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ARTICLE



Pride and Abstention: National Identity, Uncritical Patriotism and Political Engagement among Christian Students in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Little research has been done on political dynamics within the Christian community in Pakistan itself, a lacuna I begin to address through survey research among Christian and Muslim students in Lahore. I ground this study in a detailed discussion of the existing literature on Pakistan, and comparative political research on national attachment of minorities elsewhere. I am particularly interested in assessing to what extent Christian students in Lahore have a strong sense of belonging and connection to the national community or feel marginalised from it. In fact, I find that Christians do have a strong sense of connection to their Pakistani identity, but are more inclined toward military rule and less interested in and knowledgeable about politics than their Muslim counterparts. Intra-Christian differences based on income level and denomination are apparent as well: Christian students from wealthier backgrounds have higher levels of political interest and knowledge, whereas poorer students and those affiliated with Pentecostal denominations have less political engagement but higher levels of nationalism.

KEYWORDS

Christians in Pakistan; 'exit'; 'loyalty'; national identity; political engagement; uncritical patriotism; 'voice'

Introduction

On 15 March 2015, suicide bombers attacked two churches in Lahore's Christian neighbourhood of Youhanabad, killing twenty people. In response, angry Christian youths lynched two suspects and then proceeded to riot, destroying a public bus station in the process. This novel violent response shocked Pakistan and drew the attention of the international press.¹ It indicated that despite a considerable amount of research on the social, legal and political context Pakistani Christians have faced since 1947, very little is known about political attitudes among the Christians themselves. As a modest beginning, I conducted a series of surveys from 2017 to 2019 among Christian and

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1. Sanam, 'Have the Lahore Church Bombings and the Lynchings that Followed Revealed Rifts Within Pakistan's Christian Community?', *The Caravan* (26 Mar. 2015) [<https://caravanmagazine.in/vantage/lahore-church-bombings-lynchings-rift-pakistan-christian-community>, accessed 28 Oct. 2019].

Muslim students at Forman Christian College (FC College), a Presbyterian liberal arts college in Lahore, and at the Full Gospel Assemblies (FGA) Bible College, a Pentecostal seminary located in the same city. The aim of this study is two-fold. First, I seek to ascertain systematic differences and similarities between Christian minority and Muslim majority students regarding their sense of national identification, their patriotism and their political interest. How has growing up in a marginalised community shaped students' political identity? Do Pakistani Christian students feel a strong sense of belonging to Pakistan, or do they feel a greater sense of alienation from the broader national community? Additionally, do they have the same degree of interest in politics as their fellow Muslim students? Are they supportive of civilian democratic governance or military rule? The answers to these questions have clear implications for religious minorities in Pakistan, as the Christian students at FC College belong to the best-off segment of the broader Christian community in the country.

Second, I seek to delve into attitudinal differences among Christian students themselves. In two separate surveys targeting only Christian students, I also ask to what extent Christian students reveal predominant attitudes of survival, association or resistance when faced with religious intolerance. Here I am interested in ascertaining how far socio-economic differences, denominational influences and individual life experiences shape political attitudes. The main contribution of this article is to move beyond the exclusive focus on the structural constraints that Christians face in Pakistan—either legal-political or socio-economic—that underlies most of the literature on the Christian minority; instead, my goal is to take the beliefs and values of Christians seriously and give them agency, while striving to understand how a variety of factors might have shaped them.

I first provide a brief overview of the literature on Christians in Pakistan before engaging with recent comparative research in political science, where I develop three potential responses by Pakistani Christians to religious intolerance and persecution: voice, exit and loyalty. To illustrate these responses, I provide a short conceptual overview of three distinct phases of Christian political involvement in Pakistan's history. In the survey data, I find that, on the whole, Christian students exhibit the same strong sense of loyalty to the Pakistani state as their fellow Muslim students while, however, displaying far less knowledge of and interest in politics, and a greater affinity for the military.

Pakistani Christians in the social science literature

Social science research on the Christian minority in Pakistan is still in its infancy. Two major streams characterise the existing literature.² The first focuses on Christians as a religious minority under increasing social and political pressure since 1947. According to this view, discrimination and violence against the community are largely due to differing religious beliefs, a lack of tolerance in society and the political and constitutional framework. Furthermore, this literature remains largely descriptive, as little to no attempt is made to theoretically ground it. Within this strand, a number of good

2. Thanks to Noaman Ali for helping to clarify this distinction.

general overviews exist.³ Gabriel's is one of the most comprehensive, providing a detailed explanation of both the legal and institutional frameworks in Pakistan as well as an inventory of anti-Christian acts of discrimination and violence, but little discussion of Christian political activity or social structure.⁴ One of the few exceptions in this regard is Kamran's short article on the Christian community which spells out important details of Christian political activism in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵ Research by political scientists follows the same pattern, focusing primarily on the external structures, both societal and legal, that have affected Christians in Pakistan. Both Rais and Gregory, for instance, argue that President Zia ul-Haq's military dictatorship (1977–88) was ultimately responsible for religious intolerance in Pakistan, even though they acknowledge the negative impact of some of the policies of his predecessor, President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Zia ul-Haq promulgated a series of laws and ordinances that institutionalised the role of religious scholars, for example in the Federal Shariat Court, introduced elements of Shari'a law into secular jurisprudence, including the Hudood Ordinances and the Qanoon-e-Shahadat,⁶ and amended the blasphemy laws making the death penalty the mandatory punishment for derogatory comments about the Prophet.⁷ Raina, on the other hand, provides an important corrective by questioning the idea that Pakistan's founders envisioned a religion-neutral polity, as Jinnah himself called for loyalty tests for religious minorities, and the 1949 Objectives Resolution passed under Liaqat Ali Khan placed ultimate sovereignty with God and asked the state to encourage Muslims to live according to the precepts of Islam. Raina also emphasises Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's role in furthering the Islamisation of Pakistan by declaring members of the Ahmadiyya community non-Muslims, shifting the weekly public holiday from Sunday to Friday, nationalising Christian educational institutions, and helping draft in 1973 Pakistan's most 'Islamic' constitution yet.⁸ He convincingly argues that Zia ul-Haq simply accelerated a process begun with the creation of Pakistan.⁹ Empirically, Raina shows that, under civilian governments, the proportion of minority and Christian representation in the National Assembly decreased vis-à-vis the Muslim population.¹⁰ Overall, this literature portrays Christians as impotent victims impacted by the legal, political and social context. Christian political agency, in the form of resistance,

3. Iftikhar Malik, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002); Theodor Gabriel, *Christian Citizens in an Islamic State: The Pakistan Experience* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); and Edwina Pio and Jawad Syed, 'Marked by the Cross: The Persecution of Christians in Pakistan', in Jawad Syed, Edwina Pio, Tahir Kamran and Abbas Zaidi (eds), *Faith-Based Violence and Deobandi Militancy in Pakistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 187–207.

