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HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Undergraduate Studies:

B.A., Political Economy & Philosophy, Williams College, *magna cum laude*, 2011

Graduate Studies:

Harvard University, 2014 to present
Ph.D. Candidate in Public Policy
Thesis Title: “*Essays in Development Economics & Political Economy*”
Expected Completion Date: May 2020

References:

Professor Asim Khwaja
Harvard University
akhwaja@hks.harvard.edu

Professor Gautam Rao
Harvard University
grao@fas.harvard.edu

Professor Vincent Pons
Harvard University
vpons@hbs.edu

Professor Torben Iversen
Harvard University
tiversen@gov.harvard.edu

Teaching and Research Fields:

Primary field: Development Economics
Secondary fields: Political Economy, Behavioral Economics

Research Papers: (Drafts linked)

“No Representation Without Information: Politician Responsiveness to Citizen Preferences” (JMP)

Abstract: Information asymmetries plague many markets. Studies on the role of information in political accountability usually ask whether citizens know enough about politicians. In this paper, I ask instead whether politicians know enough about citizens to adequately represent them. Using original politician and citizen surveys in Pakistan, I show that politicians hold highly inaccurate beliefs about citizen preferences. In collaboration with a large political party, I conduct a field experiment with 653 politicians to understand how politicians respond when they receive information on citizen preferences. I find that politicians who receive information make recommendations to their party leadership that are closer to what citizens prefer. Directly elected politicians are more responsive than indirectly elected ones. Politicians are more responsive to information about women's preferences compared to men's preferences. I interpret my results using a simple model of belief updating and responsiveness. The model suggests that higher responsiveness to women's preferences should be expected if politicians are less confident in their prior beliefs about women, for which I find evidence in the data. This paper shows that politicians' inaccurate beliefs constrain accountability and public good provision in developing democracies. My results point to the need for better channels for the flow of information from citizens to politicians—channels that include those who are currently underrepresented.

“[Canvassing the Gatekeepers: A Field Experiment to Increase Women’s Electoral Turnout in Pakistan](#)”

with Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan and Shandana Khan-Mohmand

Abstract: Women participate in politics at lower rates than men in many developing countries. Do constraints on women's participation lie with women themselves, or with the men in their households who act as gatekeepers? We conduct a field experiment in Lahore, Pakistan to test how canvassing aimed at increasing women's turnout should be targeted within the household. We randomly assign 2500 households to one of four conditions: no canvassing visit, a visit targeted at men, a visit targeted at women, or both. All visits are primarily aimed at increasing women's turnout. We find large increases in women's turnout when the visit targets only men or both men and women. Targeting women alone is insufficient to improve their turnout. Using a costly behavioral measure of support for women's role in democracy, we find that treating men increases their support for women's role in democracy two months after the election. Households where both men and women were treated saw greater political discussion among men and women, and men in these household were more likely to provide women logistical support to vote. The results suggest that engaging men is necessary to reduce gender gaps in political participation in a context where women do not enjoy full decision-making power over their own participation.

“[Political Connections & Vote Choice: Evidence from Pakistan](#)” first-author, with Michael Callen, Ali Cheema, Adnan Khan, Farooq Naseer & Jacob Shapiro

Abstract: Do voters care about how connected their candidates are? We investigate this question in the 2015 local government elections in Pakistan combining: (i) data on ties between candidates, higher level politicians, and bureaucrats; (ii) a large-scale field experiment; and (iii) election outcomes. Before the election, voters considered local candidates' connections important and expected local politicians to help them access services provided by other levels of government. Providing voters information on connections increased support for more connected candidates, but information on past party performance did not. More connected candidates received more votes and were more likely to win office, but there was no electoral benefit to past service provision. The results provide novel evidence of the importance of political connections for electoral outcomes and show that forward-looking expectations based on candidate characteristics and an understanding of higher-level political process play an important role in vote choice.

Research Papers in Preparation: *(Data collection & analysis complete; preliminary drafts available)*

“[Overseeing the Machine: Monitoring the Effort of Political Party Workers](#)”

Abstract: Can monitoring by political parties induce their workers to expend greater effort in electoral campaigns? I answer this question through a field experiment in collaboration with a major political party in Pakistan, a context where the costs of mobilizing men are lower than the costs of mobilizing female voters. Monitoring the overall effort of political workers increases contact with male voters, but does not affect contact with female voters. Monitoring the effort of political workers on male voters alone does not increase contact with male voters, but decreases contact with female voters. These results shed light on principal-agent relationships within political parties and norms against the involvement of women in politics.

“[Precision versus Proximity: Experimental Evidence on Bureaucrats’ Decision Making](#)” with Michael Callen, Adnan Khan and Asim Khwaja

Abstract: Bureaucrats take decisions with enormous welfare consequences in developing countries. Researchers present evidence to bureaucrats aiming to convince them to use this evidence in policy-making. Using a lab-in-the-field experiment with 746 civil servants in Pakistan, we show that key assumptions underlying this process are unwarranted. In particular, two key features of policy research are not aligned with how policy-makers respond to evidence. The first feature is that researchers produce large-N evidence. We find that policy-makers update their beliefs substantially when presented with small-N evidence, but large-N evidence only shifts their beliefs marginally more than small-N evidence does. This result casts doubt on the ability of large-N research to convince policy-makers. The second feature is that research is conducted with high internal validity in some areas and it is expected that policy-makers in ‘similar’ areas will use it to make policies in their own areas. Experimental results show that policy-makers update more when given small-N evidence from their area compared to large-N evidence from other areas. This implies that to convince policy-makers, researchers should supplement large-N research with small-N research in the local area.

