

# THE 2019 PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS IN NEWLY MERGED DISTRICTS OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA: AN EPOCH- MAKING COMMENCEMENT

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## Abstract

*The integration of tribal areas (FATA) of Pakistan with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a significant development which has ultimately eradicated the twists and turns of the past and diverted the course of action from an unidentified destination to a specified one. The natives, their society, socio-cultural, economic, administrative and above all their political concerns has got a new direction in the aftermath of the said merger. The newly merged districts have recently been passed through a new experience of popular voting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2019. Being a central component of democracy, elections provide opportunities of equal standing, progress, prosperity, political awareness, and socio-economic equality to the people. As an integral part of the process of democratization, electoral processes and political contestation provide a wide variety of choice to the citizens of a nation-state to choose their respective leading figures standing in the que of contestation. The present study, however, explores the significant aspects of this political dispensation on the one hand and addresses certain important questions on the other. It pinpoints the role of the major political parties, their programmes, political manifestoes and electoral campaign. The active participation of the tribal masses, the role of independent candidates and women across these districts, are the major areas of concern at the moment. It carefully deals with all these important characteristics of the provincial assembly elections recently held in the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in the light of empirical evidences portrayed in the primary and secondary source materials.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, electoral politics, political parties, campaign, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, newly merged districts

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## Introduction

The 2019 electoral contestation provided an opportunity to the general masses of the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to participate and cast their vote in the provincial elections in order to elect the candidates of their own choice.<sup>1</sup> The arrangement of these elections was made on special basis as the general and provincial elections had already been conducted in all parts of the country on 25 July 2018.<sup>2</sup> The newly merged districts were divided into sixteen provincial constituencies during the necessary process delimitation of constituencies prior to these elections. Beside sixteen general seats, four seats were reserved for women while one for minorities in the provincial assembly. The people from all these newly merged districts actively participated in the provincial elections beneath the umbrella of different political parties. During these elections more than 2.8 million voters used the right of adult franchise to send their political representatives to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial assembly for the first time in the political history of the country.<sup>3</sup> The number of the candidates who jumped into the field was 282 while total number of registered voters was recorded 2.66255 million.<sup>4</sup> The candidates affiliated with different political parties were less in number while independent candidates were in abundance. Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf contested these elections from 16 constituencies, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (F) from 15, Awami National Party from 14, Jamaat-i-Islami and Pakistan Peoples Party each from 13, Muslim League from 3 while Qaumi Watan Party contested these elections from a single constituency. The enthusiasm and eagerness of the people to take part in these elections was unprecedented. Although the women folk particularly in the tribal society rarely come out and participate such sort of activities due to stiff tribal customs and traditions yet this time a considerable number of women populaces reached to polling stations and cast their vote in these elections.<sup>5</sup> The positive role of political parties, general public of the newly merged districts and military establishment made these elections a success story.

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<sup>1</sup> *Daily Dawn*, (Islamabad, 22 July 2019). *Daily Mashriq*, (Peshawar, 21 July 2019).

<sup>2</sup> *The News*, (Rawalpindi, 26 July 2018). *Daily Mashriq*, (Peshawar, 25 July 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Aqeel Yousufzai, "Aik Tarikhi Den" (Urdu) *Daily Aaj*, (Peshawar, 20 July 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Government of Pakistan, Election Commission of Pakistan, (Islamabad), <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/VotersTurnOutConstituencyWisePA.pdf>, accessed on 10 October 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Altaf Ullah and Syed Umar Hayat, "The Recent Electoral Reforms in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA): An Appraisal" in *Journal of Political Studies*, 24(2), (2017), 360.

It is evident that democracy in the real sense provide equal socio-political and economic opportunities to the neglected and deprived section of a society. It creates a wave of feeling in the citizens that democratic political system is the only key to development, progress and prosperity. By virtue of these attributes, throughout the world democracy has the edge over other systems of regulating the state and society.<sup>6</sup> Since few decades the efforts for bringing tribal areas into the national mainstream of the country were continued and majority of the tribal population were agreed on the mainstreaming of their areas into the national picture. The journey from Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan to the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was really a great political voyage for the native people of the region. Although they suffered a lot during this journey yet eventually, they observed the breakup of primordial structure of their society and state's institutions that consequently led to the integration of these areas with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>7</sup>

The people were conscious for the peaceful organization of provincial elections in the newly merged districts in the midst of insecurity and fragile law and order situation. But civil and military establishment with the help of native people stood successful by organizing this electoral contestation across the newly merged districts. The most significant development irrespective of the fact that who won and who defeated the elections, was that the people of these districts ultimately got entry into the politics of the county by electing their respective political representatives to the provincial parliament. This political development abandoned the antiquated tribal system and led the society towards democratic norms and traditions which were already institutionalized in the rest of the state's territories.<sup>8</sup>

However, if the process of democratization continues with the same frequency, the people of the newly merged districts will quickly get familiarity with the democratic principles, norms and values, and the political system will remain intact there. The real responsibility falls over the shoulder of new generation of these districts that how they take part in the political and democratic process of their areas to ensure fairness and efficacy of the system. The participation and engagement of the general public in the political affairs

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<sup>6</sup> Altaf Ullah, "The Role of Political Parties in the 2002 National Elections of Pakistan" in *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, XXIX(1), (2008), 97.

