Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters

Pakistan has transitioned to democracy but landlord dominance of rural politics has persisted across large parts of its countryside. What does this mean for the political participation of its rural voting majority?

This book uses rich primary research to develop innovative measures of political engagement that capture considerable diversity in the voting behaviour of rural citizens, and show how they are exploiting political spaces that are opening up as a result of social and economic change. While these changes have allowed poorer rural voters to gain some strategic advantage vis-à-vis their landlords, they have not yet contributed substantially to the creation of broad constituencies of support for Pakistan's political parties due to the existence of an alternate local political institution – the village level vote bloc. Landed elites organise vote blocs to control village politics, while voters use them to advance their political interests strategically. This makes vote blocs inherently unstable political institutions as both leaders and voters change their behaviour and strategies over time – reacting to one another and to socio-economic changes – and cause shifts to occur in the organisation of rural politics.

The book uses a mix of quantitative analysis with detailed case study work, social network analysis and archival research, to provide an empirical analysis of rural politics, specifically of local political competition, participation, and bargaining practices. This analysis shows that elite persistence in the control of local political institutions can co-exist with considerable differences in the forms of engagement between local elites and voters within the same political context, and that the observed variation is explained by the institutional basis of economic and social inequality. This suggests that the further democratisation of Pakistan's politics is dependent on the mitigation of persistent structural inequality.

Shandana Khan Mohmand is Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, and Associate Fellow at the Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives, Pakistan. Her research and writings explore the fields of political participation, inequality, and the political economy of public policy and service delivery.

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Crafty Oligarchs, Savvy Voters

Democracy under Inequality in Rural Pakistan

Shandana Khan Mohmand

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To the memory of my father,
Aslam Khan,
Who would have been happy to see me get here.

Written in memory of
Hamza Alavi and Saghir Ahmad,
Who I hope would have been happy with its subject.

And for Olivia, Imaan, Anaya and Anya,
Young women who have much to contribute to the world
And who I hope will always be inspired to realise their greatest potential.

Contents

Tables and Figures

Glossary of Local Terms

aarthi	a middleman in the trade of agricultural produce, largely based in small urban towns in agricultural areas
abadkar	initial settler
akhat	a meeting of the village called by the *maalik* or *lambardar*, in order to discuss and decide on important matters, including the collective voting decision of the village, or the vote bloc
bedakhali	agricultural tenant eviction
begaar	corvée
biradari	lineage group
bhaichara	a tenure system whereby parts of land are owned separately and taxed individually, as opposed to collectively as a single unit
chak	a Crown village, settled during the second phase of village and land settlements in colonial Punjab
charpai	a string bed
chaudhri	a large landowner whose family was given land at the time of the original settlement of the village
daara	a public meeting space maintained by large landlords around which the social and political activity of the village revolves
daawat	a lunch or dinner invitation by a vote bloc leader in the days before an election during which voters can meet with political candidates; such village gatherings constitute the campaign trail of most party candidates in rural constituencies
dera	a compound maintained by farmers (owners or tenants) on their lands where they keep their animals, machines and implements, and where they may also sometimes sleep at night to keep an eye on things; many small independent landowners may also build their homes on these *dera*s, in many cases to break their homestead-based dependence on large landlords, who in many cases still own the residential land of the main village settlement
dharra	vote bloc
haveli	mansion

jagir	an estate granted, as opposed to sold, by the British colonial administration
kammi	the traditional artisan castes in the rural *quom* hierarchy, ranking below *zamindar*s but above *muslim sheikh*s
kardar	a bailiff of a landlord
kumbah	extended family
lambardar	The person appointed by the colonial state as responsible for revenue collection, regulation of village affairs and to act as the main intermediary between the state and the village. Very often this was the largest landowner in a village. In most villages the position has become hereditary. In Crown villages *lambardar*s generally act in consultation with other *chaudhri*s, and do not necessarily represent a level of authority or power greater than that of the other *chaudhri*s.
maalik	literally owner, but with strong connotations of lordship over the entire estate
malikan–deh	village proprietary body
maulvi	caretaker of a mosque, who gives the call for prayers, the *azaan*, and also leads the prayer
misl haqiyat	colonial era record of rights within a village
musalli or *muslim sheikh*	*musalli*s are the lowest ranked group in the *quom* hierarchy; they are now called *muslim sheikh*s
munshi	a manager of a landlord's agricultural estate
muzair/muzarein	tenants-at will
nazim and *naib-nazim*	mayor and deputy mayor of a union, *tehsil*, or district
panchayat	village council, often set up informally to resolve disputes in the village
patti	shar
pattidari	a tenure system whereby land from a single estate, after being divided amongst different owners, is still taxed collectively as a single unit
patwari	the lowest level government revenue officer in Pakistan
pir	a living saint, usually a descendant of an important Sufi saint. Many cities and regions of Pakistan have a patron saint, whose descendants still occupy a spiritually exalted position, have thousands of spiritual followers and can, therefore, be powerful political players.

pukka	when used for a house it means a brick structure, but when used for a road it means that the road has been paved
purdah	literally curtain, it refers to the restricted mobility of women and to their use of various types of veils, or *burqah*s, while in a public space
quom	hierarchically arranged, endogamous status groups that involve a notion of occupational castes. The three main *quom*s are *zamindar*, *kammi* and *muslim sheikh* (in order of rank). Within each *quom*, there are sub-*quom*s or *biradari*s that are also, often, ranked hierarchically. Gough calls them 'castelike status groups' (1977, 9).
reiaya	literally, subject; the residents of an estate, living under a *maalik*
sakin–deh	village residents
seip	an informal contract in which *kammi*s would provide services to *zamindar*s in exchange for in-kind payments
shart wajib–ul–arz	colonial village administration paper
shajra–i–nasb	colonial government document that recorded genealogies
tehsil	an administrative sub-division of a district. It is the second tier of the three-tiered local government system that comprises the district, *tehsil* and union. For example, in Chapter 4, Sahiwal is a village in the Bakhar Bal union of Shahpur *tehsil* in Sargodha district
thanedar	local police officer
vangaar	labour on somebody else's land, usually at times of harvest and sowing, done in return for a meal; it can either indicate social support the villagers may extend to one another or can be demanded by the landlord
zaildar	*zaildar*s were tribal chiefs who assisted the colonial administration with revenue collection and administration within a set of villages
zamindar	the landowning caste in the *quom* hierarchy

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Introduction

Rural Voters under Inequality in an Emerging Democracy

It was a hot summer evening and as I walked out of the landlord's living room in his spacious bungalow, I noticed that a crowd had begun to gather early in an open space just outside the inner walls of the house. People were arriving from different parts of the village for a meeting that the landlord, Naib, had called. They walked up in groups and seated themselves on what appeared to be pre-designated *charpai*s (string beds) laid out neatly in a square formation. As I looked down the four sides of the square, I realised that everyone present was male and from amongst the older members of the village, and that they seemed to have sorted themselves into *quom*s[1] and *biradari*s[2] – groups that I recognised because of the few weeks we had now spent doing field research in this village. The *zamindar quom*, or landowning caste, and its various *biradari*s were all seated together on one side, members of the *kammi quom*, or artisanal caste, were seated together on another side, and some *kammi biradari*s and a few *muslim sheikh*s,[3] the lowest caste, filled the third side. The fourth side, at the head of the square, was still empty, to be filled shortly by Naib, his cousins and nephews, his estate managers, or *munshi*s, and his special guests – the men in our research team. I, as the only female in the group, was asked to remain inside the walled garden of the bungalow.

People walked around and warmly greeted one another but most stuck to their own side of the square in general. Once everyone had settled down, one of the managers walked into the living room to inform Naib that it was now time for him to join them. The landlord and his male relatives emerged together with great ceremony and walked towards the gathering of village residents, all of whom stood up to greet them. While his family and managers walked straight to their assigned *charpai*s at the head of the square, Naib walked down each side of it, greeting each person as he went. With the *zamindar*s he exchanged the customary hug, followed by a quick handshake. As he moved

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1   Roughly, caste. See glossary for a full explanation.

2   Kinship, lineage groups within each *quom*.

3   *Muslim sheikhs* are also sometimes referred to as *musallis*, a term which was more commonly used a few decades ago but which is now considered a pejorative term in some parts. I use the old term when referring to studies that use it, or to villages where the term is still common.

into the *kammi* groups, the greeting changed to a quick handshake followed by the villager bending to touch the landlord's knees in a marked gesture of respect and deference. By the time he reached the few representatives of the *muslim sheikh* caste, the greeting had reduced to a smiling nod by Naib and a touching of his knees by the villager. Naib then walked back to his place at the head of the gathering and declared the meeting open.

I was witnessing, from behind a door in the courtyard, my first ever *akhat*,[4] an integral part of rural politics in this part of Pakistan – central Punjab. Naib lived in Lahore, the provincial capital, and was visiting the village after a long time. An *akhat* marked most of his visits and, in his words, saved him from having to meet all the village elders individually each time. Today's main agenda was to allow the village to congratulate the landlord's family on his nephew's recent victory at the polls, for the seat of a deputy mayor of the *tehsil*[5] in the 2005 local government elections. Such an *akhat* would also have been called before the election, and Naib or a member of his family would have used it to inform the heads of all the *biradari*s who the village will be voting for in the upcoming election. This is true of local, provincial as well as national elections. The message would then have been carried out of the *akhat* to the various households, and on voting day, the decision of the *akhat* would generally have been implemented. It is also at the *akhat* that the village puts across its demands for public services, immediately after the name and party of the candidate have b an appropriately reverent tone in addressing their een announced, in the vague hope that the demands will make their way to the candidate through the landlord. Today, since the winning candidate was from the village itself and was seated at the head of the square with his uncle (Naib), the village residents used the *akhat* to remind him of his pre-election promises. If this had been some other election, they may have checked with Naib on the status of his conversations with the recently elected politicians, in order to ascertain if and when they might expect to see some of their demands being met. Members of the *zamindar* caste would have used a questioning tone, those of the *kammi quom* would have couched their inquiry within a deferential tone, and *muslim sheikh*s would possibly have kept quiet altogether. Each person, however, would have ensured that they maintained an appropriately reverent tone in addressing their *maalik*, or lord, and did not

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4   A village meeting. Literally, it means 'to come together'.

5   An administrative division of a district. It is the second tier of the three-tiered local government system that comprises the district, *tehsil* and union.

press him too much. No one would have wanted to deal with the consequences of open defiance or disrespect, despite the many stories of Naib's benevolence. His estate managers, as everyone knew, were not equally forgiving.

The village in which I stood was Sahiwal – a place not unheard of by scholars interested in rural Pakistan. I refer not to the *tehsil* or the district of that name but to a small village in central Punjab that has been studied intensively – by Saghir Ahmad in the mid 1960s and by Shahnaz Rouse at the end of the 1970s. It seemed like a good place to start a study on rural voters many decades later in 2006. Pakistan and its politics had changed significantly since Ahmad and Rouse (and a few other village studies conducted at around the same time) had looked in any detail at the voting behaviour of its rural voters. These studies had recounted the extent of control and power that large landlords exercised over village politics, and these ideas were now firmly lodged in how most people understood Pakistan's rural politics. But many things had changed since then in the countryside – agriculture had transformed, and with it village life and structures, and Pakistan had grown accustomed to electoral politics, something that was fairly new at the time of Rouse's research. I came to Sahiwal because I was interested in finding out how it had responded to these changes, and whether the power that its landlords exercised over the political decisions of its other residents was still intact. Everything I saw and heard at Sahiwal's *akhat* seemed to support what I had read about 'feudal' politics in rural Punjab. It did seem that citizens vote not as they want to but rather as they are told to by landlords who have managed to merge together their socio-economic dominance with political influence. Both Ahmad and Rouse had noted in their studies that Sahiwal was witnessing change over the decades that they studied it. But this *akhat* that I witnessed many decades later seemed to support the usual stories about the 'unfree' votes of rural Punjab, the country's political heartland.

However, I also knew that Sahiwal's initial settler, Naib's ancestor, was given thousands of acres by the colonial state, and this land had passed down through the generations – Naib and his family still owned hundreds of acres. This was not the case in all villages across Punjab, even within this single district of Sargodha. The colonial state had granted lands and titles to various families and lineage groups in different ways – some received large land grants, others were fairly small, some families were given full proprietary rights with complete authority over the village, while others remained tenants of the state with circumscribed social authority. Did voters in these other villages

behave differently? Or were their landed lords also able to command *akhat*s to implement their political decisions, as Naib did? If we moved away from single village studies to look instead at voting behaviour across a number of different villages, would the popular perception of landlord-dominated politics persist? In other words, was the pattern of politics in Sahiwal typical of the rest of the district, or was Naib's impressive command over his village a consequence of how much land he still controlled?

There was only one way to find out. A week later, my research team and I headed off to a village that had been settled quite differently under the British colonial rule. Here, a number of landlords had been given much smaller land grants, the largest of which had originally been less than 400 acres in 1902, compared to the 4,500 acres that Naib's ancestor had received 40 years earlier in 1860. The image of rural politics that I carried from Sahiwal lasted only until we arrived in Chak 1, only an hour's drive away within the same district. Here we learnt that the *akhat* was a much less grand affair. The village was deeply factionalised and was organised into two large groups, each of which called its own separate meeting. But this was not the factionalisation that much of the literature on rural politics in Pakistan speaks of. Martin's (2016) study of a village in the same district adds a detailed account to the generally held belief that such factions are based on rivalry between landowning clans or, in the case of Martin's case study, on bitter rivalry within the same clan. This was not the case in Chak 1. Here, all the landlords of the village – of which there were many – were part of one group. The other group was organised around 'colony politics', or the politics of the spatially segregated neighbourhood (or 'colony') of the village's poorest *kammi* and *muslim sheikh* households. The colony group was led by a small landholder from a family of sharecroppers and a *muslim sheikh* union councillor, whose recent electoral success in the 2005 local government elections had made him the voice of the poor. Here was a story of openly antagonistic class politics – the political independence of poorer groups and a daily challenge to the power of the landed.

Sahiwal and Chak 1 were only 30 miles from one another, but politically they seemed to belong to two different worlds. While the landlord of Sahiwal was confident of the support of his entire village, the landlords of Chak 1 complained constantly about the damage that had been inflicted on their reputation by the political independence of the village poor. The landless residents of Sahiwal looked to their *maalik* to mediate for them with politicians while those of

Chak 1 were struggling to establish political links that were independent of the landlords of their village. I had long been listening to people making grand generalisations about Pakistani rural politics – about the political hold of traditional landed elites, of rural voters being politically ignorant and coerced, and of class-based organisation having disappeared from village politics – but the politics of Sahiwal and Chak 1, located in the same district and in adjacent constituencies, made it difficult to generalise the nature of rural politics even across these two villages. Why did the two villages behave so differently? That Sahiwal and Chak 1 were settled in very different ways might provide part of the explanation, but there was another difference too. Sahiwal was very close to an urban centre, and its residents cycled daily to the nearby town for jobs and services, while Chak 1 was a half-hour car ride away from an urban centre along a very narrow, bumpy road. Could this also have had an effect on the politics of both villages? Shami's (2012) work in a neighbouring district some years later suggests that greater connectivity constrains the landed elite's ability to control political behaviour within their villages. But these two villages seemed to be telling the opposite story – the political choices of poorer voters who lived close to a town were controlled by their landlord while those who lived at a distance had come together to form their own political faction.

It was clear that in order to really understand rural voting behaviour we would need to work in different types of villages to see whether there were any discernible and generalisable patterns. Existing literature on Pakistan's rural politics tells us rich stories of specific villages, and how different village residents engage economically, socially and politically with one another within these. But these studies are not always helpful in telling us whether these interactions are replicated in other settings, in different types of villages where landlords have varying levels of wealth and social authority. Is Naib's ability to dictate political options to Sahiwal's residents reflected in political interactions between landed and landless villagers across the province, or even across this district? Or is it now usual to find landless populations challenging the political authority of their landlords, as they do in Chak 1? These are answers not easily available.

This is a large and glaring gap because Pakistan is an emerging democracy in which we know very little about its voters. It has gone through repeated rounds of military and democratic rule over the 70 years of its existence since independence from British colonial rule in 1947 – it was ruled by the military for 11 years from 1958 to 1969, then for another 11 years from 1977 to 1988,

and again for 9 years from 1999 to 2008. Through all its cycles of military and civilian rule Pakistan has had elections, many of which have been genuinely contested. Pakistan's elections are not showcase events and have played an important role in its history. The country was born as a result of the election of 1946, and a quarter of a century later, it was the result of another election in 1970 that split it into two separate countries – Pakistan and Bangladesh. Its first military coup was instigated by the threat of an election in 1958, and to this day, elections have played many roles through all types of regimes. They have validated military rule (1985, 2002), led to its demise (1970, 1988, 2008) and created support bases for political parties under civilian rule (1970, 1990, 1993 and 1997). Despite Pakistan's reputation as a political system characterised by military dictatorships, its voters have actively been involved in defining its political history, and elections are now so firmly engrained in the system that even the military dictatorships of the 1980s and 2000s required electoral mandates. Yet discussions of Pakistan's democratic prospects remain surprisingly unconnected to what its voters think, who they support and why. In some sense, it seems that they support the system and its inherent politics, turning up in sizeable numbers to vote during elections. However, a lack of scholarship on the subject has meant that we have little idea whether there are discernible patterns that will allow for some theory-building around why and how different types of voters engage with such inherently unstable politics. Our understanding is particularly lacking when it comes to Pakistan's voting majority – the residents of its villages. A sizeable proportion of the country's electorate, about 65 per cent, is rural, about 70 per cent of whom are landless and a large proportion live below or around the national poverty line. The rural, landless poor are thus a significant electoral category, but discussions of what motivates their political behaviour are not to be found in commentaries on Pakistan's political instability and democratic prospects.

This is a relevant question not only for those interested in Pakistan but also for those that study democracy elsewhere. The questions I ask in this book connect directly to a central puzzle in the study of politics – why do voters vote as they do, especially under conditions of inequality? Our general theories have regularly drawn a spectrum that runs between clientelism at one end and programmatic politics at the other end when we speak of how voters connect to political parties. As far as voter motives are concerned, we think of these generally in terms of gender, class, race, age, education and location. But

these concepts assume that voters have agency, and that they vote as they want based on these various facts about their identity. High levels of socio-economic inequality – such as which exists in rural Pakistan and to varying degrees in many other contexts – can constrain voter agency to the extent that voters no longer make decisions based on their identity, but rather on what is best for them within the unequal contexts in which their lives and their decisions are directly constrained by the power of elites. What happens here when electoral politics connected to intense competition at higher tiers becomes the primary organising logic of local politics? Are poor voters condemned to becoming electoral cannon fodder and to political marginalisation?

The continuation of landed power and unequal access to the means of production alongside regular elections has created unique political relationships between Pakistan's various rural classes – large landowners, peasant proprietors, landless sharecroppers and agricultural labourers. These political relationships are embedded within the logic of structural rural inequality, but they function more and more within a polity that is politically competitive and where the basic elements of democratisation have taken root. Greater political competition, both within and outside the village, should essentially provide rural voters with a way out of their 'feudal' relationships with the traditional landed elite, possibly through the channel of local collective action within the producing classes. Is this what is now happening in Pakistan's villages? For all the rich studies of rural politics in Pakistan, we do not yet have a definitive answer to such questions. We understand fairly well how rural landed elites organise politics, but we know very little about how, or why, the rural landless majority participates in and engages with this politics. Furthermore, and very importantly, how does this political engagement vary across different groups of rural citizens?

To explore the politics of landless voters, I ask three specific questions in this book: (*a*) Does the landed elite dominate and control the political engagement of rural voters, in spite of social and political change? (*b*) Does elite domination mean the oligarchic control of local politics, or do landless voters have some bargaining power vis-à-vis landed elites? (*c*) To what extent are the differences we see in political engagement explained by the institutional basis of inequality? Overall, and in a comparative context, this book is about the ways in which marginalised voters living under conditions of persistent socio-economic inequality negotiate their way to greater political space and bargaining power. I argue that even under the harshest political conditions there are savvy voters among the poor, forcing

entrenched oligarchies to resort to all of their skills to negotiate the terms of political engagement. Democracy can empower marginalised voters even in highly unequal places.

This is a conceptual, empirical and comparative study of rural politics in a group of villages in central Punjab province. Punjab dominates politics in Pakistan because of its demographic majority, and voters who live in its central region – where Sahiwal and Chak 1 lie, in the district of Sargodha – play a disproportionately important role in shaping national politics. I do not use the findings of this study to make generalisations about how rural citizens vote across all of Pakistan's countryside, but I do provide a detailed and disaggregated story of variation in electoral politics in the country's political heartland. There is a reasonable chance that what is found within these covers will give us a pretty good idea of the kind of rural politics that takes place in the other provinces, and the pressures that rural voters face in making electoral decisions elsewhere as well. Of course, there remains a need to study the other provinces in equal detail to know how generalisable the findings presented here really are.

Existing explanations of rural politics in Pakistan

Rural landless populations have not featured prominently in explanations of Pakistan's politics and instability. Such commentaries have in general focused on other actors and events. One set of comments seem to have settled on a 'bombs and beards' story. The role of religion, insecurity and violence appears to account for most explanations of the country's continuing struggle with democratic consolidation. This is a fairly limited and largely international view, and overall it provides little useful information for understanding Pakistan's experience with democracy. Large parts of the country are unaffected by violence and militant groups, and religious parties, for all the noise they create, remain marginal to politics, having received only 8 per cent of the total vote on average over the last four elections. Once we get beyond the 'bombs and beards' perspective, most political commentaries on Pakistan's instability highlight the fact that it has powerful 'feudal' landlords who control both the countryside and the political system, and who have had a mutually supportive relationship with military regimes at the centre. These elites use their landed wealth to exclude the landless, the poor, women and minorities from political power, and

they manipulate these groups to support the political preferences of the rural landed elite.[6] Indeed, after each election analyses quickly turn to how 'feudal power'[7] determined the outcome and how most voters, with the exception of those in urban areas, voted not as they would have wanted to but as they were told to by the rural landed elite. This view is more cognisant of rural voters but it too is an oversimplified perspective on Pakistan. It is true that the landed elite control much of the countryside, as was obvious in Sahiwal, and that they have helped legitimise military regimes by organising and turning out the vote when required. However, if this is all there was to the story, then we should have seen fairly stable authoritarian regimes in Pakistan. The literature tells us that elites will block changes that threaten the status quo that ensures their political power, and will actively work against democratisation.[8]

This has not been the case in Pakistan. Pakistan's military regimes have been as unstable as its democratic ones. Pakistan's first military regime was brought down by a social movement and the imminent division of the country into two parts, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Its second authoritarian regime ended with the death of the military leader in a plane crash – together with most of the top brass of the army, in what is widely believed to have been an act of sabotage – and growing pressure in the streets for a return to democratic rule. And its third military regime also ended with street protests in a movement led by lawyers and growing pressure for democracy. None of the military regimes lasted long beyond a decade, each faced a popular social movement in its final years, and they have had to resort more and more to holding elections and to ruling through parliaments and political parties. Much of this pressure has come from urban areas, but given that the electorate is largely rural, it must surely have played a role in the elections that established civilian rule at the end of each military regime in 1970, in 1988 and again in 2008. Why has the landed elite that controls this electorate not been more supportive of military rule, or worked harder to sustain it? Are their interests not particularly tied to either military or democratic regimes, or are they not in as much control of the electorate as most commentaries would have us believe?

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6   This includes writers like Fukuyama, who wrote recently that 'Pakistan … continues to be dominated by an entrenched quasi-feudal elite that has no intention of giving up its privilege' (2014, 339).

7   A term that continues to be used in public rhetoric in Pakistan to signify a multifaceted relationship of extreme social, political and economic inequality between landlords and other rural classes, based on early studies such as Herring (1979).

8   See Boix (2003), Baland and Robinson (2008), Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), Anderson, Francois and Kotwal (2015).

The first part of this question is easier to answer than the second. Part of the landed elite explanation is based on the fact that this class does as well under democratic rule as it does during military regimes. The traditional landed elite have played a central role within Pakistan's weak political parties, both as candidates and as organisers of local vote banks, leading to the view that these parties function essentially as conglomerations built around the clientelist networks of this class. The weakness of Pakistan's political parties is a direct consequence of the intermittent periods of military rule, during which political parties were manipulated, their support bases neutralised, and their leaders regularly jailed, exiled or executed. In the absence of a political cadre, the landed elite have repeatedly provided ready candidates with available vote banks under both democratic and military regimes. While political parties have come and gone, ebbed and peaked, many of those that occupy key positions and roles within them have remained largely the same. Cheema, Javid and Naseer (2013) show that 'approximately 400 families have been instrumental in shaping policies, programmes and legislation that have impacted the lives of 176 million Pakistani citizens'. Also, that between 1985 and 2008 – a period that cuts across two military regimes and a decade of democratic rule – about two-thirds of all elected legislators and half of the top three contestants for each seat of the national assembly in Punjab's constituencies were 'dynastic', in that their families have been in politics almost consistently since the 1970s. Others show that many of these elected representatives are landed (Zaidi 2004).

As for the question about the extent to which the landed elite are in control of the rural electorate, this indeed forms the central concern of this book. The existing literature on rural politics in Pakistan, much of it detailed and quite rich, provides four broad explanations for the voting behaviour of the electorate. Organised conceptually, these are the 'feudalism' or landed power explanation; the *biradari*-ism or kinship explanation; the clientelism explanation; and the class or party identification explanation. I consider each of these in turn here to see how far they are able to take us in explaining rural voting behaviour in Pakistan. I find that they all tell a good part of the story but that they are each incomplete. They explain well how land and its unequal distribution, both across landed clans and across the village population, conditions the political choices of elite groups. But they are unable to explain why the rural poor vote as they do, or why they vote at all, when their political agency is severely limited by high socio-economic inequality.

The 'feudalism' explanation

This view – which we can label as the 'feudalism', landed power or dependence explanation – uses the disproportionate socio-economic and political power of the rural landed elite in Pakistan as an explanation for voting behaviour. According to this, rural voters in different parts of the country, and especially in Punjab and Sindh, are severely constrained in their political choices by their socio-economic dependence on large landlords that rule the countryside. These landlords may be electoral candidates or they may be local power holders who are able to use their control over land and people's livelihoods to determine their vote. According to this explanation, citizens in rural Pakistan vote not as they would like, but rather as they are told by their landlords. Aspects of this explanation can be found in the works of Sayeed (1980), Gardezi (1983), Alavi (1983 and 1990), Waseem (1994), and Keefer, Narayan and Vishwanath (2003) and also more recently in that of Martin (2016), who discusses ties of dependence that link tenants, servants and other debt-bondaged villagers to faction-leading landlords.

This explanation draws on the fact that land inequality is still high in Pakistan and a large part of the workforce is dependent on farm-based employment. Its Gini coefficient[9] for land is 0.83, compared to 0.62 for India and 0.49 for China (World Bank 2002; Bardhan 2009). In 2003, Gazdar calculated that in Pakistan 'nearly half of all rural households do not own any agricultural land while just 2.5 per cent of the householders account for over two-fifth of the total owned area' (2003, 1). Tables 1.1 and 1.2 make this inequality obvious in the high land Gini coefficients, the high levels of rural landlessness and the skewed distribution of landholdings for both Pakistan as a whole and Punjab in particular. They show that in 2010, 11 per cent of landowners controlled more than half of the total farm area in Pakistan. For Punjab, this was 9 per cent owning 40 per cent of total farm area. At the same time, about half of the country's labour force is in the agricultural sector, though this has registered a minimal decline in recent years from about 48 per cent in 2000 to 45 per cent in 2011 (Pakistan Employment Trends 2011). So, most land is owned by a small group of landholders and a large part of the workforce are dependent on farm-based employment. Most political analyses that take off from such statistics argue that high land inequality translates into the economic dependence of rural voters and leads in turn to dependent voting – or, as it is more commonly called, 'feudal politics'.

9　Gini coefficient measures inequality on a scale from 0 to 1, on which 0 is perfect equality and 1 is perfect inequality.

Table 1.1   Land inequality

	Gini	Landless	Land owned	
			Max (acres)	**Mean (acres)**
Pakistan	0.83*	49%	513*	3.4*
Punjab	0.83**	47.7%	221**	2.4**

Sources: Agricultural Census of Pakistan (2000), World Bank (2002), Gazdar (2003).
Notes: * Average across all provinces (World Bank 2002).
        **Average across north, central and south Punjab (World Bank 2002).

Table 1.2   Land ownership distribution in Pakistan and Punjab in 2010 (in acres)

		<2.5 acres	2.5 to 12.5 acres	>12.5 to <100 acres	100 and above acres
Pakistan	% owners	43	46	11	0.2
	% total farm area	8	40	39	14
Punjab	% owners	42	49	9	0.2
	% total farm area	9	51	35	5

Sources: Agricultural Census of Pakistan (2010).

Such analyses also draw on the fact that the rural landed elite are actually to be found in key positions in all of Pakistan's political parties. Presidents, prime ministers and a large proportion of parliamentarians are often some of the largest landlords of Pakistan. Gazdar (2003, 3) argues that the landed have a 'monopolistic control on electoral politics', Zaidi (2004) finds in a study that most elected representatives are extremely asset-rich, and Javid (2011) points to the reproduction of landed power within Pakistan's post-colonial political order. The story, therefore, goes that continuing land inequality means that the rural elite can control and manipulate the vote in rural Pakistan to have themselves elected to seats in parliament.

There are reasons to believe, however, that these dependence-based explanations are incomplete. Keefer, Narayan and Vishwanath (2003, 15) argue,

Landlords are not a monolithic class and compete vigorously among themselves for political office. Many landlords, including the most feudal, lost their parliamentary seats in the 1990s. Second, anthropological evidence shows that rural inhabitants were less reliant on landowners in the 1990s than earlier, reducing the leverage of landowners over the voters in their areas.

Also, despite the general ineffectiveness of Pakistan's land reforms, Table 1.3 shows that between 1972 and 2010 large farm holdings reduced in number – farms larger than 12.5 acres went from being 32 per cent of all farms to just 11 per cent – while small farms of less than 2.5 acres increased dramatically from 14 per cent to 43 per cent. Even the largest landholdings have been affected. Of its original 4,500 acres, the Sahiwal family discussed earlier now owns less than 1,000 – which is divided across a number of family members so that no single landowner has more than 250 acres – and Chak 1's largest landholding has been reduced from 400 to 120 acres. This has happened for a number of reasons – due to sales to avoid land reforms and to maintain the lifestyles of the elite, and through land fragmentation because of shariah-based laws of inheritance.[10] Table 1.4 shows that rates of tenancy have also reduced significantly so that almost 80 per cent of farms are now owner-operated. Overall, farm sizes have decreased and the number of owners has increased, so that each landowner controls a smaller number of tenants and agricultural workers.

Table 1.3 Changes in farm sizes (1972–2010) (% of farms reported by size)

	<2.5	2.5 to 12.5	>12.5 to <50	50 and above
1972	14	54	29	3
2000	36	50	13	1
2010	43	46	10	1

Sources: Agricultural Census of Pakistan (2000, 2010).

Table 1.4 Tenure classification of farms – declining rates of tenancy

	1960	1972	1980	1990	2000	2010
All farms	100	100	100	100	100	100
Owner operated	41	42	55	69	78	82
Owner-cum-tenant operated	17	24	19	12	8	7
Tenant operated	42	34	26	19	14	11

Sources: Agricultural Census of Pakistan (2000, 2010).

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10 Shariah laws of inheritance stipulate equal division of assets across all sons, and a comparatively smaller fraction divided across all daughters, though Chaudhary (1999) and Nelson (2011) both tell us that landowners in the Punjab will do whatever they can to avoid such distribution to women in their family wherever possible by appealing to customary laws under which women do not inherit.

Stories of the socio-economic dependence of rural voters capture the popular imagination in Pakistan but they do not capture recent changes across Pakistan's countryside, where large farm sizes have been shrinking steadily, only a small proportion of land is still sharecropped, and the dependence of the rural landless on farm-based jobs and on landlords has reduced. Zaidi (1999, 18–19) uses these facts to argue that 'while feudal practices may have been extensive at the time of independence, and, in fact, may have been dominant, capitalist agriculture has been the leading trend and it is not possible to label Pakistan or Pakistani agriculture today as "feudal"'. Furthermore, Balagamwala and Gazdar (2013) tell us that more and more men are diversifying away from agricultural labour in what is being called the 'feminisation of the agricultural workforce' in Pakistan. This indicates a diversification of rural household incomes. Less economic dependence on jobs offered by landowners means a reduced need to support their political choices. Evidence of such changes in the rural economy suggests that the 'feudal elite'–based explanations of Pakistan's political instability – which continue to depict rural voters as dependent, coerced and ignorant, looking to their economic masters to tell them who to vote for – may be exaggerated.

Despite this and an extensive setback to the political power of the rural landed elite in the 1970s (which I recount in the next chapter), 'feudalism' continued to serve as the favourite 'whipping boy of Pakistan's intelligentsia' (Ahmad 1998). The media too continues to advance the idea that voting behaviour in rural Pakistan is shaped by such landed power. Take, for example, the media's coverage of the February 2008 election through headlines such as the BBC's 'Feudal Shadow over Pakistan Elections' (Hasan 2008), *Dawn*'s 'Pakistan's Feudal Demon' (Salahuddin 2008) or *Daily Times*' 'Feudal Politics' (Ali 2008). This is based on the fact that despite changes, land distribution in both Punjab and Pakistan is still very unequal and the landed elites are disproportionately represented within the political order. Though the validity of the 'feudalism' explanation needs to be interrogated in terms of both its scope and intensity, the question of whether any voters in rural Punjab might still be in relations to dependence with landlords remains one worth considering.

The *biradari* explanation

This explanation uses the primacy of kinship in Pakistan's social structure to suggest that rural voters are over-socialised members of kinship groups, or *biradari*s, who are constrained in their political choices by the collective political

preferences of their clan. According to this view, *biradari*s function as corporate groups that convert individual behaviour and choices into collective ones, so that rural residents vote not as they would like to but as they are directed to by the decisions of their kin group. Norms of social obligation require individuals to lend their support to their particular *biradari* to strengthen it politically vis-à-vis other *biradari*s in order to gain access to limited state resources. This explanation also argues that *biradari* groups will mostly support members of their kin as electoral candidates without taking into account other considerations about the candidate or political party. This view has been covered in some detail by Alavi (1972a and 2001), Talbot (1998), Wilder (1999), Waseem (2006) and Lieven (2011).

This has proved to be a popular view of Pakistan's rural politics, based on the fact that kinship is the 'pivotal institution in the "traditional" social structure' of Punjab (Alavi, 1971, 114). In fact, *biradari*-based interactions have remained a powerful explanation for the pattern of Punjab's development under colonial rule, the nature of the laws that came to govern it, the basis of property relationships, and its politics. In order to understand how *biradari* explains voting behaviour, it is important to understand how village society is ordered around and influenced by kinship.

The village society in Punjab is a complex phenomenon that is organised primarily in terms of families that come together within patrilineal kinship groups, or *biradari*s. These in turn collectively form *quom*s, which are hierarchically arranged, endogamous, status groups that involve a notion of occupational castes. Scholars insist that *quom*s and *biradari*s in Muslim groups are different from the *jati*s and *gotra*s of the Hindu caste system[11] (Alavi 1971; Ahmad 1977; Jalal 1994). They point out that the rules of endogamy are different and that the Hindu caste system involves notions of ritual pollution that are missing in the social stratification found in Muslim groups. The differences, however, are minimal. Both the Muslim *quom* and the Hindu *jati* are strictly endogamous, and differences exist only at the level of *biradari*s and *gotra*s – the former are endogamous while the latter are strictly exogamous (Alavi 1971; Beteille 1991; Bougle 1991). And while in Muslim groups there may be no strong sense of ritual pollution associated with the lowest groups or a religious basis for such social stratification, *quom*s are,

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11 *Quom*s are internally divided into *biradari*s, just like *jati*s are internally divided into various *gotra*s (Alavi 1971; Beteille 1991).

nevertheless, hierarchically arranged and social association between different *quom*s – including ritual exchange and attendance at marriages – is limited. Functionally, *quom*s, *jati*s, *biradari*s and *gotra*s all organise social structures and exchanges in very similar ways, based on ascriptive, primordial identities that are associated with occupation and a 'place' in village society.

The social structure of most Punjabi villages is stratified into three *quom*s (Ahmad 1977; Rouse 1988; Alavi 2001). At the very top of the hierarchy is the *zamindar quom* of landowners and tenant cultivators. Within this there is a further distinction between those lineage groups, or *biradari*s, that were recognised under colonial rule as the 'village proprietary body' to whom the right of landownership was given, and the *biradari*s of non-proprietary tenants.[12] The *kammi quom* of artisans are placed below the *zamindar quom*, and include *biradari*s such as *mochi* (cobbler), *lohar* (blacksmith), *kumhar* (potter), *nai* (barber), *kasai* (butcher), and so on. The *muslim sheikh*s, or landless labourers, lie right at the bottom of the social order. Typically, they are the poorest and most exploited group in the village social structure. *Quom*s and *biradari*s in rural Punjab are relatively more fluid and mobile than *jati*s and *gotra*s in India, in that a change in wealth and employment often leads people to change the name of the *biradari* with which they refer to themselves. Lyon (2004) records instances of villagers, usually those of lower ranked groups, using a different *biradari* name if they could get away with it. In the villages where I worked, *kammi* groups regularly used names associated with higher status *biradari*s – *kasai*s became Qureshis, *kumhar*s were Bhattis, and so on. This is not a new phenomenon. Ahmad (1972, 62) recounts a popular Punjabi proverb that says: 'Last year I was a *jullaha* [weaver], this year I am a *sheikh* [disciple of Prophet Mohammad], and next year if the prices rise, I will be a *syed*[13] [descendant of Prophet Mohammad]'.

Despite such fluidity, *biradari*s are a strong unit of identity in a village, and usually the primary unit of organisation, social support and collective action. But Alavi (2001) explains that the internal organisation of *biradari*s varies by *quom*. *Kammi* and *muslim sheikh biradari*s are weakly organised because their members are often dependent on higher groups for access to land, services and patronage. This undermines horizontal links of collective action or solidarity within the *biradari*, and they are often linked vertically with more influential

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12 This is not defined by a specific type of *biradari*, in that members of a *biradari* might be village proprietors in one village and tenants in another.

13 *Syed*s are a religious and social group that claim direct descent from Prophet Mohammad, and as such, occupy a position at the top of the social hierarchy along with landowning *quom*s.

*quom*s and landed groups. The *biradari*s of dominant landowning *zamindar*s have flexible *biradari* linkages and use their resources and power to extend their ties of kinship beyond the village to form larger alliances and coalitions, especially through marriages, with large landowners in other villages. The pursuit of such alliances can result in the formation of *biradari*-based political blocs, with considerable access to resources and power. It is small landowners, the middle *zamindar biradari*s, that Alavi identifies with *biradari* solidarity. Governed by *panchayat*s,[14] small landowners tend to have higher levels of solidarity within their lineage groups because they are more independent of the stronger, large landowners than are *kammi*s or *muslim sheikh*s. Ahmad (1977) concurs that attempts by landlords to suppress collective action is almost always directed against the rural poor, and not against small, independent *zamindar*s.

The politics of *biradari* groups is organised by leaders who are not always clan elders but rather 'mature, middle-aged men who have the time and energy to run about attending to lineage business. Their effectiveness and power vary, so that some lineages are more tightly controlled than others' (Alavi 1971, 117). *Biradari*s collectively regulate marriage decisions of individual members, and use ostracism as the most effective sanction in the case of disobedience or other transgressions deemed harmful by the collective group, such as breaking ranks during important events (Lefebvre 1999, 46–48; Wakil 1970, 704). With the advent of elections in Pakistan, voting was included in the list of activities monitored and organised by *biradari*s in rural Punjab, which took on an increasingly important role in political mobilisation. Literature on politics in India has established the salience of caste and lineage as a determinant of voting behaviour.[15] In some sense, caste-based mobilisation can indicate a more liberal form of politics that indicates horizontal organisation and collective action when compared to the politics of dependence, and has led to the inclusion of more marginalised groups in the political system in India (Jaffrelot 2000; Weiner 2001). At the same time, it is also more primordial and conservative than class or party-based mobilisation, which are able to diffuse the salience of caste-based identification as the primary basis of political organisation.[16]

This literature is less developed in Pakistan, but here too much of the recent literature has put clan-based obligations and reciprocity at the centre of

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14 Village councils, often set up informally to resolve disputes in the village.

15 See, for example, Srinivas (1966), Kothari (1970), Beteille (1991), Weiner (2001), Chandra (2004), and Banerjee and Pande (2007).

16 This does not obviously include party mobilisation that happens on the basis of caste, such as that discussed by Varshney (2000).

explanations of rural politics, including Lefebvre (1999), Chaudhary (1999), Lyon (2004), Nelson (2011), Lieven (2011) and Martin (2016). This analysis, however, has not paid enough attention to how kinship politics can work to free marginalised voters of their ties of dependence on landlords, and has focused instead on the role that kinship plays in the politics of landed groups. Within this literature, landed power and kinship-based politics are intimately connected concepts, and they suggest that much of rural Punjab's politics revolves around the efforts of landowning kin groups to maintain their landholdings in the face of encroachment and competing claims by other clans, or sometimes even from agnatic kin. To preserve their property and increase their economic and social superiority vis-à-vis other clans, competing landlords form local political factions which they use to build links with provincial and national politicians and to keep the local state bureaucracy – the *patwari*,[17] the *thanedar*[18] and the local magistrate – on their side. Nelson (2011) presents a particularly interesting analysis in which kinship-based rural politics is the intervening explanatory variable that explains how a change in the laws governing land inheritance – from custom to Islamic law after independence – impacted political relationships of accountability between landowners and elected representatives. He argues that rural politics came to focus on electing representatives that could and were willing to help preserve the economic interests of landed male kin by subverting the implementation of formal laws (Shariah) that stipulated a share for women in inheritance, unlike the norm under *riwaj*, or custom, which preserves 'the integrity of their ancestral (agnatic) estates' (2011, 6).

As stated above, this type of analysis, though immensely valuable, leaves the politics of landless groups out of the discussion of rural politics. How do those who do not own land but account for a majority of the village population, and of rural voters, use *biradari*-based politics to engage politically with their elected representatives or with the politically active landowners of their village? Most studies either leave this question unexplored, or suggest that kinship-based factions of the landed simply draw in their dependents and tell them how to vote – an explanation which, as explained above, is an incomplete one in itself. Are landless voters really simply dependents? Or, do they also draw on social solidarity to organise *biradari*-based votes, despite Alavi's suggestion that poorer groups may be seriously constrained in organising in such horizontal

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17   Lowest level revenue officer who maintains land records.

18   Local police officer.

ways? The existing literature on *biradari*-based rural politics does not help us very much with an answer here.

This explanation also presents problems when applied beyond the boundaries of a village to broader constituency politics. Wilder (1999) dealt with this in some detail and admits that while *biradari*s play an important role in political campaigns, their role in determining patterns of voting on election day itself is unclear and that 'popular perception of the importance of *biradari* in determining voter behaviour is exaggerated' (1999, 185). For one, the *biradari*-based view of electoral politics which suggests that candidates use these primordial identities to garner the support of vote banks that are from the same or related *biradari*s projects a rather static view of politics in Pakistan. As one politician explained, 'Where I have won I had Rajput *biradari* support. Where Mr Akram Ansari has won, he had Ansari *biradari* support. The Ansari *biradari* is in the majority so he has won' (Wilder 1999, 184). Such ideas have led many to suggest that political parties select candidates based on *biradari* residence patterns, ensuring that party tickets go to members of *biradari*s with a demographic majority. There is some truth to this, but if this defined the main pattern of Pakistani politics, it would be unchanging and candidates of the same *biradari* would always win, given that *biradari* residence patterns are fairly fixed, at least in the short term. However, Pakistani politics is not a static phenomenon, especially in central Punjab where marginal seats exist and are actively fought over, and where voters appear to have an anti-incumbency bias (Wilder 1999, 209; Cheema and Naseer 2008).

Another major problem with this view is the fact that it does not sit well with the demographics of the typical Punjabi village. Each village in Punjab usually has multiple *biradari*s that fall within the three main *quom* groups. In the group of villages that I study in this book, the number of *biradari*s in a single village can range from 9 to 55. Middle and lower *quom*s, as already discussed, are organised politically at the level of the village and rarely across village boundaries. This means that villages are fragmented, heterogeneous communities with multiple *biradari*s that are not often part of wider networks. This makes it difficult to imagine that candidates can win elections based entirely on the primacy of lineage solidarity and by appealing to small numbers of their own *biradari*'s voters within each village. Lyon (2004) realises quite well the difficulty in applying the simplistic idea of kinship-based electoral politics in his study of a northern Punjab village, where the majority population is from

the *gujjar biradari*, but which neither fields nor votes for *gujjar* candidates. Instead, they choose to draw on constructed ties of an 'imagined *quom*' of landlords to become a part of the faction of a more powerful, but minority *biradari* in the area for the sake of 'common economic objectives' (2004, 139). *Biradari* links are wielded strategically, and such voting behaviour may often end up resembling class, rather than kinship, organisation.

But kinship does matter in politics, especially in rural areas, not just in South Asia but even as far afield as Italy (Colclough 2000) and Vietnam (Do, Nguyen and Tan 2016). For this reason, it remains an important concept for our purposes in this book. What we need to explore here is not the fact that it plays a role in organising the politics of the minority landed elite, but the precise ways in which it may or may not also work to connect the majority of rural voters to national politics, and how this varies across locations and households.

The 'clientelism' explanation

This view argues that rural Pakistani voters exchange their vote for goods and services. According to this explanation, voters offer their electoral support to whichever candidate promises to deliver the most. Before each election, they evaluate a candidate's delivery record and promises of future delivery, and then vote accordingly. Due to this, most candidates spend their time in office providing targeted goods to supporters. This view argues that rural Pakistani citizens vote not as they are told to but as they would like to in order to maximise their access to limited state resources. This view is advanced in studies by Wilder (1999), Keefer, Narayan and Vishwanath. (2003), Hasnain (2008), Kitschelt (2009), Javid (2011) and Shami (2012), but it remains a somewhat less popular and pervasive view in the literature than the previous two explanations. Wilder's (1999) pioneering study of voting behaviour in Pakistan, the only major one on the subject, finds that electoral competition is based on developmental needs and clientelism rather than on primordial identities, and that it is this which actually defines factional politics. He argues that there is evidence that people base their electoral support on the ability of candidates to meet their identified needs, rather than on other considerations, including *biradari* linkages. However, Wilder's study is based primarily on urban Punjab. To what extent does clientelism also define the voting behaviour of the rural majority?

There have been few empirical studies of clientelism itself as an explanation of voting behaviour in Pakistan. It crops up more often in what are essentially

studies of landed power, so that it is difficult to separate clientelism and patronage – the exchange of votes for material benefits – from what is in essence the ability of landed patrons to coerce dependent voters through various means. So clientelism and landed power become interchangeable concepts. This is not entirely wrong, given the reality of rural socio-economic structures, but it infinitely complicates our task of understanding how rural citizens actually vote. There may be little difference between the landlord and the local patron, but there is a great difference between the oppressed dependent voter and the strategic client trying to improve his/her access to state services.

In discussing clientelism in Pakistan, it is important to distinguish and reconcile the differences between the concept's deployment at two very distinct levels in the broader literature – the level at which patrons and clients are linked through face-to-face, personalistic relationships within villages,[19] and that at which voters and politicians are connected through more institutionalised networks in which such direct contact is neither necessary nor usual.[20] The first of these, based on personalistic relationships, is best described by Powell's original work on clientelism in peasant societies. Powell defines the clientelist system as one

> involving an interchange of non-comparable goods and services between actors of unequal socio-economic ranks, [with three essential features]: first, the patron-client tie develops between two parties unequal in status, wealth and influence … Second, the formation and maintenance of the relationship depends on reciprocity in the exchange of goods and services … Third, the development and maintenance of a patron-client relationship rests heavily on face-to-face contact between the two parties. (1970, 412)

From this definition, Powell excludes 'relationships based on coercion, authority, manipulation' and those based on economic dependence since, in what he defines as a clientelistic relationship, both the patron and the client must have agency. Similarly, Powell clearly distinguishes between relations based on kinship and those based on clientelism by positing them as mutually exclusive substitutes, in that the latter develop in societies where kinship ties are not able to link people

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19 This was the subject of much of the initial work on clientelism, including Powell (1970) and Scott (1969 and 1972).

20 This is the approach of the more recent and quite extensive literature, including Auyero (1999 and 2000), Chandra (2004), Stokes (2005), the various articles in Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007), Nichter (2008) and Stokes et al. (2013).

of unequal status (Powell 1970, 412–14). Many other definitions of clientelism advanced by a host of scholars do not differentiate so neatly between these different linkages, and insist that clientelism, economic dependence, class and kinship are all closely connected concepts.[21] But in trying to understand how citizens in rural Punjab vote, it is important to be able to think of clientelism as a separate compulsion from these other relational concepts. So, the debt bondage that Martin (2014) reports as part of patronage in rural Punjab is better categorised as a relationship of coercion and dependence made possible by landed power.

The second level at which clientelism is most often deployed links the village up into the more institutionalised clientelistic networks that are formed around national, provincial and local elections. Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, 4–7) define this as 'a particular mode of "exchange" between electoral constituencies as principals and politicians as agents in democratic systems', which is a more symmetrical, intermittent relationship based on broker-mediated, rather than face-to-face, contact. Within this system, material goods are exchanged for electoral support (Stokes, 2009).

The reference to brokerage helps reconcile the two levels, as does Powell's emphasis on the role of the patron as the 'gatekeeper' in local societies through whom voters in villages are connected to politicians and other state officials. These gatekeeper-patrons, Powell argues, are valued not so much for their wealth, but rather for their connections with the state, so that a letter of recommendation handed to a client before a meeting with a state official is of more instrumental value in maintaining the relationship than the patron's economic power. In fact, Powell points out that as villages become more integrated into the national system, the role of these 'gatekeepers' becomes more, not less, important (1970, 414). Patrons develop relationships with bureaucrats and national-level politicians in order to help their clients negotiate a larger, more unfamiliar terrain. If clientelism meets Weber's patrimonialism,

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21 Both Weber (1978) and Fatton (1990) acknowledge the existence of structures of coercion in patron–client relationships. Lukes (1974), Gaventa (1982) and Moe (2005) argue that in such relationships patrons often wield their disproportionately greater power to reduce the reciprocity inherent in clientelistic ties by manipulating benefits to flow only in their own direction. Bodemann (1988) believes that in agrarian societies a discussion of patron–client relations cannot be had without including class and the structures of inequality that emanate from relations of production. Similarly, other scholars insist that clientelism in South Asia cannot be adequately discussed without a consideration of caste and kinship-based social structures, in that these ties serve to strengthen clientelism by allowing local patrons another instrument through which to consolidate their power and influence over extensive client networks (Alavi 1972a; Jeffrey 2002).

in places where state formation is incomplete and politics are personalised even at higher levels, the power of the patron remains stable. Political support during elections flows upwards from voters through patrons – with whom they have regular face-to-face contact – to politicians, and targeted benefits flow downwards from state actors through local patrons to voters. Shami (2012) helpfully points out that there are variations in such linkages, and that better connectivity of villages to urban centres and markets can reduce the power of a patron and increase the ability of villages to organise horizontally and engage in collective action.

This reconciled approach provides a good conceptual framework for the study of clientelism in Punjab's villages. For this purpose, I define clientelism as an asymmetrical but instrumental, short-term,[22] quid pro quo relationship in which clients are in face-to-face contact with a local patron of higher status, but with whom they are able to strategically exchange and negotiate their vote for access to certain benefits, which can be private, club or public goods and services, delivered to individuals or to the entire village. This is a political relationship of 'broker clientelism', which Archer (1990) separates from 'traditional clientelism' in which the client is bound through non-political ties to a patron whose influence emanates from economic power. Nichter (2010) further distinguishes between 'relational' and 'electoral' clientelism based on the timing of the exchange, separating elite payoffs to citizens during campaigns (electoral) from ongoing relationships beyond campaigns (relational). The variety of exchange that I am interested in capturing in Punjab is then best defined as 'relational, broker clientelism' – as distinct from 'traditional clientelism' based on coercion and landed power, and 'electoral clientelism' that involves election-time, one-off exchanges (see continuum in Figure 1.1). This form is also separated from the brokers defined by Stokes et al. (2013) to the extent that the parties that the brokers of rural Punjab engage with are organisationally weak, and do not coordinate, organise or brand their brokers in any way. The power asymmetry decidedly favours the local broker in this case, even though the party is central to the logic of the exchange.

The literature on rural politics in Pakistan essentially conflates 'broker' and 'traditional' clientelism. A good reason to separate these two concepts, not just from the perspective of voters but also from that of broker-patrons, is that they involve very different interactions with village residents. Broker-patrons have real incentives to deliver, they must be seen to be effective, and both rewards and

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22 These relationships may last over a long time but they need to be continually renewed.

sanctions work within the logic of provision. Traditional elites, like landlords, on the other hand, can use other more repressive means, such as firing employees, turning them out of their homes, calling in loans, or restricting access to certain spaces and events within the village. It is not just a dependent voter who behaves differently from a clientelistic one – a landlord too behaves differently from a broker-patron, even when they might be the same person, as is often the case. And it is time we knew whether the rural Pakistani voter is responding to the promise of provision or the social sanctions of a landlord.

There is, in Punjab, also evidence of another particular form of clientelism created by Pakistan's unique political history – 'candidate clientelism'. This is a phenomenon created by the personalisation of politics around powerful individuals through intermittent periods of military rule, during which political parties were deliberately weakened while national and provincial parliaments were formed around politicians with individualised and independent support bases (I recount this history in the next chapter). Candidate clientelism is a form of 'electoral clientelism' because it represents voters moving away from ties with local, village-level broker-patrons to developing linkages instead with political actors outside the village that make them part of larger political networks. However, voters are still not linked up to the party machine through networks of party agents that are organised by political parties. Instead, they are linked to particular candidates with whom they can move between parties from one election to the next, depending on the terms offered by parties to the candidates.

Figure 1.1   Types of clientelism

Traditional clientelism	Relational, broker clientelism	Candidate clientelism	Machine (party agent) clientelism

Electoral clientelism
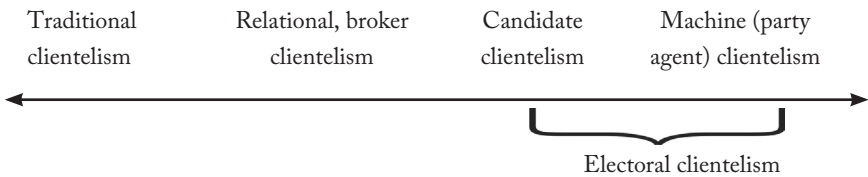
Source: Author, based on Archer (1990) and Nichter (2010).

There is evidence to suggest that both 'broker' and more electoral forms of clientelism are now important concepts in rural politics. As interactions between landlords and village citizens occur more and more under conditions defined by electoral politics, and broker-patrons attempt to organise large vote banks, the promise of provision can often work better with voters than the fear of sanction in the resource scarce and poorly provided context of rural Pakistan. Broker clientelism may now define rural politics as much as Wilder (1999)

said it does urban politics, and so, it is an important analytical concept for the analysis presented in this book.

The 'class and party ideology' explanation

This is by far the least popular explanation of rural politics in the literature on Pakistan. Included here are voters who organise on a class basis to make voting decisions, as well as those who are led in their choices by ideology or identification with a political party on some other basis. I group these together here because these two types of voters are rarely found in the literature – the literature on class organisation is particularly scant, overshadowed by the primacy of the other explanations above – and because they both define forms of organisation based on acquired and imagined identities rather than primordial, ascriptive ones.

Rural society in Punjab is structured around the following classes: at the very top are large landowners, followed by middle and small peasant proprietors, and then come various landless groups that include sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and service providers. As with the 'feudal' politics explanation, most accounts of class politics in Pakistan focus mainly on the control of the politics of the landless by the landed classes, or deal with political engagement and exchange between these different classes. What is missing here are discussions of class organisation – that is, each of the rural classes organising to vote as per their collective group interests. Alavi (2001) describes the solidarity networks that connect landed *biradari*s to landowners in other parts of the district, saying specifically that the *biradari* linkages of this class are flexible in order to accommodate such class-based alliances. This is similar to Lyon's (2004) reference to the imagined and constructed *quom* of the landed that serves common economic interests, and Javid's (2011, 362 and 2015) discussion of how the rural landed, as a class, are part of 'networks of political mobilization, economic flows, and the formal institutional apparatuses of the state' that strengthen them at the expense of other classes.

The political organisation of the landless as a class, however, finds little mention in the literature. The parts that do deal with this refer almost entirely to a particular period in Pakistan's history when its countryside was swept by a class-based political ideology and two elections in the 1970s pitted sharecroppers and labourers against their landlords. According to this view, rural citizens voted in these elections not as they were told to but as they had wanted to, to further the collective interests of their class with the external support of a political party. This explanation has been covered in great detail by Ahmad (1972), Alavi (1973) and Jones (2003), amongst others. Since the 1970s, however, class-based linkages

between voters and political parties have largely disappeared, replaced instead by the politics of kinship and clientelism.

