Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives

Mapping Electoral Violence:
A Historical Analysis of Districts in Pakistan during the 2008, 2013, and 2018 General Elections

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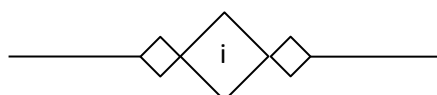
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments:

1.   Introduction

The democratic fabric of a nation is intricately woven through the electoral process, a cornerstone that reflects the collective will of its citizens. However, the conduct of elections, especially in conflict prone and developing democracies, is often fraught with challenges. These challenges are accentuated in regions grappling with internal conflicts and societal polarization, where the specter of election-related violence looms large. The repercussions of such violence are profound, risking the legitimacy of election outcomes and perpetuating a cycle of unrest even after the polls have concluded.

As Pakistan prepares for its General Elections on February 8, 2024, to elect the 16th National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies, the imperative to address and mitigate election-related violence becomes increasingly pronounced. This study undertakes a meticulous examination of historical instances of electoral and political violence during the preceding three general elections held in 2008, 2013, and 2018. Notable events, such as the tragic assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 2008 and the challenges posed by insurgency during the 2013 elections, underscore the gravity of the issues at hand.

The primary motivation of this study lies in the recognition that despite available information on election-related activities in the past, there exists an anecdotal and imprecise understanding of the incidence and impact of electoral violence on the overall conduct and outcome of elections. Consequently, this study endeavors to bridge this gap by providing evidence-based findings derived from a comprehensive and systematic analysis of historical data.

The historical mapping of electoral and political violence during the specified elections has been comprehensively conducted. The analysis delves into the intricate details of incidents, ranging from the significant event of Benazir Bhutto's assassination to the broader challenges posed by insurgency in 2013. The study, therefore, through detailed documentation of electoral violence opens up space for further studies for a nuanced understanding of the impact of electoral violence on election processes and outcomes.

The legal framework governing the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is vital for understanding and preventing electoral violence. As an independent body, the ECP, guided by constitutional provisions and laws like the Elections Act, 2017, and the erstwhile Representation of Peoples Act, 1976, is responsible for organizing elections and preventing corrupt practices. The report underscores the importance of elucidating this legal framework, providing a concise overview of constitutional and legislative structures. This understanding forms the basis for analyzing how the ECP addresses electoral violence and lays the groundwork for subsequent sections, focusing on the ECP's mandate and its role in ensuring a secure and transparent electoral process in Pakistan.

2.   Objectives of the Report

The report's objectives are founded on a two-pronged approach: mapping vulnerable districts across Pakistan and identifying districts most susceptible to electoral violence. The delineation of parameters, encompassing acts or threats of violence, persons involved, property affected, and electoral process stages, forms the methodological backbone of this study. These parameters serve to

comprehensively capture the multifaceted nature of electoral violence, facilitating the derivation of tailored and informed recommendations.

3.   Literature Review

3.1.   Introduction to Elections

Elections serve as the cornerstone of democratic processes, providing citizens with the opportunity to express their political preferences and shape the direction of their nations. Ideally, a democracy is made through free and fair elections, however, on-ground realities tell a different story. Sarah Birch *et al.* contend that elections in unconsolidated democracies are accompanied by electoral violence, which is perpetuated in three stages, i.e., pre-election, by-election, and post-election stages.[1] Understanding the electoral process involves delineating these three crucial stages: the pre-election phase, which encompasses the period leading up to the election day; the election day itself, marked by voting and result announcements; and the post-election phase, characterized by the aftermath of the electoral process, including the announcement of results and the resolution of any disputes. In the context of Pakistan, which has a longstanding history of political instability since its inception, free and fair elections have been predominantly hindered by electoral violence in all three stages; one election led to a civil war and dismemberment of the country in 1971. Pakistan has conducted a total of twelve general elections[2], most of which have been marred by violence.[3]

3.2.   Electoral Violence

Electoral violence, a phenomenon intricately linked to the democratic process, demands comprehensive exploration to navigate its complexities effectively. Broadly defined, electoral violence encompasses a spectrum of actions ranging from subtle manipulation to outright aggression, all of which have the potential to compromise the integrity of the electoral process. American Friends Service Committee defines electoral violence any act or threat of violence that aims to influence the outcome of an election by using force, coercion, or intimidation.[4] It is different from other ways of manipulating an election, such as cheating or buying votes, because it uses fear and intimidation to control people, and hence it has different costs and risks for politicians.[5]

The existing literature[6] suggests that electoral violence is more likely to occur under political systems built on patronage and clientelism. Political supporters appear willing to commit acts of violence during elections in order to support their preferred candidates in systems of government where informal relationships based on resource exchange and political allegiance

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[1] Sarah Birch, Ursula Daxecker, Kristine Hoglund, 'Electoral violence: An introduction' (2020) 57 (1) Journal of Peace Research <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022343319889657> 3.

[2] General Elections of Pakistan <https://www.electionpakistani.com/> accessed 7 Nov 2023.

[3] Asian News Network, 'Elections and Violent Conflict in Pakistan' (2018) <https://asianews.network/elections-and-violent-conflict-in-pakistan/>

[4] Charles Taylor, 'Shared Security, Shared Elections: Best practices for the prevention of electoral violence' (2018) American Friends Service Committee <https://afsc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Electoral-violence-report-web-version.pdf>

[5] FAFEN; Political & Electoral Violence in Pakistan (2010), pdf (page 2 - line 42)

[6] Charles Taylor, 'Shared Security, Shared Elections: Best practices for the prevention of electoral violence' (2018) American Friends Service Committee <https://afsc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Electoral-violence-report-web-version.pdf>

take precedence over formal political institutions.[7] In this report, we study the last three general elections of Pakistan, i.e., the 2008 elections, 2013 elections, and 2018 elections, with the objective of historical mapping of electoral and political violence as witnessed in these three elections. In the context of mapping electoral violence, a focused examination is essential to dissect the nuances of incidents occurring across the three distinct stages of elections.

Political violence, on the other hand, is a broader category that encompasses all forms of violence that are related to politics, including electoral violence. Bardal provides a right-based definition of political violence as a means of controlling and/or oppressing an individual or group's right to participation in political processes and institutions through the use of emotional, social, or economic force, coercion, or pressure, as well as physical and sexual harm.[8] This comprehensive understanding of the term by Bardal, includes Sarah Birch's claim: electoral violence as a means of controlling and/or oppressing an individual or group's right to participation in political processes and institutions. This is why electoral violence is categorized as a subtype of political violence. In Pakistan, election-related violence constitutes roughly 4% of political violence.[9]

However, the relationship between political violence and electoral violence is complex and context specific. In some cases, political violence can lead to electoral violence, as political actors use violence to intimidate voters or to influence the outcome of an election. For instance, in the 2013 general elections, the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) threatened voters and warned them against casting their ballots for three specific parties: the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and Awami National Party (ANP). There were attacks almost every day on election rallies and candidates in the month before the election.[10]

In other cases, electoral violence can be a precursor to political violence, for if an election doesn't produce a fair and accepted outcome, it can lead to political unrest and conflict.[11] For example, the general elections in July 2018 were followed by a series of targeted attacks against political party members, candidates, and workers in different provinces, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. The violence was driven by political competition, tension, and dissatisfaction among various parties and factions. The by-elections in October 2018 were also marred by violence and unrest in some areas.[12]

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[7] Charles Taylor, 'Shared Security, Shared Elections: Best practices for the prevention of electoral violence' (2018) American Friends Service Committee <https://afsc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Electoral-violence-report-web-version.pdf>

[8] Gabrielle Simon Bardall, 2016: Voices, Votes and Violence: Essays on Select Dynamics of Electoral Authoritarian Regimes, retrieved from < https://papyrus.bib.umontreal.ca/xmlui/handle/1866/18513>

[9] Umair Javed, 'Elections and violent conflict in Pakistan' (2018) <https://asianews.network/elections-and-violent-conflict-in-pakistan/>.

[10] Matt Batten-Carew, 'Political Peril in Pakistan: Comparing Levels of Violence in the 2013 and 2018 General Elections' (ACLED, 3 August 2018) <Political Peril in Pakistan Comparing Levels of Violence in the 2013 and 2018 General Elections.pdf>.

[11] African Union Panel of the Wise, Election-Related Disputes and Political Violence: Strengthening the Role of the African Union in Preventing, Managing, and Resolving Conflict (International Peace Institute 2010) 20-27 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09547.9>.

[12] Beahm, E. 'Culling the Competition: Electoral Violence in Pakistan' (ACLED, 12 October 2018) <https://acleddata.com/2018/10/12/culling-the-competition-electoral-violence-in-pakistan/>.

3.3.   Types of Electoral Violence

Diverse types of electoral violence manifest with varying motives and intensities. From terrorist attacks to political party clashes, understanding the typology of violence is crucial for assessing the broader impact on the electoral landscape. This exploration aids in discerning patterns, identifying potential triggers, and formulating targeted strategies for prevention and mitigation. In the context of Pakistan, electoral violence can be attributed to several factors, such as ethnic, sectarian, tribal, ideological, and political divisions, weak state institutions, lack of rule of law, presence of militant groups, external interference, and socio-economic inequalities. Therefore, for the purpose of this report, we used the following types of electoral violence, i.e., ethnic, sectarian, religious, terrorist attacks, and political party violence.

Pakistan's population is religiously and ethnically diverse, with 96.28 % of Muslims population and 3.73% belonging to other religions.[13] These various ethnic, religious, linguistic, and tribal groups compete for power and resources. These divisions have often resulted in violent clashes, especially during elections, when political parties mobilize their supporters along these lines. For example, in Karachi, the largest city and a hub of ethnic diversity, violence between the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), representing the Urdu-speaking community, and other parties such as the Awami National Party (ANP), representing the Pashtuns, has been a recurrent feature of electoral politics. Similarly, in Balochistan, the province with the longest-running separatist insurgency, violence between Baloch nationalists and state forces, as well as sectarian attacks by Sunni extremists against Shia Hazaras, has marred several elections.[14]

Pakistan has also faced the challenge of dealing with various militant and terrorist groups that oppose the democratic process and target candidates, voters, election officials and security personnel. These groups include the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has waged a violent campaign against the state and its allies since 2007, and various sectarian outfits such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), which have carried out attacks on religious minorities and rival sects. These groups have often exploited the security vacuum and political instability in areas such as the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Punjab, where they have established bases and networks. For example, in the 2013 general elections, the TTP claimed responsibility for more than 150 attacks, causing many casualties. TTP also issued threats and warnings to several parties, especially those perceived as secular or liberal, such as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the Awami National Party (ANP) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and prevented them from campaigning freely.[15]

Another factor that has contributed to electoral violence in Pakistan is localized factional rivalry. This rivalry often involves conflicts between local influencers, such as landlords or tribal leaders, and political party candidates. These impact the elections by mobilizing voters through

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[13] AR Shah and B Nawaz, 'Issues and State of Religious Minorities in Pakistan: A Systematic Literature Review' (2021) 5(3) Pakistan Social Sciences Review 70, 70-71.

[14] FAFEN, 'Political and Electoral Violence in Pakistan Report' (2011) <https://electionpakistan.com/fafen-political-and-electoral-violence-in-pakistan-report/> accessed 5 November 2021

[15] Ambreen Kanwal, 'Electoral Violence Against Women' TNS (2023) < https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/1030256-electoral-violence-against-women>

patronage, kinship, and economic dependence.[16] Candidates rely on local intermediaries, such as landlords, contractors, traders, and shrine custodians, to channel, coerce, and manipulate support from the electorate. A report from 2008 highlights a clash between the Gilani and Boston camps that left four people dead and several injured, by resorting to intimidation, harassment, and physical attacks to suppress the voters of the opponents.[17] Another instance is of the Punjab Muslim League experiencing factional conflict within its ranks between 1947 and 1955.[18] This conflict was rooted in the political culture of the landlords who dominate party councils and legislative assemblies. Such internal dissension can lead to the alienation of members and even the disintegration of the party. Additionally, factional rivalries have led to the splintering of major political parties, giving rise to new parties. For example, some associates of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) left and formed groups of their own due to their unwillingness to accept subordination to Bhutto's daughter and successor, Benazir.[19]

Furthermore, The Asia News Network reports that the drivers of electoral violence in Pakistan include political gender-based violence across the country, and violence grounded in religious exclusion and social conflict driven by Barelvi and other Islamist reassertions.[20]

3.4. Media Report Analysis

Several academic articles and reports explored the media coverage and political dynamics surrounding 2008, 2013 and 2018 general elections in Pakistan. Javaid Ahmed and Dr. Shahid Hussain examine the agenda-setting role of leading English newspapers during the 2008 election, while Shazia Ismail Toor and Noshina Saleem conduct a comparative study on print media's portrayal of three major Pakistani political parties in the 2013 elections. Kriti M Shah and Sushant Sareen's analysis delves into the results and implications of the 2018 general elections, as does the Election Commission of Pakistan's official report on the 2013 elections. Additionally, Khalid Jarral investigates the role of social media in Pakistani elections, and Talal Raza explores digital disinformation during the 2018 elections. Collectively, these works contribute to a comprehensive understanding of media influence, political dynamics, and information dissemination in the context of Pakistan's electoral processes.

3.5. Stakeholder Mapping

An intricate web of stakeholders plays pivotal roles in shaping the dynamics of electoral processes. Political parties, security forces, electoral institutions, civil society, citizens, and the media collectively constitute the key actors in this landscape. The interactions among these stakeholders, both cooperative and confrontational, form a critical element in understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with conducting free and fair elections. Including stakeholders in the mitigation process is crucial for sustainable election efforts. Engaging

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[16] Umair Javed, 'Of Patrons and Elections: Constituency Politics in Contemporary Pakistan' (2012) 47(32) Economic and Political Weekly 27-30 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2325179> accessed December 11, 2023.

[17] Ibid

[18] Syed, Anwar H. "Factional Conflict in the Punjab Muslim League, 1947-1955." Polity 22, no. 1 (1989): 49-73 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3234846> accessed December 11, 2023.

