

By C Christine Fair

In a world of our own

In principle, the results of the next election will be important for Pakistan and its key foreign relations. While the army continues to dominate Pakistan's foreign relations, over the past five years politicians have had carved out for themselves an increasing role in shaping the possible outcomes within which the army can operate. The army's ability to call the shots remains intact, but its ability to run roughshod over political preferences is more constrained than ever before. The next constitutionally elected government, with its ever more legitimate mandate to govern, is likely to exert itself increasingly in foreign relations. Much is at stake for the government, the political institutions, the people, and – as always – the army.

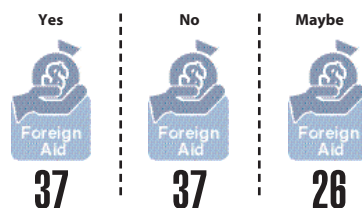




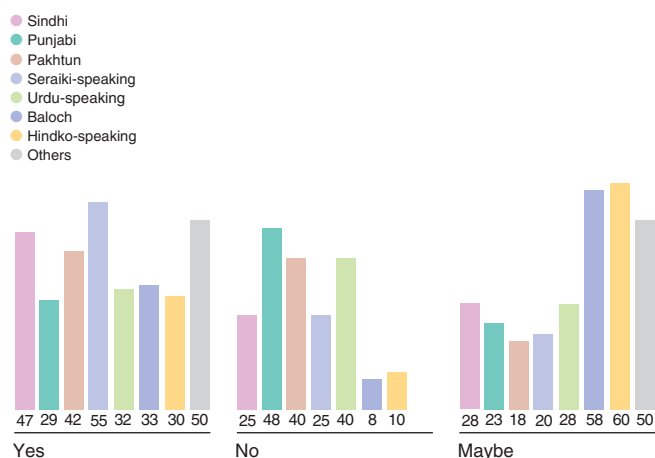
White Star

1 | Does Pakistan require foreign aid?

1.1 Countrywide indicators



1.2 Ethnicity-based indicators



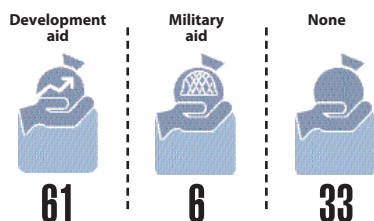
Given the expanding role that politics has assumed over the last five years, the inputs and preferences of the Pakistani voter too have assumed unprecedented importance. To gauge public sentiment on a range of pressing foreign policy issues, the Herald's Political Barometer asked respondents several questions regarding Pakistan's relations in a global context.

Views about foreign aid

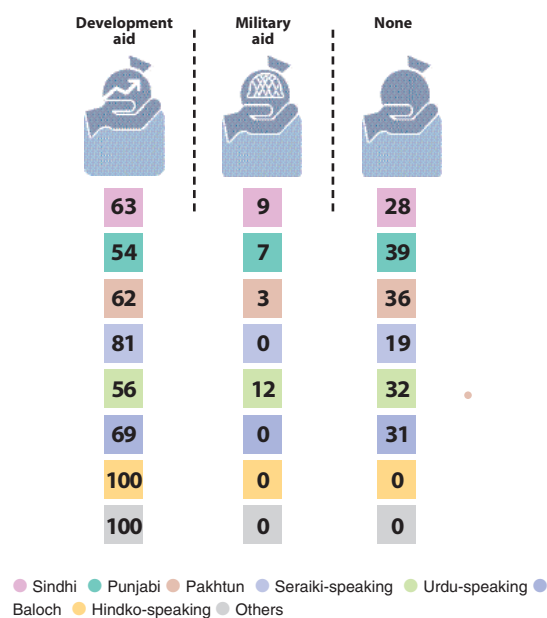
Overall, Pakistanis seem deeply divided about whether or not their country requires foreign aid with roughly the same proportion of respondents answering 'Yes' as those answering 'No' at 36.8 and 37.3 per cent respectively. Another one in four say 'Maybe'. However, there are very important differences across Pakistan's ethnic groups — Punjabis at 48 per cent are the more likely to say 'No', whereas Seraiki-speakers at 55 per cent are the most likely to say 'Yes'. A majority of Hindko-speakers and the Baloch are uncertain. Among those who do believe Pakistan requires foreign assistance, the vast majority think the country needs development aid rather than military aid. Across all ethnic groups, military aid has the highest support among Urdu-speakers at 12 per cent.

2 | What type of foreign assistance is most beneficial to Pakistan?