<sup>7</sup> Altaf Ullah, "Reforms in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan: Implications for Pakistan and Afghanistan" (Ph.D. dissertation, Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar, 2014), 4-16.

<sup>8</sup> Salman Abid, "Qabaeli Alaqaajaat mein Jamhoriyat ka Aaghaz" *Daily Express*, (Lahore, 22 July 2019).

will consequently lead to the eradication of militancy, fundamentalism and extremism in the country generally and newly merged districts particularly. Hence, constant institutionalization of the political and democratic processes in the newly integrated newly merged districts is essential in order to ensure political stability and socio-economic progress and prosperity of the region.

### **Delimitation of Constituencies**

The delimitation of the newly merged districts was necessary prior to the provincial assembly elections. Although the population of seven districts crossed the figure of 8 million according to which these districts could be divided into more than thirty provincial constituencies yet the number of registered voters and constituencies almost remained half due to some unavoidable circumstances during the last census and relatively obsolete conduct of census. Keeping in view these zigzags in mind, all the political parties unanimously passed the bill which demanded that the newly merged districts should be divided into sixteen constituencies at the moment.<sup>9</sup> However, the Bajur newly merged district was divided into three, Mohmand into two, Khyber into three, Kurram into two, Orakzai into one, North Waziristan into two, FR Tank into one, while South Waziristan into two constituencies. The sixteen general seats from newly merged districts on which the candidates contested these elections for the membership of the provincial assembly were, PK-100 Bajur 1, PK-101 Bajur 2, PK-102 Bajur 3, PK-103 Mohmand 1, PK-104 Mohmand 2, PK-105 Khyber 1, PK-106 Khyber 2, PK-107 Khyber 3, PK-108 Kurram 1, PK-109 Kurram 2, PK-110 Orakzai, PK-111 North Waziristan 1, PK-112 North Waziristan 2, PK-113 South Waziristan 1, PK-114 South Waziristan 2, and PK-115 FRs.<sup>10</sup>

According to the categorization of the Elections Commission of Pakistan, PK-100 Bajur 1 was consisted of Utman Khel and Salarzai Tehsils, PK-101 Bajur 2 included Tehsil Barang, Tehsil Khar and Mandal area, PK-102 Bajur 3 included Tehsil Mamond, Tehsil Nawagai and Tehsil Chamarkand, PK-103 Mohmand 1 included Tehsil Ambar Utman Khel, Tehsil Prang Ghar, Tehsil Pandiyali and Tehsil Yakghund, PK-104 Mohmand 2 included Tehsil Haleemzai, Tehsil Safi and Tehsil Upper Mohmand, PK-105 Khyber 1 included Tehsil Landi Kota and Tehsil Mulagori, PK-106 Khyber 2 included Tehsil Jamrud and Tehsil Bara, PK-107 Khyber 3 included the remaining parts of the Tehsil Bara, PK-108 Kurram 1 included Central Kurram and the areas of Lower Kurram i.e. Hasan Ali, Ibrahimzai and Ramagai, PK-109 Kurram 2 included Tehsil Upper Kurram and the remaining areas of the patwar circle of lower Kurram, PK-110 Orakzai included all the

<sup>9</sup> Yousufzai, "Aik Tarikhi Din" *Daily Aaj*, (Peshawar, 20 July 2019).

<sup>10</sup> Irfan Khan and Zahid Meero Khail, "Qabaeli Azlagh mein Entekhabaat 16 Nishastein aor 282 Omeedwar", Ashagaht-e-Khas, (Urdu) *Daily Mashriq*, (Peshawar, 20 July 2019).

areas of Orakzai district, PK-111 North Waziristan 1 included Tehsil Meer Ali, Tehsil Shewa and Tehsil Speenwam, PK-112 North Waziristan 2 included Tehsil Meeran Shah, Tehsil Ghulam Khan, Tehsil Datta Khel, Tehsil Razmak, Tehsil Dosalai and Tehsil Gharyum, PK-113 South Waziristan 1 included Tehsil Ladha, Tehsil Makeen, Tehsil Sararogha and Tehsil Sarokai, PK-114 South Waziristan 2 included Tehsil Barmal, Tehsil Wana, Tehsil Toi Khula and Tehsil Tyarza, while PK-115 was consisted of former FRs including FR Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan and Tank.<sup>11</sup>

In the aftermath of 25<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment, an increase of 21 seats was recorded in the provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa i.e. 16 general seats, 4 reserved for women while one for the minorities. After the merger of tribal areas into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa the total strength of the assembly raised from 124 to 145 seats. In this way, districts Bajur and Khyber each got 3 seats, districts Mohmand, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan each got 2 seats whereas district Orakzai and FRs each obtained 1 seat in the provincial legislature of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the process of delimitation of the constituencies was a technical task as the geographical location and topographical features of these districts were peculiar and uneven.