[19] Ibid

[20] Asian News Network, 'Elections and Violent Conflict in Pakistan' (2018) <https://asianews.network/elections-and-violent-conflict-in-pakistan/>

political stakeholders is associated with more effective, equitable, and credible violence reduction outcomes.[21]

3.6. International Best Practices

International best practices for prevention of electoral violence have the underlying commonality of good electoral management, security, and peace-building efforts. Mitigation of electoral violence involves a strategic focus on three phases of elections, i.e., pre-electoral, electoral, and post-electoral phases, each of which require distinct ways to counter violence prevalent to that stage.

The International IDEA in collaboration with the European Commission has developed an Electoral Risk Management Tool (ERMT) which is a software that aims to enable and assist electoral management bodies in ensuring smooth and peaceful elections. The ERM Tool specifically helps users become more adept at comprehending electoral risk elements, gathering, and analyzing risk information, creating mitigation and preventive plans, and documenting action outcomes. The guide for ERMT, called the Prevention and Mitigation Guide[22], aids the users in understanding the ERMT and inspires users to tailor strategies and actions for the prevention and mitigation of election-related violence. This guide breaks the election cycle into several phases, thus suggesting prevention tools distinct to each phase. And it also divides the prevention tools from each phase into three categories of a) improved electoral management and justice, b) improved electoral security and c) improved infrastructure for peace.

Another study by American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)[23] finds that the solutions to electoral violence are based on collective, shared efforts by key stakeholders particularly the involvement of political parties and candidates in electoral management. The study also demonstrated that preventative initiatives have a higher chance of success when practitioners can get and apply strategies that have been effectively implemented in other countries. This clearly indicates that through transnational civil society networks, effective investments in safe elections in one country can have beneficial spillover effects in other nations. AFSC has also found that mapping of electoral violence is a successful way of preventing the violence. When civil society actors and state organizations have access to precise, current information on violent incidents occurring in their respective countries as well as information on "hotspot" locations most likely to encounter various sorts of electoral violence, they may more effectively target their resources.

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[21] Akwei CA, ' Mitigating Election Violence and Intimidation: A Political Stakeholder Engagement Approach' (2018) Politics and Policy
<https://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/7805/3/Mitigating%20Election%20Violence%20and%20Intimidation%20A%20Political%20Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Approach.pdf>

[22] Sead Alihodzic, Erik Asplund, 'The Prevention and Mitigation of Election-related Violence' (2018) International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/the-prevention-and-mitigation-of-election-related-violence.pdf>

[23] Charles Taylor, 'Shared Security, Shared Elections: Best practices for the prevention of electoral violence' (2018) American Friends Service Committee <https://afsc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Electoral-violence-report-web-version.pdf>

Multiple studies over the years on effective practices of electoral violence mitigation have emphasized on addressing the root causes of political violence, such as sectarian and ethnic tensions, economic and social grievances, and foreign interventions, through dialogue, trust building, and development programs.[24]

There is one successful example of preventing electoral violence in other countries. For instance, in Ghana, a robust electoral violence prevention framework was created by engaging domestic actors in back-channel negotiations, identifying potential hotspots, early monitoring and observation, and conflict resolution mechanisms. This framework helped to reduce tensions and produced a relatively peaceful political transition.[25]

This literature review sets the stage for a comprehensive analysis of electoral violence during the 2008, 2013, and 2018 elections in Pakistan. The subsequent sections of this report will delve into the specific incidents, patterns, and implications, drawing on academic sources to enrich the exploration and provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges inherent in the democratic processes of the country.

4.   Methodology

The research methodology, designed to address the complex issue of electoral violence, has been rigorously implemented. The collection, categorization, and analysis of primary data from diverse sources, including news reports, incident report datasets, provincial police, and the Election Commission of Pakistan, have been meticulously executed. Key informant interviews with specialized experts and stakeholders have provided qualitative insights, enriched the quantitative data, and ensured a holistic understanding of the dynamics of electoral violence.

4.1.   Data Collection

Primary data collection from various sources, including news reports, incident report datasets, provincial police departments, and the ECP, has been conducted with meticulous attention to detail. The triangulation of data from these sources enhances the study's comprehensiveness and credibility. The subsequent categorization, analysis, and cross-referencing of data have been methodically undertaken, revealing patterns and vulnerabilities within districts.

Insofar as the data is concerned, the electoral period for the collection includes election day, two months prior to the election day as the pre-election stage, and three weeks after election day for the post-election stage. In the pre-election stage, it is crucial to note the electoral violence leading up to the election day, and includes events such as campaigning by political parties, political rallies, marches, corner meetings etc. These are all crucial events in the pre-election stage, and the report seeks to document the incidents of electoral violence during this period as well. Additionally, election day itself is a significant metric for data collection, as violence occurring during polling forms a crucial part of electoral violence. In the post-election

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[24] Jonas Claes, Inken von Borzyskowski, 'What Works in Preventing Election Violence: Evidence from Liberia and Kenya' (2018) United States Institute Of Peace <https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/10/what-works-preventing-election-violence>.

[25] Dorina A Bekoe, Stephanie M Burchard, 'Robust Electoral Violence Prevention: An Example from Ghana' 120 (481) African Affairs <https://academic.oup.com/afraf/article/120/481/543/6406470> 543.

stage, a period of 3 weeks involves the election of the speaker of the National Assembly, which is the point that marks the official term of and first session of the newly elected National Assembly. The period after the election day and before the election of the speaker of the National Assembly is also critical as the announcement of results after elections frequently leads to electoral violence. The period outline herein forms the metric for which the data will be collected quantitatively.

4.2. Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews, conducted with specialized experts across Pakistan, have contributed depth and context to the research. These interviews augment the quantitative data with qualitative insights, offering a comprehensive analysis of the dynamics, root causes, and potential strategies for mitigating electoral violence.

4.3. Stakeholder Mapping

The stakeholder mapping process, integral to understanding the intricate network of relationships contributing to the dynamics of electoral violence, has been meticulously executed. The identification and categorization of key stakeholders, encompassing political entities, election administration officials, civil institutions, and the public, provide a nuanced understanding of potential points of tension and vulnerability. This comprehensive view forms the basis for developing targeted recommendations.

5. Legal Scheme of the Election Commission of Pakistan

The ECP has been established under the Constitution of Pakistan as an independent constitutional body, which is solely responsible for the conduct of elections in the country.

Article 218 of the Constitution establishes the ECP, and under sub-section (3) the duty to organize and conduct elections is vested in the ECP. Sub-section (3) also explicitly empowers the ECP to ensure that 'corrupt practices' are guarded against during the conduct of elections. These powers are imperative to this report as significant violence related matters fall within the purview of these corrupt practices.

Article 219(e) of the Constitution further allows the Parliament to legislate on the conduct of elections in Pakistan, and the ECP is supposed to carry out those functions as delegated to them by the Parliament. This is crucial, as the purpose of this report is to identify the ECP's cognizance relating to electoral violence related incidents under the Elections Act, 2017. The Articles 218 and 219 form the constitutional basis for the legislation of the Elections Act 2017, and the erstwhile Representation of Peoples Act, 1976.

Chapter X of the Elections Act, 2017 specifically deals with trial of certain offenses and the powers it the ECP has in relation to the offenses. Section 190(2) of the Elections Act allows for the authorities to take cognizance of the corrupt and illegal practices on complaint by the ECP. Section 193 also specifically empowers authorized officers of the ECP to take cognizance and conduct summary trials while exercising the powers of a magistrate for a violation of personation of capturing of polling station or polling booth, along with other offenses under the Pakistan Penal Code, as defined under Section 190.

Under Section 167 of the Act, 'corrupt practices' have been defined as an offense. These specifically include violent acts, such as exercising undue influence, capturing polling stations or polling booths etc. Section 174 also awards a penalty for carrying out these corrupt practices with imprisonment up to 3 years and fine up to 100,000 rupees, or both.

Furthermore, Section 170 of the Elections Act also outlines what constitutes 'undue influence'. This includes the threat or use of violence and force, injury, damage, loss, abduction, duress etc. All these acts of violence have been integral to mapping out district-based violence in this report, and it is crucial to note that the ECP is empowered in this behalf to take cognizance of these offenses.

Additionally, Section 175 of the Elections Act deals with 'illegal practices' which include disorderly conduct near polling stations, interference with the secrecy of voting, carrying, or displaying firearms or weapons during the campaign period, on polling day and 24 hours after polling day. It also delineates resorting to aerial firing, firecrackers, and other explosives used in or near polling stations. Violence against any election official in any form is also part of this section as an illegal practice. Section 183 defines the penalty for these illegal practices as defined under Section 175, and they extend to two years or a fine of 100,000 rupees, or both.

Similarly, before the 2017 Act, the Representation of Peoples Act, 1976 was in force. For the three elections this report covers, two of them, namely 2008 and 2013, were conducted under the framework set under the Representation of Peoples Act. Under the Representation of Peoples Act 1976, Chapter VIII deals with corrupt and illegal practices, including undue influence and its significant sub-types, similarly to the Chapter X of the Elections Act.

It is also crucial to note that there is significant workforce and human resource that goes into preparation for elections. This includes hiring, training, and positioning of human resources for elections. The ECP itself employs a significant number of staff. Primarily, the ECP has a vast network of offices across all districts. The Central Secretariat for the ECP is in Islamabad and is headed by the Chief Election Commissioner along with the Secretary, ECP, along with several Joint Secretaries. The Joint Secretaries are assisted by Deputy Secretaries and Section Officers. A similar structure also exists as the Provincial level, wherein the provincial set-up is headed by the Provincial Election Commissioner, who is assisted by Joint Provincial Election Commissioners, and a few Deputy/Assistant Provincial Election Commissioners. They are also supported by Election Officials at the district level.

The ECP is also responsible for this entire exercise of conducting the elections, wherein scores of personnel are hired, trained, and appointed. A cursory look at the year-wise reports suggests this number to be in excess of half a million personnel per election. As per the 2008 report, there were almost 63,645 presiding officers, 328,825 assistant presiding officers, 169,213 polling officers, and 13,421 *naib qasids* deputed with female presiding officers. This brings the total number of electoral staff for 2008 to 575,104 personnel.[26] Similarly, for 2013, 69,801 presiding officers, 381,718 assistant presiding officers, along with 193,459 polling officers were appointed. This brings the total number of

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[26] General Elections Report, 2008, Volume - I, *Election Commission of Pakistan* <https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/ger-3.pdf>

personnel for 2013 to 644,978.[27] Furthermore, reports suggest that this number increased to 735,000 in the 2018 general elections.[28]

6. Electoral Violence Trends in the 2008, 2013, and 2018 General Elections

Electoral violence poses a persistent challenge to the democratic process in Pakistan. This comparative analysis aims to discern patterns, changes, and consistencies in electoral violence across three major general elections—2008, 2013, and 2018. The objective is to identify key findings, prevalent types of violence, affected regions, and evolving trends over these elections.

Across all three elections, certain common themes emerge, reflecting deep-rooted challenges within Pakistan's electoral landscape. Notably ethnic and political rivalries and terrorist threats are recurring themes across all three elections.

6.1. Ethnic and Political Rivalries

Ethnic and political rivalries consistently contributed to electoral violence. These rivalries often escalated into targeted attacks on leaders and workers, creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity.

During the 2008 and 2013 elections ethnic violence was a significant contributor to electoral violence, particularly in Karachi. The reason behind this is deep-rooted ethnic divisions in Karachi, which has a diverse population with prominent ethnic communities, including Muhajirs, Sindhis, Punjabis, and Pashtuns. Historical tensions and grievances among these ethnic communities, coupled with the struggle for resources and political representation, contributed to a volatile environment.

Whereas in 2018 elections, political rivalry was the major contributor of electoral violence. Political party violence, particularly on election day, constituted a substantial portion. Targeted attacks by political rivals were common, reflecting intense political competition.

Political rivalries escalated into targeted killings, with a notable focus on ethnic divisions.

6.2. Terrorist Threat

Terrorism, particularly orchestrated by groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), remained a prevalent and evolving threat. Terrorist attacks aimed at disrupting the electoral process and creating fear emerged as a distinct challenge. Terrorism, especially in KPK and Balochistan, emerged as a major threat in the 2018 elections.

6.3. Affected Regions

Across the three elections, Karachi comes out as the most affected region which witnessed ethnic clashes and targeted political violence, with surges in terrorist attacks. Balochistan

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[27] General Elections Report, 2013, Volume - I, *Election Commission of Pakistan* <https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/ger-1.pdf>

[28] "ECP receives 635,000 names for 2018 polling staff" Published 26th March, 2017 in *DAWN* < https://www.dawn.com/news/1322896>

experienced incidents primarily related to nationalist movements which resulted in terrorist attacks. This reflects a complex security concern in Balochistan. KPK and Balochistan were disproportionately affected, with terrorism and political party violence. Rawalpindi in Punjab experienced notable political clashes.

7. Electoral Violence in 2008 General Elections

The 2008 elections in Pakistan were marked by significant incidents of electoral violence. In the past, electoral violence has been relatively contained, with a minimal impact on the overall quality of elections. However, the lead-up to the 2008 elections was marked by several tragic incidents, including the assassination of a critical political leader, former PM Benazir Bhutto. There were patterns across different provinces and districts in Pakistan, particularly during the pre-election, election day, and post-election stages that have been mapped out hereunder to give a nuanced picture of the 2008 elections.

7.1. Number of Incidents of Electoral Violence Per 100,000 People in Each Province

To analyze and to gauge intensity of the violence, a ratio of violent attacks per 100,000 people is calculated for all provinces.

Formula: *(Number of incidents/population of the province) x 100,000*

Province	Number of Attacks	Population '000 (1998 Census)	Attacks/100,000
Balochistan	132	3,176	4.16
KPK	150	6,566	2.28
Punjab	38	73,621	0.51
FATA	82	17,744	0.46
Sindh	49	30,440	0.16

7.2.   Mapping Electoral Violence Stagewise

As per the data, there is an observably distinct distribution of electoral violence across the three phases of the electoral process. The data in figure 1.1 depicts that the majority - which is about 59% of total incidents - occurred in the pre-election period, indicating significant challenges leading up to the elections. 31% of incidents were reported in the post-election phase, while the election day experienced the least violence, and even that was restricted primarily around polling stations, highlighting increased tensions during the voting process.