For this reason, this explanation is also closely associated with discussions on the lack of programmatic politics, or ideological linkages between parties and voters. Kitschelt (2009, 22–23) explains that parties in Pakistan 'rely quite heavily upon clientelistic inducements while offering few programmatic inducements to voters…[and] average voters respond more readily to targeted material inducements than to programmatic policy appeals'. National and provincial politicians divert development funds from the provincial and federal levels to deliver targeted benefits to local patrons that can draw in the vote (Gazdar 2000; Khan Mohmand and Cheema 2007), and to provide goods and services with which they can be directly identified (Hasnain 2008). Easterly (2003) argues that such targeted delivery to specific groups, rather than the development of programmatic policies, has given Pakistan 'growth without development'.

There are, in fact, few efforts to make this mode of delivery look like anything other than what it is. For example, one newspaper reported recently that

> Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has directed Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to arrange around Rs 300 billion[23] for development schemes at [*sic*] the constituencies of the ruling party's MNAs in a bid to secure their re-election in the next general election, … [apparently in response to party members who] were of the opinion that voters of the constituencies might not be attracted by the PM's mega initiatives if the streets and roads of their neighbourhood were not built. They urged the prime minister to allocate around Rs 1 billion to each of the PML-N's National Assembly lawmaker for fiscal year 2016–2017. They said the same amount should also be given to respective lawmakers in the next fiscal year, which will be the last financial year before the 2018 general elections. (Manan 2016)

Though this was refuted in the same newspaper two days later by the Finance Minister who ruled out any such possibility, constituency development funds have regularly been given to politicians through the 1990s and 2000s, including up to the 2013 election, as 'effectively, a patronage slush fund' (Walsh 2013).

This explanation suggests two things. First, that political bargaining happens between local landed patrons and elected representatives. Second, that there is no real horizontal, class-based organisation around voting within landless groups that can divert this system. Once again the question we are left with

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23   About £2 billion at the time.

is, how do landless rural voters strategise, bargain and negotiate their way to better livelihoods and services within this system, and under such conditions of persistent socio-economic inequality?

The four explanations presented here provide a good conceptual framework for analysing the voting behaviour of rural citizens. Recent literature has made significant contributions to our understanding of rural politics in Pakistan, but because of the focus on what is essentially the politics of the landed and not the landless, many of these studies have regularly conflated concepts that are essentially distinct – socio-economic dependence, social solidarity, strategic clientelism and class-based organisation. If our lens is focused on the politics of the landed, these explanations work well together – landlords use their landed power to organise voters within factions built around rival kinship groups that get into clientelistic relations with politicians. However, if our lens is focused on the politics of the landless, such conflations are unhelpful, and leave many questions unanswered, a key question being: why do the landless become a part of these factions of the landed, and how much of this story is explained by relations of dependence rather than strategic linkages that rational rural voters build based on other considerations?

The literature treats the vote banks that landed groups build as conceptual black boxes, within which voters are at once both dependent and deeply clientelistic – they tell us that voters are socio-economically dependent on landlords but are also clients of patrons and parties that induce them through provision. Such black boxing leads to a number of other unanswered questions too, for example: Why are parties offering inducements to and negotiating with a population that is dependent? If these inducements are only for landed groups, does any portion of the benefits on offer pass on to landless voters? If not, how then is their support maintained, and if yes, how are these benefits negotiated? The conceptual framework developed in this section allows us to start drawing apart the four explanations as distinct and separate concepts from the perspective of marginalised rural voters, in order to start answering such questions.

Preliminary ideas about rural voting behaviour in Pakistan

My empirical investigation into the voting behaviour of village citizens in Pakistan's political heartland starts with the two villages, Sahiwal and Chak 1.

Initial observations in these two villages reveal a few important facts about rural politics that help establish the context and parameters of this study.

1. *Villages are a useful unit for political analysis*: Nucleated villages have long been the dominant pattern of rural settlement in South Asia. Local socio-economic relationships have tended to be both village-centric and village-bounded. For example, 'traditional' *jajmani* systems, whereby, for example, village blacksmiths had rights to do all blacksmithing work in a village and were in turn entitled to a fixed share of village crops, were typically organised at the level of the individual village. The individual village has also been the basic unit of public administration. The land revenue records that were such central instruments of colonial rule were organised by village; all cultivable land was – and still is – recorded as belonging to a particular village. Similarly, existing material and organisational forces tend to nudge local politics toward the level of the 'natural', nucleated and relatively bounded village, and the politics that defines voter behaviour in national, provincial and local elections is shaped by the logic of organisation at this level.

2. *Elections matter to the rural poor*: Political competition is central to village life and elections are extremely important events. The rural poor are neither disinterested in politics nor cynical about the value of their vote. They view it as something that they possess – a quite potent bargaining chip in an otherwise unequal relationship with the village elite – and which the politically active elite of the village want. Once every five years the village landlords ask personally for the valuable vote of the poor majority – an interaction that has no equivalent in other spheres of village life – and over the next five years landlords will then strategise to ensure that they do not lose this vote to their competitors. Elections thus allow villagers to create or renew reciprocal relationships with the village elite, and to negotiate with them for access to basic public services such as electricity, health services, schools, paved streets and sanitation drains, all of which are severely underprovided for in rural Pakistan.[24] The election ensures that landlords are listening when people make their demands, more attentively than they would have in an election-free environment. And landlords are similarly expected to seize the opportunity to bargain with electoral candidates to bring more services to the village.

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24 Easterly (2003), Keefer, Narayan and Vishwanath (2003) and Cheema, Khan Mohmand and Naqvi (2007) have all recorded this.

3. *Voting is a collective activity*: The literature and Pakistani popular opinion are broadly right about the fact that the great majority of rural voters are not in fact making individual decisions about voting in rural Punjab. Their voting behaviour is to a significant degree determined by their relationships with other village actors, and is the result of collective, not individual, decisions. Whether it is the citizens of Sahiwal who are organised by their landlord, or the class-conscious residents of Chak 1 who challenge the political leadership of the landed, most rural voters engage with politics through village-level political institutions that can usefully be referred to as vote blocs. Within these, voters take collective electoral decisions. This is not very different from the village factions that Powell (1970) described in Italy and Venezuela, or even those that Gaventa (1982) documented in southern USA. In fact, Gaventa described a situation similar to rural Punjab when he argued that political party alignments rarely feature in politics at the local level. Instead, 'long-standing factions, primarily headed by competing elites … appear to be the basis of cleavages' and that people speak of politics in terms of the 'bunch' that they are aligned with (1982, 142). It makes sense for voters to strengthen their 'bunch' through numbers so that its leader can bargain for more services – more electricity connections, more teachers, a street paving scheme – with candidates and parties.[25]

4. *Vote blocs, not political candidates or parties, determine the level of political competition in a village*: In rural Punjab, the number of vote blocs that exist in a village are a better measure of political competition than the number of candidates running for a constituency seat. Consider scenario A: candidates from different political parties are running for a legislative seat in a particular constituency. In a particular village in the constituency, all voters are organised under a single vote bloc and are voting for candidate X. In this case, despite the choice available to voters in terms of candidates, the extent of choice that an individual voter in this village can exercise is

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25 That voting behaviour is affected by social networks is not a new idea. Butler and Stokes (1969) famously argued that where people in Britain lived was a more accurate determinant of which party they would support than indicators, such as occupation or income, pointing to the salience and influence of localised perspectives and opinions. Similarly, Pattie and Johnston (2000) draw on many studies to argue that neighbourhoods and social networks have an important effect on how people vote. For more recent experimental research on this, see Fafchamps, Vaz and Vicente's (2013) study of peer effects in Mozambique. Discussions of collective forms of voting are also found in studies of race, ethnicity and religion as determinants of voting behaviour, especially where neighbourhoods or regions are segregated along these lines.

severely limited. In order to vote for another candidate, Y, the voter may have to sever all ties with the vote bloc, often a heavy and long-term price to pay for one election. Now consider scenario B: there is only one electoral candidate in an uncontested constituency, but the votes of a particular village in this constituency are organised across multiple vote blocs. In this case, as far as the individual voter is concerned, there is competition between vote blocs for each vote in the village. She/he can now try to negotiate greater benefits in exchange for her/his vote with different vote bloc leaders.

5. *The link between vote bloc leaders and members is multifaceted*: Most vote blocs have identifiable leaders and these recruit members. Vote bloc leaders do not simply insert another link in the chain that connects electoral candidates to voters, but rather they change the logic of the exchange itself. First, vote bloc leaders may filter the information that flows between candidates and voters, so that neither have complete information about the other.[26] Local leaders may sort through voter demands and preferences, many of which may never reach the candidate, whose response to these demands may also, in turn, be filtered before it reaches the voters. Second, while the link between candidates and voters is usually election-specific and purely political, the link between vote bloc leaders and members is year-round and multifaceted. Their proximity to one another implies multiple types of linkages – political, economic and social. Besides organising the vote, a vote bloc leader may also be the voter's employer, a clan member, a patron through whom state services and jobs may be accessed, a neighbour, a religious leader, and so on. This is, therefore, a more complicated relationship than that which exists between candidates and voters, and it is the one that holds the answer to how rural citizens vote, and which relationships they prioritise over others in making electoral decisions.

6. *Some vote bloc members may be able to bargain more than others*: There is great inequality between social groups in rural Pakistan. Sahiwal's *akhat* provided ample illustration of this – *zamindar* castes have much higher social status than *kammi* and *muslim sheikh* castes, all of them have less social authority and status than their landed *maalik,* and Naib's landholdings in Sahiwal give him social authority that the landowners of Chak 1 have never had. These unequal relationships determine the extent to which rural citizens are able to negotiate with vote bloc leaders. While

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26 Stokes et al. (2013) describe in great detail how brokers control the flow of information in clientelistic exchanges.

some voters may simply be able to keep their jobs as agricultural labourers in exchange for their vote, others may be able to negotiate more public service delivery to their neighbourhood. This depends entirely on the type of relationship that exists between a vote bloc leader and a voter, and the extent of agency that a voter has within this relationship. At Sahiwal's *akhat* it was clear that people down each length of the square had different levels of influence – some spoke more often and with less deference than others, and some never spoke at all. Voters who are relatives, fellow clan members, neighbours, or co-workers of the leader will have more agency than those who work for the leader, or depend on them for their children's admission to schools, or for ensuring that the local police officer will cooperate when they need to report a theft.

These are the broad parameters of this study. It looks at electoral activity in villages, within which differently placed voters take collective voting decisions in a competitive environment, organised around unequal and multifaceted relationships between vote bloc leaders and members.

Argument: Political engagement under structural inequality

This book is about how and why marginalised citizens vote under conditions of extreme socio-economic inequality in an emerging democracy. It is based on the assumption that politics functions under pressure from two conditions in the context of rural Punjab. The first of these is the condition of persistent structural inequality that exists across Punjab's countryside, which works to restrict the political space and bargaining power of poorer, landless rural voters by making them both socio-economically and politically dependent on the traditional landed elite. The second condition is that of competitive electoral politics that provides opportunities for poorer citizens to expand their political space in a number of ways – through the valuable vote so coveted by competing politicians, and therefore by their vote bloc leaders; through the logic of collective organisation and political action; and through the growing involvement and support of external actors in the form of political parties. These conditions apply opposing pressures on political engagement in Punjab's villages, at once both constraining and expanding the bargaining power of rural voters vis-à-vis the traditional landed elite that organise local vote blocs (captured in Figure 1.2). Most of this book is focussed on understanding how these political institutions function under these competing pressures, and the type of political space they make available to rural voters in the process. There are three questions in particular that this book takes up, as set out earlier.

Does the landed elite dominate and control
the political engagement of rural voters?

Politics in rural Pakistan is organised, enabled and constrained by dynamic village-level political institutions that are locally referred to as *dharra*s, which can be translated as 'vote blocs'.[27] Village-level vote blocs are acknowledged by most scholars of Pakistani politics, but they have remained a largely 'black box' concept that are most often portrayed as bringing together dependent tenants and servants within kinship-based factions of the landed. This book opens up these black boxes to look at how *dharra*s function, and why landless citizens are members of these. I look in particular at how vote blocs are conditioned by the two polar pressures of socio-economic inequality and a competitive electoral system, and how they in turn condition two main aspects of rural political engagement – local political competition that operates between vote blocs; and the bargaining power of individual voters that is conditioned by their interaction with leaders within vote blocs (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2   Competing pressures on democratisation at the village level
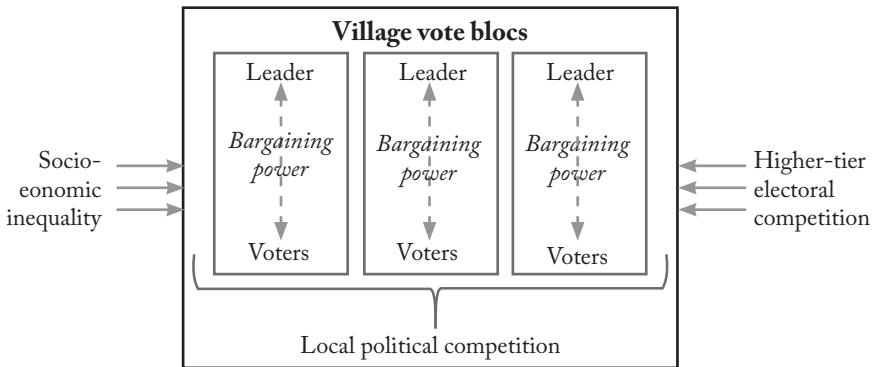
Source: Author.

Vote blocs are organised at the village level and do not include members from neighbouring villages. Almost all rural voters are members of these institutions. The numbers on this are staggering. There were vote blocs in each of the 38 villages that I studied – some had just one while others had up to four – and 80 per cent of those we spoke with, about 2,200 survey respondents in all, were

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27   These are institutions in the sense that they are based on regularised and expected rules, norms and procedures that condition political behaviour, and that have sanctions associated with them in the case of violations (Helmke and Levitsky 2006; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

members of these vote blocs. Vote blocs have clearly identifiable leaders with whom village residents may engage on an almost daily basis. Most of these leaders belong to the rural landed elite, and they dominate village life across multiple domains – they employ agricultural labour, lease land to tenants, resolve disputes and connect village residents to government departments, the police and judiciary (Cheema, Khan Mohmand and Naqvi 2007; Shami 2012). They bring into play their power, influence and connections across all of these domains to organise village residents into vote blocs. The fact that these domains are interlinked increases the likelihood of the landed elite dominating and monopolising village politics.

The close and multifaceted engagement between landed vote bloc leaders and the largely landless voters means that none of the standard logics of electoral behaviour apply here. In deciding which party to cast a vote for on election day, rural voters in Pakistan are not evaluating the programmatic policy package of one political party versus another before deciding whom to vote for, nor are they waiting for a candidate to offer to buy their vote (or their turnout) for cash or food. They are also not voting on the basis of the interests of their particular income or class group – voters from the same class of agricultural tenants or labourers in the same village will often be found voting for different political parties on either end of the political spectrum. And neither are these voters voting on the basis of their particular religious or ethnic identities. And yet it would also be wrong to say that none of these considerations play upon their electoral decisions. Many village residents that I worked with during the research for this book spoke repeatedly about the performance records of politicians, the extent to which a particular party represented the needs of rural workers, which politician could offer a better deal, or which candidate belonged to the same ethnic, religious or kinship group as themselves. Rural Punjabi voters are conscious of such political configurations, but these will not determine who they will cast their vote for on election day. That decision will be taken within the vote bloc, either by the leader or by the vote bloc as a collective group. At that point, it will not be the individual preferences of voters or the messages of national campaigns that will matter most, but rather the internal dynamic of the vote bloc.

These political interactions closely resemble other concepts discussed in the broader literature on political intermediation, but they differ in subtle yet significant ways. For example, we may be tempted to think of vote blocs as

simply factions or vote banks. But the *dharra*s of rural Punjab involve a stronger and more tangible notion of political organisation and collective action than is usually involved in factions, which manifest local conflicts in their most common usage,[28] or vote banks that are made up of loose networks of clients. Similarly, while a study of vote blocs involves discussions of clientelism and political brokerage that connect it with recent literature on the subject,[29] vote blocs are to be distinguished from the notion of party machines and their brokerage networks. Political parties in Pakistan are weak and do not mobilise the rural vote directly through extended networks of brokers, whose task it would be to turn out core voters on election day and to convince swing voters to vote for the party. In fact, Pakistan's rural poor, especially within its political heartland in Punjab, can rarely be told apart by party affiliation, so the concept of core and swing voters loses its relevance here. The space left vacant by a lack of political party-based mobilisation is occupied instead by local leaders bringing village voters into vote blocs, using the logic of local rather than national politics. So, even though vote bloc leaders may look somewhat like the local brokers discussed by Stokes et al. (2013), they are not recruited or organised by party machines, do not see themselves as part of extended party networks, and can change their political alignment fairly quickly, and often.

I examine political engagement within 78 vote blocs in 38 villages, and I find that most vote bloc leaders own land and exercise a fair amount of power over the landless population of their villages. Vote blocs provide the ideal institutions through which to exercise such control and to place constraints around local political behaviour. All of this suggests that landed elites do indeed control the political engagement of rural voters. However, the political power that local landlords are able to exercise is no longer based on their monopoly over the ownership of land. One of my main arguments in this book is that the rural traditional elites have had to change their political strategies based on structural changes in rural Pakistan over the last many decades. Landholdings have reduced through fragmentation and sales, non-farm job markets have expanded and have come closer to villages through the growth of small towns, and democratisation has intensified political competition and made many interactions subject to the logic of electoral politics. All these changes have

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28   Such as by Nicholas (1966) and Martin (2016).

29   This includes recent works by Helmke and Levitsky (2006), Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007), Stokes et al. (2013) and Piliavsky (2014).

provided opportunities for poorer voters to push the boundaries of the political space available to them. The landed elite have struggled to hold on to their authority, and if they have persisted in their central political role, it is only because they have learnt to adapt. As their land holdings have diminished, landlords have managed to expand their role in other arenas, particularly in organising local politics and providing the much-needed access to a remote and disconnected state. Landlords who once believed that engaging with the village populace over politics was below them now convene *akhat*s to test public opinion; families who viewed participation in local government elections as below their status are now candidates for decentralised offices; and landlords who once sent their estate managers to deal with the local bureaucracy now ensure that they pay their respects regularly at various departmental offices in the district.

The landed elite are no longer just landlords. Those who now exercise real power over a village population do so in their role as vote bloc leaders who forge strategic election-specific alliances with politicians using a logic that remains the same under both military and democratic regimes. Members of their class within the village create different vote blocs to connect to as many of the main political parties as possible in order to reduce the risk of backing a losing candidate, and to ensure some service delivery to the village. This is especially useful when village residents prioritise local public goods – a high school for girls, a veterinary hospital or a road to the village – over private goods targeted at individual voters.

Do landless voters have bargaining power vis-à-vis landed elites, and are there observable differences in this?

Scholars have argued that

> Pakistani politics is vigorously competitive. The average number of candidates running for election from a single constituency was 8.07 in the 1997 election and 7.54 in the 2002 election. The average candidate won with a vote margin of 26% in the 1997 election and 17% in the 2002 election. Nine parties were represented in the National Assembly in the 1997 elections, and seventeen in the 2002 elections. (Afzal 2014)

This has remained true through subsequent elections. At the same time, others have argued that politics in rural Pakistan is not competitive because voting

happens through vote blocs that are prone to capture by special interests, are dominated by the local elite and tend to exclude the poor (Wilder 1999; Keefer, Narayan and Vishwanath 2003). A good part of the puzzle that this book deals with is whether or not this is true – is Pakistani politics competitive at higher tiers (where electoral contests occur for seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies) but uncompetitive at the local level because of socio-economic inequality and the existence of vote blocs?

Political competition in rural Pakistan is more a function of how many landlords are organising vote blocs within a village, rather than how many candidates are running for elections in the constituency. Local political competition in villages revolves not around national or regional political parties, candidates and their competing ideologies, but instead around village-level vote blocs, leaders and their political strategies. Political competition and political control are, therefore, intimately linked concepts within the context of Punjab's socio-economic inequality. In villages where the landed elite control everything, we would expect to see little competition. Conversely, where we see competition, we can expect to also see some gaps in the political control of landed groups and some decision-making space opening up for landless voters.

The evidence I present in the chapters of this book reveals that while poorer voters are politically constrained in general by conditions of inequality, accounts of their complete lack of political autonomy on account of socio-economic dependence are highly exaggerated. Voters use vote blocs to advance their political interests strategically vis-à-vis the landed elite. The villages of Pakistan are severely under-provided and political parties lack programmatic agendas focused on improving and universalising public provision. In this under-provided context, rural voters have learnt that public goods (including rights, justice and security) will arrive in the village as a result of connections that the landed elite of their village have cultivated over generations with political candidates, state agencies and officials. And that these goods and services will be made available to them only through their participation in vote blocs. The rural poor may be under some economic pressure to join vote blocs, but my evidence suggests that a stronger reason for their participation is that public goods are not on offer outside these local political institutions.

The politics of vote blocs works for voters in two specific ways in securing access to goods and services. First, the extent of political competition between multiple vote blocs within the same village, each vying to secure the greatest

number of votes, makes vote bloc leaders more open, and possibly more responsive, to voter demands. The greater the level of effective competition between village vote blocs, the greater the possibility that voters may benefit by becoming members of these. Second, vote blocs provide rural Punjabi voters with political spaces within which to organise and collectivise, and then use their numbers to strengthen their bargaining position vis-à-vis vote bloc leaders who are able to provide access to state officials and resources.

Much of the research in this book is focused on the strategies employed by the rural poor to expand the space available to them within vote blocs – using a logic made available by electoral politics – even as the landed leaders of these blocs strategise to constrain this space as much as possible, using the logic of unequal relationships that are embedded within the structure of the local economy. I argue that rural voters in Pakistan use vote blocs as strategically for their own interests as do those who lead them. How successful they are in this depends on the extent to which voters have bargaining power – loosely defined as the ability of a voter to negotiate strategic gain in return for his/her vote – vis-à-vis the leader of the bloc. Those who have less bargaining power are able to negotiate few or no benefits, and may be coerced into making voting decisions that simply ensure their job security, or that the landlord's henchmen will not pay them a visit. Those who have more of it are able to negotiate greater benefits for themselves and their larger group. The operative concept, therefore, for unravelling why rural voters vote as they do is bargaining power. I use this concept to develop a typology of rural voters in Chapter 4 that allows us to distinguish systematically between members of vote blocs that are still in relations of dependence (dependents); those that are building strategic clientelistic relationships to access services (clients); those that are led by considerations of kinship obligations and solidarity (kin); and those that identify with a political party or organise on the basis of an acquired, common identity (peers). I argue that these four types of voters engage differently with village politics and with their vote bloc leaders, and have different types of bargaining power, and different motivations for voting.

What explains the observed differences in political engagement?

Not all villages, even within the same district, were created equal. Some have more economic inequality than others, some have more hierarchically ordered social structures than others, and some lie at greater distances from towns and cities (and all their attendant opportunities for social and economic mobility)

than others. Furthermore, people within each village can almost always be divided into the three distinct, hierarchically arranged quom groups – the agricultural *zamindar*s, the artisanal *kammi*s and *muslim sheikh* labourers – with quite strict social segregation across the groups. These various inequalities at the village and household level intersect to determine how widely social authority is dispersed across the village population. In some villages authority resides within a small group, sometimes just a single member, at the top of the village hierarchy, while in others it is dispersed much more widely across a larger proportion of the population. Of central importance to the investigation I conduct in this book is the political impact of the particular ways in which village and household level inequality intersect. It may be fairly obvious that conditions of economic inequality and social hierarchy will constrain some voters more than others – we can expect that an individual voter from a *zamindar* caste group will have more political options than one from a *muslim sheikh* household, and larger landowners may gain more from village politics than landless voters – but to what extent are such advantages of the elite mitigated in more egalitarian or equal villages, or in those that are better connected and lie closer to non-farm job markets?

Explanations of rural politics in Pakistan have been based either on the detailed study of a single village or on a few cases. While these studies have made some really insightful contributions with small sample work, they have not been able to tell us how their explanations hold up in other types of villages. What happens to politics when we move from an unequal village to a more equal one, or from a more hierarchical one like Sahiwal to a less hierarchical one like Chak 1? And do these differences then hold up across a larger number of these types of villages? For that we would need to draw inferences from a representative sample of village types that could show us whether there are discernible patterns that connect structure and politics across different locations in a more generalisable way. I study political engagement between vote bloc leaders and voters in 38 villages that represent the distribution of different types of villages in a single district, Sargodha, where the colonial government endowed both relatively equal and unequal land settlements. This is not always true of other districts in Punjab. This means that by studying a varied, random and representative sample here in this one district, I am able to make strong claims about the effect of structural inequality on political competition and the bargaining power of voters, holding most district level factors constant.

The answers I find in this book point to a very strong relationship between structural inequality that was a consequence of colonial land settlement policy implemented over a century ago, and the form of political engagement that occurs between vote bloc leaders and voters today. In villages where landownership rights, and with it social authority, were given to a few individuals or *biradari*s early during colonial rule (a type known as 'Proprietary' villages), politics is less competitive and poorer voters have little or no bargaining power. On the other hand, in villages where landownership rights remained, at least originally, with the state and where, as a consequence, the social authority of *zamindar biradari*s was more limited (a type called 'Crown' villages), politics is more competitive and voters have greater bargaining power and political space within which to operate. The effect of social hierarchy constrains marginalised voters far less in this latter type of village, and there is a greater incidence of horizontal collective action here. Furthermore, I find that it is not variations in land inequality that drive these differences in political engagement, but rather different degrees of social hierarchy. Interestingly, these differences do not affect a household's decisions about whether to become a member of a vote bloc or not, where I found almost no variation across households and villages. Instead, they affect decisions about which vote bloc to join, and they determine the substantive nature of political engagement that occurs within the vote bloc between leaders and members. This disaggregated analysis across different types of villages and households allows me to conclude that even within the same district and the same constituencies, the substantive practice of democracy varies from village to village, depending on levels of structural inequality. Where inequality is low, democracy has greater chances of taking root. Where inequality is high, citizens have little political agency.

Even within the same village, politics is not static. Political engagement, and with it vote blocs, change from election to election. Small changes in engagement should not surprise us much, but sometimes vote blocs will undergo a definitive shift that alters the very logic of its organisation. Under what conditions does this happen? This concern provides the final part of our puzzle. If a vote bloc organises largely around voters that are socio-economically dependent on the leader, when does this relationship change to one between patrons and clients? And if a vote bloc is organised around clientelistic linkages, when might its members start to collectivise instead around a social identity? Understanding shifts in local political organisation is essential for questions around democratisation, and this concern

draws inspiration from one that is a primary concern for Stokes et al. (2013): when and how do countries transition from non-programmatic linkages between political parties and voters to more programmatic politics? In Pakistan's context, this question pertains most to shifts in the way vote blocs organise voters.

Vote blocs are essentially unstable political institutions because of the tension that exists within them between landed leaders and largely landless voters. While the traditional landed elite have an incentive to keep organising the rural voting majority outside of party structures, landless voters have an incentive to find gaps within the system in order to reduce the control of landlords over their political decisions, and to build more independent links with actors and parties that might support them in their struggle based on ideological positions. These tensions in the internal dynamics of vote blocs leads both leaders and voters to change their behaviour and strategies over time – reacting to one another and to socio-economic transformations – and causing shifts in vote bloc organisation. Based on this, I develop a theory of shifts in local political engagement in the later part of this book. These shifts are not linear, and local political competition and the bargaining power of voters both increase and decrease as the logic of political engagement moves between socio-economic dependence, class-based opposition, broker clientelism and party-based voting characterised by candidate clientelism – all concepts that I will develop over the next few chapters.

It is in the examination of these shifts and in the impact of inequality that clues to Pakistan's democratic prospects are to be found. Various recent political and economic changes have allowed poorer rural voters to gain some strategic advantage vis-à-vis their landlords, to varying degrees across different types of villages. I recount this in detail in the pages of this book. These strategic gains have caused shifts in rural politics towards greater local political competition and inclusion in general – more in some villages than others – but this has not yet contributed substantially to the creation of broad rural constituencies of support for Pakistan's political parties. This is because political gains by the rural poor have happened within local political institutions, the village vote blocs, which are disconnected from political parties. So, rather than political party activism aggregating individual rural votes into broad supra-local collectivities with common interests, rural politics continues to follow the logic of political interactions embedded in the many intersecting inequalities of Punjab's villages. Ultimately, the answer to whether or not democracy will last in Pakistan will

depend on the extent to which the impact of these unequal structures can be mitigated, and the extent to which political parties are able to translate the gains made by the rural poor within local political institutions into mass support bases that they can more directly organise, and whose particular interests they can represent against the local elite within national politics.

Research design and methodology

This study is about the impact of inequality on the politics of the rural poor within the context of democratisation. To be able to make strong claims about this relationship, we need to develop credible measures of rural politics and voting behaviour, and be able to vary levels of inequality, while at the same time holding as many other related political and economic factors constant as possible. The design of this study is led entirely by this challenge.

Holding all else constant: Selecting a district

This study is based on 38 villages within one district of central Punjab, Sargodha. The choice of district is based on some common sense understanding of Pakistan's politics and on studies that have emphasised the centrality of the region for the study of rural politics. Syed (1991, 581) points out that 'a political party, or a coalition, in Pakistan can form a stable government at the center only if it commands substantial electoral support in the Punjab where more than 60%[30] of the country's population lives'. Of Pakistan's 272 parliamentary constituencies 141 are in Punjab.[31] Wilder (1999, 215–16) zooms in further to point out that

> the key to electoral success is in central Punjab, which has half of the Punjab's and a quarter of the entire country's National Assembly seats. It is the most densely populated, urbanized, and industrialized of the Punjab's four regions, and hence politically the most volatile.

He also points out that since 69 per cent of this region's population is rural, 'elections have reinforced the political dominance of rural Punjab' in Pakistani politics. This remains the case even today. So, looking at voting behaviour in rural Punjab allows us to observe the type of voter that gets to determine who rules the country.

Besides being in central Punjab, Sargodha has another important attribute for our purpose here. Despite the fact that it lies in the most agriculturally

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30 This is now about 53 per cent according to the latest census figures from 2017.

31 Compared to 61 in Sindh, 39 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 16 in Baluchistan, 12 in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and 3 in the federal capital.

prosperous and progressive part of rural Pakistan, it is home to some of the most historically powerful landed families that have dominated Punjabi politics since colonial times. There is a good chance here of running into the type of large 'feudal lord' who exploits the dependence of landless villagers for political gain that the media and popular discourse on Pakistani politics refer to regularly. Sargodha presents an interesting case of the coexistence of historical landed power with more recent economic and social transformations in the countryside, such as the emergence of the capitalist large and middle farmer and a dramatic decline in tenancy.

The decision to restrict the study to just one district is based on the need to keep as many macro-level political factors constant as possible while allowing levels and types of inequality to vary at the village level. This allows more rigorous explanations for the relationship between structural inequality and voting behaviour. In fact, Sargodha provides a fascinating natural laboratory setting in which we can hold a number of factors constant – post-independence political history, culture, economic development, type of party politics, type of local administration and levels of urbanisation – while still being able to observe significant differences in land inequality and socio-economic structures. This is because villages that lie in close proximity to one another within the same district and the same national and provincial constituencies[32] were settled as both Proprietary and Crown estates under colonial rule, with varying concentrations and dispersion of landownership and social authority. Sargodha thus provides variation across both types and levels of inequality within the same political and administrative units.

Varying levels of inequality: Case selection

We[33] purposively selected six villages in Sargodha as our cases to reflect differences along three dimensions of inequality: (*a*) social structural inequality, based on whether the village was settled as a Proprietary or Crown village, (*b*) land inequality and (*c*) inequality of opportunity, based on distance from an urban town. We started in Sahiwal, a Proprietary village that had been

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32   Sargodha district has 5 National Assembly constituencies and 11 Provincial Assembly constituencies.

33   I worked in the field with a team of research assistants and students from the Lahore University of Management Sciences. Through this book I use the pronoun 'I' when I refer to my analysis but 'we' when I refer to field research, to acknowledge the assistance and contribution of this incredible group of people.

extensively studied in the past and where we could conduct a longitudinal analysis of political change over the last 50 years. We then went across to Chak 1, a diametrically different Crown village. Discovering how different it was in its politics from Sahiwal, we then began to use our developing dataset of over 800 villages in Sargodha district to look for other case villages that varied along one of the dimensions of inequality but was similar on the other two. So we looked for a village that, like Sahiwal, was a Proprietary village with high historical land inequality, but was very remote, in order to provide a good contrast to the more urban Sahiwal. This gave us Tiwanabad. Similarly, we also looked for a village that was settled as a Crown village like Chak 1, and was also remote, but had a more equal distribution of land historically than Chak 1. This village was Chak Migrant. We selected six villages in this way and spent between a few weeks to a few months in each village, studying political and socio-economic interactions in detail and getting to know the leaders and members of each bloc. Table 1.5 presents the typology and names[34] of the six case study villages.

Table 1.5   Sample of case studies

	Proprietary villages		Crown villages	
	Unequal	**Equal**	**Unequal**	**Equal**
Remote	Tiwanabad	Badhor	Chak 1	Chak Migrant
Urban	Sahiwal		Chak 2	

Source: Author.

In order to generalise our findings from the six case villages, we then randomly selected another 35 villages to survey, stratified by whether they were Proprietary or Crown villages. This was based on hypotheses that we drew from the differences we observed in the six villages, and on our reading of colonial history, which indicated that the process under which villages were settled under colonial rule may well provide a very potent explanation of observable differences in socio-political behaviour across villages.[35] The sample of 35 randomly selected villages is representative of the actual distribution of Proprietary and Crown villages in Sargodha (Table 1.6),[36] and allows for

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34   All names used are pseudonyms.

35   I provide details on this in Chapter 2.

36   Further details on case selection are in Chapter 5.

stronger claim-making about the relationship between structural inequality and voting behaviour. The process of random selection required the creation of a dataset on village history and historical land inequality for the entire district, over 800 villages in all, using colonial land revenue documents found in the archives of the district and provincial revenue offices. By sheer chance, the random selection included three of the case study villages. We decided to retain these in the sample in order to confirm the veracity of our research instruments and to allow for better validity checks across the data collected in case villages and that collected across the larger sample. So we now had a total sample of 38 villages – the 6 case villages and 32 additional ones – in which the three repeated villages were part of both data collection rounds. We worked in these 38 villages over a period of two years between 2006 and 2008.

Table 1.6   Proportion distribution of village types in Sargodha and in sample

	Proprietary villages		**Crown villages**	
Total in district	513	62%	317	38%
Study sample	23	66%	12	34%

Source: Government of Punjab, Board of Revenue, *Shahpur District Village Inspection Reports* (1911–1924).

The data for this study was collected at three distinct points. I worked with a large team to collect extensive and detailed qualitative and quantitative data in 38 villages between 2006 and late 2007. During this time we asked questions about the last two national and provincial elections[37] that were held in 1997 and 2002, and the local government elections of 2001 and 2005. I then returned to the six case study villages with a much smaller team (sometimes just one other male researcher) in the days leading up to the 2008 and 2013 national and provincial elections to observe changes in vote bloc organisation. During this time, I updated the information from the earlier rounds of case work, interviews and surveys, and paid special attention to the way in which things had changed since our last visit. This was an interesting and volatile time in Pakistan's history and the three points of data collection coincided with elections held under military rule in 2002, then during a democratic transition in 2008, and finally at a time when some preliminary signs of a democratic consolidation had become visible in 2013.[38] This allowed me to observe the ways in which

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37 Elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies are not staggered and are always held on the same day in Pakistan.

38 Local government elections were not held again until the end of 2015.

vote bloc organisation and political competition can vary and shift in subtle ways from one election to another and from one regime type to another.

Measurements and a mix of methods

We combined and nested different methods to get more complete measures of local political competition, participation in vote blocs, and bargaining practices. The multi-method, nested strategy used to both collect and analyse data is entirely led by the needs of the investigative effort and the challenge of unravelling difficult concepts. Bargaining power is not easily defined or measured and neither is local political engagement that occurs not between political parties and voters but between informal local leaders with whom rural voters have daily contact across a number of domains. Each method was added because of its particular value in helping us deal with a challenging empirical investigation.[39]

In the subset of six case study villages, we collected data through census and sample surveys, ethnographic observations and social network analysis, allowing for an analysis that combines comparative case study narratives with a detailed understanding of the nature of political networks and patterns of behaviour across different social groups. Social network analysis was particularly useful in discovering new actors and networks. Some of the emerging political entrepreneurs, who were named in network surveys during the early phases of our work by a few households that had started to view them as alternatives to the landlord, had created vote blocs of their own by the time we returned to these villages during later elections.

We observed various activities in these six villages, participated in village meetings, and had many casual conversations with people from different social classes – from the landlord and his managers to agricultural workers. I spent many hours each day in various homes across the villages, enjoying the hospitality of my hosts, and talking to both women and men, whom I could interact with freely as long as it was indoors. My limitations as a female researcher ended up working to my advantage eventually, as it ensured more private (and by implication, more honest) conversations with the men who make household voting decisions. By contrast, my male colleagues found that

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39 Such a research strategy is in line with recent calls for the use of more mixed and nested methods to study political concepts, such as by Coppedge (1999), Lieberman (2005) and Weller and Barnes (2014).

while their free and open access to public spaces in the village meant that they were better able to observe interactions, and participate in the political conversations that occur almost all the time in *dera*s and the village *daara*, interviews attracted too much attention and too many group responses. Like me, they soon learnt to head indoors to conduct individual surveys.

Our detailed study of these six villages, and the many trials and errors it involved, taught us how to quickly and accurately capture complex information on voting behaviour when we later surveyed the 32 other villages of our larger sample. Here we combined a large survey with detailed key respondent interviews on village history, politics, social structures and socio-economic interactions. We also conducted a full census of each village to get more precise aggregate measures, such as for levels of land inequality – which we used to create land Gini coefficients for each village – and levels of literacy. In analysing this data, I used both detailed narratives with multivariate regression models to find generalisable patterns across the 35 villages while still being able to draw on more fine-grained evidence on the dynamics of village politics. This book pulls together all these various sources of data across the different phases of fieldwork to present its analysis, drawing on different pieces of evidence as the narrative develops, to build an original and, hopefully, engaging story about competitive politics and marginalised voters under conditions of socio-economic inequality.

Structure of the book

The story this book tells is the following. I start in Chapter 2 by looking at the genesis of the high levels of inequality that exist in Punjab today. The initial parts of the chapter look at the colonial period and they focus on drawing out structural differences created by the settling of Proprietary and Crown land tenure systems at this time. This forms the basis of later comparisons across these two types of villages. The chapter also focuses on understanding the historical, colonial origins of the political power of the traditional landed elite that we observe in Punjab's villages today. In the later part of the chapter, I analyse Pakistan's post-colonial political history and its struggle with democratisation, focused in particular on how the power of the landed elite manifested in national and provincial politics.

Chapter 3 forms a segue from national politics to the locally grounded empirical analysis presented in subsequent chapters. It looks at the tension that exists at the local level between socio-economic change and institutional pre-conditions, manifested as village level politics. In it I return to village Sahiwal and draw on two earlier studies by Ahmad (1977) and Rouse (1988) to conduct an intensive longitudinal analysis of social and agrarian transformation over five decades. I focus in particular on how its residents have responded to the national political changes recounted in Chapter 2 while living under conditions of extreme inequality.

Sahiwal's story shows that though the landed elite continue to dominate politics, their power has transformed dramatically over time from being based on economic control to now being rooted in political representation and intermediation between rural citizens and the state. I use the story of social transformation in Sahiwal over five decades to draw out relevant political concepts that help us frame the empirical investigation presented in the rest of the book.

I develop these political concepts in Chapter 4. Here I define village-level vote blocs, local political competition, processes of participation and the bargaining power of rural voters – my outcomes of interest – as operationally usable and measurable concepts that can be applied consistently across different types of villages. I draw on our empirical investigation in 38 villages to sketch out the details of the architecture of rural politics and competition in Pakistan's villages. Most significantly, I develop a typology of voters that helps nuance the political engagement and bargaining practices of Punjab's majority rural population.

I use these concepts in Chapter 5 to compare political engagement in the five case study villages we studied after Sahiwal, focusing in particular on how local landed elites organise vote blocs to control village politics and the extent to which rural voters in the different types of villages are able to use the same political institutions to advance their political interests strategically vis-à-vis the landed elite. This comparative case analysis allows us to see how and where the political power of oligarchs is now less complete, highlighted by the ways in which savvy rural voters navigate and negotiate their way through inequality to create some political space for themselves. This chapter establishes the extent to which differences in social structural inequality help explain variations in political engagement across the case study villages. Chapter 6 advances the

empirical analysis by asking whether these explanations are generalisable across the larger sample of 35 villages in Sargodha district. Here, I use multivariate regression analysis to test the correlation between structural inequality and voting behaviour. These two chapters show that elite persistence in the control of local political institutions can coexist with considerable differences in the forms of engagement between local elites and voters within the same political context, and that the observed variation is indeed explained by the institutional basis of economic and social inequality.

The tension between landed vote bloc leaders and landless voters makes vote blocs inherently unstable political institutions. Both leaders and voters change their behaviour and strategies over time and cause shifts in vote bloc organisation. In Chapter 7, I look at when and how such changes occur by examining how vote blocs in the six case study villages shifted in subtle but significant ways across the 2002, 2008 and 2013 elections. I conclude the book in Chapter 8 by summarising how structural inequality works to constrain political collective action by numerically dominant but marginalised groups. My findings suggest that further democratisation of Pakistan's politics is dependent on the mitigation of persistent structural inequality to allow marginalised voters to be better represented in national politics.

Colonial Constructs and Post-colonial Politics

1849–2018

A good place to start a story is at the beginning. In the case of land inequality and the power of landed groups in the politics of rural Punjab, this beginning is the annexation of Punjab by the British colonial state in 1849, which, according to Gazdar, 'can be seen as the point of departure for any historical analysis of land' (2009, 6). The institutional and administrative reforms that followed this annexation took Punjab from being 'a land of small peasant proprietors' to a province where by the end of colonial rule in 1947 'less than 4 per cent of the agricultural population owned more than 50 per cent of the land while poor peasants, landless sharecroppers and agricultural labourers accounted for 80 per cent of the population' (Hamid 1982, 52). In this chapter, I argue that in meeting the main goals of Empire in Punjab – the maintenance of law and order, and the creation and expansion of a revenue base – the colonial state changed the nature of Punjabi villages and created economic and social hierarchies that continue to determine the pattern of politics in these villages to this day. The colonial reforms and events I describe here shaped most of the factors whose influence on rural politics I analyse in later chapters. The colonial creation of a powerful, rural landed elite also affected the nature of post-colonial national politics, which I recount in later parts of the chapter.

Creating a 'traditional' landed elite under colonial rule: 1849–1947

Soon after its annexation of Punjab in 1849 the British colonial state set about implementing some key reforms. The basic aim of these was not different from what Young described as the objective of colonialism in Africa – to construct 'institutions of domination with improvised resources … [and] simultaneously to create agencies of rule and to invent extractive devices imposing on the subordinated societies the cost of the unsolicited governance proposed for them' (1994, 78). In Punjab the colonial state had three main aims: (*a*) establish a revenue base and extract resources to fund the administrative apparatus of the state, including the army, (*b*) maintain local law and order and create 'agencies

of rule', and (*c*) expand the revenue base over time. In this section I look at how the British colonial state went about these three tasks in Sargodha district, or Shahpur as it was then called.

Revenue base and extraction:
The settling of 'Proprietary villages'

The most immediate task was that of establishing a revenue base. In a rural setting like Sargodha, there were only two sources of revenue – land and labour. But at the time of annexation, 89 per cent of the district was 'in a state of nature' and it was inhabited by semi-nomadic pastoralists (Ouseley and Davies 1866). Settled agricultural communities existed only in close proximity to the banks of the river Jhelum, but even in these villages there was indefinite and varied tenure, fluid communal institutions and ambiguous rights of ownership (*Imperial Gazetteer of India* 1908; Banerjee and Iyer 2005). It was almost impossible to impose a tax on such communities. This meant that both land and labour had to be 'settled' before they could be taxed. The British colonial state had two tasks before it – to define private property rights in established villages and to settle the nomadic population in new villages because 'sedentary cultivating populations were far easier to bring within the net of domination than were pastoral and nomadic communities' (Young 1994, 100).

Private property rights were the lynchpin of establishing a revenue base. Metcalf notes that 'in collecting the land revenue, the Government had of necessity to settle responsibility for its payment on some person, and in so doing to define the rights in land of the various classes of society' (1962, 295). There were three main types of land tenure systems in colonial India – *zamindari*, *ryotwari* and *mahalwari*. In both *zamindari* and *ryotwari* tenures, revenue responsibilities were based on individual property rights – those of landlords in the *zamindari* system, instituted in Bengal, and of individual cultivators in the *ryotwari* system, instituted in Madras and Bombay Presidencies. The *mahalwari* system – instituted in Punjab[1] and the western parts of what is now Uttar Pradesh in India – was village-based, and payment of land revenue was the collective responsibility of what was termed the 'village proprietary body' (Nelson 2002). The differences between these three types are summed up nicely by Banerjee and Iyer (2008, 4):

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1   Here I refer to the greater Punjab, which at the time included the current Pakistani province of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.

In the landlord-based systems, the British delegated revenue-collection authority to landlords with authority over large areas. In village-based systems, the revenue collection was delegated to village bodies consisting of several people. In individual-cultivator systems, the British collected land revenue directly from the cultivator.

The village was the unit of land administration in the *mahalwari* system, but village land was actually settled in a variety of ways under it. The first phase of land settlement in present-day Sargodha simply imposed private property regimes on existing villages of cattle-herding populations with no clearly defined land rights. These settlements recognised the village community as having joint rights and responsibilities in the land, but conferred the village as a divided estate across different individuals – based, in the agricultural parts of Punjab, on the amount of land that they actually possessed and cultivated, and based on heads of cattle in more desolate, pastoralist districts like Shahpur. These settlements coincided with the fact that in the early days of the annexation, the colonial state, backed by the British Parliament, was championing the cause of small peasant proprietorships and joint ownership by village communities all over India, to the exclusion of aristocratic intermediaries – the *jagirdar*s and *zamindar*s favoured by the Mughal and Sikh empires (Metcalf 1962). These initial villages were largely settled as *bhaichara* grants, which recognised the customary possession and usage of the land by tribal kinship groups (rather than any ancestral claims to the land) but where revenue assessment was divided across members of the village proprietary body (Ouseley and Davies 1866). Nelson (2002) suggests that the conversion of the right of cultivation into property rights under *bhaichara* settlements was considered a more progressive form of tenure by the early settlement officers working across different parts of Punjab in the 1850s, because it turned cultivators into proprietors with greater stakes in the land and therefore higher expected productivity.

Eight years after the annexation of Punjab, the Indian Mutiny, or the War of Independence, of 1857 erupted. The rebellion was led by the same middle peasantry that the colonial state had been supporting while large landowning tribes came out to fight on the side of the British. This turned the tables of colonial land policy. Metcalf explains,

For the first time in fifty years the landlord classes found widespread sympathy among the British officials in India, and the previously accepted ideas of peasant proprietorship were vigorously challenged. Even in such

a stronghold of peasant settlement as the Punjab most officials, from the
Lieutenant-Governor on down, had by 1864 become converted to a policy
of landlordism and revision of settlement. (1962, 307)

The motto of this new policy, associated with the colonial bureaucrat Henry
Lawrence, was to govern with the assistance of rural intermediaries and 'natural
leaders', especially those large landlords that had rendered loyal services to the
colonial government during the 1857 rebellion (Talbot 2002, 69). This new
bent was couched in terms of being the custom of the land. The Settlement
Commissioner during the 1860s, Edward Prinsep, explained, 'A superior class
"exercising an absolute right of property" had always existed in the Punjab, and
that this class, once secure in its traditional rights, was the source of the future
prosperity of the province' (Metcalf 1962).

In Sargodha, local chiefs who had loyally assisted the British in military
combat during the Second Sikh War (1848–49) and during the 1857 rebellion
were endowed with grants of Crown wasteland (Conran and Craik 1993; Talbot
2002). Under these *zamindari* grants landownership rights were conferred on
one person or family – the *zamindar*[2]– who was responsible for the payment of
land revenue. The landlord collected this revenue by leasing land out to tenant
cultivators – largely without occupancy rights[3] – and was free to determine the
level of rent paid by these tenants. The land revenue obligation of the landlord
was based on the size of the landholding, rather than on produce, so that any
surplus from tenant rents and sharecropping arrangements belonged to the
landlord (Wilson 1897; Leigh 1917; Douie 1931).

At around the same time, the colonial state also became more sympathetic
to considering ancestral claims to land, which coincided in part with the change
of policy and in part with continuing disputes, especially in Shahpur district,
over land rights conferred to cultivators under the earlier grants (often to the
exclusion of those who had an ancestral claim). Nelson (2002, 135) points
out that 'even if colonial administrators arrived in the Punjab with an explicit
interest in the promotion of peasant proprietorship, they left with an interest
in the preservation of ancestral shares' and of local landowning kinship groups.
Though villages were not reclassified according to ancestral claims with as much
enthusiasm in Sargodha as in neighbouring districts at this point, here too some

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2   Literally, the holder of land (*zamin*).

3   Tenants-at-will cultivated land under a contractual arrangement with the landlord and had no security
     of tenure, as opposed to occupancy tenants who had rights of ownership (Rouse 1983, 744).

villages were designated as *pattidari* tenures, where revenue was assessed for the village, and the responsibility for its payment was distributed across members of the village proprietary body according to ancestral shares, rather than actual cultivation and possession (Douie 1931). Stokes (1975) argues that *pattidari* and *bhaichara* tenures were very similar, except that in the latter most owners were cultivators while in the former there was more tenancy, based as it was on ownership through ancestral claims rather than possession.

In villages that were originally settled as *pattidari* tenures, the different portions did not represent fractions of an original whole held by a common ancestor (*Imperial Gazetteer of India* 1908, 110). Over time, however, some large *zamindari* grants naturally tended towards becoming *pattidari* tenures as well, as the original common (*mushtarka*) land grant fragmented across different heirs over generations. Similarly, Nelson (2011) argues that some *pattidari* grants eventually evolved into *bhaichara* tenures, as ancestral claims got fragmented through inheritance to the extent where actual possession of land became the only real measure of property rights. Land tenure systems in Punjab evolved and mutated over time across some variation of these three basic types, and the differences across them became less salient. The three types of villages – *zamindari, pattidari* and *bhaichara* – were categorised collectively as 'Proprietary villages' by the colonial administrators,[4] a terminology I maintain through this book. This indicated the fact that the village proprietary body in these villages had full property rights that were conferred and recognised by the state and it distinguished them from another type of village that the colonial state would soon create, the 'Crown village'.

Revenue expansion: The creation of 'Crown' villages

To bring wasteland under cultivation through the new Proprietary settlements, special land revenue concessions were given to *abadkar*s[5] to encourage them to settle and cultivate the village as quickly as possible. Simultaneously, the colonial government started the task of extending canal irrigation to the recently settled Proprietary villages between 1870 and 1890. This first phase of canal irrigation happened largely through the personal administrative initiatives of enterprising colonial officers (Gilmartin 2009, 4), but the state would soon embark on a larger, more systematic effort that would extend irrigation across Punjab and transform it entirely in the process.

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4   Government of Punjab, Board of Revenue, *Shahpur District Village Inspection Reports*, 1911–1924.

5   Initial settlers.

A major task before the colonial state was to expand its revenue base over time. Punjab's vast tracts of wasteland and its low population density – 156 people per square mile compared to 311 in Bengal and 420 in the North Western Provinces[6] – presented few opportunities for this, given that the state had already settled the villages that lay in its agricultural zones (Chakravarty–Kaul 1996). The rest of the province was dry and uncultivable. At the turn of the century the colonial government in Punjab set about creating the world's largest network of perennial irrigation canals – the planning for which had started two decades earlier – that transformed Punjab from a dry wasteland to the 'bread basket' of India and Pakistan that it is today.

To settle the 'canal colonies', the state designated all uncultivated land as 'Crown lands', made them the property of the provincial revenue department, and declared these uninhabited, despite the existence of the semi-nomadic pastoralists that roamed it. Canals were then dug to carry water from Punjab's rivers across the length and width of the province. Along these canals villages were built from 1902 onwards that were numbered rather than named, and were laid out in fixed square plans as perfect grids in which 'settlers were compelled to build their compound walls on fixed alignments so as to ensure regular streets' (*The Colony Manual* in Gilmartin 2004, 7). The state moved in *abadkar*s from the more populated eastern parts of the province to relieve population problems that were threatening the bases of the 'traditional' agrarian order in the East Punjab (Washbrook 1981). Washbrook argues that the way in which canal colony villages were settled made the project at once both economically transformative and socially conservative, because 'the colonies were settled on social models which tried to replicate and perpetuate as far as possible (though with less than perfect success) the structure of landed society in the regions from which the immigrants came' (1981, 697). Land, which was also laid out in perfect squares, was conferred on this new population in small parcels under occupancy tenancy contracts drawn directly with individual settlers (Gilmartin 2004; Gazdar 2009). To oversee revenue collection from these cultivators, the Deputy Commissioner of a district would appoint a village headman, or *lambardar*. These local intermediaries received 5 per cent of the revenue they collected from the village in return for their services, which included local policing and dispute resolution (*Imperial Gazetteer of India* 1908, 113).

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6   Now Uttar Pradesh.

The canal colonies of Sargodha district were settled differently from the rest of Punjab during this phase. In the 1890s, the Horse and Mule-breeding Commission was created to investigate the possibility of the British Indian army gaining self-sufficiency in breeding cavalry horses and reducing its dependence on the import of horses from other countries (Ali 1988). In 1901, as the Lower Jhelum Colony was being settled – which covered the canal colony villages that fall within Sargodha district – the Commission recommended that this self-sufficiency may be possible if the new grants were tied to a tenant's ability 'to maintain mares for breeding horses and mules for the army' (Ali 1988, 24). Therefore, in what came to be known as *ghoripal* (horse-breeding) grants, 'the breeding obligation ... became the basis on which [tenants] took up the land' (1988, 25). The size of each grant was determined by the number of mares that each settler brought along. A mare was worth two squares of land (55 acres) and a family that was able to contribute more than one could secure rights over a sizeably large land grant. Within these horse-breeding tenancies there were also the yeoman (*sufedposh*) grants, under which a tenant was given only one-and-a-half squares per mare but was allowed to maintain between five and fifteen mares, with an upper limit of about 650 acres of land in total (Ali 1988). Some horse-breeding grantees, therefore, managed to amass quite large landholdings, though in terms of magnitude these were generally smaller than those in Proprietary villages. There was also less security of tenure, in that a tenant's continued possession of land was dependent on his/her fulfilment of the obligation to breed healthy horses and mules. These horse-breeding conditions were abrogated in 1941, after which landowning settlers in Crown villages received proprietary rights and became part of the village proprietary body.

I follow the *Village Inspection Reports*[7] in using the term 'Crown villages' for the settlements created during this phase. They are also called *chak*s, and are listed in government records as such, followed by a number and an abbreviation that signifies their position along various branches of the canals.[8]

Agencies of rule: Creating Punjab's 'traditional' landed elite

In settling Proprietary and Crown villages, the colonial state did not confer rights of ownership on all residents of a village. A differentiated population with

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7 Government of Punjab, Board of Revenue, *Shahpur District Village Inspection Reports*, 1911–1924.

8 For example, a village may be called Chak 37 N.B., which signifies Crown village No. 37 along the northern branch canal.

a hierarchical structure had advantages to offer. First, it would ensure the loyalty and support of those who were given special privileges, such as property rights. Second, it ensured that these local intermediaries could maintain control over the rest of the subject population, thus decreasing the pressure on the state's own security apparatus.

In Proprietary villages, authority was settled on specific families or lineages that were called the *malikan-deh*,[9] or the 'village proprietary body' (I use the abbreviation VPB for these through the rest of the book). The VPB's special status received formal legal recognition in the revenue records,[10] which went into great detail in defining their relationship with the government; with each other; with the non-proprietary *sakin-deh*[11] of the village, made up of the tenants (*muzair*) and artisans (*kammi*); and potential new entrants and other outsiders to the village (Chakravarty–Kaul 1996, 198). Regardless of the type of village – *zamindari*, *pattidari* or *bhaichara* – the VPB had 'proprietary' rights over the rest of the village population, thus the common label as a 'Proprietary village'. They were to serve as intermediaries – with 'unofficial agency' – between the state and the village, and were expected to act on 'behalf of the landowners, tenants, and other [village] residents in their relations with the State' (Douie 1931, 137).

To underscore the idea that this group had a traditional claim to social authority (as Edward Prinsep had suggested), the colonial state also gave the VPB's special status the force of custom. Based on a desire to 'uphold Native institutions and practices, as far as they are consistent with the distribution of justice to all classes',[12] the colonial state settled the rights of different classes of villagers by recording village custom – or as much of it as was visible to British colonial officers – in the *shart wajib-ul-arz* (the village administration paper). By then incorporating the *wajib-al-arz* into the Punjab Land Revenue Act of 1871, the state ensured that customary law was now part of the formal legal system of the province (Chakravarty–Kaul 1996). This document enshrined and protected the social and economic dominance of the VPB, to the effect that 'village governance was no longer to be based upon the consensual will of the village community' (Chakravarty–Kaul 1996, 198). Mamdani (2001)

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9   *Malik* means owner, and *deh* means village, so that the term literally means owners of the village, which was a hereditary claim to the village land.