According to 2017 census report, the Bajaur newly merged district remained the highest populous district among the others newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with a total population of 1093684 individuals. Keeping in view its population, three seats were allocated to Bajaur in the provincial assembly. The population of Mohmand newly merged district was recorded 466984 and two seats were allotted to it. The Khyber newly merged district was consisted of 986973 individuals and it was allotted three seats. Kurram newly merged district got two seats in the provincial assembly as its population was recorded 619553. The total population of Orakzai newly merged district was recorded 254356 and due its low population it was allocated only one seat in the assembly. North Waziristan newly merged district was allotted two seats in the assembly as its population was recorded 543452. Similarly, two seats were allotted to the South Waziristan newly merged district which total human strength was recorded 679185 while one seat was allocated for the former FRs in the Khyber

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<sup>11</sup> Government of Pakistan, Election Commission of Pakistan, "Final Delimitation of Tribal Districts", (March 2019); <https://www.ecp.gov.pk/PrintDocument.aspx?PressId=65971&type=PDF> accessed on 16 September 2020.

<sup>12</sup> *Daily Aaj*, (Peshawar, 28 March 2019).

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Pakhtunkhwa provincial assembly as the combined strength of these regions was recorded 357687.<sup>13</sup>

### **Electoral Campaign in the Newly Merged Districts**

The 25<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment ultimately paved way for the merger of tribal areas (FATA) of Pakistan into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. With this decision, it was essential to provide space to the newly merged districts' political representatives in the provincial assembly by allocating seats on population basis primarily. Although the population of the newly merged districts was more than five million yet due to unavoidable circumstances these districts were allotted sixteen general seats in the provincial assembly.<sup>14</sup> Eventually, the long-standing demand of the people of these districts was accomplished and they got access to the provincial legislature for the first time in the political history of their areas. After successful process of delimitation of constituencies political parties were given considerable span of time to launch and propagate their respective political programmes and election manifestos during the electoral campaign. All the major and minor political parties decided to take part in the political contestation. The ruling party, Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf contested these elections on all the general seats. Both the independent and candidates associated with different political parties started their election campaign in order to get maximum public support. Beside these general seats, four seats were reserved for women and one for the minorities. For female reserved seats, four candidates jumped into the field while three candidates contested these elections on the single reserved seat for minorities. It is worthening here that two female candidates also contested these elections on general seats of the assembly which revealed that the women folk of these districts actively participated in the provincial elections of 2019.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike previous elections, the role of women community in the electoral campaign was unique and unprecedented during the 2019 provincial elections. Awami National Party assigned certain important responsibilities to its female followers and supporters particularly in PK-105 and 106 of Khyber newly merged district where they launched and monitored the electoral camping of the party and enthusiastically supported their party candidates. The women followers of the party strived to raise the ratio of women votes by launching special campaign and organizing corner meetings and public gatherings in which student community was given proper space to ensure maximum female participation in the elections.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Daily Express*, (Islamabad, 28 July 2019).

<sup>14</sup> *Daily Dawn*, (Islamabad, 30 August 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Ehtesham Bashir, "Aks Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" *Daily Express*, (Peshawar, 20 July 2019).

<sup>16</sup> *The News*, (Rawalpindi, 22 July 2019).

Despite several apprehensions and impediments, the election campaign in all the newly merged districts continued for almost three months and completed in a peaceful way. During the whole process of election, no major incident or mishappening was reported. Candidates of various political parties and their supporters remained peaceful during their respective election campaigns. It was proved that the general masses of the war-ravaged newly merged districts were not only aware of the political and democratic culture rather they could peacefully take part in the electoral and political processes. Even in the most sensitive newly merged districts such as North and South Waziristan district, the election camping remained peaceful till the end of the election day. Along with the ruling Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf, all the political parties participated in these elections and their corresponding national and provincial leaders visited these districts to gain public support for their respective political parties. It became obvious from the conducive political environment and peaceful election campaign in these districts that peace and tranquility could be established here by involving the general masses of the region to fill the gaps already occupied by some non-state actors and aliens.