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE ACROSS ELECTORAL PHASES
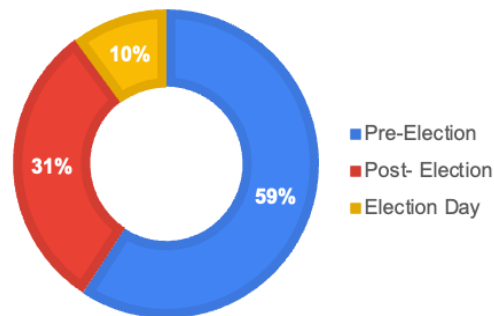
Fig. 1.1 Electoral Violence Across Different Phases (2008)

7.3.   Province-Wise Electoral Violence

Breaking down the numbers by province, the electoral violence poses a significant challenge in KPK and Balochistan. The data reflected in figure 1.2 shows that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) stands out with the highest number of incidents, totaling 150, making up about 33% of the total incidents. Followed closely by Balochistan, with 132 incidents, FATA having reported a total of 82 incidents, Sindh reporting 49 incidents, and Punjab, despite being the most populous province, reporting a relatively lower overall number of incidents amounting to a total of 38.
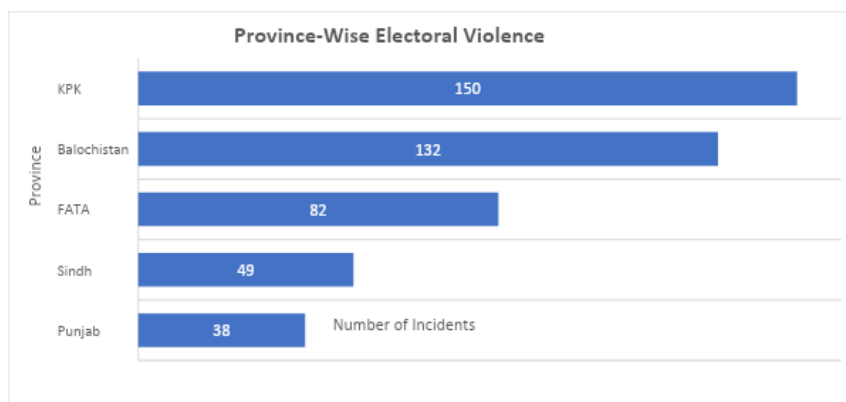
Fig. 1.2 Province Wise Electoral Violence (2008)

7.4.   Electoral Violence by Province and Electoral Stage

Electoral violence across different provinces at the three identified phases of the electoral process is mapped in the data figure 1.3. Balochistan experienced a substantial level of violence,

particularly during the pre-election phase, with 93 incidents, contributing significantly to its grand total of 132.
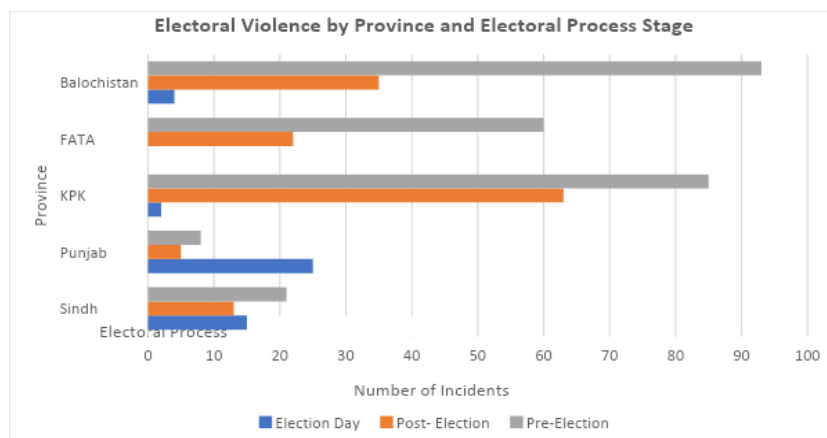
Fig. 1.3 Province Wise Electoral Violence at Different Stages

On Election Day, Balochistan faced very few incidents, and post-election violence was reported in 35 instances. This highlights a persistent challenge in the province during the entire electoral cycle, where the pre-election phase is visibly the most challenging.

In FATA, events of electoral violence were observed across pre-election and post-election phases. Pre-election incidents were particularly high at 60 instances, indicating heightened tensions before the conduct of the elections.

The data for KPK reveals a relatively lower level of violence on Election Day with only 2 incidents, but relatively similar levels of volatility were witnessed in both pre-elections, having 85 incidents, and post-election having 63 incidents, resulting in a total of 150 incidents overall.

Punjab witnessed a relatively lower overall number of incidents totaling 38, with the majority occurring on Election Day, amounting 25 incidents. This suggests a more stable pre-election and post-election environment in comparison to other provinces, however, it is pertinent to note that Punjab has the most critical election day out of all the provinces.

Sindh, on the other hand, had a notable level of pre-election violence, totaling 21 incidents, contributing to its grand total of 49 incidents. The distribution of violence across stages in Sindh is more balanced compared to other provinces. However, Sindh, like Punjab, also witnessed a disproportionate amount of violence on election day. Of all the provinces mapped out, Punjab and Sindh visibly have more accidents occurring on election day which is a notable concern.

7.5. District-Wise Mapping of Electoral Violence
The data given in figure 1.4 shows the spread of most vulnerable districts across Pakistan with Kohat at the top of the list, followed by Quetta and Dera Bugti. It is pertinent to note that these

top 3 most vulnerable districts were all from Balochistan. These were followed by Swat and Peshawar from KPK, South Waziristan from FATA, and Karachi from Sindh.
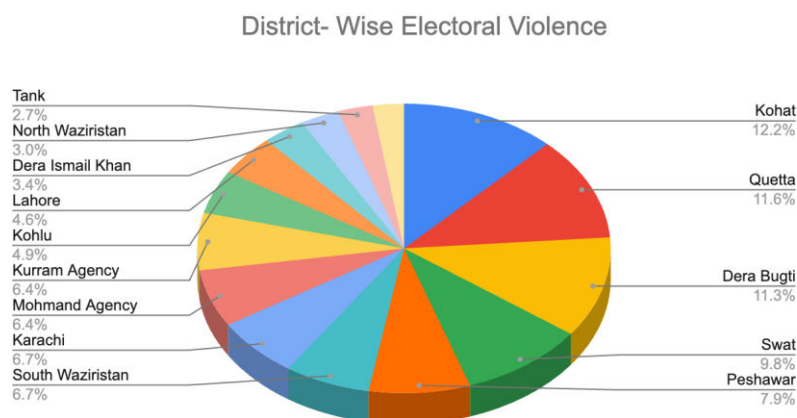
Fig. 1.4 Most Vulnerable Districts (2008)

7.5.1. Kohat

Amongst all the districts mapped, Kohat emerged as the most vulnerable in 2008. Electoral process therein has been marked by a substantial number of violent incidents, with 40 reported in the pre-election phase. The perpetrators of these attacks were largely composed of unknown militants and Local Taliban groups who targeted civilians, government offices and infrastructure. Attack tactics used reveals that Kohat is most vulnerable to Rocket Attacks and Improvised Explosive Devices, indicating a level of sophistication and strategic planning by perpetrators. Other lethal attacks involved methods like suicide bombings and remote-controlled blasts, resulting in numerous casualties and injuries. The security/law enforcement agencies faced continuous assaults, including firing and grenade attacks on checkpoints. Moreover, political parties were not immune either, or were indiscriminately targeted as well. Unknown militants contributed to the turmoil, attacking CD shops, private property, and government infrastructure using explosive devices and crackers. The diversity of targets, ranging from civilians to security forces, coupled with the involvement of various perpetrators, including the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), paints a complex and challenging picture of the security landscape in Kohat during this period. Additionally, less frequent but diverse attack tactics, including suicide attacks, kidnapping, cracker incidents, firing, and hand grenade attacks, highlight a dynamic security environment with various sophisticated threats.

7.5.2. Quetta

In the pre-election phase, Quetta, Balochistan experienced a series of politically motivated and ethnically charged incidents. The pre-election phase saw clashes in Kandhari Bazar between police and protesters associated with the All-Parties Democratic Movement (APDM), resulting in injuries and property damage. Simultaneously, a remote-controlled landmine targeted security personnel in Dera Bugti. Sabzal Road witnessed a bomb blast near a designated polling station, underscoring the volatile atmosphere and the threats to the electoral infrastructure.

On Election Day, 2 attacks were reported at polling stations in Quetta targeted with a bomb blast and a hand grenade attack. Post-election, violence escalated with attacks on gas pipelines by a militant group, Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), and subsequent rocket and cracker attacks. Multiple incidents targeted government offices, public property, and civilians.

The post-election period was marked by an array of tactics, including hand grenade attacks, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), firing, and rocket attacks. These incidents were attributed to nationalist insurgents and unidentified militants, reflecting a complex and multifaceted security landscape. The situation culminated in an ethnic clash in Killi Ismail, where three traffic personnel were fatally shot by BLA. Subsequently, security personnel were injured in another IED attack, highlighting the persistent security challenges and political tensions in Quetta during this period.

7.5.3.   Dera Bugti

Dear Bugti, Balochistan experienced all the violence during the pre-election stage. In the period leading up to the elections on December 29, 2007, a wave of orchestrated violence unfolded, primarily attributed to the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Republican Army (BRA) in this area. The strategic targeting of infrastructure, especially gas pipelines, was a recurrent theme. The BLA employed Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and rocket attacks on gas pipelines, aiming to disrupt not only the energy supply but also create an atmosphere of instability. Additionally, power pylons and cell phone towers were subjected to rocket attacks. The BRA contributed to the turmoil by deploying IEDs to damage government buildings, tube wells, and power pylons. The attacks extended beyond infrastructure, with political leaders and workers becoming targets, exemplified by an incident where an improvised explosive device targeted a pro-government tribal elder, resulting in civilian casualties. The pre-election violence further escalated with attacks on security and law enforcement agencies, including rocket attacks on camps and firing incidents, leading to multiple casualties and vehicular destruction. This sustained and coordinated campaign of violence aimed at key elements of infrastructure, security forces, and political figures highlights the unstable and strained atmosphere in Dera Bugti during this pre-election period.

7.5.4.   Swat

In the pre-election phase, on February 16, 2008, in Mingora, Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), the region experienced a series of violent incidents, primarily instigated by unknown militants. A suicide bomber targeted an army media center and base near Gul Kadda, resulting in two civilian deaths and 14 injuries. The attack involved the bomber crashing a car into the army facility. The violence further continued on February 17, with a militant being killed near the Kanju Police Station as security forces caught individuals engaged in planting explosives at a polling station. Additionally, in the Matta area, there was an attack with remote-controlled devices, showcasing the militants' focus on disrupting the electoral process.

The post-election period saw a surge in attacks by local Taliban factions in Swat, targeting civilians, political figures, and security forces. Tactics included hand grenade attacks, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), rocket attacks, and suicide bombings. Significantly, an army convoy was the target of a suicide bomber during a funeral procession, leading to considerable civilian casualties and the destruction of vehicles. The varied nature of these attacks, which included suicide bombings and targeted assassinations, highlights the intricate security issues encountered in Swat during this period of unrest.

7.5.5. Peshawar

After the elections on February 18, 2008, in Peshawar, KPK, there was a surge in violent incidents and terrorist attacks. These attacks were reported to be planned by local Taliban and other unknown militant groups, and they targeted a wide range of places and groups. Religious sites, shrines, and madrassas were hit with improvised explosive devices, damaging important places like the Malang Baba shrine. Private properties faced similar attacks, with rocket attacks and bombings causing destruction to businesses and civilian infrastructure. Security check posts and law enforcement agencies were targeted with rocket attacks, causing injuries and damage. Attacks on gas pipelines, power pylons, and cell phone towers disrupted important services. The situation was made worse by a suicide attack on civilians and fights between different ethnic groups. The attacks used a range of methods, like rockets, improvised explosive devices, and suicide bombings, showing how complex and unstable the security situation was in the region at that time.

7.5.6. South Waziristan

Following the post-election period on March 1, 2008, in South Waziristan, FATA, the region witnessed a surge in terrorist attacks and ethnic violence perpetrated by unknown militants and the local Taliban. The attacks primarily targeted security and law enforcement agencies, with incidents ranging from the kidnapping of two scouts to rocket attacks and firing on civilian populations. The violence escalated on March 5, with a series of rocket attacks resulting in casualties, damage to army camps, and the destruction of a Frontier Corps (FC) fort. The militants employed various tactics, including improvised explosive devices and hand grenades. The situation further intensified with the kidnapping of four scouts on March 5 and the abduction of five Christians on March 6, both incidents reflecting the brazenness and audacity of the militant groups operating in the area. The clashes between the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Uzbek militants, along with the successful rescue of the kidnapped Christians by law enforcement agencies, underscored the complex and volatile security landscape in South Waziristan during this post-election period.

7.5.7. Karachi

As the 2008 elections in Karachi, Sindh, approached, the city experienced a turbulent and violent atmosphere marked by a series of incidents involving security forces, political parties, and unidentified militants. The events included rocket attacks on security personnel, firing incidents between rival political groups, and targeted attacks on political leaders and workers. The clashes, particularly between the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP), resulted in casualties and vehicles being torched. The situation escalated on February 17, 2008, with violence erupting during protests for the restoration of

the judiciary, leading to injuries, vehicle burnings, and fatalities. The political unrest continued with targeted assassinations of political leaders, further fueling violence in ANP strongholds. Election day on February 18 witnessed attacks on PPP rallies and workers, with clashes between MQM and PPP reported. Post-election, the violence persisted, with scuffles between MQM and PPP workers resulting in civilian casualties. The situation reached a tragic turn on March 3, 2008, when two police officers involved in counterterrorism activities were shot dead by unidentified gunmen. The unfolding events highlight the unpredictable and intricate nature of Karachi's political scene during the periods before and after the elections. The instability was fueled by a combination of rivalries between political parties, ethnic conflicts, and targeted attacks.