4. Gabriel, *Christian Citizens in an Islamic State*.

5. Tahir Kamran, 'Community of the Marginalized: State, Society and Punjabi Christians', in *South Asian Review*, Vol. XXXI, no. 2 (2010), pp. 66–83.

6. The Hudood Ordinances stipulated punishments for particular offences in accordance with Islamic law, most famously stoning in the case of adultery. For instance, according to Qanoon-e-Shahadat or 'Law of Witness', the testimony of a woman is given only half the weight of that of a man in certain financial matters. See Charles Kennedy, 'Islamization and Legal Reform in Pakistan, 1979–1989', in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. LXIII, no. 1 (1990), pp. 62–77.

7. Rasul Bakhsh Rais, 'Identity Politics and Minorities in Pakistan', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, no. 1 (2007), pp. 111–25; and Shaun Gregory, 'Under the Shadow of Islam: The Plight of the Christian Minority in Pakistan', in *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2012), pp. 195–212.

8. Ajay K. Raina, 'Minorities and Representation in a Plural Society: The Case of the Christians of Pakistan', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 37, no. 4 (2014), pp. 684–99.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 688–90.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 698.

mobilisation, collaboration or even concealment, is not discussed in detail. The Christian community comes across as homogeneous with no real internal differences beyond superficial references to caste and denomination. Furthermore, with very few exceptions, this strand of the literature remains overwhelmingly descriptive, eschewing analysis and explanation through recourse to scholarship in political science.

The second stream of literature views the plight of Christians primarily through a caste- and class-based lens. While it makes some effort to disaggregate the community by socio-economic background, a homogenising tendency remains, with caste replacing religion and faith as the main unifying and defining aspect. McClintock's study made an initial contribution by differentiating between the largely poor and low-caste Punjabi community on the one hand, and the wealthier descendants of high-caste Hindu and Muslim converts, the Goan Catholic community and those of mixed Anglo-Indian origin on the other.¹¹ O'Brien focuses solely on low-caste Christian Punjabis, positing that they constitute a community that was looking for liberation from caste constraints and social oppression over a period of centuries, and finally found emancipation and escape in the mass conversion movement to Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While O'Brien does briefly discuss internal differences between Punjabi Christians, particularly the effects of social mobility on the replication of caste-based attitudes, to him they remain a unified, internally-coherent and externally-bounded group.¹²

Like O'Brien, Singha places caste squarely at the centre of her discussion of the Christian community, arguing that discrimination and violence against Christians almost exclusively affects low-caste members engaged in menial labour in the sanitation sector. The prime cause for their ill-treatment is not religion, but their perceived uncleanness and their lowly position in society. The small but relatively well-off Christian middle class, on the other hand, may face comparatively minor institutional discrimination, but is generally much better integrated into the general society. For Singha, Christians are not passive victims, but seek to overcome structural disadvantages through a contextualised understanding and application of biblical passages, especially those of Christ washing the feet of his disciples and the figure of Mary Magdalene, as a means to give low-caste Christians a sense of occupational and personal dignity.¹³ Walbridge further emphasises the agency of the Christian community through a detailed ethnographic reconstruction of the life of the political activist Bishop John Joseph. Her work lays a useful foundation for more systematic research on the politics of Pakistani Christians, as it contains important insights into denominational, regional and class-based differences within the community, although her rich portrayal of Pakistani Catholics is more satisfying than that of Protestants.¹⁴

11. Wayne McClintock, 'A Sociological Profile of the Christian Minority in Pakistan', in *Missiology*, Vol. 20, no. 3 (July 1992), p. 347.

12. John O'Brien, *The Unconquered People: The Liberation Journey of an Oppressed Caste* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

13. Sara Singha, 'Dalit Christians and Caste Consciousness in Pakistan', PhD dissertation, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, 2015; and Sara Singha, 'Christians in Pakistan and Afghanistan: Responses to Marginalization from the Peripheries', in Daniel Philpott and Timothy S. Shah (eds), *Under Caesar's Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 226–59.

14. Linda Walbridge, *The Christians of Pakistan: The Passion of Bishop John Joseph* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003). I engage with the figure of John Joseph in more detail below.

In a recent analysis of Christian identity in Pakistan based on a study of certain organisations and missionary schools, Grit finds that Christians, despite their grievances, identify very strongly as Pakistani citizens. Thus, for instance, they frame their call for textbook reform not as critiques of the state but as a patriotic duty to improve educational standards. While very sensitive to detail and theoretically rooted in the sociological literature on framing, Grit's focus of analysis is not primarily on politics.¹⁵ As a whole, this second stream of literature provides a more substantive description of the Christian community, but it does not engage in a detailed political analysis of it.

Theoretical framework: 'Loyalty', 'voice' and 'exit'

There is a lacuna in the literature on the politics of Christians in Pakistan today. In order to create a theoretical framework for the following survey research, I present three theoretical models, 'loyalty', 'voice' and 'exit', derived from recent scholarly work on Christians' responses to persecution as well as political science research on ethnic minorities and their sense of national attachment and patriotism. I trace these models through a brief schematic history of the Christian community after 1947 in order to develop a framework to help understand current Christian attitudes toward politics. This history is not meant as a detailed empirical analysis of politics and structural change in the Christian community, but as an illustration of these three ideal types. In the empirical section I use these ideal types to ask the following questions: first, how far do Christians differ from Muslims, and between each other, in their loyalty to Pakistan? Second, to what extent are there intra-Christian differences with regard to the strategies of voice and exit?

