

New Economic School
Assistant Professor

Office Contact Information

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

Current Position:

Assistant Professor at the New Economic School, January 2021-

Education:

PhD in Economics, University of Paris-Dauphine, France
Thesis Title: "Essays on Judicial Independence and Development"
Completion Date: 15th October 2019
Advisor: Ekaterina Zhuravskaya

M.S. Public Policy and Development, Paris School of Economics, France
Thesis Title: "Using Geopolitics to identify causal effect of Aid on Growth"

Research Fields:

Development Economics, Political Economy, Law and Development.

Publications:

1. Mehmood, Sultan. 2022. "The impact of Presidential appointment of judges: Montesquieu or the Federalists?" **American Economic Journal: Applied Economics**, 14(4): 411–445.
2. Mehmood, Sultan and Seror, Avner. 2023. "Religious Leaders and Rule of Law" **Journal of Development Economics**, 160(1): 1–18.
3. Mehmood, Sultan, Seror, A. and Chen, Daniel, 2023. "Ramadan Fasting Increases Judicial Leniency in Judges from Pakistan and India" **Nature Human Behavior**, pp.1-7. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-023-01547-3> (Cover Article)
4. Mehmood, S. and Ali, B., 2024. Judicial Capture. **The Economic Journal**, 134(659), pp.1287-1301.
5. Mehmood, S, Naseer, S., and Chen, D., 2024. "Altruism in Governance: Insights from Randomized Training for Pakistan's Junior Ministers". **Journal of Development Economics**.
6. Mehmood, S., Naseer, S. and Chen, D.L., 2024. Teacher vaccinations enhance student achievement in Pakistan: The role of role models and theory of mind. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 121(48). <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2406034121>
7. Transmitting Rights (with S. Naseer and D. Chen) – Forthcoming at the **American Economic Journal: Economic Policy**. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.20230620&from=f>

Revise and Resubmit:

8. Reform Multiplier and Elite Entrenchment (with B. Ali) – R&R at **American Economic Journal: Applied Economics**.
9. AI Education as State Capacity: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan (with S. Naseer and D. Chen) - R&R at **Journal of Development Economics**.

Teaching Experience:

Spring 2020: Econometrics and Data Science I at Sciences Po (Masters Level)
Fall 2020: Statistics and Probability Theory at Sciences Po (Masters Level)
Spring 2022: Empirical Public Economics at the New Economic School (Masters Level)
Spring 2022: Introduction to Law and Economics (Bachelors Level)
Spring 2022: Law and Economics (Masters Level)
Spring 2023: Empirical Public Economics at the New Economic School (Masters Level)
Spring 2023: Introduction to Law and Economics (Bachelors Level)
Spring 2023: Law and Economics (Masters Level)
Spring 2024: Introduction to Law and Economics (Bachelors Level)
Spring 2024: Law and Economics (Masters Level)
Spring 2024: Econometrics II (Masters Level)

Referee Service (selected):

American Economic Review, Review of Economic Studies, The Economic Journal, Journal of the European Economic Association, American Economic Review: Insights, Review of Economics and Statistics, Journal of Development Economics.

Submitted Papers (selected):

1. [Ink and Ire: The Revolutionary Impact of Russian Literature](#) (with V. Avetian) – **Submitted.**

Can the written word spark resistance against an autocratic state? We examine Russian literature from its Golden Age, illustrating how the *Sovremennik* magazine, initiated by the legendary poet Alexander Pushkin and featuring works of Russian literary giants, served as a gateway to more radical ideologies, ultimately igniting violent dissent against the Czarist regime. Using Pushkin's 'circle' and his chance encounters as an instrument for the magazine's spread, we find evidence of a causal relationship. The magazine cultivated a market for revolutionary ideas, inspiring underground publications and new generations of readers and writers. Our findings highlight that Russian literature, one of the most influential literary movements, catalyzed violent political dissent against the Czar.

2. [Contract Enforcement in a Stateless Economy](#) (with D. Chen) – **Submitted.**

How do markets flourish in the absence of a formal State authority enforcing contracts. To study contract enforcement without the State, we focus on a large informal market: illegal gambling. We present evidence that even in the absence of legal enforcement authority, personal relationships, and violence, more than 70% of gamblers fulfill their contractual obligations in this informal economy. We provide experimental evidence that even in impersonal and informal markets, reputation plays a key role in the honoring of contractual obligations. Extensions of the payment deadline also increases contract enforcement. Overall, we provide data and causal evidence that contract enforcement is possible in impersonal markets and without formal legal enforcement. Illegal gambling thrives on the same principles of reputation and credit constraints that sustain modern legal markets.