Book Chapter:

Liaqat, Asad, Ali Cheema & Shandana K. Mohmand. Forthcoming, 2020. “[Who do Politicians Talk to? Political Contact in Urban Punjab](#)” in *Pakistan’s Political Parties: Against All Odds*. Georgetown University Press.

Research Projects: (Funding raised; design & field implementation ongoing)

“What motivates women to run for office?” with Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan & Shandana Khan Mohmand

“Government Responsiveness to Women’s Collective Action” with Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan & Shandana Khan Mohmand

“Inequality, Trust & Governance” with Ali Cheema & Siddharth George

Teaching Experience:

2019 (Award)	Distinction in Student Teaching, HKS
2019, Spring	Development Economics (Graduate, HKS), Prof. Adnan Khan
2018, Fall	Development Economics (Graduate, HKS), Prof. Ricardo Hausmann
2017, Fall	Intermediate Microeconomics: Advanced (Undergraduate), Prof. Edward Glaeser
2015, '18	HKS Executive Education Course: Rethinking Financial Inclusion
2012, '14, '17	CERP - J-PAL Trainings: Evaluation Methods
2009, '10	Teaching Assistant, Williams College

Research Experience:

2011-14	Center for Economic Research in Pakistan, Research Associate
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Research Grants:

2019	Evidence in Governance & Politics (EGAP), <i>“Pathways to Women’s Substantive Representation in Pakistan”</i> with Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan & Shandana Khan Mohmand	\$270,000
2019	Economic & Social Research Council, UK, <i>“Governance, Trust & Inequality”</i> with Ali Cheema & Shandana Khan Mohmand	\$147,000
2019	Action for Empowerment & Accountability (A4EA) Research Programme, DFID UK, <i>“What motivates women to run for office?”</i> with Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan & Shandana Khan Mohmand	\$150,000
2018	International Growth Center (IGC), <i>“Politician Responsiveness to Citizen Preferences”</i>	\$24,150
2018	Jameel-Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) Governance Initiative, <i>“Politician Responsiveness to Citizen Preferences”</i>	\$33,000
2018	United States Institute of Peace, <i>“A Field Experiment to Increase Women’s Electoral Turnout”</i> with Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan & Shandana Khan Mohmand	\$147,500
2018	IGC, <i>“Effect of Capacity on Delivery of Urban Services”</i> with Gharad Bryan, Ali Cheema, Adnan Khan & Gerrard Padro-Miguel.	\$14,000
2017	A4EA Research Programme, DFID UK, <i>“A Field Experiment to Increase Women’s Electoral Turnout”</i> , with Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan & Shandana Khan Mohmand	\$170,500
2017	J-PAL Governance Initiative, Travel Grant	\$5,000
2016	J-PAL Urban Services Initiative, <i>“Effect of Capacity on Delivery of Urban Services”</i> with Gharad Bryan, Ali Cheema, Adnan Khan & Gerrard Padro-Miguel	\$47,500
2015	International Growth Center, <i>“Political Connections & Vote Choice”</i> , with Michael Callen, Ali Cheema, Adnan Khan, Farooq Naseer & Jacob Shapiro	\$28,000
2015-6	South Asia Institute, Harvard University, Travel Grants	\$5,500

Invited Talks & External Presentations:

- 2019 Pacific Development (PACDEV) Conference, New England Universities Development Conference (NEUDC), MIT Political Behavior of Development (PBD) Conference, Yale Conference on Federalism in South Asia, Boston Judgment & Decision Making (JDM) Day, APSA Conference, South Asia Politics Conference at the World Bank, MPSA Conference, Harvard Experimental Working Group Conference
- 2018 Association for Analytic Learning on Islam & Muslim Societies (AALIMS) Conference, APSA Conference, New England Workshop in Empirical Political Science, Consortium for Development Policy Research (Pakistan)
- 2017 Harvard South Asia Institute Research Symposium
- 2016 Boston University Political Economy Workshop

Referee Service:

Journal Of Public Economics, Journal of Politics

Research Briefs for Policy Audience:

“State Capacity in Punjab’s Local Governments: Benchmarking Existing Deficits”, with Ali Cheema, Adnan Khan & Ameera Jamal. IDS, 2019.

“Women’s Political Participation in Pakistan’s Big Cities: Evidence for Reform”, with Ali Cheema, Sarah Khan, Shandana K. Mohmand & Anam Kureishi. IDS Policy Briefing 166, Brighton: IDS. March 2019.

“Competing to Deliver? Political Workers and Service Delivery in Pakistan”, with Ali Cheema & Shandana K. Mohmand. Making All Voices Count (MAVC) Research Briefing. September 2017.

“These 3 barriers make it hard for policymakers to use the evidence that development researchers produce”, with Michael Callen, Adnan Khan, Asim Khwaja & Emily Myers. Washington Post. August 13, 2017.

“Political Attitudes in Pakistan and the 2018 Election”, with Ali Cheema. IDEAS Policy Brief. April 2017.

Affiliations:

Graduate Fellow, Center for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP)
Junior Fellow, Association for Analytic Learning on Islam & Muslim Societies (AALIMS)
Graduate Affiliate, Institute of Development & Economic Alternatives (IDEAS)
Ph.D. Affiliate, Evidence for Policy Design, Harvard Kennedy School

Languages:

Urdu (Native), Punjabi (Native), Hindi (Fluent), English