The chart in figure 1.5 maps out incidents in 15 most vulnerable districts across the three stages of the electoral process.

Vulnerable Districts	Pre-Election	Post- Election	Election Day	Total
Kohat	40	0	0	**40**
Quetta	4	32	2	**38**
Dera Bugti	37	0	0	**37**
Swat	3	29	0	**32**
Peshawar	0	24	2	**26**
South Waziristan	0	22	0	**22**
Karachi	17	2	3	**22**
Mohmand Agency	21	0	0	**21**
Kurram Agency	21	0	0	**21**
Kohlu	16	0	0	**16**
Lahore	7	0	8	**15**
D.I Khan	11	0	0	**11**
North Waziristan	10	0	0	**10**
Tank	0	9	0	**9**
Jafarabad	8	0	0	**8**

Fig. 1.5 Most Vulnerable Districts (2008)

7.6. Types of Violence Recorded

The numerous incidents that took place amounted to varying forms of violence, including terrorist attacks, political party clashes, sectarian tensions, and ethnic unrest, at different stages of the electoral process. The prevalence of each, as indicated in the data in figure 1.6, is demonstrated by the percentage distribution.

It reveals that terrorist attacks and political party violence were the most common types of violence, accounting for a significant 75.8 % and 17.1 %, respectively, while sectarian and ethnic violence were less common, making up 2.9 % and 1.8 % of the total, respectively.
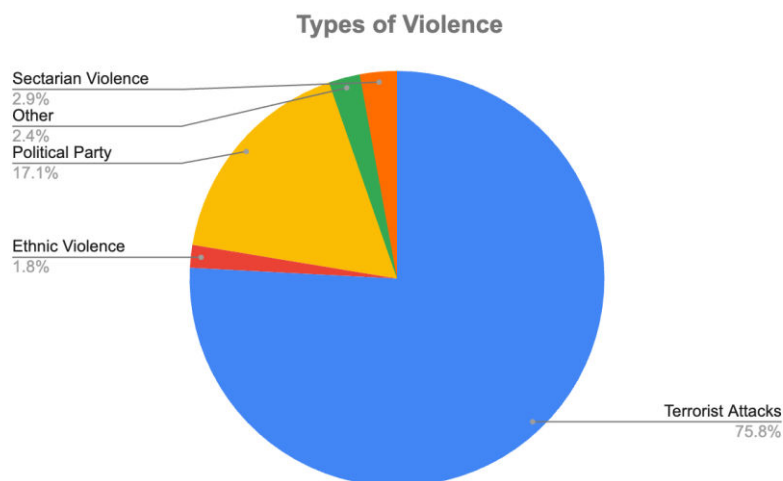
Types of Violence

Fig. 1.6 Types of Violence in the Most Vulnerable Districts (2008)

The pre-election period, marked predominantly by terrorist attacks, saw districts such as Charsadda, D.I Khan, and Dera Bugti grappling with multiple incidents. Khuzdar, on the other hand, faced violence related to political party activities. D.I Khan also witnessed sectarian violence.

On Election Day, areas like Bahawalpur, Dadu, and Karachi experienced political party-related violence, while Lahore and Quetta were hit by terrorist attacks.

The potential root causes for these varied incidents range from political rivalries and ideological differences to ethnic tensions, with the perpetrators varying from terrorist groups to individuals linked to political entities.

7.6.1. Entity Responsible

Given that terrorist attacks constitute the majority of incidents associated with electoral violence, the given data in figure 1.7 illustrates the specific terrorist or militant organizations accountable for orchestrating these attacks. This visual representation aids in understanding which groups maintain the highest levels of activity. For instance, in 2008, Local Taliban emerged as a major threat, constituting 33.3% of the overall threat, with a primary focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).
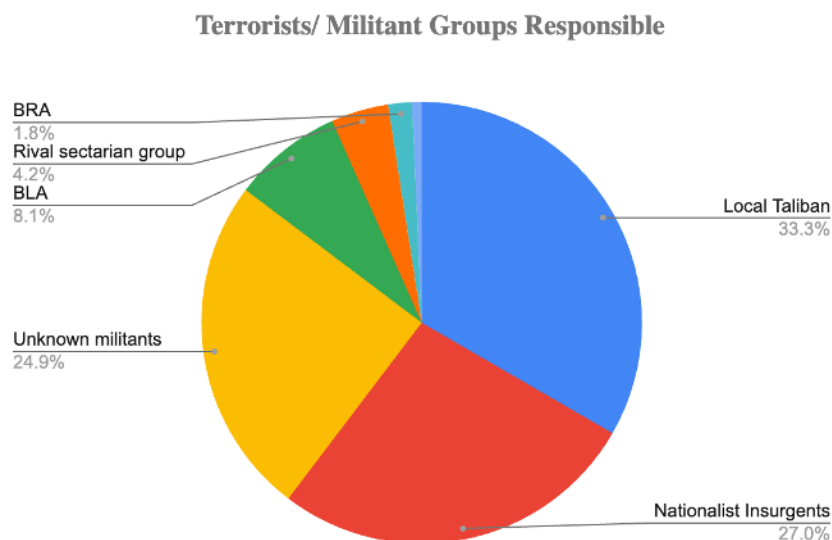
Fig. 1.7 Terrorist/Militant Groups Responsible for Terrorist Violence (2008)

Their extensive range of targets, including security forces, civilians, political workers, government officials, CD shops, and worship places, highlights the severity of their impact, utilizing tactics such as suicide bombings, rocket attacks, landmines, and heavy weaponry.

Following closely were Nationalist Insurgents at 27.0%, predominantly composed of Baloch separatist factions such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Republican Army (BRA), with a focus on Balochistan and occasional forays into Sindh. The BLA, accounting for 8.1%, specifically targeted critical infrastructure, while the BRA contributed 1.8%.

Rival Sectarian Groups, responsible for 4.2% of attacks, fueled sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni communities in FATA and KPK, targeting civilians, religious scholars, and places of worship.

The category of Unknown Militants at 2.4% introduced an element of obscurity, engaging in terrorism across provinces like Punjab, Sindh, KPK, and FATA, targeting political figures, security forces, civilians, CD shops, government offices, and polling stations.

8.   Electoral Violence in 2013 General Elections
8.1. Number of Incidents of Electoral Violence Per 100,000 People in Each Province
For the purpose of analysis and to gauge intensity of the violence, a ratio of violent attacks per 100,000 people is calculated for all provinces.

Formula: *(Number of incidents/population of the province) x 100,000*

Province	Number of Attacks	Population '000 (1998 Census)	Attacks/100,000
Balochistan	60	6,566	0.91
FATA	13	3,176	0.40
KPK	57	17,744	0.32
Sindh	86	30,440	0.28
Punjab	14	73,621	0.01

Summarily, the greatest number of violence related incidents in the 2013 elections was recorded in Sindh as reflected in the data in figure 2.1. However, as per the ratio per capita, Balochistan remained the most violent province. This is closely followed by KPK and FATA where incidents per capita ratio was significantly higher than Sindh and Punjab, which had relatively lower ratios of electoral violence incidents per capita.
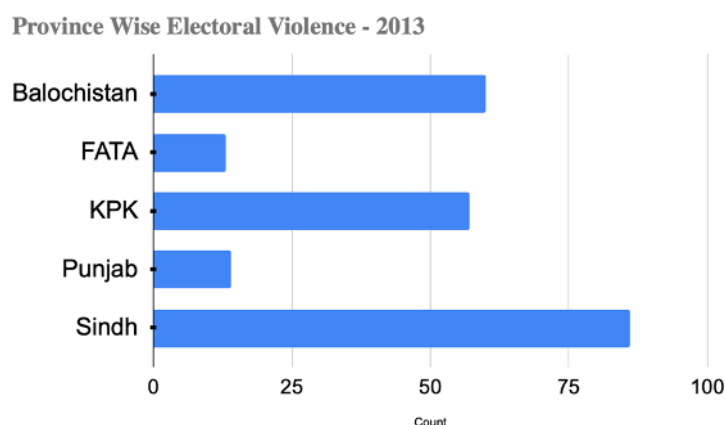
Fig. 2.1 Province-Wise Electoral Violence (2013)

The data seeks to map out districts in which electoral violence was most frequent. Therefore, within the provinces, Karachi in Sindh, Quetta in Balochistan, and Peshawar in KPK have been mapped out as three most vulnerable districts. It is pertinent to note here that the three most violent districts in the three most violent Provinces are provincial capitals.

The data in figure 2.2 maps out the top 15 most violent districts in Pakistan in elections 2013. The top 15 districts have been chosen with a minimum of 3 or more incidents in a district. A total of 158 incidents have been recorded in these 15 districts. Out of the multiple districts outlined in this pie chart below which pertains to lethal and non-lethal incidents of electoral violence, Karachi stands out as the most vulnerable district. Following suit are Quetta and Kech

in Balochistan, along with Peshawar, Charsadda, Mardan, and Swabi in KPK. For elections 2013, focus will lay mainly on Karachi and a joint analysis of other provinces will follow.

ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN 2013

Panjgur 1.9%
Nowshera 1.9%
Swat 1.9%
North Waziristan... 1.9%
Nasirabad 2.5%
Khuzdar 2.5%
Hyderabad 2.5%
Mardan 3.8%
Kech 3.8%
Swabi 4.4%
Charsadda 5.1%
Peshawar 6.3%
Quetta 7.0%

Karachi 46.8%

74
11
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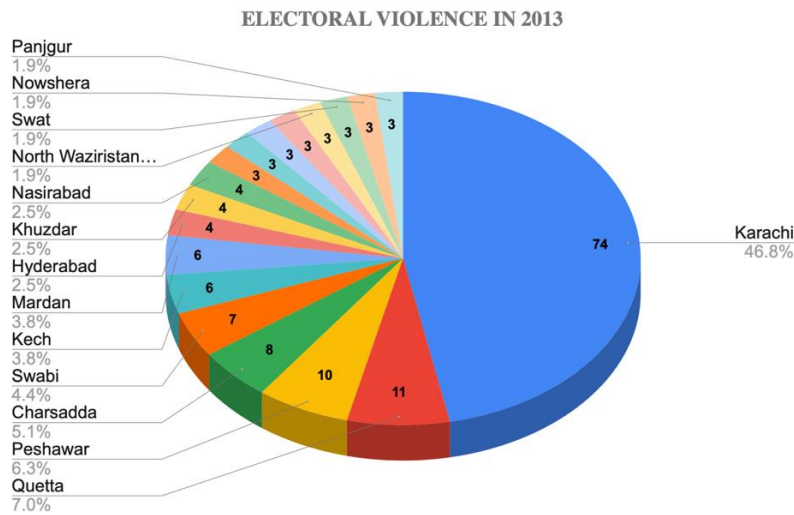
Fig. 2.2 District Wise Electoral Violence in Pakistan 2013

Furthermore, the chart in figure 2.3 depicts the types of incidents that have taken place in the entire set of reported incidents throughout Pakistan in 2013. All types are subtypes of electoral violence, however, in 2013 across all districts in Pakistan, terrorist attacks form the bulk of electoral violence, with almost 58% of all incidents being terrorist attacks by militants. This is closely followed by ethnic violence, and violence by political parties seems to make up the least amount of electoral violence events. Other sorts of violence are a combination of sectarian, gender, and religious incidents which are better represented as a category of their own as the amounts individually are negligible.

Types of Electoral Violence

Sectarian Violence 2.2%
Ethnic Violence 26.0%
Politcal Party 6.5%
Other 9.5%

Terrorist Attack by Militants 55.8%

5
60
129
22
15

Fig. 2.3 Type of Electoral Violence (2013)

Since terrorist attacks make up the bulk of the types of incidents related to electoral violence, the chart in figure 2.4 depicts the individual terrorist or militant organizations responsible for conducting the attacks. This allows us to better gauge what terrorist organization remains most active, for example in 2013, the TTP was the most active terrorist group carrying out acts of electoral violence in Pakistan. Although individual nationalist insurgent parties create the bulk of attacks other than TTP, it is quite evident from the data that mainly Baloch-Nationalist insurgents, such as the BLA, BRA, BLF, and the Lashkar-e-Balochistan, have been actively carrying out incidents of electoral violence in Pakistan. Attacks by Baloch-Nationalist insurgents pertain only to districts of Balochistan, whereas the TTP has conducted attacks in all other provinces.
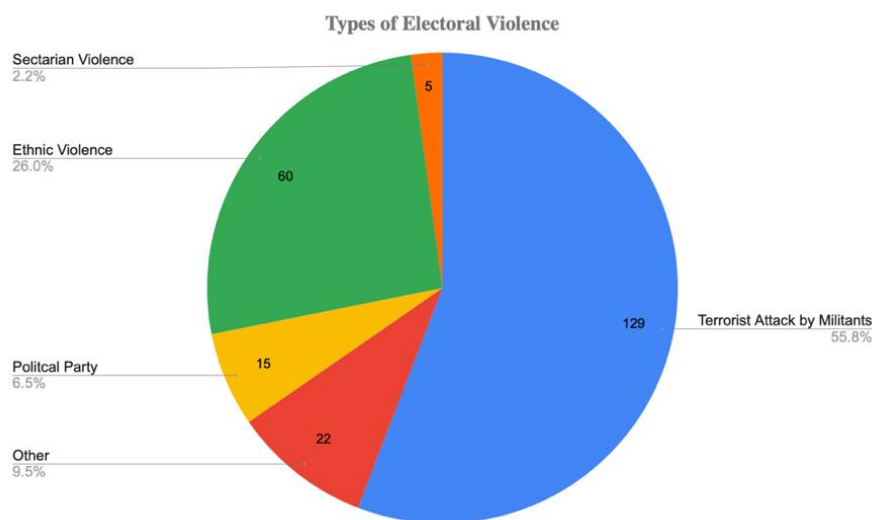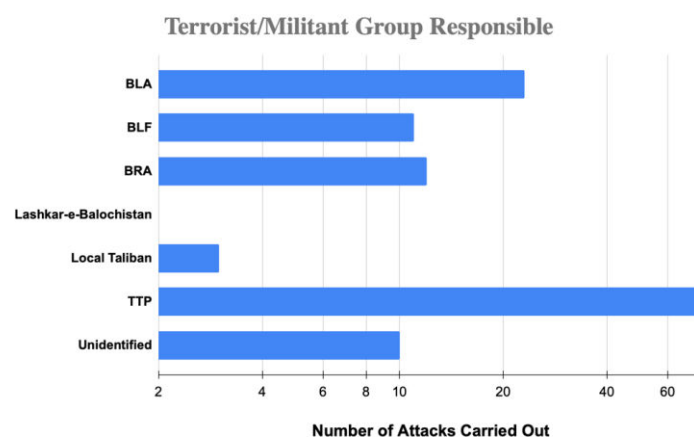

Fig. 2.4 Terrorist/Militant Groups Responsible (2013)

8.2. Karachi

The 2013 elections in Karachi were marked by a disturbing trend of electoral violence, with a total of 74 reported incidents. Most susceptible areas in Karachi include Orangi Town, Baldia, Lyaari, and Korangi Town, with almost 14 incidents occurring in these areas.