In his seminal volume, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Hirschman discusses three responses to adverse conditions by various economic and political groups and organisations, summed up as 'exit', 'voice' and 'loyalty'. According to Hirschman, exit is often an individual choice or mindset to escape poverty or political oppression, either through migration or individual vertical mobility, whereas voice involves community action by a disadvantaged group against oppressive conditions. Generally speaking, increasing chances for exit tend to result in a lower probability of voice. However, loyalty, the third response, helps widen the opportunity for voice even when individual exit is possible—individuals and groups forego the possibility of greener pastures elsewhere if they have developed a strong sense of connection with a particular organisation, firm or country.¹⁶ These categories have been recently applied by Philpott and Shah in their comparative global study of Christian responses to persecution. First, Christians may use survival strategies of remaining silent or emigrating to avoid facing religious intolerance; this is referred to as 'exit'. Second, they may choose confrontation by challenging governing institutions, ranging from open criticism and demonstrations to armed resistance, and even sometimes martyrdom. This is referred to as 'voice'. Third, Christians may put much effort into association-building outside of their

15. Kor Grit, "Christians by Faith, Pakistani by Citizenship": Negotiating Christian Identity in Pakistan', PhD dissertation, Utrecht University, Utrecht, 2019.

16. Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

community, either with Christians from other denominations or even with members of the majority religious community.¹⁷ While worthy of further inquiry, I do not include this last strategy in my analysis here because it is not represented in Hirschman's three categories, which I want to focus on particularly in this context.

Although Philpott and Shah barely touch on Hirschman's last category of loyalty, it has been treated extensively in recent political science survey research on national attachment and identity among ethnic minorities in the United States and cross-nationally. Huddy and Khatib, for instance, arguably develop the most carefully thought-out and empirically-tested taxonomy of concepts related to national attachment.¹⁸ According to them, the survey-based literature has not been careful enough in distinguishing between related, yet different, phenomena, including nationalism, national pride, national identification and patriotism. They argue that national identity, a psychologically-rooted sense of belonging, and uncritical patriotism, an active political ideology featuring unquestioning support of one's country and government, ought to be considered distinct concepts with very different political effects. Based on survey research among students at the State University of New York (SUNY), Stony Brook, they find that individuals with a strong sense of national identity are more politically active, knowledgeable and democratically inclined than those with lower levels of national identification. Individuals with high levels of uncritical patriotism, on the other hand, are less likely to vote, pay less attention to politics, and are more likely to have authoritarian attitudes. They also show, however, that ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans, have lower levels of both national identification and uncritical patriotism.¹⁹ Subsequent cross-national research confirms that minorities generally identify more weakly with and feel less proud of their country as compared to members of the majority community.²⁰ It is precisely this question of minority loyalty to country, as gauged by national identity and uncritical patriotism, that I interrogate in my survey research among students in Pakistan.

Loyalty, voice and exit also emerge from the historical record of the Pakistani Christian leadership: fierce loyalty to and active participation in the Pakistani state, critical engagement with and even opposition to the Pakistani state, as well as quietism and passivity. The first model of loyalty represents particularly those elite Christians who supported the Muslim League before Partition, strongly identified with Pakistan, and actively involved themselves in government affairs in the country's early years. They believed that as Muslims who had been a minority in India for centuries, Jinnah and the Muslim League leadership would be careful to provide greater protection to the Christian minority in Pakistan than possible in majority-Hindu India. Thus, Diwan Bahadur S.P. Singha, one-time registrar of Punjab University, the founder of the pro-independence All-India Christian Association, and the first speaker of the West

17. Daniel Philpott and Timothy Shah, 'In Response to Persecution: Essays from the Under Caesar's Sword Project', in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2017), pp. 5–9.

18. Leonie Huddy and Nadia Khatib, 'American Patriotism, National Identity, and Political Involvement', in *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. LI, no. 1 (Jan. 2007), pp. 63–77.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 73.

20. Zachary Elkins and John Sides, 'Can Institutions Build Unity in Multiethnic States?', in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 101, no. 4 (Nov. 2007), pp. 697, 702; and Christian Staerklé, Jim Sidanius, Eva Green and Ludwig Molina, 'Ethnic Minority–Majority Asymmetry in National Attitudes around the World: A Multilevel Analysis', in *Political Psychology*, Vol. 31, no. 4 (Aug. 2010), pp. 507, 514–15.

Pakistan National Assembly after 1947, voted for the Muslim League demand to include all of pre-partition Punjab in the new Pakistan, along with his two fellow Christian delegates, C.E. Gibbon and Fazal Elahi, and 88 Muslim colleagues. However, because the Assembly was split into Western and Eastern blocs for the 23 June 1947 vote, and the delegates from Eastern Punjab overwhelmingly voted for the partition of Punjab, their votes did not prove decisive.²¹ During the Boundary Commission deliberations, another Christian leader, Chaudhry Chandu Lal, travelled to Pathankot and Gurdaspur to secure local Christian support for inclusion in Pakistan by having themselves politically identified as Muslims.²²

Perhaps no other Pakistani Christian exemplified this position of loyalty to the state as did Chief Justice A.R. Cornelius, the first of only two non-Muslims to have served as head of the Supreme Court. In addition to being a strong proponent of legislative supremacy and judicial independence, Cornelius was also an advocate for the application of Shari'a law because he felt that every country's cultural heritage ought to be mirrored in its legal framework for greater popular legitimacy.²³ According to one study, he even came to believe that deeply rooting Pakistani jurisprudence within the Islamic tradition, interpreted through a progressive modernist lens, was the only way to institutionalise and coup-proof liberal democracy in the country.²⁴ Ironically, most of his Muslim colleagues in the upper courts were deeply sceptical of applying religious sources and traditions to modern jurisprudence.²⁵ Cornelius argued that the establishment of special Shari'a courts, the institutionalisation of the religious tax or *zakat*, and the protection of Muslim religious endowments would guarantee the role of religion in Pakistani society, which in turn would best guarantee the potential for a virtuous life. He urged Pakistani jurists to ground their legal reasoning more deeply in the Qur'an, and deplored those who only drew on Anglo-European sources.²⁶ Justice Cornelius demonstrated the model of a minority citizen fully supportive of the new country and the cultural, social and religious traditions of its majority inhabitants.