10 Made up of the record of land rights, the *shart wajib-ul-arz* (village administration paper), and the *shajra-i-nasb* (the genealogical record).

11 Residents.

12 Dalhousie's Dispatch reproduced in Chakravarty–Kaul (1996).

records a similar process of the formalisation of customary laws[13] in Africa, and argues that much of the colonial legacy of social inequality flows from the fact that the colonial state chose not to enforce civil law between natives in its colonies.[14] He points out,

> While civil law spoke the language of rights, customary law spoke the language of tradition, of authenticity. These were different languages with different effects, even opposite effects. The language of rights bounded law. It claimed to set limits to power. For civic power was to be exercised within the rule of law, and had to observe the sanctity of the domain of rights. The language of custom, in contrast, did not circumscribe power, for custom was *enforced*. The language of custom *enabled* power instead of checking it by drawing boundaries around it. (2001, 654)

One aspect of the state's new concern with customary practice was the recognition of ancestral claims of members of the village proprietary body. An immediate effect of this was that many tenants who had been given land rights as cultivators in the initial settlements soon after annexation had these revoked in favour of those with ancestral claims, and instead became tenants-at-will with little or no security of tenure. Prinsep considered this to have been traditional practice under Sikh rule, when 'the landowner had the right to evict any tenant and could do so at any time'.[15] 'The result was that by 1866 out of 60,000 tenants recorded as hereditary cultivators in Amritsar [district] all but 15,000 had been reduced to tenants at will' (Metcalf 1962, 305).

Soon after customary law was institutionalised in 1871, another law was passed to protect the land rights of this special group of intermediaries that were now central to colonial administration. This was the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900, which divided the population of rural Punjab between agricultural, or *zamindar*, and non-agricultural 'tribes'[16] – which included the artisanal *kammi*s and the menial *muslim sheikh*s. Under this law only agricultural castes

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13 For a detailed discussion on the need for codification of customary law in colonial Punjab, see Prenter (1924), who writes, '… just as the vague Customary Law was in a way codified in Bengal and the United Provinces by the Brahmins, so there is no racial reason why Customary Law in the Punjab should not be codified in an appropriate way. The reason why it has not become codified long ago is not because codification is repugnant to the people, but because hitherto no power has attempted the task' (1924, 232)

14 Young (1994) explains that both civil and criminal law existed but it applied only to the colonisers, and to issues that arose between colonisers and natives.

15 Prinsep to Financial Commissioner, Punjab, 28 April 1863, quoted in Metcalf (1962, 305).

16 The word 'tribe' was used to refer to what were essentially caste groups, or *quom*s.

could own land, to the extent that land could not even be sold to a member of a non-agricultural caste, which at this time made up about half of the province's population (Gazdar 2009). Through this Act the colonial state linked economic endowment to a primordial, social identity, and then froze this in time to restrict both economic and social mobility. For instance, a person from a non-agricultural caste who may have been on the brink of saving enough to buy some land would now not have been able to do so until after independence, when the law, though yet to be repealed, was no longer enforced.[17] The law also applied to other channels of upward mobility. Someone from a non-agricultural caste would not have been selected to join the military or the civil service, and would even have had to apply for special permission to upgrade his/her house from a mud hut to a brick building. Later when limited elections were introduced in 1920, the Candidate Qualification Rules of 1919 would stop them from running for elections or even voting (Yadav 1987).[18]

Landowners in Crown villages did not have similar proprietary rights over the village population, but here too land rights were given exclusively to members of the agricultural castes, so that even in these villages the process of land settlement determined not only the distribution of land but also the structure of authority and the rights of different groups within the village (Ali 1988; Gilmartin 2004). Smith (2000) and Gilmartin (1994a) both argue that the process of recording the details of village life in India in law and government records led to the now prevalent practice of classifying Indian rural society as one determined primarily by caste and kinship. They point out that caste went from being simply a principle of social organisation – and in that an essentially dynamic and fluid concept – to being the basis of static government rules, regulations and administration, so that 'customs, rights, and duties came increasingly to be defined, instead of each village negotiating the way it was to run its affairs' (Smith 1996, 172). This classification, done largely to enable the state to integrate each village and its social structure into a standardised mould of administrative control and regulation (Gilmartin 1994a, 1127), was

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17 Gilmartin (1994a) claims that it was repealed. However, a senior officer of the Punjab Board of Revenue insisted in an interview that the Land Alienation Act of 1900 was never formally repealed, but that after 1956 it became Constitutionally illegal. Various court cases led the state to add an amendment to the Act that declared all citizens were 'agricultural tribes'. In India, however, it was formally repealed soon after independence.

18 The right to run for election was restricted to revenue paying members of the VPB. Other *zamindar* castes could vote, but non-proprietors were permitted to do so only if they had completed their primary education.

'instrumental in creating a new kind of caste consciousness' (Smith 2000, 2).
Berry (1992) and Dirks (2001) both argue that in the process of encoding custom
the colonial government instead constructed its own version of customary law
with an increased emphasis on caste and kinship as the main social demarcator.
Gilmartin (2009, 9) points out,

> The noteworthy features of the Punjab's legal structure (and particularly
> its prominent use of 'customary law') was the degree to which the free
> individual, though recognized as a holder of 'rights,' was also legally
> constituted as constrained by a patriarchal, kinship based structure … The
> law thus created an essential image of Punjabi society and culture (whatever
> its actual cultural and religious variations) as fundamentally defined by an
> indigenous culture of tribe and patriarchy, within which individual legal
> 'rights' were embedded.

These images, argues Washbrook (1993, 240), 'conformed far more to the
colonial stereotype of "what they had always been" than to what they may actually
have been one hundred years earlier'. Colonial rule and discourse thus led to
hierarchically ordered caste (*quom*) and lineage (*biradari*) groups becoming the
'pivotal institution in the "traditional" social structure' of Punjab (Alavi 1971,
114; Dirks 2001).

Within this social structure, Punjab's landowners were located at the very
top as a special, protected and loyal constituency of the colonial state. Not only
did this class collect and pass on land revenue but it also maintained local law
and order. Furthermore, it provided a layer of intermediaries in the form of
*lambardar*s and *zaildar*s[19] between colonial administrative offices and village
residents (Douie 1931). Talbot (2002) and Javid (2012) describe in detail how
the influence of these intermediaries was strengthened through engineered
administrative and political office. Constituency boundaries in both district
board elections from the 1880s onwards, and provincial legislative elections
from 1920 onwards, were drawn up to coincide to the extent possible with the
areas of influence of local chiefs and village headmen. 'By imbricating political
boundaries with existing circles of social and economic power, it was felt that
these leaders would be able to draw on the existing sources of power to dominate
electoral contests as well', and in the process, turned these intermediaries into
powerful sources of local patronage (Javid 2012, 137).

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19 *Zaildar*s were tribal chiefs that operated at a higher level than *lambardar*s, and assisted the colonial
administration with revenue collection and administration within a set of up to 50 villages.

The economic power and social authority of Sargodha's landlords, however, differed to a great extent across Proprietary and Crown villages. First, land inequality was lower in Crown villages since land grants were given to many landowners in each village. Levels of tenancy were also lower since most proprietors were expected to, and often did, farm their own land. Second, because *abadkar*s came from different parts of Punjab to Crown villages, all landowners in a village did not belong to the same lineage group and so, social authority was more dispersed across the landlord class here. Third, Crown villages were directly administered by the district office through 'colony law' (rather than the customary law that was applied in Proprietary villages). Settlers in Crown villages were tenants of the state and did not have full proprietary rights. This was to allow the state to better regulate these villagers as suppliers to the British army and 'to create villages of a type superior in comforts and civilization to anything which had previously existed in the Punjab' (Singh 1929, in Gilmartin 2004, 7). While colonial officers remained uninvolved in Proprietary villages, where all rights of regulation and administration were delegated to the VPB, Gilmartin (2009, 4) points out that 'indeed, the workings of the canal colonies came to be known for the assertive role that administrators played in the large-scale settling of the peasantry on formerly uncultivated (or intermittently cultivated) lands'.

All this meant that relations between landowners and other village residents were less hierarchical in Crown villages. Since the *zamindar* caste of these villages were themselves tenants of the state, they had no proprietary rights over the rest of the village population. Also, the residential land on which the village's other caste groups lived was not owned by the *zamindar*s, unlike in Proprietary villages where the VPB owned all homestead land and, through it, exercised great control over the lives of non-VPBs. In Crown villages, the state granted homestead land to village artisans and to the private tenants of the state lessees, making them considerably more independent of the *zamindar* caste. Furthermore, since the elite status of the grantees in these villages was not underwritten by customary law, and since they acquired proprietary rights much later than the VPBs of Proprietary villages, they were less cohesive as a group and their power over other village residents was relatively limited.

The process of settling land and rights differently across Proprietary and Crown villages in Sargodha provides the most significant source of variation across villages in the district, and across different types of caste and lineage

groups within these. No post-independence change has come close to approximating the impact that the events of the colonial period had on village structure, and on the relations between different groups of villagers. Both Punjab and Sargodha emerged from colonial rule with deep structural inequality premised on landownership and caste status, and with an economically secure landed elite that was also firmly in control of its society and politics.

The partition of 1947

When elections to the provincial legislative councils and assemblies were introduced in India in the last three decades of colonial rule, the large landlords of Punjab – Muslim, Hindu and Sikh – came together to form a political party that would dominate the province until independence. The Unionist Party – many of whose founding leaders were from Sargodha district – was secular, with a rural base and a strong Punjabi identity. It was very closely aligned to the British colonial state, given the special relationship that existed between the latter and the province's landed groups. This close relationship put the party in direct opposition to both the other two leading political parties of the time – the Congress party, which was leading the movement for independence against the colonial government, and the Muslim League, which was leading a movement to create a separate state, Pakistan. The political power and influence of these landlords in Punjab kept both the Congress and the Muslim League from gaining any substantial support here. In the 1937 election for the provincial legislative assemblies, the Unionist Party secured 95 out of the 175 seats in Punjab, while the Congress won 18 and the Muslim League managed to get only 1 urban seat (Oren 1974). Of the Unionist's 95 seats, 84 were rural constituencies, and of these, 76 per cent were won by the large landlords of Proprietary villages (Yadav 1987).[20]

Talbot (1998) argues that *biradari*-ism was an integral part of politics in the Punjab at this time. In fact, he alleges that the reason the Muslim League won only one seat in the 1937 election was that it was unable to 'garner votes through the traditional channels of political mobilisation in the countryside, the *biradari* networks, the patron–client ties between landlords and tenants and

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20   The remaining seats were not necessarily held by non-VPBs or the landed groups of Crown villages. I was simply unable to identify and match the remaining names from the lists provided by Yadav (1987).

the network of disciples of the leading *pirs*[21] (1998, 63). By the next election in 1946, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and his party appear to have learnt the trick and organised the Muslim League around *biradari*s and the influence of landed groups (Talbot 1998, 73). This seemed to work, for things changed dramatically for the Muslim League in the 1946 election, when it swept both urban and rural Muslim seats in Punjab. Though some part of this was attributed to rising support for the Pakistan movement, the main reason for this victory was the fact that many of the Muslim members of the Unionist Party had joined the Muslim League by 1945 and had brought with them their rural constituencies and votes.

This shift was compelled by two facts that had become clear to the members of the Unionist Party. First, that British colonial rule was coming to a definite end. Second, that its obvious successor, the Congress party, was committed to instituting land reforms in India. The Muslim League and its leader, Jinnah, on the other hand, were ambiguous on this issue (Talbot 1980). Pakistan thus looked like a much better prospect for these landlords in the event of being abandoned by their old colonial patron. And so the new country came into being on 14 August 1947 led by a political party that was dominated in Punjab by conservative landlords. The ex-Unionists' conviction that they had chosen wisely was expressed by one of the original leaders of the party, Sir Feroz Khan Noon – a prominent landlord of Sargodha and one of those who shifted to the Muslim League in 1945 – to Hamza Alavi over a casual lunch in Dhaka in 1951, when he remarked, 'Jawaharlal [Nehru] comes from a good family. But he has surrounded himself by communists. They are out to destroy the great landed families of India. Thank God they cannot touch us here [in Pakistan]' (Alavi 2002).

The dramatic partition of India and Pakistan at independence in 1947 created one more type of village in Punjab – the migrant village. When Sargodha district became part of the newly created Muslim state, Pakistan, its Sikh and Hindu population abandoned their lands and villages – both Proprietary and Crown – to move east of the new border to India. This population was replaced by Muslim migrants heading west from parts of East Punjab that were now in India. In some cases entire villages were abandoned and then resettled anew when ownership rights of land were given to new settlers. Property was allotted, however, only in compensation for that which the migrants had left behind in India, so that only those who were landowners back home would have received

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21 *Pir*s are descendants of saints.

land after migration. There was a proposal in the new cabinet of Pakistan, led by the Minister for Rehabilitation of Refugees, to compensate settlers according to their needs, rather than what they had previously owned in India, thereby seizing an opportunity to distribute land more widely at this critical juncture. The proposal was rejected by a government dominated by landed interests – including the Chief Minister, Nawab Iftikhar Hussain Khan of Mamdot, who was himself claiming large tracts in compensation for his holdings in eastern Punjab – because of its implications for introducing land reforms to implement such a wider distribution (Jalal 2014). Though land inequality was reproduced post-independence through the new settlements, the replacement of populations did erode old social and authority structures of these villages to an extent, based on the fact that, in general, families and lineage groups attempted to move and settle together. Many 'migrant' villages thus came to resemble the old *bhaichara* villages of lineage-based communities.

Landed power and the early post-colonial years: 1947–70

Moore (1966) argues that there was a special relationship between the colonial state and the landed elite of British India's countryside. This had led the state to strengthen the landed class through state patronage at the cost of developing an urban, dynamic bourgeoisie. Indeed, the two main political parties – the Congress in India and the Muslim League in Pakistan – both emerged from colonial rule with a high dependence on 'locally dominant rural elites' (Harriss 1989, 71; Alavi 2002). Since then, however, traditional landed elites have lost much of their political predominance in India, but not in Pakistan. Sketching out how this difference evolved is a good way to identify the early factors that contributed to the continuing political power of the landed classes in Pakistan.

While Moore correctly identified a symbiotic relationship between the colonial state and the rural landed elite of India, he seems to have understated the role of other classes, above all, the industrial capitalists. Even under colonial rule, India had begun to develop an urban, industrial capitalist class that became quite powerful by the time of independence in 1947. This class constituted an important part of the Congress party, within which it funded politics and the nationalist movement that the party led for Indian independence (Alavi 1989, 17). In the Muslim-majority areas that came to constitute East and West Pakistan after partition, the urban industrial class was comparatively weak and

was unable to fund either the Muslim League or its movement for Pakistan. The Muslim League, instead, came to be centred on the urban 'salariat'[22]– which would later dominate the civil bureaucracy in both countries – and 'big landowners, especially of the Punjab' (Alavi 1989, 18). Though the rural landed elite was also a part of the Congress, they were essentially 'junior partners'.

The difference in the importance of landed groups within the two parties meant that while India instituted land reforms soon after independence, these were avoided in Pakistan. India's land reforms reduced the landed elite's centrality in post-independence politics and opened up the space for the emergence of new political groups and leaders (Banerjee and Iyer 2005). In Pakistan, the landed class remained central within the Muslim League and ensured that land reforms were not on the agenda. The new country's initial years were difficult and unstable. The Muslim League did not have a large support base in the provinces that now constituted Pakistan. Its main support through the Pakistan movement had come from the Muslim populations of Hindu-majority states that were now in India. Support from Muslim majority states (that were now part of the new country) had come too close to partition in 1947 to be deeply entrenched and was based less on ideology and more on strategic alliances with locally powerful groups, such as the landlords of Punjab. While the party struggled with establishing the basic framework of the new state, it had little time to think about broadening its support base. Punjab's landlords, who had joined the Muslim League just in time to help it seal the deal on the creation of Pakistan during the 1946 elections, now proved equally useful in maintaining control of the countryside and ensuring revenue and produce – much the same role they had played under colonial rule. This helped them transition into becoming an important component of the governing class of the new state and the question of land reforms that would upset this equilibrium was clearly off the table for the Muslim League. When Mian Iftikharuddin, a leader of the Muslim League in Punjab and a minister in the new cabinet, proposed land reforms to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in 1950 – both for reasons of social justice and to support incoming refugees with requisite resources – the government not only rejected his proposal but also dismissed him from the party soon after for trying to rally support for such reforms across the Punjabi countryside (Saeed 2011; Jalal 2014; Chattha 2016).

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22 A term Alavi uses for the salaried class of Muslim government servants, especially those in the Hindu-majority parts of northern India that came to form the core of the Pakistan movement. Alavi argues that having seen a diminution in its share of jobs in pre-partition India, the Muslim salariat saw that it stood to gain most from the creation of a new state.

The need to 'enforce central authority over provinces where the Muslim League's organizational machinery was virtually non-existent' also had the party turn to the bureaucracy for support (Jalal 1994, 250). This was similar to the Congress's reliance on the administrative wing of the state in the years after independence, but with the crucial difference that the Congress's organisational machinery, built during a mass nationalist movement, was far more broad-based. This allowed it to strike a balance with both the Indian bureaucracy and the military in which it retained the upper hand. Without such an organisational structure, the Muslim League lost out to the unusually large salariat that had now moved to Pakistan's capital, Karachi, and dominated the state structure from which it drew its power as a class.[23]

The salariat's need to maintain control of the state vis-à-vis political institutions was underpinned by the power struggle between West and East Pakistan. Right from the beginning the population of the western half dominated the army and bureaucracy, but East Pakistan had the demographic majority. 'In any representative political system, the Bengalis [of East Pakistan] would dominate power at the centre' (Jalal 1994, 251). Civil and military officers of the western wing, therefore, decided to avoid elections altogether by carrying out the bureaucracy-assisted military coup of 1958, which brought Pakistan's first military regime under General Ayub Khan to power. This coup decidedly shifted the balance of power away from the eastern province, and also away from political parties towards what has since been known as the 'military–bureaucratic oligarchy' in Pakistan (Alavi 1989, 18; Sayeed 1980; Gardezi 1983).

The rural landed elite had an important role to play within this oligarchy as well, and the military regime instituted two sets of reforms that further entrenched the power of this class. The first of these, ironically, were land reforms in 1959. These were an attempt to broaden the constituency of the regime by redistributing assets from the landed gentry to the middle farmers, who provided the bulk of Ayub's support. The reforms were not aimed at empowering poorer rural classes – small peasants, landless artisans and agricultural labourers. About 100,000 acres that had been developed by tenants under the promise of eventual ownership were auctioned off instead to existing landowners, an action that dislodged 200,000 tenants (Ali 1970, 119). Many of the beneficiaries of these reforms were also former military and civil officers who received resumed land

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23 Details of this are covered by, Ali (1970), Alavi (1989), Jalal (1995), Diamond (2000), Haqqani (2005) and Bhave and Kingston (2010).

at extremely low prices (Jalal 1994, 160). Ali (1970 95) suggests that Ayub's land reforms were an attempt not at equality amongst peasants but equality amongst landlords. He argues that, in fact, these reforms quelled a growing unrest in the countryside that could have led to a peasant uprising, and managed to further entrench the landlords. It was also during Ayub's military regime that the army became a major landholder itself.

In the same year as the land reforms, Ayub Khan also introduced political reforms. This was the Basic Democracies system of local government elections, the aim of which was to introduce a limited and controlled semi-democratic system. Elections held under this political structure in 1959 and 1964 created a restricted franchise that put political power entirely in the hands of the landed class. Jalal (1994, 159) called Basic Democracies the 'politics of exclusion', based on the same doctrine of 'functional inequality' as the land reforms. The system created a link of political patronage between military dictators and the landed elite, and this coalition worked actively to further undermine the development of representative political institutions.

Meanwhile in India, the spaces created by the waning influence of landed groups were gradually filled by political actors led by the logic of electoral majorities. New political parties emerged that mobilised the previously marginalised lowest caste groups as their main support base.[24] Kaviraj (2000a, 156) points out that electoral politics made caste more salient as an identity; 'instead of dying obediently with the introduction of elective mechanisms, caste groups simply adapted to new demands, turning caste itself into the basis of a search for majorities'. Gough (1977, 12) argues that much of this mobilisation was class-based, pointing out that 'radical political parties have organised first middle peasants and then landless laborers and other propertyless workers against the landlords, the rich peasants, and the bigger merchants and other owners of property'.

A similar space for the electoral logic of majorities and the mobilisation of the rural poor never opened up in West Pakistan during these early years. Its political parties had little room in which to develop and organise under the 'military–bureaucratic oligarchy' (Alavi 1972b, 59). So, while the Congress party consolidated its political predominance in India under Nehru, the Muslim League lost out to non-elected state institutions early on.[25] By most accounts

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24   See, for example, Beteille (1971), Kaviraj (2000b), Hassan (2000) and Kohli (2001).

25   The Awami Muslim League had a different trajectory in East Pakistan, where the constant tensions

the original party ceased to exist during Ayub Khan's regime in the 1960s,[26] and other parties were similarly undermined and manipulated, including the National Awami Party (NAP) and the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP).

And so, the two neighbours emerged from the first two decades of independence with very different political institutions. India had travelled a distance towards establishing a vibrant and stable democracy by the end of the 1960s, within which its rural poor were organised by various political parties. Pakistan, on the other hand, had entrenched a system in which the rural poor were represented by the traditional landed elite within a limited form of local democracy, and real power lay with non-elected institutions of the state.

Challenging landed power: The rise of class and party identification, 1970–77

Something was changing in the countryside by 1970. Analyses of rural Punjabi society post-independence had stratified it by caste and lineage, or *quom*s and *biradari*s, which had been the social logic of colonial village settlement patterns (Inayatullah 1963). Scholars writing in the 1970s, however, started to discuss rural Punjab in terms of class, not caste, and argued that 'social stratification is a matter of economic class more than of caste or kinship groups' and that 'political behaviour is largely motivated by economic considerations' (Ahmad 1972, 73). Others that made similar points were Gough (1977) and Alavi, who insisted that class conflict[27] was replacing factional (kinship-based) conflict in the villages of Punjab (1973). Ahmad (1972) went so far as to posit the two lowest rural classes – the 'poor peasants' and the 'peasant proletariat'– as forces for revolutionary change. This hope and shift in perspective coincided with the rise of a new political party – Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

Ayub's 'politics of exclusion', pursued by the regime through the 1960s, resulted in rising unrest and opposition. In 1968, discontent erupted into a

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with the western wing strengthened the local support base of the party and made it more resistant to non-elected state institutions.

26 It is confusing to trace the party's history, given that every political party created by a military leader in Pakistan has used this name in some form because of its resonance with voters as the party of Jinnah.

27 This referred to the conflict in rural areas between those who owned land and those who did not (tenants, artisans and labour).

movement that was led by 'labour militancy and student radicalism' and which demanded universal adult franchise and parliamentary democracy (Jalal 1994, 160). The student and labour movement brought down the military regime of Ayub Khan, and led eventually to elections in 1970 and Pakistan's first elected parliament. The newly created PPP swept to power in West Pakistan and in Punjab on a platform of *masawat* (literally, equality) in these elections.[28] It won by 'cobbling together a loose coalition of divergent social and economic interests' that included, among others, 'the Punjabi rural underprivileged – small landlords cum tenant farmers, landless field labourers, and menials' (Jalal 1994, 162). The election 'threw up elements from the lower and middle social strata who, having been radicalised by the politics of exclusion and the economics of functional inequality [under Ayub Khan], now wanted to capture the PPP, and by extension, the political arms of the state' (Jalal 1994, 163). Rouse supports the same view, in that 'for the first time in Pakistani history, the producing classes saw state power as central in affecting change in their status' (1983, 780).

The military regime of Yahya Khan, under whom the 1970 election was held,[29] had expected that '*biradari*, century-old rural relations, traditions, the hold of certain establishment families and not mere crowds at public meetings will be the deciding factor at the polls' (*Morning News* [Dhaka] article in Jones 2003, 257). But the crowds at the PPP's public meetings did indeed convert their support into votes on election day and all other traditional forms of political organisation and alignment were defeated. Jones's (2003) study of the 1970 election casts rural Pakistani voters as citizens who prioritised a class identity over other social groupings and voted along ideological lines in support of a political party and its manifesto. He points out that in this election Zulfiqar Bhutto

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28 In East Pakistan, the Awami Muslim League led by Mujib ur Rahman won 160 of 162 seats, and thus also the majority of the total 300 seats of the national parliament. However, it was not allowed to form government because of decades of denying the eastern wing any real political power and because the party did not have a single seat in West Pakistan. Bhutto demanded a coalition government but Rahman refused to accept this, given his party's clear majority. A lack of agreement across the parties and the military government led to protests and demonstrations in East Pakistan, a brutal crackdown by the army and the eventual separation of East Pakistan to form Bangladesh in December 1971.

29 After Ayub Khan had to step down during the movement of 1968, he handed power to another general, Yahya Khan, who announced and oversaw the 1970 election and the subsequent civil war in East Pakistan, before handing power to Bhutto in December 1971.

> … led his Pakistan People's Party to victory … by galvanising the common man behind his programme of Islamic Socialism and promise of *roti, kapra, makan* ('bread, clothing, housing'). Never before had the rural peasant or urban worker so broken with his customary leadership, the rural landlord and the urban union godfather, to assert his independent political rights as he did in 1970. (2003, 2)

The PPP's class-based vote not only rendered feudal control of rural voters ineffective but also 'finally "shattered" the *biradari* system, at least insofar as its customary political functions are concerned' (Jones 2003, 331). Baxter (1974, 28) points out that the PPP came out of nowhere in the 1970 election to beat all 'feudals', and that 'no member of the rural elite can find much pleasure in the results of the 1970 elections … [because] as a group the rural elite was badly beaten and this by a group largely comprising unknowns'. The landed elite had stayed away from the PPP in the 1970 election, based largely on the fact that they had not expected to be defeated so readily by a new political force in its first ever election. It seems that even Bhutto himself had not expected that his party would get more than 35–40 of the total 138 West Pakistan seats in the National Assembly (Jones 2003, 258). What he got instead were 81 seats, or almost 60 per cent of the mandate in West Pakistan, and over 75 per cent in Punjab.

The main division that split voters in the 1970 election was land – those who had it voted against the PPP and those who did not have it voted for it, earning the PPP the label of 'party of the poor' (Wilder 1999; Jones 2003). Through the initial years of the PPP regime,

> small peasant proprietors, tenants, and field labourers believed that Bhutto had released them from the grasp of oppressive landlords who, while managing to evade the PPP's land reforms, had nevertheless been forced to 'part with some of their feudal perks' and 'overlords mentality', which was 'by no means a small achievement'. (*Viewpoint*, 28 August 1977, 16, in Jalal 1994, 171)

Though Bhutto vacillated often in his public speeches on the extent of socialism or revolution that he supported, his election campaign statements, such as '[the] present movement would not be successful until the worker owns his factory and the tenant the land he cultivates',[30] earned him a large constituency within urban labourers and the rural peasantry (Jones 2003, 239). As one respondent,

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30 Quoted in Jones (2003) from the periodical *Azad* (November 1970).

an agricultural labourer, put it to me years later during a field interview in 2007, 'Pakistan was liberated in 1947 by Jinnah. We [the poor] were liberated in 1970 by Bhutto.'

Much of this support was the result of a successful rural campaign by the 'Punjab Left', a faction within the party led by one of the leading figures of PPP's early years, Sheikh Rashid. Party workers under Rashid campaigned in villages directly with tenants and agricultural labourers, and maintained a vehement stance focused on the exclusion of all 'undesirable' landed elements from the PPP. Though the Punjab Left was not entirely successful in keeping the PPP free of landed groups – given that Bhutto himself was a large landlord, and many large landholders from his native Sindh had joined the PPP early on – it did manage to keep them out in Punjab to the extent that by the time of the election, almost half of the party leaders were political newcomers. Rural populations that had until then been described as an unsophisticated and uneducated electorate, to whose 'genius' democracy was not suited,[31] responded overwhelmingly to the PPP's new political candidates when they appealed directly to them and not to their landed lords. This made some analysts of the time hopeful that 'one might conclude that the day of the rural elite control of government in the Punjab has ended' and that 'the rural elite, obviously, does better in limited or controlled elections, as in those prior to independence or those during the Ayub period' (Baxter 1974, 28).

It was not just through politics that Bhutto's regime attacked the landed. Soon after coming to power in 1971 Bhutto instituted Pakistan's second set of land reforms, which had a more radical aim than the first. His party's manifesto made this clear by stating,

> West Pakistani owners of large estates, the feudal lords, constitute a formidable obstacle to progress. Not only by virtue of their wealth, but on account of their hold over their tenants and the neighbouring peasantry, they yield considerable power and are, even at present, a major political force … The breaking-up of the large estates to destroy the power of the feudal land owners is a national necessity that will have to be carried out through practical measures. (PPP Manifesto, 1970, in Shafqat 1997, 146)

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31 A phrase originally used by President Iskander Mirza in 1958 as an immediate precursor to Ayub Khan's Martial Law regime. He used Pakistan's low literacy rate to suggest that the 1956 Constitution was creating problems by asking for elections and democracy. The same sentiment was later also attributed to General Ayub Khan, who used it as a justification for his model of controlled democracy.

Bhutto, like Ayub, imposed ceilings on landholdings but reduced these from 500 acres of irrigated land and 1,000 acres of unirrigated land in Ayub's reforms to 100 acres and 200 acres respectively by the time of the final round of reforms in 1977. More importantly, 'land was to be resumed without compensation and it was also to be distributed to tenants free of cost' (Sayeed 1975, 55). Also, public officials (excluding members of the armed forces) could keep no more than 100 acres of the land that they had received from the Ayub government. The reforms also extended to revenue payments, in that landowners with land below 12 acres of irrigated land or 25 acres of unirrigated land were exempted from the payment of land revenue and other land-based revenue assessments. This reform in itself benefited more than five million farmers in Punjab (Sayeed 1980, 92).

Land reforms were accompanied by tenancy reforms that sought to protect tenancy rights and livelihoods, and included a law against *bedakhali,* or the eviction of tenants. Other measures such as the reiteration of the abolishment of *begaar*,[32] which Ayub had implemented, and the seizure by state of illegally occupied land were also instituted (Shafqat 1997). These reforms were strengthened by a change in attitude of various state departments. For example, when 'soon after the 1970s elections, rural lords reacted to the PPP's promise to give land to the tillers by allying with local state functionaries to carry out a series of tenant evictions' landlords found that the judiciary had become very receptive to litigations by tenants concerning evictions and coercion (Jalal 1994, 162). Out of the cases of evictions registered in Punjab, 70 per cent of the judgements ordered the restoration of tenants (Herring 1983, 117). Herring also claims that evictions themselves may have been constrained to some limited extent by increased tenant militancy that in itself was a result of the 'development of political and social consciousness among tenants in rural Pakistan' during this period (Herring 1983, 116).

In 1976, a National Charter for Peasants was added to the list of reforms under which all cultivable land owned by the state was to be distributed to peasants living below subsistence levels (Shafqat 1997, 152). However, as far as peasants and labourers are concerned, the most dramatic reform with the most lasting impact turned out to be the homestead reforms introduced at about the same time, under which state land within the village settlements was

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32 Corvée, or a day's unpaid labour performed by a subject on the demand of a landlord.

turned into residential schemes of 5-*marla*[33] plots. These plots were allotted to about 600,000 applicants in Punjab that included artisans, farm labourers, and tenants (Sayeed 1975). Besides this, in Proprietary villages, where most of the residential land was owned by members of landowning families, homestead land was confiscated by the state and handed over to those who were resident on it through the issuance of formal certificates that clearly stated the new ownership and right of residence of these tenants and labourers. This represented a dramatic change because prior to this landless groups lived under the constant threat of eviction and were, therefore, in a position of complete dependence. They were expected to offer *begaar* in return for their homesteads and were also expected to demonstrate total subordination to any other demands made by landlords. With the threat of eviction removed, a considerable degree of personal freedom and empowerment was allowed to these groups.[34]

Despite all this, the impact of Bhutto's reforms was limited by various loopholes in the land reform laws that were exploited by landlords to hold on to their assets. Since the ceiling was on individuals rather than on families, landlords transferred land to family members, so that in the end only about 2 per cent of the total arable land was distributed, which affected 2,298 landlords and 88,582 tenants and small peasants (Syed 1992, 130). They also carried out large-scale evictions. Many of these were contested in court where rulings often went against landlords, but enduring linkages between state officials and the landed elite were exploited so that land was actually restored to tenants in very few cases. Landlords also handed over bad quality, unproductive land so that there was little change in rural poverty statistics, though some literature does insist that the various reforms of this time combined to double cultivators' income in Sindh (Sayeed 1980, 93).

The debate around the impact of Bhutto's reforms remains contentious. The PPP under Bhutto had sought to end 'feudalism' in Pakistan by setting land ceilings and instituting related agrarian reforms. However, both Shafqat (1997) and Herring (1983) point out that the causal link between setting land ceilings and the dismantling of feudalism is weak, given that feudalism is also based on the social and political control of the landless by the landed. Baxter (1974,

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33 5 *marla*s equal 126.5 square metres. A *marla* is a traditional unit of land measurement in South Asia. 20 *marla*s = 1 *kanal*, and 8 *kanal*s = 1 acre. Under British rule the *marla* was standardised to the equivalent of 25.3 square metres.

34 Various other governments in the 1980s and 1990s later continued this policy of issuing homestead ownership certificates to village residents.

28) had warned that the consolidation of such substantial political changes needed more time and that 'only another election held on the terms of those in 1970 can determine the future of the landed aristocracy – and whether the PPP has redeemed its pledge to end "feudal" power in politics'. However, the next election was not held on the same terms or with the same populist fervour. By the time the 1977 election rolled around, Bhutto had changed his bias from small landholders, peasants and labourers to larger landlords and moderate middle-roaders in both urban and rural areas. He gave a large proportion of party tickets to 'members of influential landed families, many of whom had been defeated by the PPP's relatively unknown candidates in the 1970 elections' (Jalal 1994, 169). Most analyses of the reforms of this period, therefore, conclude that they had little impact in terms of reducing ties of dependence between landlords and other rural classes (Hussain 1979; Alavi 1983; Shafqat 1997). What little had changed suffered a reversal after General Zia-ul-Haq came to power in 1977.

Despite this, there appears to be a consensus in the literature that this period represented the greatest challenge in Pakistan's history to the political and social power of rural landlords. According to Sayeed (1980, 93), 'Bhutto's great contribution was that he had aroused both a new hope and political consciousness among these classes [poor peasants, tenants, artisans and farm labour] that, given certain decisive policies on the part of the government, their lot could improve'. Jalal (1994) argued that the 1970s led to a realisation amongst landed classes that political alignments that ignored the rural middle and lower classes were no longer feasible. Jones summarises the impact of the PPP's 1970 campaign by pointing out that '… the political map of Punjab had altered and that the countryside was no longer a place where vast bodies of politically inert folk would passively support their traditional leaders' (2003, 243). The processes that allowed this to happen had started to consolidate in the protests and demonstrations that brought down Ayub Khan's military regime, but it was under the PPP government that this social uprising translated into political power for groups that had previously been marginalised. This period also marked the point of transition from 'the passing age of elite politics' to a 'new age of mass politics' in Pakistan (Jones 2003, 7). Another effect – as evidenced by the fact that by the end of Bhutto's regime the landed elite of Punjab were filling the PPP's ranks in droves – was that the political party had replaced, at least briefly, the landed power of the rural elite as the primary force in rural politics. The impact of these national events on rural populations

becomes clearer when we look at how they affected political behaviour and socio-economic relations within villages in Chapter 3.

Re-emergence of the landed elite
as a political force: 1977 onwards

Many of the limitations that Bhutto's government had placed on landed power disappeared when General Zia-ul-Haq overthrew Bhutto in a military coup soon after the 1977 election, using as an excuse the anti-government urban riots that had broken out over election rigging allegations. The need for support and a constituency made Zia reach out to 'bigger fish' in rural areas, and thus he pledged to protect the interests and property of the landed elite, and to stop the last round of land reforms that had gone into the pipeline at the end of Bhutto's regime (Jalal 1999, 322). Under Zia's rule the land reform agenda was dropped and landowners were able to keep large holdings without fear of redistribution, to add to their existing holdings, and even to recover some of the land lost under Bhutto. State departments, especially the judiciary that had been sympathetic to the claims and issues of tenants and labour under Bhutto, reverted to siding with the landed elite and many tenancy claims based on the tenancy reforms of the 1970s were now thrown out of the courts. Successive governments after Zia either completely ignored the issue of land reforms and redistribution, as the governments of both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif did in the 1990s, or actively sought to reverse the reforms, as General Musharraf's military government did in the 2000s when he allowed the ownership of large farms in order to provide incentives for the corporatisation of agriculture (Khan 2004, 6).

Zia banned political parties, repressed all party-based political activities, and started a campaign to depoliticise the rural and urban poor. Compared to Bhutto's slogans that had centred on the political empowerment of marginalised groups, the military regime's mantra was Islamisation, and in this it built its main constituency not around the poor, but around the urban middle and lower-middle classes of traders, merchants and *aarthi*s[35] (Jalal 1994, 173). Zia had promised parliamentary elections when he took over in 1977, but instead he held local government elections two years later in 1979 on a non-party basis. In the absence of political parties, candidates in these elections turned once again to the other readily available forms of political organisation and mobilisation

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35 A middleman in the trade of agricultural produce.

– *biradari*-based networks and the local influence of the landed elite – to win their seats for district councils.

Since Zia had only this tier of electoral politics to rely on for legitimacy, he gave district councils considerable power to raise and spend money, turning them quickly into an attractive source of political patronage. The two rounds of local government elections held in 1979–80 and 1983 introduced an era of fierce local electoral competition between individual power holders within a decentralised structure of political clientelism in which political parties were missing (Cheema and Khan Mohmand 2003). Politics, thus, came to revolve around personalities and not parties.

Under pressure, Zia finally had to announce Provincial and National Assembly elections in 1985, eight years after coming to power. These too were held on a non-party basis. Zia not only banned political parties in the 1985 elections, but also excluded many of their members from the electoral race.34 This disqualified most politicians that had risen through the politics of the 1970s and meant that the new assemblies under the military regime were captured by local government politicians from the district councils. Nearly half of all elected to the Punjab Assembly were sitting local councillors. This transplanted the logic of local forms of political organisation around influential landed elites and *biradari* networks to the higher tiers, and in so doing, strengthened the personalisation of politics around prominent individuals and social networks (Cheema and Khan Mohmand 2003). Gilmartin argues that the 'importance of *biradari* grew hand in hand with the increasingly heavy hand of state control under Zia' (1994b, 36). The outcome of the 1985 election was determined largely by 'ties to clan, tribe, or *biradari* and feudal social bases' (Rais 1985 in Wilder 1999, 183), and the national parliament emerged from the election as a politically fragmented body built around local patronage networks.[36] In the words of Mahbub ul Haq, Zia's Finance Minister, during the 1985 National Assembly's first budget session, 'We don't have one party, or ten parties … we have two hundred parties. Each member of the assembly considers himself responsible only to himself'.[37]

Consistent measures to weaken political parties through the Zia era meant

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36 Jalal suggests that this kept Zia's rural landed allies happy, who wanted access to political power without the imposed discipline of an external party structure (1999, 322).

37 Interview with *Overseas Mashriq* on 27 June 1985, quoted in Cheema and Khan Mohmand (2003, 10).

that the tendency towards the localisation and personalisation of politics carried on even after party-based national elections were revived in 1988 after Zia's death in a plane crash. Bhutto's daughter, Benazir, recently returned from exile abroad, won the 1988 election amid hope that this would mean a return to the politics of the 1970s. But much had changed through the Zia era, including the entrenchment of the army's role and interest in politics. Military interference in electoral politics led to an incredibly unstable political era through the 1990s. Four national elections were held during this 11-year period. Benazir Bhutto's PPP and Nawaz Sharif's PML-N[38] came to power twice each, one after another, and ruled over short-lived, unstable governments. PPP won the 1988 and 1993 elections, while PML-N won the 1990[39] and 1997 elections. Each government was dismissed before it could complete its term by different Presidents on corruption charges, using one of a number of Constitutional amendments[40] introduced by Zia to circumscribe and control political parties.

Despite a return to civilian rule, this period did little to strengthen political parties. Hasnain (2008, 146) suggests that some of the responsibility for this lay with parties themselves, in that even the most established party of the time, the PPP, invested little in strengthening its internal organisational structure:

> Party organisation was never high on the agenda of the PPP under Benazir Bhutto in the 1980s and 1990s. One factor was the absence of internal party elections. Instead, the party organisation was highly personalised, with people close to the leadership being appointed to key posts, as opposed to being elected from amongst the party membership. This personalisation promoted factionalism.

With weak internal structures, political parties continued to rely heavily on the individual power and networks of local influentials. Many of these were, of course, the old rural landed elite that had been the target of Bhutto's early politics, but who had joined the ranks of the PPP by the time of the

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38 Most Muslim League factions withered away through the Zia years. After the 1985 election, however, a new configuration of the party came into being, headed by Zia's protege, Nawaz Sharif, who had risen to prominence as first the nominated Finance Minister of Punjab, and then after the 1985 election as the Chief Minister of Punjab. When party-based elections were restored in 1988 after the death of Zia, Sharif's party provided the main opposition to the PPP.

39 The PML-N headed a coalition of parties in this and the 1988 elections, known as the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI), while the PPP was at the head of the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) in 1990.

40 This particular amendment was Article 58-2(B), which provided the President with the power to dismiss elected assemblies.

1977 election in what Jones terms the 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em' culture of Punjabi politics (2003, 454).

He notes,

> Though their traditional authority had been challenged, often successfully, in the 1970 elections, the notable and gentry groups soon proved their residual authority to be remarkably resilient. They still had the best access to the district and provincial bureaucracies, often through personal connections with relatives and school chums in the upper bureaucracy, and could play the game of 'brokerage' far more effectively … than PPP officeholders who had no social access to elite circles. They used these contacts to rebuild their influence, getting local petitioners jobs, transfers, promotions, more canal water, agricultural loads, fertilizer, tubewell connections, etc. (2003, 454)

Wilder notes that the tendency to vote in response to targeted material inducements – popularly known as *thana katcheri kee siyasat* (literally, politics of access to the police and courts) – became stronger with each successive election through the 1990s. In fact, he argues that factionalism in Punjab – often referred to as its most potent form of local political activity – could now be trumped by a record of delivery. He quotes a politician to explain this: 'All dharas [factions] disappear if I have given them the delivery of electricity or roads. All the dharas are there for local feuds but if I've done a lot of development everyone will vote for me' (1999, 197). *Biradari*-ism too continued to play a role, especially in the issuance of tickets to party candidates. In the 1993 elections, most of the candidates of the two main parties, the PPP and PML-N, represented the dominant *biradari*s of their constituencies.

Interestingly, the strengthening of clientelist politics in the 1990s revived political parties in Punjab. This was also true of rural areas. The reason for this was simple – patrons could only provide services (such as electricity, roads or schools) and benefits (such as public jobs) if they were elected or connected to elected politicians, preferably those who were part of the winning party (Wilder 1999). This played out particularly strong during the four elections of the 1990s when the fluidity of vote bases became evident. Based on the perception that each government was not dismissed simply to be brought back into power by the 'establishment',[41] voters swung in large numbers between the PPP and the PML-N looking for services, in what came to be seen as an anti-incumbency bias especially in Punjab.

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41 In Pakistani popular perception, it is the 'establishment' that really runs politics, a word that is used to refer largely to the army and the intelligence agencies.

While this political clientelism heralded the breaking down of old ties of dependence and kinship and led to the re-emergence of political parties, it did not allow these parties to move towards programmatic politics. Election campaigns came to focus squarely on a record of local, targeted delivery. Wilder pointed out that even the Chief Minister of Punjab's office functions as a personal *darbar* (royal court), in which his Political Secretary personally listens to individual requests and hands out the all-important 'chit' (recommendation) or makes calls to various government departments on behalf of supplicants. This, he argues, shows a recognition even on the part of the highest office in the province that its legitimacy is based on how much it can deliver to each voter and not on the quality of its policy-making (1999, 199). However, he also quotes another politician to indicate that clientelism's role as the primary force in Punjab's politics may well be exaggerated.

> Every MNA [Member of the National Assembly] has a constituency of approximately half a million [voters]. There is a limit to the number of jobs an MNA can create, how many postings and transfers he can arrange, how many villages he can electrify and develop, etc. (1999, 209)

What emerged in Punjab through the 1990s was essentially a two-party system in which all electoral competition was centred around the PPP and the PML-N, with various smaller parties aligned to one or the other (Table 2.1). The 1990s managed to entrench party politics in Pakistan, but the effect of the Zia years was evident in the weak structure of these parties and in the personalised support bases of prominent politicians within them.

Table 2.1   Number of seats won by the main political parties (1970–2018)

	1970	1977	1988	1990	1993	1997	2002	2008	2013	2018
PPP and PPP-led alliances	81	155	102	45	95	19	80	125	46	54
PML and PML-led alliances	11	37	55	104	70	139	18	92	188	85
PML-Q	–	–	–	–	–	–	118	50	2	5
PTI	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	33	156
All others combined	46	25	50	58	42	49	125	75	73	42
Total	138	216	207	207	207	207	342	342	342	342

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan.

General Pervez Musharraf overthrew Nawaz Sharif in a dramatic coup in October 1999 to take over as Pakistan's third military ruler,[42] and attempted, at least for the initial years, to rule without parliament or holding national elections. Like Generals Ayub and Zia before him, he attempted to diffuse pressure by introducing local government elections, once again on a non-party basis.[43] These elections were held in 2001 and 2005, and they created a loyal cadre of local politicians to lend the military regime legitimacy. These elections again strengthened the old local power blocs and networks. Keefer, Narayan and Vishwanath (2003, 14) estimate that up to 70 per cent of seats at the local level were won by the 'rural gentry'. Bari and Khan (2001) point out that a majority of elected district mayors owned land in access of 25 acres and that there was a positive correlation between the size of land ownership and the probability of success in the mayoral elections. While government reports of the time claimed that the elections had managed to clean out Pakistani politics by removing old politicians and replacing them with 'young blood', Manning et al. (2003, 27) found that '30 per cent of district *nazim*s (mayors) in Punjab were former MNAs or MPAs, and approximately 90 per cent belonged to established political families'. Landed elites that had moved up from Zia's district councils to the parliaments of the 1990s now moved back down to the districts, where real power lay once again in Musharraf's regime. Regardless of the political structure, landed elites seemed to find seats to occupy.

Following in Zia's footsteps, Musharraf attempted to neutralise political opposition by considerably weakening the PPP and the PML-N, both of whose leaders – Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, respectively – spent the entire Musharraf era in exile outside Pakistan. However, unlike those before him, Musharraf was unable to avoid national and provincial elections for very long or keep political parties out of national politics. He finally called a national election for October 2002, exactly three years since he took power. Since the election was unavoidable, and would also need to be held on a party basis in a largely fair and free manner under both local and international scrutiny, Musharraf created a new party out of a splinter group of the PML-N, called

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42 Musharraf deposed Prime Minister Sharif while still on a flight back home from Sri Lanka, even as Sharif attempted to fire Musharraf the Chief of the army before his flight could touch down at Karachi airport. Musharraf won the day and landed at the airport as the new ruler of the country, with only the last of the fuel remaining in the plane's tank.

43 For an explanation for why only military dictators have held local government elections in Pakistan (that is, until those in 2015–16), see Cheema and Khan Mohmand (2003).

the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q). The 2002 election was fought mainly between the three parties – the PPP, PML-N and the PML-Q – and though the PPP won the election, PML-Q formed the government. This was accomplished through various political manipulations – including the selective disqualification of politicians based on new educational criteria, the registration of new corruption cases, arrests and incarcerations on various charges, and offering PML-Q membership as a way to avoid any of the above – but mainly by convincing a group of PPP parliamentarians to break away and join the PML-Q, post election, in order to reduce the PPP's majority in the National Assembly. The most dramatic defection within this group was that of a PPP politician who had run on an anti-army platform in Okara, a largely rural constituency that was witnessing a tenants' uprising against forced evictions from army-owned farms. After winning the election on a PPP ticket and a promise to help the tenants fight for their rights of occupancy and ownership, the politician not only split from the PPP to join Musharraf's military regime but also went on to become the new Defence Minister in his cabinet.

Through Musharraf's time, state patronage flowed down to constituencies either through the PML-Q or through the elected tier of local governments that were associated with the Presidency itself. Musharraf strengthened this association by coming in strongly on the side of local government officials in conflicts between the various tiers of government. PML-Q's term in power was marked largely by a strengthening of political clientelism, which was evident even in the run up to the 2008 election when a BBC article[44] on feudalism quoted a local journalist as follows:

> What has changed now is that people tend to wait till the end to see who is most likely to win. Then they vote for that guy in droves … so that it ensures that they will have some access to the 'station and katchery (courts)' … What is seen as a basic right – access to justice – is used as a crude but very effective electioneering tool.

Once Musharraf's power started to wane in the wake of a popular movement against him in 2007 – led largely by lawyers protesting the unceremonious ousting of the Chief Justice by Musharraf – the PML-Q could not hold its own. In fact, the adage that had been used for the PPP in the 1970s – that even a lamp-post would have won had it had a PPP ticket – was used again to describe how any candidate associated with the PML-Q and Musharraf would lose the

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44 'Feudal Shadow over Pakistan Elections' (12 February 2008), available at www.news.bbc.co.uk.

2008 election. The party won only 50 seats and by the following election in 2013, it had been reduced to only 2 seats in parliament.

Six weeks before the election in February 2008, Benazir Bhutto, recently returned from exile once again, was assassinated at a campaign rally in Rawalpindi on 27 December 2007. The election was held under tense circumstances and a threat of more violence. Furthermore, it was held under a sitting military President, Musharraf, who was not only opposed to both the main political parties, but whose loyal cadre of local government officials were organising the polls in each district. Fears of machinations in PML-Q's favour were rampant once again and yet both the PPP and the PML-N made a comeback, sharing the vote largely between themselves. The PPP came to power at the centre and the PML-N took over in Punjab. A good part of the result was based on an anti-Musharraf sentiment, but analysts also pointed to the wave of sympathy for the PPP following Benazir Bhutto's assassination, which drove swing and undecided voters in its direction. The fact that both parties had prevailed led many political analysts to talk of a resurgence of party-based identity and voting patterns in Pakistan. Commentaries on the results suggested that the PPP had retained its vote bank amongst lower income, rural and female voters, and that the PML-N now had a fairly stable middle and upper class, urban and male constituency.

The 2008 election marked Pakistan's transition to democracy once again when Musharraf stepped down as President a few months after the election. The PPP government went on to complete its term, but then lost Pakistan's ninth national election in 2013, in which the PML-N scored a landslide victory and returned to power for the third time. The election generated great excitement based on the fact that a democratically elected government had completed a full term, a free and largely fair[45] election was held after the stipulated period and a peaceful transition from one political party to another was achieved without the involvement of the military. Pakistan seemed to finally be moving towards democratisation, at least in terms of electoral politics, and its parties were gaining strength. Wilder's earlier assertion that the rural landed elite had come to realise that 'while parties need strong candidates in rural constituencies, strong candidates increasingly need strong parties to win' (1999, 218) seemed to be truer than before.

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45 A new party, the PTI, contested the results of a few seats in the Punjab, based on irregularities on election day, which led to by-elections for some of these seats.

The 2013 election also saw the exponential rise of a third political force after the demise of the PML-Q. This was the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), led by the country's most popular cricket player, Imran Khan. Khan had only ever won a single seat in parliament before this but rose to compete closely with the PPP in the 2013 election on a platform of *tabdeeli* (change), and an anti-corruption and anti-'feudalism' campaign. Despite this, the party made no significant dent in rural politics, where it remained a largely unknown force in Punjab, but it was able to form government in the northern province of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The party's greatest contribution was a strong campaign to get out the vote – incentivised by the belief that its largest vote bank lies within Pakistan's young voters, an age group that has largely sat out previous elections. This campaign worked. While the average turnout for the eight elections held between 1977 and 2008 was 40 per cent – with the highest being 47 per cent in the 1977 election – a record 50 million voters lined up on 11 May 2013 to vote, bringing the turnout to about 55 per cent. This was despite the fact that members of the Taliban insurgency – responsible for a wave of terrorist attacks across the country – were reported to have distributed pamphlets in various cities threatening violence against those who came out to vote.

The labels of feudalism, *biradari*-ism and clientelism were all thrown about by the media in its coverage of the 2013 election as well, but the general conversation seemed to have shifted decidedly to the role, rhetoric and ideologies of political parties in both urban and rural areas. The resurgence of political parties brought to the fore an emerging pattern within Pakistani politics – regionalism. Each of the three largest parties garnered support mainly in one province – of PPP's 31[46] total seats in the National Assembly, 29 were won in Sindh; 117 of PML-N's 125 seats came from Punjab; and of PTI's 28 total seats, 17 were in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.[47] None of these three parties managed to make their presence felt in the restive Baluchistan province, where a coalition of smaller parties formed government. The fact that Pakistan's political parties have an ethnic support base is not new, but the 2013 election confirmed that the effort of various parties over the last two decades to become national in character and support had not worked well.

This changed to some extent in the 2018 election with PTI's victory. It

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46   These numbers do not factor in the reserved seats for women and minority groups that are allocated after the election, and which make up the totals in Table 3.5.

47   These numbers are for directly contested seats, before the addition of proportionate reserved seats for women and minorities in parliament, which are included in Table 2.1.

won 156 of the total 342 parliamentary seats (compared to 85 for the PML-N and 54 for the PPP), and these came from across the entire country – it won 61 of 141 seats in Punjab, 36 of 51 seats in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, 15 of 61 seats in Sindh, 2 of 16 in Baluchistan, and all 3 seats in the federal capital. In contrast, support for the PML-N was based almost entirely in Punjab, where it won 62 seats (with only an additional 3 in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa), and the bulk of PPP's support came from Sindh (36 seats, with only 6 additional seats in Punjab, and a single one in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa's tribal areas). Provincial assemblies reflected a similar story – PTI formed governments in Punjab and Khyber Puktunkhwa, and was part of a coalition government of small regional parties in Baluchistan, while the PPP came to power in Sindh. PML-N was relegated to the opposition in both Punjab and the centre.

Allegations of the military's interference and engineering dogged PTI's victory, with both analysts and opposition parties suggesting that this was part of the reason behind its strong national performance (see, for example, Afzal 2018 and Barker 2018). Another reason was the sizeable number of defections of 'electable' politicians[48] to the PTI from other parties. About 45 such 'electables' joined the PTI in the months before the election. Many of these were familiar faces from families who knew the 'art of contesting elections',[49] mostly by drawing on networks of local influentials and their vote banks. The expectation was that these defections of experienced politicians with personal vote banks would give PTI an electoral advantage. Interestingly though, only half of these candidates were successful in the election. For example, on each of the five National Assembly seats in Sargodha district, where this book is based, an 'electable' politician defected from one of the other parties to contest the 2018 election on a PTI ticket – and they all lost. PML-N won all five of Sargodha's constituencies, but its candidates were also old 'electables'. Sargodha's is a story of intense electoral competition between dynastic politicians whose fates are now intricately intertwined with the performance of political parties.

Their fates are also equally dependent on the preferences and voting behaviour of the district's predominantly rural voters. With about 260,000 votes polled in each of the five constituencies (an average turnout of 57 per cent), the margin with which each politician won his (all were men) seat was very small

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48 A local term for those with strong support bases of their own, especially in rural parts.

49 A term used by a senior member of the PTI to defend the party's position on bringing in people with no loyalty or ideological connections to the party (Reuters 2018).

– as little as just 279 votes in one constituency.[50] This story was repeated across different parts of Punjab, the province that defines the fate of governments, with PTI and PML-N polling almost equal numbers here – PTI had a vote bank of about 11 million and PML-N's votes equalled 10.5 million. Voters came out in sizeable numbers – some 53 million people in all across the country – in what was a closely contested and genuinely competitive electoral battle (despite the engineering). They came out despite bombs that had targeted electoral rallies and claimed some 150 lives in the run-up to the election; despite incredibly hot and humid July weather; and despite the fact that they had to line up for hours to cast their votes in crowded polling stations that lacked amenities. Why do voters come out to vote in Pakistan's volatile and violent elections, especially when their political agency is severely limited by high socio-economic inequality and the structure of Pakistan's politics? This is the question that concerns us over the subsequent chapters. To answer it, we must shift our lens to a level where we can more clearly observe the motivations of Pakistan's rural voting majority in its political heartland, in the villages of central Punjab.

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50 In the other four constituencies the margins of victory were 823; 8,728; 10,066; and 31,015 votes, still quite small given the size of the vote bank.