Pre-Election Stage

The pre-election stage in Karachi, constituting a voluminous 48 incidents, emerges as a tumultuous period dominated by ethnicity-based violence. This category of violence predominantly arose from the deep-seated rivalries between political groups in Karachi. A striking revelation is that almost all pre-election and post-election events were associated with ethnicity-based violence, underlining the profound impact of ethnic dynamics on the electoral landscape.

8.2.1. Causes of Ethnic Violence

The primary cause behind this wave of pre-election ethnic violence was the intense rivalry between political groups, particularly along ethnic lines. Karachi's political landscape has long been characterized by ethnic divisions, and these rivalries manifested in a series of targeted attacks against leaders and workers of rival factions. In so far as ethnic violence is concerned, events pertain to rival ethnicities based on whether you are a Sindhi, a Balochi, a Muhajir (Immigrant) etc. Since Karachi is a diverse metropolitan city, different ethnicities are not

uncommon. Rivalries based on those ethnicities certainly do exist, and during electoral periods, a surge in the clashes resultant of these rivalries is witnessed.

The intensity of ethnic violence during this stage was marked by targeted killings, with death tolls generally ranging from 1 to 3 casualties per incident. This suggests a strategic approach aimed at eliminating key figures rather than inflicting widespread harm.

8.2.2. Perpetrators of Ethnic Violence
Rival political groups were identified as the primary perpetrators of ethnic violence during the pre-election period. These include clashes between MQM and the PPP, and the most commonly used attack tactic included firing to gun-down opposition leaders and workers, creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity in the run-up to the elections.

8.2.3. Terrorist Attacks: A Distinct Threat
Apart from ethnicity-based violence, the pre-election stage witnessed 16 incidents categorized as terrorist attacks. These incidents presented a distinct threat, employing tactics such as IEDs and hand grenades. Notably, all these attacks were attributed to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), indicating the involvement of organized terrorist and militant groups in destabilizing the electoral environment.

8.2.4. Causes of Terrorist Attacks
The causes behind these terrorist attacks were markedly different from ethnicity-based violence. Motivated by a broader agenda, these attacks aimed to disrupt the electoral process and create fear through more destructive means. Since such militant/terrorist organizations are "banned political outfits", which means that they cannot contest elections. Consequently, gaining any sort of electoral advantage as a result of perpetrating these attacks is highly unlikely, and they are used as a means to disrupt the electoral process overall and to weaken democracy.

8.2.5. Intensity of Terrorist Attacks
The intensity of terrorist attacks was notably higher than the intensity in political rivalries, with casualties averaging from 5 to 11 per case and, in some cases, exceeding 45 in one sectarian-related incident. This elevated intensity suggests a higher level of strategic planning and potentially the involvement of well-organized militant groups. The intensity of such attacks also suggests that there is a lack of specificity in the target of these terror attacks. They range from targeting political parties, leaders, local people uninvolved in the elections, children etc. Even political parties are targeted indiscriminately, which suggests that there is no specific electoral advantage the terrorist outfits seek to derive out of these activities.

8.2.6. Perpetrators of Terrorist Attacks
All terrorist attacks during the pre-election stage were attributed to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), highlighting the role of external militant elements in instigating violence during this critical phase.

Election Day

On election day itself, 12 reported incidents presented a shift in tactics. Most incidents were attributed to unidentified assailants, while others were categorized as either terrorist attacks or political clashes.

8.2.7. Causes on Election Day

The involvement of unidentified assailants on election day suggests a level of anonymity and potential subversion of the electoral process. Additionally, political clashes may be attributed to heightened tensions and competition between various political entities. The issue with unidentified assailants is that no one can say for sure who has solicited their expertise to carry out attacks. In Pakistan, it is not uncommon for political parties to have militant wings that they seemingly condemn and dissociate from but are used as underhanded tactics to do their illegal deeds. On election day, it is evident that parties cannot afford political clashes between their workers as that may allow for the Election Commission to act against the perpetrators in a formal manner. It is then a plausible conclusion that although unidentified, the persons carrying out such attacks during election day have a certain agenda in mind and are unofficially naked by some political party.

8.2.8. Intensity on Election Day

The intensity of incidents on election day varied. Among the most violent attacks on election day in Karachi was a bomb blast in Landhi, in which 45 citizens, including children, were injured and 11 were killed. The culprits for the attack in Landhi also remain unidentified. Similarly, ranger personnel were targeted and killed during election day in the Manghopir area of Karachi district, killing 2 rangers and injuring several others. Other attacks pertained to the use of tactics to scare off voters from polling stations, and violent physical attacks on some political leaders.

Post-Election Stage

The post-election phase in Karachi reported 18 incidents exclusively related to ethnic violence, primarily targeting political party leaders and workers. Strikingly, 9 out of these incidents specifically targeted leaders and workers affiliated with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), emphasizing the lingering ethnic tensions even after the conclusion of the electoral process.

8.2.9. Causes in the Post-Election Stage

The continuation of ethnic violence post-election underscores the deep-seated nature of rivalries and the challenges in achieving post-election stability. The causes of post-election violence in Karachi are rooted in historical animosities, as aforementioned, that persist despite the electoral process due to Karachi being an ethnically diverse metropolitan city.

8.2.10. Intensity in the Post-Election Stage

The intensity of post-election incidents remained a concern, with most events of violence being targeted killings of political leaders and workers. Up to 19 political workers and leaders were target killed during the post-election period. This extreme number of targeted killings calls for a better security landscape that needs to be put in place even beyond election day. For elections

to conclude smoothly, post-election security concerns become imperative, as it is evident from the data gathered for Karachi district.

8.2.11. Perpetrators in the Post-Election Stage

The post-election events exclusively related to ethnic violence point towards ongoing rivalries between political groups. The specific targeting of MQM leaders and workers highlights the intricacies of post-election power dynamics and the challenges in achieving a harmonious post-election environment. It is worthy to note here that terrorist attacks and unidentifiable attacks post elections witness a significant decrease, which shows how parties strategically avoid any outright clashes on election day.

8.3. Quetta

In Balochistan, Quetta, during the pre-election period from April 13 to May 10, 2013, a concerning pattern of terrorist attacks unfolded, revealing distinct characteristics in terms of tactics, targets, and responsible groups. A total of 11 attacks were reported in Quetta during this time period. The attacks were mostly involving IEDs, hand grenade assaults, and even rocket fire. The utilization of IEDs and rocket fires suggests a higher level of sophistication in certain incidents, emphasizing the range of tactics employed by the assailants.

Political leaders, election offices, and polling stations were primary targets in these attacks. The attacks on political leaders' convoys and offices reflect a direct assault on the political landscape, while incidents targeting election offices and polling stations aimed to disrupt the electoral process itself.

Multiple militant groups, including the BLA, BLF, and TTP, were identified as perpetrators. This indicates a complex security environment with various regional and ideological motivations behind the attacks.

Civilian casualties, including injuries to political workers and children, were reported. The targeting of civilians underscores the indiscriminate nature of the attacks, affecting not only political figures but also innocent bystanders.

The pre-election stage emerged as a critical period especially for political leaders at the hands of militant groups in KPK.

8.4. Kech

In Kech, Balochistan, during the pre-election period from April 21 to May 10, 2013, a series of terrorist attacks unfolded. The attacks predominantly involved use of lethal weapons such as hand grenades and firing incidents.

Political figures and election-related targets such as polling stations and election convoys were primary targets of these attacks in Kech. The attacks on the houses of political leaders and the blast outside a polling station indicate a direct assault on both individuals and the electoral process.

Various militant groups were identified as responsible for the attacks. This diversity of groups reflects the complex security landscape in the region. These include nationalist insurgent parties like the Baloch Liberation Army, Lashkar-e-Balochistan, and the Baloch Republican Army, militant outfits, and other terrorist organizations.

All incidents occurred during the pre-election phase, signifying a concentrated effort to create fear, disrupt the electoral process, and specifically target political figures in the lead-up to the elections. The attacks resulted in civilian casualties, with injuries reported in several incidents. An armed attack on an election convoy on May 9 resulted in fatalities and multiple injuries.

In Kech, Balochistan, mostly political figures were targeted in pre-election attacks involving lethal attacks. Responsible groups included various militant organizations, highlighting the varied nature of threats in the region. The pre-election phase emerged as the most critical period. The attacks on election-related targets, such as polling stations and convoys, underscore the multifaceted challenges faced during electoral periods in the region.

8.5. Peshawar

Pre-Election Stage

During the pre-election stage in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, from April 11 to May 10, 2013, a grim pattern of terrorist attacks, primarily orchestrated by the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and local Taliban factions, unfolded. These attacks, ranging from improvised explosive device (IED) detonations to hand grenade (HG) assaults, targeted political leaders, election offices, and party offices, resulting in significant casualties. The most devastating incident on April 16, 2013, saw a suicide bombing during an election meeting, claiming 16 lives and injuring 40. Election and party offices were also subjected to IED attacks resulting in loss and damage to significant property.

Election Day

As the election day approached, bomb blasts outside polling stations added to the chaos, resulting in the loss of a young life, and injuring 21 people, including five policemen.

In summary, political leaders in Peshawar were most susceptible to pre-election attacks involving various tactics, primarily IEDs and suicide bombings, orchestrated by the TTP and local Taliban factions. Enhanced security measures and vigilance are imperative during this stage of the electoral process to mitigate the severe impact of such attacks.

8.6. Charsadda

Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, during the 2013 elections experienced a harrowing series of political violence incidents, underscoring the vulnerability of political leaders throughout the electoral process. These events, spanning only the pre-election period, showcased a pattern of targeted attacks orchestrated by militant elements, particularly the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The predominant types of attacks included improvised explosive device (IED) detonations and remote-controlled explosives, aimed at both residences and vehicles associated with

political leaders. These incidents escalated as the election approached, signifying a deliberate effort to instill fear and disrupt the electoral process. The data reveals that political leaders faced heightened susceptibility during the pre-election phase, with targeted attacks on their homes, indicating a strategic attempt to incapacitate key figures before the polls. The TTP's consistent claim of responsibility for these attacks underscores the organized and militant nature of the violence.

In essence, political leaders in Charsadda were most susceptible to pre-election attacks involving IEDs and remote-controlled explosives, orchestrated by militant groups like the TTP, emphasizing the critical need for enhanced security measures and strategic interventions during this vulnerable stage of the electoral process.

8.7. Swabi

In Swabi, KPK, during the pre-election period from March 30 to May 10, 2013, a series of terrorist attacks unfolded, indicating specific patterns in terms of tactics, targets, and responsible groups. The attacks involved a variety of lethal tactics, including firing, hand grenade assaults, and IEDs.

Political activists, election camps, public meetings, and election offices were the primary targets. The attacks were not limited to a specific type of target, reflecting a broad attempt to create fear and disrupt various aspects of the electoral process. The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was identified as the responsible group for these attacks. The consistent involvement of a single group indicates a centralized effort to destabilize the region during the pre-election phase.All incidents occurred during the pre-election phase, emphasizing a strategic effort to create instability leading up to the elections.

Civilian casualties were reported in several incidents, including injuries and fatalities. The attacks on political activists and public meetings resulted in both direct and collateral damage. For example, an incident on April 28, involving an explosive device planted in a motorcycle, resulted in the death of 13 civilians and one injury. Another attack on May 10, where an explosion took place in Mohallah Nazar Khel Maal Lara, resulted in one fatality and two injuries.

In Swabi, KPK, political activists, including ANP members, were targeted in pre-election attacks involving firing, hand grenades, and IEDs. The TTP consistently emerged as the responsible group, indicating a centralized effort to disrupt the electoral process.