The respected Christian lawyer and journalist, Joshua Fazl-ud-din, was also supportive of the Pakistan movement, but noted potential problems Christians would face in a polity based on Muslim identity. He argued that whatever state they found themselves in, Christians should show absolute obedience to it, even to the point of shooting their only son if he was fighting for the other side in the event of war. In an Islamic Pakistan, Christians ought not to raise demands, should be cautious in their political activities, and dutifully fulfil their responsibilities as citizens.²⁷ In his book praising

21. Ishtiaq Ahmed, 'Did S.P. Singha's Vote Win the Punjab for Pakistan?', in *Daily Times* (24 Nov. 2014) [<https://dailytimes.com.pk/102399/did-s-p-singhas-vote-win-punjab-for-pakistan-in-1947/>], accessed 7 Sept. 2019]. While honouring the Christian Punjabis' stance towards the creation of Pakistan, Ahmed dispels the myth that three Christian votes led to Punjab's inclusion in Pakistan.

22. Munir-ul-Anjum and Shahnaz Tariq, 'The Role of Christians in the Freedom Movement of Pakistan: An Appraisal', in *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 32, no. 2 (2012), pp. 437–43.

23. Ralph Braibanti, 'Cornelius of Pakistan: Catholic Chief Justice of a Muslim State', in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (1999), pp. 126, 130–1.

24. Clark Lombardi, 'Can Islamizing a Legal System Ever Help Promote Liberal Democracy? A View from Pakistan', in *University of St. Thomas Law Journal*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (2010), pp. 649–91.

25. Ali Usman Qasmi, 'God's Kingdom on Earth: Politics of Islam in Pakistan, 1947–1969', in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, no. 26 (2010), pp. 1219–20.

26. Braibanti, 'Cornelius of Pakistan', pp. 131–3, 145–7.

27. Joshua Fazl-ud-din, *The Future of Christians in Pakistan* (Lahore: no publisher given, 1949).

General Ayub Khan's 1958 military coup, *1958 Revolution and the Non-Muslims*, Fazl-ud-din argued that Christians ought to fully identify with Pakistani culture and society rather than overemphasise the differences between them and Muslims. Yet, in spite of his caution, he was also willing to raise his voice on issues important to him: he strongly condemned Muslim 'communalists' who blamed non-Muslims for Pakistan's troubles.²⁸

A Christian political voice coalesced briefly in the late 1960s through the Pakistani Masihi League, formed to protect Christian interests after Ayub Khan's Basic Democracy scheme eliminated Christian representation at the federal level and amid widespread doubts about Christian loyalty during the 1965 war with India.²⁹ The party split apart before the 1970 elections, but Christian activism continued into the 1970s when leaders successfully agitated against Bhutto's decision in 1973, amended in 1975, to eliminate reserved minority seats in the National Assembly. Established Christian politicians also participated in the 1977 Pakistan National Alliance protests against Bhutto's increasingly authoritarian rule, thereby unwittingly assisting in bringing about the coup by General Zia ul-Haq. On the other hand, a number of young Christian activists were die-hard supporters of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP). When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was sentenced to death in 1978, several young PPP activists set themselves on fire in protest and died, including a Christian, Yaqoob Pervaiz.³⁰

Beginning in the 1980s, several assertive Christian leaders, popular among the poor and underprivileged, started mobilising Christians in response to the increasingly repressive legal and social atmosphere encouraged by General Zia. Julius Salik, a Lahori politician known for his theatrical protests,³¹ rallied Christian municipal workers in 1983 to go on a hunger strike for the right to have Christian radio programmes, and against school examinations being held on a Sunday.³² Shahbaz Bhatti, from the Catholic town of Khushpur in Central Punjab, founded the Christian Liberation Front in 1985 and later served as federal minister for minority affairs. He was widely known for his bold call to repeal the blasphemy laws, for which he was assassinated in 2011.³³

Another Khushpuri, Bishop John Joseph, arguably the most important Christian voice in Pakistan's recent history, was initially focused on theological education and evangelical outreach, but his attention became increasingly diverted to the social uplift of poor urban and rural Christians, particularly after his appointment as the first ethnic Punjabi bishop in the Catholic Church.³⁴ He also helped form the National Commission for Justice and Peace which seeks to address bonded labour in the rural economy as well as a wide array of other issues related to religious minorities.³⁵

28. Joshua Fazl-ud-din, *1958 Revolution and the Non-Muslims* (Lahore: The Punjabi Darbar Publishing House, 1960), pp. 23–5, 30–1.

29. Francis Nadeem, *Yeh Des Hamara Hai* (Lahore: Hum Ahang Publications, 1997), pp. 66–72.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 75. Also see Raja Anwar and Khalid Hasan, *The Terrorist Prince: The Life and Death of Murtaza Bhutto* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publication, 2014), pp. 34–5.

31. Julius Salik, *Peace Journey* (New York: Page Publishing, 2018).

32. Alexander John Malik, *My Pakistan: The Story of a Bishop* (Lahore: ILQA Publications, 2019), pp. 169–76.

33. Annabelle Bentham, 'Shahbaz Bhatti Obituary: Pakistan's Christian Minister Assassinated for His Opposition to Blasphemy Laws', *The Guardian* (10 Mar. 2011) [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/10/shahbaz-bhatti-obituary>], accessed 28 Oct. 2019].

34. Walbridge, *The Christians of Pakistan*, p. 54.

35. Kor Grit, 'Contested Consent: A Catholic Organization's Efforts for Textbook Reform in Pakistan', in *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, Vol. 18, no. 4 (2017), pp. 409–30.

When Zia ul-Haq's Islamisation policies culminated in the blasphemy laws, the bishop began a campaign of social and political activism, ending in his controversial suicide in 1998.³⁶ This event partially succeeded in galvanising Christians into social and political action, with demonstrations against the blasphemy laws all over the Punjab. Bishop Alexander Malik of the Anglican Church of Pakistan even publicly called for them to be abolished, otherwise the Christian community would be forced to create a Christian militia in response.³⁷