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Landed Power in Sahiwal
From Domination to Intermediation*

At the centre of many explanations for Pakistan's unstable democracy remains the landlord, still seemingly in control of his/her constituency, able to deliver the votes to any party that asks and, by extension, in apparent control of the population that makes up the constituency – parties and kinship notwithstanding. How does one reconcile this view with the transformations that have occurred in rural economy, society and politics over the last few decades? Are Punjabi landlords in as much control of their rural constituencies as is suggested? If yes, how have they managed to retain this control, and if not, why then are they still at the centre of Pakistan's political story? I answer these questions in this chapter by returning to Sahiwal[1] village in Sargodha district and tracing its history from the 1960s to the election of 2008.[2] Sahiwal presents a perfect case study in which to investigate these questions because it is home to a landlord family that fits the stereotypical image of the 'feudal' lord with historical landed power that s/he uses to exploit the dependence of landless villagers for political gain – the crafty oligarch of popular discourse in Pakistan.

It is also a good place to gain a unique insight into institutional path dependence – how initial conditions of inequality produce a certain type of local politics, despite socio-economic and political changes over time. Sahiwal was studied in detail by Saghir Ahmad in 1964–65 as the case study for his doctoral dissertation (Ahmad 1977), and then again in 1978–80 by Shahnaz Rouse for the same purpose (Rouse 1988). It is, therefore, the perfect site for a longitudinal study that can provide a unique, micro-level view of the impact of structural changes – such as land reforms and agrarian modernisation – and of national political changes represented by alternating periods of authoritarianism and democratisation on the residents of a village, and on their political and socio-economic relationships with one another.

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* Parts of this chapter have appeared earlier in Shandana Khan Mohmand, 'Losing the Connection: Party-Voter Linkages in Pakistan', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 52, no.1 (2014): 7–31.

1 A pseudonym originally coined by Ahmad and then used by Rouse, not to be confused with the *tehsil* Sahiwal.

2 I look at the 2013 election in Chapter 7.

Armed with the earlier studies, I came to this village with a team of researchers in 2006–07. We knew from Ahmad's and Rouse's studies that Sahiwal had been steadily changing over the decades, but much of what we saw here, such as the village meeting recounted in the initial pages of this book, seemed to support the usual stories about the unfree votes of rural Punjab. How exactly do these two things – steady social, economic and political change, and the continuing power of rural landed groups – continue to coexist? This was our main concern here. Over the next many months we studied Sahiwal in detail, using a mix of ethnographic participant observations, key respondent interviews and extensive quantitative data collection through a full village census and a household survey of almost 35 per cent of the village (201 households). This chapter combines our research with the earlier studies to capture socio-economic and political relationships at three points in time, spread over half a century.

The detailed history of Sahiwal – focused, in particular, on the tension that exists at the local level between institutional pre-conditions of inequality and socio-economic change, manifested as village level politics – provides a segue from national politics to the locally grounded empirical analysis presented in the rest of this book.

Sahiwal in the 1960s: Domination[3]

The village of Sahiwal lies in Sargodha District, about 6 kilometres from the market town of Shahpur Saddar, which is also the *tehsil* headquarters. Sahiwal was given by the colonial government in 1860 as a *zamindari* grant of 4,572 acres to Sarfaraz Khan, who was from an ethnically Pukhtoon chiefly family of another district, for services rendered to the British colonial government against the Sikhs (Rouse 1988) or in suppressing the rebellion of 1857 (Ahmad and Alavi 1974). The family eventually paid a nominal price for the grant and received full ownership rights vested in one man, and through him, in his family and descendants. Sarfaraz Khan was considered an *abadkar*, and as such was allowed revenue concessions in order to encourage him to settle and cultivate the land as quickly as possible. He did this by attracting tenants from agricultural castes from the surrounding areas. Each tenant moved to the village with their own *seip-kammi*s, or artisans, who specialised in various services, such as blacksmiths, barbers, carpenters and water carriers. Each tenant was

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3   This section is based on Ahmad (1972), Ahmad and Alavi (1974) and Ahmad (1977).

given the freedom to occupy as much land as they could clear, prepare and till with their oxen and tools. By 1867 the work was complete and Sahiwal 'began as an acknowledged village with a full set of functionaries and a contractual relationship established between the landlord, farmers and artisans' (Ahmad and Alavi 1974, 138). Sahiwal was managed by the family as one unit until 1920, when a feud between two grandsons of the original grantee allegedly led one to instigate the murder of the other. Since the son of the deceased was not yet old enough to inherit and manage the land, part of the estate passed to the state under the Court of Wards system until 1933, when it was returned to the son of the murdered heir. This split the village into two separate *patti*s,[4] and converted the *zamindari* tenure to a *pattidari*[5] tenure. Since then the village has been divided into two, with each *patti* headed by a single *zamindar maalik*[6] who plays an important role in the economic, social and political life of the village.

Saghir Ahmad came to Sahiwal during Ayub Khan's military regime in 1964 to study the impact of two specific reforms instituted about five years ago by the regime. One of these was the land reform law passed in 1959 that had imposed ceilings on the holdings of large landlords and distributed the land resumed from landlords to landless tenants. The other was the introduction of the Basic Democracies system in the same year, under which local government elections were held for the first time in Pakistan. Each village, if it had between 700 and 1,000 residents over the age of 21, chose a Basic Democrat to be part of a union council.[7] Together, these reforms had promised to redistribute both power and resources across a greater number of people, and to empower poorer groups and include them in the governance of the country. Many analyses of the 1959–60 elections suggested that 'power had reached the masses' (Innayatullah 1962, in Ahmad 1977, 92). Ahmad chose Sahiwal to evaluate, at the most micro level of analysis, the diffusion of power and wealth that had come about because of these two reforms.

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4   Shares.

5   This meant that the village land was controlled separately by the two branches of the family.

6   *Maalik* literally means 'lord'.

7   The heads of the union council were represented on the *tehsil* council, the heads of which sat on the district council. Together, the 80,000 Basic Democrats composed the electoral college for the Presidential elections. This was Ayub's pattern of 'controlled democracy'.

Physical layout and structure

Ahmad described Sahiwal in 1964 as a village of 1,590 residents divided across 274 households, 90 per cent of which were descendants of the original tenants and artisans that moved here a century ago with Sarfaraz Khan. Its only link with the external world was provided by a *tanga*[8] ride across fields or a dirt road to the nearby town of Shahpur. The village, he says, was

> divided into two unequal halves by a main unpaved street. The eastern half contains most of the houses, while the western half consists of a compound containing a few houses … Inside this compound are the landlords' warehouses for storing wheat and cotton, stables for their horses, residential quarters for one of the two landlords, and a two-storey building which serves as a meeting place for villagers and as a guest house for visitors. (1974, 136)

In the rest of the village, all the houses were made of mud. Only three others were *pukka,* or brick houses, which belonged to a family of goldsmiths. The village had two mosques – one for each faction – 'a primary school, and a number of small general shops kept in the shopkeepers' residences' (1974, 137). Most artisans used their residences as their area of work while tenant farmers lived in the village but also built mud huts on their lands, called *dera*s, where they kept their animals and their implements, and where they sometimes also slept at night to keep an eye on things.

When Ahmad arrived in Sahiwal it was owned and headed in its entirety, some 4,572 acres in all, by two of Sarfaraz Khan's descendants, Haji sahib and Khan sahib,[9] both of whom were absentee landlords who controlled their village and their lands through *munshi*s, or managers, and who cultivated their lands through sharecropping arrangements with resident tenant farmers. For strategic reasons, these managers were not from Sahiwal itself and were brought in, instead, from Sarfaraz Khan's ancestral village in Mianwali district. Both Haji sahib and Khan sahib were also the village *lambardar*s,[10] and were,

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8   Horse-drawn carriage.

9   Khan sahib was the grandson of Sarfaraz Khan, and Haji sahib was his great-grandson and the son of the murdered heir. Khan sahib's brother was the one who allegedly instigated the murder of Haji sahib's father. Both of these – Haji sahib and Khan sahib – are pseudonyms coined by Ahmad and later also used by Rouse.

10   The person appointed by the colonial state as responsible for revenue collection, regulation of village affairs and to act as the main intermediary between the state and the village. Very often this was the largest landowner in a village. In most villages the position has become hereditary. In Sahiwal, since there were two separate *patti*s, there were two separate *lambardar*s.

thus, responsible for revenue collection from the village on behalf of the state, a remnant of colonial administrative practice. However, in Sahiwal these two were the only landowners (along with a few other members of their families whose shares they controlled) and, therefore, the only ones responsible for paying revenue. Much of this revenue was financed from tenancy proceeds.

Economic structure and relations

The entire village, its land and its people were divided into two equal halves. Each of the two landlords controlled 2,100 acres, despite the land reforms of 1959. The entire village economy was based on land – in that 95 per cent of the village residents made their living off it. The continuing animosity between the two landlords – based in large measure on the murder of Haji sahib's father at the behest of Khan sahib's brother – and their complete control over the main economic resource of the village meant that all tenants, artisans and village servants worked for, and were aligned with, one or the other landlord, not both.

Within the typical social structure of a Punjabi village, *zamindar quom*s tend to dominate the social hierarchy because of their control over land. In Sahiwal, this dominance lay with the Pukhtoon landlords, who were not part of the traditional Punjabi *biradari* system. The rest of the village was made up of three *quom*s. At the top of the hierarchy were the agricultural castes, or the *zamindar*s, all of whom were involved in agriculture, mostly as tenants. After them came the *kammi*s, who were the village artisans and supported the farmers in their work by making their implements (the *lohar*),[11] repairing their ploughs (the *tirkhan*), weaving their cloth (*jullaha*) and making their shoes (the *mochi*). At the bottom of the hierarchy were the *musalli*s, who were the village sweepers, domestic servants and farm labourers. The tenants were all non-occupancy sharecroppers and divided the produce 50–50 with the landlords. According to the law, 'occupancy tenants become owners of the tenanted land if they occupy it for twelve or more years, while non-occupancy tenants never acquire such a right. A non-occupancy tenant cultivates a piece of land at his landlord's pleasure' (Ahmad 1977, 58). The artisans and *musalli*s worked for *seip*, which meant that they received a portion of the harvest in kind for services

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11 These are names of *biradari*s but quite literally indicate the profession of the group. This was much truer in Ahmad's time than it is now, when the sons and grandsons of these artisans have diversified into other professions. *Lohar* literally means blacksmith, *tirkhan* means carpenter, *jullaha* means weaver and *mochi* means cobbler. Many other such *kammi biradari*s existed in the village that rendered particular services to either the entire village or to specific households.

that they had rendered to the landlord and the *zamindar*s throughout the year. Their transactions with one another were also settled through an exchange of services, so that the *mochi* (cobbler) made shoes for the *nai* (barber) and his family in exchange for getting haircuts for himself and his family.

When Ahmad arrived, this economic structure was entirely unaffected by modernisation or the mechanisation of agriculture. Ploughing and threshing were done by oxen, and harvesting and winnowing by hand-labour, while all fertilizer was animal manure. The main crops were 'wheat, cotton, sugarcane and fodder, with minor cultivation of vegetables, pulses and tobacco' (Ahmad and Alavi 1974, 143). The only changes that had affected Sahiwal's traditional pattern of agriculture were that more cash crops were being grown on the insistence of landlords, which also meant that landlords were now making more decisions, agriculture was getting more commercialised, and the produce – especially that of cotton and sugarcane – was no longer distributed according to traditional divisions within the village but was being sold, instead, to new mills in the area through agents that visited the village. Interestingly, Ahmad found that it was the landlords who were selling to mills while tenants, despite the option of getting a good price, were still exchanging cotton and sugarcane with shopkeepers and *kammi*s – in the first case to establish credit to procure other items of need, and in the second case, to support the traditional sources of livelihood for these groups (1974). Ahmad also noted that both landlords had just recently established their own farms on a small portion of their lands – 200 acres in the case of Haji sahib, and 75 acres in the case of Khan sahib (1977).

Sources of dependence

Access to land defined all relations of production and all livelihoods within the village. The fact that all of this vital resource was owned and controlled by two men placed an incredible amount of power and authority in their hands. This authority was conceptualised in terms of the landlords' ownership not only of the land but also of the village, and with it, of its people. Ahmad was told by residents that the landlords 'are the *maliks* [owners/lords] and we are *reiaya* (subject) or *ghulam* (slave)' (1977, 116).

Dependence also flowed from two other sources. The initial land grant had included not just agricultural land but also the land on which the village was eventually built. This meant that all tenants, artisans and servants had built

their houses on land owned by the landlords. If they were to be evicted from the house, there was usually nowhere else to go, and it effectively translated into expulsion from the village and its community. This was an extremely serious threat, and according to Ahmad's account, always hung over people's heads. Through the ownership of village land the landlords were able to control the lives of not only those who worked directly for them but also of those who worked outside the village, because 'the final authority as to who should live and who should not live in the village rests with the landlords' (Ahmad and Alavi 1974, 141). People from *kammi* and *musalli quom*s in particular had to offer free labour, or *begaar*, to the landlord for the right to live on his land, long after it was officially abolished under Ayub Kan's regime in 1952.

The third source of dependence was irrigation water. When Sarfaraz Khan had first started to settle the land of Sahiwal, he had built a private canal that brought irrigation water into the village. It was not until 1956 that the state opened an all-season canal managed by the Irrigation Department. Prior to this, all tenants had been dependent on the landlords' jointly owned private canal for their irrigation needs, and on rains and wells. Tenants were expected to pay a fee for its use and all villagers were expected to contribute free labour to maintain it. Anyone who displeased the landlords might quickly lose access to irrigation water.

To a much lesser extent dependence also flowed from the village residents' need for an influential mediator in their dealings with the state. Villagers did not often have to approach state officials, but when they did, it helped to have a 'powerful and benevolent landlord, functioning as *lambardar* and having influence in high places' to secure benefits for his village. Ahmad termed this relationship 'client dependency', indicating that while the landlord provided some patron-like services to his clients, in this case an 'approach'[12] to the state, the relationship was built primarily around dependence (1974, 142).

Pattern of politics

Ahmad, thus, walked into a village where the control of landlords was fairly complete. He commented that 'by controlling the land on which the people live and from which they draw their subsistence, the landlords have some control

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12 Ahmad points out that, amusingly enough, this word has passed into the local Punjabi dialect. More than four decades later, during my own fieldwork in rural Sargodha, it was still the most common word used in villages to indicate having a good relationship with an important contact in the state as in, 'one must have "approach"'.

over every villager. They set the tempo of village life and standards of right and wrong' (1972, 67). This was reflected in the electoral politics of Sahiwal. Every household in the village, whether *zamindar, kammi* or *muslim sheikh,* counted itself as part of the electoral faction of one or the other landlord, based largely on whose land they tilled or from whom they drew their *seip*. Factionalism ran so strong that 'many members of a lineage group working for one landlord may not even speak to members of their same lineage group working for the other landlord, much less participate with them in social events' (Ahmad and Alavi 1974, 153). Ahmad recalls being told that this even included brothers, cousins or uncles if they belonged to the opposing *patti* (1977). In fact, the members of each faction even prayed apart in two separate mosques, in which the *maulvi*s[13] 'broadcast propaganda for their respective masters every Friday before prayer time' (Rouse 1988, 837). This factionalism played out strongly during the local government elections held under the Basic Democracies system of Ayub Khan in 1959–60 and then again in 1964.

Ahmad points out that Sahiwal had many '"good, wise, and concerned persons" who could have qualified well as basic democrats', especially given that these local government elections were for too low a tier of government for the landlords to have been interested in contesting them (1974, 165). However, instead of allowing and supporting one of these residents, the landlords put up their managers as candidates. Neither of these managers was from Sahiwal, and their main role in the village was to protect the interests of the landlords and to maintain control in their absence. They had never been accepted as part of the village community by the other residents. Nevertheless, no one opposed their candidacy and everyone came out to vote for them because it was obvious to all that votes were being cast not for the candidates but for each landlord. Ahmad found that Khan sahib's candidate was reputed to be '"religious", "simple" and "honest"; [and Haji sahib's candidate] "a drinker of wine, a womanizer, corrupt" but "helpful"' (1977, 99). The latter won. Though Sahiwal now had a representative on the union council, the intense factionalism that existed within it meant that the winning candidate was able to represent only half the village, and worked strictly for Haji sahib's faction through his entire tenure.

The elections were contested in exactly the same way in 1964, and Haji sahib's manager and candidate won again. However, this time Khan sahib had used his influence to have a seat added to Sahiwal, so that two basic democrats were now

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13 Caretaker of a mosque.

to be elected. This worked as he had hoped, and of the two 'minor employees' put up by both sides for the second seat from a neighbouring hamlet, Khan sahib's candidate won. Ahmad was curious about the fact that Haji sahib's manager had won both times, given that the village was split extremely equally between the two factions. He found that about 350 of the 823 votes were not tied to either faction, in that they 'belonged to the Kammis who served either the whole village or an equal proportion of tenants on both sides, and the "independents" – including shopkeepers, goldsmiths, and other outside employees' (1977, 100). While all of them claimed to have split their votes between the two factions equally, Ahmad found that much of the decision-making had been based on pressures, sanctions and promises (mostly of jobs and extra land) from both sides. Further investigation led him to find that what had finally led to a victory for Haji sahib's faction were votes cast by two families of the *kammi quom* of barbers, who were 'educated and upwardly mobile', and who had based their vote entirely on the reputation and prestige of Haji sahib, as opposed to that of his candidate. Where prestige was involved, Khan sahib lost repeatedly, despite the fact that he had a little more 'land and more men under his control' (Ahmad 1977, 101).

Power and monopolistic control in Sahiwal

Based on such instances, Ahmad noted that the villagers were not entirely powerless. As long as they were able to break ties of land-based dependence, people like the barbers and the goldsmiths could make independent decisions. In fact, even those who were still dependent used factionalism to their advantage to gain some measure of power. Ahmad pointed out that they constantly attempted to

> create competition, or to keep old factionalism alive between their lords, for the peasants benefit from such rivalry and disputes. I was amazed and amused at the villagers' constant attempts to create dissension between the landlords, between the landlords and managers, and between managers. (1972, 67)

Nevertheless, he noted that in the final analysis,

> the outcome of the election was primarily the result of existing economic alliances with the landlords, secondarily due to promises and hopes of benefits in the future, and thirdly due to the prestige of the candidates' sponsors. These factors were strong enough … to override the ties of friendship, kinship and caste. (1977, 102)

Ahmad showed that the landlords of Sahiwal had high levels of authority and power in the 1960s. He quoted the example of a member of the goldsmith family – one of the richer, politically more independent households in the village – who had the son of one of Khan sahib's tenants prosecuted in the courts for robbery. Although the courts had sentenced the young man and his accomplices, the goldsmiths withdrew the case and settled for an out-of-court compromise when Khan sahib asked them to. The goldsmith explained that he settled the case in this manner only because 'we cannot afford to refuse Khan sahib. If we do, we know we will lose our house, our shop, and the business. We cannot do that, so we have to go along with his suggestion'. Ahmad described this not as 'voluntary obedience' but as the 'fear of "negative sanction"' (Ahmad 1977, 104–5). It was this fear of sanction that trumped all other ties of kinship, class, friendship and reciprocal clientelism in Sahiwal in the 1960s. Commenting on this period, Rouse noted that 'extra-economic means of coercion abounded during this period. The system of social and production relations that existed in Sahiwal during this time closely resembled that of feudal relations' (1988, 834).

Within such a structure, when Ayub's land reforms were implemented in 1959, the landlords simply bypassed them by using their contacts in the state and their power to apply sanctions within the village. They redistributed land to various relatives and descendants, and converted some land from tenant farms to farming of cash crops with wage labour, thus impoverishing sections of the tenants and artisans. About 600 acres were indeed redistributed,[14] though in much smaller packets than the stipulated 12.5 acres. Those peasants who made a bid to acquire more as per the law soon found that they had lost all rights to cultivate land that they had previously farmed over generations, that they had difficulty accessing irrigation water, and that they were continually threatened with evictions from their homes. In answer to his original questions, therefore, Ahmad found that the power of the landlords and their contacts with the state had effectively translated into their immunity against any attempts at the diffusion of power. Neither the land reforms nor the local government elections had had a significant impact. Therefore, despite threats to their complete domination of Sahiwal, Ahmad found at the close of his study that the two *maalik*s were still firmly in control of the entire village, all of its land and each one of its dependent residents, barring a handful.

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14 Figure is based on my interview with Haji sahib's son in 2007.

Sahiwal in the 1980s: Transformation[15]

By the time Shahnaz Rouse arrived in Sahiwal to start her study in 1979, the Green Revolution had transformed agriculture in rural Punjab, the 1970 election had introduced a completely new political dynamic, the 1972 land reforms had been instituted, Zulfikar Bhutto's regime had served its full term and Pakistan had returned to military rule under General Zia-ul-Haq. Pakistan, and with it Sahiwal, had undergone extensive changes and it was the transformation brought about by these changes, especially in village relations, that Rouse wanted to analyse through the study of one village, Sahiwal. In doing this, she concentrated in particular on one landlord, Haji sahib, and his progressive and liberal eldest son, Naib,[16] to see 'what liberal politics and rhetoric combined with conservative and punitive measures translate into in terms of rural political action' (1988, 41).

Changes in physical layout and structure

In the 15 years between Ahmad and Rouse's study, Sahiwal had almost doubled its population and was now a village of 439 households. Its connectivity with Shahpur town had improved because of a paved road and people had stopped referring to it as *pardes* (a foreign land). They now travelled to town easily and regularly, to buy goods at its small bazaar, to access the hospital, or to work in its workshops and factories. The village and its layout had not changed much but it now had two new residential colonies that were set slightly apart from the rest of the village. The first of these, known as Lokari, was created close to the village on a piece of Haji sahib's agricultural property on which he settled landless labourers. The other, which Rouse reports only in passing, was created during Bhutto's regime as a colony of small house plots near the school, and therefore called School Colony, in which ownership rights were given to poor households within the village. Besides this, 'some non-owners, poor peasants, Kammis and landless labourers received titles to their homes' during the Bhutto government, but this did not apply to those already resident in Lokari 'because their settlement was claimed as landlord's private agricultural land and not as village common-land' (Rouse 1983, 323). Rouse notes that only in these two colonies was residence *quom* specific – since land in both Lokari and School

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15   This section is based entirely on Rouse (1983, 1988).

16   A pseudonym coined by Rouse.

Colony was distributed only among *kammi* and *muslim sheikh* groups – while the rest of the village had a mixed residential pattern. Sahiwal's two mosques had now multiplied into five. One was built in each of the two new colonies, and the increasingly influential Shia *syed biradari* of the village had built one of their own. Except for this last one that was used exclusively by Shias, Rouse notes that use of the mosques was no longer faction specific but were rather used by whoever lived closest to them. Sahiwal now also had a middle school for boys and a primary school for girls.

Haji sahib's landholdings had reduced as a result of the land reforms of 1972 and the sale of outlying lands to 'support his feudal style of life, characterised by a love of pomp and a show of generosity' (Rouse 1983, 313). Rouse recorded his total landholdings to be 1,077 acres (compared to the 2,100 he owned in 1964), of which 800 were under mechanised self-cultivation now and only 277 acres were leased out to 31 tenants. Khan sahib now owned about 825 acres himself and had passed on about 550 acres to his three sons. Of the total, 1,117 were under mechanised self-cultivation and 258 were leased out to tenants. While Khan sahib remained in Shahpur town, Haji sahib was no longer an absentee landlord. He had moved to the village with Naib and both now personally oversaw their large farm. This also meant that the discretionary power of their managers had now been reduced, though the manager remained an important intermediary between the village and its *maalik*s. Like other landlord families in the province, Haji sahib had responded to his reduced holdings by insisting his sons diversify away from the life of a landlord. While Naib had full responsibility for the family's lands, the second son was sent to the army and the youngest joined the private sector.

Some of the land sales had been made to tenants from *zamindar biradari*s in the village who had managed to accumulate enough money through other sources of income to have purchased land. A family of goldsmiths, who were of the *kammi quom* but had accumulated much wealth through their traditional occupation, now controlled about 160 acres between four households, all of which were let out to tenants. Three other ex-tenant households now owned 50, 13 and 6 acres each. However, these landholdings were insufficient to meet the subsistence needs of these families and so they remained involved in their non-agricultural occupations.

Changes in agrarian relations of production

Ahmad studied Sahiwal at the beginning of an agrarian transformation based on the land reforms of 1959 and the commercialisation of agriculture. Right after the completion of his study, the Green Revolution took off in Punjab. He heard of it at a distance as it was beginning,[17] and commented,

> In Sahiwal, at the time of this study (1965), not many ex-tenants belonged to this class [the peasant proletariat]. Instead, this class was dominated by the artisans. It was recently reported to me, however, that more land had been put into so-called 'self-cultivating farms', which could have been achieved only by evicting the tenants or decreasing their holdings, hence forcing them to work at least partly as laborers. (1972, 69)

By the time Rouse arrived in Sahiwal, 'mechanisation, or what the census refers to as "self-cultivation", [was] the basis of the system of agricultural production in Sahiwal' (1983, 318–9). Ayub Khan's push for growth in the 1960s had led to the modernisation of agriculture and to a dramatic increase in production during the Green Revolution. The increased productivity convinced both the *maalik* families in Sahiwal to not only rationalise agricultural practices but also bring large tracts of land together under mechanised self-cultivation. Many argued that this period marked 'a break from "feudal" to "capitalist" relations of production' (Rouse 1988, 38). The two years that Rouse spent studying these changes in Sahiwal led her to conclude that the transformation had led to greater inequality and the impoverishment of tenants, artisans and landless labourers.

What happened in Sahiwal was not unusual. Migdal explained the processes of agricultural change in the 1960s and their particular impact on small farmers and tenants by pointing out that as mechanisation became the norm, large landowners sought to consolidate their holdings by either evicting tenants or by raising rents so that tenants, already 'hovering near subsistence,' were pushed out of the tenancy market (1974, 161). This, Migdal points out, meant that the most mechanised villages were also often the most unequal because market and technology were both pushing towards a concentration of land in fewer hands (1974, 158). Smaller farmers who were less able to adopt or compete with innovative techniques during the period of the Green Revolution were displaced in large numbers, to the extent that in Pakistan 'those with less than

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17 Ahmad passed away in a tragic accident in 1971. All of his work quoted here was published posthumously.

10 acres and those with 10 to 25 acres lost 12.2 per cent and 6.9 per cent of their land respectively from 1959 to 1969, while the holders with 50 to 100 acres gained 19.2 per cent' (Migdal 1974, 164).

Rouse saw exactly these changes play out in Sahiwal. Mechanisation had led Naib to move to the village from Lahore and to convert almost all his land into a capitalist farm. This, in turn, had led to a transformation in traditional relations of production and had necessitated the eviction of tenants from plots of land that they had cultivated over generations. Tenants now farmed only about 700 acres in all, compared to the more than 4,000 acres they had cultivated 15 years earlier. Many of the tenants were forcibly evicted, starting in 1966. The first eviction 'was also the first instance of an armed confrontation over land, a confrontation in which police forces and all the armed power at the landlord's disposal were brought into play' (Rouse 1983, 315). Encouraged by the state's support, the landlords continued evicting tenants over the next four years.

The loss of livelihood was not limited to tenants. Mechanisation meant a lower demand for farm labour as well as a reduced need for many of the agricultural implements made or maintained by village artisans. The well diggers were no longer required after the introduction of tubewells, which also resulted in a reduced demand for the pots that the potter *biradari* used to make for the Persian wheels. Fewer farmers meant less work for the blacksmiths and the carpenters. At the same time, easier access to the growing market town of Shahpur meant that the residents of Sahiwal had access to more varieties of cloth and shoes than what the weaver and cobbler *biradari*s could offer them in the village. All in all, Rouse witnessed a period marked by loss of traditional livelihoods for a large part of the population, and a period of flux during which people looked for alternative means of income. Artisans and ex-tenants alike were forced to enter the market as wage labourers, working on land whenever the opportunity to sell their labour presented itself, or migrating to urban centres to look for employment. She notes that this was a time when Sahiwal provided an increasing number of recruits to the army, and that migration and 'entry into marginal positions in the service sector and petty commerce is on the rise' (1988, 904–05). Rouse claims that the increase in numbers of wage workers erased the occupation-based demarcations between the various artisan *biradari*s, who now all fell within the same class group. This led to greater class consciousness that played out in the elections of 1970.

Until 1970 the eviction of tenants had gone largely unchallenged. However, Bhutto's regime, recognising rural producers as a large and effective constituency, brought the law on to the side of the tenants. It worked to protect their interests so that not only were evictions far fewer and less rapid than under Ayub or later under Zia, but many of the tenancy-related litigations in Shahpur *tehsil* were also decided in favour of tenants rather than landlords. Naib realised which way the wind was blowing and joined the Pakistan People's Party after the 1970 elections. Rouse observed:

> In order to realise his political ambitions he had to pay allegiance to the PPP political platform, and this meant implementing Bhutto's land reforms to the letter. And this he did. No more evictions took place in his *patti* as long as Bhutto remained in power. The division of inputs provided in the law was strictly and honestly adhered to. Naib went further than most; he even called a meeting of the tenants to inform them of their newly acquired legal rights. (1983, 317)

It was also at this time that *begaar* 'became less acceptable among artisans in Sahiwal. Among the tenants, on the other hand, the practice still continues, although superficially it is now undertaken voluntarily' (Rouse 1988, 801). She points out that *begaar*, a practice that includes a notion of force, started being called *vangaar*, which is used for the practice of tenants helping each other during harvest and sowing seasons, and which is voluntary and reciprocal in nature. When tenants offered such assistance on the landlords' lands, 'quite clearly, such reciprocity is absent' (1988, 577). What was present still was the threat of eviction in the case of a refusal.

Rouse points out that 'it should be noted that with all his liberal leanings, [Naib] followed the *letter* of the law only. The law contained many loopholes and in the long run was open to subversion; a fact of which full advantage was taken' (1983, 317). In fact, as soon as Bhutto was overthrown in a military coup by Zia-ul-Haq in 1977, Naib's attitude changed too. Between 1979 and 1980, Rouse recorded 16 evictions and observed that the threat of an eviction, along with a recognition that the repressive stance of the new military regime was aimed against Bhutto's constituency, was enough to acquire the quiescence of the remaining tenants. She pointed out that

whenever disputes arise over evictions or implementation of other land regulations and general law and order, the revenue and police authorities favour the property-owners … I did not find a single case where a decision was made in the favour of tenants when they were involved in disputes with the landlords. (1983, 321)

Transformation of dependence and power

All of these changes had affected the relationship between *maalik* and *reiaya* in both positive and negative ways. Rouse notes that 'with large landlords currently organising production along the lines of the firm, the ties that bound the rural producer to the landlord have been broken' (1988, 906). A few other changes also reduced the dependence of Sahiwal's residents on the *maalik*s. The setting up of the colony of small house plots and the granting of homestead rights to those who had homes on the *maalik*s' land in the main village reduced dependence dramatically and eliminated one of the most significant private sanctions and sources of coercion available to the landlord. Another form of control that was removed was the *maalik*s' control over water. Over the years they had come to control access to irrigation water because the state-owned canal ran through their self-cultivated farms, and because they owned the only tubewells in the village. However, during Bhutto's regime public taps were dug on the outskirts of the village that allowed open access to water and later in 1982, public tubewells were also put in. 'Also, there now existed in Sahiwal other categories of landowners – rich, middle and small peasants. The petty bourgeois sector of Sahiwal's population had also increased' (Rouse 1988, 842). This, together with increased education and easier access to urban towns, reduced the extra-economic control that *maalik*s exercised over their *reiaya*.

Ironically, the shift to wage labour did not free most residents from dependence on the *maalik*s because in the absence of an investment in education or the acquisition of alternative skills, labour on land still provided the only means through which a relatively stable source of income could be acquired. Rouse observed that even now '85% of the villagers in Sahiwal make a living from the land' (1983, 319). Worse still, the supply of labour outweighed the demand and weakened the position of the village populace vis-à-vis the landlords. Rouse pointed out that

the Kammi no longer receive their traditional dues from the new crops of rice and sugarcane. Wages are low in Sahiwal and casual labour is mostly restricted to harvest time, or when sugarcane and rice are planted (both wheat and cotton are planted mechanically). People in the village say that they can now expect nothing from the landlords and will get only that which they strive and fight for. They also express a sense of betrayal by the state. They deeply lament Bhutto's death. (1983, 318)

The *maalik*s also retained control over those who resided in Lokari colony since they had not received ownership rights, and their compliance in the form of tied labour was required in return for the right of residence (Rouse 1983, 317). In fact, even in the rest of the village Rouse noted that despite their possession of official ownership certificates of homestead, villagers still believed that they lived on the landlords' land and that their occupation of it was tenuous and based on the benevolence of the *maalik*. She recorded various instances of eviction threats against residents who possessed official ownership certificates (1983, 317; 1988, 845).

Those who remained as tenants were given land at the farthest edges of the landholding, and their work was closely regulated by Naib and his managers, who now maintained detailed worksheets and 'any tenant who failed to do as instructed was fined, and those whose work was not satisfactory were warned by threats of eviction' (Rouse 1983, 316). Also, in bringing land under self-cultivation, the *maalik*s had chosen the best irrigated lands around the government canals. Their private tubewells were also installed on these lands close to the canals. This meant that the lands they gave out to tenants further afield had poor access to water, and until public tubewells were installed in 1982, tenants remained dependent on the landlords for access to irrigation water. Records of the 'orderly system of assigned turns' for the public canal were maintained by the managers of the landlords, and were often manipulated. In fact, withholding water was considered the easiest way to get rid of a tenant. Tenants claimed they were powerless in the face of such manipulations because 'they have no access to records, cannot read or write, and for them to approach government officials is difficult' (Rouse 1983, 321). Tenants had earlier lost much of their decision-making power on what to cultivate as agriculture came to be standardised around four crops – wheat, cotton, rice and sugarcane, of which 'only wheat was a subsistence crop'[18] (Rouse 1983, 316). Furthermore,

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18 Ironically, this had happened because the 1972 reforms had put the burden of taxes and the

as animals lost their importance and centrality for the landlords' mechanised farms, the *maalik*s insisted that tenants produce less fodder, thus affecting the latter's ability to rear cattle and greatly reducing their asset base.

The transformation of agriculture meant that not only did tenants have less access to land but they also lost other assets and their ability to grow subsistence crops. The power of Sahiwal's producing classes vis-à-vis the landlords was greatly reduced as the wealth of the latter increased while the poverty of the former was exacerbated. Yet another source of dependence was the close relationship between the state and the landed class. Rouse points out that the three main state officials that maintain direct contact with the village – the *patwari* (lowest level revenue officer), the *thanedar* (local police officer)and the *tehsil* magistrate – maintained a close collaboration with the landed class and lent official weight to the influence of the landlord (1988, 784). She point out that 'access to the state permits certain forms of control' (1988, 43) and allowed the landed to decide who could access the state and for what purpose. Though the *maalik*s lost this power briefly under Bhutto, it was restored to them soon after by Zia.

Politics: From factionalism to class

The changing relations of production outlined above completely transformed politics in Sahiwal in the 1970s. The two *maalik* families reacted to their loosening control over the village by putting aside their antagonism and bringing both the *patti*s together in one political faction. They had imagined that this would allow them to increase their control over the villagers, 'who [would] no longer use the antagonism between the two households to their advantage' (1988, 857). However, they could not have expected what happened instead in the 1970 elections. Rouse summarises it as follows:

> The PPP found a receptive audience among Sahiwal's working population. Party chapters were organised in Shahpur and Sahiwal. The local chapter was headed by a man from an artisan *quom*. When elections were held in 1970, the PPP set up its own candidate for the local seat. The large landlords, for the first time in Sahiwal's history, set up a joint candidate in opposition to the PPP's candidate. Both landlords used all their capacity to convince villagers to vote for their candidate. The PPP candidate won. For the first

provision of seeds and half of all other inputs on the landlord, who insisted, therefore, on making more decisions (Rouse 1983, 317).

time, villagers voted along class and not factional lines. Some households
voted with the landlords, but these came primarily from the petty bourgeois
households in the village or those retainers closely connected with the
landlords. The landless voted overwhelmingly for the PPP candidate, as did
the majority of the sharecroppers and small holders. (1988, 875)

The new PPP regime meant many things to the residents of Sahiwal. For the
first time they had direct access to national-level state power through their PPP
representatives, 'the overall environment was in their favour', as was an external
institution – the party – to which they now looked as an alternate source of
support and power with which to counter the power of the *maalik*s. As one of
my respondents in the village put it, 'Bhutto's regime changed everything because
for the first time people with just 2–4 acres could get into top political seats
in the area'. It was a realisation of the extent of the change that had occurred
that made Naib join the PPP, 'expecting to regain lost control over the political
process' (1988, 876).

In the 1977 elections both Naib's father, Haji sahib, and his wife contested
as PPP candidates and won seats in the Provincial Assembly of Punjab.[19]
However, since the government fell almost immediately afterwards in Zia's
military coup, they were in power for less than three months. The new military
regime announced elections soon after. For these, Naib was rewarded with a
PPP ticket for his continued allegiance to the party, and he was to run as a
candidate for the National Assembly. However, the elections were eventually
cancelled, the PPP was banned and only local government elections were held
in 1979 on a non-party basis. In the run-up to these elections it had become
evident again that the producing classes of Sahiwal were organising around their
class interests (Rouse 1988, 898). Naib's candidature was opposed by the PPP
party cadre within Sahiwal, which wanted seats to be allocated on the basis of
elections within the party. However, the PPP itself had come to be dominated
by landed groups in the later part of its tenure and these felt that their power
would be better preserved by the allocation of seats through nominations, and
so it was Naib who received a ticket. This brought forth severe criticism within
the village of the PPP and its diminishing support of peasant groups. In fact,
most surprisingly, given the later pattern of Pakistani politics, the party cadre
in Sahiwal explicitly told Rouse that

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19 Naib recounted this to me in an interview during my own fieldwork in Sahiwal in 2007.

… should the party not present a coherent program delineating what it proposed to do for the rural poor, the organizers were willing to abandon the party and join another that did have such a program … For the local party leaders, the program was as important, if not more so, than past achievement [of the party]. And the process through which the party was organized also carried considerable weight in retaining the continued support of the rural producers. (1988, 879)

After the national elections were cancelled and non-party based local government elections were announced in their place, Naib was no longer interested in running as a candidate. Instead, Khan sahib nominated a candidate to whom Haji sahib's family gave their full support. This ended Naib's affiliation with the PPP. Rouse observed that 'as soon as it was announced that political party based elections were not in the cards, his commitment to liberal causes ended' (1988, 880). Small and poor peasants, artisans and labourers, however, still rallied around the issues that had brought them together in the 1970s, and put up their own *kammi* candidate who was a tenant of Khan sahib's. He won, despite vigorous campaigning by Naib himself for Khan sahib's candidate. Rouse notes that this victory was of 'enormous importance because this time the rural producers had no national political organization behind them' (1988, 881). They were, however, supported by an ex-tenant, Fatah,[20] who had recently acquired 50 acres and had started building a political base in the village against the landlords. Fatah had come to be viewed as a representative of the interests of artisans and labourers, and a 'champion of their rights' (1988, 84).

In substantive terms, however, the victory meant little for the producing classes given the Zia government's lack of commitment to them. The winning candidate was evicted from his lands, and no one in the village was able to contest this legally in a judicial climate that explicitly favoured the powerful, despite the fact that the victim was an elected official of local government. Negotiations, went on within the village. During the period of his eviction Fatah gave the candidate some of his own land to cultivate. Eventually, Khan sahib granted him his tenancy back but 'the acreage allotted was appreciably smaller than before, in a remote area and of very poor quality land' (1988, 882).

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20 There is some confusion around whether Fatah was the candidate himself or the supporting ex-tenant. Rouse records this incident without names, and in his interviews with me, Fatah claimed both to have run for election and to have owned land at the time. In an earlier paper I suggested Fatah was the candidate but I now believe that, given his *biradari*, there is a greater chance that he was the landowning ex-tenant.

Inequality, class and power in Sahiwal

In conclusion, Rouse points out that

> the general picture one observes in the village, therefore, is one that shows a concentration and centralization of production in the hands of the large landlords, at one end, combined with increasing proletarianization and sub-peasantization among the bulk of the village population on the other end. (1988, 895)

While people were now more independent of the *maalik*s, growing inequality, landlessness and unemployment limited their social and economic mobility. Rouse noted that despite all the changes, the basis of social organisation in the village was still determined by the relations of property, and that 'forms of control, at different historical times, have corresponded closely to the nature and type of production' (1988, 845). She pointed out that

> changes in the system have relaxed the traditional structure, so that Kammis may be found as rich peasants, or *Jats*[21] as wage labourers. By and large, however, for most classes the movement is downwards, with increasing segments of each (excluding the large farmers and the rich peasants) being forced to join the ranks of the rural or urban proletariat. (1983, 322)

In the immediate aftermath of Bhutto's rule Rouse stated confidently that the ideology of *quom* had become fluid, and that, instead, class consciousness was increasing, as more people became part of the same rural proletariat. However, she also cautioned that despite the evident class consciousness of Sahiwal's producers,

> Forces preventing the sustained organization of the rural producers along class lines have not completely dissipated … Thus, the 'caste' ideology that historically served to maintain the status quo, continues to play a role. This ideology of status ascription has long been used by the landed elites to sustain their privileged position. (1988, 907)

Rouse concluded that 'today's Sahiwal is in a transitional period, in which both economic and extra-economic methods of control co-exist' (1988, 856). This

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21 The highest ranked of the agricultural *zamindar quom*s.

was to change further in the following decades, and we arrived in 2006 to see on which side the die had settled.

Sahiwal in the 2000s: Intermediation[22]

Unlike Ahmad and Rouse I did not go to Sahiwal to study a major economic event. Instead, it was the continual exposure of rural citizens to electoral politics that brought me here in 2007 with a team of researchers. When Ahmad studied Sahiwal its citizens had no experience of national politics. They had only voted in two rounds of local government elections. By the time Rouse came around the residents of Sahiwal had voted in Pakistan's first two national elections in 1970 and 1977, and in the local government elections of 1979–80. They had finally been exposed to political parties but the experience was recent. By the time we arrived, the residents of Sahiwal had become intimately acquainted both with national elections and with Pakistan's political parties. Between Rouse's study and ours they had participated in six national and provincial elections, and four local government elections – 10 elections in just over 25 years. Our main interest lay in studying how local politics had responded to the interaction between persistent structural inequality and this repeated engagement with elections at different levels.

Changes in physical layout and structure

While Sahiwal had doubled its population between Ahmad's and Rouse's study, its population had increased by only 132 households in the 25 years between Rouse's and our study. The total population in 2006 was now 571 households. The main reason for this slow growth is migration away from the village to Shahpur town, Sargodha city, Lahore or even further afield to other parts of the country. Sahiwal's layout has changed little since Ahmad's description of it, complete with the walled-off compound of the landlord's houses and their granaries. However, now instead of just three *pukka* houses, 88 per cent of its residents live in brick structures with high boundary walls. Some of these, such as the homes of the *jaura biradari* of goldsmiths, are large multi-storeyed *haveli*s decorated with coloured tiles. In sharp contrast to these are the remaining mud houses that belong almost exclusively to the *musalli biradari*, now called *muslim sheikh*s, and which have no, or very low, boundary walls. Both the schools have

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22 This section is based on my fieldwork, parts of which were presented earlier in Cheema, Khan Mohmand and Naqvi (2007).

been upgraded, so that the village now has a high school for boys and a middle school for girls.

Both the colonies still exist. Lokari has been renamed after Naib, and is now a part of the main village, though it still lies on its western border. Many of the poorer groups in the village still live here. School Colony is still set apart from the village and is almost exclusively home to *muslim sheikh*s and low-ranked *kammi biradari*s. Our mapping of the village also revealed some other *biradari*-based residential concentrations in various parts of the main settlement, such as the Kasai Colony, where all of the households of the *kasai biradari* of butchers live. Most of the *zamindar biradari*s live in clusters in the middle of the main settlement while many of the *syed*s, who are still the only Shias in the village, live together in a relatively isolated cluster at the rear of the main village settlement. The goldsmith *jaura*s live in another cluster along the main road that runs through the village, which has come to be known as 'goldsmith street'.[23] Interestingly, higher ranked *kammi biradari*s such as the potter *kumhar*s do not live in clusters and are, instead, spread throughout the village.

There are now a total of six mosques in the village. The most recent one, the Jamia mosque, is now considered the main mosque and was constructed recently by the Social Welfare Organisation of the village to provide a common place of worship. The land for it was granted by Naib, and every household in the village contributed money for its construction, though the main financial contribution came from the goldsmiths. It is interesting that a sixth mosque was built for this purpose, given that two of the older mosques have the capacity to fit most of the village's population. However, sponsoring a mosque often underpins a family's rising wealth and influence in both rural and urban Pakistan, so that the most plausible reason for the building of this recent mosque appears to be the fact that the influential *jaura*s were not until now associated with any of the other mosques.

By the time we arrived in Sahiwal both Haji sahib and Khan sahib had passed away, and their sons now headed the two families. Haji sahib's son, Naib, had moved to Lahore with his family and visited Sahiwal on a fortnightly basis while Khan sahib's eldest son, Sardar,[24] still lived in Shahpur and visited the village every day. Due to this Sardar was now more involved in village activity than

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23 *Sunharian di galli.*

24 I coined the new pseudonyms introduced in this section.

was Naib. Nevertheless, Naib retained more prestige and influence. This was plainly visible in each of his visits to the village. While people bent to touch Naib's knees in greeting and deference when he entered the *akhat*, no one did this for Sardar. From what we saw, Naib was still very much the *maalik* of the village. Much of this had to do with Naib's own personality – his education, urbanity and sophistication – and the fact that, like his father, he had a love of pomp and ceremony. All of these combined to set him apart from the rest of the village, a fact that was both resented and respected. On the other hand, Sardar was much closer in his ways to the lifestyle of the villagers, to the extent that one of his nephews, Nazim, had even married a woman from the village and was now a full-time resident. No member of the *maalik* family had married someone from Sahiwal before this and had looked, instead, to their ancestral village for suitable spouses. What had particularly shocked the family, and earned Naib's displeasure, was that Nazim's bride was the daughter of his ex-manager. While people related more to Sardar for all these reasons, the relationship included much less deference than that which they showed to Naib.

Both Naib's and Sardar's landholdings had decreased dramatically. Land sales have continued but a much more important reason was the fragmentation of land within the family. Soon after the 1972 land reforms Haji sahib had divided his land amongst his children in order to avoid further reforms. What had been held in the name of one man came to be officially owned by twelve people.[25] This did not affect anything while Haji sahib was alive, since Naib managed the entire landholding as one unit. However, after Haji sahib passed away Naib's siblings, especially the husbands and sons of his seven sisters, showed an interest in managing their own lands. Naib now owns only 140 acres, but many of his siblings continue to defer most decision-making to him for the rest of the estate as well. Similar fragmentation has occurred on Sardar's side of the family and he now personally owns only 250 acres.

Changes in agrarian relations of production

At a time when Sahiwal had only 274 households and all of the land was cultivated through tenants, Ahmad had observed that the pressure on available agricultural land had increased manifold because of demographic growth and expansion. It is therefore not surprising that with 571 households now and most of the agricultural land under self-cultivation by the *maalik*s, two drastic

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25 This includes Haji sahib, his wife, his seven daughters and his three sons.

changes in agricultural patterns and relations of production have occurred. First, people have moved away from agriculture as their main occupation, and some have even moved out of the village in search of work. Only 17 per cent of the population identifies itself now as cultivators, 13 per cent of the village is now employed in the state sector, including the army, while 20 per cent of current residents are employed in the non-farm sector within the village (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Occupation of household heads in Sahiwal

Cultivators	Daily wage labour	Non-farm sector	Govt service/ army	Migrant	Unemployed/ other
17%	40.5%	20%	13%	6%	3.5%

Source: Author.

Second, in a village society in which status is still marked by landownership, much of this new non-farm income has come to be invested back in land. As the *maalik*s continued to sell small pieces of their land, various ex-tenants and artisans of the village bought these to mark their upward mobility, to the effect that 22 per cent of the village, or 127 households, now own agricultural land. Most of this increase has come from within the *zamindar biradari*s, in which 79 households now have landholdings that range in size from 1 to 50 acres. While no member of the *muslim sheikh quom* owns any land even now, 39 *kammi* households have managed to acquire land, though only one of these is above the subsistence level of 12 acres (Table 3.2). Tenancy has virtually disappeared as a practice. Landholdings are either farmed by the family or by hiring agricultural labour on a daily wage basis. Only 24 per cent of land, less than 400 acres, is now tenanted by 25 households, or 4 per cent of the population.

Table 3.2 Landownership by *quom*

	Maalik	*Zamindar*	*Kammi*	*Muslim sheikh*
Total households	4	231	239	82
Landowning households	4	79	39	0
Per cent landowning	100	34	16	0
Per cent landless	0	66	84	100

Source: Author.

As far as agrarian relations of production are concerned, Sahiwal is now neatly polarised between those who own land and cultivate it themselves, and those who are landless and work as agricultural labour. In the middle lies a strata that is no longer connected to land.

Despite the dramatic shift to non-farm sources of income, Rouse's thesis of the proletarianisation of the village is fully evident in the fact that 40 per cent of the village makes its income through daily wage labour. Most of these work as agricultural labour on the lands of various owners, ranging from the *maalik*s to the *kammi*s. Others work outside the village on construction sites or in the market in Shahpur. The number of agricultural labourers remains high because despite Rouse's concern that '… if, and when, harvesters are added to the farm machinery still more labourers will lose their jobs in the village' (1983, 325), the *maalik*s decided against mechanising the harvest. This was primarily because canals cut through fields in Sahiwal in a way that makes them too small for the effective use of large combine harvesters. However, Naib explained to me that another reason they stuck to a manual harvest, as well as the manual planting of sugarcane, was because

> we had a sufficient dependent workforce that we had control over. Smaller landlords in other villages, especially those in *chak*s, have had no choice but to mechanise because they had no control over the population of their village, but that is not the case here in Sahiwal.

Almost half of the village, therefore, remains tied to the *maalik*s through relations of production.

Circumscribed independence

A few of Sahiwal's *zamindar biradari*s not only increased their landholdings but complemented this with livestock rearing, an increased investment in education, and jobs in the state and other urban sectors. In doing so they have built linkages with nodes of power outside the village and have become autonomous vis-à-vis both the *maalik*s and the village economy. Many of these connections are with members of their own *biradari*s in other villages and towns. For example, Sahiwal's *mekan*s, who were tenants of the *maalik*s during Ahmad's study but who had soon after purchased land, acquired education, forayed into the urban job market and built into the politically influential network of the larger *mekan biradari* that is well represented in the

local government politics of both Shahpur *tehsil* and Sargodha district. The *mekan*s have found an alternate basis for social and political organisation, one that is independent of the *maalik*s, and in doing so they have also provided the residents of Sahiwal with an alternate channel for state access. These new channels, centred around *biradari* networks, have reduced the village's unidirectional dependence on the *maalik*s for state access.

Similarly, the *jaura biradari* of goldsmiths, already independent during Rouse's time, have continued to consolidate their economic position within the village and are now considered second to only the *maalik*s in their wealth. Not only has their traditional occupation continued to turn high profits but they also have exclusive control over Sahiwal's credit market. Interestingly, this has happened because of a realisation by Sahiwal's residents that the *maalik* families' control of other aspects of their lives could easily put them into debt bondage if loans were to be introduced into the relationship. So, instead, they have turned to the *jaura*s who have an available cash flow but do not exercise any other control over them. The *jaura*s present an extremely interesting case of upward mobility, given that Ahmad had noted previously that this group was assigned a low rank among *kammi biradari*s in the village. Nevertheless, even during Ahmad's fieldwork this group had started to mark their upward mobility by enforcing 'strict *purdah* for their women, a rather uncommon practice among lower social groups' and 'when asked for self-placement on a five point hierarchical social scale, they placed themselves at the top' (1972, 67).

My interview with *jaura* women revealed an interesting aspect of the repercussions of such upward mobility within the strictly endogamous *biradari*s of rural Punjab. As one of them explained, 'if there are no *jaura* boys in Sahiwal to whom we can marry our daughters they will remain unmarried because we cannot trust *jaura*s from other villages'. Since I had not heard this sentiment echoed by any other *biradari* in the village – who often looked to the extended *biradari* outside the village for suitable matches – I probed further and found that it was based on an unwillingness to marry their girls into other *jaura* families who may not have experienced similar upward mobility. Unable to marry boys from other *biradari*s and unwilling to marry members of their own *biradari* who may still be ranked among *kammi* groups in other villages, *jaura* girls faced the prospect of either remaining unmarried or marrying any available *jaura* boy from Sahiwal, regardless of age or previous marital status. *Jaura* boys were not similarly constrained and could bring in girls from across the wider *biradari* into their higher status group in Sahiwal.

Upward mobility is not, however, restricted to just the *jaura*s or the *zamindar* groups. Some *kammi biradari*s too have experienced such mobility, based to a large extent on the acquisition of education. This is evidenced by the fact that *kammi*s have a higher literacy rate than *zamindar biradari*s, and that more of them live in brick houses (Table 3.3). In fact, the schoolteachers in the village are almost all from the *kammi quom*s. There are two major reasons for this. First, since they had not been connected to land in their traditional occupations – as owners, tenants or labour – *kammi*s had started diversifying and investing in education earlier than other groups. Second, as village artisans, many *kammi* groups were far more skilled in terms of the urban economy and had an easier time integrating into it than the agrarian *zamindar*s. The mobility of *muslim sheikh*s, on the other hand, has been fairly limited. Seventy two per cent of them are employed as daily wage labourers, and they continue to constitute the most deprived social group in every way.

Table 3.3   Socio-economic indicators by *quom*

	Maalik	*Zamindar*	*Kammi*	*Muslim sheikh*
% Literacy	100	54	67	27
% Brick houses	100	89	94	68

Source: Author.

Upward mobility is often accompanied by entire families changing their *biradari* names. We recorded various instances of families who were referred to as either *kammi*s or *muslim sheikh*s by the rest of the village, but who introduced themselves to us with names of *zamindar biradari*s. Previously *pauvli* (weaver) families are now *gondal*s, including Naib's current manager. *Mochi*s (cobblers) and *kumhar*s (potters) are now *bhatti*s, and *kasai*s (butchers) and some *muslim sheikh*s are now *qureshi*s. As one member of the latter group told me, 'We changed our name when our son started working in Sargodha. It works outside the village where we can use any name we want. But in the village it makes no difference. Everyone knows who we are'. Yet, over time, the new names do appear to stick. Naib's powerful manager was never introduced as a *pauvli,* and even Naib referred to his name change only once while explaining how unusual it was for someone from a *kammi* group to have risen to this position.

However, while the *maalik*s may have lost their absolute dominance of the village, they have not yet lost their authority. There are multiple reasons for

this. First, despite the fragmentation of landholdings, as a family the *maalik*s still own most of the land in the village. This means that agricultural labour is still dependent on them for its livelihood, as are all those who need fodder for their livestock. Second, most major disputes and crimes, including inter-*biradari* issues, are resolved by the *maalik* family, especially by Sardar and Nazim. When Ahmad studied village-based dispute resolution and the role of 'influentials' in it, he found that the landlords and their managers were not involved and it was a few members of the large *zamindar biradari*s who resolved disputes. Ahmad concluded that this could indicate that 'landlords are seen as outside the village, only occasionally concerning themselves with village affairs; … they are probably viewed as being above these petty offices and activities' (1977, 116). Now, however, dispute resolution is a central aspect of the *maalik* family's involvement in village activities. Our team was witness to two separate *panchayat*s,[26] one led by Sardar and the other by Naib's manager, in which a theft and a disagreement over the regulation of visitors to the local shrine were resolved. In the former case, the thief (also our first guide) was punished by being dismissed from the service of the *maalik*s, fined Rs. 10,000[27] in addition to the original cost of the sack of vegetables he had stolen, and banned from entering Naib's *daara*.[28] The defendant, who had been training to be a *kardar*,[29] was reduced to daily wage labour as a result of these tough sanctions. The fact that the *maalik*s could impose and implement such harsh punishments without any formal legal authority is a testament to their continuing dominance.

Third, despite the emergence of *biradari*-based networks, our interviews revealed that the most effective state access is still provided by the *maalik*s who have maintained close linkages with politicians and the district and provincial bureaucracies. The election of Nazim as the deputy mayor of both the union and Shahpur *tehsil* in 2005 served to strengthen the role of the *maalik*s as the main intermediaries for the delivery of state services. Our surveys revealed that almost all demands for public services are first articulated within *biradari*s and then brought to Nazim through *biradari* leaders. The *maalik*s are also the village's main contact with the police and the courts. In cases when dispute resolution

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26 Village council, often set up informally to resolve disputes in the village. In Sahiwal, this is now called the Islahi Committee, roughly translated as the Corrections Committee.

27 About $165 at the time of the fieldwork.

28 A public meeting space maintained by large landlords around which the social and political activity of the village revolves.

29 A bailiff of a landlord.

leaves the purview of the village *panchayat*, the *maalik*s can affect the manner in which the police choose to deal with complaints. Village residents believe that service delivery is dependent on the will and proactivity of the *maalik*, and that the cost of such delivery is usually deference and obedience.