2.1 Countrywide indicators



2.2 Ethnicity-based indicators



Pakistan-US relations

The US and Pakistan have a long and tortured history going back to the mid-1950s. Disappointments have been numerous on both sides. To gauge Pakistanis' beliefs about the US, respondents are asked "Should Pakistan have a strong strategic alliance with the United States?" Respondents are similarly in disagreement with nearly one-third saying 'Yes', another third saying 'No', and the remainder saying 'Maybe'. Across the country, there is no consensus about this vexing alliance. In fact, there is very little variation by age or gender. However, the answers vary widely across Pakistan's ethnic groups. Punjabis and Pakhtuns are more likely to say 'No' at 44 per cent and 41 per cent respectively, Urdu-speakers and Sindhis are more likely to support this alliance at 50 per cent and 43 per cent respectively and the Baloch are most likely to be uncertain about this with 74 per cent saying 'Maybe'.



Hina Rabbani Khar, Pakistan's foreign minister with Hillary Clinton, the former US Secretary of State

Drones remain a contentious issue

While the US began using drones in Pakistan during the presidencies of George W Bush and General (retd) Pervez Musharraf, President Barack Obama has escalated their use. Pakistanis are uncertain about the degree of cooperation that their own civilian, military and intelligence agencies provide to the US drones. With both governments refusing to be transparent, reports of civilian casualties flame the anger of many Pakistanis against the US.

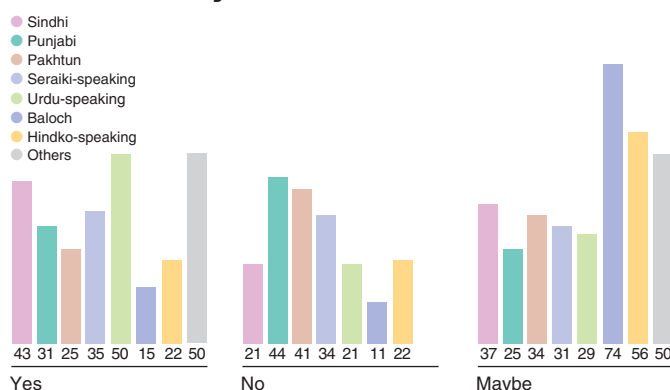
To better understand Pakistanis' views on drones, respondents are asked: "Are drone strikes an acceptable course of action against the Taliban and al-Qaeda?" A majority at 57.3 per cent say 'No'. However, a sizeable minority at 25.2 per cent think they are acceptable and another 17.5 per cent answer 'Maybe'. The youngest and oldest respondents from the age brackets of 18 to 35 years and of 70 years and above

3 | Do you think Pakistan should have a strong strategic alliance with the United States?

3.1 Countrywide indicators



3.2 Ethnicity-based indicators



are more likely to reject them (both at around 60 per cent). However, compared with other age groups, the oldest respondents are also more ambivalent with one in four saying 'Maybe'. Much more variation is evident across the ethnic groups. Urdu speakers and Sindhis are much more likely to support drone strikes at 48 per cent and 43 per cent respectively, while Punjabis, Hindko-speakers and Pakhtuns are most likely to reject them at 73 per cent, 70 per cent and 67 per cent respectively. The Baloch are most likely to be undecided with 44 per cent responding to the question of acceptability of drone strikes with 'Maybe'.

When asked whether or not drone attacks are an infringement upon Pakistan's sovereignty, the overwhelming majority at 69.6 per cent says 'Yes'; however, more than one in ten say that they are not an infringement and nearly one in five answer 'Maybe'. While there was some minimal variation by age and gender, the most striking variation was again across ethnic groups. Urdu-speakers, Seraiki-speakers, and the Baloch are more likely to reject the claim that drone strikes violate Pakistan's sovereignty at 40 per cent, 26 per cent and 25 per cent respectively whereas Hindko-speakers and Punjabis at 90 per cent and 84 per cent overwhelmingly believe that drone attacks are a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. The Baloch, again, are the most likely at 56 per cent to offer the ambivalent response of 'Maybe'.

While the majority of survey respondents oppose drones on both questions, clearly there are important minority voices on this controversial issue which are generally unacknowledged.

Foreign militants and the question of sovereignty

Drones are not the only possible affront to Pakistani sovereignty. Pakistan and the world have been focused on the foreign militants tied to an array of international

Islamist terrorist and insurgent organisations that are ensconced in Pakistan's territory. To understand the gravity with which Pakistanis view this enduring situation, respondents were asked whether or not "foreign militants operating from or within Pakistan" infringe upon the state's sovereignty.