### **Elections in Newly Merged Districts and the Role Political Parties**

The process of democratization doesn't complete when there is no organized political parties and a proper system of political contestation among the candidates of different political parties and groupings. It is not only a competition among different candidates of various political parties rather it provides a testing field for the political programmes and election manifestos of these parties. One of the significant aspects of the electoral politics is that it allows the citizens of a particular state to opt for the election of those candidates whom they consider appropriate to be the political representatives on their behalf to take part in the collective affairs of state. It is an avenue for the general masses to inter and play their role in the political development of their respective society indirectly. The voices of the masses are carried out by their political representatives to the parliament where these voices are accommodated in the law making and decision-making process. The foundation of democratic institution of any modern state is based on the organization of free, impartial and transparent electoral contestation.<sup>17</sup> The existence of political parties, groups or associations is essential for the smooth running of electoral and political processes as it institutionalize and provide perpetuation to democracy in any modern state and society. Keeping in view all these significant socio-political phenomena, the general masses of the newly merged districts under the umbrella of different political parties and

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<sup>17</sup> Altaf Ullah, "Election 2008: Tarikh ka Aik Naya Baab" (Urdu) *Daily Al-Akhbar*, (Rawalpindi, 31 March 2008).

independent candidacy took part in the 2019 provincial elections conducted in the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on 20<sup>th</sup> July. It provided an entry to the peoples’ representatives of these districts to the provincial legislature on the one hand and common men to the politics of the province on the other.<sup>18</sup>

The ruling Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf which was more ambitious as compared to other political parties during these elections, nominated its candidates against all the sixteen general constituencies across the newly merged districts. From PK-100 Bajaur 1, PTI provided its ticket to Anwar Zeb Khan who was a well-known political figure of the concerned constituency. He played his role as tribal elder and remained active during his life career the resolution of socio-political problems of his people. He always strived to bridge the gulf between the government and general public of his area. He was pragmatic enough to mediate in the social issues of the tribal people for the sake of establishing good-will among the common men of the society. By promoting socio-cultural homogeneity among the people especially at a time when the tribal belt was passing through a span of fragile security situation and disturbance in the wake of terrorism and militancy. While addressing to the masses of his constituency during the election campaign and clarifying the political manifesto of Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf, he indicated towards the achievements of his party and commended its process of accountability.<sup>19</sup> In the like manner, PTI allotted its ticket to Ajmal Khan against PK-101 Bajaur 2 while PK-102 Bajaur 3 was given to Hameed-ur-Rehman to contest the elections. Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf nominated the following candidates throughout the newly merged districts to contest the first ever provincial elections from newly merged districts. The essential elaboration is shown in the table below.

Candidates of Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf for the 2019 Provincial Elections

S.No.	Constituency	Candidate
1.	PK-100 Bajaur 1	Anwar Zeb Khan
2.	PK-101 Bajaur 2	Ajmal Khan
3.	PK-102 Bajaur 3	Hameed-ur-Rehman
4.	PK-103 Mohmand 1	Raheem Shah
5.	PK-104 Mohmand 2	Sajjad Khan
6.	PK-105 Khyber 1	Shahid Hussain
7.	PK-106 Khyber 2	Amir Muhammad Khan Afridi
8.	PK-107 Khyber 3	Muhammad Zubair
9.	PK-108 Kurram 1	Riaz Bangash

<sup>18</sup> *The Frontier Post*, (Peshawar, 21 July 2020), *Daily Aaj*, (Peshawar, 22 July 2020), *Daily Express*, (Islamabad, 22 July 2020).

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Anwar Zeb Khan, *Daily Aaieen*, (Peshawar, 20 July 2020).



10.	PK-109 Kurram 2	Syed Iqbal Mian
11.	PK-110 Orakzai	Shoaib Hassan
12.	PK-111 North Waziristan 1	Muhammad Iqbal Khan
13.	PK-112 North Waziristan 2	Aurangzeb Khan
14.	PK-113 South Waziristan 1	Afsar Khan
15.	PK-114 South Waziristan 2	Naseer Ullah Khan
16.	PK-115 Former FRs	Abid-ur-Rehman

**Source:** Irfan Khan and Zahid Meero Khail, “Qabaeli Azlagh mein Entekhabaat 16 Nishastein aor 282 Omeedwar”, Ashagaht-e-Khas, (Urdu) in *Daily Mashriq*, Peshawar, 20 July 2019.

Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf highlighted its efforts made for the mainstreaming of newly merged districts in the national politics in the election manifesto. During the election campaign the leadership of the party pointed out that the accommodation of the native population of these districts in the main body of Pakistani society was the glaring instances of its success both at central and provincial level. The people were living under a primordial socio-political order were not treated as equal citizens of the state. The central command and ring leaders of the party indicated that the provincial government of PTI initiated mega development projects in the newly merged districts by utilizing the available provincial resources. The people were well-aware and familiar with all these programmes and line of action determined by the party and its leadership. The amalgamation of twenty-eight thousand levy forces into the regular provincial police had basically provided a permanent livelihood to thousands of different families of these districts. In the like manner, the extension of health facility programme to the inhabitants of these districts were some of the glaring examples of practical performance of the ruling party.<sup>20</sup>

The most popular religio-political party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) also participated in the 2019 provincial elections and stood its candidates throughout these districts. Although it was not in favour of the recent merger of tribal areas into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as it had its own separate opinion regarding the merger yet still it decided to take part in the electoral contention. The basic and major point of divergence of this religio-political party was that it desired to get the general masses of these areas into confidence to decide their future line of action in the form of a referendum. However, after the merger of these areas into the province of Khyber

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<sup>20</sup> *Daily Mashriq*, (Peshawar, 20 July 2020), *Frontier Post*, Peshawar, (20 July 2020), *Daily Express*, (Islamabad, 21 July 2020).

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Pakhtunkhwa, it kept its divergent opinion and argument on the back burner and jumped into the field of political contestation.<sup>21</sup>

The next important political party was Awami National Party which took part in the 2019 provincial elections and nominated fourteen candidates to contest these elections under the umbrella of ANP. It propagated its political programme and electoral manifesto almost in all the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The provincial political leadership participated in the processions, public gatherings and corner meeting during the election campaign and pointed out the backward position of the native people of these districts. They proposed a way out for the socio-economic, political and administrative backwardness of these districts and also promised the people that it would provide health and education facilities to the common man.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, Pakistan Peoples Party participated by providing party tickets to thirteen candidates to contest these elections. By propagating its political programme and manifesto, PPP talked about the economic development of newly merged districts and other relevant issues which the general public were facing on routine basis in order to solicit public opinion in its favour. The basic facilities of health and education on the one hand and the overall mainstreaming of these districts into national politics on the other, was too on its priority list. It also attracted peoples' attention by recalling them its earlier achievements in the form of extending Political Parties Act 2002 to these districts and substitutive modifications in the primordial regulation i.e. FCR of 1901. Indeed, prior to these reforms neither the general masses were entitled to cast their votes nor the political parties were formally permitted to take part in the political and electoral processes of the region. Similarly, Jamat-i-Islami stood thirteen candidates during these elections from different constituencies of newly merged districts during these elections. This religio-political party was considered more organized and disciplined as it always strived to systematize its internal party politics, affairs and correspondence etc. However, the Qawmi Wattan Party was the last one which contested these elections from only three provincial constituencies. All these political parties seemed active during the electoral campaign as they immediately launched their respective political propagandas when the government gave them green signal for the organization of special provincial elections which were conducted after the merger of tribal areas into the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is interesting to note that during these elections still the influence of independent candidacy was visible because 202 independent

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<sup>21</sup> Irfan Khan, "Aor Tarikh ban Gai" in *Daily Mashriq*, (Peshawar, 22 July 2020).

<sup>22</sup> *The Frontier Post*, (Peshawar, 12 July 2020), *Daily Mashriq*, (Peshawar, 10 July 2020), *Daily Aaj*, (Peshawar, 11 July 2020).

candidates jumped into the field against the candidates of various political parties in the 2019 provincial elections.<sup>23</sup>

Beside sixteen general seats, eight candidates submitted their nomination papers to the Election Commission of Pakistan to contest these elections against four reserved seats for women. The ruling party (PTI) and ANP each nominated one candidate namely Aneeta Mehsood and Naheed Afridi respectively. Whereas Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) and Jamat-i-Islami each nominated three candidates namely Naeema Kishwar, Rozina Bibi and Siraj-un-Nissa, and Nazrana Bibi, Basroz Bibi and Zarshada respectively. Similarly, three candidates came up to contest these elections on three reserved seats for minorities. PTI nominated Wilson Wazir and Jamat-i-Islam nominated Sarband Singh while Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) nominated Surrayya Bibi against these reserved seats. All these candidates belonged to Khyber newly merged districts.<sup>24</sup>

### **Results and Analysis of the Elections**

The announcement of the results is the final stage of electoral process in which the competing parties ultimately reached on a particular conclusion and future line of action. Every political party keeping in mind its numerical strength, design its future programme after the election results. In case no party get an absolute majority then the party with the highest numerical strength in the house tries to frame a coalition government by inviting other small groups or parties. This sort of coalition government often establishes on the basis of give and take formula. The rest of the parties usually join the opposition benches in the house and conduct its affairs under the leadership of a leader of opposition who is unanimously selected by the candidates sitting on the opposition benches.<sup>25</sup> So far as the results of the 2019 provincial election were concerned, the independent candidates won maximum seats of provincial assembly by getting success from six general constituencies.<sup>26</sup> The basic reason behind the success of independent candidates was that the people of tribal areas did not experience popular democracy in which right to the adult franchise is the hallmark of any modern political polity. Initially, very limited class i.e. Maliks/tribal Chiefs, would cast their votes to promote

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<sup>23</sup> Irfan Khan and Zahid Meero Khail, "Qabaeli Azlagh mein Entekhabaat 16 Nishastein aor 282 Omeedwar", Ashagaht-e-Khas, (Urdu) *Daily Mashriq*, (Peshawar, 20 July 2019).