The question arises as to what extent this strand of activism still survives in Pakistan's Christian community. Overall one could argue that the Christian population has become increasingly cut off from meaningful politics in the last few decades. Because of Zia's system of separate electorates that bunched minority voters into a single national electoral district and deprived them of their local vote, the diffused Christian population had little connection with its candidates and representatives who only campaigned in urban areas that had a meaningful number of minority voters; minority voters were effectively disenfranchised when it came to local concerns.³⁸ When President Musharraf re-established a joint electorate system in 2002, he retained the reserved seats for religious minorities, but these representatives were now nominated by the major political parties and not directly elected by the Christian population.³⁹ Generally speaking, the Christian population puts little trust in these representatives because they have no accountability to the community and are usually regarded as pursuing politics for personal gain rather than for the interests of the Christian community as a whole.⁴⁰ Christian leaders with grass-roots support are no longer the highly-educated lawyers, journalists and justices of the post-Partition period, but are now almost exclusively either church leaders or church-supported leaders of established denominations. However, even this voice has become diluted by the steady stream of parishioners moving from the established churches to Pentecostal and other non-denominational churches, which tend to be more quiescent.⁴¹ According to available sources, Christians associated with Pentecostal as well as Charismatic churches increased dramatically from 100,000 to close to 800,000 from 1990 to 2010, whereas the number of those associated with the three major established denominations (Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian) has increased more or less in line with population growth, from 1.5 to 3.2 million.⁴² A good example of this new type of leader is Pastor Anwar Fazal, a Pentecostal who has maintained close relations with Christian representatives of mainstream political parties, but who abstains from political activism himself.⁴³

36. Walbridge, *The Christians of Pakistan*, pp. 67–8.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 100–1. According to Walbridge, Bishop Malik retracted this statement shortly thereafter.

38. Raina, 'Minorities and Representation in a Plural Society', pp. 695–6.

39. Emmanuel Zafar, *A Concise History of Pakistani Christians* (Lahore: Humsookhan Publication, 2007), pp. 87, 107.

40. Asif Aqeel, 'Problems with the Electoral Representation of Non-Muslims', *Dawn Herald* (1 July 2018) [<https://herald.dawn.com/news/1154039>, accessed 28 Oct. 2019].

41. Walbridge, *The Christians of Pakistan*, pp. 194–6.

42. Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World: A Day-by-Day Guide to Praying for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993); and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: The Definitive Prayer Guide to Every Nation* (Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica Publishing, 2010).

43. Sarah Eleazar, 'Bearing the Cross: Pakistan's Christians Struggle to Keep the Faith', *The Caravan* (31 Jan. 2018) [<https://caravanmagazine.in/reportage/pakistan-christians-struggle-keep-the-faith>, accessed 28 Oct. 2019].

The preceding section has outlined three possible positions available to the Christian minority in Pakistan. First, they may exhibit loyalty to the state, indicated by a strong sense of national identity and uncritical patriotism. Second, they can choose to critically engage with and even confront the state through a strategy of voice. Third, they can be quiescent, seeking to avoid political engagement and thus exiting politics. In the following section, I use survey data to test whether there are systematic differences between Muslims and Christians with regard to their sense of identification with and loyalty to the state. Secondly, I look for systematic differences along denominational and socio-economic lines among Christian students with regard to strategies of voice and exit.

Survey research: Methodology and empirical findings

Survey research on the Christian minority in Pakistan is practically non-existent. The biggest political science survey project in the world, the World Values Survey, has been conducting recurrent surveys in Pakistan since 1997, but includes only a tiny number of Christian respondents—the last survey in 2012 included only one out of a total of 1,200 respondents⁴⁴ and is thus useless to study systematic differences between Pakistani Christians and Muslims, not to mention internal differences in the Christian community. To fill this lacuna, I carried out a series of surveys in 2017 and 2018 at Forman Christian College (FCC), a private university in Lahore where I teach, and another survey in January 2019 at the Pentecostal Full Gospel Assemblies (FGA) Bible College in Lahore. While FCC's affiliation and administrative leadership are largely Christian, a majority of its faculty and students identify as Muslim. It does, however, boast a larger concentration of Christian students, about 15 percent of the student body, than any other government-recognised institute of higher learning in Pakistan. As a result, it presents an ideal environment to compare political attitudes between Muslim and Christian students who otherwise share a number of environmental influences in common through their course work and extra-curricular activities.

In the first three surveys, conducted with the help of my undergraduate research methodology students, a stratified sampling strategy was used in order to accurately represent the student body as a whole. The size of each sample was 408, 291 and 259, respectively, with a total of 196 Christian students included. The survey questions were directly modelled on Huddy and Khatib's survey project at SUNY, Stony Brook, but tailored to the Pakistani context. To capture 'national identity', a subconscious sense of belonging to the nation, I asked students how important being Pakistani was to them, whether they referred to Pakistanis more as 'they' or 'we', and how well the term Pakistani described them. To test their levels of 'uncritical patriotism', I asked them four questions that captured the extent to which they approved or disapproved of criticism of Pakistan, and whether they thought Pakistan was better than other countries. In order to gauge authoritarian tendencies, I asked them about their views on military involvement in civilian affairs. I also sought to assess students' political interest, knowledge and engagement. I did not include a question on students' voting behaviour

44. World Values Survey [<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>, accessed 28 Oct. 2019].

because most of them had been too young to vote in the last federal and provincial elections in 2013. I gauged political interest by asking them about the number of hours they spent watching political talk shows and the number of days in the week they read the political news section of a newspaper. I also constructed a quiz of nine to ten questions on provincial and national Pakistani as well as international political figures in order to ascertain their political knowledge. I limited background questions to their gender, their party preference, their native language as a proxy for ethnicity, and the religious community of their parents, as I was more interested in their background community than their current religious beliefs. Furthermore, I added native language as a control variable. FCC has students from all over Pakistan, and based on my personal experience, students from outside Punjab have very different political attitudes from those inside Punjab.

In November 2018 and January 2019, I carried out two more surveys, this time focusing only on Christian students in order to ask specific questions tailored to their particular experiences. Instead of creating a fully representative sample, the goal was to maximise the number of Christian respondents in order to understand variations among this demographic group. At FCC, the survey was carried out in three separate sections of a Christian ethics course required for Christian students. Of the 66 respondents who filled out the survey, 64 were Christians. At FGA Bible College in Lahore, a Christian-only institution, I conducted a survey after a chapel service and collected a total of 107 response sheets. I only included eighty of them in the final data because 27 of them were filled out so incompletely as to be useless for analysis. Based on the survey data, it is clear that the FCC students are far more likely to come from older established church denominations (Catholic, Anglican or Presbyterian), whereas the majority of FGA students are Pentecostal due to the college's denominational affiliation. The survey included all previous questions related to political attitudes as well as political interest and knowledge. In addition, I wanted to find out their responses to religious intolerance, focusing particularly on the strategies of voice and exit described above. With regard to exit, I asked students whether they would favour leaving the country, as well as remaining silent, in response to religious intolerance. For voice, I asked students to what extent they would be willing to participate in a demonstration against or to write a letter to the editor in response to intolerance. Lastly, I wanted to be able to analyse intra-Christian differences based on socio-economic and denominational factors, so I asked students to specify their denominational affiliation and parents' monthly income.