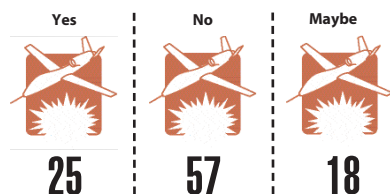
Surprisingly, the respondents are much more likely to see foreign militants as an infringement than they do drones (80 per cent for foreign militants, 69.6 per cent for drones). Almost five per cent do not believe that foreign militants violate Pakistan's sovereignty while another 15.1 per cent answer 'Maybe'. Interestingly, the oldest respondents (from the age group 70 years and above) are most adamant in this view with 93.5 per cent of them saying 'Yes'. While gender differences are modest, ethnicity accounts for much more variation. Pakhtuns and Seraiki-speakers are more likely than other Pakistanis to see them as violating Pakistan's rule at 87 and 86 per cent respectively whereas the Baloch are much less likely at 59 per cent to have this view and, as with other questions, the Baloch are also more likely to say 'Maybe' at 41 per cent.

Relations with India

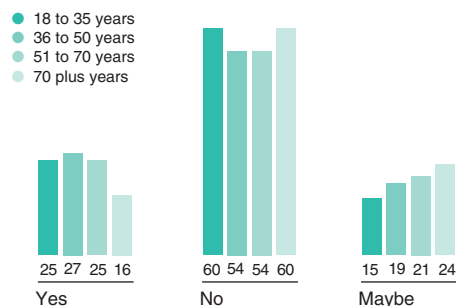
Over the last two years, Pakistan and India have made important strides in improving their economic relations. In 2011, Pakistan offered India the "most favoured nation" (MFN) status. India granted Pakistan the same status much earlier in 1996. Respondents are asked whether or not Pakistan should have reciprocated the Indian move. The plurality of respondents at 43.1 per cent believe that Pakistan should not have done so, with 27.5 per cent saying 'Yes' and another 29.4 per cent saying 'Maybe'. There is some age variation, with persons of 70 years of age or older being somewhat more supportive, at 33.3 per cent, than the average and such persons are also somewhat less likely to say 'Maybe' at 24.4 per cent.

4 | Are drone attacks an acceptable course of action against the Taliban and al-Qaeda?

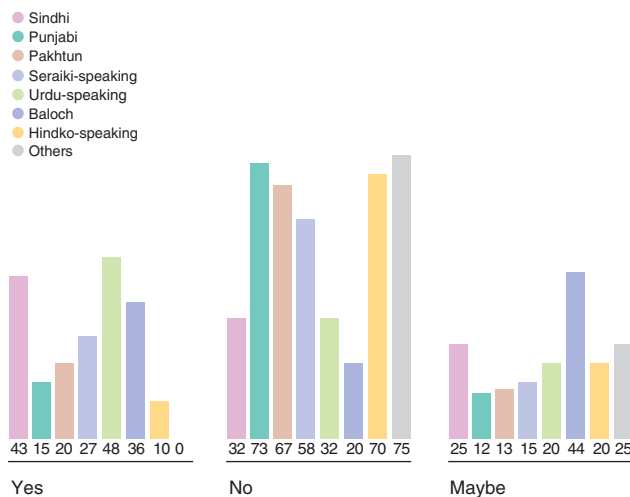
4.1 Countrywide indicators



4.2 Age-wise indicators



4.3 Ethnicity-based indicators



Women were somewhat less likely to say 'Yes' and somewhat more likely to be ambivalent. As with other questions, most of the interesting variations can be observed across ethnic groups. Urdu-speakers, Seraiki-speakers, the Baloch and Sindhis are more likely to support granting India the MFN status at 46 per cent, 45 per cent, 44 per cent and 41 per cent respectively whereas opposition is most intense among Punjabis at 62 per cent. Hindko-speakers and Pakhtuns are more likely to be ambivalent at 70 per cent and 52 per cent. The majority of Baloch are also more likely to be ambivalent at 52 per cent.

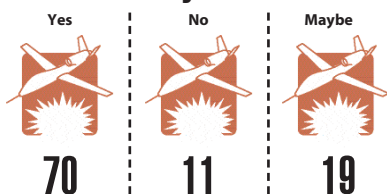
Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan

Pakistan and Afghanistan have historically had vexed relations stemming from the early days of Pakistan's independence, when Afghanistan was the only state to reject Pakistan's admission to the United Nations. Afghanistan – as well as the US and others – continually complain that Pakistan interferes aggressively in Afghanistan. They point to Pakistan's period of overt support to the Pakhtun Islamist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar during the early 1990s and later for the Taliban until 2001. Pakistan continues to sustain criticism that it still supports the Afghan Taliban and allied groups such as Jalaluddin Haqqani, even though Pakistan has been a critical partner for the West in the war against al-Qaeda. While the US plans to withdraw from Afghanistan, Pakistani policymakers have tough choices ahead of them.