Finally, the influence of the *maalik*s is reinforced through myths, symbols and a language of patronage that describes a relationship that is still that of a benevolent father who maintains a distance but loves his children dearly. During the *akhat* we witnessed most speakers eulogised the *maalik*s and their *mohabbat*[30] for the people of Sahiwal that was evident in all the things that they, especially Naib, did for the village. When Naib addressed the gathering he described the spirit of Sahiwal as being that of one big, caring family. He went on to credit the village for the recent remission of the cancer with which he had been struggling for many years. He told everyone present that leading medical researchers in the US had told him during his treatment that there was a special ingredient in his body that had helped him recover faster, one that they could not figure out, but which he knew was the love and prayers of the people of Sahiwal. Furthermore, I was told by various respondents that for decades most people in the village had believed that anyone who spoke against Naib would lose their eyesight.

Politics, factions and intermediation

As the economic and social power of the *maalik*s of Sahiwal weakened, they increased their involvement and investment in politics. Initially they turned their attention to national and provincial politics, but eventually, as they lost other sources of authority, they got involved in local government as well, a level that until now they had shunned. Haji sahib had been a close friend of President Ayub Khan but the family did not get directly involved in politics until the second national election under Bhutto in 1977 when both Haji sahib and Naib's wife, Malika, contested and won seats on PPP tickets in the Provincial Assembly of Punjab. Naib was given a PPP ticket for the National Assembly elections that Zia had promised but, when these were replaced by non-party based local government elections, Naib passed the candidature to one of Khan sahib's nominees.

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30   A deep love.

Under Zia the PPP was banned, its political activity severely constrained and its leaders jailed or exiled. At the same time a new configuration of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) was created during the mid 1980s, with Nawaz Sharif at its helm, to which the *maalik* family shifted its allegiance. Malika made it back to the Punjab Provincial Assembly in the non-party based elections that Zia held in 1985. Through the multiple elections that followed in the next two decades, the family has maintained its support for the PML-Nawaz (PML-N). Malika is a senior member of the party and is credited with having had significant public grants released for Sahiwal for street paving, sanitation and the upgrading of the two schools. Another testament to the power of the *maalik*s is the fact that despite Rouse's (1988) observation that through her stay in Sahiwal she noted a desire of the people to see a return to PPP rule, the village has never again voted for a PPP candidate. Instead, it has consistently supported Naib and Malika's PML-N.

The *maalik*s' foray into local government has been limited to Sardar's side of the family. It started with Sardar's election to Sargodha's district council under Zia in 1987. According to our interviews the village received almost nothing during Sardar's tenure, which is another reason for the higher support and respect shown to Naib by Sahiwal's residents. More recently, Nazim ran for and won the seat of the *naib-nazim*, or deputy mayor, of the union and *tehsil* councils in the local government elections of 2005. The fact that *tehsil* councils had access to significant funds for local projects meant that during our fieldwork in the village Nazim was the most actively sought out member of the *maalik* family.

At the same time, *biradari*-based politics began to emerge as a form of political organisation in the village. Our surveys show that internally Sahiwal is divided across many small factions that are largely *biradari*-based. The Shia *syed*s consider themselves a faction while the *kumhar*s are organised under a *kumhar* schoolteacher as a separate faction. The most significant of these is a class-based one organised, fittingly, by Fatah and his sons – the ex-tenant whose rise against the *maalik*s was recorded by Rouse – around Sahiwal's middle strata of traders. Over the years, Fatah's family and *biradari*, the *mekan*s, had seen upward mobility through education and urban jobs. This, together with the larger *mekan biradari*'s influence in the *tehsil* and district administration, enabled Fatah to translate his traditional opposition to the *maalik*s into an alternate channel of access to state services by Sahiwal's residents. Fatah mobilised a

significant faction of the *zamindar biradari*s against the *maalik*s in each election, of about 400 votes out of the village's total 2,000 votes, and usually had these polled for the PPP – 'both because I am a PPP supporter at heart, and because it represented the opposite of the *maalik*s' choice, the PML-N', he explained.

Not all *biradari* networks, however, are able to build external links such as those of the *mekan*s. For them, negotiating for public services continues to happen through the *maalik*s and so they continue to support the family in election after election. The main reason for this is the fact that while they have made useful contacts with influential members of their larger extended *biradari* networks in the district, their connections cannot compete with those of the *maalik*s, especially Naib's family, who have regularly sat down to dinner with presidents and prime ministers since the 1950s. What these factions do ensure, however, is that *maalik*s have to negotiate their support before each election. At the *akhat* we witnessed soon after Nazim's victory, recounted in Chapter 1, a member of the *syed biradari* told him in a rather straight forward manner that the election had been won and he now needed to get on immediately with the business of bringing development schemes to the village.

While on the surface the two *maalik* families are still politically united, the campaign for the 2002 election in the village provided some indications that the old fissures between them had reappeared. Since Naib was unwell at the time, Sardar called an *akhat*, though at Naib's *daara,* in which the family's support for a Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) candidate was announced.[31] Representatives from all the village *biradari*s were present. Sardar presented the *maalik*s' choice of candidate, along with the merits of voting for him, after which everyone was given a chance to voice an opinion. Most people chose, instead, to make demands for particular public services, presenting them as the cost of their vote, and hoped that these would be forwarded to the candidate they were about to support. Sardar assured them that he would do that, and the voting decision appeared to have been finalised. However, the night before polling began, a rumour spread through the village that Naib was supporting the PML-N candidate and that he did not agree with Sardar's support for the PML-Q. The next morning the village came out in droves to vote for the PML-N. The constituency, however, was won by the PML-Q

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31 The 2002 election was held under General Musharraf's military regime and managed in the districts by his loyal cadre of local government officials, who were expected to pull in the vote for the party supported by the regime, the PML-Q. It is therefore not surprising that Nazim, who was one such official, and his uncle Sardar wanted Sahiwal's vote to go to the PML-Q.

candidate, supported both by Musharraf's military government and his loyal local government cadres. Through the PML-Q's tenure that followed, Sahiwal received nothing from the national government.

Just before the 2008 election, Naib finally lost his long struggle with cancer and passed away. Many had expected that political power within the village would now shift to Sardar and Nazim. However, the looming end of Musharraf's military regime, PML-Q's waning prospects, Bhutto and Sharif's return to Pakistan, and the expectation that their parties would make a comeback in these elections retained the support of the residents of Sahiwal for the PML-N, and with it for Malika, who took on her husband's mantle as the head of the village. PML-N won in both Sahiwal and in Punjab in 2008.[32] Support for Malika grew stronger and has since been underscored both by her appointment to senior positions within the Punjab government, and the fact that the provincial and national governments both withdrew their support from the local government system introduced by Musharraf. This significantly weakened Nazim's new-found influence within the village after the 2008 election.

Understanding the continuing centrality of Sahiwal's *maalik*s

In the early twentieth century, only members of the agricultural tribes, as defined by the Land Alienation Act (1900), were allowed to stand as electoral candidates and some form of property restrictions remained in place until independence (Talbot 2002). This shifted both political power and representation towards the rural landed elite. Over time such regulations were removed, political parties were organised and local bases of organisation diversified away from the landed elite. At the same time, landholdings became smaller and agrarian relations of production changed. Yet the history of Sahiwal shows us that despite all these changes, politics in the village is still organised by its *maalik*s. Sarfaraz Khan was given complete ownership of Sahiwal in 1860, and 150 years later, it is still his great great granddaughter-in-law, Malika, who decides how the village will cast its vote.

The nature of the *maalik*s' authority, however, has changed. Ahmad defined it as almost complete power and told a story of dependence that was defined by the *maalik*s' ownership of three things – land, homesteads and water. The

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32   The PPP formed government at the centre.

control over land was eventually reduced by land reforms and land sales. The control over homesteads was liberalised in the 1970s and 1980s, and control over water vanished too with the opening of public canals, tubewells and taps. Yet Rouse found that the power remained because of the *maalik*s' continuing economic control over land and employment. As this was reduced further by land sales and fragmentation, the *maalik*s increased their investment in the state, in terms of both bureaucratic contacts and representative politics, and became the main conduit for state-based political clientelism. Absolute feudal power transformed into political authority.

Their continuing authority is, in fact, a testament to their ability to adapt to changing political conditions. When their power was first challenged in the 1970s the two *maalik* families reacted to their loosening control over the village by putting aside their antagonism and coming together in one political faction to counter the mounting opposition of the sharecroppers and labourers. When the class-based organisation of the village producers that had necessitated this union disappeared, they began to drift apart again. When Sahiwal's tenants and labourers found support in the PPP's manifesto, the *maalik*s joined the party and won the right to represent them. When General Zia banned the PPP, they shifted their allegiance to the party supported by the new regime, and so avoided being marginalised from access to state power.

The same adaptation to changing circumstances is evident in the *maalik*s' evolving engagement with village residents. As village residents lost their ties of dependence and were 'freed' of their membership in one or the other of the landlords' factions, they first organised around a class-based identity, but when external support for this form of social organisation disappeared, they turned instead to horizontal alignments on the basis of kinship. The *maalik*s responded to this by becoming directly involved in regulating village affairs through activities they had earlier considered too far below them – such as resolving village disputes between different *biradari* groups and contesting local government elections. To reconnect with villagers for whom horizontal *biradari*-based linkages were becoming more important than vertical links of socio-economic dependence, the *maalik*s intensified their investment in the state in order to become the main channel through which the village could access state officials and services at the national, provincial and local levels. This reconnected *maalik*s and residents through a new form of vertical linkage, that

of political clientelism, and allowed the *maalik*s to remain central and relevant to the lives of village residents.

Sahiwal's story shows that the power of the *maalik*s has transformed dramatically from domination to intermediation, much of it as the result of adapting to national level political and economic changes – to which it seems villages and the relationships between their various residents are hugely susceptible. Nevertheless, the authority and political power of the landlord has continued in some form, as has structural inequality. This is because of a lack of accompanying institutional reforms to deal with the structural basis of this inequality – the effective redistribution of land or access to land markets that could reduce the initial unequal conditions, as well as access to sufficient levels of public goods, such as education and healthcare, by the larger village population that would allow greater economic and social mobility. In the absence of structural reforms and a general underinvestment in public services, rural change has largely consisted of land fragmentation, a reduction in tenancy and the greater availability of non-farm jobs in rural districts – changes that have not been enough to reduce the power of Sahiwal's old landed elite.

A complementary change has been the coming of electoral competition, with the promise of providing rural voters with a way out of their dependence on the traditional landed elite, and spaces for more local collective action within the producing classes. This has not dislodged the *maalik* family in Sahiwal, but then, Sahiwal is a fairly unique village in that it was a very large *zamindari* grant with an unusual amount of power concentrated in the hands of one family after the original settlement of the village. Does its story reflect how competitive electoral politics, socio-economic change and persistent structural inequality interact in other villages that were settled differently under colonial rule? What sorts of village level politics is reproduced in more equal Proprietary or Crown villages? I move from Sahiwal to ask this question in a larger and more representative sample of villages in the following chapters.

4

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Local Competition and Bargaining Power
Conceptualising Political Engagement in Rural Punjab

What type of village politics is reproduced across Sargodha's villages by the interaction between structural inequality and electoral competition? It is difficult to answer this question without developing a set of operationally usable concepts and measures of political outcomes at the local level that can be applied consistently across different types of villages. Sahiwal's story highlights relevant political concepts that can help frame our empirical investigative effort, such as the fact that organising village vote blocs is now a central part of what landlords do; that local political competition revolves around these blocs; and that voting behaviour is determined by political engagement within these blocs between landed leaders and different types of village citizens, some of whom have a greater ability to negotiate with the leader than others. Sahiwal's voters seem to have found resourceful ways to make difficult situations work in their own favour whenever possible, but we do not yet have a systematic way in which to identify and then conceptualise and measure the ways in which rural voters exercise agency in village politics.

This concern encompasses the first two questions I asked in Chapter 1 – about the extent to which the rural landed elite control the political engagement of rural voters, and the extent to which there is variation in such engagement between leaders and voters. I return in this chapter to the following figure from Chapter 1 (Figure 4.1), and use it to set up the central concepts of this study and the main drivers of rural politics: (*a*) village vote blocs, (*b*) vote bloc leaders who create and nurture these blocs, (*c*) collective status-based bargaining between voters and leaders *within* vote blocs and (*d*) local political competition *across* vote blocs. Our task here is to not just conceptualise these drivers of local politics and develop usable measures for them but also to understand the ways in which these may vary from village to village, and voter to voter.

Figure 4.1   Structure of political engagement in rural Punjab
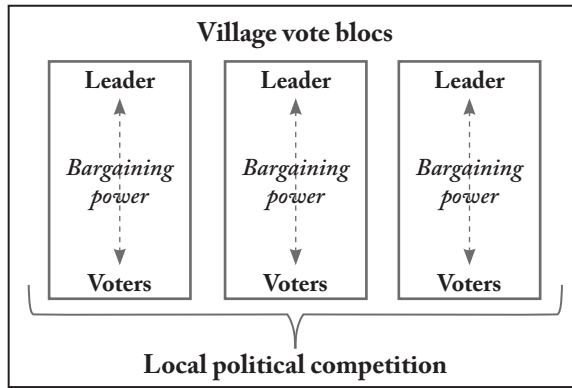
Source: Author.

What exactly is a vote bloc?

On election day most rural Punjabi voters arrive at polling stations having taken collective decisions within vote blocs on who to vote for. Their vote, in most cases, does not reflect how they identify with the candidate or party for which they will cast the vote. Instead, it reflects their relationship with the leaders of the vote blocs of which they are members. We spoke with about 2,200 survey respondents in 38 villages[1] – a sample that was stratified by caste so as to represent different types of voters in each village – and found that the numbers on vote bloc membership are staggering. Every village had at least one vote bloc, and it was not just the dependent populations of these villages that joined them. In fact, 80 per cent of those we spoke with – rich and poor, upper and lower caste, men and women – were members of vote blocs.

What exactly is a vote bloc, or *dharra* as it is locally called? Vote blocs are territorially – bounded, village level informal political institutions[2] that are organised and led by local political intermediaries. They have clearly recognisable leaders and identifiable members, though a leader may not always be able to identify all *dharra* members with confidence. Vote bloc leaders organise political action at the level of a village through these institutions, and recruit voters on different bases to make collective electoral decisions. Vote bloc members and

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1   Details on village selection and data collection are in the initial pages of Chapters 5 and 6.

2   In that they are not formally recognised as a political institution, but they are defined by norms and rules.

leaders may identify with political parties but they are not organised by them,[3] and they may often change their support from one party to another.

Vote blocs look a lot like village level factions but for two crucial differences. Nicholas (1966, 1968) points out that factions are conflict groups, and as such, there must always be two or more competing factions within any given arena.[4] The arena of electoral contest in this study is the village, and many villages in Sargodha have just one large vote bloc that encompasses the whole village. In such cases, factional political conflict does not contribute to the organisation of the vote bloc. In fact, vote blocs must operate across factional divisions in such cases. *Biradari*s within a village may organise across a number of different kinship-based factions, but they then form alliances to come together within a smaller number of vote blocs to make electoral decisions. This is the other crucial difference – factions are separated by vertical cleavages while vote blocs can be organised along vertical or horizontal divisions across village society.

In most other ways vote blocs resemble Nicholas' factions, which he defines as groups that organise political relations and have little function outside politics,[5] the power of their leaders is multi-faceted, and they draw this from a variety of sources – social (family and history), economic (dependence) and political (office plus connections) (Nicholas 1968). There is a notion of 'membership' in and 'recruitment' to these groups in the broadest sense of the terms, but they are not corporate groups and lack permanence. However, they can persist over a long period of time, and variation in their stability and persistence can indicate the strength and dominance of their leaders. Alavi (1973) argued that such factions are the most pervasive form of political organisation in peasant societies, and since they cut vertically across both class and caste, political and social cleavages in such societies do not always coincide. Writing at the time of Pakistan's first democratic election, Alavi argued that politics was organised largely around factional conflict in rural Pakistan. Three decades and eight elections later, I argue that these factions have mutated into more strategic vote blocs that are now more connected to the logic of national and regional politics, and which may, in the process, often seek to mute factional conflict in

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3   This is a crucial difference between vote bloc leaders and the brokers identified by Stokes et al. (2013).

4   This is also the view that Nelson (2002) has taken more recently, when he argues that factions in rural Punjab are a reflection purely of local animosity and conflict.

5   Though Nicholas agrees with Lewis' (1958) insistence that factions sometimes have 'important social functions outside politics' too (Nicholas 1968, 23).

order to increase electoral strength. This means that vote blocs may now bring political and social cleavages to sometimes overlap.

Vote blocs are organised in different ways – sometimes they are organised vertically around a landlord's tenants and labourers, while at other times they bring together people from the same class of village residents. Vertically organised vote blocs are usually led by village dominants, called *maalik*s or *chaudhri*s,[6] who derive their influence, dominance and authority from the ownership of land. They are usually the wealthiest people in a village, and control most of the employment opportunities and the trade of the village's produce. In many cases, their family's landownership dates back to the time of the original settlement of these villages under British colonial rule, when land was granted to individuals and families from agricultural castes to constitute the village proprietary body. This pattern of settlement gave landed families immediate economic power over other groups in the village and over time their monopolistic economic power helped them acquire social and political power as well. Horizontally organised vote blocs, on the other hand, are organised around social ties of class, caste, neighbourhood or occupational identity. The power of their leaders – usually small landowners from the village's middle strata – derives from their organisation of networks of social solidarity, and they use this as a form of collective action to gain some political independence for the group vis-à-vis larger landowners.

Vote blocs have one primary function – to organise village politics by deciding who their members will vote for, and what they will receive in return. Voters participate in them for different reasons – some would like to be able to hold on to their jobs, others would like to be able to make more effective demands for a paved street in front of their house, and yet others would like to simply reinforce their ties of social solidarity with their village neighbours. The extent to which voters will gain as members of these political institutions is dependent on the bargaining power of the individual voter vis-à-vis the vote bloc leader, which is, in turn, dependent on the power and influence of the leader and the level of political competition in the village. The rest of this chapter focuses on unravelling these relationships between vote bloc leaders and members in the context of rural inequality.

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6   A *chaudhri* is a large landowner whose family was given land at the time of the original settlement of the village, usually within Crown villages.

Are vote blocs controlled by the landed elite?

The general literature on rural Punjab and the case study of Sahiwal both reveal that village politics is organised by the landed elite. However, the fact that there are significant historical differences across villages in terms of economic and social structural inequality indicates that this must be a more nuanced story than the one we are usually told. Do all landlords organise and control village politics as Naib and Malika do in Sahiwal, or are there differences that matter in this story of the control of rural politics by the landed elite?

We know from the case of Sahiwal that organising village politics and vote blocs has become a primary channel through which landlords retain their relevance in the lives of village residents. The vote bloc works simultaneously to give the leader local authority in the village, a vote bank with which to get the attention of political candidates, and a say in the distribution of resources in case the preferred candidate (and his/her party) wins the election. And vote bloc leaders do not simply play a political role in village life. They may also employ agricultural labour and lease land to tenants; resolve village disputes; and maintain active links with the bureaucracy and the police so that when a village resident needs to visit any of these offices, the vote bloc leader can facilitate this visit and ensure they will get adequate attention. One such leader explained,

> Politicians can provide a lot of services, but we have many local needs, such as resolving local disputes and conflicts with the police and the local magistrates, and these the politicians are rarely willing to deal with. We have to do all of that for the village. It is our responsibility to make sure that we are able to meet these needs.

Vote bloc leaders operate across multiple domains in most villages that we studied but the extent to which they are able to dominate and control village politics can vary quite a lot from village to village, and is usually a function of two main factors – the social authority of leaders and the extent to which they control the economic means of production.

Many vote bloc leaders draw their social authority from their membership of the original village proprietary body (VPB), but in some villages the VPB comprises of a small family, such as in Sahiwal, while in others it may cover more than half the village. When the vote bloc leader is from a minority social group but manages to lead a vote bloc that pulls in members from different *biradari*s, it

indicates power and influence across multiple domains. It also indicates a more hierarchical social structure within the village and the fact that there is possibly little competition for the leadership of the vote bloc, which will often fall to a member of the largest landowning family. On the other hand, a leader who is from a majority social group may be able to construct quite a large vote bloc simply on the basis of demographics and social identification, without having to employ influence across other domains. This indicates a more horizontal, egalitarian social and power structure within the village, and could also indicate some competition for the leadership position, which often falls to the more politically entrepreneurial members of the majority *biradari*. In our sample of 38 villages, the population proportion of a vote bloc leader's *biradari* within a village varied widely – from 0.2 per cent in a *zamindari* village to 62 per cent in a village originally settled as a *bhaichara* grant.

When social authority is underwritten by a vote bloc leader's control of the economic means of production, political competition may be especially limited. If there is complete overlap between the largest landlords and the leaders of each vote bloc in a village, it indicates a confluence of economic, social and political power, many dependent members, and little effective political competition as voters are bound to the bloc of their *maalik*. At the other extreme, if vote blocs are led by leaders who have no or little access to economic resources, little historical social power and have only recently emerged as political leaders, we can expect members to have joined the vote bloc because of reasons other than dependency and, therefore, to have greater bargaining power vis-à-vis the leaders. We would also expect to see more effective competition between the blocs for the village's votes.

At the time of our survey, there were 78 vote blocs in our sample of 38 villages and each of these had one main leader. We collected detailed information on all these leaders and were able to interview 76 of them.[7] Some lived in the village itself, others had moved out to the *tehsil* town or to Sargodha city, and even to Lahore. We contacted and interviewed each one of them and found that they share some common traits. First, with the exception of Malika in Sahiwal, they were all men.[8] Second, all of them, except two, were landowners. The size of their landholdings, however, varied immensely – from 450 acres down to just 2 acres. A quarter of vote bloc leaders owned in excess of 50 acres while 36 per cent

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7   One refused to be interviewed while another could not be contacted.

8   I, therefore, refer to them in the masculine through the rest of this book.

owned below the stipulated subsistence level of 12.5[9] acres (Table 4.1). In other words, though landed, many vote bloc leaders are not large landowners of the 'feudal' variety, and in many cases, were not even the largest landowner in their own village. It is important to point out though, that even these small packets of land places them within a 30 per cent minority that owns land across our entire sample.[10] In a region where land is extremely unequally distributed across the population – the Gini coefficient for land inequality is 0.84 for the sample as a whole, which is extremely close to perfect inequality – any landholding is sufficient to make you a member of the village elite.

Table 4.1 Land owned by vote bloc leaders

Land owned (acres)	Category	Vote bloc leaders		
		No.	%	Cum. %
0	Landless	2	2.63	2.63
1 to <5	Marginal	5	6.58	9.21
5 to <12.5	Small	20	26.32	35.53
12.5 to <25	Medium	15	19.74	55.26
25 to <50	Large	13	17.11	72.37
50 to 150		17	22.37	94.74
>150		4	5.26	100
		76	100	

Source: Author.

Third, and possibly more importantly as far as socio-political influence goes, 90 per cent of vote bloc leaders were from the original VPB families and *biradari*s, and all except the two landless vote bloc leaders in our sample were from *zamindar biradari*s. This means that not only are most leaders part of the village economic elite but that their authority is also underwritten by historical and social influence. VPB status, as compared to simply being from

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9 Stipulated as subsistence level by the state and used in both the land reforms. The logic comes from a holding size that can be cultivated by a family with one pair of oxen.

10 See Table 6.5 for the distribution of land across the population of sample villages. Overall, about 70 per cent of the population is landless and another 25 per cent owns less than the subsistence level. Only 5 per cent own more than 12.5 acres.

a *zamindar biradari,* indicates an ability to have accumulated both social power and political contacts with the state over generations – much like 'old money' in most parts of the world – and to be dominant across social, economic and political structures inside the village. Being part of the VPB makes the political power of vote bloc leaders particularly pervasive and encompassing. When we asked survey respondents why a particular person was the head of their vote bloc, 46 per cent said it was because he was the *maalik* or the *chaudhri* of the village – both terms used for members of the VPB. Only 24 per cent said it was because he was the largest landlord in the village while another 12 per cent said it was because he was the *lambardar* (Table 4.2). Very often this could be the same person – it is common for the largest landlord to be considered the head of the village and to have inherited the position of the *lambardar* from his forefathers – but the particular term that each respondent chooses to use to refer to the leader provides a valuable insight into what voters think is the basis of the leader's political influence. A majority believe that the influence flows from a historical, familial position at the top of the village's social hierarchy while only 24 per cent think that it is based on landownership. Taken together, these three categories account for 82 per cent of responses. Interestingly, only 3 per cent think their leader derives his power from being the head of a particular *biradari.*

Table 4.2 Basis of leadership of vote bloc leaders

Basis of leadership	%
Maalik-Chaudhri (Head of village)	46
Largest landlord	24
Lambardar	12
Local government officer	4
Family	4
Biradari	3
Politically active and dynamic	3
Politician-candidate	2
Other	2
Total	**100**

Source: Author.

Members of the VPB in a village are 7 per cent more likely to be a vote bloc leader, compared to everyone else in the village, after controlling for the possible effect of other individual characteristics such as caste, landownership, age, education and wealth (Table 4.3). This is not a negligible effect, given that there are very few vote bloc leaders – between one and four people at the most per village – and the probability of becoming one is raised by VPB status more than it is by any other factor, including land. Interestingly, while landownership is an important factor, it only increases the likelihood of being a leader by a very small percentage when we control for other personal characteristics, and an interaction between VPB status and landownership is not significant at all. This means that the correlation between VPB status and vote bloc leadership is significant on its own, and is not driven by an overlap with landownership. I use a village fixed effects model to ensure that these results are driven by variation within villages and not by unobserved differences across the sample of villages. I also checked to see if this pattern was more symptomatic of certain types of villages, such as Proprietary or Crown estates, but found no significant differences.

Table 4.3 Effect of landownership and VPB status on vote bloc leadership (probit estimates/marginal effects)

	(1) VB Leader (With Village FE)	(2) VB Leader (With Village FE)	(3) VB Leader (With Village FE)
VPB	0.137*** (0.019)	0.072*** (0.012)	0.057*** (0.013)
Land Size		0.001*** (0.000)	0.002* (0.001)
VPB*Land			0.000 (0.001)
Observations	1,572	1,572	1,342
Controls		Caste, Age, Education and Wealth	

Notes: Marginal effects; standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Why exactly does VPB status matter so much for political leadership? The answer lies in the ability of members of these families to draw on social norms, rules and sanctions from both economic and social spheres of influence to create and maintain political networks. In very unequal villages like Sahiwal, the authority of the *maalik* is still rooted in a set of sanctions around agricultural employment and the imposition of private and public fines. They can fire or blacklist labourers who refuse to comply, and given that they own a majority of village land, such labourers might find it difficult to get alternate employment. They can also restrict access to fodder grown on their lands, and stop people from using village pathways and access roads that cut across their lands. In other types of villages, we found a regime of collectively sanctioned public fines imposed by *maalik*s and *chaudhri*s as part of their village level dispute resolution functions. In Chak 1, one of our Crown case villages, we found that the *chaudhri*s imposed private sanctions that involved fines levied with the explicit aim of maintaining debt bondage. Norms governing debt bondage, in particular the transfer of debt from father to son, strengthens the authority of *chaudhri*s by increasing their economic control over agricultural labour. In more egalitarian villages where such economic sanctions are not possible or effective, punitive measures may include the social exclusion of individuals or entire families from the *biradari*, the village *panchayat* or the village itself. Together with historical social authority, VPB status gives vote bloc leaders control over a host of sanctions that can be used to bind people into vote bloc membership.

The most prominent function that a vote bloc leader must perform is to forge links with political candidates and parties. Leaders from VPB *biradari*s are able to draw on relationships with prominent political candidates that may be a few generations old. New leaders need to convince candidates through displays of political entrepreneurship. Neither type of leader is embedded within political parties nor are they usually connected to particular electoral candidates through stable links of caste or kinship, though these may exist in some cases (as we will see in the case studies in the next chapter). Instead, their alliances with political candidates are strategic and can shift from election to election, based largely on the deal that best matches either the needs of the village or the preferences of the leaders.

These upward linkages between vote bloc leaders and politicians operate in one of two ways. Either an electoral candidate will call on the vote bloc leader to offer to help the village with various issues – road construction, street paving,

the upgrading of a school, cases stuck with the police or courts – in return for electoral support, or the vote bloc leader will get in touch with a candidate that he considers useful and offer him the votes he holds within his vote bloc. Either way, offers are made by both sides and a deal is struck, without the candidate coming into direct contact with those who will eventually vote for him/her on election day. As one of our vote bloc leaders put it.

> We make ourselves indispensable to politicians because we make things easier for them and divide the workload. Ghaus [one of the local politicians] does a door-to-door campaign across the constituency, but not here. Why? Because here I can assure him the vote of my bloc. He does not need to campaign here.

Sixty per cent of our respondents believed that the alignment between their vote bloc leader and the electoral candidate was a strategic election-time alliance that they forged through negotiations (Table 4.4). Eighteen per cent believed that their leader and the electoral candidate shared social links of friendship and may have attended the same schools, possibly in Sargodha city or Lahore.

Table 4.4   Basis of alignment between vote bloc leader and candidate

Basis of alignment	%
Election-time strategic alliance	60
Friends/classmates	18
Political party	7
Traditional clientelism	5
Same family	4
Vote bloc leader is the candidate himself	1
Pir-mureed (Saint and disciple)	0.88
Same occupational group	0.62
Same *biradari*	0.35
Other	3.15
Total	100

Source: Author.

Only 7 per cent of respondents thought that their leader was aligned with the candidate because he identified with that particular political party, and less than

6 per cent said that the alignment was based on familial, *biradari* or religious links. Qualitative interviews provided evidence that many respondents believe these strategic electoral alliances are aimed at bringing benefits to the members of the vote bloc and not just the leader, and in some cases, even to the entire village where, for example, deals are struck for improving the village's access to main roads. And where such dealmaking is concerned, VPBs do this better than other leaders, based on local social authority and generational links with dynastic politicians and the bureaucracy.

So, village politics is controlled not simply by landlords but actually by a few vote bloc leaders from within this group, and what matters most for becoming a vote bloc leader is to be male, landed (though not always the largest landowner), and, most importantly, a member of the VPB. Despite this, there are a number of emerging vote bloc leaders in some of our case villages who are not from the original proprietary families. We already know of Fatah in Sahiwal, and we will meet some other such leaders in the next chapter – the educated, ex-tenant Sultan in Tiwanabad whose family now owns a small parcel of land and whose older brother is a public servant; and Nawab in Chak 1, who owns only a single acre but has managed to organise the producing classes of Chak 1 along with Baba, a member of the *muslim sheikh* caste whose political leadership was giving the *chaudhri*s of his village many sleepless nights. Along with about eight other such emerging political intermediaries whom we encountered over the years in the rest of our case villages, these vote bloc leaders are proof of the fact that competing nodes of authority and political leadership are emerging in rural Punjab. None of them were granted any land by the colonial state but their families – almost always agricultural tenants from the *zamindar biradari* – acquired it at some point. Their political influence is new and draws on more recent political opportunities.

A common reason for their rise to political prominence is their participation in local government elections in the 1980s or the 2000s. In fact, local government office seems to be the great leveller between *maalik*s, *chaudhri*s, and other emerging leaders. We were told repeatedly in different villages that *maalik*s and *chaudhri*s had traditionally found it below their social status to engage with local government elections, and that they would only stand for electoral office or organise vote blocs for national and provincial contests. But things had now changed considerably. A number of *maalik*s and *chaudhri*s in our case villages had run for office in the local government elections of 2001 and 2005. At the same time, so had some newer leaders from non-VPB and even

non-*zamindar biradari*s. A powerful example of the levelling impact of local government elections is provided by a comparison of Nazim of Sahiwal and Baba of Chak 1. Nazim is a member of the *maalik* family of Sahiwal, one of the most prestigious landowning families of the entire district, while Baba is a member of the lowest ranked *muslim sheikh* caste group in Chak 1, unable to command much social authority even within his own village. Nazim is able to call an *akhat* of the entire village while Baba would rarely be invited to the *akhat* of the *chaudhri*s in his village. And yet both rose to political prominence by running for office in the local government election of 2005, and winning as deputy mayor and councillor, respectively, of two different union councils within the same district. Had they run in the same union, Baba would have worked alongside Nazim in making decisions for their union council. Baba may not be invited to the *chaudhri*s' *akhat* in his village but he now sat with some of their counterparts in union council meetings.

Inequality and voter bargaining power: A typology of vote bloc members

Given conditions of structural inequality, there are two questions we need to ask about the 80 per cent of our respondents who are members of vote blocs: first, did they choose to do so of their own free will, that is, did they exercise any agency in deciding to be members; and second, once they are members, do they have any bargaining power vis-à-vis the leader? Categorising vote bloc members is a difficult task, especially if we want to understand the autonomy and bargaining power of different types of voters within Punjab's villages. The concepts most often used in the literature to understand how voters are recruited by brokers and faction leaders are 'loyal and swing' (Stokes et al. 2013) and 'core and follower' (Bailey 1969; Alavi 1971). Loyal voters are those who identify strongly with a particular political party and are expected to vote for it under most circumstances while swing voters are indifferent between parties and will usually need to be persuaded in some material or non-material way to vote for a particular party. Bailey defined core members of a faction as 'an inner circle of retainers', and others as 'an outer circle of followers', and that 'the core are those who are tied to the leader through multiplex relationships: the bond with a follower is transactional and single interest' (1969, 49).

These concepts are not very useful for our current purpose of understanding voter autonomy and bargaining power. Loyal, core, swing and follower are all

attributes that tell us why a voter may choose to vote for a particular party or be part of a particular faction, but they tell us very little in terms of the extent to which such voters may have different types of agency in making strategic political decisions. In the context of rural Punjab, we cannot simply assume that voters have the ability to respond freely to political incentives. This makes the concepts of 'loyal and swing' particularly problematic for our purposes, for these are based on the assumption that voters have agency that they can use to decide how to respond to the strategies of political actors – whether to be a loyal, core supporter or to be indifferent to the options available.[11] Our concern here is more fundamental. We need to know to what extent voters actually have agency in unequal contexts.

Voting behaviour is a complex subject, made even more so by the fact that voters in rural Punjab have multi-faceted relationships with their vote bloc leaders.[12] People's political actions can be determined by a range of pressures, defined by the fact that each voter can occupy multiple 'identity spaces', and 'the alignments suggested by his role in one sub-structure may conflict with those suggested by his role in another sub-structure' (Alavi 1971, 112). Some members may have single-stranded ties with leaders based on employment. Others may have more multi-stranded ties, where they may need the leader to access state services and at the same time also be members of his kin group, possibly share his class status, and live in his neighbourhood. How then do we know when different pressures are at play and how can we sort through the factors that actually shape the decisions of vote bloc members in different contexts? Alavi has a simple suggestion – ask the members themselves, because perspective matters. He points out,

> We find that the question [of member recruitment] appears very different … if we shift the perspective from that of the faction leader, for whom it may matter very little on what basis he recruits his followers, to that of the follower, who may be faced with a multiplicity of ties linking him with rival faction leaders, and who therefore has to make a choice. In making his choice,

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11 A number of recent studies have dealt with the concepts of core and swing voters in looking at who political parties and brokers prioritise in service provision, such as Cox and McCubbins (1986), Dixit and Londregan (1996), Stokes (2005), Nichter (2008), Thachil (2014), Stokes et al. (2013), and Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez and Magaloni (2016).

12 The study of voting behaviour has a rich intellectual tradition that includes Lipset (1960), Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Dahl (1971), Chhibber and Petrocik (1989), Niemi and Weisberg (1993), and Chandra (2007), but its ability to capture electoral relationships in which political parties are not central actors is limited.

he must act within the constraints imposed on him by his situation in the social structure of the village. (1971, 112)

It is this choice that we must probe directly in order to understand which tie or identity voters prioritise when choosing between vote blocs. Leaders are concerned with whether they can use extra-political means to expand their political vote blocs. Voters, on the other hand, weigh their role within the different sub-structures of a village – social, economic and political – to make a decision that promises the most benefits or, often, the least cost.

It is a matter of great consequence for, say, a share-cropper (or any kind of economic dependent) whether he will go with the faction to which his master belongs rather than support a kinsman or, alternatively, to support the latter and defy his master. That is a very difficult choice; a dilemma which he must resolve. (Alavi 1973, 49)

In the context of rural Punjab, there are a variety of pressures that impinge on the 'rationality' of voting choice. At the extremes, we cannot assume either (*a*) that individuals' voting choices are good indicators of individual preferences or (*b*) that voting with the local landlord is motivated purely by relations of domination outside the electoral arena. It is possible that an individual who votes as part of the dominant landlord's vote bloc may have considerable bargaining power vis-à-vis the leader, while an individual who votes within a vote bloc of kin members may have very little. In fact, as I found a voter's participation in a vote bloc can express anything from a relationship of dependence on a landlord, to strategically choosing the strongest patron, to supporting the party or candidate of their choice.

Contexts of high socio-economic inequality, in which political leaders exercise extra-political power over voters, require a different set of concepts to categorise voters – ones that go beyond the standard continuum between clientelistic and programmatic party–voter linkages to also acknowledge relationships of economic dependence and social solidarity between voters and local political actors (which are too often lost through their conflation within discussions of clientelistic relationships at one end of the continuum). Initially, I too imagined that the bargaining power of a rural Punjabi voter could usefully be conceived and measured as existing along a single continuum where some voters are able to bargain and exercise more agency than others. However, a few months into our field observations I realised that this was not the most

useful framework for the rural Pakistani context. It made much more sense to conceive and measure the bargaining power of voters here as a response to a set of interactions – between voters, vote bloc leaders, and socio-economic inequality. Specifically, bargaining power is best conceptualised as the result of three specific types of interactions:

1. The first interaction occurs at the point of becoming a member of a vote bloc. Not all rural voters join vote blocs – about 20 per cent of our respondents were not part of any bloc, claimed to be morally opposed to the idea of collective voting, and had few, if any, political linkages with other actors within the village. However, the remaining village population were all members of vote blocs. This distinction between members and non-members is depicted by the top branches of Figure 4.2.

   I make two main assumptions about why village residents join vote blocs. The first is that the interaction between vote bloc leaders and voters is shaped by relationships within other, non-political spheres and structures. Many voters in Punjab's villages are strongly pressured to support vote blocs organised by the local 'dominants' to whom they have to go for work, for dispute resolution, for help in approaching government offices, and a host of other functions that they perform at the village level. At the same time, there are voters who join the same blocs for social reasons, as relatives, neighbours, friends, or colleagues of the local 'dominant'. These voters may also be pressured to join vote blocs but this is a qualitatively different pressure. The second assumption is that regardless of the reason, all voters are making rational decisions. This, to a large extent, defines the neglected factor in debates and research on these issues in Pakistan. In a context where most individuals are identified by others as belonging to one or more 'groups' (village, caste, clan, vote bloc, and so on), and elections are understood by electoral candidates dominantly to involve seeking the support of groups en bloc through their group leaders, voters take their own ascriptive or potential group identities into account when making electoral decisions. If everyone expects them to support the vote bloc led by their local landlord, is it not rational actually to support that landlord, independent of any considerations of 'dependency', because this will increase the landlord's power and the chances that he will be able to use it to bring resources to the locality? Similarly, even in the absence of a local 'dominant', members of an egalitarian village might still give up

their right to exercise individual choice and instead take collective group decisions, so as to (*a*) increase the electoral power of the group and, thus, attract more resources to the locality and (*b*) ensure the future solidarity of the group if the individual suffers misfortune. Therefore, the fact that someone votes as part of a vote bloc tells us nothing on its own about their level of dependence. To be part of a vote bloc may simply be the most rational choice.

2.   This then requires us to recognise a second set of interactions – the extent of inequality in the relationship between members and leaders. Some members have more equal (or horizontal) relationships with the leader of the vote bloc while others have more unequal (or vertical) relationships. Alavi (1971 and 1973) suggests that two types of members have vertical linkages: (*a*) those who are tied to the leader through economic dependence and (*b*) those that are aligned to the leader through ties of patronage and protection. These two types of members have an unequal relationship with the leader, and they exercise little or no choice in deciding between different and possibly competing bases for membership. Their decision is made for them by their need for the particular vote bloc leader, either as an employer or a patron. Two other types of members have horizontal linkages: (*a*) those with primordial ties of family, tribe, religion, kinship or caste with the leader and (*b*) those with more acquired ties of class solidarity, shared professions, or a common neighbourhood. These types of members have an equal relationship with the vote bloc leader, and they have more choice in deciding which tie to prioritise in joining a vote bloc. It follows then that members with horizontal linkages have more bargaining power vis-à-vis the vote bloc leader than do members with vertical linkages. This distinction is depicted by the middle branches of Figure 4.2.

3.   The third interaction nuances horizontal and vertical linkages in terms of the autonomy that voters can exercise in their relationship with the leader. Voter autonomy varies along a separate dimension that cuts across vertical and horizontal linkages. This dimension distinguishes political relationships from those shaped by extra-political structures. Farm workers that sow a vote bloc leader's land, and villagers that look to him as their political patron are all in vertical relationships with the leader, but it can be argued that political clients have more autonomy and

more bargaining power than workers that stand to lose their jobs, and sometimes their homes, if they choose not to support the leader. A leader need not respond to economically dependent voters and still be able to maintain their support, but he will certainly need to deliver something to maintain the support of a client who is expecting to gain materially from what is a political relationship. Similarly, a leader has a horizontal linkage with both his fellow clan members and with those who share his political ideology, but the latter type of member is less constrained in the relationship compared to the former type, who faces far more social pressures from within the larger kin group and its elders. Again, a leader may be assured of the unconditional support of family and clan members for a long time, but will certainly need to be responsive to the demands of those that join the vote bloc of their own free will to build political ties. This dimension is depicted by the lowest branches of Figure 4.2. I argue that voters for whom a political relationship with the leader takes primacy over other types of ties have more autonomy in making political decisions than those with a primarily socio-economic relationship with the leader.

Figure 4.2 Types of rural voters
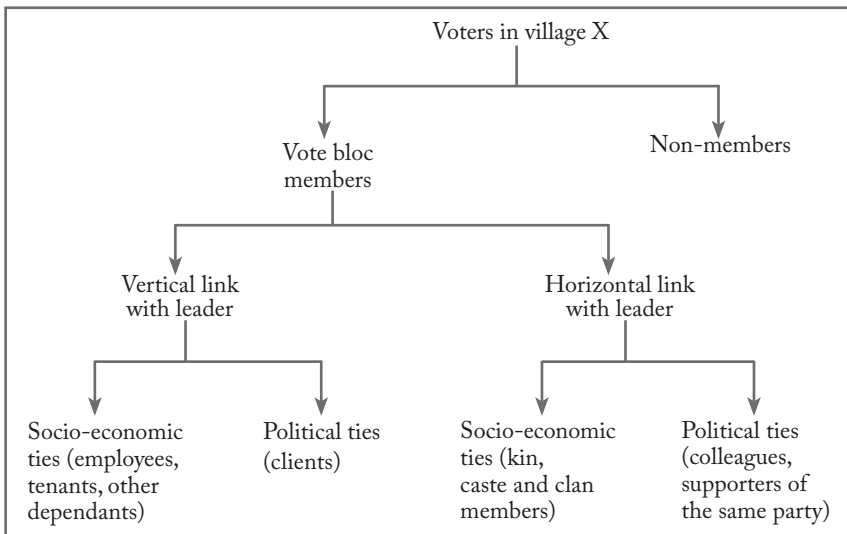
Source: Author.

These dimensions help distinguish vote bloc members in terms of the relational basis on which they participate in vote blocs, and the varying extent to which they can negotiate strategic gain in return for their vote with the vote bloc leader. Voters may want to negotiate a whole variety of things – more stable employment or tenancy agreements, the case of absent schoolteachers and health officers, that their own street should be paved before others, prioritisation of benefits to their own groups and neighbourhoods, and, of course, which candidate or political party they should collectively support. But not all vote bloc members are able to negotiate equally with the leader. A voter who is economically dependent can only really ask for a continued livelihood. On the other hand, a fellow landlord that chooses to align with a particular vote bloc for political reasons can talk to its leader as an equal and negotiate the price of his/her support across a larger range of options.

Figure 4.3 categorises rural voters in terms of their relational basis of participation in a vote bloc, and the types of bargaining power that they have as members. The columns of the matrix distinguish voters with vertical (unequal) linkages from those with horizontal (equal) linkages. The rows of the matrix distinguish voters with political relationships, and thus more autonomy, from those with extra-political relationships, and thus less autonomy. Their interaction gives us four ideal types of vote bloc members – socio-economic dependents, clients, kin group members, and equal peers of the vote bloc leader – and their corresponding level of bargaining power.

Figure 4.3 A typology of vote bloc members and their bargaining power

	Vertical linkage (unequal status)	Horizontal linkage (equal status)
Socio-economic ties (less autonomy)	DEPENDENTS *Bargaining power*: **Low**	KIN *Bargaining power*: **Socially constrained**
Political ties (more autonomy)	CLIENTS *Bargaining power*: **Politically constrained**	PEERS *Bargaining power*: **High**

Source: Author.

Dependents: If a voter connects to a vote bloc leader vertically and the relationship is based on extra-political ties, it is one of socio-economic

dependence. In a rural context, the most common example of such voters are agricultural labourers who are employed by large landlords and have few other employment opportunities. Tenants, sharecroppers and even herders who are dependent on landlords for fodder also fall within this category. Such a tie can also be based on the dependence of voters on the village elite for performing certain social functions, such as dispute resolution across caste groups. This relationship includes the possibility of sanctions and punishment in the case of a member choosing to opt out of the vote bloc or joining another one, and so this type of voter uses both membership and his/her vote to avoid sanctions. There is no notion of negotiation between member and leader, the voter has little bargaining power, and the relationship is long-term and stable.

Clients: If members connect vertically to the vote bloc leader but have more autonomy, their relationship is primarily political and one of broker clientelism. In this case the voter offers his/her vote to the leader in exchange for some benefit – this may include money (though this is extremely rare between leaders and members) or a particular public service, such as an electricity connection, or access to the police or some other government official. This is a transactional relationship between two actors of unequal status, based on negotiation and bargaining, and can be short-term and unstable. Members will choose the leader they think is most capable or most willing to provide the good or service in question, and will then strengthen the leader's political position by voting as part of his vote bloc. With the growing importance of electoral politics and votes, clients in vertical relationships can have a significant amount of bargaining power and can make their landlord-patrons compete with one another for their vote. Clients have more bargaining power than dependents but are constrained by the need for a political patron, and may not have much choice if other vote bloc leaders are not equally powerful or cannot offer as much in return. Their bargaining power is, therefore, 'politically constrained'.

Kin: If vote bloc members connect horizontally to vote bloc leaders as equals through extra-political ties, their relationship is based on social ties of family, kinship, caste or religion, and within this they may have little autonomy. Such voters align with a vote bloc leader out of a sense of social obligation and solidarity. Their motivation is based either on the fact that the bloc is led by a member of their own caste or kin group or because all other members of their kin group have decided to join the bloc collectively. For many voters such groups function as forums for collective action in two ways – either through the

vote bloc leader representing their common interests directly to state officials or as a two-step process in which the leader of the lineage group builds links with the leader of a vote bloc to represent the collective interests of the smaller primordial group, using group numbers for leverage and political advantage within the vote bloc.

A member's autonomy within the bloc is limited because 'an individual household's political actions are… always subject to the authority of the lineage' (Alavi 1971, 117), and because the lineage, or *biradari*, group can enforce sanctions like social ostracism as the cost of defection (Wakil 1970; Lefebvre 1999). Since leverage comes from numbers, social groups can view any deviations from the collective will quite sternly. Such members may personally identify with a different political party but will be socially constrained by the collective decision of their kin group and the imperatives of strengthening their kinship networks. In fact, it is possible that the growing importance of electoral politics may have increased the cost of defection. This is, therefore, a long-term and stable relationship that involves little negotiation. Voters may have some bargaining power but this is 'socially constrained' by the collective will of the *biradari*.

Peers: If vote bloc members connect horizontally to vote bloc leaders as equals and they have decision-making autonomy, the relationship is primarily a political one based on class solidarity, shared occupations, common neighbourhoods,[13] or support for the same political candidate or party. An example of such a tie would include all sharecroppers coming together under the leadership of another sharecropper, or members of a certain profession, such as farmers or potters, coming together in a vote bloc to promote certain collective demands. This is basically a horizontal group based on ties of social support and solidarity, and is a short-term, unstable relationship that will last as long as it yields social benefits. All voters within this category have a high level of bargaining power vis-à-vis the leader with whom they have freely chosen to align their vote.

The bargaining power of the four types of voters can be ranked vis-à-vis one another to some extent. If we read off the rows of Figure 4.3, it is clear that clients

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13 Punjabi villages can have either mixed or segregated residential patterns. Both types fit into this category. In the first case, neighbourhoods are so mixed that the only reason someone would identify it as a basis for vote bloc participation is if they had forged a voluntary residence-based political tie with their neighbours. In the second case, where residential segregation exists, it is usually based on class rather than caste, especially in the form of the schemes of small homestead plots (the 5-*marla* colonies) initiated by various governments to give homestead rights to the poor.

and peers have more bargaining power than dependents and kin respectively. The same is true of the columns – both kin and peers should have more bargaining power than dependents and clients respectively. But what about clients versus kin, both of whom have a medium level of bargaining power that is either socially or politically constrained? I suggest that given the fact that kin are in a relationship with an equal, and their membership often represents an effort at collective action, they should ideally have more independence and greater bargaining power than clients, who are in an unequal relationship with a member of the village elite. Furthermore, sharing a social tie with the vote bloc leader may enable more open lines of bilateral communication. Kin members may see leaders regularly at social occasions and have the opportunity to sit down with them for casual conversations, and so they may be more likely to express their preferences and have these be considered by the leader. In comparison, leaders may be available to clients only through formal appointments and large vote bloc meetings. This means that an effective way to tell apart the bargaining power of a voter is to see whether they have more vertical or horizontal linkages with the vote bloc leader (down the columns of Figure 4.3), rather than whether these are based on socio-economic or political relationships (across the rows of Figure 4.3).

In practice, voters' reasons for participating in a particular vote bloc are rarely so easy to categorise, and may be based on any combination of the motivations described here. Nevertheless, a stylised categorisation of a voter's primary basis for participation in a vote bloc is tremendously useful in unraveling the complexity of voting behaviour in rural areas. The typology shows that the same vote bloc can mean different things to different voters. While for some it is a manifestation of their economic dependence on a landlord, for others it is a forum for collective action. The simple fact of vote bloc membership tells us very little on its own about the level of dependence or freedom of a voter, but if we are able to distinguish vertical from horizontal linkages and political from extra-political ties – relationships that are embedded in the underlying economic and social structures of Punjab's villages – we can make more progress towards understanding why rural voters join vote blocs. The categorisation suggested above, therefore, provides us with some consistent, operationally usable categories to compare and contrast the bargaining power of one voter with that of another within the same village, and even within the same vote bloc.

Understanding local political engagement:
Contestation and inclusion

The contention that politics in rural Pakistan is not competitive is based on the idea that the landed elite control voting behaviour through their domination of vote blocs. This argument, in simplified form, goes like this – elites create these village level political institutions, almost everyone in the village becomes a member because of their socio-economic dependence on landlords, and then because all politics happen within and through these institutions and because they represent the interests of the landed and not the landless, rural politics is uncompetitive and landless voters are powerless. This argument is not entirely wrong. It is true that rural politics is organised through vote blocs rather than by political candidates or parties, and that these are led by the landed elite, many of whom combine economic and social power to gain political influence. However, it is also true that this view makes invisible the variation in the social authority of leaders and the bargaining power of voters. Vote bloc politics is organised in many different ways, and political engagement between leaders and members can vary from bloc to bloc. These variations determine whether or not politics in rural Punjab is competitive and whether voters have any control over their political decisions. In some villages, or in some vote blocs, voters' choices are controlled but in others they play an active role in deciding who they will vote for and why.

Our lack of understanding of how vote bloc politics actually functions and interacts with processes of democratisation rests in good part on a lack of disaggregation across its most important component parts. Conceptualising and measuring aspects of democracy has never been a simple task in any context. As with any effort aimed at approximating the reality of democratic practice, we must bear in mind here too that political engagement that occurs across and within vote blocs is not unidimensional. Attempts to capture political competition as it actually operates in Punjabi villages must look beyond the simple counting of the number of political actors competing in a given election to look instead at what is happening between vote blocs at the village level. And notions of political engagement must go beyond just relational linkages to also look at the nature and substance of engagement that occurs between leaders and members once they come together within vote blocs.

Vote bloc politics is multidimensional and must be conceptualised as such. But its inherent complexity must also be simplified along familiar and usable

component parts that make our task of understanding these political institutions and comparing them to one another easier. I do this by drawing on Dahl's (1971) two dimensions of democratisation – contestation and inclusion – which, according to Coppedge, Alvarez and Maldonado (2008), have formed the basis of the most common indicators of democracy used over the entire latter half of the last century. And these do very nicely for the context of rural Punjab as well, where vote blocs regulate and condition rural voters' ability to formulate and signify their preferences through collective action (contestation), and their ability to participate in political processes and decisions (inclusion). Our main concern in terms of conceptualising political engagement in rural Punjab is thus with – (*a*) the extent to which vote blocs allow contestation within local politics and (*b*) the extent to which they include members within their decision-making processes.

Contestation

The number of vote blocs in a village is the most basic component and measure of contestation. Multiple vote blocs allow voters to have more choice in terms of membership, at least in principle, and they may be able to make leaders compete with one another for their vote. This can increase both political competition in the village and the bargaining power of voters vis-à-vis village leaders. A single vote bloc, on the other hand, can severely restrict their options. In the 38 villages that we surveyed, each had at least one vote bloc, a majority had two to three vote blocs each, and one village even had four (Table 4.5). This was a particular anomaly because, unlike most other villages in Sargodha, this village had no main central settlement. Instead, the population was dispersed across four small settlements that were disconnected from one another, and each settlement had its own vote bloc. This case exemplifies the fact that vote blocs are territorially bounded political institutions. In villages that had Sargodha's typical pattern of consolidated, central settlements, three was the maximum number of vote blocs.

Table 4.5   Number of vote blocs per village

1 vote bloc	10 villages
2 vote blocs	17 villages
3 vote blocs	10 villages
4 vote blocs	1 village

Source: Author.

When a village has more than one vote bloc, we found that the trend is for each to connect to a different candidate and political party. In only 5 out of the 28 villages with multiple vote blocs did more than one vote bloc connect to the same electoral candidate. Building linkages with different politicians makes sense from the point of view of vote bloc leaders. Electoral candidates are bound to value vote bloc leaders more if they are in competition for the vote of the village against another electoral candidate. If one candidate is assured the full vote of a village, albeit divided across different vote blocs, she/he may have little incentive to bargain with any of the bloc leaders for this vote.

The number of vote blocs, in and of itself, however, does not tell us enough about effective competition in the village. This is because some vote blocs may be too small to provide a real alternative option to voters. The number of votes controlled by each vote bloc leader, therefore, is a useful additional component of contestation to consider. If a leader controls a majority of votes in the village, despite the existence of other vote blocs, he may have little incentive to bargain with voters over expressed preferences. On the other hand, if there are many vote blocs that divide the vote bank equally between them, the marginal value of each vote is higher and each leader would have to compete vigorously against the others for members. Not only do leaders need to keep their own members happy but they may also attempt to attract members of the other blocs through promises of delivery and responsiveness to expand their vote blocs. Either way, both political competition and the bargaining power of voters is increased by a more even distribution of votes across blocs. Our data shows that if there is only one vote bloc in the village, it generally controls 90–100 per cent of the village vote; if there are two vote blocs they split the vote quite evenly between them, though we found a 2:1 ratio in some villages and if there are three vote blocs the trend is for two of these to be large and equal, with the third bloc controlling a small proportion of the total vote.

To make sense of this, I adapted the Molinar 'number of parties' (NP) index,[14] a regularly used measure of political competition across countries and across

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14   Number of parties (NP) index is used to calculate the number of vote blocs (NVB) (Molinar 1991):

$$NP = 1 + N \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} P_i^2 \right) - P_1^2}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} P_i^2}$$

elections,[15] that provides an adjusted measure of competition by weighing the number of political parties by their share of total seats or votes (Molinar 1991). I used the NP index to create a measure of the number of vote blocs (NVB) in our 38 case villages, and, therefore, of the effective level of competition in a village. Let us take a hypothetical example of what the NP tells us. Country A has three political parties, of which one party controls a majority of votes – 10,000 of the total 15,000 votes – and the two other parties divide the remaining 5,000 votes equally between them. Country B has only two parties that divide the same number of total votes equally between them. Using the NP index, Country B gets a score of 2 in terms of the effective number of political parties, and can be considered more politically competitive than Country A, where the effective number of parties is only 1.23, despite having a higher number of actual political parties. This measure standardises the strength of each party, or vote bloc, so that they can be more usefully compared. The average NVB score across the 38 villages for the 2002 election (the most recent national election at the time of our data collection in 2006–07) is about 1.7, which is fairly competitive.

