

## **Aix-Marseille School of Economics**

PhD Candidate

### **Office Contact Information**

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

### **Education:**

PhD in Economics (Expected Jun, 2025)  
Thesis Title: “Essays on Institutions and Development”  
Aix-Marseille School of Economics, France

Masters Theoretical and Empirical Economics  
(specialization: microeconomics)  
Aix-Marseille School of Economics, France

M.S. Information and Operational Management  
(specialization: economics and applied statistics)  
Cumulative GPA: 3.96/4.0  
First Position in the State of Punjab (Gold Medal by the Chief Minister)  
University of the Punjab, Pakistan

B.S Applied Mathematics  
with distinction (First Division/Grade A),  
University of Sargodha, Pakistan

### **References:**

**Professor Marc Sangnier**  
Aix-Marseilles University;  
University of Namur.  
[marc.sangnier@unamur.be](mailto:marc.sangnier@unamur.be)

**Professor Avner Seror**  
Aix-Marseilles University;  
[avner.seror@univ-amu.fr](mailto:avner.seror@univ-amu.fr)

**Citizenship:** Pakistani

### **Research Interests:**

Development Economics, Agri Tech, Law and Development

## **Working Papers:**

### ***Judicial Capture (with S. Mehmood) - Forthcoming - The Economic Journal***

We use data from Pakistan to establish a reciprocal exchange relationship between the judiciary and government. We document large transfers in the form of expensive real estate from the government to the judiciary, and large favors in the form of pro-government rulings from the judiciary to the government. Our estimates indicate that the allocation of houses to judges increases pro-government rulings by 50% and reduces decisions on case merits by 30%. The allocation also incurs a cumulative cost of 0.03% of GDP to the government. However, it allows the government to expropriate additional land worth 0.2% of GDP in one year. The results suggest that such transfers within the state deteriorate the rule of law.

### ***A Travesty of Justice: Unintended Consequences of Anti-Corruption Efforts - Best Paper Award (IOEA 2023)***

Typically, anti-corruption campaigns are believed to promote accountability, strengthen democracy, and establish the rule of law. However, this paper demonstrates how corruption efforts can be manipulated to persecute political opponents and consolidate the incumbent's power. Through regression discontinuity design estimates, I show that opposition politicians charged with corruption in Pakistan's Anti-Corruption (NAB) courts are more likely to be convicted if they narrowly win the election compared to if they narrowly lose. This targeting of opposition politicians seems to displace the prosecution of corruption cases against non-politicians. In courts that are particularly congested, corruption convictions of opposition politicians crowd-out corruption convictions of non-politicians. In contrast, associates of the incumbent government who narrowly win the elections are less likely to be convicted. Analysis of mechanisms reveal that career concerns are likely important to explain these results. The judges who convict opposition politicians are more likely to be promoted. When the power to appoint and promote judges is taken away from the politicians, the career concerns mechanisms break down and the effect on convictions attenuates. The results cannot be explained by alternative mechanisms of judge selection or peer effects. Overall our findings underscore the need for caution when implementing anti-corruption campaigns. While such campaigns are typically viewed as a means to promote accountability, they can also be manipulated to target political opponents and maintain the government's hold on power.

### ***Altruistic Vaccination– (COVID-19 RESPONSE) with (Syngjoo Choi, Jun Hyung Kim, and Avner Seror)***

We study the altruistic motives behind vaccination intentions. Using data from a field experiment in Pakistan, we find that providing information about the probability of transmitting COVID to others substantially increases vaccination intention. We find that subjects are more responsive to a treatment that focuses their attention on the loss experienced when they do not get vaccinated and infect others relative to a treatment that focuses their attention on the gain experienced when they get vaccinated and do not infect others. We explain our findings in a theoretical model that accounts for reference-dependent preferences and loss aversion. We finally calibrate our model and show that our experimental evidence are consistent with the existence of both substantial loss aversion and altruistic motives in vaccination decisions.

### ***Reform Multiplier (with S. Mehmood)***

How and when does a reform trigger a cascading effect? This paper provides evidence that a judge selection reform in Pakistan, which shifted the appointment power of judges from the government to a committee of judges, had a multiplier effect on anti-government rulings in the decade following its implementation. As the first generation of committee-appointed judges (first-degree of separation from the government) is replaced by the second generation of committee appointees (second-degree of separation from the government), the reform's effect compounds. Nevertheless, as the reform amplifies anti-government rulings, it also increases the concentration of judges hired from a few select law firms. Despite the rise in judges hiring their former colleagues from law firms where they previously practiced as attorneys, there is no observable decline in the quality of judicial decisions. Rulings based on case merits and adherence to due process of law rise with each degree of separation from government appointments. Selection effects of second-generation judges drawing talent from top law schools emerge as a key contributor behind the reform multiplier effect. Overall, our results underscore that measures increasing the independence of the judiciary can have enduring positive effects on judicial autonomy and decision quality, even when they concurrently alter the composition of the judicial elite by making it concentrated.