<sup>24</sup> *Daily Dawn*, Islamabad, 09 July 2020., *Daily Aeen*, (Peshawar, 08 July 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Altaf Ullah, "The 2002 National Elections in Pakistan: An Analysis", (M.Phil. Dissertation, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 2002), 89-90.

<sup>26</sup> *Daily Jang*, (Rawalpindi, 22 July 2020).

independent candidacy and political parties were not allowed to nominate their respective candidates to take part in the electoral process for a longer period of time. In 1996, the government bestowed the right of adult franchise upon the tribal people, only then they started to participate in the electoral politics of their areas but political parties were not permitted to enter into the tribal areas and play their due role in these areas till the introduction of political and administrative reforms introduced by the PPP government during August, 2011. Under these reforms process, the Political Parties Act was extended to these areas and thereafter the political parties were formally permitted to inter and take part in the political activities. All these past practices institutionalized under the primordial structure had its repercussions on the recent electoral contestation and ultimately on its results in which the success ratio of the independent candidates was high and the candidates associated with different political parties got less seats.<sup>27</sup>

However, the results of the 2019 provincial elections demonstrated that six seats out of sixteen general seats were won by the independent candidates while the next in line was the ruling Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf which got success on five general constituencies of newly merged districts. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) obtained three seats while one each provincial assembly seat was won by the Awami National Party and Jamat-i-Islami. The rest of the two major political parties namely Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League (N) could not get even a single seat of the assembly in the provincial elections of 2019. It means that both the parties could not come up with a remarkable victory. Similarly, the two important nationalist political parties namely Awami National Party and Qaumi Watan Party did not attract a considerable number of voters in their favour.<sup>28</sup> The former got success only from one constituency i.e. PK-103 Mohmand 1 while the later nominated only three candidates who could get success.<sup>29</sup>

**Constituency Wise Election Results**

No.	Constituency	Successful Candidate	Party Affiliation
1.	PK-100 Bajaur 1	Anwar Zeb Khan	Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf
2.	PK-101 Bajaur 2	Ajmal Khan	Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf

<sup>27</sup> Altaf Ullah and Gohar Rehman, “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa mein Zam Qabaeli Azlagh aor Intekhabi Siyasat 2019: Aik Tehqeeqi Mutligha” *Mujallah Tarikh wa Saqafat-i-Pakistan*, (July-Dec, 2019), 254-55.

<sup>28</sup> *Daily Aaj*, Peshawar, 22 July 2020., *Frontier Post*, (Peshawar, 22 July 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Irfan Khan and Zahid Meero Khail, “Qabaeli Azlagh mein Entekhabaat 16 Nishastein aor 282 Omeedwar”, Ashagaht-e-Khas, (Urdu) *Daily Mashriq*, (Peshawar, 20 July 2019).

3.	PK-102 Bajaur 3	Siraj-ud-Din	Jamat-i-Islami
4.	PK-103 Mohmand 1	Nisar Ahmad Mohmand	Awami National Party
5.	PK-104 Mohmand 2	Malik Abbas Rehman	Independent Candidate
6.	PK-105 Khyber 1	Shafiq Afridi	Independent Candidate
7.	PK-106 Khyber 2	Bilawal Afridi	Independent Candidate
8.	PK-107 Khyber 3	Muhammad Shafiq	Independent Candidate
9.	PK-108 Kurram 1	Muhammad Riaz	Jamiat Ulema-i- Islam (F)
10.	PK-109 Kurram 2	Muhammad Iqbal Mian	Pakistan Tehrik-i- Insaf
11.	PK-110 Orakzai	Syed Ghazi Ghazan Jamal Khan	Independent Candidate
12.	PK-111 North Waziristan 1	Iqbal Khan	Pakistan Tehrik-i- Insaf
13.	PK-112 North Waziristan 2	Mir Kalam	Independent Candidate
14.	PK-113 South Waziristan 1	Hafiz Assamuddin	Jamiat Ulema-i- Islam (F)
15.	PK-114 South Waziristan 2	Naseerullah Khan Wazir	Pakistan Tehrik-i- Insaf
16.	PK-115 Former FRs	Shoaib Afridi	Jamiat Ulema-i- Islam (F)

**Source:** Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad

According to the Election Commission results, Anwar Zeb Khan, a candidate of Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf from PK-100 Bajaur 1 obtained 12,951 votes while Waheed Gul of Jamat-i-Islam got second position with 11,775 votes.<sup>30</sup> In PK-101 Bajaur 2, Ajmal Khan of PTI stood first with 12,194 vote while JI's candidate, Sahibzada Haroon-ur-Rasheed got second position with 10,468 votes.<sup>31</sup> While from the next constituency of Bajaur i.e. PK-102 Bajaur 3, Siraj-ud-Din of JI got victory and obtained 19,88 votes while Hameed-ur-

<sup>30</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-100 Bajaur 1 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, (Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-101 Bajaur 2 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, (Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019).