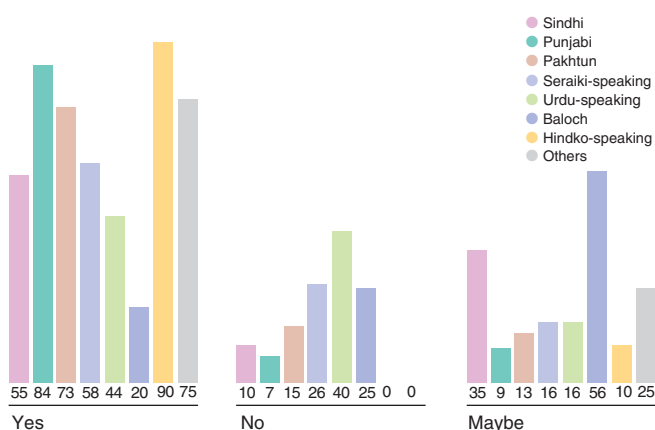
To understand how potential voters feel about Pakistan's Afghanistan policy, respondents were asked: "Should Pakistan actively promote a government favourable to its own interests in Afghanistan?" Respondents are at odds on this issue with roughly a third of persons giving each of the three options – 'Yes', 'No' and 'Maybe' – in response. The oldest respondents are both most likely to support such activism at 39.1 per cent and also to be ambivalent about the same at 37 per cent. In contrast, the youngest are most likely to reject proactive efforts at 37.5 per cent. Men are somewhat more likely than women to disapprove of proactive engagement at 37.9 per cent versus 32 per cent. Turning to the considerable ethnic differences, Urdu-speakers, Seraiki-speakers and Sindhis are most supportive of Pakistani activism to secure its interests in Afghanistan at 76 per cent, 55 per cent and 41 per cent whereas the Baloch and Punjabis are most opposed

5 | Are drone attacks an infringement on Pakistan's sovereignty?

5.1 Countrywide indicators



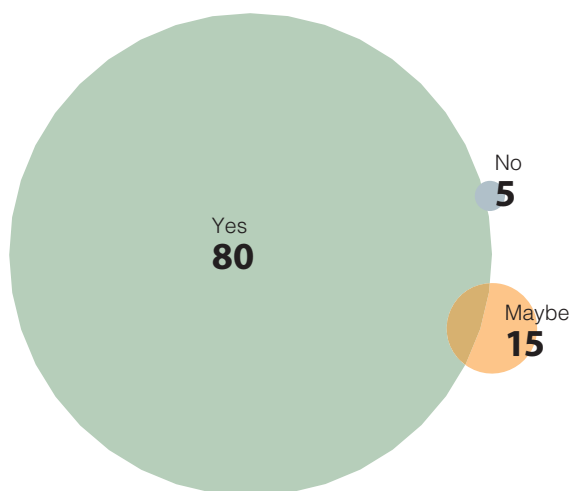
5.2 Ethnicity-based indicators



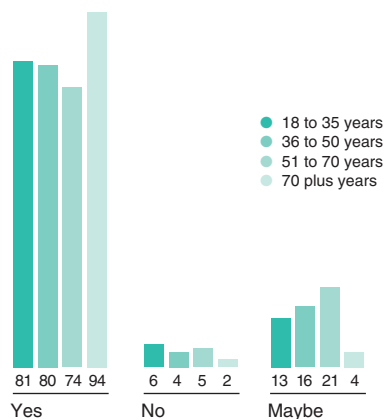
When asked whether or not drone attacks are an infringement upon Pakistan's sovereignty, the overwhelming majority at 69.6 per cent says 'Yes'; however, more than one in ten say that they are not an infringement and nearly one in five answer 'Maybe'.

6 | Are foreign militants operating from or within Pakistan infringing Pakistan's sovereignty?

6.1 Countrywide indicators



6.2 Age-wise indicators



to it at 53 per cent and 46 per cent. Hindko-speakers are overwhelmingly uncertain about the best way forward with 60 per cent indicating 'Maybe'.

Pakistan engaging the world

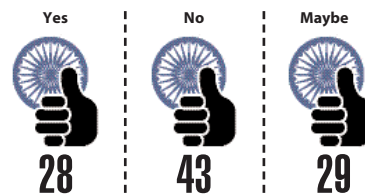
In recent years, Pakistan's foreign relations have been important sources of military and economic assistance as well as diplomatic and political support for its regional concerns. To gain insight into which countries Pakistanis view as most beneficial to their country, survey participants were asked to indicate which country was the best for Pakistan from among a series of options: China, India, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the US as well as countries associated with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and a category called "Muslim countries". Curiously, despite much of the praise that China sustains in Pakistan for being Pakistan's all-weather friend, it does not fare terribly better than the other individual countries or groups of countries. While China tops the list with 14.9 per cent of the respondents identifying it as the 'most beneficial', the other countries and groups of countries, including the US, draw similar shares at roughly 11 to 13 per cent.