9. Electoral Violence in 2018 General Elections

In the 2018 elections, electoral violence was notably concentrated in KPK and Balochistan, surpassing levels in Punjab and Sindh, as illustrated in figure 3.1. The analysis aims to identify districts with the highest incidence of electoral violence, pinpointing Peshawar, Banu, and Kohistan in KPK, Quetta in Balochistan, and Rawalpindi in Punjab as particularly vulnerable.
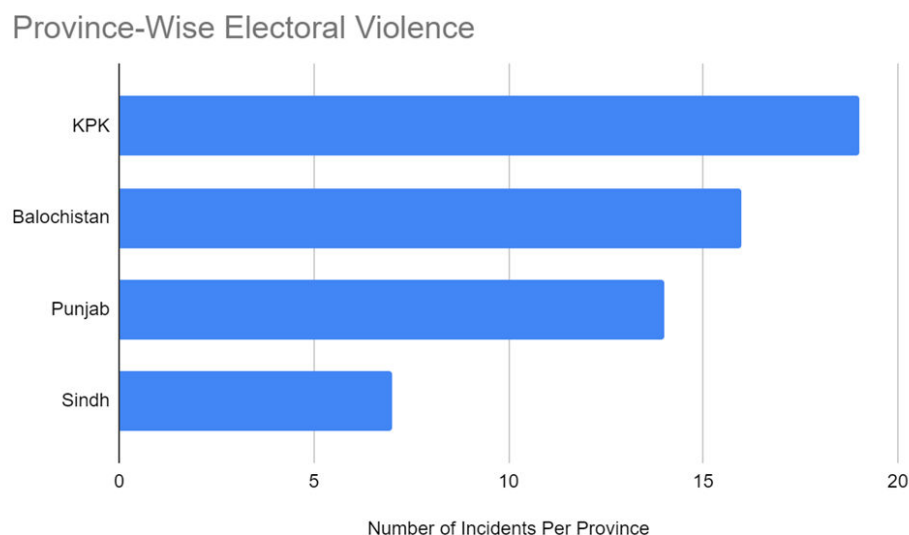
Fig. 3.1 Province Wise Electoral Violence (2018)

The data in figure 3.2 maps out 11 most violent districts in Pakistan during the 2018 elections. The top 11 districts have been chosen with a minimum of 2 or more incidents per district. A total of **26 incidents** have been recorded in these **11 districts**. Out of the multiple districts outlined in this column chart below which pertains to lethal and non-lethal incidents of electoral violence, Kohistan is the most violent with the highest percent of incidents of electoral violence per 100,000 people. Quetta, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Banu follow the lead being the most vulnerable districts. For the purpose of elections 2018, focus will lay mainly on the most vulnerable districts.
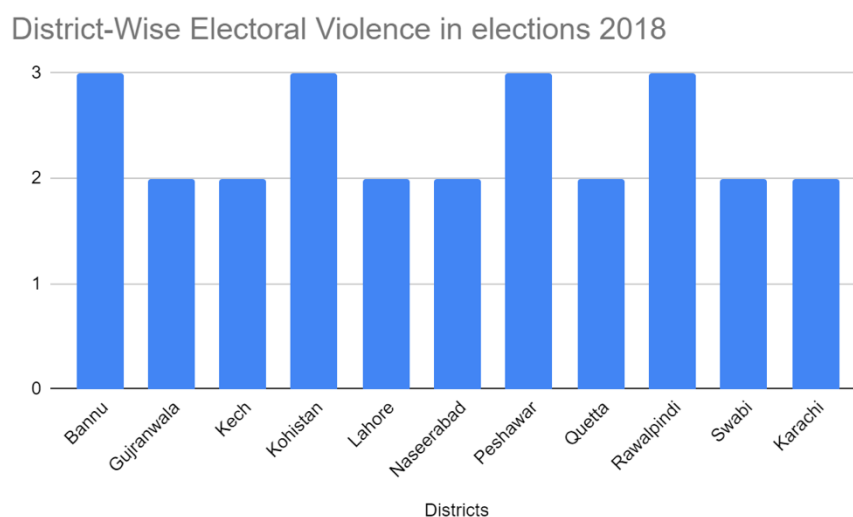
Fig. 3.2 Most Vulnerable Districts (2018)

9.1. Number of Incidents of Electoral Violence Per 100,000 People in Each Province

For the purpose of analysis and to gauge intensity of the violence, a ratio of violent attacks per 100,000 people is calculated for all provinces.

Province	Population '000 (2017 Census)	Attack/100,000
Balochistan	12, 335	0.13
KPK	30, 508	0.06
Sindh	47,854,	0.014
Punjab	109, 989	0.017

Furthermore, the data in figure 3.3 depicts the types of incidents that have taken place in the entire set of reported incidents of electoral violence throughout Pakistan in 2018. All types are subtypes of electoral violence. In elections 2018, across all districts, Political Party violence form the bulk of electoral violence, with almost 49.1% of all incidents being violence between rival Political Parties. This is followed by incidents of Terrorist Attacks which make up 40.0% of all incidents, while Ethnic Violence and Religious violence follow the lead with 9.1% and 1.8% of all incidents respectively.
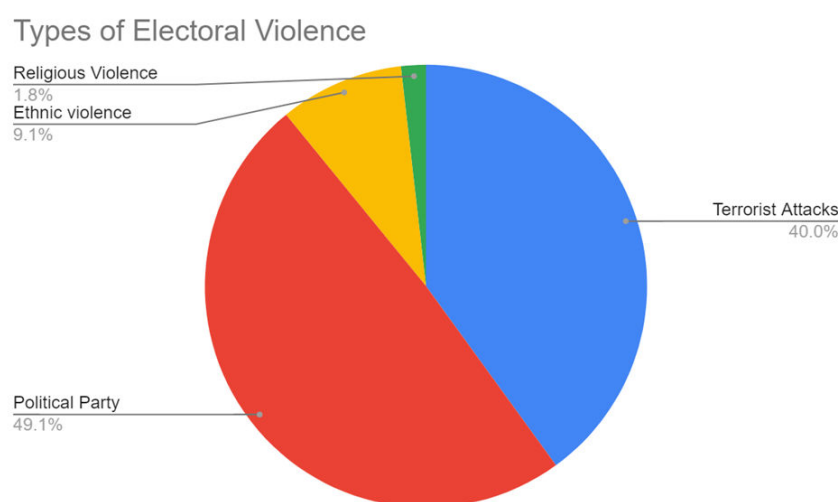
Fig. 3.3 Types of Electoral Violence (2018)

The following analysis pertains to outline the dynamics of these incidents, categorizing them based on stages – pre-elections, election day, and post-election; and identifying the causes, intensity, and perpetrators of electoral violence during each stage.

9.2. KPK

The 2018 elections in KPK witnessed disturbing violence both in the pre-election and post-election stage. The three most violent districts (on a per capita basis) were Kohistan, Bannu and Peshawar.

Pre-Election Stage

The pre-election stage in KPK, constituting 11 incidents of electoral violence, emerges as a period dominated by violence through Terrorist Attacks. A high number of casualties were

caused by lethal attacks in Balochistan which faced 10 terrorist Attacks in the pre-election stage, whereas violence perpetrated through rival political groups was limited to only 1 incident in the pre-election stage.

9.2.1.   Perpetrators of Violence

With respect to terrorist attacks, TTP is identified as the primary perpetrator of these attacks in KPK during the pre-election stage, who employed multiple attack tactics such as firing, IEDs and suicide attacks. Rival political groups were identified as the primary perpetrators of Political Party violence during the pre-election period, who perpetrated the violence through armed clashes between the political party supporters, thus creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity in the run-up to the elections.

9.2.2.   Intensity of Attack

The intensity of terrorist attacks was notably higher than the intensity in political rivalries, with 34 casualties and 140 injuries in total caused by the terrorist attacks. Whereas only 2 injuries were caused by the clash between rival political parties. A major suicide attack was reported in Peshawar, Yakatoot area. Reportedly, ANP leader and a candidate for a provincial assembly seat Haroon Bilour was among 21 killed in the suicide attack. Similarly, in DI Khan district of KPK, Former provincial minister and PTI candidate for a provincial assembly seat, Ikramullah Gandapur, was killed along with his driver in a suicide blast. Reportedly, a suicide bomber blew himself off as soon as Mr Gandapur came out of his house and sat in his car, resulting in 2 casualties and 3 injuries.

Election Day

On election day, a total of 7 reported incidents presented a shift in tactics. Most incidents are of violence caused by Political Party rivalries and are attributed to rival political groups.

9.2.3.   Perpetrators of Violence

The violence on election day witnessed in KPK was caused majorly because of rival political parties which involved political party workers and political party supporters. The most used attack tactic by rival political groups was physical clash at the polling stations, with 3 incidents of firing.

9.2.4.   Attack Intensity

Since the election day in KPK only witnessed political party violence, rather than terrorist attacks which dominated the pre-election stage, the intensity of attacks was lower on the election day as compared to the month preceding it. There were a total of 3 casualties on the election day with more than 20 injuries. One major attack targeted a close relative of a Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) candidate Babar Ali, who was shot dead during a clash with ANP workers.

Post-Election Stage

The post-election phase in KPK was relatively less violent than other stages, since only 1 incident of electoral violence occurred which was perpetuated through a rival political party. The incident involved political party workers. Two activists of a political party received bullet wounds when rival political party workers allegedly fired at a rally organized by the former.

9.3. Balochistan

In the 2018 elections, Balochistan faced a total of 16 incidents spread across multiple districts. The pre-election stage witnessed more electoral violence than the latter two stages, with 12 incidents in the pre-election stage and 4 incidents on election day. In the pre-election stage a concerning pattern of terrorist attacks unfolded, revealing distinct characteristics in terms of tactics, targets, and responsible groups. All the terrorist attacks were conducted by Baloch nationalist insurgent groups such as BLF, BLA and BRF while Islamist State Khorasan was responsible for 2 attacks. Compared to other provinces, Balochistan had the highest number of casualties totaling 177 deaths caused due to electoral violence in the 2018 elections. This is because except 1 attack, the remaining 15 attacks were lethal attacks perpetuated through bomb blasts, IEDs, hand grenades and suicide attacks. A single Suicide blast in Mastung district of Balochistan claimed 150 lives. Nawabzada Siraj Raisani, Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) candidate for a Provincial Assembly seat was killed in this suicide attack on an election gathering in the Mastung.

On the Election Day, there was 1 terrorist attack which was a suicide blast near Eastern Bypass of Quetta. The attack claimed 31 lives including 6 of policemen and 2 minors and injured 70 others. A police vehicle was the apparent target of the blast. Deputy Inspector General of Quetta police Abdul Razzaq Cheema survived the suicide attack but another police officer, Riaz Ahmed Nothani, was killed. ISIS claimed the attack. Quetta police said the suicide bomber blew himself up after he was stopped from entering the Tameeri Nau Education Complex school, which served as a polling station.

9.4. Punjab

During the 2018 elections, Rawalpindi was amongst the most violent districts in Pakistan and the topmost violent district in Punjab, with a total number of 3 reported incidents. The 3 susceptible areas where the incidents took place include Bank Colony Dhamial, Kohinoor Mills on Peshawar Road, and the NA-61 constituency (which includes the Cantonment Area) in Rawalpindi.

All incidents of electoral violence in Rawalpindi constitute clashes between rival political groups. Strong party affiliations among the voters and party workers were on the rise during the 2018 elections. The supporters and workers of different parties are seen engaged in incidents of electoral violence in terms of armed clashes, attacks during election campaigns and attacks on polling stations.

9.5. Sindh

Sindh faced the least incidents of electoral violence during the 2018 elections as compared to other provinces, with a total of 7 incidents resulting in 20 plus injuries and 0 casualties. The incidents ranged from politically motivated attacks to religious and ethnic violence. Majority of the incidents were a result of rivalry between political groups, thus leading to clashes and disruptions on Election Day. This rivalry often escalated into violence, jeopardizing the integrity of the electoral process.

9.6. Mapping Electoral Violence Stages

In 2018, the data in figure 3.4 depicts that the majority - which is about 52.7% of total incidents - occurred in the pre-election period, indicating significant challenges leading up to the elections. 41.8% of incidents were reported on the election day which highlighted the increased tensions during the voting process, while the post-election period experienced the least violence, and even that was restricted primarily to clashes between political party supporters who were not satisfied with the results of the election.
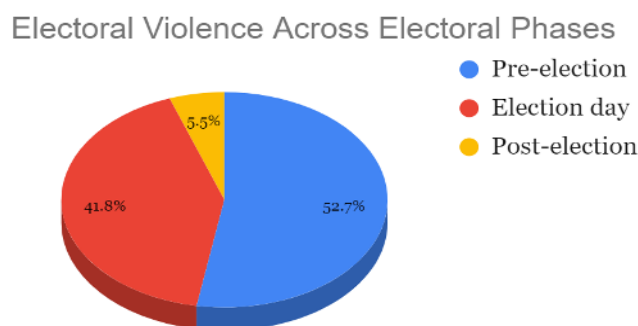

Fig. 3.4 Electoral Violence Across Different Electoral Phases (2018)

9.6.1. Political Party Violence

Political Party violence has been the most dominant form of violence in election 2018. Most of the incidents of Political Party violence between rival political groups was witnessed on the election day, with a few incidents reported from the pre-election and post-election phases.

In the Pre-election phase, 5 incidents of political party violence were reported among which 3 incidents happened in Punjab while 1 in KPK and 1 in Sindh. The total reported casualties because of violence between political parties is 1, whereas the number of people injured amounts to more than 10 in total. Since the attack tactic employed in this category of violence is majorly non-lethal physical violence such as a pre-planned clash or a scuffle between political party workers or supporters therefore, the consequences are primarily injuries to the people involved in the event.

A total of 19 incidents of clashes and scuffles between political party members were witnessed on the election day. The most violent provinces in this regard were Punjab and KPK with 7 incidents reported in each and followed by Sindh with 3 incidents and Baluchistan with 2 incidents.

9.6.2. Terrorist Attacks

In the Pre-Election stage, there were 20 Terrorist Attacks. With regards to the intensity of the attacks, 4 attacks were Suicide Blasts, 5 were Firing events, 2 bomb blasts, 6 IED Attacks, 1 attack by cracker, 1 attack by Hand grenade, and 1 failed IED attack. These terrorist attacks all together claimed 186 lives and injured 335 people. 8 of these attacks have been perpetrated by Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), whereas 7 attacks were perpetrated by Baloch and Sindhi nationalist insurgent groups, and 4 attacks by unidentified insurgents or militants. 1 terrorist attack took place on the election day in Quetta near Tameer-i-Nau Public College Complex.