The evidence is depicted in simple bi-variate statistical form using comparison of means. For the continuous variables in the study measuring political interest or monthly income, this was fairly straightforward. However, several important variables consist of indices constructed from ordinal-level survey questions based on a five-point Likert scale. As a general rule, calculating the mean as a measure of central tendency for ordinal level data is frowned upon, as there is no guarantee, for instance, that the difference between 'strongly agree' and 'somewhat agree' is the same as between 'somewhat agree' and 'neither agree nor disagree'.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, because the variables

45. See, for instance, <https://web.ma.utexas.edu/users/mks/statmistakes/ordinal.html>, accessed 24 Nov. 2019.

Table 1. Concepts and measurement.

Concept	Sub-concepts	Survey instrument
Loyalty	National identity	Are you more likely to say 'we' or 'they' about Pakistanis? How important is being Pakistani to you? The term 'Pakistani' describes me very well
	Uncritical patriotism	People who don't fully support Pakistan should live elsewhere Pakistan's policies are almost always morally correct Pakistan's citizens should not criticize their own country Pakistan is a better country than most
Voice		Willingness to join a demonstration in response to intolerance Willingness to write a column in response to intolerance
Exit		Likelihood of leaving country in response to intolerance Likelihood of keeping silent in response to intolerance
Authoritarianism	Support for military	Military should stay out of civilian affairs Military needs to be involved in governing
Political interest	Following news	# Hours watching political talk shows per week # Days reading political section of newspaper per week
Political knowledge (of domestic and international politics)		Political Knowledge Quiz composed of nine (Spring 2017) or ten (other four surveys) questions

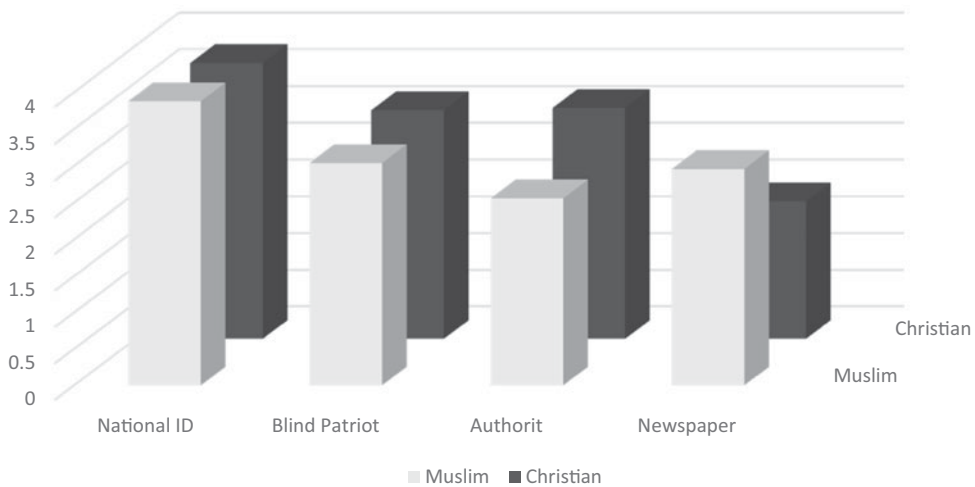


Figure 1. Muslim and Christian students in comparison.

consist of an index of three–four questions, calculating and comparing the means does yield important insights about the overall tendency of particular demographic groups in comparison with one another, as long as I do not assume that these are mathematically precise differences.⁴⁶ In Table 1, I summarise the various concepts related to political attitudes discussed above, accompanied by the survey questions used to measure them.

The main findings comparing Muslim and Christian students are summarised in Figure 1. The results indicate that Pakistani Christians do not conform to the expectations of comparative research on ethnic minorities in other countries. Muslim students score slightly higher in terms of their national identity, but Christian students have a slightly higher ‘blind patriotism’ score. I avoid drawing overly precise

46. See, for instance, <https://measuringu.com/mean-ordinal/>, accessed 24 Nov. 2019.

Table 2. Comparison of Christian and Muslim students, by language.

Survey Spring 2017 (408 respondents)						
Religion & language	(1–5)			Newspaper hours per week (0–7)	TV hours per week	Quiz score (0–9)
	National identity	Uncritical patriotism	Authorit.			
Christian total	3.66	3.07	3.34	1.62	3.7	4.49
Muslim Punjabi	3.91	3.02	2.49	3.75	3.77	6.55
Muslim Urdu	3.89	3.11	2.93	2.52	4.4	5.92
Muslim Pashto	3.4	2.83	1.7	3.73	3.97	7.07
Muslim periphery	3.23	2.73	2.34	4	5.58	6.93
Muslim total	3.77	3.01	2.69	2.95	4.39	6.18
Survey Fall 2017 (291 respondents)						
Religion & language	(1–5)			Newspaper hours per week (0–7)	TV hours per week	Quiz score (0–10)
	National identity	Uncritical patriotism	Authorit.			
Christian total	3.92	3.25	3.39	1.52	4.12	4.48
Muslim Punjabi	3.97	3.25	2.18	3.79	6.46	7.54
Muslim Urdu	4.07	3.18	2.88	2.32	4.42	6.05
Muslim Pashto	3.73	2.58	1.59	3.56	5.87	7.44
Muslim periphery	3.57	2.62	2.17	3.16	5.22	7.17
Muslim total	3.95	3.07	2.56	2.81	5	6.54
Survey Spring 2018 (259 respondents)						
Religion & language	(1–5)			Newspaper hours per week (0–7)	TV hours per week	Quiz score (0–10)
	National identity	Uncritical patriotism	Authorit.			
Christian total	3.67	3.02	2.62	2.62	2.03	5.74
Muslim Punjabi	4.37	3.07	2.26	4	2.4	7.35
Muslim Urdu	3.97	3.25	2.64	2.45	2.05	5.54
Muslim Pashto	3.48	2.28	1.33	4.22	2.17	7.61
Muslim periphery	3.88	2.93	1.89	3.59	1.55	6.86
Muslim total	4.02	3.07	2.33	3.16	2.08	6.34

conclusions from the ordinal-level data, but, overall, Christian students seem quite grounded in their Pakistani identity, rather than alienated. And they are just as uncritically proud of their country as their Muslim counterparts. Secondly, Christian students are more likely to see the need for military intervention in civilian governance as compared to their Muslim counterparts. More in-depth research needs to go into this finding, but it suggests that Christians view democratically elected governments with considerable scepticism, and associate military regimes with greater protection of and advancement for the Christian community. Thirdly, Christians exhibit less interest in and knowledge of politics as compared to their Muslim fellows.

