

Office Contact Information

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Languages: Punjabi (native), English
(fluent), Hindi/Urdu (fluent), French
(basic), Russian (basic)

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Current Position:

Assistant Professor, 2021-present

Previous Position:

Post-Doctoral Research Associate at Aix-Marseille School of Economics and Universitat Pompeu Fabra (2019-2020)

Research Fields:

Development Economics, Political Economics, Law and Economics

Education:

PhD in Economics, University of Paris-Dauphine, France

Completion Date: 15th October 2019

Thesis Title: “Essays on Judicial Independence and Development”

M.S. Public Policy and Development, Paris School of Economics, France

Thesis Title: “Using Geopolitics to identify causal effect of Aid on Growth”

M.S. Economics with honors, University of Tilburg, The Netherlands

Thesis Title: “Access to External Finance and Innovation: A Macroeconomic Perspective”

B.S. Economics with distinction (valedictorian), University of Utrecht, The Netherlands

Thesis Title: “Macroeconomic Implications of Terrorism”

Year abroad at LUISS Guido Carli Rome, Italy

Citizenship: Pakistani

Under Revision:

Judicial Independence and Development: Evidence from Pakistan - **Resubmitted to Review of Economic Studies**

Referee Service (selected):

World Development, The Economic Journal

Working Papers:

Judicial Independence and Development: Evidence from Pakistan (IOEA Best Paper Award 2018) - *Resubmitted*

This paper provides causal evidence that the institution of Presidential appointment exerts considerable influence on judicial independence, decision quality and development in Pakistan. We find that a change in the selection procedure of judges from Presidential appointment to appointment by judge peers significantly reduces rulings in favour of the government and that this reduction reflects an improvement in the quality of judicial decisions and development outcomes. Using mandatory retirement age as an instrument for new appointments allows us to estimate the causal effect of the reform. We test for and provide evidence against potential threats to identification and alternative explanations to our findings. The analysis of mechanisms reveals that the results are explained by rulings in politically salient cases and by judges who are politically active prior to their appointments.

Religious Leaders and Rule of Law (with A. Seror)

In this paper, we provide systematic evidence of how historical religious institutions affect the rule of law. In a difference-in-differences framework, we show that districts in Pakistan where the historical presence of religious institutions is higher, rule of law is worse. This deterioration is economically significant, persistent, and explained by the rise of religious leaders elected to political office. We explain our findings with a model where religious leaders leverage their high legitimacy to run for office and influence Courts. Our estimate of the economy-wide losses attributed to land expropriation by religious leaders through Courts is about 0.06 percent of GDP every year.

Judicial Capture by Favor Exchange (with B. Ali)

We use data from Pakistan to establish two results about the relationship between the judiciary and the government. (1) We document large favors in the form of expensive real estate from the government to judges, and large favors in the form of pro-government rulings from the judiciary to the government. Our empirical strategy exploits variation arising from the sudden termination in the real estate allocation and a rule of thumb used by the government to determine the allocation. (2) We distinguish between judge ideology and favor exchange explanations and find evidence in support of a quid pro quo favor exchange as the key mechanism driving the results. Our estimates indicate that cumulatively allocation of houses cost the government about 0.02 percent of GDP, however, it allowed the government to expropriate additional land worth 0.05 percent of GDP every year. Our results are consistent with qualitative evidence from many developing countries and suggest that favor exchange between the government and the judiciary deteriorates rule of law.

Publications (Pre-PhD):

Mehmood, S., 2014. Terrorism and the macroeconomy: Evidence from Pakistan. *Defence and Peace Economics*, 25(5), pp. 509-534.

Mehmood, S., (2019). Political Cleavages in Pakistan: Evidence from the Changing Structure of the Electorate. In *Political Cleavages, Party Systems and Social Inequalities: A study of Electoral Democracies 1948-2019*. Edited by Amory Gethin and Thomas Piketty. *Harvard University Press*.