Having said that, the majority of respondents feel – with little variation across age and gender – Pakistan should pursue better ties with Muslim countries at 88.2 per cent. There was comparatively less ethnic variation on this question than on the others, with one notable exception: the Baloch were clearly less enthusiastic at 54 per cent and were also more likely at 43 per cent to be uncertain about the value of such overtures to Muslim countries.

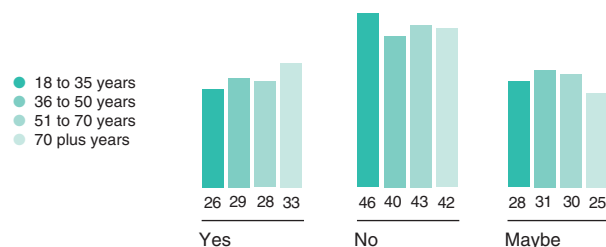
There is somewhat less enthusiasm for Pakistan pursuing better ties with SAARC countries with 74.4 per cent saying 'Yes', 4 per cent saying 'No', and 21.6 per cent saying 'Maybe'. The youngest respondents at 77.3 per cent are more enthusiastic and support such efforts while the oldest respondents at 63 per cent are less likely to support the strengthening of ties with SAARC countries. Men are somewhat more likely than women to support this outreach at 76.9 per cent versus 71.3 per cent. Ethnic variation is generally low; however, the Baloch, as elsewhere, are less likely to support stronger ties as 51 per cent respond with 'Yes' and 49 per cent with 'Maybe'.

7 | Should Pakistan have granted India the 'most favoured nation' status?

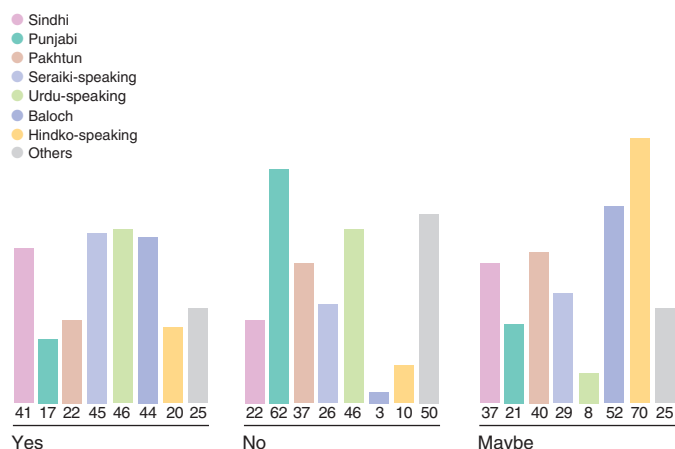
7.1 Countrywide indicators



7.2 Age-wise indicators



7.3 Ethnicity-based indicators

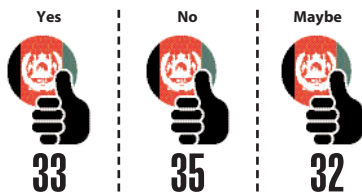




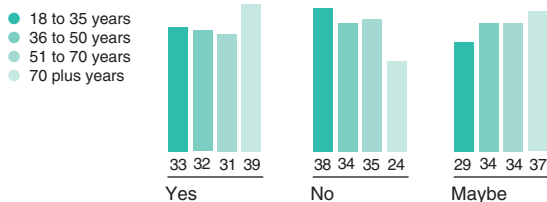
Pakistanis are uncertain about the degree of cooperation that their own civilian, military and intelligence agencies provide to US drone attacks

8 | Should Pakistan actively promote a government favourable to its own interests in Afghanistan?