In all three stages of elections, the most common party responsible for perpetrating violence through terrorist attacks is TTP as shown in figure 3.5. The number in each slice corresponds to the number of attacks perpetrated by the relevant terrorist group.
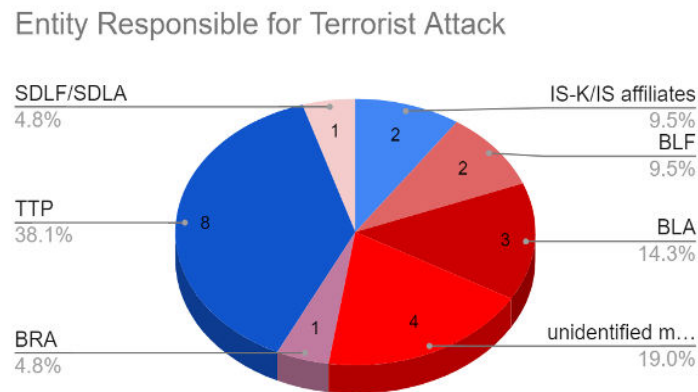

Fig. 3.5 Terrorist/Militant Groups Responsible (2018)

10.   Stakeholder Mapping Across 2008, 2013, and 2018 Elections

To properly map out stakeholders across all three elections, the following factors need to be kept in mind. Firstly, it is critical to map out similar or common stakeholders across all three elections. This enables the mapping out of stakeholders for future elections as historically, the same have remained constant. Secondly, it is also imperative to map out stakeholders that are unique or anomalies in each election. This allows for noting changing trends and dynamics, enabling the prediction for future elections whereby a change in a certain factor demonstrating a certain effect can form a correlation. Thirdly, mapping out recurring trends between stakeholder interactions allows the holistic analysis of mapping out stakeholders and their interactions with each other. This is critical to the research as it synthesizes the mapped stakeholders and their interactions to provide an all-encompassing analysis of historical electoral violence in Pakistan.

10.1. Political Parties

Political parties consistently remained central stakeholders across all three elections. Major players such as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and various regional parties played active roles because these parties were not only contenders in the electoral arena but were also key actors in the perpetuation of electoral violence The enduring significance of political parties underscores their pivotal role in the democratic process, engaging in electoral competition and sometimes contributing to violence, as seen in clashes between MQM and PPP in Karachi during the 2008 elections.

The party with the most anomalous presence in the past 3 elections is Awami National Party (ANP) which came to rise in the 2008 general elections but faced a decline in votes casted to it in the subsequent 2013 and 2018 general elections. ANP was the 5th most dominant party in

the 2008 general elections with a total of 13 seats[29] in the National Assembly with 31 seats in NWFP. However, it witnessed a fall in its popularity during the 2013 general elections when it won only 2 seats in the National Assembly along with 1 seat in Balochistan Assembly and 5 seats in KPK Assembly. It is important to point out here that ANP nominated only 8 candidates, all of whom were able to secure the seat. The reason why ANP took a back seat in the 2013 elections is because the party's leadership has come under attack several times. Due to the massive number of attacks on ANP over the years since 2008, ANP has been forced to take a backseat. Consequently, in the 2018 general elections ANP won only 1 seat in National Assembly while 7 seats in KPK Provincial Assembly and 3 seats in Balochistan Provincial Assembly.[30]

Apart from ANP, MQM stands out as another party that experienced a decline in dominance due to electoral violence. Despite winning 32 seats in the National Assembly during the 2008 elections,[31] MQM's prominence diminished over the years. The party faced setbacks, including the assassinations of three leaders, notably Imran Farooq in London. In the 2013 elections, MQM retained most seats in Karachi and lower Sindh but encountered conflicts, particularly with Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) over Karachi's NA-250 constituency. Tensions escalated following the killing of PTI office-bearer Zahra Shahid Hussain. Subsequently, MQM underwent significant organizational changes, including the disbandment of its Karachi Tanzeemi Committee and later its Rabita Committee.

Another anomaly in the general elections of Pakistan is apparent in the 2018 general elections where Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) emerged as a new political party. Its emergence underscores the pivotal role of religious political parties as key stakeholders. TLP, a new entrant, secured 2.2 million votes, making it the fifth-largest party nationwide. The party's influence was evident, with its votes potentially impacting the outcomes in at least 19 National Assembly constituencies. Analysts speculate that if TLP voters had voted for PML-N, the party could have gained around 13 more seats. Moreover, TLP's significant influence in altering results in 17 National Assembly constituencies in Punjab highlighted its potential to sway the electoral landscape because the number of TLP votes were higher than the difference of votes secured by winning and losing candidates. The strategic alliance of TLP with either PTI or PML-N could have substantially changed the election results, emphasizing the transformative role of political parties as influential stakeholders in shaping electoral dynamics.[32]

It is crucial to acknowledge that the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) attained considerable political prominence by resorting to religiously motivated violence, given its roots in a religio-political protest movement around the blasphemy issue. The TLP actively advocated for the

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[29] Election Commission of Pakistan, 'General Election: 2008 Report Volume II' <https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/ger-4.pdf>

[30] Election Pakistan, 'Party Wise Election Result: 2018 General Elections' <https://electionpakistan.com/parties-wise-election-results/?assembly=1&election=7646&assemblyName=Balochistan%20Assembly&electionType=General%20Election%202021>

[31] Election Commission of Pakistan, 'General Election: 2008 Report Volume II' <https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/ger-4.pdf>

[32] Gallup Pakistan, 'Electoral Analysis of TLP Vote Bank and Electoral Calculus in 2018 General Elections' <https://gallup.com.pk/post/32964>

causes of Khatm-e-Nabuwat (the finality of Muhammad's prophethood) and Namoos-e-Risalat (the honor of the Prophet Muhammad) by orchestrating extensive protests that effectively paralyzed several cities in the country. One noteworthy incident in this context was the shooting of then Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal on May 6, 2018, intensifying concerns about the potential for violence in the lead-up to the scheduled July 2018 general election.

10.2. Government Bodies

Government bodies including ECP, and security forces also play a major role in the electoral process. With respect to the 2018 general elections, ECP, Intelligence Agencies and police officers played a major role in preventing electoral violence by categorizing the polling stations into three distinct categories based on threat of violence in each polling station. The categorization helped determine the allocation of security measures and resources as required in each polling station. The polling stations were divided into three categories, i.e., highly sensitive (category A), sensitive (category B) and normal (category C) depending on their susceptibility to electoral violence. In the 2018 elections, 6,147 of the 47,257 polling stations in Punjab were put in Category A, whereas 15,917 were put in category B and 25,193 were put in category C. The top three districts in Punjab with most Category A polling stations were Faisalabad, Gujranwala, and Multan.33

Furthermore, ECP revised and strengthened the code of conduct for the 2018 elections to explicitly prohibit all forms of electoral violence against women candidates, including physical, sexual, and verbal abuse.34 They also deployed more than 370,000 security personnel, including army and paramilitary forces, to ensure the safety of voters, candidates, and polling staff.35 The ECP was seen collaborating with civil society organizations and media outlets to raise awareness and educate voters on the importance of peaceful and inclusive participation in the electoral process.[36]

The collaboration between security forces and electoral institutions remained crucial across elections. Their coordination aimed at ensuring a secure environment for voters and candidates.

10.3. Civil Society

Civil society organizations consistently emerged as watchdogs across the elections, advocating for fair and transparent elections. One of the most prominent entities in this field is FAFEN which initiated a large-scale project on prevention of electoral violence, i.e., the Political and Electoral Violence Education and Resolution (PEVER) project[37] which aims to spread public awareness

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[33] Punjab Police, Government of Pakistan, 'Polling Stations in Punjab Categorized on Basis of Threats', <https://punjabpolice.gov.pk/node/6125>.

[34] Election Pakistan, 'FAFEN Violence Monitor: Political and Electoral Violence in Pakistan', (2010) <https://electionpakistan.com/fafen-political-and-electoral-violence-in-pakistan-report/>.

[35] Mashail Malik, Niloufer Siddiqui, 'Exposure to Violence and Voting in Karachi', (2019) United States Institute of Peace <usip.org>.

[36] GAAMAC, 'Preventing hate speech, incitement and discrimination: the case of Pakistan' (2022) <gaamac.org>.

[37] Election Pakistan, 'FAFEN Violence Monitor: Political and Electoral Violence in Pakistan', (2010) <https://electionpakistan.com/fafen-political-and-electoral-violence-in-pakistan-report/>.

about what is electoral violence and how it is perpetuated, therefore, preventing the incidents of electoral violence.

The USIP supported civic education and citizen journalism initiatives to promote peaceful voting and report violence in regions where public information is scarce.[38] Moreover, the GAAMAC, a global network of states and civil society organizations, conducted a case study on the root causes and prevention of hate speech and incitement in Pakistan, and recommended measures to enhance legal frameworks, media regulation, and interfaith dialogue.[39]

10.4. Voters

Citizens, exercising their democratic right to vote, were fundamental stakeholders consistently present in all three elections.

Election Year	Number of Registered Voters	Voter Turnout	Turnout Percentage
2008	80,796,382	35,637,072[40]	**44%**
2013	86,189,828	46,217,482[41]	**53.62%**
2018	104,981,940	54,321,031[42]	**51.5%**

In 2008, with 44% of registered voters participating, a low turnout was influenced by rampant violence during the election campaign. A suicide bombing two days before polling claimed 37 lives at a PPPP rally, contributing to election-day violence that resulted in at least 20 deaths, predominantly among PPPP voters. While 2013 witnessed an improvement with a turnout of 53.62%, the positive momentum waned in the 2018 elections, seeing a slight dip to 51.5%. The gender disparity in turnout was notable, with male participation at 56.01% compared to female turnout at 46.89%, reflecting a nine-percentage-point gap. An overall low turnout rate during the past three elections is attributable to rampant electoral violence. The civilian population often becomes collateral damage in these incidents, underscoring the need for protective measures and public awareness campaigns.

10.5. Anti-State Organizations

Militant and terrorist organizations emerge as significant stakeholders, contributing to the complexity of electoral violence. In 2008 elections, one of the primary perpetrators of electoral violence was the Local Taliban, operating mainly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), who orchestrated 33.3% of the overall threat. Nationalist

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[38] Ambreen Kanwal, 'Electoral Violence against women' TNS (2023) <thenews.com.pk>.

[39] Mashail Malik, Niloufer Siddiqui, 'Exposure to Violence and Voting in Karachi', (2019) United States Institute of Peace <usip.org>.

[40] Election Commission of Pakistan, 'General Election: 2013 Report Volume II' <https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/v2.pdf >

[41] Election Commission of Pakistan, 'General Election: 2013 Report Volume II' <https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/v2.pdf >

[42] Election Commission Pakistan, 'CONSTITUENCY WISE PERCENTAGES OF WOMEN VOTERS TURNOUT- NATIONAL ASSEMBLY' <https://ecp.gov.pk/percentages-of-segregated-malefemale-voter-turnout-based-on-form-4 >

insurgents, comprising factions such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Republican Army (BRA), were another significant category of perpetrators, accounting for 27.0% of attacks. Similarly, terrorist organizations were also very active in the 2013 and 2018 elections. In the 2013 elections, 55.5% of the total terrorist attacks were caused by TTP. In 2018 elections, 40% of the total violence was terrorist attacks orchestrated majorly by militant and insurgent groups (causing 52.4% of the total terrorist attacks) and by TTP (causing 38.1 % of the total terrorist attacks).

Throughout the three elections, TTP and Baloch-Nationalist insurgents, including the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), and the Baloch Republican Army (BRA), play pivotal roles as both instigators and executors of violence. Their motivations vary from disrupting the electoral process to advancing broader ideological or separatist agendas, reflecting a multifaceted set of challenges faced by electoral stakeholders.

11. Media Reporting Analysis

Media coverage of incidents related to electoral violence during the 2008, 2013, and 2018 elections was widespread, spanning diverse platforms such as print media and electronic media. Newspapers, news websites, television channels, and social media platforms all played pivotal roles in disseminating information.

We analyzed news reports from several Pakistani publications, including English Newspapers dailies; Dawn, The News, Express Tribune, The Nation and Urdu Newspapers dailies Jhang, Nawa-e-waqt. English newspapers provided less detailed incident reports, while Urdu newspapers were more comprehensive. Our focus was on their coverage of electoral violence during the 2008, 2013, and 2018 elections.

11.1. Media Reports

11.1.1. Purpose

By examining media reports, we aim to gain insights into the nature, causes, and consequences of such violence, with the ultimate goal of proposing recommendations for mitigating these issues. The purpose of the media reports varied, encompassing informative, investigative, and opinionated elements across all three elections. While some reports aimed at providing a factual account of incidents, particularly near the election day and election day itself, others delved into investigative journalism, mainly post-elections, uncovering the root causes and perpetrators of electoral violence. Opinionated pieces were also prevalent, under editorial sections of newspapers, offering perspectives and analyses on the broader implications of the violence.

11.1.2. Tone of the Reports

The tone of the reporting is a blend of objectivity and opinion. While attempts are made to present information, some instances of bias and emotion are evident, influencing the overall tone. The electronic media coverage tends to be more sensationalized, while print media maintains a relatively neutral stance.

11.1.3.   Sources and Credibility

Information in the media reports relies on a mix of facts, expert opinions, and some speculative elements. Official statements, eyewitness accounts, and expert analyses are cited, enhancing the credibility of the report. However, certain segments of the coverage include speculative elements, requiring careful consideration by reporters.

Comparing the three elections, the credibility of the media reports on electoral violence during the 2018 elections appears to be relatively high. The information in the reports seems to rely on a mix of facts and observable events, contributing to a factual and informative representation. However, the presence of expert opinions is not explicitly evident in the provided excerpts, and speculative elements are minimal.

11.1.4.   Context

A comprehensive contextual background to the incident aids in understanding the incident's root causes, facilitating a more nuanced comprehension for the audience. The media reporting during the three elections were a mix of reports including reports which provided essential context by exploring the historical, political, and social factors contributing to electoral violence, and reports where the context is underexplored, presenting an opportunity for more in-depth analysis.

The reporting in 2018 often highlighted the impact on individuals, emphasizing casualties, injuries, and damage to property. By focusing on the human aspect, the news reports effectively conveyed the consequences of electoral violence, fostering empathy among readers and potentially influencing public discourse on the matter.