Work in Progress:

Training Elite Civil Servants in Soft-Skills: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan (with S. Naseer & D. Chen)

The Strike of the Righteous: The Impact of Hate Literature on Radicalization in Pakistan (with S. Asad)

Judicial Independence in the Shadow of Terrorism

An investigation into the causes of abolition of slavery: The Case of Uncle Tom's Cabin (with Ekaterina Zhuravskaya)

Government Advertisements and Media Self-Censorship: Evidence from a Regression Discontinuity Design

Are judges a jury of one? Evidence from Abolition of juries in India

Research Experience:

2015-2016: Researcher at Institute for Research on Development (IRD), Paris, France

Projects at IRD:

1. Construction and compilation of electoral fraud dataset in Africa
2. Construction and compilation of dataset on citizen trust of state institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa

2012-2014: Researcher at Central Planning Bureau, Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs

Projects at CPB:

1. A macroeconomic analysis of the returns to public R&D investments (academic paper)
2. Science funding: international comparisons of science funding systems (policy brief)
3. Innovation and financial access in the subprime crisis (academic paper)

06-09.2010: Summer internship at Research Department, Central Bank of Pakistan (SBP)

Research on terrorism and its impact on the external sector of Pakistan

Teaching Experience:

Fall 2018: Statistical Reasoning at Sciences Po (Masters Level)

Spring 2019: Quantitative Methods at Sciences Po (Masters Level)

Awards and Honors:

2020 International Growth Centre Research Grant (\$ 50, 000)

2020 Ronald Coase Medal (Runner-up)

2019 EDI Grant “Judicial Independence in Pakistan” (\$ 32,000)

2018 Best Paper Award Institutional and Organizational Economics Academy

2017 University of Paris Student Research Award (\$ 2,000)

2017 Foundation Sarah Andrieux Exploratory Research Grant (\$ 1,200)

2016-2019 Doctoral Fellowship University of Paris Dauphine

2015-2016 Paris School of Economics Public Policy and Development Scholarship

2011-2012 Tilburg University Scholarship for Academic Excellence

2008-2011 Utrecht Excellence Scholarship

Conferences (selected):

Annual ASSA 2020 Meeting, San Diego, USA

Annual Conference Economic Development and Institutions EDI 2020, Namur, Belgium

Annual Conference American Law and Economics Association ALEA 2019, New York, USA

Annual Meeting Midwest Political Science Association MPSA 2019, Chicago, USA

Annual Meeting American Political Science Association APSA 2019, Washington DC, USA

Annual Meeting Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture ASREC 2019, Boston, USA

Annual Conference Royal Economic Society RES 2019, Warwick, UK

Annual Conference Society for Institutional & Organizational Economics SIOE 2019, Stockholm, Sweden

Annual Conference in Public Economics, Journées LAGV 2019, Marseille, France

Annual Asian Meeting of the Econometric Society 2019, Xiamen, China

Annual Conference American Law and Economics Association ALEA 2018, Boston, USA

Annual Meeting Institutional and Organizational Economics Academy, IOEA 2018 Corsica, France

Annual Conference Centre for the Studies of African Economies CSAE 2018, Oxford, UK

Annual Conference Centre for the Studies of African Economies CSAE 2018, Oxford, UK

Invited Seminars/Workshops/Conferences (selected):

ETH Zurich Law and Economics Seminar, 2020
Bocconi University Applied Economics Seminar, 2020
World Bank South Asia Development Conference 2019, Washington DC, US
Economic Development and Institutions (EDI) General Conference 2019, Paris, France
Institute for the Study of Religion, Economics and Society (IRES) Workshop 2019, Los Angeles, US
Applied Economics Seminar 2019 Paris School of Economics, Paris, France
CRED Workshop 2019, University of Namur, Namur, Belgium
Graduate Student Workshop 2019, Institute for Study of Religion, Economics and Society, Boston, US
Brownback Seminar 2019 at the Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan
Casual Friday Development Seminar 2018, Paris School of Economics, Paris, France

Policy Writing:

“A cultural phenomenon”. [The International Herald Tribune](#), 2016.
“A discussion on death penalty” [Dawn Pakistan](#), 2015.
“Fallibility of Intuition and the Utility of Models”. [The International Herald Tribune](#), 2014.
“Public Funding of Science: An International Comparison” with Ryanne van Dalen, [CPB Policy Brief](#), 2014.
“The Power of the Situation”, [The International Herald Tribune](#), 2014.
“The roots of terrorism”. [Dawn Pakistan](#), 2013.

Affiliation(s):

Fellow, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (2020 to present)
Fellow, Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan (2019 to present)
Fellow, Governance and Regulation Chair, Paris Research University (2016 to present)

Computer Skills:

Stata, Eviews, Python, Latex, MS Office, ArcGIS

References:

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