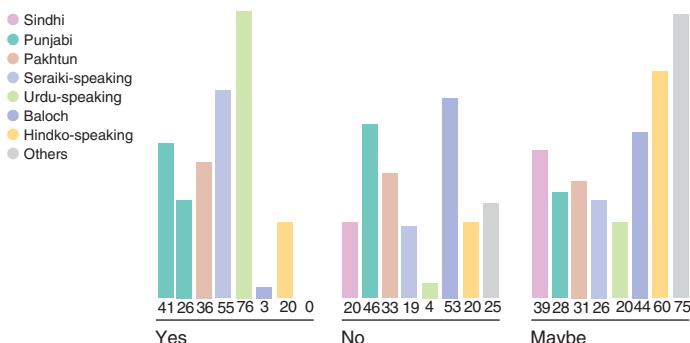
8.1 Countrywide indicators



8.2 Age-wise indicators



8.3 Ethnicity-based indicators



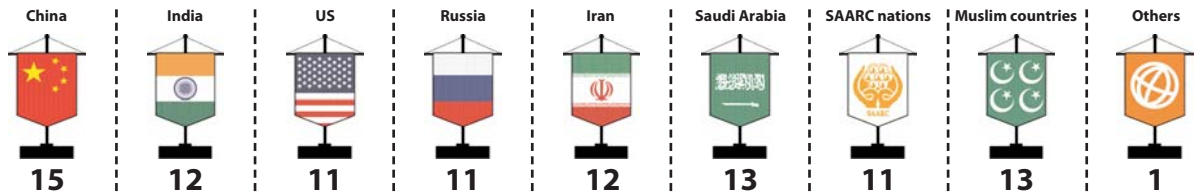
Political parties and foreign affairs

With elections looming, respondents were asked which party they believe would “handle Pakistan’s foreign affairs in the best possible manner”. Both the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PMLN) have the most support with roughly 30 per cent. Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has the support of 21.3 per cent of the survey sample. Other parties all draw support in the single digits. However, among the youngest survey participants (18 to 35 years), the competition is much tighter with the PPP, PMLN and PTI drawing the support of 26 per cent, 31 per cent and 23 per cent of participants respectively. The older respondents (70 years and above) are more likely to support the PMLN at 41 per cent and the least likely to support the PTI. There is little noteworthy variance between men and women. As would be expected, there is interesting ethnic variation. The PPP fares best among Sindhis, Seraiki-speakers and Urdu-speakers at 51 per cent, 49 per cent and 48 per cent. The PMLN does the best among Punjabis at 45 per cent and the PTI garners the most support among Pakhtuns, Hindko-speakers and Punjabis at 36 per cent, 30 per cent and 25 per cent respectively.

Interestingly, when respondents were asked to say which party would handle Pakistan’s foreign affairs in

9 | Which nation/s will be most beneficial to Pakistan as its ally/allies?

9.1 Countrywide indicators



10 | Should Pakistan have stronger ties with Muslim countries?

10.1 Countrywide indicators



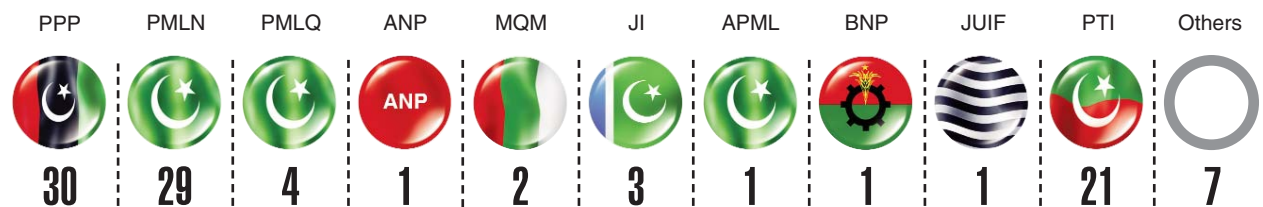
11 | Should Pakistan have stronger ties with SAARC nations?

11.1 Countrywide indicators

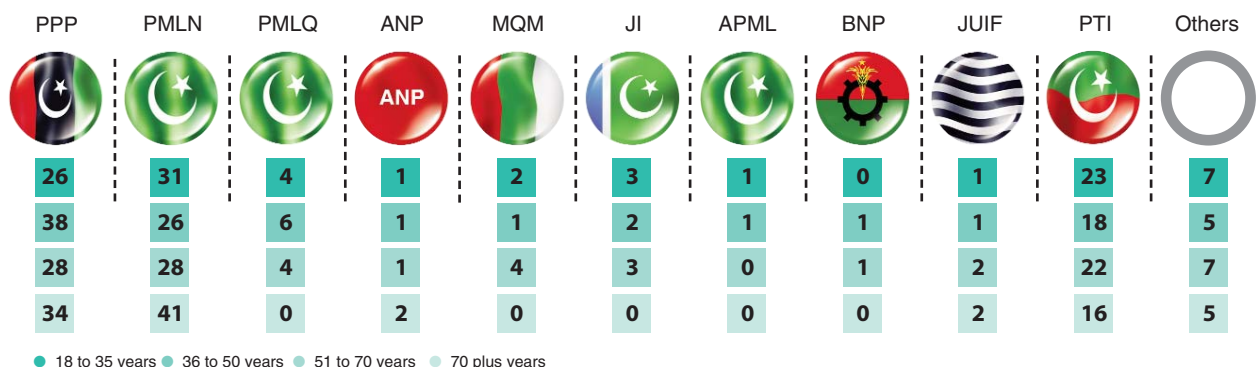


11 | Which party will handle Pakistan's foreign affairs in the best possible manner?