Rehman of PTI remained on second number with 13,436 votes.<sup>32</sup> Nisar Ahmad Mohmand of ANP stood first with 11,247 votes from PK-103 Mohmand 1 while PTI's candidate Raheem Shah got second position with 9,669 votes.<sup>33</sup> The nationalist oriented ANP could get victory only on a single seat of the provincial assembly. Its candidate, Abbas Rehman obtained 11,751 votes while Muhammad Arif of JUI-F got second position with 9,801 votes.<sup>34</sup> Shafiq Afridi with independent candidacy got victory from PK-105 Khyber 1 by obtaining 19,733 votes while the next in the line of competition was Sharmat Khan, another independent candidate who obtained 10,745 votes.<sup>35</sup> The success of independent candidate, Bilawal Afridi with the highest votes of 12,814 was recorded from PK-106 Khyber 2 whereas another independent candidate Khan Sher Afridi got the second highest votes i.e. 6,297.<sup>36</sup> From the third constituency of the same district i.e. PK-107 Khyber 3 two independent candidates were taking the lead in which Mohammad Shafiq and Hameedullah Khan obtained 9,796 and 8,428 votes respectively.<sup>37</sup> The candidate of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) Muhammad Riaz got victory from PK-108 Kurram 1 by receiving 11,948 votes and he was closely followed by an independent candidate Jamil Khan who obtained 11,5517 votes.<sup>38</sup> The other constituency of the same district was won by a PTI's candidate Iqbal Hussain Mian who got 39,536 votes while Inayat Ali, an independent candidate got 22,957 votes and stood second. An independent candidate Ghazan Jamal Khan got success by obtaining 18,448 from the single constituency of Orakzai newly merged district and defeated the PTI candidate Shoaib Hassan who received 14,699.<sup>39</sup> In contestation from PK-111 North Waziristan 1, a JUI candidate, Samiuddin was defeated by a PTI candidate Muhammad Iqbal Khan by obtaining 9,288 and 10,200 votes respectively.<sup>40</sup> The second

<sup>32</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-102 Bajaur 3 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-103 Mohmand 1 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-104 Mohmand 2 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-105 Khyber 1 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-106 Khyber 2 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-107 Khyber 3 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-108 Kurram 1 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-109 Kurram 2 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-110 Orakzai (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

constituency of the same district i.e. PK-North Waziristan 2 was won by an independent candidate Mir Kalam who got 12,075 votes and defeated Sadiqullah of JUI and Aurangzeb Khan of PTI who obtained 7,975 and 7,942 votes respectively.<sup>41</sup> In South Waziristan newly merged district Assamuddin of JUI obtained 10,365 votes and defeated an independent candidate Waheed Khan whose secured 9,679 votes.<sup>42</sup> Whereas, Nasirullah Khan of PTI won the second constituency of the same district by receiving 11,114 votes.<sup>43</sup> However, a sharp electoral contest from PK-114 consisted of former FRs, was observed between the political candidates of JUI and PTI. The candidate of the former, Muhammad Shoaib obtained 18,102 while the candidate of the latter got 18,028 votes respectively.<sup>44</sup>

### **Provincial Elections and the Role of Women**

The female population and their involvement in the electoral and political processes of any modern political polity is essential for the accomplishment of the overall process of democratization. Though in developing countries like Pakistan the participation of this portion of society is comparatively less than the male one but with the passage of time and changing circumstances now the women folk seems active in the aforementioned processes. During the 2019 elections in the newly merged districts the participation of women was unprecedented. Beside four reserved seats for women, they also contested these elections on two general seats of the provincial assembly.<sup>45</sup> The overall participation ratio of women folk in these elections was recorded 28.6 percent. Out of the total 2801837 registered voters, the number of male voters was 1681308 while 1130529 were female voters. In these elections 525462 male voters while 210626 female voters cast their votes. In other word, it can be stated that 31 percent male while 18 percent female voters used their right of adult franchise during the 2019 provincial elections conducted only in newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-111 North Waziristan 1 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-112 North Waziristan 2 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-113 South Waziristan 1 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Form-47, Constituency PK-114 South Waziristan 2 (Erstwhile FATA Elections) Result, Election Commission of Pakistan, Islamabad, 21 July 2019.