3. [Training Policymakers in Econometrics](#) (with S. Naseer and D. Chen)– **Submitted.**

This study empirically assesses the power of econometrics education to shape policy choices and outcomes. We initially randomized policymakers into an econometrics training program and found that trained deputy ministers improved their performance in national research methods and public policy exams by 0.5-0.8 sigma. The stated valuation of quantitative evidence and commissioning of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) in policymaking increased by 1.32 sigma and 300% respectively. A year after the training, they were twice as likely to choose and triple the funding for a policy backed by RCT evidence. Building on these findings, we further extended our research to evaluate the practical implications of econometrics training on front-line public servants.

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4. [AI Education as State Capacity: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan](#) (with S. Naseer and D. Chen) – **R&R at Journal of Development Economics**

We randomize elite bureaucrats in Pakistan into AI educational workshops and find that it influences their willingness to adopt AI and their funding allocations toward digitization. Cross-randomizing them into AI fairness activism reduced this willingness and funding. To capture a uniform measure of the performance of civil servants we utilize a digital democracy platform, where we observed that AI training enhanced dispute resolution and citizen ratings of their efforts, particularly for land disputes, while AI fairness activism diminished them. Overall, our research shows that top government officials' human capital is malleable and affects policies, attitudes, staff, and the population.

5. [Why are Rights Revolutions Rare?](#) (with S. Naseer and D. Chen) – **Submitted.**

We show that when traditional norms are challenged, norm disruptors pay a price. We experimentally foster more progressive gender attitudes among female teachers in Pakistan and show that these attitudes transmit to their students. Progressive gender attitudes, however, elevate stress hormone concentrations in blood plasma by 0.3 standard deviations and lead to a 0.35 standard deviation increase in domestic violence. Leveraging random variation in the fraction of teachers treated within a school, we find, however, that when additional teachers hold progressive attitudes—a moral bandwagoning effect—the costs of holding progressive gender attitudes are attenuated. Overall, our results suggest that deviation from traditional gender norms comes at a cost, but this cost diminishes as societal norms converge. In particular, domestic violence, more so than stress, stymies gender rights revolutions.

Selected Observational Studies (Work-in-Progress):

1. The 1970 Bhola Cyclone and the Birth of Bangladesh (with M. Mobarak)
2. Equity and efficiency preferences of judges (with D. Markovits, T. Tyler, R. Fisman, S. Kariv)
3. The policy preferences of government leaders (with R. Fisman, S. Kariv, S. Naseer)
4. Are judges a jury of one? Evidence from Abolition of juries in India (with R. Ahmed and N. Kala)
5. Civil Society and Democratic Reform: Evidence from Lawyers' Movement in Pakistan (D. Chen)
6. Beneath the Ban of Abortion: Evidence from the USSR (with Y. Prokhorskoy and H. Zoabi)

Selected Pre-registered Experiments (Work-in-Progress):

Reshaping Beliefs about Ourselves and Others (with J. Kaur, S. Naseer & D. Chen) – [AEA RCT Registry](#)
Insincere Beliefs (with A. Seror) – [AEA RCT Registry](#)
Mental Health, Teacher Stress and Student Achievement (with S. Naseer & D. Chen) – [AEA RCT Registry](#)
The Strike of the Righteous: The Impact of Hate Literature in Pakistan (with S. Asad) – [AEA RCT Registry](#)

Policy Writing:

“A Judicial manifesto”. [The International Herald Tribune](#), 2023.
“Training Effective Altruism: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan”. [Vox Policy Column](#), 2021.
“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.

Awards and Honors:

- 2024 Armenian Economic Association Best Paper Award “Ink and Ire: Revolutionary Impact of Russian Literature”.
- 2022 International Growth Centre Research Grant “Machine Learning for Tax Courts” (\$ 60, 000)
- 2021 IPA Peace and Recovery Research Funding “Radicalization in Pakistan” (\$ 50, 000)
- 2020 International Growth Centre Research Grant “Judicial Access and Development” (\$ 70, 000)
- 2019 EDI Grant “Judicial Independence in Pakistan” (\$ 32,000)
- 2018 Best Paper Award Institutional and Organizational Economics Academy

Affiliation(s):

- Member, CEPR Research Grants Evaluation Committee (2022- 2023)
- Member, PIDE Rasta Grants Evaluation Committee (2021- present)
- Fellow, Mahboob ul Haq Research Centre, Lahore University of Management Sciences (2021- present)
- Fellow, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) (2020 - present)

Computer Skills:

Stata, Python, Latex, MS Office, ArcGIS.