11.1 Countrywide indicators

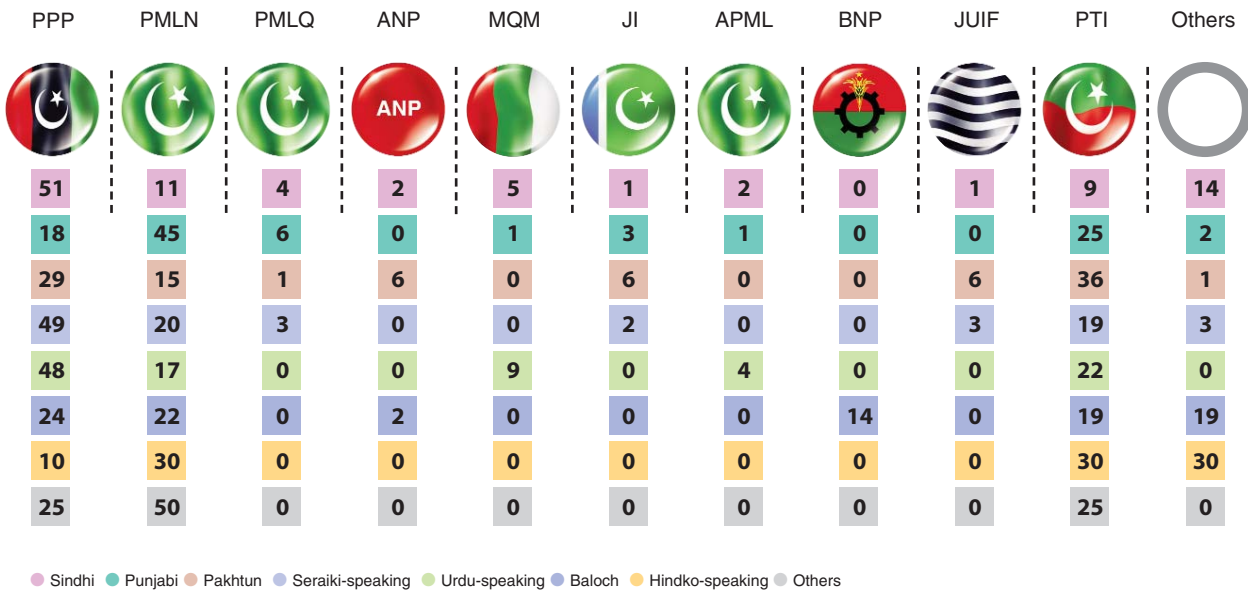


11.2 Age-wise indicators



● 18 to 35 years ● 36 to 50 years ● 51 to 70 years ● 70 plus years

11.3 Ethnicity-based indicators



the worst possible manner, respondents are mostly likely to nominate the PPP for this ignominious distinction at 38 per cent, with the PMLN coming in second worst place with 17.6 per cent, and the MQM ranking third with 11.8 per cent. Older respondents are more sceptical of both the PPP and PMLN at 46.5 and 27.9 per cent while being less wary of the MQM at 7 per cent. Ethnic differences are numerous across the parties and the ethnic groups.

Finally, respondents were asked whether or not they would vote for a party based upon its professed preferred relations with the US, Afghanistan, India, and Muslim countries. With respect to the US, a plurality of respondents at 38.5 per cent would vote for a party that maintains a “neutral stance” compared to 28 per cent who would vote for one that “pledges strong ties with the United States” and 17.2 per cent who prefer a party that opposes such ties. The balance does not consider this a factor. This is somewhat curious: given the anti-Americanism that is pervasive in Pakistan, relatively few would support a party based upon its professed commitment to opposing ties with the US.

With respect to Afghanistan, 37.9 per cent of respondents would support a party that “pledges strong ties” and another 37.8 per cent would support a party that “maintains” neutrality. Only 9.3 per cent would vote for a party that opposes such ties with Pakistan’s western neighbour. The balance rejects this as a consideration in voting choices.