## **Work in Progress:**

### *Psychological Well-being and Educational Efficiency: Evidence from Civil Servant Intervention in Pakistan (with S.Mehmood and Daniel L. Chen)*

Teaching in public schools is one of the most stressful jobs in the world. We work with one of the largest networks of charter schools to investigate how mental health assistance to teachers impacts their and students' mental health. We provide experimental evidence on how teacher stress can be reduced, how it transmits to student stress, and how it may hold back academic achievement. We randomly assign teachers to mindful meditation, individual cognitive behavioral therapy sessions, and pharmacological aid. Meditation and cognitive behavioral therapy reduce stress, while no impact of pharmacological assistance is observed. In a factorial design, we also cross-randomize teachers to reduce mental health stigma, increasing the acceptability of seeking pharmacological aid. We observe increased take up and impact of pharmacological aid in the cross-randomized group. Overall, we find stress from teacher to student is transmissible and hurts student learning, but these costs can be ameliorated through policy interventions. Social stigma against pharmacological assistance is a key stumbling block beyond financial constraints that hurts teachers' and students' mental health. A social action signaling social acceptance of seeking mental health reduces stigma associated with accepting pharmacological help, increase take-up of pharmacological aid, and reduces the stress in short and medium term.

### *Wolf guarding the Sheep: Regulatory Capture in Agricultural Markets*

In this project, I hope to study how regulatory agencies may engage in monopoly pricing. We do this in context of Pakistan where we examine how politicians just winning elections and those just losing may impact price fixing behaviour in the agriculture markets in a Regression Discontinuity Design. I have compiled a list of names of “sugar barrons”, these are politicians-cum-industrialists that both hold key regulatory offices as well as have large personal stakes in the sugar industry. I hope to match this with votes data from Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and examine how these politicians just winning elections impact local sugar prices, quantity produced and local economic development in the district.

## **Work Experience:**

**May 2017 – Dec 2021:**

### **Senior Research Associate at the Center for Economic Research Pakistan (CERP) and Senior Research Associate at Precision Development (PxD)**

1. PxD and CERP were collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture in Pakistan.
  - a. Assistance on various RCTs in Pakistan with Farmers and Extension Agents.
  - b. Assistance on conducting audits on Soil testing facilities to measure their precision and accuracy.
2. CERP is collaborating with the Punjab Police
  - a. Assistance in Police reform policy to induce behavioral changes in police to reducing police brutality
3. PxD and CERP are collaborating with Punjab Skill Development Fund (PSDF)
  - a. Assistance on RCT based on M-learning.
4. PxD and CERP are collaborating with IFAD (International Fund for Agriculture Development)
  - a. Assistance on policy development to improving rural women participation in Pakistan's Labour Force
5. PxD and CERP are collaborating with the Government of Pakistan and the Private sector (Nestle, DS Farms and KADO (Karakoram Area Development Organization))
  - a. Assistance in Policy development to move farmers towards Organic Farming practices in Hunza District in the Gilgit Baltistan Province of Pakistan

Principle Investigators of these projects are Michel Kremer, Shawn Cole, and Heiner Baumann.

## **2015-2017:**

### **Research Assistant at CERP and PxD**

1. Generating reports and presenting them to Government Officials and PIs
2. Meeting several high-profile government officials to build and maintain relationships.
3. Managing and allocating government's field staff as well as PxD/CERP field staff.
4. Running multiple data analysis for PxD, CERP and AD, Punjab.

## **2014-2015:**

### **Research Assistant at Central Bank of Pakistan (SBP)**

#### **Research Assistance to Dr Sajawal Khan**

1. Worked on the Project "Optimal Monetary Policy in the Presence of an Informal Sector and Firm-Level Credit Constraints"
2. Worked on data cleaning (survey data), descriptive statistics and basic econometric analysis.

## **Teaching Experience:**

### **2013-2014 Teaching Assistant, Prof. Dr. Jamil Amir.**

1. Took Q&A (review) classes and tutorials.
2. Helped with class record-keeping, such as tracking attendance and calculating grades.
3. Solved all homework problems once a week with class.

## **Awards and Honors:**

2022 Best Paper Award (Institutional and Organizational Economics Academy)  
2021-2022 Aix-Marseille School of Economics Fellowship  
2017 Honorary Gold Medal by the Chief Minister  
2015-2017 University High Achiever Scholarship during Masters  
2010-2014 University Excellence Scholarship during Bachelors

## **Conferences:**

APSA 2020, MPSA 2021, IOEA 2022, AMSE 2023, IOEA 2023

## **Computer Skills:**

Stata, R, Eviews, Python, C++, MATLAB, Latex, MS Office, ArcGIS