I calculated NVB index scores for each village for both the 1997 and 2002 national elections, and found that in 16 villages there was an increase in the effective number of vote blocs in 2002, indicating greater competition. In 13 villages there was a decrease, and in nine villages there was no change at all. Vote bloc organisation, it seems, can be dynamic and our evidence reveals that it closely reflects changes in national level politics. The 1997 election was essentially a two-party electoral contest between the PPP and the PML-N that became a three-way contest in 2002 with the emergence of the PML-Q under the Musharraf regime. In 9 out of the 38 villages, an additional vote bloc appeared between the 1997 and the 2002 elections, and in each of these there was now at least one vote bloc associated with the new party. In fact, if a village had three vote blocs it almost invariably meant that each was aligned to one of the three main political parties – the PPP, the PML-N, and the PML-Q. It was not necessarily always the new vote bloc that linked up to the new political party. In some cases, an older vote bloc changed its affiliation to the new party, and the new vote bloc then linked up to the party that had been abandoned in the process. Our interviews revealed that this split of the village vote across multiple blocs and parties operated more as a risk reduction strategy than as a

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15 Along with the alternative indices, the 'Effective Number of Parties' Index (Laakso and Taagepera 1979) and the 'Hyperfractionalisation' Index (Wildgen 1971). By privileging the dominance of the largest party, the NP index may be more accurately reflective of the power dynamics of rural Punjab's politics than other indices.

manifestation of local conflict. The greater the number of parties that a single village can connect to through vote blocs, the higher are the chances of being associated with the winning candidate and, therefore, the higher the probability of bringing some services to the village. This argument may not hold in the case of private goods or targeted services that can be restricted to the members of a particular vote bloc, such as the paving of streets in a particular neighbourhood only. However, if what the village really wants is a public good – such as a high school for girls, a veterinary hospital or a road to the village – then it seems plausible that multiple vote blocs connected to different political parties may represent not local conflicts but the best strategy for ensuring delivery.

Our data for changes between the 2002 and 2008 election is less clear but interesting in itself. The February 2008 election marked Pakistan's transition to democracy after eight years under military rule. A few months before the elections, General Musharraf imposed emergency rule in November 2007. Soon after, Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the PPP was assassinated in December. The election that followed two months later in February happened under extremely volatile conditions. Our fieldwork in Sargodha's villages came to a sudden end with the imposition of emergency rule in November, and we could only return to a few villages close to the election a few months later in February. Much of the information on vote bloc organisation was thus collected months before the actual election. However, this provided us with a good opportunity to check how soon before an election do vote bloc membership numbers become clear to their leaders. In many villages we were told that it was simply too early (through the summer and autumn of 2007) to know how many votes were controlled by each bloc or, in some cases, even how many vote blocs there might be at election time. In other villages we were told that they would only know their numbers for sure after the election. This explained why we were given such clear information on vote shares in the two previous elections, for which we had asked questions retrospectively. Leaders seem to have a better idea of their membership numbers after an election than before it. This counters the idea that vote blocs are stable, that members are all well known to the leader, and that voters do not often switch between blocs. Whether or not key respondents were able to give us information on vote bloc numbers did not correspond to any particular village type. Overall, 22 of the 38 villages were able to provide the information with some confidence, and of these 15 villages had an increase in the NVB, indicating a more even distribution of voters, and only 2 saw a decrease while 4 had no change.

New vote blocs often signal an emerging leader in village politics. This is the case of one of our two landless, non-*zamindar* vote bloc leaders. Anwar, who is from a *kammi biradari* of weavers, formed a third faction of 50 members of his extended family and lineage group in his village just before the 2002 election and linked it to the new party, the PML-Q. This Proprietary village had until then been dominated by two factions led by landowners from the same dominant *biradari* that split the village in half and were aligned with the PPP and PML-N. In his interview Anwar claimed that he was driven only by a strong identification with the new party, though it is highly likely that he was also able to negotiate some gains for his vote bloc members that they may not have been able to access through their membership in the two older blocs.

The extent to which voters in a village can organise their own vote bloc – around an identity of their own choosing and independent of the influence of local dominants – is another important component of contestation. This would perhaps be most meaningful for those people in a village who are almost consistently ignored and excluded from decision-making processes – the marginalised, landless *muslim sheikh* caste of labourers. This group shares almost no social links with landed vote bloc leaders, and their inclusion in a vote bloc is almost always based on ties of dependence or patronage. If *muslim sheikh*s were to organise their own vote bloc, constructed around their specific class interests as village labourers, it would indicate a level of real political empowerment and contestation within the village. But as may be expected, this group has the lowest access to opportunities to contest village politics, and a separate vote bloc of *muslim sheikh*s is a highly unlikely scenario. However, we did find a *muslim sheikh* leader of a vote bloc that included members from other *biradari*s as well. This is Baba from Chak 1, who came together with a small landowner to organise one of Chak 1's two main vote blocs that brings together most of the village's landless *kammi* and *muslim sheikh* population. I recount Baba's story in more detail in the next chapter.

A more usual vote bloc configuration is for *muslim sheikh*s to split across the village's available vote blocs. Table 4.6 provides the scoring system devised to understand the extent of political independence exercised by *muslim sheikh*s vis-à-vis vote bloc leaders. Only three villages scored 2 or above on this scoring scheme, and the remaining all received a score of 0 or 1, which means that in these villages, *muslim sheikh* groups are all part of the vote blocs of the landed. Alavi (1973) interpreted this as the co-option of less powerful *biradari*s into

different vertical cleavages in order to prevent them from forming horizontal linkages of their own that could lead to class-based, ideological conflict. One of our key respondents agreed. 'The lowest castes in the village try to form their own vote bloc but the people with influence split them up', he said. 'They cannot tolerate them being in their own vote bloc, or negotiating with candidates on their own against other blocs. Our leaders include the lowest castes in their own *dharra* to keep them dependent and to make sure that all contact with politicians is through the *dharra* leader.'

Table 4.6 Political independence of lowest caste group

Variation	Score
All part of 1 vote bloc led by VPB landlord	0
Split across 2 or more vote blocs led by VPB landlords	1
Split across 2 or more vote blocs, at least one of which is led by non-VPB leader	2
Politically independent – have formed separate vote bloc	3

Source: Author.

In some cases landlords accomplish this through sanctions and coercion, but in other cases it looks more like persuasion and allows *muslim sheikh* voters the leverage and opportunity to make some demands. Our conversations and surveys with *muslim sheikh* groups confirmed this. In a competitive village, *muslim sheikh*s can use their numbers to negotiate benefits for their group with the competing leaders, and the fact that they are split across different blocs increases their chances of gaining some access to services. If, for example, they are able to negotiate more paved streets in their often segregated part of the village, then the benefits accrue to the whole caste group, regardless of who wins the election. It is not uncommon to hear vote bloc leaders complain that members from groups with which they have few social contacts – *kammi*s and *muslim sheikh*s – are the hardest to monitor, and often keep them guessing to the very end in terms of their votes. For example, in one of our case villages, Chak 2, the leaders of the village's two blocs were both unsure of the membership status of a sizeable number of about 300–400 swing voters from the more marginalised caste groups, who used the animosity between the two leaders to gain greater leverage for themselves by negotiating actively with both sides right up to election day.

Inclusion

Inclusion or the extent to which voters can participate in decision-making processes within the vote bloc has two vital components. The first of these is the basis on which voters are recruited into vote blocs. This is connected to the earlier discussion of the relational basis on which voters participate in vote blocs, where we had concluded that voters with more vertical linkages have less bargaining power than those with more horizontal relationships with vote bloc leaders. Vertical linkages include economic dependence of the village populace on a landlord-leader, historical ties of loyalty, and ties of broker clientelism, in which members align with leaders based on expectations of material benefits. Horizontal linkages include social obligation to a group, primordial or acquired identification with a group, and ties of ideological support in which members align with leaders based on a set of shared beliefs. Vote blocs are rarely formed around a singular logic, and most leaders will recruit members on any combination of these types of links.

In order to capture and measure differences in vote bloc organisation across villages, I used voter responses from household surveys to questions about their basis of participation in a vote bloc to assign a 'basis of membership' score to a village. Table 4.7 provides the scoring system, which assigns a score of 0 if all voters participate on the basis of dependence, a score of 1 for clientelistic linkages, a score of 2 if the basis is one of social relationships, and a score of 3 if the links are constructed around ideological or acquired associations. To calculate the unique score of a village, responses of different households that are members of a particular vote bloc were first averaged out to assign a score

Table 4.7 Basis of vote bloc membership

Variation	Score
Vertical: Economic dependence, loyalty to landlord family	0
Vertical: Clientelism, expectation of benefits	1
Horizontal: Social obligation to, or primordial identification with, a group (caste, kinship, religion)	2
Horizontal: Support for ideological or policy-based reasons, or solidarity based on an acquired identity (class, occupation)	3

Source: Author.

to each vote bloc. These were then averaged out across all vote blocs in a village to assign an overall score to that village. We found evidence of all four types of membership across our sample households but an overall average score of 1.59 for villages – and a range that varies only from 1 at the lower end to 2.08 at the higher end – indicate that most villages are characterised by a mix of clientelistic and kinship-based participation in vote blocs.

The second component of inclusion is the extent to which voters can participate in making collective decisions within the vote bloc about which candidates or parties to support at election time and what deals to strike with the chosen candidates. This can vary across a full spectrum in our case villages. At one end members living in more egalitarian villages are able to discuss electoral choices with leaders and can participate fully in arriving at a consensus decision within the bloc. Here, a session of the village council (*panchayat*) or a village meeting (*akhat*) is called to make collective decisions and debate any objections. At the other end of the spectrum, an absentee landlord-leader takes a decision in his city home based only on his own preferences, and then communicates this decision to his managers or agents in the village, who then announce it to the village population, usually through the loudspeakers of the village mosque or at the Friday prayer.

Between these two extremes lie other scenarios. The vote bloc leader may call a large meeting (*akhat*) in which a decision is announced without any deliberation but members may get a chance to voice their opinions and express their preferences and demands to the leader. Or the vote bloc leader may go from house to house to tell his members who they will be voting for and why. The fact that he needs to do this instead of being able to announce the decision at a meeting means that there is a need to convince some members and spend time face-to-face to answer questions and ensure compliance, which in turn indicates greater political competition within the village and more bargaining power for members vis-à-vis the leaders. In 23 of our 38 case villages, non-deliberated decisions were announced by leaders, while in 15 villages there was some degree of deliberation and consultation. Table 4.8 categorises and scores these variations.

Table 4.8 Process of electoral decision-making at the time of each election

Variation	Score
Non-deliberated decision announced by vote bloc leader	0
Non-deliberated decision announced in village council (some elements of public discussion)	1
Decision announced by leaders or agents door-to-door or at dinner gatherings (some element of one-on-one deliberations and campaigning for candidate)	2
Decisions taken after deliberations between leaders and members	3

Source: Author.

Even in villages where vote blocs make non-deliberated decisions, the process of gathering votes indicates that voters may have some leverage. In many villages vote bloc leaders and their assistants will start the process by pasting campaign posters of the preferred candidate all over the village to signal their decision to voters. This is then followed by a lunch or dinner invitation, a *daawat*, to the whole village. Often the candidate will also be present and mingle with some of the villagers. Voters may attend *daawat*s thrown by each vote bloc before deciding who to vote for but often only the largest vote bloc will have the resources to finance such gatherings. Vote bloc leaders use these gatherings to signal their power and connections to voters, and will try to ensure that electoral candidates are present at *akhat*s and *daawat*s, especially close to election time. Such village gatherings constitute the campaign trail of most party candidates in rural constituencies. The failure of a candidate to attend a *daawat* can cost the leader votes, especially if another vote bloc leader in the village has succeeded in bringing their own candidate to speak with voters.

Index of political engagement (IPE)

Political engagement between voters and village level leaders in rural Punjab is a multidimensional interaction, one that brings into play all of the complexity expected of political relationships that are moored within unequal economic and social structures. The scores developed here are limited in scope (as any measure attempting to approximate a complicated reality would be) but they allow us

to make a fairly good start of capturing and measuring the complexity of this relationship along two dimensions of democracy – contestation and inclusion. We now have four usable measures of political engagement as it occurs in rural Punjab (summarised in Figure 4.4), and scores for each of these that capture the variation we can expect to see across them in Punjab's villages in Table 4.9.

Figure 4.4   Dimensions of the index of political engagement (IPE)
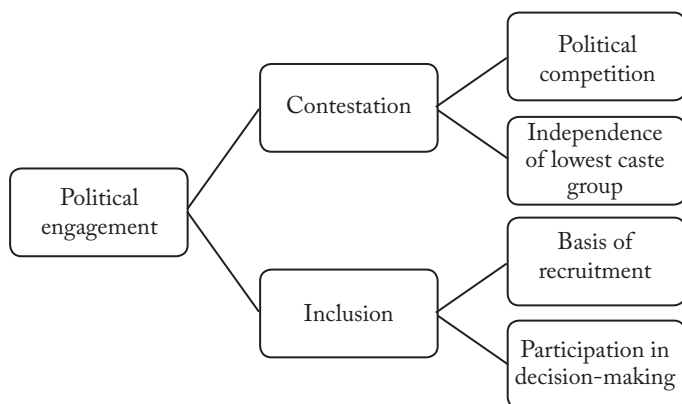
Source: Author.

Table 4.9   Dimensions of the index of political engagement (IPE)

	Dimensions	**Scores**
Contestation	Political competition: Number of vote blocs in each village	1–3.88
	Political independence of lowest caste group	0–3
Inclusion	Basis of member recruitment into vote blocs	0–3
	Participation of members in decision-making	0–3

Source: Author.

Adding the scores across the four components gives us a single continuum of composite scores for the sample of 38 villages which I call the index of political engagement (IPE). The extreme scores on this index are defined by 1 at the lower end and 12.88 at the upper end. A village that scores 1 is completely uncompetitive and non-inclusive – it has a single vote bloc that recruits members through vertical linkages mostly as dependents, and allows them no space in decision-making. At the upper end, the score of 12.88, represents the highest

NVB score in our sample (3.88) combined with the maximum score for the three other components of contestation and inclusion (9). Such a village has multiple vote blocs, some of them formed horizontally around the class interests of lower caste groups, and members are recruited through horizontal linkages and play a role in internal decision-making.

Figure 4.5 Index of political engagement (IPE)

1   13
Undemocratic political engagement   Democratic political engagement

Source: Author.

The average IPE score for all villages in our sample is about 4.80 which is not very high but the range of scores for individual villages shows that there is quite a bit of spatial variation in political engagement even within the same district and very often within the same constituency (see Annex 2, which provides detailed scores for each of the 38 villages). The IPE score ranges from 2 for our least competitive and non-inclusive village to 7.33 in our most competitive and inclusive village. Two of our case study villages, the Proprietary village Tiwanabad and the Crown village Chak 1, lie near each extreme of the continuum, and I discuss their politics in detail in the next chapter to show what politics looks like at extreme ends of the IPE.

Conclusion

I asked a number of questions at the beginning of this chapter. First, do the rural landed elite control village politics? The answer to this all important question in Pakistani politics is a qualified 'yes'. The rural elite is still landed, the distribution of land in rural areas is still very unequal, and this landed elite continues to organise voters into vote blocs. However, this is not enough to conclude that the landed elite are in complete control of rural politics, for a number of reasons. First, many landed vote bloc leaders own land packets that are too small to guarantee them members for their vote blocs based on dependence. Second, what seems to matter more for leadership is not land ownership on its own but the VPB status of the leader. This implies that it is the connections that leaders have managed to build with the state and other political actors outside the village over many generations that brings people into their vote blocs. This is not different from Hagopian's explanation for the

persistence of the traditional elite in Brazil, where she argues that 'traditional elites shifted their power base from land into the state, transforming themselves into a political class whose political dominance rested on their manipulation of state resources' (1986, 4). Third, the political power of the old VPB leaders is actively being challenged by newer, entrepreneurial political leaders in even the most hierarchical, oppressively controlled villages. This is especially effective when the rise and influence of these newer leaders is sanctioned by the state, such as through local government office. We will meet many of these new leaders in the next chapter.

Another question this chapter dealt with is whether rural politics is competitive at the local level, and whether this means that some voters have greater agency than others to make strategic political decisions. This, we discovered here, is a function of both their bargaining power vis-à-vis landed leaders *within* vote blocs, and the extent of local political competition *across* vote blocs in the village. Vote bloc membership, in and of itself, tells us very little about the agency of an individual voter. Some members have more bargaining power than others depending on their position within the village social structure and the type of relationship they share with the vote bloc leader – vertical or horizontal, and political or extra-political. These intersecting relationships based on social structural inequality demarcate four ideal types of vote bloc members – dependents, clients, kin and peers – all of whom have different levels and types of bargaining power. Similarly, the existence of a vote bloc does not, in and of itself, make local politics uncompetitive. Variations in the social authority of leaders and the bargaining power of voters determine whether or not politics in rural Punjab makes inclusive political spaces and opportunities for contestation available to marginalised voters. In some villages voters' choices are controlled but in others they choose quite freely, and frequently, between different leaders and blocs.

And finally, I asked what type of village politics is reproduced across Sargodha's villages by the interaction between historical structural inequality and electoral competition. We have drawn up the concepts, parameters and measures required to answer this question, and will now turn to look at how these play out in a set of case study villages that look similar in many ways but differ from one another along crucial dimensions. To what extent are the political outcomes we discussed here affected by whether a village is a Proprietary or Crown village, equal or unequal, and remotely located or close to an urban town? I look at this next.

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Bargaining with Landlords
Comparing Political Engagement in Unequal Contexts

Sahiwal is a very unequal village in which the original proprietary landlords are in control of village politics, but where voters have used a combination of opportunities – access to non-farm jobs, education, political enfranchisement, linkages with external political actors – to expand the political space available to them inside the village. Sahiwal leaves us with questions about the extent to which a similar pattern of politics is replicated in other nearby villages in Sargodha district – does Malika's control of Sahiwal's politics reflect the way old landed families operate politically in other types of villages too? And are a middle strata of upwardly mobile voters and political entrepreneurs equally visible elsewhere?

As explained in the initial chapters, district Sargodha has different types of villages across which land inequality and social structures vary. We have so far observed politics in a village that was originally settled as a large *zamindari* grant (though converted to a *pattidari* one soon after) and has always been very unequal, but it is close to the town of Shahpur where many of its residents now work. How is politics organised in a village that was a Crown colony, or where land was distributed more equally at the time of settlement, or one that lies deep inside the district, far away from its growing towns? In other words, to what extent do differences in levels and types of inequality condition local political competition and the bargaining power of voters in Sargodha's villages?

In this chapter, I look at political outcomes in five case villages that are different from Sahiwal along specific dimensions of socio-economic inequality, outlined in Table 5.1. My primary interest here is in understanding differences in political organisation across Proprietary and Crown villages – the two major types of colonial land settlements that created socially and economically unequal structures and institutions in rural Punjab – though there are differences within these two broad types of villages. Some are more unequal than others, and some offer greater opportunities for upward mobility than others through their proximity to urban centres. We selected case villages that could offer us a sense of how political engagement can vary across these different contexts.

Selecting the six case villages

The six case villages (including Sahiwal) were selected to represent different types of inequality: (*a*) the extent of social structural inequality, captured by differences between Proprietary and Crown villages, (*b*) historical land inequality, captured by differences in the size of the original land grants and (*c*) inequality of economic opportunity, captured by the distance of a village from a town or city. We selected three Proprietary and three Crown villages, and it so happened that they represented different sub-types within these land tenure systems (labelled in Table 5.1). We used a number of government records to create the master list from which we chose each village.[1] To control for as many other sources of variation as possible, we selected pairs of villages within the same union councils.[2] We identified a list of union councils that had a mix of historically equal and unequal villages, and then randomly picked one union council in Sargodha's Proprietary belt and another in its Crown colonies belt. Within each union council we randomly selected one equal and one unequal village.[3] This gave us Tiwanabad (unequal) and Badhor (equal) in the Proprietary belt, and Chak 1 (unequal) and Chak Migrant (equal) in the Crown belt.

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1   We started with the 1998 *Population Census*' listing of revenue villages. Within these we separated Proprietary from Crown villages by using a simple naming convention since Crown villages are called *chak*s and are listed in government records as such. Therefore, it is possible to differentiate between village types just by looking at their names. Nevertheless, we further verified this classification through a database that we created from the Revenue Office's colonial archives. These included the *Village Inspection Reports*, which were created between 1911 and 1924 as a record of village and tenure type, division of land and mode of agriculture. We also used these *Inspection Reports* to differentiate between historically equal and unequal villages on our list. The specific indicator we used for this purpose was the extent of landless tenancy in each village. If this was more than 60 per cent, we classified it as an unequal village. To calculate the distance of each village from an urban centre, we used the 2003 *Agricultural Census* and defined a remote village as one that was 15 kilometres or more from a *tehsil* town or city. (Each district in Pakistan is sub-divided into *tehsil*s. Rural *tehsil*s usually have one main town, which is also the administrative headquarters.) We verified these and other distances to neighbouring towns and cities during fieldwork in each village.

2   A union council is the lowest tier in the three-tiered local government system, which comprises the district, *tehsil* and unions.

3   A union council usually has between 5 and 15 villages.

Table 5.1 Sample of case studies

	Proprietary villages		Crown villages	
	Unequal	**Equal**	**Unequal**	**Equal**
Remote	Tiwanabad *zamindari*	Badhor *bhaichara*	Chak 1 *sufedposh*	Chak Migrant *migrant*
Urban	Sahiwal *pattidari*		Chak 2 *ghoripal*	

Source: Author.

All of these villages turned out to be remote in terms of their distance from the *tehsil* town. We needed to add some villages that were close to urban centres to our sample of cases. We already had Sahiwal as one of our more urban cases, and so we decided to add the final case village by looking for one that was also close to an urban centre and unequal but, unlike Sahiwal, was a Crown colony village. We picked this village randomly from a much shorter list of probable candidates. This was Chak 2. Resources dictated that we stop the case work at this point rather than complete all the cells of the matrix, but we already had enough variation along each dimension of inequality, and an interesting mix of villages, to enable a rich comparative analysis.[4]

We spent a substantial amount of time in each of these villages and collected detailed data using a number of different methods, including ethnographic participant observations; interviews with about 100 key respondents; complete village censuses to get data on land inequality, literacy rates, poverty and demographic composition in terms of caste and kinship groups; and household surveys with questions about social and political networks. We conducted these surveys with a sample of about 40 per cent of households in each village.[5] In order to ensure that we spoke with a representative cross-section of the village,

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4   Also, it is possibly easier to extrapolate how politics functions in villages that are both close to an urban town and had lower inequality to begin with (the empty cells in Figure 5.1), once we understand the pressures for change in villages dealing with greater disadvantage.

5   Between 34 to 47 per cent of households were surveyed, depending on the size of each village.

we used the census to stratify the village population by caste and *biradari* before selecting a sample. This provided a total sample of about 700 households across the six villages. It is important to point out that we selected our sample as a proportion of the total number of households and not the total population of the village. Our respondents are the heads of each of these households.[6] We did this largely to capture a greater diversity of responses, based on the assumption that households generally vote together within the same vote bloc, and that speaking with multiple respondents within the same household would not yield different responses on vote bloc membership.

Political control and cooperation in proprietary villages: The case of Tiwanabad and Badhor

Tiwanabad and Badhor lie deep in the *tehsil* of Shahpur, the same town that sits just outside Sahiwal village, and they form a natural pair because they lie very close to one another within the same union council. Both villages are remote and they were both settled as Proprietary estates, but while Tiwanabad is extremely unequal and hierarchical, land in Badhor is more equally distributed and its social structure more egalitarian. The two villages provide a neat contrast of the impact of these factors on rural politics and the extent to which local political engagement can vary across villages that share most but one crucial feature – the size of the original colonial land grant and the proportion of the village population that received it.

Tiwanabad: A case of political control

Like Sahiwal, Tiwanabad[7] is also a Proprietary village. It lies 25 kilometres from the town of Shahpur, is not close to any major inter-city roads, and has about 318 households from 48 different *biradari*s. It is an unequal village – 100 per cent of its agricultural land was cultivated through tenancy in the early 1900s, and its current Gini coefficient for land is still extremely high at 0.91. Seventy-three per cent of the village population is landless, 25 per cent owns

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6   For a third of our surveys we insisted on speaking with the eldest female in the house, though our respondent would often refer to male members of the household to confirm who the household had voted for in the previous election. In village after village we realised that politics was a subject that women did not engage with much, and that they left political decisions to the men of the household.

7   Pseudonym.

less than 12.5 acres, and another 2 per cent, about 7 households, owns up to 35 acres. The rest of the village land is all owned by one person, the *maalik* of the village. The village is also quite poor and only 40 per cent of its population lives in brick houses while the rest live in mud and thatch huts.

Tiwanabad was settled as a *zamindari* grant that the colonial *Inspection Report* recorded as 2,281 acres owned by a single landholder in 1917. This landholder was from the Tiwana tribe of central Punjab that had initially consolidated its power in the region by developing strong and fierce cavalries that gave it control over the local population. They later drew strength from first Sikh and then British military and economic patronage to emerge as the largest landholding tribe in all of West Punjab (Talbot 2002). Separate branches of the tribe received various estates in Sargodha in return for services rendered to the British colonial state during the Sikh Wars. Tiwanabad was one of those estates. When I studied the village in 2006–07, it was still owned by only one person but land fragmentation, land reforms and land sales had reduced the holding to only about 300 acres. Nevertheless, this was large enough to have maintained the current scion of the Tiwana family, whom I refer to by that name here, as the *maalik* of the village.

The power and authority of the *maalik* appeared to be more oppressive and obvious in Tiwanabad than in Sahiwal. Tiwana himself is an absentee landlord who lives in Lahore but controls the village through four managers. Some of this control is based on the continuing economic dependence of the village residents on Tiwana for work, while the rest seems to be based on a constant reiteration of the family's historical social authority over all the residents of the village through various means. For example, all homesteads in the village used to be owned by the Tiwana family, and they used this liberally as a sanction against recalcitrant villagers, to the extent of not even allowing such villagers to clear out their belongings before being locked out of the house or thrown out of the village altogether. The logic behind this, as explained by Tiwana's father to his villagers, was that anything a villager amassed over the years was either as a result of the *maalik*'s benevolence or of villagers stealing from him, and thus it all belonged to him. Homestead rights were officially granted by the state to occupants in the 1970s and 1980s, but even during our fieldwork in the village, most residents still considered the village to be Tiwana's personal property because that is what he had told them. As one respondent put it, 'So what if I have a paper from the government saying this piece of land on

which my house stands is mine. The village and all its land is still Tiwana's.' When Bhutto's 5-*marla* colonies were being established across the region in the 1970s, these were vehemently resisted in Tiwanabad and never built. A key respondent explained that this meant that 'there is no *azaad*[8] vote here, unlike in other villages. Only those who live outside the main village are *azaad*'. Tiwana's socio-economic power is underwritten by political office and connections. He was part of the National and Provincial Assemblies under both General Ayub and General Zia. One of his daughters is married to an ex-President's son while another is married to a senior PML-N politician.

Like in Sahiwal, Tiwana's power too suffered a blow in the 1970s when small landholders began to emerge in the village. Tiwana sold off a significant amount of land during the late 1960s and 1970s to avoid Bhutto's two rounds of land reforms. Some of this was bought by *zamindar* tenants and even some *kammi* families, who managed to break loose of Tiwana's control and became Tiwanabad's new class of small peasant proprietors. Through the 1970s, tenancy decreased in Tiwanabad, self-cultivation increased and with it the number of families involved in agricultural and day labour.[9] Bhutto's reforms ended *begaar*, and relations between the various caste groups were monetised, which ended the traditional *seipi* relationships that tied all village classes economically and socially to the *maalik*.

Until the 1970s, Tiwanabad's tenants were constantly rotated between parcels of land to maintain them as 'tenants at will' and thus to reduce their claim to occupancy tenancy. Bhutto's reforms, however, extended the right of occupancy to all tenants, and those in Tiwanabad demanded that their contracts be converted likewise. Tiwana resisted the demand and this led to a militant protest against him – a rare event in the region – which resulted in his manager being turned out of the village by tenants. Though much of the ground conceded by Tiwana because of this incident was reclaimed soon after under the Zia regime, this revolt transformed the relationship between the *maalik* family and the rest of the village. As Tiwana himself explained to me, 'Bhutto gave *azaadi* to all these people [referring to the village population]. Until Bhutto came along I could control them. But after him things were different and they broke rules.'

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8   Literally, independent. The term is used locally to refer to voters who can make independent voting decisions.

9   In 2007, agricultural labour on daily wages was the occupation of more than 30 per cent of the village.

Tiwanabad is the only one of our six case villages that combines all three types of extreme inequality – it is very far from an urban centre and it is a Proprietary, *zamindari* grant in which land was very unequally distributed, such that it was all given to just one person. Of the six villages, Tiwanabad has the smallest proportion of cultivators but the highest proportion of landless agricultural labourers, attesting to a general lack of mobility of the village population. About 40 per cent of its population is still dependent on agricultural labour within the village and only 16 per cent of all residents, comparable to Sahiwal's 17 per cent, are cultivators of land as either owners or tenants. A sizeable number of village residents have moved away to get jobs, given the lack of any employment opportunities nearby, but their families continue to live in the village.

At the time of our first visit in 2006, Tiwanabad also had the worst levels of public provision of our six case villages. It neither had a single paved street nor any sanitation drains, despite the fact that this had been a longstanding demand in the village. Its schools and health clinics were irregularly attended to and its newer settlements had no electricity. The main road into the village led straight to Tiwana's front gate, which was at the outer edge of the main settlement, and stopped there. The rest of the village was traversed by dirt paths. When we came back in 2007, the election of a new mayor from the village (recounted below) had resulted in work having started on both street paving and a sanitation system. However, the construction work stopped conspicuously at the entrance to the *muslim sheikh* neighbourhood.

Village politics

The greatest challenge to Tiwana's power came as late as the 2005 local government election, when Sultan, the son of one of Tiwanabad's small peasant proprietors, stood for the union *nazim*[10] post in the local government elections in opposition to Tiwana's candidate, and won. The local government elections had always been considered too low a level for the Tiwana family to contest personally, but they had taken a keen interest in them since the 1980s by nominating candidates for all the seats of the union council, who would then be elected unopposed. Residents of the union had even coined a term for this, 'Tiwana's panel', which referred to the *maalik*'s ability to pick the entire panel of candidates for local government elections. This had served to underscore his political and social power over the years. Tiwana nominated Sultan – a young

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10   Mayor of the union council, which in this case included 10 other villages.

enterprising son of a small landowning *zamindar* family who ran two private schools in the village – as a councillor to his panel for the 2001 union council elections. Sultan went on to poll more votes than Tiwana's trusted managers – the result of a door-to-door campaign by Sultan's family across all villages of the union. According to some of our key respondents, this warned Tiwana against Sultan, and he was dropped from the panel for the 2005 election. However, Sultan decided to contest anyway, not just as a union councillor but for the seat of the union council *nazim* against Tiwana's nominated candidate. He went on to win and became the mayor of the entire union of 10 villages.[11] Sultan attributed his win to a number of factors, not least of which was the fact that people, especially younger voters, had simply been waiting for someone to oppose Tiwana so that they could vote for him. He noted that many households were split between parents and older siblings voting for Tiwana's candidates and younger members voting for him, an extremely unusual occurence in a context where much emphasis is put on social cohesion within families and clans. Another contributing factor was the poor performance record of Tiwana's candidate during his first term in 2001.

Details of this local government election in Tiwanabad provided great insights into the process of casting what should be a secret ballot but usually is not. Sultan explained that candidates could use various measures to ensure that people voted exactly as they had promised to. The most common way is to have a potential supporter seal the deal by taking an oath on the Quran. If a vote is bought, the payment is withheld until the election results are in. And because results are announced by polling station, it is easy to connect a failed candidate to a lack of votes from a particular station and village. Another way of ensuring a favourable vote is by placing recognisable agents of one's own inside polling stations to 'remind' everyone of the promise, while not allowing agents of opposing political parties into the polling station on election day. In Tiwanabad it is also a tradition for all polling agents to be fed directly from Tiwana's house on election day, which apparently 'softens them up' to any

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11 According to Sultan's family members, there is a story behind the family's need to counter Tiwana. Many decades ago, his older brother, now an official in Punjab's civil service but a college student at the time, was on his way to town and asked Tiwana, who was also heading out of the village, for a ride. Tiwana agreed but instead of asking him to join him in the car, sat him in the back of the van that was accompanying him, carrying his dogs. The brother explained how that ride into town, sitting between the *maalik*'s dogs and following the *maalik*'s car, convinced him that he would one day stand up to him. He explained that he felt he had finally managed to do so through Sultan's win.

irregularities they might witness. A final rather extreme measure is to ensure that the booths are set up next to open windows in the polling station so that voters can hold up their stamped ballot paper to show agents stationed just outside that they have indeed placed their stamp on the preferred candidate's name. A voter who failed to hold up the ballot paper was assumed to have voted against Tiwana's choice. Sultan attributed part of his victory to his family's presence in the polling stations on election day as his agents. This was the first time in Tiwanabad's history that opposition polling agents had been present in a polling station in the village. The fact that they were able to ensure a secret ballot allowed many groups, especially the poor, to vote as they wanted and not as they had been told.

Though Tiwana's power was shaken with Sultan's election, it did not disappear. Sultan won the union *nazim* election with a majority vote that came from the other villages of the union, which do not fall under Tiwana's direct economic and social control. In Tiwanabad itself, Tiwana's nominee had won by a margin of 120 votes (of about 1700 total votes). Also, the challenge to the *maalik*'s political dominance was restricted to local government elections only. As far as national and provincial elections were concerned, Tiwana's power was secure and largely uncontested. Even in the months leading up to the 2008 election that marked Pakistan's transition to democracy, there was no opposing vote bloc leader in the area that could compete with his political influence and connections. For these higher level elections, Tiwana led the village's single large vote bloc with about 88 per cent of the village vote. Our household surveys reveal that half of these members joined the bloc under economic pressure and the rest on account of his social authority. Key respondents confirmed that there had been little change in vote bloc organisation since the 2002 national and provincial elections. The remaining 10 per cent of voters, which included Sultan's family, were the few independent landowners who had moved out of the main village settlement after they purchased land. The fact that they now lived on their own land meant that they were no longer dependent on Tiwana, and this underscored their *azaad* vote. They voted individually and independently outside any vote bloc, but there was some indication that they discussed this decision informally with one another before doing so.

Tiwana, by his own admission, had no special alignments with any political party. Instead, his support for a candidate was based on the choice of his *pir*, Sialvi of Sial Sharif. The *pir* would decide whom to support – usually a

candidate of either of the Muslim Leagues – and then pass on the decision to Tiwana (and his other followers), who in turn passed it to his managers in the village. The managers would then announce the decision to the rest of the village population on the loudspeakers of the main mosque and would then monitor the voters in the lead up to election day to ensure that votes were cast accordingly. In the run-up to the 2008 national and provincial elections, our key respondents repeatedly answered our questions about who the village was going to vote for by saying, 'We don't know yet. We are waiting for *maee baap*'s[12] message to arrive from Lahore.'

Badhor: A case of political cooperation

Badhor is a small village of only 110 households in the same union council as Tiwanabad, and thus equally remote. It is a Proprietary village but, unlike Tiwanabad, it was settled as a lineage *bhaichara* grant. Like all *bhaichara* villages, it is dominated by one large *biradari*, the *badhor*, which gives the village its name, constitutes 40 per cent of its population and owns much of its land. However, unlike most *bhaichara* villages, shares in the village land were given to two separate lineage groups at the time of the original settlement – the majority *badhor biradari* and the minority *basra biradari*, which accounts for only 7 per cent of the village population. It has only 14 other *biradari* groups and its population is less diverse than the much larger Tiwanabad next door. The *badhor* and *basra* lineage groups are considered equal in social status and each has its own separate *lambardar*, a position that is hereditary in this village. While the *badhor* are the demographic majority and have more landholdings as a group, the *basra* have invested in education and urban employment, and have used this remittance income to become the wealthiest group within the village with the four largest individual landholdings.

Badhor is more equal than Tiwanabad. It was settled as a village of small peasant proprietors and about a third of its land was self-cultivated in the early 1900s. The colonial *Inspection Report* lists it as a village of 457 acres that were owned by 49 different landowners. All of this land, however, is owned by members of either the *badhor* or *basra biradari*s, while the remaining population is landless and dependent on these two main *biradari*s for agricultural labour, or for access to land in the case of 10 tenant households. There are now 34 landowning households. In all, 67 per cent of the village is landless, 28 per cent owns less than 12 acres, and another 3 per cent, about 3 households, owns up

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12   Literally, 'mother and father'. The term was used regularly in Tiwanabad to refer to the *maalik*.

to 35 acres. The major difference between Tiwanabad and Badhor is that it has no large landlord; compared to Tiwana's landholding of 300 acres, Badhor's two largest landlords own 75 and 50 acres each.

Agricultural output in the village has suffered because of the poor quality of land and a shortage of irrigation water because the village is at the tail end of an irrigation canal. A large proportion of the village has opted to join the army – almost 20 per cent of households were either in, or retired from, the army at the time of our survey. The wealthier families within the *badhor* and *basra* clans have recently used barren land and remittance income to start poultry and fish farms, on which they employ village residents. This has ensured that despite Badhor's remoteness, residents have access to non-farm employment opportunities within the village. This is also reflected in the fact that about 70 per cent of its population lives in brick houses (compared to only 40 per cent in Tiwanabad).

Badhor is one of the better provided of our case villages. It has a functioning school and paved streets, lanes and sanitation drains. This is attributed largely to the high levels of social cohesion within a horizontal social structure as well as a consensus on the need for service delivery that has motivated its leaders to cultivate links within the bureaucracy to deliver local public goods to the village.

Village politics

Though the main *lambardari* of the village lies with the majority *badhor biradari*, it is the minority *basra* that are politically dominant. At the time of the 2002 and 2008 elections there was only one vote bloc in the village. This was led by the largest landowner of the *basra biradari*, Mian, who owned about 75 acres. Mian was a senior officer in the state highways department and lived in Sargodha city. The vote bloc encompassed almost all groups within the village, and most members claimed to be actively involved in its internal decision-making processes. Voters identified three main reasons for being in the vote bloc. Half the village – the *badhor*s and *basra*s – identified kinship as their reason for participation. The other half was split between two types: those who were dependent on the leading *badhor* and *basra* families for employment on their lands and farms, and those who said that these families provided their only access to state officials because of Mian's job within the bureaucracy.

The village was also closely aligned with Tiwana next door. The *lambardar* of the *basra biradari* had run as part of Tiwana's panel of union level candidates

in the 2001 local government election and had won the post of the deputy *nazim*. During Sultan's election in 2005, Badhor as a village continued to vote for Tiwana's candidate. Again, their reason for this was the access to state offices that Tiwana was able to provide to the heads of Badhor's *biradari*s, especially in the provincial capital, Lahore. Between Mian's access to district level officials in Sargodha and Tiwana's access to provincial and national offices in Lahore and Islamabad, the voters of Badhor seemed to have strategically positioned their few votes to ensure access to state offices when required.

A comparison between Tiwanabad and Badhor further underscores the former village's particularly hierarchical structure, and makes the impact of historical inequality obvious. Both villages are Proprietary and have restricted access to urban employment and services. However, the difference in the size and form of their original land settlements – one a *zamindari* estate and the other a small *bhaichara* village – has meant that whereas Tiwanabad is a vertical village still dominated to a large extent by one man who has used his landed wealth to gain political influence within national and provincial politics, Badhor's landed elite have little political influence even within the union and have increasingly moved into non-agricultural professions. So, while Tiwana maintains oppressive social control of his village through coercion and the fear of sanctions, Badhor has a horizontal social structure in which politics is characterised by consensus and cooperation, and where its wealthier residents have brought non-farm employment opportunities to the village to benefit its larger population.

Competition and bargaining in Crown villages: The case of three *chak*s

The main differences between Proprietary and Crown estates were that landlords in the latter owned smaller parcels of land, villages were ruled under colony law (rather than customary law), and the social power and authority of the VPB in these villages was always more constrained. How do these differences affect local political competition and the bargaining power of voters? I look at the case of three Crown villages, or *chak*s as they are locally called, in this section. One of these was entirely resettled with new residents after Pakistan's split from India in 1947, and is classified as a migrant village. Chak Migrant's unique history of resettlement has meant that it is a very egalitarian village. It forms a natural pair and neat contrast with its neighbouring village, Chak 1. Both villages are part of the same union council and lie deep within Sillanwali *tehsil*,

far from any urban centres. The main difference between them is that Chak 1 has a more unequal distribution of land. Chak 1 also forms a neat comparison with Chak 2. Both villages were settled in very similar ways as 'horse-breeding' grants, and land was unequally distributed in both, but Chak 2 lies very close to Sargodha city and its residents have far greater access to economic opportunities than the residents of the remote Chak 1. The impact of these factors on village politics is evident in the details of the cases presented below.

Chak 1: A case of class conflict

Chak 1 is a Crown colony village that lies 18 kilometres from the *tehsil* town of Sillanwali, to which it was connected by a narrow and bumpy road at the time of our first visit. It is the most unequal of the three Crown case villages. It was leased as a *sufedposh*, or yeomen, grant in 1902 to three families of agricultural castes from three different villages. Land settlement in this part of the district was based on the number of mares a family could contribute to the horse-breeding endeavours of the colonial state.[13] Two families brought five mares each, while the third brought seven mares and was granted about 390 acres and the office of the *lambardar* in return. A number of other families came with one mare each and received smaller packets of land. Like other Crown villages, Chak 1 became home to a number of unrelated landowners, or *chaudhri*s, from different *biradari*s, about 30 in all.

The colonial state made the largest landowner and *lambardar* responsible for functions such as revenue collection, management of the common land and fund of the village, informal dispute resolution, and an overall representation of the community in negotiations with the colonial district administration on issues of land and revenue assessments. While the *maalik*s of Sahiwal and Tiwanabad became informal intermediaries between the state and village residents because of their social authority, the *lambardar*s of Crown villages were formally vested with this authority by the state. However, given the almost equal distribution of land between the three original families in Chak 1, the authority of the *lambardar* was constrained and had to be exercised in consensus with the larger group of *chaudhri*s. Social authority in Chak 1 was, therefore, fairly dispersed across the upper social tier comprised of all the *chaudhri*s of the village. It was obvious that the *chaudhri*s of Chak 1 did not

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13 I explain *ghoripal*, or horse-breeding, grants in Chapter 1. A mare was worth 1.5 squares of land.

have the singular authority of the *maalik*s of Sahiwal and Tiwanabad. But as an unequal village, it shared a key characteristic – the concentration of land in a few landowning families. About 85 per cent of its land was cultivated through tenancy in the early 1900s, and its current Gini coefficient for land is extremely high at 0.92. Eighty per cent of the village population is landless, 13 per cent own less than 12 acres, and another five per cent own up to 35 acres. The two largest landowners own just over a 100 acres each.

The *chaudhri*s were able to amass economic, social and political authority for a number of reasons. They controlled almost the entire land of the village collectively. Thus, they were able to use economic sanctions to regulate rights of tenancy and agricultural employment, as well as the share of tenants and *seip*s, as long as they worked together as a class. This ownership and control have remained largely unchanged for two reasons. First, like Tiwanabad, the remoteness of Chak 1 means that there has been little upward mobility or accumulation of wealth amongst small landowners and other *quom*s. Second, the amount of land that most *chaudhri*s owned was below the ceilings set by both the 1959 and the 1972 land reforms, so that the only change in landholdings has come from land fragmentation within families. Another source of authority and control is the *chaudhri*s' ownership of homestead land. Like all Crown villages, Chak 1 was a planned settlement that divided the village into four large residential blocks within a perfect square intersected by two perpendicular streets. Three of these blocks were each assigned to the three large landowning families, while the fourth was divided between the smaller landowners. Since each family was expected to bring their own artisans and servants (*kammi*s and *muslim sheikh*s) at the time of settlement, these people were settled on the periphery of the residential block of their 'owner'. *Kammi*s were given 2 acres of agricultural land per family but *muslim sheikh*s received nothing. This pattern of residential settlement meant that both *kammi* and *muslim sheikh* castes were dependent on the family on whose land they lived. The threat of eviction was always high, and as one *kammi* respondent put it, 'Our lives were governed by the phrase, "collect your things and leave immediately."' Given the level of collusion between the *chaudhri*s, the evictee could not settle in any other block. Thus, an eviction from the block meant exile from the village.

The *chaudhri*s used their economic power to maintain social and political control of the village. All disputes were resolved by them and they made all political decisions amongst themselves and then announced these at an *akhat*

to their *kammi*s and *muslim sheikh*s. The idea that these groups could choose differently was inconceivable. However, despite the apparent cohesion between them vis-à-vis other castes, the network of *chaudhri*s was essentially unstable and deeply factional. Decades of fighting over various economic arrangements – mainly irrigation water – had led to the current *lambardar* describing the other main landowning family to us as their 'traditional enemy'. Deep polarisation within the *chaudhri*s, and also between the landed and landless groups in the village (as we will see later), meant that along with Tiwanabad, Chak 1 was the worst provided of our case villages. At the time of our first visit in 2006, it did not have a single drain or paved street, and had low-quality schools with an extreme shortage of teachers.

The landless population of this remote village has been very dependent on the *chaudhri*s for employment, but the recent development of quarries and a stone-crushing industry near the village provided them with an alternative source of daily wage employment away from the *chaudhri*s' lands. Village residents have also diversified into public employment and many families had at least one person in the army or other state employment. This was reflected in the fact that about 60 per cent of the village lived in brick houses.

The competing source of employment in the nearby quarries had affected the *chaudhri*s' labour supply, and to bind labour to their lands, they had come up with a system of labour-bondage through debt. An initial loan – taken most often to finance weddings or medical issues, or to convert mud houses into brick ones – could end up binding a household to a *chaudhri* for generations. A system of private fines had also been institutionalised by the *chaudhri*s – for example, for taking fruit without permission from an orchard, or for damages caused to property or equipment – that were often arbitrarily imposed and added to the accounts of the indebted. In most of our other case villages, loans were acquired through community networks based on family, kinship and friendship, but in Chak 1 the *chaudhri*s monopolised the debt market. However, the more the landlords tightened their control, the more villagers found ways to assert their independence.

Village politics

Until the 2008 election, Chak 1 had two main vote blocs. The first, with about 56 per cent of the votes, was led by the *lambardar* and included all the *zamindar biradari*s along with their dependent *kammi*s and *muslim sheikh*s. The second, with about 37 per cent of the votes, was an extremely unusual vote bloc – it

was made up almost entirely of the *kammi* and *muslim sheikh* population that lived in the village's 'colony'.

As explained in Chapter 2, in the 1970s the Bhutto government turned state land in villages into residential schemes of small plots that were distributed amongst *kammi* and *muslim sheikh* groups in order to reduce their homestead-based dependence on *maalik*s and *chaudhri*s. In Chak 1, this 5-*marla* scheme came to be called the 'colony', and with its establishment 'colony politics' was born. *Kammi* and *muslim sheikh* families that moved to the colony were no longer dependent on the *chaudhri*s for residence (unlike those who remained in the main village settlement) or for employment because of the nearby quarries. With these two sources of dependence reduced, colony residents no longer saw a reason to come together politically under the *chaudhri*s. As one key respondent put it, 'We just cast votes and received nothing in return.' Instead, they organised their own vote bloc and created independent links with politicians under the leadership of two men. One of these was Nawab, an agricultural tenant from a *zamindar biradari*, who cultivated three acres of land – one of which he owned and lived on outside the main village settlement, and two that he rented. The other leader of the vote bloc was Baba, a *muslim sheikh*, who worked as an agricultural labourer. Nawab and Baba's bloc was supported, but not led, by the 'traditional enemy' of the *lambardar*, Jung, a major landowner of over 100 acres.

In both the 2002 and 2008, elections the colony bloc supported the PPP, largely on the basis of ideology[14] and the fact that it represented the polar opposite of the *chaudhri*s' preferred party, the PML-Q. The *chaudhri*s of this village were related through kinship to Cheema, the most powerful politician in the district and famous for never having lost an election since 1979. They had always supported him on the basis of *biradari*, and when he quit the PML-N to join Musharraf's PML-Q ahead of the 2002 election the *chaudhri*s too shifted their vote.

Baba was elected as a union councillor in both the 2001 and 2005 local government elections. As one *chaudhri* put it to me, 'We never thought we would have to see the day a *muslim sheikh* would rise to this position in the village. People in other villages are talking about this and it reflects very badly on our influence as *chaudhri*s. People are wondering how we could have let this happen.' Baba's nomination and consequent election by colony residents was seen by both sides as a mark of 'rebellion' against the *chaudhri*s – the situation that was dismaying

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14 In many of our case villages, the PPP vote was regularly referred to as either the *nazriati* (ideological) vote or the *ghareeb* (poor) vote.

the *chaudhri*s was delighting the colony. A particularly bad blow, the *lambardar* said, was when he found out that even his own manager had voted for Baba in the local government elections and considered himself a part of Baba's vote bloc in the national elections. A close relative of the *lambardar* picked an evocative analogy to explain the situation. 'The colony has a "Bangladesh mentality",[15] he said. 'They are now in open rebellion against us and want to do everything themselves.'

Not surprisingly, when a recent extension to the colony was approved by the state, its implementation was blocked by the *chaudhri*s. The colony's residents believed that the fact that they did not even have a proper sanitation system was because the *chaudhri*s had blocked almost all service delivery to the colony in the past. The *chaudhri*s, on the other hand, claimed they had requested Cheema but received nothing, not just in the colony but in the entire village, possibly because he was aware they no longer had any control over a large portion of the village vote and so, he had little reason to pay them any attention. If the village could come together as one vote bloc, the *chaudhri*s insisted, it might increase their chances of accessing more state services. But colony residents did not believe any of this. They claimed that Cheema himself had confirmed to them that the *chaudhri*s blocked every scheme that he approved for the village – possibly to punish them for the rebellion and to bring the colony under their political control.[16]

'Colony politics' ensured that Chak 1 had greater caste-based social polarisation than any of the other villages we studied. This had resulted in the development of class consciousness within the lower castes, who described village life in terms of 'us' versus 'them'. A colony resident, while discussing a *kammi* who is in the *chaudhri*s' vote bloc, explained, 'We may be totally opposed to one another when it comes to politics, but as far as the poor versus the *zamindar*s are concerned, we are complete allies in terms of our efforts to protect the interests of the colony.' Life in Chak 1 was defined by horizontal class-based organisation and confrontation – in complete contrast to the vertical political alignments in Sahiwal and Tiwanabad, and the consensual and homogenous politics of Badhor.

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15 Bangladesh, previously East Pakistan, separated from West Pakistan in 1971 after a bloody civil war and a protracted movement for independence.

16 A scheme for the paving of streets and drains was finally sanctioned for the village in 2007 by the deputy mayor of the *tehsil*, in the last months of the local government before it lapsed. Both colony residents and the *chaudhri*s claimed credit for having pursued the case.

Chak Migrant: A case of *panchayati* politics

Chak Migrant is a Crown village of about 280 households that lies close to Chak 1 and is about 20 kilometres from the *tehsil* town of Sillanwali. It was originally a village of Sikh infantry grantees who had come here from various districts of East Punjab,[17] including Ambala. According to the colonial *Inspection Report*, the land grants in this village were small, and varied between one and two squares.[18] The village was abandoned in 1947 when the entire Sikh population migrated to East Punjab, and a new set of Muslim migrant settlers, incidentally once again from Ambala district, came to claim it in compensation for the land that they left behind. The complete replacement of its population by migrants meant that Chak Migrant was significantly different in its social and authority structures from the adjacent Chak 1, which had always been a Muslim village and saw no change of population in 1947.

About 60 per cent of the new population of Chak Migrant came from the same village – Raiwali in Naraingarh *tehsil* of district Ambala in East Punjab. They were all from the *rajput biradari* and claimed to be the 11th generation of a single forefather, Rai Maigh Singh. Those who came to Chak Migrant were divided across four main *kumbah*s (extended families). The elders of these *kumbah*s were given a choice of places to settle in 1947 and they chose the relatively prosperous, completely abandoned, agricultural village of Chak Migrant, which had fertile land and an abundant supply of water at the time. Land was allotted on the basis of the amount of land each household had owned in Raiwali. As it turned out, the four *kumbah*s had owned more land there than was available in Chak Migrant and its adjacent villages, so the families were also allotted land in the districts of Jhang, Narowal and Shiekhupura. Although their landholdings were spread across Punjab, the families decided to reside together in Chak Migrant initially but an increasing population and decreasing irrigation water over time, had forced members of some families to relocate to their other landholdings. Long after the initial flow of migrants in 1947, a small group of unrelated migrant *rajput*s from Chak Jhansa in District Karnal of East Punjab arrived, and though they were given residential land in the main settlement, their allotted landholdings were in an adjacent village. Other groups in Chak Migrant included a large minority of *gujjar*s – migrants from Samana *tehsil* of District Patiala in East Punjab – who were also all from the

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17   Now Indian Punjab.

18   Between 24 and 48 acres.

same lineage group, and a small population of *kammi*s who came to this village as the artisans of the *rajput kumbah*s in 1947.

As a result of this settlement pattern, groups in Chak Migrant identified themselves in terms of lineage and *kumbah*s. The social structure of Chak Migrant was relatively horizontal. At the time of our research, there were a total of 16 *biradari* groups in the village. At the top were the demographically dominant *rajput*s, about 60 per cent of the village population, and almost all of them were small landowners. They were also the economically and socially dominant group within the village. Below them was a small middle tier made up of a few *zamindar biradari*s, all of whom together constituted about 23 per cent of the population. The remaining 17 per cent of the village population was made up of the various *kammi biradari*s, who were considered the lowest social tier but who owned more land here than did members of their *biradari*s in any of the other five case study villages.

Chak Migrant had the highest number of cultivators compared to the other five case villages, and its Gini coefficient for land was the lowest in our sample at 0.58. Only 27 per cent of its population was landless. The rest owned small packets of land – 70 per cent owned less than 12.5 acres, another 2.5 per cent owned between 13–17 acres, and the largest landholding was just 23 acres. Those who were landless, along with some with landholdings too small to support a full family, worked in the same nearby quarries as Chak 1's daily wage labourers. They, therefore, had little economic dependence on the village's landowners. A fairly high proportion, 17 per cent, were also in public service and the army, pushed out mainly by inadequate irrigation water supply through the canal that used to previously deliver plentiful water even to this tail-end village. About 60 per cent of houses were made of brick.

The unique settlement pattern and relatively more equal distribution of land across the population meant that land and authority were not concentrated in the hands of a powerful individual, family or group. It was vested instead in a *panchayat* (village council) that comprised of the various *kumbah*s of the *rajput*s and the other lineage groups. Authority within the *panchayat* was equally shared, but those who had a seat on the council – a hereditary position in most cases – were more influential than other village residents. All economic arrangements, dispute resolution, and sanctions were determined by this fairly horizontal social organisation. The *panchayat* was also where the village's voting decisions were discussed until a consensus was reached, and a decision was then announced to the village.

The *panchayat* had come to be dominated in some ways by the four *rajput kumbah*s over time. Rana, the wealthiest and most educated member of the *rajput* families, was also the most politically important person in the village. His centrality, however, was based not on his landownership[19] or his family's historic position but rather on his acquired wealth, education and political dynamism, especially in terms of his ability to develop and maintain close contacts with various electoral candidates and public officials. He had run for and won the post of the union *nazim* in 2001, and had earlier been a union councillor during the Zia regime in the 1980s. He presented himself as a local political kingmaker who had played an important role in the phenomenal political rise of his fellow *rajput biradari* member, Rana Ghaus, in this constituency. Ghaus had risen from being the *tehsil nazim* in 2001 to winning the Provincial Assembly seat from this constituency in 2008. Like the other equal, egalitarian village, Badhor, Chak Migrant too was well provided with public services when we first visited in 2007, due largely to Rana's linkages with local politicians and the high level of social cohesion and consensus within the village.

Village politics

Chak Migrant has the highest proportion of non-bloc voters of our six case study villages – almost 31 per cent of our respondents in this village were not members of a vote bloc for the 2002 elections and voted independently for various candidates (see Table 5.2). The village had one large vote bloc during both this and the earlier 2001 local government elections, in which Rana was a candidate for union mayor and four other residents ran for seats on the union council. The vote bloc stayed stable through the 2005 local government elections but split into two just before the 2008 national and provincial elections. One vote bloc was made up largely of the *rajput kumbah*s, led by Rana, and the other vote bloc brought together a mix of some *rajput*s with all the other *biradari*s, including the *kammi*s. The bloc had no identifiable leader as such, but the household surveys indicate that they were possibly led by one of Rana's *rajput* kinsmen who had became a union councillor in the 2005 local government election and had greater political aspirations.

The split seemed to be based almost entirely on people's political preferences for different politicians, rather than on class or lineage polarisation. Conversations revealed that the different preference was a case of 'resource politics'. Rana is

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19   Rana owned about 17 acres and was not the village's largest landowner.

a supporter of the PPP. This put the village on the wrong side of the district's most powerful politician, Cheema of the PML-Q. Our key respondents claimed that this had cost the village dearly in terms of irrigation water. The village's position at the tail end of a canal had led to very low agricultural productivity. Village residents had made repeated appeals to the Irrigation Department for an improved water supply but officials had been completely unresponsive to their complaints. This the village attributed to the fact that the provincial irrigation minister was Cheema's son. They eventually gave up on state channels and instead pooled village resources to patrol the canal at night to prevent water theft by landowners in upstream villages. However, when they presented evidence of theft to the authorities, the local police registered a case against them for harassing other villages with an intent to cause harm. It seems that the second vote bloc was created after this incident to mend political fences with Cheema and to provide him with some support from within the village – something Rana and his bloc were unwilling to do – in an effort to bring more irrigation water to the village.