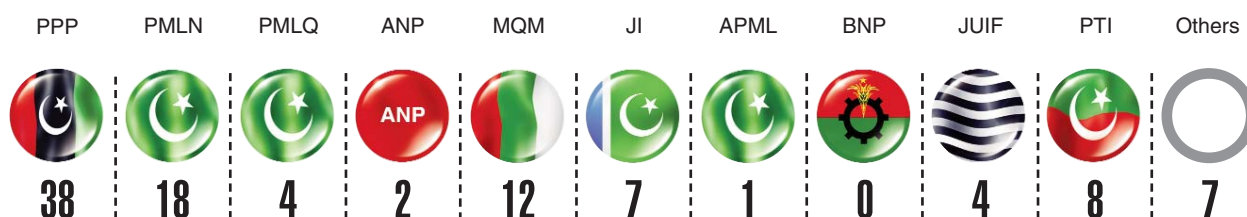
With regards to a party’s position on ties with India, a plurality prefers a party that maintains a



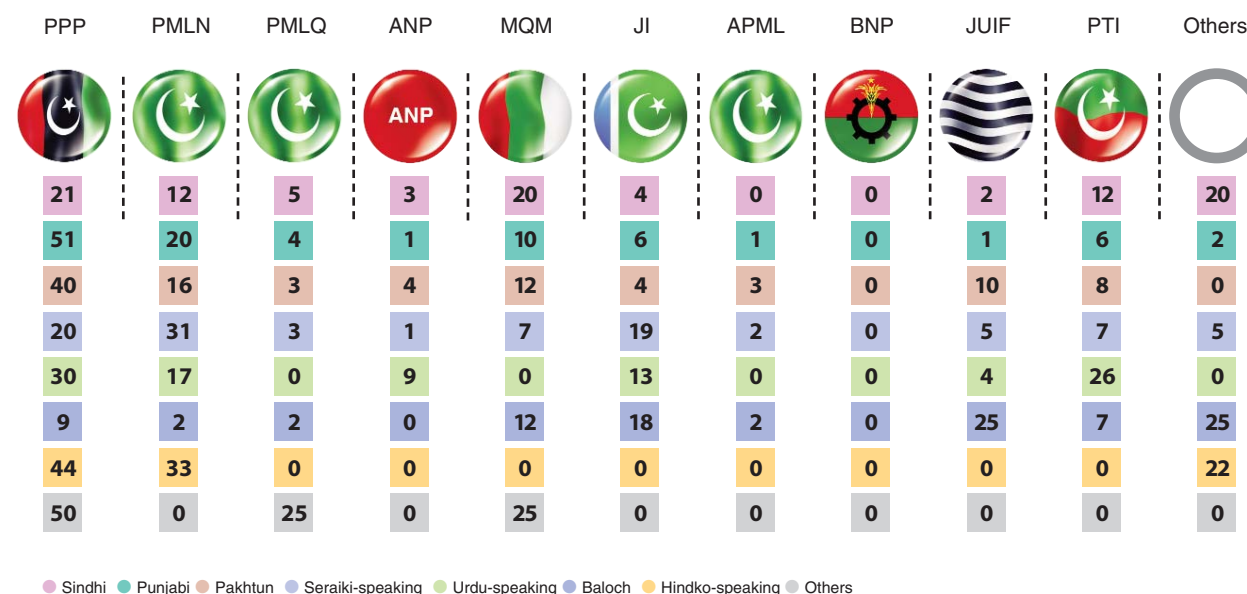
Despite the notion that China is Pakistan’s all-weather friend, it does not fare terribly better than other countries in the survey

12 | Which party will handle Pakistan's foreign affairs in the worst possible manner?

12.1 Countrywide indicators

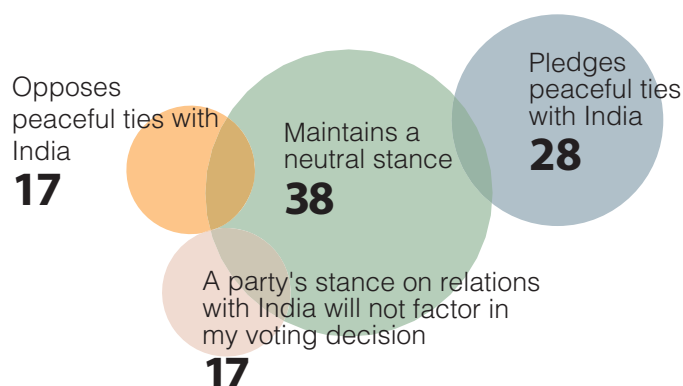


12.2 Ethnicity-based indicators



13 | Would you vote for a party that...

13.1 Countrywide indicators



neutral stance at 37.8 per cent as compared to 28.1 per cent of the respondents who prefer a party to pledge peaceful ties with India and 17 per cent who prefer a party to reject such ties. Thus, while many Pakistanis are wary of their eastern neighbour, there does not seem to be a strong impetus to prefer a party that is hostile to ties with India, as was the case with Pak-US ties.

In contrast to relations with India, Afghanistan and the US, an overwhelming majority of the respondents at 73.6 per cent say that they would support a party that would pledge peaceful ties with "Muslim countries". Neutrality garners a mere 13.7 per cent of the responses. ■