<sup>45</sup> *Daily Aaj*, Peshawar, 20 July 2019., *The Frontier Post*, Peshawar, 20 July 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Shabir Hussain Imam, "Entekhabaat: Aghaz-e-Safar" *Daily Aaj*, (Peshawar, 24 July 2019).

It goes without saying that though the general masses of newly merged districts were mainly conservative and believed in the old tribal customs and traditions but despite it, two women candidates jumped into the field of electoral contestation and contested these elections against the male candidates on general seats of the assembly. These two women candidates were Naheed Afridi and Mrs. Mansa who contested these elections from PK-106 Khyber 2 on the ticket of ANP and from PK-109 Kurram 2 on the ticket of JI respectively. Although neither of these women candidates could not win their respective seats yet their contestation on general assembly's seats was considered as a break though in the political history of the region.<sup>47</sup>

With this comprehensive prelude, it has been clarified that women participation in the last provincial election from the newly merged districts is unprecedented and exemplary if compared with the earlier electoral history of these districts. It is obvious that more than two lakh female population avail the right of adult franchise during the 2019 provincial elections. It is evident that the women of these districts are willing to take part in the political development of their areas and excited to work parallel with the male population in the routine work. If one observes the role of women folk with reference to these elections, it can be rightly stated that the involvement of women in the electoral activities of newly merged districts would ultimately accommodate them in the decision-making process both at national and provincial level.<sup>48</sup> Some of the apprehensions regarding women participation in these election were already surfacing prior to these elections. For instance, it was presumed that how female population of this stationary society would leave their homes? Would they reach to their respective polling stations? Would they cast their votes in favour of male candidates? And the ultimate trepidation that could they reach their homes safe and sound after casting their votes? Indeed, people's perceptions were entrenched by primordial tribal traditions in which the role of women was mostly confined to household activities and they were not tolerated outside their *chadar* and *chardeewari* in the institutionalized order across the region. Although this situation has recently been changed by virtue of modern education, access to print and electronic media, social and political awareness yet still these districts are far behind from other parts of the settled areas of the county in all these aspects. Historically, the women folk was equipped with the right of adult franchise for the first time during 1997 general elections. In the aftermath of those elections, the number of male and female registered voters was recorded 78 and 360 respectively. After two decades of political journey more than two lakh women cast their precious votes during the 2019 provincial elections

<sup>47</sup> Tanvir Qaisar, "Qabaeli Azlagh ke Entekhabaat: Kredet Afwaaj-e-Pakistan ko" *Roznama Express*, (Peshawar 22 July 2019).

<sup>48</sup> Shabir Hussain Imam, "Entekhabaat: Aghaz-e-Safar" *Daily Aaj*, (Peshawar, 24 July 2019).



from these districts.<sup>49</sup> The execution of Elections Act, 2017 also played its due role in the engagement of women population in the political and electoral processes of the region. It was one the most important features of the Act which declared that the ratio of female votes must not be less than 10 percent.<sup>50</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, it can be stated that the process of democratization demands maximum political participation of the general public in order to play their indirect but effective role in the collective affairs and decision-making processes of a modern state. Being an essential of democracy, elections provide an open field of political contestation to the candidates of various political parties and groupings across any political society. As far as the 2019 electoral contestation in newly merged district was concerned, it was an immediate impact of the merger of tribal areas (FATA) into the contiguous province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that eventually led to the organization of provincial assembly elections in the newly merged newly merged districts. The newly merged districts remained under a different socio-political and legal-administrative set up since long, therefore, one can easily observe very significant political dynamics in these districts both prior to elections and thereafter. The active involvement of major political parties on the one hand and the politics of independent candidature in these districts on the other, were something amazing and anomalous as well. The results of these elections showed that most of the general seats of the provincial assembly went into the hand of independent candidates (6 seats) who were followed by the candidates of PTI and JUI with success on 5 and 3 seats respectively. The success of the remaining political parties was minimal as ANP and JI each obtained only one seat while PPP and PML-N could not win even a single seat of the provincial assembly from newly merged districts and the vote bank was, thus, scattered. However, the organization of the 2019 provincial elections in the newly merged districts is generally considered as a mega political event in the political history of the region. It would be proved as a prelude to the political development of these districts in the days to come. The system of direct elections via adult franchise would gradually reduce the success ratio of independent candidacy and eradicate the space for non-state actors as well. The process of peoples' participation and women empowerment would ultimately lead to the dawn of a new era in the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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<sup>49</sup> *Daily Aaj*, (Peshawar, 23 July 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Elections Act, 2017 (Act No. XXXIII of 2017), The Gazette of Pakistan Extraordinary, (Islamabad October 2, 2017).

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