Chak 2: A case of factional politics

Chak 2 is a Crown village that lies about 10 kilometres from Sargodha city, and is a *ghoripal* (horse-breeding) settlement in which land was granted to 10 families of different *biradari*s who came here with one mare each when the land was originally settled. Land was, therefore, equally divided between these 10 *chaudhri* families but the rest of the village population was landless. Historically, about 80 per cent of the village land was cultivated through tenancy, and even today the Gini coefficient for land is 0.85. Seventy per cent of the village population is landless, 25 per cent owns less than 12.5 acres, and another 4 per cent owns up to 25 acres. The largest landholding is just 55 acres, and there are four households that own around this much land. Though it is less unequal than some of our other case villages, it is a poorer village where less than 40 per cent of its population lives in brick houses.

Eight of the original 10 families were from the same village in Khushab district, and descendants of all the original grantees still live in the village. Chak 2 is made up of about 50 different *biradari*s, of which the largest are the *muslim sheikh*s (24 per cent) and two *zamindar biradari*s, the *awan*s (15 per cent) and *khokhar*s (10 per cent). The *lambardar* is from the *khokhar biradari*. The great-grandfather of the current *lambardar* had requested the colonial state

for a *lambardari* of a new Crown village in return for bringing mare-owning families from his village to settle and cultivate it. He was given Chak 2 along with its *lambardari* even though he brought with him only one mare like everyone else. This position was considered hereditary[20] and his great-grandson, Rabba, is still the *lambardar*.[21] After the original grants the colonial government cancelled some *ghori*s, which means that the lease of land to a grantee family was revoked because the mares they maintained were found to be in poor health during regular inspections. The *lambardar* intervened on their behalf with the colonial state and eventually had these leases restored to the families. This helped establish and enhance his social authority in the village, and the Khokhar family's prestige has persisted through the generations. They have also managed to increase their landholdings from the original 2 squares to 5.5 squares (130 acres) through purchases, but this is divided among three siblings.

Chak 2 is unequal in its distribution of land but its proximity to Sargodha city has opened up the labour market to its residents. Most of its daily wage labourers are engaged in jobs outside the village and thus are not dependent on Chak 2's landowners. It is also generally well provided in terms of public services, with well-functioning schools and health centres, and paved streets and drains across parts of the village. Of the four unequal case study villages, Chak 2 is much better provided than the two remote villages – Tiwanabad and Chak 1 – but not as well provided as the other more urban village, Sahiwal. This is largely because of the high level of factionalised conflict between the two main vote blocs in the village, which have each ensured that any services they bring to the village will only benefit the neighbourhoods of their own members.

Village politics

Chak 2 has two main vote blocs that divide almost all the village votes between them. One of these is led by the *syed* family of local *pir*s. The other is organised and led by the *khokhar lambardar*, Rabba. The two vote blocs are bitterly opposed to one another, even though they usually connect up to the same electoral candidate. The animosity is so pronounced that the *pir*s and *khokhar*s refuse to sit on a joint village *panchayat*. They each resolve conflicts within their blocs separately, and any dispute between members of the two different

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20 A *lambardari* was not by law hereditary but has functioned in this way in most villages.

21 Like *lambardar*s in other villages, his current functions include collecting the *abiana* (irrigation tax) and *malia* (agricultural produce tax) according to a list maintained and provided by the *patwari*, for which he continues to receive 3 per cent of the total amount collected as a commission.

blocs is taken straight to the police. For the local government elections of 2005, both vote blocs put up a candidate for union mayor – the *lambardar*'s younger brother in the case of the *khokhar* vote bloc, and the *pir* himself in the case of the *syed* vote bloc. The *pir* won.

As far as national elections are concerned, the *lambardar* explained,

> I am a PPP supporter at heart but the PPP candidate here is very weak and so I see no point in wasting my vote on him. I won't get anything from him. We play the political game for survival, to get what we can for our people, and not for ideology. If we don't try and grab what we can like this, the state will not deliver on its own.

For this reason both vote blocs chose to support the powerful PML-Q candidate, Cheema, in 2002. Musharraf's military regime was known to be favouring the party, and both Rabba and the *pir* were hoping to benefit from the bargain. However, when Cheema visited the village in the days leading up to the election, he ignored Rabba and went only to visit the *pir*. To hurt him, Rabba had his bloc poll all their votes for the MMA[22] candidate at the last minute. This ensured that Cheema called on him the next time round, and so Rabba announced that in the 2008 election he would have his vote bloc support the PML-Q. In return, he asked the candidate to have the road to Sargodha city repaired, a veterinary hospital built, and electricity and gas provided to the village. 'Besides, we have a few land issues stuck in the courts which he can help us resolve if we support him,' Rabba explained.

Rabba's hold over his vote bloc, however, was weak. The proximity to Sargodha city and the landlords' own limited landholdings meant that most people were not economically dependent on Rabba or the *pir*. Both leaders told us that a large portion of voters swing between the two vote blocs, which are extremely unstable. Rabba's vote bloc claimed 400 votes in the 1997 national elections, 700 in the 2002 elections, and about 550 in the 2008 election. The *pir*'s side said it had 800 votes in the 1997 election, only 400 in 2002 and about 600 in 2008. The fact that about 300–400 voters changed their membership from one election to the next underscores the *chaudhris*' limited power and authority within the village. Rabba believed he was able to identify some *biradari*s, mostly from the *kammi* caste group, that were swing voters – 'they are undependable,

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22 A coalition of various religious parties that managed in 2002 to form a government in the Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province, but has since disbanded.

they proclaim publicly that they are with us but we are never sure which side they are really voting on' - but he suspected that many other voters were also moving between vote blocs from one election to the next, and that both factions had become increasingly unsure of voters' alignments over the past few years.[23] Key respondents in the village hinted that voters take advantage of the animosity between the two leaders and actively play them against one another to gain greater leverage for themselves.

Our household surveys revealed that Rabba and the *pir* had an accurate count of their support, and that indeed about 50 per cent of the village had voted as part of Rabba's vote bloc in the 2002 election and the rest had aligned with the *pir*. From the point of view of the voters, they aligned with either of the two leaders for one main reason – the expectation of service delivery and access to the state, especially the police. Voters did not link individually or directly with the leaders. Instead, they first came together either as *biradari*s or as a neighbourhood – which in this village could be considered class-based organisation, given that the upper, middle and lower classes live in different parts of the village – and then decided collectively which of the two leaders to align with. Their decision depended on how much each leader could promise them, which, in turn, depended on how much each leader had been able to negotiate with the electoral candidate. This meant that any bargain that the leader was able to strike with the candidate had to be made public in order to gain support.[24] Rabba had also found another strategy to maintain his core support base – his faction strongly believed that they needed the *lambardar*'s official stamp in order to get anything done in a state office, 25 and to get this, they needed to remain on his side. On the other side, we probed how much of the *pir*'s support was based on his spiritual status, but found that only 2.5 per cent of our respondents said that this was a consideration in their decision on whose vote bloc to join. Politics in Chak 2 seemed to be defined almost entirely by bargains, negotiations and clientelistic linkages.

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23   In fact, he asked if our surveys could possibly help figure out people's political alignments. Needless to say, no information was shared with him.

24   It is important to point out that when we probed how much of the *pir*'s support was based on his spiritual status, we found that only 2.5 per cent of our respondents said that this was a consideration in their decision on whose vote bloc to join.

Comparing political engagement in Proprietary and Crown villages

The details of the six case study villages allow us to confirm in some instances, and establish in others, answers to the three main questions that I set up in Chapter 1. Each of the case studies confirm the fact that regardless of whether a village is a Proprietary or Crown estate, equal or unequal, remote or right next to a town, most voters within them engage with politics through vote blocs that are organised and led by the traditional landed elites. Vote bloc membership varies to some extent across villages – Chak Migrant has the lowest number of vote bloc members, while Chak 2, where much is to be gained from factionalism, has the highest (Table 5.2). It also varies across types of elections, in that more people vote outside of vote blocs in local government elections than in national elections. This is both because candidates for union councils are located much closer to voters, so that more individual, direct linkages abound, and because the stakes are much lower in union council elections, so vote bloc leaders put in less effort to organise votes collectively.

Table 5.2   Percentage of sample households voting as part of a vote bloc

	Proprietary villages			Crown villages		
	Sahiwal	Tiwanabad	Badhor	Chak 1	Chak 2	Chak Migrant
National Assembly elections (2002)	83	88	88	93	96	69
Union councillor elections (2005)	75	76	78	62	80	58

Source: Author.

The six cases also confirm the fact that, irrespective of the type of village, vote bloc leaders are generally landed and are from the old VPB families of the village. Malika and Nazim of Sahiwal, Tiwana of Tiwanabad, and Mian of Badhor can all trace their families back to the people to whom the British colonial state granted land rights in these Proprietary villages. The same is true of Crown villages. The *chaudhri*s and *lambardar*s of Chaks 1 and 2 brought mares to receive land leases in these *ghoripal* villages that were eventually converted

to full ownership rights, and Rana of Chak Migrant belongs to the families that migrated here in 1947 to receive land in compensation for that which they left behind in India.

There is, however, great variation in the social authority that these landed, VPB, vote bloc leaders can exercise over the population of each village. Malika and Tiwana's control over the political decisions of their villages, Sahiwal and Tiwanabad respectively, is orders of magnitude greater than that exercised by the *chaudhri*s of the other two unequal villages, Chaks 1 and 2. This is reflected in the differences in political engagement across these villages, captured in each village's score on the Index of Political Engagement (IPE) in Table 5.3, and on each of its two dimensions – contestation and inclusion. As expected, Tiwanabad scores the lowest, given its single vote bloc and the extent to which the political choices of marginalised groups are determined by Tiwana's own preferences. Some voters here may collectivise on the basis of horizontal linkages with one another, but most residents are brought into the vote bloc through ties of dependence and clientelism, and play no part in collective decision-making within the vote bloc itself.

Table 5.3   Dimensions of political engagement in six case villages (2002)

	Proprietary			Crown		
	Sahiwal	**Tiwanabad**	**Badhor**	**Chak 1**	**Chak 2**	**Chak Migrant**
Contestation						
Political competition (NVB)	1.21	1	1	1.59	1.74	1
Political independence of lowest caste group	0	0	0	2.50	1	0
Total for contestation	1.21	1	1	4.09	2.74	1
Inclusion						
Basis of member recruitment	1.44	1.43	1.17	1.53	1.73	2.08
Participation in decision-making	1.50	0	3	1.50	2	3
Total for inclusion	2.94	1.43	4.17	3.03	3.73	5.08
Overall IPE score	4.15	2.43	5.17	7.12	6.47	6.08

Source: Author.

Sahiwal fares better along this dimension, as well as on the emergence of a new middle-class group of peasant proprietors who have been freed of their ties of dependence as ex-tenants of the *maalik* family, and now organise a small horizontal vote bloc of their own. While the vote bloc of the landed elite might continue to be organised vertically, the second vote bloc is more inclusive in its internal dynamics. Badhor's politics of consensus gives it a higher IPE score, despite the existence of a single vote bloc and largely clientelistic linkages with Mian, the vote bloc leader. People may need him to access state services and employment opportunities in this remote village, but Mian has little room here in which to impose his political preferences on other village residents.

Similarly, the existence of a single vote bloc does not prevent Chak Migrant from scoring even higher on the IPE, based on its high inclusion score. Rana, controls a far smaller proportion of his village's votes compared to leaders in other villages, and must also defer to collective decisions taken in the *panchayat* on most issues of import, so that political engagement here between Rana and the members of his vote bloc looks very different from that in the other villages that have a single vote bloc. The highest IPE scores, belong to the two competitively organised *chak*s with two vote blocs each, a fair amount of horizontal collective action, and where marginalised groups have a greater role in decision-making within the vote bloc – either because they have a vote bloc of their own, as in Chak 1, or because they use the factional conflict between the two vote blocs strategically to further their own interests, as in Chak 2.

This does not mean, that no political space has opened up at all in Proprietary estates. Access to non-farm jobs and other economic opportunities – through the in-village economic initiatives of Badhor's landed families, and through proximity to an urban centre in Sahiwal – has been a particularly powerful driver of change, and of the emergence of alternate nodes of (more horizontal) political organisation. To better understand the form and nature of emerging political space, it is particularly instructive to compare the two Proprietary villages that have the most singular, entrenched and consolidated forms of authority – Sahiwal and Tiwanabad. It is here that we would least expect new political entrepreneurs to emerge, and yet, we have seen this happen in both cases.

Sahiwal and Tiwanabad both came into being as large, unequal, *zamindari* estate grants. To this day they are led by descendants of the original grantees,

who have managed to retain socio-economic influence and have organised large vote blocs that encompass most of the village. A key difference between them is that while Sahiwal is just 6 kilometres from Shahpur, the *tehsil* headquarters, Tiwanabad lies 25 kilometres away, deep within the *tehsil* with few regular means of public transport that connect it to urban centres. This seems to have been a key factor in the difference in political organisation that we observed in the two villages. Social network analysis, using data from household surveys conducted in 2007, shows that a middle tier of emerging intermediaries exists in Sahiwal but not in Tiwanabad. These include prominent individuals from Sahiwal's *zamindar* families, such as Fatah of the *mekan biradari*, and another emerging political intermediary who heads the *syed biradari* in the village. Malika and Nazim remain central to village politics, but as far as intra-*biradari* dispute resolution and access to the police is concerned, the middle tier of *zamindar*s is largely independent of the *maalik*s and provides village residents with another channel of access to at least *tehsil* offices. Such a middle-tier, horizontal network of emerging intermediaries is largely missing in Tiwanabad, but Sultan's election to the office of the union mayor managed to shift the balance of power quite significantly – even in a village that combines extreme inequality, remoteness, and a vertical social structure to provide its *maalik*, with great socio-economic and political power.

In fact, Sultan's role in Tiwanabad allows us to identify drivers of local political change in a way that Sahiwal does not. Each village has a number of networks that form around key individuals for electoral decision-making and for access to state functionaries and offices. Depending on how entrenched the social authority of certain leaders may be, it is not unusual to find the same leaders at the centre of the different networks listed in Table 5.4. In Sahiwal, it is difficult to distinguish whether Nazim's centrality across all networks is because of his official position as the deputy mayor of the union and *tehsil* councils or simply a consequence of his traditional domain of influence as a *maalik*. But in Tiwanabad, Tiwana the *maalik* is clearly distinguishable from Sultan, the non-VPB union mayor. This means that we can trace the specific domains in which Tiwana was able to retain his influence after Sultan's election in 2005, and those in which the new mayor was now more central. We used social network analysis to assess this, making use specifically of 'in-degree centrality measures' which provide a score for each actor's prominence within a given network by counting how many other actors tie in to them. Our data,

summarised in Table 5.4, revealed that Sultan's formal position as a state official had quickly made him an alternative channel of access to state resources. The formal powers and responsibilities of a union mayor were conferred on him in 2005, and by the time of our survey in 2007 most people were already naming him as their primary intermediary for demands related to school management, street paving and sanitation works. In these domains, in which local governments were empowered by law, Sultan had a network size that competed with that of the *maalik* and his managers (Table 5.4). However, when it came to access to the police and courts, village-based dispute resolution, and national and provincial elections, domains that were not connected to the jurisdiction of local government, the social power of the *maalik* counted for more than the formal authority bestowed on the mayor.

Table 5.4   Comparing Sahiwal and Tiwanabad: In-degree centrality measures of the main actors in different networks (2006–2007) (size of network)

Networks	Sahiwal		Tiwanabad	
	*Maalik*s* (+managers)	Fatah and other new intermediaries	Tiwana (+managers)	Sultan and other new intermediaries
MNA/MPA election	111	44	117	2
Local government election	122	41	102	20
Dispute resolution	164	84	141	8
Thana	152	51	129	17
Sanitation and street paving	107	37	54	74
Gas connection	112	38	54	43
School management	90	101**	27	32**

Source: Author's survey.

Notes: *Naib, Sardar and Nazim.
**Of which 73 in Sahiwal and 10 in Tiwanabad are in-degree scores of the school headmasters

The fact that villagers seek direct connections with government functionaries whenever these are available and accessible is also visible in the networks around school management, in which the village headmaster in Sahiwal has a higher network size than even Nazim. It seems that while the power of the

*maalik*s is pervasive across some domains, it is possible to reduce it fairly quickly in others, in particular in the domain of public service delivery through the creation of other officially sanctioned channels. The oligarchic control of the traditional landed elite has certainly been challenged by emerging leaders and intermediaries even in the most hierarchical, unequal villages – Sultan used state office to mount a challenge and provide a viable alternate channel to the state and services, and Fatah has used his larger kinship network within the district to make him a central figure in Sahiwal's politics.[25]

The comparison between Sahiwal and Tiwanabad continues to be instructive in understanding the political space available to voters in these villages. Most voters in Sahiwal and Tiwanabad have vertical links within vote blocs that are controlled by their *maalik*s (Table 5.3), but there is evidence of more horizontal collective action in both. Sahiwal's proximity to Shahpur town has meant that its middle-tier residents – the *zamindar biradari*s of small peasant proprietors that are organised by the ex-tenant, now landowner, Fatah – have managed to access jobs outside the village and have become more independent of the *maalik*s through the accumulation of wealth and land. This middle tier is still very small in remote Tiwanabad, and the power of the *maalik* is visibly more oppressive, but even here 36 per cent of vote bloc members connect to Tiwana horizontally through *biradari*-based networks. This means that people organise within their kinship groups and then use these to increase their bargaining power while connecting upwards with the leader.

The differences in political outcomes between Sahiwal and Tiwanabad appear to be driven by their access, or lack thereof, to opportunities and networks in urban centres. This seems to also drive differences between another pair of villages – the two *ghoripal* Crown colonies. Chak 1 and Chak 2 are both historically unequal Crown villages in which land was given to a few families that owned and bred mares for the British cavalry. Networks in both villages still revolve around the hereditary office of the resident *lambardar*, and both villages are divided across two vote blocs that are bitterly opposed to one another. But the nature of the divide is completely different in the two villages. Chak 1 was settled as a *sufedposh* village in which three families received a lease to most of the land. The village had a vertical social structure that marginalised large parts of the village, and its remoteness meant that the village population was dependent on landlords until recently. This intensified both their interaction and

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25 The extent of their challenge to landed power becomes more obvious when we look at the 2013 elections in Chapter 7.

their subsequent political conflict, which was driven by extreme deprivation and marginalisation. As sources of dependence dissipated over the years, voters found more independent political space, but landlords continued to use oppressive measures to maintain some control over them. This led to strong class-based opposition and polarisation between the landed and the landless. Lower caste groups in this village can make autonomous political decisions and pursue links with national and regional politicians that are independent of their landlords, but they have not gained very much materially in the process.

Voters in Chak 2 have pursued a completely different strategy. The village's proximity to Sargodha city meant that dependence on landowners was always low, and leaders in the village have had to negotiate voter support through service delivery, personal favours, and the cultivation of personal connections with electoral candidates and state officials. Rabba has even had to resort to emphasising the formality of the *lambardar*'s position in his interactions with residents, quite unlike *lambardar*s in the other villages. Here, rather than striking out on their own, voters have used their membership of the two vote blocs organised by the largest landed families in the village – Table 5.2 shows that this village has the highest number of vote bloc members for elections to both the highest and lowest tiers of government – to strategically play up the extreme factionalism between the leaders, and have gained exponentially more than Chak 1 as a result. It seems that where socio-economic dependence is low, as it is in the more urban Chak 2, groups such as its *kammi* voters can actively use the factionalism between landlords for their own strategic political gain.

Proximity to an urban centre has ensured that the residents of Chak 2, like those of Sahiwal, are better provided than those that live in remote Chak 1 and Tiwanabad. But it does not ensure voters here greater autonomy vis-à-vis their landlords. In fact, this comparison between the two unequal *chak*s thwarts any attempt to single out access to urban centres as the explanation for differences in political outcomes – rural Chak 1 has a higher IPE score than the more urban Chak 2. Even across the set of Proprietary villages, it is the remote Badhor that scores higher than the others. But while we may be tempted to explain this as a function of Badhor being a more equal village than Sahiwal and Tiwanabad in terms of land distribution, this explanation does not hold for Chak 1. With its Gini coefficient of 0.92 for land distribution, Chak 1 is the second most unequal case village of our sample (with only Sahiwal more unequal at 0.94; see Table 5.5). Yet this does not prevent it from getting the highest IPE score of all six case villages – significantly muddying the generally held belief in Pakistan that

land-based inequality leads to the political marginalisation of landless groups. It is here in Chak 1 that voters have greater political autonomy and space to vote as they want, away from the influence of landlords. Across our set of six case villages, it seems that it is neither land inequality that is driving political outcomes, nor is it distance to an urban centre. There is something else that explains political outcomes, and this becomes clearer when we conduct another tightly controlled comparison, this time between Chak 1 and Tiwanabad.

Tiwanabad and Chak 1 are both remote and unequal villages. Despite the huge initial differences in their land grants, their current land Gini coefficients are almost identical – 0.91 in Tiwanabad and 0.92 in Chak 1 (Table 5.5). And yet their political outcomes differ dramatically – Chak 1's IPE score of 7.12 is significantly higher than Tiwanabad's score of 2.43. In fact, given that the full range for IPE scores across all 38 villages is from 2 at the lower end to 7.33 at the higher end (see Annex 2), these two villages represent extreme types of political engagement across our entire sample. There seems to be little correlation then between the distribution of land and the nature of political engagement.

Table 5.5   Land distribution across six case study villages

| | Proprietary villages | | | Crown villages | | |
	Sahiwal	Tiwanabad	Badhor	Chak 1	Chak 2	Chak Migrant
% Landless	78	73	67	80	70	27
% owns <12.5 acres	20	25	28	13	25	70
% owns 13-35 acres	1	2	3	5	4	3
% owns >35 acres	1	0.32*	2	2	1	–
Largest landholding (acres)	250	300	75	120	55	23
Gini coefficient for land	0.94	0.91	0.89	0.92	0.85	0.58

Source: Author's survey.

Note: *All numbers are rounded off, so the total is just over 100 with the >35 acres category.

Our measure for local political competition between vote blocs – the 'effective' number of vote blocs in a village – gives Tiwanabad a score of 1, indicating that there is no competition here, while it gives Chak 1 a score of 1.59, indicating a higher level of effective competition between two vote blocs (Table 5.3).[26] A similar trend is obvious along the other component of contestation – the

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26   A score of 2 would indicate a competitive village with two equal sized vote blocs.

extent to which poorer groups have any political independence in the village. Marginalised groups in Tiwanabad have absolutely no independence whatsoever, evident in their score of zero on this dimension, while in Chak 1 they have a vote bloc of their own, organised by a member of their own class. The dramatic differences continue across the scores for inclusion, where Tiwanabad continues to score well below Chak 1 along both components (Figure 5.1).

These are important observations given our interest in finding out what causes differences in political outcomes. There seems to be a quite obvious answer here. In a tightly controlled comparison in which we are able to control for a number of factors, including land inequality, distance to an urban centre, and regional and district level governance, it is possible to make claims about the source of variation with some level of confidence. Here that source is the difference in social structure and the consequent difference in the social authority of vote bloc leaders between Crown and Proprietary villages.

Social network analysis and the in-degree centrality scores of major political actors in Chak 1 and Tiwanabad allow us greater insight into the role played by social structural inequality. Table 5.6 shows that while new nodes of authority have emerged in both villages, this emergence is far more dramatic and substantive in the Crown village than in the Proprietary estate. Many of the networks that form around demands for social provision continue to revolve around the *chaudhri*s in Chak 1, as do those around dispute resolution, but when it comes to voting, the centrality of the *chaudhri*s is almost matched, and in the case of local government elections even surpassed, by intermediaries from the colony who score high on in-degree centrality. Public jobs and independent links between colony residents, politicians and officials have opened up new channels of intermediation with the state that are not dominated by landlords. Nawab, the leader of the colony bloc, shows up repeatedly in all networks as an important conduit between colony residents and the state, and also between them and the *chaudhri*s. Sultan's challenge to Tiwana in Tiwanabad has been impressive but to a more limited degree. The social authority of the *maalik*s of Proprietary villages has been built over many decades, sanctioned by the colonial state and unchallenged by the post-colonial one. As a result, it is much greater and more oppressive than the social authority of the *chaudhri*s of Crown villages, and it allows a far more constrained political space to marginalised voters that live in Proprietary villages.

Table 5.6 Comparing Chak 1 and Tiwanabad: In-degree centrality measures of the main actors in different networks (2007–08) (size of network)

Networks	Chak 1		Tiwanabad	
	*Chaudhri*s	Colony (Nawab and Baba)	Tiwana (+managers)	Sultan and other new intermediaries
MNA/MPA election	76	63	117	2
Local government election	26	46	102	20
Dispute resolution	80	41	141	8
Thana	53	27	129	17
Sanitation and street paving	70	33	54	74
Gas connection	42	43	54	43
School management	44	38	27	32

Source: Author.

These observations are not anomalous or particular to the differences between Chak 1 and Tiwanabad only. A quick look again at Table 5.3 confirms that a pattern is visible across all six case villages – regardless of levels of inequality or distance, Proprietary villages consistently perform worse than Crown villages on political outcomes. Our three Proprietary villages score between 2.43 and 5.17 on the Index of Political Engagement, while Crown villages score between 6.08 and 7.12.

The real difference in IPE scores across the two types of villages seems to come from differences in contestation – the extent to which village politics is competitive and allows any real political independence to marginalised groups – rather than from differences in inclusion, which measures the extent to which voters have any real bargaining power vis-à-vis landlords. Both Proprietary and Crown villages display a range of values on measures of inclusion – the range of scores for Proprietary villages is 1.43 to 4.17, and for Crown villages it is 3.03 to 5.08 – but when it comes to contestation, the former are consistently and similarly uncompetitive. On contestation, the range of scores for Proprietary villages is 1 to 1.21, while for Crown villages it is 1 to 4.09 (Figure 5.1). It seems that political space in terms of bargaining power seems to exist for voters in Proprietary villages, but they must exercise this power in contests organised and controlled by the old VPB leaders of these villages.

Figure 5.1   Visualisation of IPE scores: differences in inclusion and
contestation across the six case villages
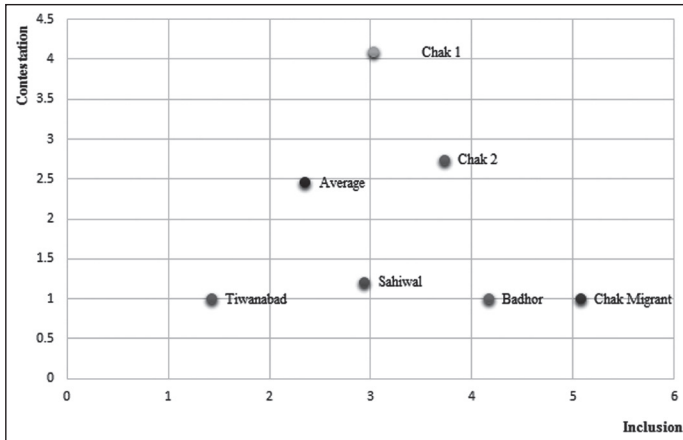
These findings connect to the stories of the changing basis of power of traditional landed elites – they may have become more inclusive in some cases under pressure from socio-economic changes, but these changes have not yet led to the opening up of space for a real contest and challenge to their central role within village politics – more so in Proprietary villages than in Crown villages. Marginalisation of poorer voters exists in both kinds of villages, but while in one it has led to greater political activism and collective action, in the other, in Proprietary villages, the entrenched, oppressive social and political control of landed elites has produced a more uncompetitive form of local politics in which other intermediaries are not yet able to fully compete. A comparison across our six case villages has pointed us towards a clearer explanation for why and how political dynamics vary across different types of villages. Does this explanation of political outcomes being driven by structural inequality – that between Proprietary and Crown villages – hold up across a larger sample of villages as well? I look for this confirmation in the next chapter.

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Structural Inequality and Variations in Political Engagement

We now have one main question that remains to be answered – what explains the differences in political engagement that we have observed across different types of villages? The comparisons across the six case study villages in the previous chapter suggest that much of the difference may be a result of unequal social structures, rather than unequal land distribution. Voters in Crown villages interact differently with their landed vote bloc leaders – there is less deference in the relationship, opposition is more open and bold, and the instrumental aspects of the relationship are more pronounced. This is a function of the less entrenched social influence of landed groups in these villages. Their social and political authority is constantly challenged – the more they find ways to consolidate it, the more the voters in these villages find ways to expand their own political space and the bargaining power they have within it. Our three Crown case study villages have consistently higher scores on the Index of Political Engagement (IPE) than Proprietary villages. The question to consider is whether this is a generalisable trend across the larger sample of 35 villages in Sargodha district. Are political outcomes determined by structural inequality?

A related task that this chapter takes on is to unravel the underlying structure and nature of political engagement in rural Pakistan across different types of villages and households. The anthropology and political economy literature on voting in Punjab focuses on describing the relational basis of electoral politics, but leaves a real gap in terms of providing rigorous analysis of the differences that underpin clientelism and kinship-based collective action in different local contexts. This chapter probes questions that have been left unanswered by this literature so far, including the extent to which relations of socio-economic dependence – the concept that so fires the public imagination in Pakistan – are still to be found in linkages between rural voters and their landlords, patrons and kin leaders. It asks about the ways in which the regular interaction of Punjabi voters with political leaders of higher status affects both the relational basis of voting, and the nature of political engagement and collective bargaining that underpins it.

The process of selecting a representative sample of 35 villages that replicates the distribution of land tenure types across Sargodha district – that is, whether

the village was settled as a Proprietary or Crown village – has already been detailed in Chapter 1 (see Table 1.6). We used a number of research instruments to collect data in these villages. We ran census surveys in each village to create a database of about 9,000 households – with information about caste and land distribution, wealth indicators, sources of income, and literacy rates – and conducted detailed voter surveys with the heads of 45 randomly selected households in each village. This gave us a total sample of 1,572 households that were stratified by caste to ensure that we captured almost all caste groups according to their actual distribution in the village. The household surveys included questions about socio-economic indicators, politics, voting patterns and relations with other actors in the village. We also conducted structured and detailed interviews with three to four key respondents in each village about the social stratification of the village, economic and social relations across different groups of residents, village history, and political organisation and alignments. Key respondents generally included those considered the best informed about village affairs, such as vote bloc leaders, farm managers (*munshi*s), schoolteachers, other politically active figures or caste leaders.

We directed a randomly selected third of our household surveys to the eldest female in the house to capture gender differences in political preferences. This did not work well. While female respondents answered all other questions with great enthusiasm, they regularly referred us to male members of the household for all political questions. In village after village we realised that politics was a subject that women left to their men. In the end, only 29 women – less than 2 per cent of the total sample – were exclusive respondents of our surveys and answered questions about their own political preferences. I am, therefore, unable to locate gender as an explanatory factor for differences in voting behaviour, but this fact allows me to make a few comments about women's participation in village politics later in this chapter.

Revisiting structural inequality across Sargodha's villages

Villages in rural Punjab are not strikingly different from one another at first glance. In Sargodha, they all lie on a flat plain, are generally easily accessible – though often along dirt tracks – and are normally laid out in a consolidated settlement that lies in the centre of the agricultural lands of the village. Their population comprises a mix of *biradari* groups that live in close proximity to

one another in dense settlements, though some residential segregation also exists, most usually and visibly of the poorest groups at the outskirts of the village. Most often, this is a function of the 5-*marla* housing schemes that were created by various governments for marginalised groups, and were often put at some distance from the main settlement on available state lands. Many villages are underprovided – there are few public services, schools and health centres are understaffed, and many streets remain unpaved with few sanitation drains to carry away waste and water. They also have high levels of poverty – income levels are very low, a sizeable proportion of residents are dependent on day labour, many houses are still made of mud and thatch, and building more solid roofs and walls is a major priority for any family able to save some money.

Yet there are important differences across Sargodha's villages in terms of inequality. As explained in Chapter 2, villages were settled under different types of land tenure systems under colonial rule, and these have resulted in important differences in their social structures. Some are more hierarchical than others in terms of the social dominance of their landed elite groups, and some are more unequal than others in terms of the distribution of land across village residents. Some villages are poorer in terms of the living standards of their residents while others lie in more remote parts of the district and, so, have not benefitted from the growth of Punjab's small towns over the last few decades. Often these inequalities coexist and intersect – one village may be socially hierarchical, economically unequal and remote; another may be more egalitarian, have land more equally distributed across the village population, and be close to a town, though most have different combinations of these factors. Furthermore, some villages may be quite plural, made up of a mix of up to 50 different kinship groups living and working together, while others are more homogeneous with a population that belongs largely to the same kinship group. All of these factors can affect the relational basis of voting, the way vote blocs are organised, and the levels of contestation and inclusion in village politics.

The most important social structural differentiation across Punjabi villages is in terms of the dispersion of social authority across different groups and actors. All villages are hierarchically organised but some more than others. In a very hierarchical social structure, authority is centralised and is exercised by a few people at the very top over a large village population. In a more egalitarian social structure, authority is dispersed across a much larger population at the top, and they exercise it over a smaller population that makes up the remainder of the

village. Such authority almost always remains within the *zamindar biradari*s at the top of the village hierarchy, so that we are essentially talking about the extent to which authority is dispersed across the different kinship groups of the *zamindar*, or landowning, caste. A good measure of this authority is the population proportion of the original village proprietary body (VPB) *biradari*s in the village, the group in which authority was historically vested by the colonial state. Table 6.1 provides details on the composition of VPB groups in Proprietary and Crown villages. Proprietary villages have very few VPB *biradari*s in each village, but the population proportion of each of these is about 14 per cent on average. In contrast, Crown villages can have almost seven such lineage groups per village, but each of these are quite small and make up only about 4 per cent of the population of each village. This social structure reflects the fact that the colonial state settled these villages with a mixed population of multiple castes, *biradari*s and families from all over Punjab.

Table 6.1   Demographics of village proprietary body (VPB)

Type of village	A Average no. of VPB *biradari*s per village*	B Average population size of each VPB *biradari* per village** (%)	C Total average population proportion of VPB *biradari*s per village (A*B)
Proprietary	1.88	13.66	26
Crown	6.9	4.44	31

Sources: * Government of Punjab, Board of Revenue, *Shahpur District Village Inspection Reports*, 1911–1924.
   ** Village census survey by author.

Overall, this means that while VPB *biradari*s in Proprietary estates represent, on average, a smaller proportion of the village population than in Crown villages – 26 per cent as compared to 31 per cent in Crown villages (Column C) – the differences across them are not as large as we might have expected, given the extent of difference in social authority that we saw across the two types of villages in our case studies. There is something beyond mere demographics that contributes to the qualitative difference in social authority, and to the fact that Proprietary villages have a more hierarchical social structure than Crown villages. This additional factor is that the authority of VPB groups in Crown villages was always circumscribed by the fact that they were not private

owners but rather tenants of the colonial state, which directly regulated these villages under colony law until 1941. In Proprietary villages, on the other hand, the village proprietary body had full property rights that were conferred and recognised by the state. The elite of Crown villages thus did not develop the type of historically grounded, officially sanctioned, and entrenched social authority that the elites of Proprietary villages, across all their sub-types, had over the rest of the village population. This explains to a greater extent the hierarchy we see in Proprietary villages, and the more defused social authority we see in Crown colonies.

There are also important variations across our 38 villages in terms of land inequality, despite the fact that land is very unequally distributed in rural Punjab in general. We are able to record land inequality at two points in time – historical inequality as reported by the colonial *Village Inspection Reports*, and current land inequality as captured by our own census surveys and calculated as a Gini coefficient for each village. The clearest available measure of inequality in the colonial records is the extent of landless tenancy and self-cultivation in a village between 1911 and 1922, and we use this as a proxy to measure inequality in the distribution of landownership. The higher the level of tenancy (and lower the level of self-cultivation), the higher is land inequality – indicating few owners of large estates that were cultivated mostly by tenants. The lower the level of tenancy (and higher the level of self-cultivation), the lower is land inequality, because it means that land was in smaller packets that were largely cultivated by the owners themselves. This could vary from 38 per cent tenancy in a Crown village to 100 per cent in the most unequal Proprietary villages. Table 6.2 shows how both historical and current inequality varies across these two types of land tenure systems.

We know already that the current Gini coefficient for land inequality is very high in Sargodha district – the average across our 38 villages is 0.84. This is also the average for Proprietary villages, with a slightly higher Gini at 0.85 in Crown villages. The lowest Gini coefficient score is 0.66 in a Proprietary village that was originally settled as a *pattidari* grant, and the highest Gini coefficients are for villages like Sahiwal and Tiwanabad that were settled as large *zamindari* grants. Using the historical and current measures together allows us to check the extent to which land inequality is entrenched in these villages, and may have affected socio-economic and political relationships between landowning leaders and landless voters over generations. I found that historical and current

land inequality are highly correlated across our group of villages (at 0.70), which means that if a village was unequal in the 1910s it is unequal even today, relative to other villages in the sample. Historical inequality in land distribution is connected to current inequality in landownership, indicating that economic transformation in these villages has been limited.

Table 6.2 Historical and current land inequality

Village type	Average tenancy (historical)*	Average Gini (current)**	Gini range across village type
Proprietary	72%	0.84	0.66–0.97
Crown	65%	0.85	0.73–0.93

Source: * Government of Punjab, Board of Revenue, *Shahpur District Village Inspection Reports*, 1911–1924.
　　　 ** Village census survey by author.

The controlled comparison across case villages in the previous chapter played down the role of land inequality in determining political outcomes by showing how similarly unequal Proprietary and Crown villages can have very different forms of village politics. However, we do not know yet whether this is a generalisable pattern across Sargodha's villages. I test this relationship further across the larger sample of villages in the next section to see whether persistent land inequality really has no role to play in determining political outcomes, or whether it is a combination of intersecting land and social structural inequality that explain differences in political engagement.

To do this, we must control for a number of other differences that exist across Sargodha's villages and that could also potentially affect the nature of politics. The most important of these include access to alternate economic opportunities in urban centres, levels of poverty in the village and how socially diverse these villages are. The distance of a village from an urban town provides a good indicator of the extent to which residents can access the growing opportunities offered by towns and markets that have burgeoned all over Punjab's countryside over the last few decades. Sahiwal's example showed that its residents regularly access schools and hospitals in Shahpur town, and commute on a daily basis to its factories and commodity markets for jobs. As Shahpur expanded and transportation links became better, Sahiwal's residents gained more access to alternate services and sources of income, thereby reducing their socio-economic dependence on the *maalik*s. In some cases this provided enough income to invest

in land inside the village, and so created alternate nodes of political authority.

There is a good chance that other villages that lie closer to urban centres may also display similar processes of change, as compared to those that are at a distance from any town or city and where people are more dependent on jobs and services on offer within the village. Landless people in remote villages have two options – they can continue to work at the few jobs on offer within the village or they can leave their families and migrate away to Pakistan's towns and cities. This also means that those who have jobs to offer in such villages, mostly the landowning elite, have greater control over the lives of those competing for these jobs. People who live in villages close to towns can set their own terms while those in remote villages must accept what is on offer.[1] There is a lot of variation in terms of distance in our sample – the closest village is just 3 kilometres from a town while the farthest is 45 kilometres away.

Villages in Sargodha have a high level of poverty, but here too there are differences across villages that can affect how their residents engage with leaders – we would expect that richer citizens may have more horizontal links with leaders compared to poorer voters. We found that people were not generally very comfortable with sharing income and asset data, so we measured poverty through a proxy variable that records the proportion of brick houses in a village. This is based on the fact that we were repeatedly told during our field research that converting a mud house into a brick structure is a priority investment for a family, if and when it has extra income. So, the fewer brick houses a village has, the poorer it is. In 15 of our sample villages, less than a third of all house structures are made of brick, and in only 8 villages are there more than 45 per cent brick houses. The poorest village has just 17 per cent brick houses while the richest village in our sample, which happens to be Sahiwal, has about 82 per cent houses built of brick.

Villages can also differ from one another on how diverse or homogenous their population is in terms of the number of *biradari* groups that live in them. This varies in our sample villages from just 9 *biradari*s in a migrant village (recall that these were settled by related kinship groups settling together) to up to 55 *biradari*s in a *zamindari* village, which were settled by a single family bringing together various clans of cultivators, producers, artisans and labourers. On average, Proprietary villages have about 33 *biradari*s while Crown villages have

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1 Distance is a major variable of interest for both Shami (2012) and Rouquie (1978), who assert that the authority of local power holders is greater in more remote localities.

37. The reason why it is important to hold plurality constant while checking for correlations between social structural inequality and political outcomes is the fact that greater plurality can lead to more fragmented interests, and thus lower levels of political collective action.[2] Its impact can also work in another manner – greater plurality could indicate the emergence of more diverse power nodes over time and more competitive politics.

In the next section, I look at how the social structure of a village and levels of land inequality are correlated with political outcomes across the larger sample of 35 villages, while controlling for any possible effect that could come from poverty levels in a village, its plurality or its distance from an urban centre.

Does structural inequality predict the nature of political engagement?

In asking voters about their political choices and decisions, I do not use any of the usual parameters – who they vote for or even how many of them turn out to do so. Given that politics is organised through vote blocs in Punjab's villages, I am concerned instead with how and why they become members of vote blocs, and how much agency they exercise within these political institutions to make collective decisions about voting. In examining their relationships with bloc leaders, I return to the question of who rural Punjabi voters are – victims of economic circumstance, over-socialised members of kin networks, class-conscious party supporters or benefit-seeking vote sellers? If each village has its share of all these types of voters, what separates the choices and decisions of one type of voter from another? Which of these often competing linkages are the most important to them, and what role does land and social structural inequality play in determining these political choices? These are some of the questions I answer here.

Vote bloc membership

About 80 per cent of the 1,572 households we spoke with openly identified themselves as members of a vote bloc in the 2002 election. The number was quite similar in the previous election in 1997 (Table 6.3). Rates of vote bloc membership are not the same as rates of voter turnout. Pakistan's turnout rates are low – in 2002 these were 42 per cent for Pakistan as a whole and 46 per

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2   This is based on studies on the impact of social heterogeneity, such as Alesina, Baqir and Easterly (1999), Mahoney (2003), and Banerjee, Iyer and Somanathan (2005).

cent for Punjab, and they went up marginally to 44 per cent and 49 per cent for
Pakistan and Punjab respectively in 2008[3]. Many vote bloc members do not vote
at election time, despite the efforts of their bloc leaders to bring out the vote. The
main explanation for why high membership rates in vote blocs do not convert
into high turnout rates is the fact that while turnout is a measure of individual
behaviour, membership applies to households. Effectively, every household will
ensure that at least one or two of its members vote, and this is enough to ensure
the household's membership in a bloc. Leaders seem aware that not every person
in a household will come out to vote, especially women and younger members,
and possibly because of high monitoring and enforcement costs, little actual
effort is put into turning out higher numbers. Even in a village as hierarchical
and politically dynamic as Sahiwal, only about 50 to 60 per cent of votes are ever
polled, which matches the constituency averages. The math on this adds up well
– the average household size in rural Punjab is 6.35 with 3.45 adults,[4] so one
or two people voting per household would provide about half of the number of
registered voters. Other issues related to low turnout rates include the need to be
physically present in the village to vote (a difficult task for migrant labour), and
various election day problems.

Table 6.3   Percentage households in sample that were part of a vote bloc

	1997		2002	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Bloc voters	1,211	77	1,243	79
Non-bloc voters	361	23	329	21
Total	**1,572**	**100**	**1,572**	**100**

Source: Author.

   There is nothing immediately obvious that sets apart the 21 per cent who
were not members of vote blocs – they did not live in a separate part of the
village, did not belong to any particular identifiable group and were not part
of a publicly known village conflict. This was a group of voters that simply
did not believe in 'this system of politics'. Many non-members explained that
they voted for political candidates based on their desire for change, or their

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3   This increased to 55 per cent for Pakistan and 60 per cent for Punjab in 2013 and then decreased
    to 51 per cent and 56 per cent respectively in 2018 (Election Commission of Pakistan at www.ecp.
    gov.pk).

4   This is according to the Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) for 2007–08, which is
    at the time of our surveys. These figures have since been updated to 6.18 and 3.48 respectively for
    2013–14.

leadership qualities and dynamic personalities. However, in most cases these candidates were supported by at least one vote bloc in the village – about 54 per cent of all non-member votes were cast for the PML-Q in 2002, while the others were polled for the PPP (29 per cent) and the PML-N (17 per cent). Their rejection of vote blocs seemed to have less to do with the desire to support different candidates and parties and more to do with the rejection of the way in which village politics was organised.

I used probit regression analysis to see if there is something about a village or a household that would explain why some voters become members of vote blocs while others do not. I regress vote bloc membership on land tenure type – whether the village is Proprietary or Crown – and on its level of land inequality, holding distance, poverty and plurality constant. The results reveal that there are no significant differences in vote bloc membership across villages – voters in the various types of villages that we observed are just as likely to be members of vote blocs (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4   Determinants of vote bloc membership – village characteristics (probit estimates/marginal effects)

	Vote bloc member
Crown estate	-0.025 (0.027)
Land inequality	0.235 (0.147)
Observations	1,572
Controls	Distance Poverty Plurality

Notes: Marginal effects; *standard errors* in parentheses.
[*] $p < 0.10$, [**] $p < 0.05$, [***] $p < 0.01$

As for household characteristics, I check across a list of these. The first is social status, measured as the caste group to which a household belongs – VPB, *zamindar*, *kammi* or *muslim sheikh*. The second household characteristic is the amount of land that a household owns. Wealth and class-based explanations of voting behaviour have abounded since Lipset and Rokkan (1967). Our census surveys indicate that almost 70 per cent of the population of our villages is landless and 25 per cent own less than the subsistence level of 12.5 acres, leaving

only 5 per cent with landholdings above subsistence level (Table 6.5). Is the political independence of non-members explained by their caste status or their ownership of land? I also check across other household characteristics, such as poverty, measured in terms of whether or not the house is made of bricks, the age and education of the household head (our respondent), and their occupation to see if these might explain vote bloc membership in any way.[5] Lipset (1981) listed both age and occupation as important determinants of voting behaviour, while Hershey (2007) argued that education may make voters more informed and conscientious.

Table 6.5   Land distribution across census sample in 35 villages

Land	Category	Population		
		No.	**%**	**Cum. %**
0	Landless	6,290	68.80	68.80
1 to <5 acres	Marginal	1,404	15.36	84.16
5 to <12.5 acres	Small	988	10.81	94.97
12.5 to <25 acres	Medium	246	2.69	97.66
25 to <50 acres	Large	138	1.51	99.17
50 to 150 acres		66	0.72	99.89
>150 acres		10	0.11	100
		9,142	100	

Source: Author.

Our results show that the age of a voter and their VPB status predicts membership. Older voters are marginally more likely to participate in bloc voting, as are members of a VPB *biradari,* compared to *muslim sheikh*s which is the dropped category in Table 6.6. Also, people in professional employment – doctors, engineers, lawyers – and artisans are less likely to be members of vote blocs. Other than this, caste, landownership, wealth status, education and other occupational categories are not significantly correlated with vote bloc membership.[6] Vote blocs organise all types of voters regardless of their socio-economic status, with some younger voters, professionals and artisans opting out of these village

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5   Details on these variables are in Annex 4.
6   Details on how these characteristics are measured are in Annex 4.

Table 6.6 Determinants of vote bloc membership – household characteristics (probit estimates/marginal effects)

		Vote bloc member (with village F.E.)
Caste	VPB	0.068** (0.034)
	Zamindar	-0.055 (0.035)
	Kammi	0.003 (0.033)
Land owned		0.000 (0.001)
Wealth (type of house)	Brick house	0.016 (0.038)
	Mud-brick house	-0.013 (0.037)
Education		-0.001 (0.003)
Age		0.002** (0.001)
Occupation	Professional	-0.125** (0.049)
	Labour (day/agricultural)	0.008 (0.045)
	Artisans	-0.117* (0.062)
	Contractual Labour	-0.050 (0.057)
	Business/trade	-0.038 (0.053)
	Agriculture (owner/tenant)	-0.036 (0.046)
Observations		1,516

Notes: Marginal effects; *standard errors* in parentheses.
$^{*} p < 0.10,$ $^{**} p < 0.05,$ $^{***} p < 0.01$

level political institutions. The finding that age matters is not surprising. Older voters are more likely to abide by social norms in the village, and vote bloc participation can now be considered one such social norm that has evolved out of the traditional factionalism of Punjabi villages. And the fact that VPB *biradari*s are a little more likely to be members of vote blocs is supported both by the fact that they organise these institutions, and are supported and endorsed within this role by other similarly placed village residents with whom they share linkages of kinship.

Relational basis of vote bloc participation and bargaining power

Which tie or identity do voters prioritise when choosing between vote blocs? We asked our survey respondents a series of questions about vote bloc membership – which vote bloc they were members of, why, the kind of relationship they had with the leader of the vote bloc, and the form of their interaction with him. We probed for secondary and tertiary preferences and choices, but most respondents were fairly clear about the primary, basis of their membership in a vote bloc. Table 6.7 tabulates their responses. Thirty-five per cent of voters that we spoke with identified broker clientelism as the reason for their participation in a vote bloc and said that their main link with leaders was as clients. Fifty-one per cent identified reasons that fall within the category of kin – *biradari*, *biradari*-based

Table 6.7 Basis of participation of a household head in a vote bloc

Basis of participation	%	Category
Patron–client (service delivery)	35	Clients (35%)
Biradari alliance	33	Kin (51%)
Extended family	11	
Biradari	7	
Religion	0.32	
Dependence on landlord	4	Dependents (7%)
Fear of violence/sanctions from village head	3	
Neighbourhood	4	Peers (6.5%)
Political party	2	
Occupational group	0.50	
Others	0.18	
Total	**100**	

Source: Author.

alliances, family and religion. These two categories of clients and kin together account for 86 per cent of our respondents. Only 7 per cent said they were in a vote bloc because they feared sanctions from the village head if they opted out or because they were economically dependent on the landlord, and only another 6.5 per cent said they participated for reasons that fall within the category of peers – same occupational group or neighbourhood, or identification with the same political party.

There are, therefore, two main types of bloc voters in rural Punjab – those who become members because of an expectation of a tangible benefit and those who identify socially, usually on the basis of kinship, with a horizontal network. Though these findings could lead us to conclude that rural Punjabi voters are primarily led by primordial considerations of kinship rather than clientelism in their voting decisions, we need to be slightly cautious in accepting this result. Table 6.7 shows that 33 per cent of those listed as kinship-based voters actually identified a *biradari*-based alliance, rather than *biradari* itself, as the basis of their participation. The difference between these two bases is significant. *Biradari*-based voting means that members identify the vote bloc with their own lineage group, possibly because the leader is from their *biradari* or because they share some similar ties of reciprocal social obligation and exchange with him. *Biradari*-based alliances, on the other hand, signify that voters take a two-step process to connect with the leader – they first organise on the basis of kinship within their own *biradari*s under the leadership of clan or caste leaders, and then the kin group provides its collective vote to the highest bidder, as it were, after a process of negotiation and alliance building. Such voters organise as kin but usually participate in a vote bloc as clients. Looked at from above, from the perspective of the leader, this is clientelism. Looked at from below, from the perspective of the voter, it is kinship and collective action. Perspective and the point at which data is collected, therefore, makes a difference in unravelling voting behaviour. From the point of view of vote bloc leaders, about 68 per cent of vote bloc members are engaged in clientelistic behaviour (clients and those that are part of *biradari* alliances), but from the perspective of voters, about half of them – the 51 per cent that fall within the category of 'kin' – are thinking about collective strategies to counter the impact of unequal access to power and services.

This fact also clarifies how it is possible for *biradari*-ism and broker clientelism to coexist within the same village, and often within the same vote

bloc. While the former is usually a form of horizontal social organisation and collective action, the latter is a complementary strategy for accessing the state and public services. These findings provide further evidence that the politics of rural Punjab is '*thana katcheri kee siyasat*' (literally, politics of access to the police and courts) to a very large extent. Within this pattern of politics vote bloc leaders have authority and influence not because they own land or because they have economic control over the livelihoods of voters, but because they serve as the main intermediary between the state and its rural citizens. When we asked voters if they approach the police and courts directly when required, only 19 per cent said they did. Eighty-one per cent of our respondents said they go through someone, and when named, these intermediaries were invariably the leaders of vote blocs in each village. We got similar responses for questions regarding public services. Sultan of Tiwanabad called it the 'agency *nizaam* (system)' in which vote bloc leaders are 'the agents of people'.

Again, we used multivariate regression analysis to check if there is something particular about a household or about the village that determines why some voters are more likely to organise horizontally within *biradari*s before connecting to bloc leaders, while others align directly and vertically as clients. We have good reason to believe now that the type of village that voters live in will make a difference to the way they connect with vote bloc leaders. There are extreme cases, such as that of Mir Ahmad Sher Garh, a Proprietary *zamindari* village in which 89 per cent of all vote bloc members have vertical linkages, or the more equal Proprietary village Kot Fateh Khan, in which only 14 per cent have such linkages. In most other villages there is usually a fairly even distribution of members with vertical and horizontal linkages within the same village and within the same vote bloc. In our sample of vote bloc members, about 42 per cent have vertical linkages as dependents and clients, and about 58 per cent have horizontal links as kin and peers (Table 6.7). What determines this split across households and villages?

I checked for correlations between the relational basis of vote bloc participation – whether members are 'dependents', 'clients', 'kin' or 'peers' of the vote bloc leader – and the caste and landownership status of a household. Alavi (2001) suggests that non-*zamindar quom*s may be actively prevented from forming kin-based, horizontal linkages of their own in order to undermine class-based organisation. And given the ways in which the traditional landed elite have used their ownership of agricultural and homestead land to maintain

political control over village residents, households that own land may be more likely to be independent of the power of landed vote bloc leaders, and so they may have more horizontal linkages and greater bargaining power within vote blocs. In order to clearly determine these relationships, independent of the effect of other factors, I hold the wealth levels of the household (whether the house is made of brick or not) and the age, education and occupation of the household head constant. It is important to control for the effect of these factors because it is possible that over time, older voters gain greater say and bargaining power vis-à-vis younger vote bloc leaders. Higher education and income, and non-farm based occupations may also allow voters more independence and greater bargaining power in their relationships with leaders, and may move voters towards less primordial links and possibly greater identification with political parties.

The results of the regression analysis reveal the following in Table 6.8. There is a strong correlation between social status (or caste hierarchy) and the relational

Table 6.8   Effect of social structural and land inequality
(household characteristics) on type of linkage

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
		Horizontal linkages	**Dependents**	**Clients**	**Kin**	**Peers**
Caste	VPB	0.254***	-0.079***	-0.195***	0.268***	0.006
		(0.048)	(0.026)	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.026)
	Zamindar	0.120***	-0.037	-0.086**	0.076*	0.048**
		(0.043)	(0.024)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.023)
	Kammi	0.084**	-0.039*	-0.045	0.065	0.020
		(0.042)	(0.023)	(0.040)	(0.041)	(0.023)
Land owned		0.004***	-0.000	-0.003***	0.002**	0.001
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Observations		1,171	1,171	1,171	1,171	1,171
Controls			Age Education Wealth Occupation			

Notes: Marginal effects, Village FE; *standard errors* in parentheses.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

basis of vote bloc membership. All caste groups – VPB, *zamindar* and *kammi* – are significantly more likely to have horizontal linkages, and therefore greater

bargaining power, compared to the poorest group in the village, the *muslim sheikh*s (which is the dropped category in Table 6.8). In fact, the coefficient of the effect increases steadily as we move up the social hierarchy. Members of the *kammi* caste are 0.08 percentage points more likely to have horizontal relations with the vote bloc leader compared to *muslim sheikh*s, members of the *zamindar* caste are 0.12 percentage points more likely, and VPB *biradari*s are 0.25 percentage points more likely to have horizontal linkages. This supports Alavi's (1973) argument that higher caste groups and agriculturalists have stronger links of social solidarity and are better organised politically. This has not changed over the intervening three decades.

The same pattern is visible in terms of the four types of voters – 'dependents', 'clients', 'kin' or 'peers'. Members of VPB *biradari*s are most likely to be kin members of vote bloc leaders, and to participate in the vote bloc on this basis, as compared to any other relational basis and compared to any other caste group (after controlling for other household level factors and for differences across villages). Interestingly, while *zamindar* groups are also more likely to participate on the basis of kinship, they are at the same time also the only group that have any significant participation in the bloc as peers of the leader, as members of the same class or occupational group. *Kammi* groups may be more likely to have horizontal linkages than *muslim sheikh*s, and less likely to be in relations of dependence, but their relational linkages are not of a significantly different variety than those of *muslim sheikh*s in general. Thus, there continues to be a significant difference in the basis on which upper and lower caste groups participate in vote blocs, but it is interesting that vertical relations of dependence now only define the political behaviour of the most marginalised groups in these villages.

