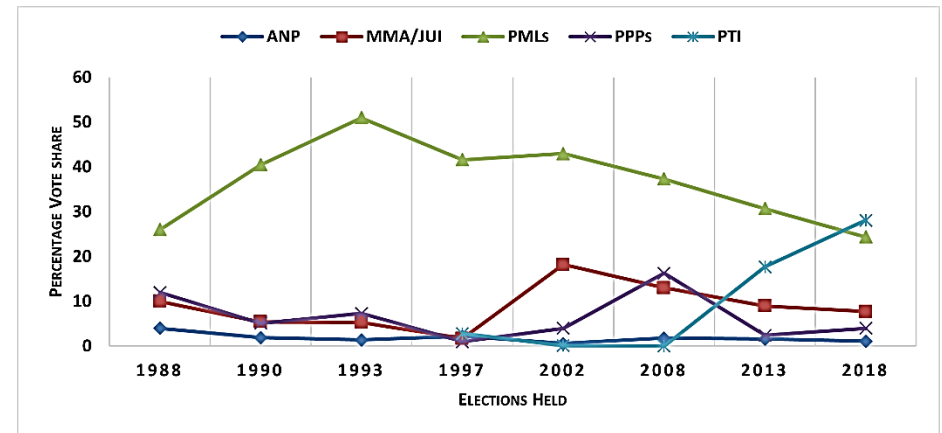
**Figure 8:** Electoral Volatility in Malakand Region Provincial Assembly Election

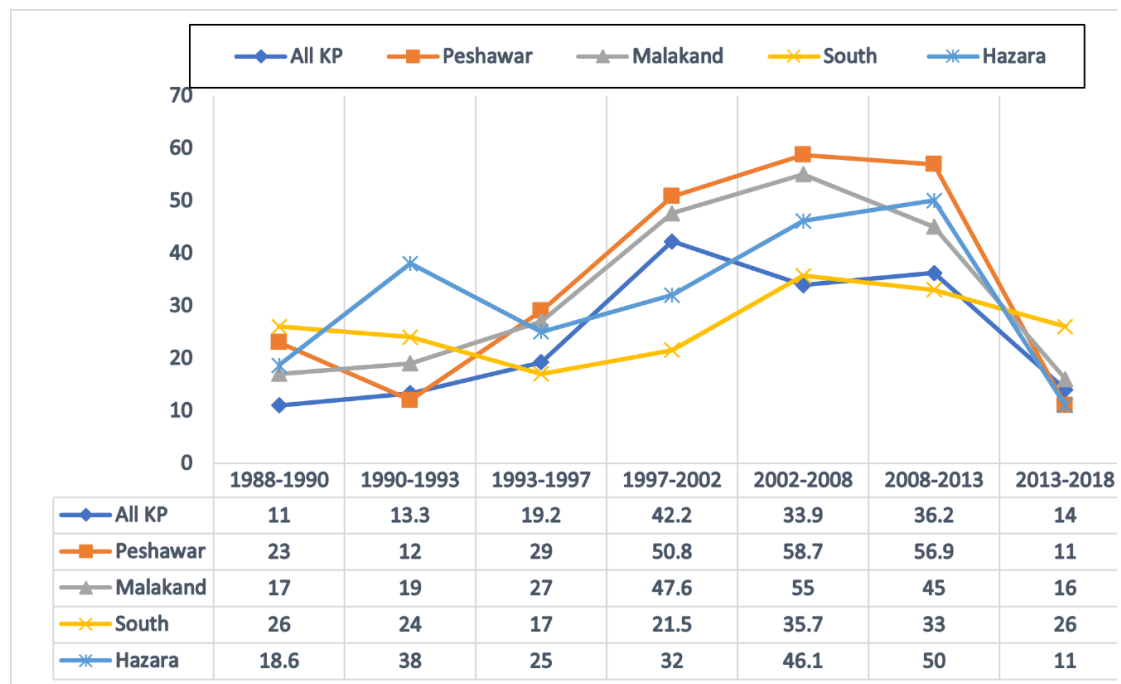


**Figure 9:** Electoral Volatility in South Region Provincial I Assembly Election



**Figure 10:** Electoral Volatility in Hazara Region Provincial Assembly Election



**Figure 11:** Pederson Electoral Volatility (PEV) KP province and four regions

## 6. Conclusion

This study examined the electoral history and electoral volatility in KP province of the national and provincial assembly elections held from 1970 till 2018. The study concludes that there has been significant electoral fluctuation in support of the political parties throughout history in the province of KP. But despite the electoral volatility, the article finds it interesting that a considerable number of electorates are strongly attached to the political parties and that each political party has maintained considerable electoral support, especially in specific regions.

The study indicates that considerable support for PMLs remained consistent in the Hazara region throughout the electoral history. However, PTI has been making inroads since the 2013 elections and has grasped considerable support that not only reduces the independent candidates' vote share but also that of PML-N. Likewise, the data displays consistent electoral support for religious parties in South KP. Though PMLs also retained their support in this region until the 1997 elections, it witnessed a gradual decline in its vote share since the 2002 elections. In the election since 2013, PTI has emerged as an important party that dragged mainly PPP, PMLs, and independent vote share from the southern region of KP. Similarly, in the Malakand region, the religious parties, PMLs, and PPP have competed against each other. But since the 2013 elections, PTI has largely dragged the PPP and PML vote shares, while religious parties still maintain marginal support in the region.

The pattern of electoral support in Peshawar Valley appears dissimilar to the rest of KP. As per data, the nationalist ANP voter support is more consistent than the other parties. The data suggest that except for the 2002 elections when MMA swept Peshawar valley, until the 2008 elections ANP and PPP were the major contenders in this region. However, after the 2013 elections, the PTI has not only diminished the PPP's electoral support but has also significantly reduced the ANP's voter base. Using the Pederson Electoral Volatility Index, the data confirms that the Peshawar Valley is the most volatile region of the KP among the four regions of the province. As a highly electorally volatile region, the study demonstrates that Peshawar Valley is supposed to play a dynamic role by giving representation to different political parties.

In the same vein, although the whole province showed volatility throughout history, that has decreased in the more recent election i.e., 2018. The decreasing trend in volatility is an indication of strong partisanship among the voters. The descending trend of volatility not only indicates strong partisanship but also prompts the investigation of the factors that are responsible for lowering volatility.

These could be the economic retrospective evaluation, the social structure and identity formation, and the institutional factors of party competition.

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