On the whole, students therefore exhibit an attitude of strong but passive loyalty to the Pakistani state. They seem to be following Joshua Fazl-ud-din's advice to the Christian community in early 1947, discussed above, that Christians ought to fully identify with whichever state they found themselves in after Partition. But Fazl-ud-din also advised them to stay away from political mobilisation for communal rights.

Table 2 presents the comprehensive results across the three surveys at FCC, while also controlling for ethno-linguistic identity. Due to their small numbers, I grouped

everyone who listed a native language of Pakistan other than Punjabi, Urdu or Pashto into the ‘periphery’ category.

While religion seems to have little impact on national identity and uncritical patriotism, students with native languages other than Urdu or Punjabi, and thus probably from outside Punjab province, exhibit considerably lower feelings of national identity and uncritical patriotism as compared to both Christian and Muslim Urdu and Punjabi speakers. These students are also less supportive of authoritarianism and show greater political interest and knowledge as compared to Punjabi and Urdu speakers. This needs to be confirmed through more research, but it seems likely that these students grew up more politically aware, and may have a greater sense of political grievance than their Punjabi counterparts. An additional interesting finding is the difference between Muslim Urdu and Punjabi speakers. Although both are from Punjab province, Urdu speakers exhibit considerably less political interest and knowledge as compared to their fellow Punjabi-speaking students. This may be due to the fact that Punjabi-speaking students generally hail from rural landowning families that are almost inevitably involved in politics either directly or indirectly. Even though their landholdings are not as extensive as those in Sindh and the Seraiki belt of southern Punjab, landlords still hold considerable sway over large numbers of peasant voters who depend on them for work and housing.⁴⁷

In the second two surveys I conducted in November 2018 and January 2019 at FCC and FGA Bible College, I asked questions that would shed light specifically on whether students would be more likely to choose a strategy of exit, voice or loyalty to the Pakistani state in response to intolerance, using parents’ monthly income (in Pakistani rupees, PKR) as well as religious denomination as potential causal factors. I added the data from the two surveys together so as to increase the number of students in each of the subgroups. [Figure 2](#) summarises the findings for the three subgroups that each display distinctive patterns, while [Table 3](#) gives the comprehensive results of the survey.

Results from these two surveys confirm the data from the other surveys. On the whole, Christian students exhibit high levels of ‘national identity’ and ‘uncritical patriotism’, equivalent to the results of the Christian students and Urdu- and Punjabi-speaking Muslim students in the previous surveys. The results for approval of authoritarianism as well as political interest and knowledge match those from the previous surveys as well. There also seems to have been a slightly higher preference for voice as compared to exit.

But what about intra-Christian differences? First, it is clear that significant differences exist between students from FCC and FGA. This is not surprising, as the average monthly income for FGA respondents was about 29,000 PKR, whereas for Christian FCC respondents, it was about 57,000 PKR. At FGA, 65 out of eighty respondents were affiliated with Pentecostalism, whereas at FCC, only twelve out of 64 were. Furthermore, FGA students are being trained mainly for a career in Christian ministry through a curriculum focused on theological studies, whereas FCC is a liberal arts

47. For an in-depth discussion of ‘landlordism’, see Hassan Javid, ‘Class, Power, and Patronage: Landowners and Politics in Punjab’, in *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 22, no. 3 (2011), pp. 337–69; and Shandana Khan Mohmand, ‘Losing the Connection: Party-Voter Linkages in Pakistan’, in *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 11, no. 1 (2014), pp. 7–31.

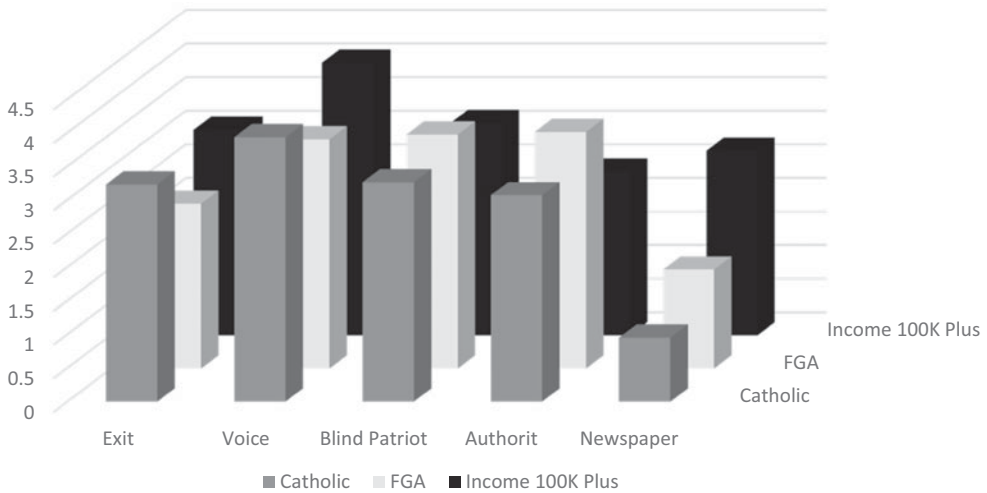


Figure 2. Comparing Christian students: Denomination, university and parental income.

Table 3. Exit, voice and loyalty among Christian students at FCC and FGA.