11.2. 2008 General Elections

The media's coverage of Pakistan's 2008 general elections had a significant impact on the political climate. Leading Pakistani English newspapers were instrumental in setting the election agenda. However, the coverage was criticized for its lack of balance and depth. For example, the print media gave more attention and space to the PPP and the PML-N than to other parties, such as the ANP, the MQM, and the MMA.[43] This indicates a bias towards the mainstream parties and a neglect of the regional and religious parties. Moreover, newspapers like The News, Dawn and The Nation published more editorials against the government than in favor of it, which reflects a negative or critical attitude towards the ruling regime. [44]

11.3. 2013 General Elections

During the 2013 general elections, the private mass media was active and ready to cover all poll-related events. Despite this, there were instances of bias and sensationalism. The PMLN, for instance, received the most coverage and was portrayed more positively than the PTI and PPP.[45] This biased reporting often sways public opinion and the electoral process. For example, some journalists and TV persons went on to express their strong emotions and judgments about the

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[43] Ahmed J and Hussain S, 'Coverage of Pakistan General Election 2008 in Leading Pakistan English Newspapers: Exploring Agenda Setting' (2010) 17 Journal of Political Studies 161, pg 4 pdf.

[44] Ahmed J and Hussain S, 'Coverage of Pakistan General Election 2008 in Leading Pakistan English Newspapers: Exploring Agenda Setting' (2010) 17 Journal of Political Studies 161, pg 10 pdf.

[45] Shazia Ismail Toor and Noshina Saleem, 'Print Media and Politics: A Comparative Study of Three Leading Pakistani Political Parties in General Elections 2013' (2020) 57(1) Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan 331.

actors and events, condemning the TTP and its allies for their brutality and barbarity, praising the ANP, the MQM, and the PPP for their bravery and sacrifice, criticizing the government and the security forces for their incompetence and irresponsibility, and calling for justice and integration for the Baloch separatist groups and the political parties and groups involved in the violence. This involved bias viewpoints and reflection, which shaped the opinion of the public at large. People were instigated and started condemning parties based on this opinionated reporting.

11.4. 2018 General Elections

The analysis of media reports surrounding 2018's electoral violence revealed incidents where specific political figures and party offices were targeted. The report presented these incidents without evident bias, avoiding the characterization of violence based on political affiliation. This approach contributed to fair and impartial reporting, allowing readers to form their own interpretations. However, a small part of the media's coverage of the 2018 general elections were controversial. Allegations of military interference in the election outcomes and media control were rampant. In the lead-up to the election, some mainstream media outlets faced reporting restrictions. The well-known newspaper "Dawn" experienced threats, harassment, and restrictions on its distribution in certain areas due to its coverage of a meeting between the civilian government (led by PML-N) and the Army. This changed their reporting style and led to impartial reporting.[46]

11.5. Geographical Focus - Center vs. Periphery

The analysis of media coverage reveals a notable discrepancy in the reporting of electoral violence incidents, with a discernible emphasis on regions, including major urban centers like Islamabad, Karachi, Peshawar, and Quetta. These central areas received more extensive coverage compared to the peripheral regions such as Bannu and Waziristan. The media's tendency to concentrate on politically active locations may contribute to an incomplete understanding of the overall spatial distribution and nuances of electoral violence, potentially overlooking incidents occurring in more remote or less politically significant areas. This geographical bias in reporting highlights the need for a more inclusive approach to ensure a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of electoral violence across diverse regions.

During the electoral phase of 2018 general elections, the reporting demonstrated a focus on various regions, encompassing both central (politically prominent) and peripheral (less prominent) areas. While incidents in major cities like **Quetta and Peshawar** received notable attention, the coverage also extended to areas such as Bannu, Turbat, and Faisalabad. This balanced approach contributes to a more nuanced understanding of electoral violence across different geographies.

11.6. Role of Social Media

In the 2013 elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan's allies launched initiatives on social media and targeted campaigns for women to boost voter participation. These collective

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[46] Kriti M Shah and Sushant Sareen, 'Pakistan General Elections 2018: Analysis of Results and Implications' (Observer Research Foundation, Special Report No 78, December 2018)

endeavors resulted in a voter turnout of **53.62 percent** in the general elections of 2013, marking the highest voter participation in the past thirty years.[47]

Social media reporting played an instrumental role in shaping public's opinion. Platforms like twitter and Facebook specifically contributed much to spreading the awareness and gathering momentum for carrying out political campaigns and protests. The PTI and PML-N effectively leveraged social media to shape public perceptions and garner broad-based support through mass mobilization strategies.[48] However, digital disinformation was also noted whereby misleading, manipulated, and fake content was circulated through social media platforms. For example, there was a doctored image on twitter that accused Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari of making derogatory remarks about the Pashtun ethnic group.[49]

11.7. Media Regulation and Sensitization

Media sensitization is crucial during the electoral process, particularly in relation to pre-election reporting. This is especially when incidents are not adequately linked to elections. Media coverage during the pre-election period can significantly influence public opinion, political discourse, and even the electoral process itself. Our dataset for 2008 elections shows there was an increase in sectarian violence in the months leading up to the election. This kind of coverage, if properly linked with the elections, creates awareness amongst people leading to making informed decisions prior to election day. This underscores the vital role of media sensitization in ensuring fair and unbiased pre-election reporting. Moreover, disinformation on social media during the 2018 elections reinforced the existing biases and prejudices of the people and increased the animosity and hostility among political rivals and different social groups. It also exploited the sensitive religious and ethnic issues to provoke negative emotions and reactions. [50]

Additionally, it is pertinent to note that ECP introduces a code of conduct for the media prior to all three elections, given under its general report for each election. Trends show, the media coverage adheres to general regulations, respecting ethical standards. However, there are instances where sensationalism and speculative reporting was noted as highlighted above earlier.

The media analysis underscores the significance of exploring new avenues in the ever-evolving landscape of information dissemination. As we navigate through an era marked by rapid technological advancements and dynamic communication platforms, it becomes imperative for media practitioners to adapt and seek innovative approaches. The call to explore new avenues is

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[47] Election Commission of Pakistan, 'Report on the General Elections 2013 Volume-I'
<https://ecp.gov.pk/storage/files/1/ger-1.pdf > accessed 6 December 2023.

[48] Jarral K, 'Pakistan Elections: The Role of Social Media' (Asia Dialogue, 15 October 2018) <Pakistan Elections: the role of social media – Asia Dialogue (theasiadialogue.com)> accessed 4 December 2023

[49] Raza, Talal. "Mapping Digital Disinformation around Elections: A Case Study of Pakistan's 2018 General Elections." (Center for International Media Assistance, 21 Oct. 2019) < Center for International Media Assistance (ned.org)> accessed 5 December 2023

[50] Kriti M Shah and Sushant Sareen, 'Pakistan General Elections 2018: Analysis of Results and Implications' (Observer Research Foundation, Special Report No 78, December 2018).

not merely a suggestion but a necessity, given the changing preferences of audiences and the emergence of novel communication channels.

12. Recommendations

12.1 Legislative and Policy Measures

12.1.1 Establishment of Electoral Offenses Tribunal:

i. The Federal Government should work towards creation of a specialized tribunal focused on cases of electoral violence for swift justice. Furthermore, establish a transparent mechanism for citizens, with a particular focus on women, to lodge complaints regarding political and electoral violence. Develop a systematic follow-up process and ensure effective communication of case outcomes.

ii. Ensure fair and efficient adjudication of electoral violence cases.

12.2 Institutional Capacity Building

12.2.1 Training for Election Officials:

i. Establish the size, composition, mandate, and tenure of electoral staff in Pakistan through an inclusive and transparent process. This involves engaging diverse stakeholders to ensure representation and credibility in the selection and assignment of electoral personnel.

ii. Implement voter and civic education programs for electoral staff in collaboration with various stakeholders, including civil-society organizations. This initiative aims to cultivate a culture of democracy and peace among the electoral workforce in Pakistan, fostering an understanding of democratic values and principles.

iii. Provide specialized training for election officials on conflict resolution.

iv. Enhance their capacity to identify and respond to potential flashpoints.

12.2.2 Strengthening Law Enforcement Agencies:

i. During the three general elections, involvement of security personnel was restricted to post-incident.

ii. It is crucial to shift the focus of security personnel from reactive to proactive strategies. Specifically, the implementation of proactive and intelligence-led security measures can significantly mitigate the risk of electoral violence. Establish a robust intelligence network dedicated to monitoring and analyzing potential threats to electoral processes. Collaborate with various intelligence agencies to gather information on individuals, groups, or entities planning to instigate violence. Utilize technology, informants, and data analytics to identify patterns and anticipate potential security risks.

iii. Equip law enforcement with tools and training for handling electoral violence.

iv. Foster collaboration between election officials and law enforcement for a coordinated response.

12.3   Strategic Planning by the Government

i.   Enhance the capacity for gathering information on potential electoral hotspots in Pakistan. This involves leveraging data from diverse sources, including civil society organizations like FAFEN and CPDI, to effectively identify areas at risk of electoral violence.

ii.   The Election Commission of India (ECI) employed a new technique called **"vulnerability mapping"**, a method aimed at identifying polling places susceptible to electoral violence. Subsequently, efficient police and paramilitary forces were strategically deployed to these identified areas. The ECI gathered data, including population size, known criminals, potential soft targets, historical election violence, and past voter turnout, to inform decision-making. Measures such as preventive arrests and heightened security cover were implemented.

iii.   Similar to ECI's approach, ECP can establish an annual roster and typology of upcoming elections in Pakistan. This will aid in identifying regions that may require closer monitoring and the deployment of preventive resources to proactively address any potential challenges in the electoral process.

iv.   Prioritize regions in Pakistan that demand urgent attention to mitigate potential problems related to electoral violence. This prioritization should be based on a comprehensive assessment of risk factors and historical patterns in each region.

v.   Give priority to the deployment of pre-election assessment teams with a well-defined mandate. These teams should assess the technical preparedness of electoral stakeholders and evaluate the overall political climate, fostering dialogue among contestants. Additionally, they should provide recommendations on whether an election should proceed as scheduled or be postponed to a more suitable date.

12.4   Civil Society Engagement

12.4.1   Voter Education Programs:
i.   Implement campaigns to educate voters on the importance of peaceful elections.
ii.   Disseminate information on electoral processes and voting rights.
iii.   Enhance mechanisms for gathering comprehensive data on the prevalence of electoral violence in Pakistan, including integrating indicators related to violence in election settings into routine data collection efforts. Collaborate closely with government institutions, such as the Federal Bureau of Statistics, and incorporate these indicators into surveys like the Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey and Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement.

12.4.2   Community Outreach:
i.   Collaborate with local communities to identify and address potential sources of conflict.
ii.   Develop informative programs that educate listeners about the electoral process, including voter registration, polling procedures, and the role of various institutions. Deliver the information through radio, providing clear and unbiased information about candidates, political parties, and electoral systems to empower listeners with knowledge. UNESCO reports that radio has a reach exceeding 95 percent across

diverse global demographics. In many low-income countries, recent statistics reveal that over 75 percent of households possess a radio, highlighting its widespread presence as a prevalent and accessible communication tool.[51] Therefore, radio is a tool which can spread the message to a broad audience.

12.5   Political Party Engagement

12.5.1 Codes of Conduct and Action Plans:
    i.   Encourage political parties to adopt codes of conduct emphasizing commitment to safe, free, and fair elections.
    ii.   Develop action plans outlining specific steps to prevent and address electoral violence.

12.5.2 Awareness Building Among Party Workers:
    i.   Implement awareness programs targeting political party workers on the consequences of electoral violence.
    ii.   Emphasize the importance of peaceful political competition for the overall democratic health.

12.6   Media Responsibility

12.6.1 Promote Responsible Reporting:
    i.   Engage with media organizations to encourage unbiased reporting.
    ii.   Disseminate information on the impact of sensationalism on electoral violence.

12.6.2 Media Literacy Campaigns:
    i.   Launch campaigns to enhance public understanding of media manipulation.
    ii.   ECP should collaborate with Pakistan Electronic and Media Regulatory Authority ("PEMRA") to conduct public awareness raising messaging and campaigns under the section 20(e) of *PEMRA Ordinance of 2002*. PEMRA has powers, under the PEMRA Ordinance, as a regulator and the guardian of public interest in media regulation to enforce the mandatory allocation of ten per cent of the total durations of broadcasts by stations in the public interest for programs designed for promoting welfare of the public.
    iii. Empower citizens to critically assess information to prevent misinformation.

12.7   International Cooperation

12.7.1 Collaborate with International Organizations:

    i.   Seek support and expertise from international organizations.

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[51] Tarek Bazley 'In the internet age, radio still rules the world' (2016) ALJAZEERA
<https://aljazeera.com/news/2016/2/13/in-the-internet-age-radio-still-rules-the-world >

ii. Establish partnerships for the exchange of best practices in mitigating electoral violence.

iii. Incorporate indicators related to electoral violence into existing reporting mechanisms, such as the Social Development Goal monitoring systems. Establish shared national goals within these systems to address issues hindering political participation, fostering a more inclusive electoral environment for all citizens in Pakistan.

This comprehensive strategy aims to create a conducive environment for free and fair elections in Pakistan. Implementing these measures requires collaboration among key stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organizations, media, and international partners. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of strategies will be essential to ensure the effectiveness of the proposed interventions in mitigating the risk of electoral violence.

Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) is an independent, non-partisan and a not-for-profit civil society organization working on issues of peace and development in Pakistan. It is registered under section 42 of the Companies Ordinance, 1984 (XLVII of 1984) later substituted by Companies Act 2017. It was established in September 2003 by a group of concerned citizens who realized that there was a need to approach the issues of peace and development in an integrated manner. CPDI is a first initiative of its kind in Pakistan. It seeks to inform and influence public policies and civil society initiatives through research-based advocacy and capacity building in order to promote citizenship, build peace and achieve inclusive and sustainable development. Areas of special sectoral focus include promotion of peace and tolerance, rule of law, transparency and access to information, budget watch, media watch, local government, climate change, election watch and legislative watch and development.

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