Causal factors	(1–5)					(1–5)		
	National ID	Blind patriot	Authorit.	Newspaper hours per week (0–7)	TV hours per week	Quiz score (0–10)	'Exit'	'Voice'
Christian total	4.14	3.37	3.32	1.57	1.6	3.66	2.86	3.49
FCC	4.06	3.24	3.06	1.82	1.75	4.11	3.38	3.6
FGA	4.2	3.48	3.52	1.37	1.47	3.3	2.45	3.41
Protestant	4.18	3.38	3.33	1.83	1.61	3.91	2.91	3.38
Catholic	4.02	3.26	3.07	0.95	1.55	3.64	3.22	3.93
Pentecost.	4.18	3.58	3.58	1.57	1.6	3.66	2.68	3.28
Income 100,000 PKR plus	4.16	3.16	2.44	2.75	1.875	4.88	3.06	4.06
Income 75–99,000 PKR	4.43	3.45	2.75	1.7	1.8	3.5	3.2	3.1
Income 50–74,000 PKR	3.86	3.1	3.19	1.33	1.67	3.9	3.02	3.86
Income 30–49,000 PKR	4.12	3.39	3.37	1.52	1.66	3.6	2.81	3.67
Income below 30,000 PKR	4.21	3.37	3.58	1.51	1.51	3.72	2.75	3.23

college with students pursuing a wide variety of career options. As a whole, FGA students exhibit similar, if slightly higher, levels of national identity and uncritical patriotism, and are just slightly less likely to favour voice in comparison to Christian FCC students. FGA students are also considerably more authoritarian, and less interested and knowledgeable about politics, while they are also less likely to favour the exit strategy, which encompasses both political quietism as well as physical exile in response to intolerance. On the whole, FGA students exhibit stronger tendencies of loyalty vis-à-vis exit and voice, particularly as compared to FCC students.

But denomination and wealth also have an impact on student attitudes. Catholic students are much more likely to favour a strategy of voice as compared to the other students because they are more willing to write a newspaper opinion piece and participate in a public demonstration in response to religious oppression. The study, of course, does not test whether they would actually do this in practice. But they were also less interested in politics as gauged by the number of times per week they read the

political section of a newspaper. While one has to be careful while generalising from this data, it confirms the impression that Catholics and the Catholic Church, on the whole, have been more politically active in the last few decades as compared to Protestants, while being not necessarily more knowledgeable.

Secondly, monthly income does not seem to have a major systematic impact, except for those students from the wealthiest families with an income of 100,000 PKR per month or more. These resemble Muslim FCC students to a greater degree; they too are far more sceptical of military involvement in politics, are more politically interested, and score higher on the political knowledge quiz as compared to other Christians. Of all income groups, they are also the most willing to raise their voices in response to religious intolerance. This may reflect a greater sense of social acceptance as well as perceived political influence as compared to the other Christian students. Further research could determine how far these are values established in the home or adopted during their higher studies at FCC or FGA. Poorer students are not more likely to express a willingness to engage in dissent as compared to wealthier students.

Conclusion

The findings of this article have to be treated with considerable caution. First, the survey population was limited to university-age students at two educational institutions. I was able to obtain some socio-economic and denominational variation among the Christian community by including a survey at FGA Bible College. Given the relatively small number of Catholic students at FCC, survey research should be conducted at a Catholic seminary or other institute of higher education. Furthermore, while there is ethnic diversity at FCC, the survey does not present a fully representative picture of Muslim students since FCC students who are not on scholarship tend to come from wealthier families due to the relatively high tuition fees. Nevertheless, because of the high number of Christian students studying alongside Muslim students at FCC, it does represent an ideal comparative environment for this study.

Second, research should be expanded to a wider demographic beyond university-age students. Comparative analyses of residents in neighbourhoods with high Christian concentrations, such as Bahar Colony and Youhanabad, on the southern edge of Lahore, might be a future avenue. Moreover, Christians who grow up in Muslim-majority villages or urban neighbourhoods may well have undergone a very different political socialisation process as compared to those from Christian towns and villages in the interior of Punjab such as Maryamabad or Khushpur, or exclusively Christian urban neighbourhoods in Lahore or Faisalabad. As well, Christians in different regions of the country, particularly those in Karachi, or the tiny Christian minorities in Quetta or Peshawar, may have different experiences as compared to those in the Punjab.

Last, the causal mechanisms undergirding the findings need to be further explored through extensive in-depth interviews and systematic participant-observation. At this point it is not clear why particular groups of students think the way they do beyond some of the structural variables for which I have tested. Nevertheless, this research does offer an interesting glimpse at important empirical trends in terms of student engagement in politics, their identification with and pride in Pakistan as a country, as well as potential

responses to religious oppression. Future in-depth qualitative research endeavours that go beyond the educated middle class could focus on the following questions that arise from the empirical results of this study, but cannot be answered by it: (1) What are the mechanisms through which Christians develop a strong national identification with and uncritical patriotism for Pakistan? Are there any differences to Muslims?; (2) What are the primary drivers of Christian support for authoritarianism and lack of interest in politics?; (3) How important are class and caste differences in shaping political attitudes within the Christian community?; and (4) What are the mechanisms through which politics are discussed and practised within Catholic churches as compared with Protestant churches, as well as between traditional versus Pentecostal denominations?

In summary, what has this study contributed to our knowledge of Pakistani Christians? Based on the findings, Christian students feel just as Pakistani, and are just as uncritically proud of their country, as their Muslim colleagues. However, they consistently exhibit higher levels of support for authoritarianism, and are less interested in politics and have less knowledge of it. According to available political science research, minorities tend to feel less attached to and less proud of their country of residence, but based on the survey findings here, we can surmise that this is not a globally uniform majority–minority dynamic, but that minority political attitudes are shaped by their specific historical and cultural contexts. Furthermore, while Christians seem to feel a strong need to fit in, ethnic minorities in Pakistan, at least among FCC students, are more likely to assert their subnational identity vis-à-vis the majority. Secondly, there are some significant intra-communal differences between different Christian groups: Pentecostal students are less interested in and knowledgeable about politics, while Catholic students are more likely to favour active dissent as a strategy in the face of religious oppression. Income level seems to be significant only for the wealthiest Christian students: they are significantly less pro-authoritarianism than other students, they show more interest in politics, and they favour active dissent more than other students.

This study only represents a beginning. It does not, for instance, deal with the power dynamics existing within and between Christian communities. However, it has illuminated some important insights into how Christians in Pakistan think about politics and the country. No doubt, further research, accompanied by in-depth ethnographic and interview-based research, will shed more light on the precise causal processes underlying these attitudes and beliefs.

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