The effects of landownership on the relational basis of participation in vote blocs is also significant, though weaker in terms of marginal effects. For each extra acre of land owned, the likelihood of a kinship-based linkage increases by 0.002 percentage points, and the likelihood that the household head is a client of the leader decreases by 0.003 percentage points. This also indicates increases in the strategic bargaining power of more landed voters. The results establish that differences in voting behaviour across households are driven by socio-economic differences, and that inequality constrains the politics of the poorest groups.

These results explain differences in voting behaviour across households, but are there also significant differences across villages? I check for this in terms of

the main village characteristics detailed in the previous section, to see if the social structure of a village and the distribution of land within it produce a certain type of village politics. The results in Table 6.9 reveal that voters in Crown villages are significantly more likely to have horizontal linkages – they are 12 per cent more likely to have linkages based on kinship and 11.5 per cent less likely to connect with vote bloc leaders on the basis of clientelism compared to voters in Proprietary villages, who are more likely to connect through vertical, clientelistic linkages, holding other factors like distance, plurality and poverty levels constant. So, if a village was settled under colonial rule as a Proprietary estate, even today its voters have more vertical relationships and less bargaining power than in Crown villages.

Land inequality has an expected effect – as land inequality increases across villages, the less likely the voters are to have horizontal linkages with their leaders. The likelihood of clientelistic linkages increases significantly as we move to more and more unequal villages, and the likelihood of finding voters with kinship-based linkages or peer relationships with leaders increases equally significantly as we move to more equal villages. Interestingly, relations defined by socio-economic dependence are not significantly correlated with any kind of village.

Table 6.9 Effect of social structural and land inequality (village characteristics) on type of linkage

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Horizontal linkages	**Dependence**	**Clientelism**	**Kinship**	**Peers**
Crown Estate	0.119*	0.013	–0.115*	0.124**	0.013
	(0.064)	(0.019)	(0.059)	(0.057)	(0.025)
Land Inequality	–1.351***	0.187	1.125***	–0.968***	–0.401***
	(0.284)	(0.115)	(0.298)	(0.282)	(0.137)
Observations	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210	1,210
Controls			Distance Poverty Plurality		

Notes: Marginal effects; *standard errors* (in parentheses) clustered at the village level.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

I argued earlier that the relational basis of participation indicates the level and type of bargaining power that voters have vis-à-vis their landed leaders. By

implication then, voters in Proprietary villages and unequal villages have less bargaining power than those in more equal and Crown villages. And upper caste and more landed groups across all types of villages have more horizontal, equal linkages with greater bargaining power. Overall, structural and land inequality, at both the household and village levels, significantly constrain the ability of more marginalised voters to negotiate strategic gain for themselves and their larger group through village politics. These are not novel findings on their own. The fact that vote blocs are organised around the kinship networks of the landed and may exclude the interests of poorer voters has been established by the literature. What is novel though are the findings that relational linkages can differ in significant ways because of the impact of history and persistent structural inequality, even when villages lie close to one another within the same district. The fact that village politics is different in Proprietary versus Crown villages was obvious in our case studies, and it seems now that this is a generalisable trend that holds up across a larger number of villages. It is also novel to be able to establish that despite these differences, village politics in both Proprietary and Crown villages are underpinned by strategic interactions that draw on clientelistic relationships and collective action even within poorer groups, rather than on socio-economic dependence of the landless on the landed. Finally, these findings recast kinship-based voting behaviour as strategic collective action organised around the need to access a distant state and to make sense of the nature of the political system, rather than as the primacy of primordial relationships between over-socialised, non-strategic voters.

Women voters

The one type of voter whose political preferences we still have little information on are women voters. This is despite the fact that we started our field research in these villages by speaking with women in the household separately from the men for a proportion of our surveys in order to capture gender differences in political preferences. As soon as we would start asking about elections and vote blocs, women would call in male members of the household to answer our questions. Often they said this was because they could not remember who they had voted for because their husbands, fathers or brothers had simply told them which electoral symbol to stamp on the ballot paper. If we insisted on knowing more about the woman's political choices, the response usually was, 'I voted as he did.' Since we were unable to record women's responses separately

from those of men in the household in most of these cases, we are unable to locate differences in electoral choices within the same household.

Most vote bloc leaders seem to be aware of this fact and rarely think of women as a separate constituency. Instead, households as a whole constitute membership in a vote bloc, and discussions about women voters usually only revolve around making them come out to vote rather than on how they will actually vote. This does not mean that women have no political opinion. In more casual conversations I found that women follow village level politics keenly and are aware of the various alignments and conflicts. Unlike the general perception of Pakistan's female, rural voters, these women are not isolated from political networks. The issue seems to be that they separate village level politics from national politics – village alignments are real and tangible while national politics is simply a stamp on a printed paper with some symbols on it, every five years or so. And as far as village politics is concerned, almost everyone agrees that it is important to project the family and the clan as a united whole within which all members have similar political preferences. Women will refer resentfully to the fact that these common preferences almost always coincide with those of male, rather than female, members of the clan, but there is little effort to change this state of affairs. However, things do seem to be changing slowly. Many years later at the time of the 2013 election, I found a small vote bloc in one village that was made up entirely of female voters. I discuss this in the next chapter.

Nature of political engagement

The fact that voters in Proprietary villages are more likely to connect to leaders as clients, and those in Crown villages through kinship networks, establishes that relationships between voters and leaders in Punjab's villages are embedded in the underlying economic and social structures of these villages. Do these structures similarly condition levels of contestation and inclusion in a village by impacting the nature of political engagement and collective bargaining that underpin relationships of clientelism and kinship?

To unravel political engagement and its relationship with structural inequality, I return to the concepts and index, the IPE, developed in Chapter 4. The IPE provides us with a convenient way of assessing the extent to which political engagement and its various components can vary across village types in a more systematic manner. Table 6.10 shows how Proprietary and Crown villages fared on the IPE on average. Recall that the IPE score can range from 1 to 12.88 and that the average for all villages in our sample is about 4.80.

Crown villages on the whole have a higher than average score on the IPE at 5.64, while Proprietary villages score below average at 4.38. Crown villages score consistently higher along every dimension of the IPE than Proprietary villages, which indicates that political processes in the former are more competitive, inclusive, and allow greater space to more marginalised voters.

Table 6.10   IPE scores by village type

		Possible range	Average score		
			Full sample	Proprietary village	Crown village
Contestation	Number of vote blocs in village (NVB)	1–3.88	1.70	1.63	1.86
	Political independence of lowest caste group	0–3	0.75	0.64	0.96
Inclusion	Basis of member recruitment	0–3	1.59	1.53	1.70
	Participation in decision-making	0–3	0.76	0.58	1.12
	IPE score	1–12.88	4.80	4.38	5.64

Source: Author.

Let us look first at the two components of contestation – the effective number of parties, measured as the NVB, and whether or not *muslim sheikh*s are able to organise independently of the influence of *maalik*s and *chaudhri*s. We know that the sample villages are fairly competitive with an average NVB score of about 1.70 for the 2002 election. But if we divide scores up by village type, we find visible differences in levels of competition. Proprietary villages had, on average, about 1.63 effective number of vote blocs, while Crown villages approximated a more perfectly competitive score with 1.86 vote blocs. Similar differences are visible across the other component too. In terms of the political independence exercised by *muslim sheikh*s vis-à-vis landed groups, Proprietary estates had an average score of 0.64 while Crown villages scored 0.96 on

average. This is on a scale of 0 to 3 where 0 indicates that the whole *muslim sheikh* population of the village is in a single vote bloc led by a VPB leader, and a score of 3 indicates that the group has organised a vote bloc of its own and is thus independent of the power of the landed elite.[7] The difference here between Proprietary and Crown villages is not a large one, indicating that the most marginalised groups are co-opted into the main village vote blocs everywhere. But there is a qualitative difference – Crown villages tend closer to a score of 1, which indicates that *muslim sheikh*s are split across different vote blocs here while in Proprietary villages there is a greater tendency for them to be organised by a single landed VPB leader. This signifies that marginalised groups in Crown villages may be able to make *chaudhri*s compete for their vote in ways that is not possible vis-à-vis the *maalik*s of Proprietary estates.

The two types of villages also behave differently on the two components of inclusion. Aggregating from household level responses, villages score 0 or 1 if members join vote blocs on a vertical basis, and a score of 2 or 3 when they do so on a horizontal basis.[8] Proprietary villages have an average score of 1.53, which falls below the overall average of 1.59 for all villages, while Crown villages have an above average score of 1.67. This may look like a small difference but we have established in the previous section that it is a statistically significant one – there is a significantly greater tendency towards horizontal linkages in Crown villages than in Proprietary villages. In terms of participation in decision-making processes within the vote bloc, the average score was once again lower in Proprietary villages (0.58) than in Crown villages (1.12), indicating that while vote bloc members generally do not participate in internal decisions in any type of village, there is more deliberation within the panchayats and akhats of Crown villages than in those of Proprietary villages.

The nature of political engagement seems to vary consistently across Proprietary and Crown villages, more on some components than others, but are these differences all statistically significant? I use multivariate regression analysis once again to answer this question. Political competition, measured as the NVB score for a village, is a continuous variable and lends itself easily to such analysis but it is harder to interpret the other components which are categorical variables. To make these easier to interpret, I reconfigure them as

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7   See Table 4.6, and Tables 4.7–4.9 for the scoring system along other components.

8   See Table 4.7.

dichotomous variables. So, the independence of the lowest caste group in the village takes a value of 0 if the lowest caste group is all part of a single vote bloc led by a VPB landlord, and a value of 1 if they are split across multiple vote blocs, some of which may be led by non-VPB leaders (scores 1–3 in Table 4.6). Inclusion of members in the internal decision-making processes of vote blocs is also measured as a dichotomous variable where 0 signifies a lack of deliberation – when electoral decisions are announced to residents at village meetings or from the loudspeakers of the village mosque without first being discussed in any way (scores 0–1 in Table 4.8) – and 1 indicates that there is some degree of deliberative decision-making (scores 2–3 in Table 4.8). [9]

The results in Table 6.11 show that land tenure type continues to be a strong predictor of the nature and substance of local political engagement. Crown estates are positively and significantly correlated with greater political competition and with the greater independence of lower caste groups. Keeping other factors constant, if we move from a Proprietary village to a village that is very similar except for the fact that it was settled as a Crown estate under British colonial rule, we would expect to see the NVB score for that village increase by 0.58 points. Lower caste groups here are also 45 per cent more likely to be more independent of the political power of the landed elite.[10] Given that we may be losing some power on the effect because of the limited number of observations here (only 35 villages in all), the fact of a significant finding suggests that a strong correlation exists between social structural inequality and political engagement.

Deliberative decision-making within vote blocs, however, does not seem to be significantly different in Crown villages. This finding matches the results from the case studies, where we concluded that it is not on inclusion that Proprietary villages compare unfavourably to Crown villages but on contestation, that is, the extent to which village politics is competitive and allows any real political independence to marginalised groups.[11] It needs to be reiterated though that

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9   The basis of recruitment variable is not included here. This is essentially a household level variable, and was run as such in the previous section.

10   The regressions here control for the village's proximity to an urban centre, its poverty levels and plurality, and apply a weighting adjustment to control for the size of a village.

11   There is a possibility that the lack of a significant relationship here is because of the limited number of village observations in these regressions, but given that it closely matches the findings from detailed qualitative work, it is possible to interpret the result as an insignificant correlation with some confidence.

we did find a strong correlation earlier with the other component of inclusion – the relational basis on which voters are recruited into vote blocs. Overall it seems that Proprietary villages, in comparison to Crown estates, tend to provide fewer opportunities for contestation by groups other than the landed elite and have more vertical political relationships, but also that their hierarchical social structures may be opening up to some extent to allow more spaces for deliberation on political affairs to different groups of voters. The results for land inequality here are insignificant, and this could be related to the limited number of observations. However, given that the effect of social structural inequality showed up regardless, it is possible to conclude that the effect of land inequality, if it does exist, is not equally strong.

Table 6.11   Effect of social structural and land inequality (village characteristics) on political engagement

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Political Competition	**Independence of lower caste**	**Deliberative decision-making**
Crown Estate	0.583** (0.281)	0.452** (0.220)	0.279 (0.204)
Land Inequality	–0.807 (1.803)	–1.426 (1.000)	–0.490 (0.939)
Observations	35	35	35
Controls		Distance Poverty Plurality	

Notes: Marginal effects; *standard errors* in parentheses.
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

These results emphasise the more novel findings of this study – that colonial structures and institutions continue to condition the nature of rural politics in Punjab's villages, and to determine the mediated manner in which many citizens access and engage with the state. Vote blocs exist everywhere in Sargodha and most voters make collective political decisions within these, but the nature of engagement between leaders and members within these vote blocs is significantly different in Crown and Proprietary villages. In the former type of village, voters can contest the dominance of the landed elite through collective action, have a greater ability to participate in political processes and decisions, and so can formulate and signify their preferences to vote bloc leaders in ways

that are not possible in Proprietary villages. This means that the relational basis of voter participation in vote blocs, about which the literature has generally had more to say, is underpinned by substantially different types of engagement based on institutional structures that have been discussed far less.

Uncovering the political space of rural voters

The literature on Pakistani politics leaves a gap in explaining the nature and sources of subnational variation in political linkages between voters and their landlords, patrons and kin leaders, and the ways in which they engage with one another. This chapter establishes a number of findings that help strengthen this literature and provide us with a much clearer and nuanced insight into voting behaviour in rural Punjab. Landed village elites with old social power organise vote blocs and about 80 per cent of village residents participate in these. However, despite the landed and social power of the leaders, most voters participate not because of socio-economic dependence but because they need access to a distant and unresponsive state that the leader is able, or at least promises, to provide. Far from presenting a picture of socio-economic dependence, rural Punjabi voters are actively organising on the basis of kinship, striking bargains with landlords, and negotiating over issues that matter to them. Service delivery is an important component of these negotiations, and even if it does so in a limited way, vote bloc membership provides them with a channel to various state offices and politicians.

Eighty-six per cent of voters in our sample participate in vote blocs because of ties of kinship and broker clientelism, rather than economic dependence or party identification. I argue that this evidence reveals that almost all voters in rural Punjab use vote blocs as spaces within which to collectivise and strategise their access to public goods and services within unequal contexts, though those who are richer and part of the village elite have greater bargaining power vis-à-vis leaders than poorer, non-elite members of a vote bloc. While *biradari*-based linkages and alliances are the most common basis for the participation of rural voters in vote blocs, it is not the basis on which leaders connect to candidates. In fact, only 0.35 per cent of respondents said their leader was connected to a candidate on the basis of *biradari*. The relationship between candidates and village level vote bloc leaders is informed by strategic, election time alliances that reflect the specific needs of the vote bloc leader at that moment, and these

may very well reflect the needs of the members of his vote bloc, most of whom he recruits on the basis of clientelism. The evidence presented here counters the notion that politicians can win national or provincial elections based on the manipulation of large numbers of dependent voters that can be brought out in droves by the rural landed elite. The results presented in this chapter show instead that voters are generally benefit-seeking, strategic political actors who organise within their kinship networks to strengthen their bargaining position and then link up to vote bloc leaders through clientelistic linkages. These ties of patron and client are then replicated within the upward linkages between these leaders and political candidates. Effective electoral strategies are, therefore, constructed around dynamic, negotiated and shifting ties of mutual benefit.

But the extent to which the needs of village residents are actually reflected in the demands put forward by vote bloc leaders to electoral candidates depends to a very significant extent on the bargaining power of voters. I argue here that kinship-based linkages offer voters greater bargaining power than clientelistic ties. And we found that the nature of the relational linkage between voter and leader varies across villages. Voters in Proprietary villages are more likely to be clients, whereas those in Crown villages are more likely to collectivise as kin. So, voters in the latter type of village have more bargaining power than those in Proprietary estates. Further, these relational linkages are underpinned by substantively different types of political engagement across these two types of villages. It is not simply the fact that voters in Proprietary and Crown villages tend towards different types of political ties, but also that they actually participate in very different forms of village politics. Voters' space for participation and contestation is far more limited in villages where land grants were made with full proprietary rights to landowners from agricultural castes – a single individual in some cases, and larger groups of agnates in others. Even though the same social group was provided with land in Crown estates as well, the lack of proprietary rights over the land and any state sanctioned social authority over the village population until much later has meant that the political space available to landless voters here looks very different. They are able to contest village politics, choose between more vote blocs, make landed leaders work for their votes, and make more collective political decisions.

This does not mean that they face no constraints while making political decisions. Greater competition in Crown villages, combined with the greater independence of landless voters here, means a more expanded space for collective action. This can place social constraints on voters in Crown villages

that emanate from the collective decisions of horizontal social groups and their need to strengthen their political positions vis-à-vis electoral candidates through numbers. The need to maintain cohesion can lead horizontally organised groups to apply stringent social sanctions against members who want to make independent political decisions. Voters in Proprietary villages, on the other hand, face a different set of constraints. Their constraints are defined by their political dependence on landed patrons, who limit both contestation and inclusion in village politics. The political collective action of voters here is vertically organised, and is focused on strengthening the hand of the traditional landed elite of their village, in order to enable them to attract more resources to their own village.

The greater bargaining power of voters in Crown villages may actually, it seems, be benefitting village residents in terms of better access to public services as well. Cheema et al. (2018) compare long-run development outcomes between Crown and Proprietary estates. Using a regression discontinuity design, they find that being in a Proprietary estate lowers literacy by 10 percentage points and public goods provision by 0.3 standard deviations over a 100-year period. These effects are most pronounced for discretionary public goods that are more likely to be subject to manipulation and targeted provision by politicians, suggesting that the nature and substance of engagement – between politicians and local leaders, and between these local leaders and voters – plays a significant role in determining public service provision outcomes.

Political engagement, therefore, varies across Punjab's villages and we now have a better understanding of what this variation is based on. Within the same district and the same constituencies, the substantive practice of democracy varies from village to village, conditioned by levels and types of structural inequality. Where inequality is low, democracy has greater chances of taking root. Where inequality is high, citizens have little political agency.

When Do Shifts in Political Engagement Occur?

The findings of the previous chapter establish a strong relationship between political engagement and structural inequality. Does this mean that the nature of political engagement is static across time, given that social structures change very slowly at least over the short term? Our cases tell us that this is not true. The main vote bloc leaders of Sahiwal and Tiwanabad are large landlords who, in the not too distant past, controlled more than just the political decisions of the members of their vote blocs. Over time their control has reduced due to various factors and their influence survives today as intermediaries and 'agents', rather than as the absolute *maalik*s that their fathers were. So, when and how do vote blocs change and what causes shifts in the way they are organised? This is the question that concerns us in this chapter. If a vote bloc organises largely around voters that are socio-economically dependent on their leader, when does this relationship change to one between patrons and clients? And if a vote bloc is organised around clientelistic linkages, when might its members start to collectivise around a social identity, or start to commonly identify instead with a certain political party?

These questions draw inspiration from one that is a primary concern for Stokes et al. (2013): when and how do countries transition from non-programmatic linkages between political parties and voters to more programmatic politics? The question I ask here about shifts in the organisation of vote blocs essentially provides the micro logic of the larger transition that Stokes et al. (2013) are concerned with. Its main aim is to identify the microprocesses of political change, especially under conditions of great inequality, that underpin democratisation at higher, more visible levels. If Pakistan's democratic prospects rely in any way on the establishment of more stable and direct links between voters and political parties that represent their collective interests without the intervening role of landed elites, then it follows that the key must lie in sighting and understanding shifts that occur within village politics.

We saw in the previous chapters that there is an inherent political tension between landed and landless groups within each village. The traditional landed elite have an incentive to organise the rural voting majority outside of party structures, using a mix of political and non-political mobilisation strategies,

to ensure that their political centrality and influence persists. As landholdings fragment and the economic dependence of their *reiaya* dissipates, strategies that ensure political control become even more important to landowners. At the same time, as politics becomes the obvious conduit to under-provided services, voters have an incentive to seek and use strategies that will expand their own bargaining space within the vote blocs of the landed. In other words, vote bloc leaders (elites) and members (voters) work at cross purposes – leaders work actively to constrain the political space available to members, while members strategise to expand this space whenever, and in whichever way, they can. These tensions in the internal dynamics of vote blocs drive both leaders and members to change their behaviour and strategies over time – reacting to one another, to socio-economic transformations, and to national political changes – and altering vote bloc organisation in the process, sometimes quite quickly across the space between two elections.

I trace these shifts in this chapter. The research presented in this book so far is based on data that was collected between 2006 and 2008 in 38 villages. I returned to the six case study villages in the days leading up to the 2013 election to see what had happened to vote blocs and to the relationship between their leaders and voters through Pakistan's transition to democracy during the PPP's 2008–13 tenure. Through interviews and observations, I was able to trace the ways in which political organisation and competition can shift in subtle ways from one election to another. Village politics was still organised through vote blocs and the same leaders were still in power, but in each of the six villages there was a clear sense that politics had shifted and opened up further since my last visit.

The 2013 election in the six villages

After a gap of five years I returned to Sargodha a week ahead of the May 2013 election. I was interested in knowing how things change in rural politics and how vote blocs evolve over time, but this election had an added significance. It marked the completion of a full term in government for a political party under a democratic regime, the first since Bhutto's 1971–77 tenure. The 2013 election would mark the first signs of a democratic consolidation – a competitive and mostly free and fair election[1] run without the influence of the army in which

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1   This claim was contested by the PTI, which ran a protracted protest after the election to contest the results of four seats in Punjab based on irregularities on election day. None of these were in Sargodha.

an outgoing democratic government, led by the PPP, would peacefully hand power over to another elected government, formed by the PML-N, and in which more voters would vote than in any election since the 1970s. In the following week, more than 55 per cent of registered voters would turn out to vote in the election across Pakistan, compared to 44 per cent in 2008 and 42 per cent in 2002. In Punjab the turnout rates would be an unprecedented 60 per cent, and in the three National Assembly constituencies within which our six case study villages lie, they would range between 60–63 per cent.

How had political organisation in Sargodha's villages responded to these early signs of democratisation? This question brought me back, along with a colleague,[2] for interviews, observations and casual conversations with some of our key respondents in the days leading up to the elections. We found the villages abuzz with political activity. Village *daara*s were crowded and filled with political discussions and speculations, and various politicians were regularly passing through for *daawat*s and meetings on their campaign trails. One event in particular had electrified local politics and generated great excitement through the entire district. It was indeed the only topic of political conversations when we arrived in the first of the six villages, Sahiwal.

Sahiwal

We found that almost everyone in Sahiwal's *daara*s was talking about a local politician of the *mekan biradari*. The PML-N, which everyone believed was going to win the national election, had issued a party ticket for the provincial seat to a large landlord – a member of the politically dominant Qureshi family of Sargodha – and a relative of the party chief. Qureshi, however, was not locally popular. He was elected from this constituency in the 2002 election and was the runner-up in 2008. Yet he had no real performance record, was said to have a 'feudal mentality', and was considered an outsider to the district. Opposing him was a local *mekan* politician, Bahadur Mekan, a member of one of the largest local *biradari*s. He ran for the first time in 2008 as an independent candidate unattached to any political party, and despite receiving only 2,800 votes in that election, he built a reputation over the next five years as a 'worker' – he was easily accessible and had used his family's connections within the bureaucracy and local government system to deliver many services. This had swung support

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2   I want to thank Hassan Javid for his continuing interest in this study and for taking time out of his teaching schedule to come along on these trips.

strongly in his favour within the constituency. People believed he was 'one of us'. Encouraged by this, he approached the PML-N for a party ticket for the 2013 election but was refused in favour of the landed relative – despite the fact that Qureshi had contested the previous two elections on a PML-Q ticket.

Mekan decided to contest in any case, as an independent once again. His following grew quickly in strength following this announcement and soon made him a stronger contender for the provincial seat than Qureshi. A few days before our visit, a member of the party's leadership stopped by the constituency for an election rally and was told by the PML-N's district-based youth wing that they were bound to lose this seat. Furthermore, the party's rally was boycotted by the sizeable *mekan biradari*. Worried by this, the PML-N suddenly issued a statement to 'open' the seat. This, as Malika explained to me, meant that the party was no longer backing its own candidate, nor opposing Mekan (who, it was now rumoured, had been invited to join the PML-N in case of a win). The conversations at the *daara*s were infused with excitement. Local will, it seemed, had prevailed over the *jaagirdarana nizam*, or the 'feudal system' of politics.

Far more interesting was what this had done to politics within the village. Most voters in Sahiwal were still aligned with Malika, and were excited about the prospect of an impending PML-N victory and the expectation of high office for Malika in the subsequent government.[3] However, there was little support for Qureshi and Malika was worried that she may now be supporting a losing candidate. 'This whole thing is very upsetting. People in this village no longer want to vote,' she said, referring to rumours that Sahiwal's low turnout rates may be even lower this time. 'We must bring the village together.' This had taken her to Fatah's door – the *mekan* leader of Sahiwal's small second vote bloc made up largely of independent peasant proprietors – with a request to join forces in support of his relative, Bahadur Mekan. But was Fatah ready to abandon the PPP, the party that he had supported for many decades as a form of opposition to the *maalik*s? 'The marginalised of rural Pakistan will always be PPP at heart,' Fatah told me. 'But the party's leadership has squandered this support away. It has taught us to no longer look to parties for support, but rather to people who can help us out and give us what we need.' That for Fatah now meant his kin brother, and to ensure Mekan's victory, he was now happy to align with Malika. In Fatah's own words,

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3   Malika was not running directly for an electoral seat this time but she was at the top of the party list of women to be nominated to reserved seats in parliament after the election. Sixty seats (17 per cent) are reserved for women in parliament and are distributed across parties in proportion to the share of seats that each party wins.

> I'm joining Malika for many reasons. There are no longer any good PPP politicians here. Also, she requested me personally, and she is a better politician than the men of her family. She has managed to unite the village, by bringing us services, in a way that the men never could. And now, of course, it is also a question of *biradari*.

In other words, Fatah's class-based opposition to the *maalik*s was now over.

He went on to explain, 'I started politics as an ideological voter and organiser in the 1970s under the PPP. But when that ended, I moved to the politics of *dharra* (vote blocs) and *biradari*.' I asked if the emergence of a new party, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI), and its leader's decidedly anti-landlord rhetoric might provide Fatah with another opportunity to further his political goals against the *maalik*s, away from the waning PPP. But Fatah explained that politics here was not about ideology. 'The PTI candidate is the nicest man and a very close friend. But I cannot vote for him because for me, this time, it is a *quomi sawaal* (question of *biradari*).' Aligning with Malika meant that rather than his usual 400–500 votes, he could now bring the entire village's vote to support his kinsman's bid for power. Fatah's logic paid off. The *mekan* candidate won the election the following week and joined the PML-N, which swept to power in the province and at the centre. Malika received not just a reserved seat but also a provincial cabinet position, and the PTI and PPP were both relegated to the opposition. Sahiwal's second class-based vote bloc disappeared in the bargain, but Fatah was now an indispensable part of Malika's politics in the village.[4]

Tiwanabad

Changes in Tiwanabad's politics had been equally dramatic over the same period. It seemed that Tiwana's power had unravelled to some extent since we had last been in the village, though it was still intact in many ways. He was still determining much of the village vote on advice from his political mentor, the *pir* of Sial, and much of the village was still waiting for his announcement from Lahore to know who they would be voting for. But this proportion of the village had now shrunk to about 70 per cent (from about 88 per cent earlier).

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4   Details on parties, candidates and votes, and on the changing nature of vote bloc alignments are in Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1 at the end of this section.

And there was now a new vote bloc, called the *derajaat dharra* – the vote bloc of the *dera*s[5] – that controlled the other 30 per cent of the village vote.

This bloc was led by a small independent peasant proprietor, Shah, who had organised the previously unaligned non-member voters of Tiwanabad, and had attracted some new members in the process from Tiwana's vote bloc. Shah and his bloc were aligned with the PPP. This was for three reasons. First, the PPP candidate for this constituency belonged to the Shia sect, like Shah himself. This provided Shah with an obvious basis on which to connect to political candidate, and had possibly contributed to his success in creating a new vote bloc in Tiwanabad during the PPP's tenure at the centre and in this constituency. Second, the PPP candidate, Gondal, had provided electricity to the various *dera*s during his tenure and had become generally popular for being a responsive politician. Shah and his vote bloc thus wanted to reward Gondal for his performance record by supporting him in the upcoming election. The third reason for his support was the fact that Tiwana had never, and could never be expected to, support Bhutto's pro-labour PPP, the party he held responsible for the loss of his absolute power over Tiwanabad. Supporting the PPP thus allowed Shah to stand in direct and open opposition to Tiwana.

It seemed, however, that Shah was in for a surprise. The Qureshi–Mekan political drama had affected configurations in Tiwanabad too.[6] The *pir* of Sial was annoyed with the PML-N for suddenly withdrawing its support from his preferred candidate for the provincial seat, Qureshi. It was now expected that the *pir* would ask his followers to withdraw support from the PML-N across all national and provincial constituencies in retaliation, and to vote instead for the PPP. This would include Tiwana, who our key respondents believed would find it hard to ignore the *pir*'s wishes. Given this unexpected news, Shah was now considering moving his support to the PML-N. Apparently, his opposition to Tiwana trumped his support for the PPP, despite the candidate's impressive performance record. This was not unlike Fatah's motivations against the *maalik*s of Sahiwal before the 2013 election. Shah's vote bloc had provided some of Tiwanabad's voters with the opportunity to oppose Tiwana, and this required that they be supporting different sides. Sultan – who had not had another

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5   *Dera*s are the homesteads of independent landowners who live outside the main village settlement on their own land.

6   Sahiwal and Tiwanabad are part of the same provincial constituency, for which Mekan and Qureshi were contesting the election, but different national constituencies, where Gondal was contesting Pir Hasnat of the PML-N (see Table 7.1).

opportunity to run for election after local governments lapsed during the PPP regime – explained that things were now indeed different. 'Our helplessness has decreased as choice has increased. People are now more willing to oppose Tiwana visibly and openly.'

He went on to explain,

> Ours is an 'agency *nizam* (system)' here. Tiwana, Shah and I are agents of people. People give us votes because they need us to get things done for them. But this is changing and people have different motivations for voting now. They might say yes to me, but that does not mean they will really vote with me. We are not the only ones that matter anymore. Now it matters who the politician is, and politicians know this too. Pir Hasnat [the PML-N candidate] would never step out for a campaign before. Now he wants to ensure that he meets with as many people as possible before an election. They use *daawat*s and food to attract voters. And people want to see and meet them too.

It seemed that not only had Tiwanabad finally managed to get a second vote bloc but also that the oppressive political control of Tiwana was waning in general. At the time of our visit it was still unclear how the village was going to vote. The on-going confusion between Qureshi and Mekan for the provincial seat – reflected in the uncertainly over which vote bloc, Tiwana's or Shah's, was supporting the PML-N – had unsettled Pir Hasnat's vote bank for the national seat too. What was clear though was that politics here was now far more competitive than it had been earlier.

Badhor

The simmering question of whether to support the party favoured to win the election, the PML-N, or to reward PPP's Gondal for his strong performance record between 2008 and 2013, had also led to changes in Badhor's politics. It too now had another vote bloc, which divided the village almost exactly in half. Each *dharra* controlled about 110–130 votes of the total 250 that would be polled.[7] The emergence of a new bloc marked a political schism within the influential *basra biradari* in the village. Mian still led one vote bloc, and he supported the PML-N. A key respondent explained that there was little reason for this other than the fact that the party was expected to win (as it did), and

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7   The village had 450 registered votes but our key respondent explained that only about 250 are ever polled. Part of this was because those in the army never came home to vote.

Mian had a number of cases stuck in court that he hoped could be favourably resolved if he backed the winning horse.

Most of the village was unconvinced by this logic, including many in his own *biradari*. Those who were linked to Mian through ties of employment, or those whom he had helped through his state connections, stayed in his bloc. Others moved to a new bloc created by the *lambardar* of the *basra biradari*, named Dar, and together they were planning to support the PPP candidate. This was unusual, given that the landowners of Badhor, like many of Sargodha's other landowners, have almost always supported the PML-N. Dar explained,

> People here are unhappy because our PML-N candidate has been Shahbaz Sharif's[8] advisor for five years, and yet he never did anything for us. Why would we reward him? He does nothing but still expects people to touch his feet, because he is a *pir*. In this constituency he is the rich man's vote. But the PPP guy is the poor man's vote. He has spent his term delivering electricity and gas connections, and jobs.

When I queried about the PPP's poor prospects in the upcoming election, he responded confidently, 'Gondal has family members running for two MNA seats and four MPA seats from other parties. Some of them are bound to win, and that will mean he can still help us out even if he does not win.' Badhor's voters had strategically expanded their network of connections to include candidates of both the PML-N and the PPP, and were bound to enjoy state access regardless of which candidate won.

Chak 1

Chak 1 had experienced dramatic changes over the last few years. The class consciousness and the 'colony versus *chaudhri*s' politics that had defined this village had now transformed to the extent that Nawab (along with Baba) was now a prominent organiser of the *chaudhri*s' vote bloc. This was entirely unexpected, and we found that it had happened for two reasons. First, the animosity and factionalism between the *chaudhri*s had reduced, so that Jung, 'the traditional enemy' of the *lambardar*'s vote bloc and a great supporter of the colony, was now part of the main landowners' bloc. Second, Nawab claimed

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8   The Chief Minister of Punjab province after both the 2008 and 2013 elections, and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's younger brother.

that the attitude of the *chaudhri*s towards the colony had changed – 'they now speak our language,' he told us.

Both changes seemed to be connected to the involvement of a new member of the *lambardar*'s family in village politics. Wazir had spent much of his life in Lahore, where he worked with civil society organisations, but decided to get involved with village affairs after the recent passing of his father, a paternal uncle of the *lambardar* who had been one of our main key respondents amongst the *chaudhri*s during our earlier visits. Wazir now ran the village's affairs, as well as the vote bloc of the *chaudhri*s, with his paternal aunt, Bibi.[9] And it was immediately obvious that he did indeed speak a different idiom from other *chaudhri*s. While his father had thought of *kammi*s and *muslim sheikh*s largely in functional terms – as agricultural and domestic labourers – and had been displeased with their insubordination, Wazir saw them as allies who could strengthen his vote bloc and the village's political position with their numbers. His strategy had obviously worked. 'Bibi and I now control more than half the village's vote', Wazir claimed, 'and with Jung and Nawab joining us with their colony vote, our bloc now includes about 75 per cent of the village.' He clarified, however, that this applied to the National Assembly seat only. 'For the MPA seat there are too many candidates and too many direct connections between the village and politicians. We have no real control there,' he said.

Nawab and Wazir had different perspectives on what had transformed the traditional fault lines in the village. Nawab put it down to party politics. 'The colony vote was a PPP vote, but after Benazir [Bhutto] died [in Dec 2007], we left the PPP and joined the *chaudhri*s. There is no longer any point in separate politics,' he explained. Wazir, on the other hand, put it down to his own political strategy. 'I ran the *akhat* this time [for the 2013 election] as a consultation rather than an announcement. This had never been done before. I also put an extra effort into pulling Jung in because we really need to unite now.' He is not entirely wrong in his assessment of the situation. Nawab, in a separate interview, explained,

> The invitation to attend the *akhat* and have our say was what finally convinced us to join them. They implored us to stop doing 'colony politics' to help bring everyone together. And they introduced us to the two candidates for the MNA and MPA seats at the *akhat*, and asked us to place our demands before them directly. No one had ever asked us to do this before.

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9   The *lambardar* had become busier with his job and family in Lahore, and now rarely visited the village.

It was obvious that Nawab had not managed such direct contact with these powerful politicians in his many years as a vote bloc leader.

The *chaudhri*s' candidate was still Cheema, and he was still running on a PML-Q ticket. In the new democratic climate, the party that had lent its support to General Musharraf's military regime was not expected to make a mark on election day. This did not seem to deter Wazir and Bibi from supporting Cheema. They explained that their *biradari* links with him dictated that they could not shift the bloc's support away from him to the PML-N, not even based on the fact that he had provided them with little over the last two decades. 'Maybe that was because we were never able to deliver a good number of votes to him because of our divided politics,' Bibi explained. 'We had no control over these people [the lower caste groups in the colony], so he could ignore us because we were not politically important. Now with Jung and Nawab's support, maybe things will be different. Let's see,' she said, hopefully. Perhaps the fact that Cheema was still one of the most powerful men in the district also contributed to this support.

The remaining 25 per cent of voters in the village were still in what remained of the colony bloc, but they were now supporting the PML-N. This was because they were aligned with the candidate, Bhatti, who had just shifted from the PPP to a PML-N party ticket. Bhatti had run against Cheema on a PPP ticket in 2008 but had lost. He now hoped to defeat him on a PML-N ticket, and the colony had decided to follow him to the new party in the hope of backing a winning candidate. The village also had a very small third vote bloc made up of only 10–15 households that were planning to support the PTI. All of these households had sons in the army, and they were organised by one of the landed families whose men were all in the army and intelligence services now. According to our key respondents within the bloc, the army was keen on the PTI winning and had encouraged them to draw out a vote for it.

The PPP was not fielding a candidate for the National Assembly seat in this constituency, but it did have one for the Provincial Assembly seat. The only voters now supporting the party were part of a small vote bloc in the colony that was led by a woman, and counted mostly women as its members along with some of the colony's more diehard male PPP supporters. This was the only vote bloc that we found during the entire study whose members were mainly women. Its leader, Rani, was a lady health worker (LHW)[10] who had

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10   Lady health workers (LHWs) form a network of over 100,000 women trained in providing maternal

been an active organiser of the colony bloc over the years. 'The women of this village are closely connected to the PPP because they see it as a party that has benefitted them,' she explained. Rani's support and campaign for the PPP was possibly connected to her own position as a LHW, a programme initiated by Benazir Bhutto's government in 1994. The last PPP government also initiated the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in 2008, which provided monthly cash transfers to the poorest women across the country. Many women in the colony were recipients of BISP transfers. As one elderly woman explained to me, 'Of course we vote for the PPP. Would they not be upset if they give us all this money and we are not even grateful enough to vote for them?' But the women's support for the PPP preceded BISP. Nawab remarked, 'You can't stop women in the colony from voting for the PPP. Even in 2008 they did not allow us to properly reward our MPA candidate, Ghumman, for the construction of drains in the colony[11] because they insisted on voting instead for the PPP.' Chak 1's politics may have lost its edge with Nawab joining Wazir's bloc, but its confrontational nature over the years seems to have created a political consciousness that has made women here more politically aware and active than in any of our other case villages.

Chak Migrant

Chak Migrant's politics had disaggregated across three different vote blocs – one large one that brought together a majority of the village, and two other small ones. Rana still led the village's main vote bloc, which had now managed to bring together about 85 per cent of the expected 800 votes within its membership. Rana had also abandoned the PPP since our last visit and was now aligned with the PML-N. This was a decision determined largely by *biradari*-ism. Rana's *rajput* kinsman, Ghaus, had marked a meteoric rise in the district's politics. He was the *tehsil* mayor in 2001 and had then decided to contest the Provincial Assembly seat from this constituency in 2008 on a PPP ticket. This had worked out nicely for Rana. Supporting Ghaus meant that he could continue to collect votes for his party while also reinforcing social solidarity with his kinsmen. Ghaus won the seat and helped strengthen Chak Migrant's position in water

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health care at the community level across Pakistan under the National Programme of Family Planning and Primary Health Care.

11 Provided by Ghumman's uncle, the *tehsil* deputy mayor.

disputes with other villages located along the irrigation canal that brought water to its lands – upstream water theft had meant a reduced supply to the village for many years. He was now contesting the MPA seat again.

However, Ghaus had now shifted from the PPP to the PML-N for the 2013 election, and Rana had decided to follow. He explained, 'With Ghaus, it is like we too are MPAs, we feel like we are in power. We will not have that with anyone who is not from our *biradari*.' I queried his ideological support for the PPP, to which he responded, 'We go with the party that opposes Cheema – when he was in the PML-N, we supported PPP, and now that he is with the PML-Q, we are free to support PML-N. Under him we got nothing, but with Ghaus, we will.' He thought for a while and then added,

> We've always been with the PPP, but PPP in opposition does not suit us, and there is a strong wave of anti-PPP sentiment in the country right now. I think this constituency wants to shift to the PML-N right now, and Ghaus is responding to that.

He was right about this. Rana Ghaus won with a comfortable margin a few days later.

The village's remaining 15 per cent of voters were split almost equally across two other vote blocs. One of these blocs was aligned with a religious party, the JUI, led by a particularly religious member of the *rajput biradari*, and the remaining votes, all from the *gujjar biradari* of the village, were expected to go to the PTI's *gujjar* candidate. Rana expected that there would also be some unaligned, independent voters. 'It is a democracy, after all,' he said. 'People can decide on their own too.' He believed that many of the unaligned voters might be from the *kammi biradari*s in the village. He shared further,

> The *kammi* vote used to be with us *zamindar*s always, but now it's all *jamhoori* (democratic). They'll pretend to vote with us on the surface, but we are never sure of how they really vote anymore. I think they'll probably hedge their bets and split across all three vote blocs. They've told me to expect a majority from them, but I can't be sure.

Chak Migrant's horizontal structure and lack of entrenched landed power seems to have led voters to organise almost entirely on the basis of social linkages, such as kinship and religion, and to use these identities to build close linkages with political candidates.

Chak 2

Chak 2 was the only one of the six villages where things had not changed very much. The village was still divided across two vote blocs. Rabba was now very ill and not able to fully participate in local politics. This had not changed anything. His wife explained,

> We have to do politics, whether we want to or not. When someone in this village needs something, they will come to us, and if we haven't built political connections during election time, how will we get their issues resolved over the next five years? We can only request favours if we remain visibly involved in politics and build vote banks for politicians when they need us.

The family had, however, changed parties yet again. PML-Q's Cheema had started to visibly favour the village's *pir*, who headed the rival vote bloc, and this had made things more difficult for Rabba's bloc. So the family had had to cultivate new connections, and were now backing the PML-N for the MNA seat and a close personal friend for the MPA seat – who was running as an independent but was expected to join the PML-N in case of a win. Rabba explained that the tide was now turning against Cheema and that things had worked out well for their vote bloc. He elaborated,

> Cheema got things done, including getting roads built, improving our water supply and promising gas connections, but we all think that his continuing membership of the PML-Q will not let him be useful to us in the future. Most vote blocs in this area are now leaving the PML-Q. It is important to think about what is good for the constituency, and to focus on who can provide it. This is the primary basis upon which political support is decided.

Rabba announced the decision to support the PML-N to the village at a recent *akhat*, and it was welcomed by the village to the extent that Rabba's vote bloc was once again counting about 700 of the total 1,200 votes within its membership. Much of this had to do with strong expectations of the PML-N's win at both the centre and the province. It also helped that in the months leading up to the elections, Bhatti, the PML-N candidate for the National Assembly seat, had visited the village and had held a public meeting. On the other side, in what Rabba's family called 'the great betrayal', the *pir* had abandoned Cheema, possibly based on similar concerns about his waning prospects, and had decided to run for the MPA seat himself on a PTI ticket. A part of his vote bloc, largely voters

from Chak 2's colony, had not followed him and were planning to vote for the PPP, without visible membership in any new vote bloc.[12] The *pir* was aware of this and had asked the PPP for a ticket in order to retain these votes, but had been refused. He then went to the PTI and received a ticket, but lost a good portion of his vote bloc because of a general lack of support for the new party in the district.

It seemed that votes had become more difficult to accumulate across the constituency. Rabba's brother, Azam – who had always been an active part of the vote bloc's politics, including an unsuccessful bid for the union mayor's office in 2005 – explained that door-to-door campaigns were now a necessity, and that he had been going from village to village to get the vote out over the last few weeks for a friend. 'Meetings at *daara*s are not enough anymore. We now need to personally visit people (do *haazri*) at different locations, and this takes a lot of time,' he said. This was new to the district. He suggested that this was the reason that the 'nawabs' of this district – the old traditional landed elites, such as the Tiwanas – would start losing the local vote. 'They don't leave their homes. You simply cannot meet these *nawab*s,' he complained. 'You wait for them outside all day until their "durbar" happens late in the afternoon and then they just meet a few people,' he added further.

In an incredible example of hedging their bets across different parties, it turned out that Azam was not canvassing for the PML-N, but instead for a close friend from the influential Qureshi family of Sargodha who was running on a PPP ticket for a National Assembly seat in the neighbouring constituency. This meant that not only could Rabba's family depend on another candidate in the district for support – just in case things did not work out for their own PML-N candidate against the powerful Cheema – but that they could also draw the colony vote closer to their own side by supporting a common party. Azam explained that Qureshi's past delivery record and his membership of the PPP meant that they could generate support for him across the 'colonies' of the constituency's villages. This did not mean more votes for his own bloc in Chak 2, but it did provide him with more authority within the village vis-à-vis the *pir*. It certainly was a case of killing two birds with one stone. Azam explained why spreading risk in this way had become necessary,

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12 It is possible that this is Chak 2's emerging third bloc, and that later fieldwork will find a clearly identifiable leader from within the colony.

Table 7.1   Candidates and parties in the 2008 and 2013 national and provincial elections

	2008 Government at the centre: PPP Government in Punjab: PML-N						2013 Government at the centre: PML-N Government in Punjab: PML-N					
National Assembly (NA) constituencies	Winner	Party	No. of votes	Runners up	Party	No. of votes	Winner	Party	No. of votes	Runners up	Party	No. of votes
NA 64 (Badhor, Tiwanabad)	Nadeem Afzal Gondal	PPP	65,628	Farooq Shah	PML-N	60,460	Pir Hasnat Shah	PML-N	151,690	Nadeem Afzal Gondal	PPP	67,212
				Haroon E. Piracha	PML-Q	45,390						
NA 67 (Chak 1, Chak 2, Chak Migrant)	Anwar Cheema	PML-Q	83,594	Zulfikar Ali Bhatti	PPP	66,392	Zulfikar Bhatti	PML-N	109,132	Anwar Cheema	PML-Q	97,361
NA 68 (Sahiwal)	Shafqat Hayat Khan	PML-N	88,967	Azhar Qureshi	Indp*	58,579	Nawaz Sharif	PML-N	140,828	Noor Hayat Kalyar	PTI	45,584

Provincial Assembly (PP) constituencies	Winner	Party	No. of votes	Runners up	Party	No. of votes	Winner	Party	No. of votes	Runners up	Party	No. of votes
PP 35 (Chak 2)	Kamil Gujjar	PPP	35,518	Faisal Farooq Cheema	PML-Q	32,753	Faisal Farooq Cheema	Indp*	41,853	Kamil Gujjar	PML-N	31,740
										Mohd. Sher Nangiana	PPP	12,319
										Mehmood Gillani	PTI	8,637
PP 36 (Chak 1, Chak Migrant)	Rana Munawar Ghaus	PPP	33,221	Faisal Javed Ghumman	PML-Q	30,427	Rana Munawar Ghaus	PML-N	37,509	Faisal Ghumman	Indp*	28,398
										Shah Ali Rajput	PPP	2,152
PP 38 (Sahiwal, Badhor, Tiwanabad)	Shahzadi Tiwana	PML-N	57,510	Munir Qureshi	PML-Q	28,268	Bahadur Khan Mekan	Indp*	39,240	Munir Qureshi	PML-N	2,7034

Source: Election Commission of Pakistan.
Notes: *Ran as an independent without a party ticket.

Figure 7.1 Changes in vote bloc organisation between the elections of 2008 and 2013
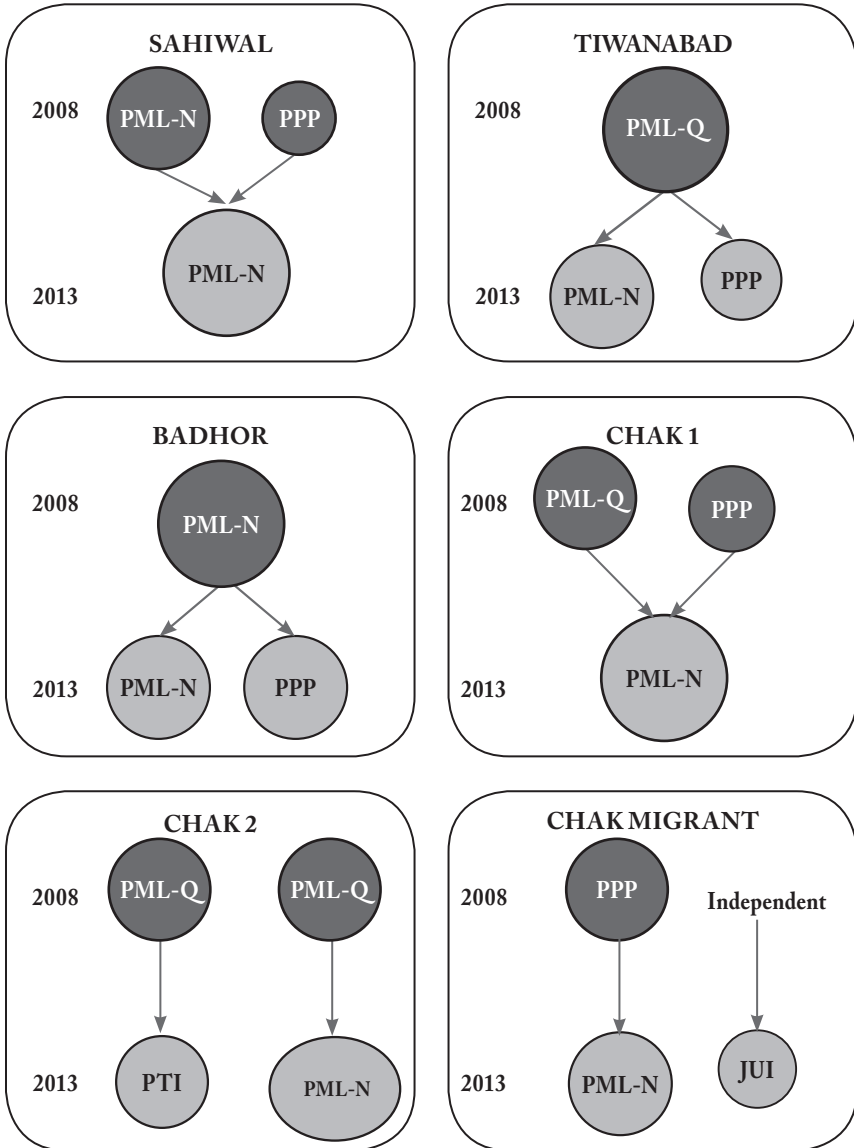
> The elections this time are more confusing than they have ever been before. There are so many candidates for every seat, especially for the MPA seats. This has made the constituency level picture look uncertain. In the past, when there were only 1–2 main parties, things were more clear cut. The result was often known before votes were cast. Now we have no idea what is going to happen.

Ultimately, Rabba's side came out victorious – both the *pir* and Cheema lost their seats, and both the candidates that Rabba was supporting for the National and Provincial Assemblies won.

Shifts in the basis of vote bloc organisation

The index of political engagement (IPE) provides a systematic way to analyse changes in vote bloc organisation over time. Table 7.2 shows how the IPE score for each of the six case villages changed from 2002 to 2013 along the main dimensions of political engagement. On contestation, village scores range from 1 (no contestation) to over three in both elections, and 3 is no specific pattern in terms of the changes that occurred between the two elections – half the villages saw some increase in scores while the other half saw a decrease. On inclusion, villages scored between as low as 1.43 at one end of the spectrum (Tiwanabad) and over 5 at the upper end (Chak Migrant) in 2002, while in 2013 the range had increased significantly at the bottom end to three in Sahiwal and Tiwanabad and only slightly at the upper end to 5.25 in Chak 1. As before, villages appear to have fewer issues around inclusion than around contestation, so that while voters may be gaining greater bargaining power vis-à-vis landed leaders across all types of villages, spaces for genuine and effective contestation remain more limited. Overall, however, IPE scores increased in four out of six villages to indicate more competitive and inclusive politics in 2013 than in 2002.

Tiwanabad had a high level of socio-economic dependence in 2002, which was reflected by a very low IPE score of 2.43. With the rise of Shah's bloc by 2013 and a degree of class-based opposition by independent *zamindar*s to Tiwana's political decisions, the score had increased dramatically to 4.18. This reflected an increase in political competition, more horizontal participation and a greater role in decision making for the middle class of peasant proprietors within the second bloc. In Sahiwal, Fatah's opposition to the *maalik*s had provided the more independent middle-level members of the village with a political

Table 7.2 Dimensions of political engagement in six case villages (2002 and 2013)

	Sahiwal		Tiwanabad		Badhor		Chak 1		Chak 2		Chak Migrant	
	2002	2013	2002	2013	2002	2013	2002	2013	2002	2013	2002	2013
Contestation												
Number of vote blocs in village (NVB)	1.21	1	1	1.18	1	1.90	1.59	1.16	1.74	1.29	1	1.02
Political independence of lowest caste group	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.50	2	1	1	0	2
Total for contestation	1.21	1	1	1.18	1	2.90	4.09	3.16	2.74	2.29	1	3.02
Inclusion												
Basis of member recruitment	1.44	1	1.43	1.50	1.17	1.75	1.53	2.25	1.73	1.75	2.08	2
Participation in decision-making	1.50	2	0	1.50	3	3	1.50	3	2	2	3	3
Total for inclusion	2.94	3	1.43	3	*4.17*	*4.75*	*3.03*	*5.25*	*3.73*	*3.75*	5.08	5
Overall IPE score	4.15	4	2.43	4.18	5.17	7.65	7.12	8.41	6.47	6.04	6.08	8.02

Source: Author.

alternative to Naib and Malika's vote bloc for many years, and gave the village a score of 4.15 in 2002, but the alliance between the two blocs in the days leading up to the 2013 election reduced political competition in the village. However, because the preferences of the two blocs had converged in a sense, and many independent proprietors were still making independent political decisions in which Malika had now joined them, the score is not much lower at 4. Malika was now back in control of the entire village's vote, but this had not led the village back towards socio-economic dependence. Many of Sahiwal's *biradari*s were still organised as small kinship-based factions which supported Malika as a political patron, and a powerful politician in her own right, so that even though the village may have regressed into one vote bloc defined by clientelistic linkages, decision-making within it opened up more to include the preferences of these more horizontally organised groups. Sahiwal's politics in 2013 was a mix of broker clientelism and *biradari*-ism.

Badhor's single vote bloc, which had been organised in 2002 around broker clientelism and *biradari*-based ties under an entrepreneurial leader, had now moved closer to candidate clientelism in 2013. Its dominant *biradari* had split in two to support different candidates, and each bloc was hoping to gain materially from the candidates they were supporting. Mian was hopeful his court cases would be favourably resolved with help from the PML-N candidate if the party came to power, and Dar was hoping that the PPP's Gondal (or any of his relatives) would continue to provide public goods as he had over his 2008–13 term in power. This village had transitioned from broker clientelism, based around the role that Mian played in providing services to the village through his job in the provincial bureaucracy, to candidate clientelism, where the village was now connecting directly to different political candidates in the hope of strategic gain. Its IPE score had increased from 5.17 to 7.65 because of greater political competition and more political space for its lower caste groups (Table 7.2).

In the Crown villages, Chak 1 had been defined by class-based opposition until 2008 because of the existence of 'colony politics', and had a score of 7.12 on the IPE. By 2013, much like in Sahiwal, a deal between Wazir and Nawab had reduced the bite that 'colony politics' had earlier had. However, unlike Sahiwal, Chak 1's score did not fall. In fact, it increased to 8.41. Nawab may have joined forces with Wazir's bloc of *chaudhri*s but other small vote blocs continued to exist in the village and functioned quite freely of the landlords of the village.

Together they provided village residents with access to candidates from the PPP, PML-N and PTI, so that even though the effective level of political competition had decreased a little (NVB went down from 1.59 to 1.16), political space for the village's poorer voters had expanded across all vote blocs. Chak Migrant's score had also increased from 6.08 to 8.02 based on a proliferation of vote blocs organised around social identities that provided bargaining space for its voters and had independent ties with different political parties. Chak 2 saw minimal change in its scores, as the clientelistic ties that connected its voters and leaders continued as before. But the consolidation of more votes within Rabba's vote bloc decreased the NVB score from 1.74 to 1.29, causing a small decrease in the overall IPE score of the village (Table 7.2).

In the context of continuing inequality, what matters is not just that there is more political contestation, but also where the challenge and contest is coming from and what is causing IPE scores to tend upwards. What can the change of scores between 2002 and 2013 tell us about this? Though the association between scores and types of village politics is not perfect, Table 7.3 indicates that there may be some discernible patterns. Ties of socio-economic dependence between leaders and members is associated with a very low IPE score, but is no longer the usual mode of village politics. By 2013, none of the case villages fell within this space on Table 7.3. Scores increase dramatically as the large vote blocs of the landed start facing opposition and competition from the middle class of independent peasant proprietors – as in Tiwanabad in 2013 and Sahiwal for much of the last three decades – and scores are even higher where the opposition comes from the landless classes, such as in Chak 1 in 2002. In these spaces of class-based opposition, increased contestation is manifested as an open challenge to the power of the *maalik*s and *chaudhri*s by different classes – independent peasant proprietors, *kammi*s and *muslim sheikh*s – when the opportunity presents itself, as it did in many villages under the PPP in the 1970s, and as market-based changes and electoral politics have made possible more recently. The value of parties and candidates within this space is simply in terms of the extent to which they can help emerging entrepreneurial leaders consolidate their challenge to landed elites.

Table 7.3 IPE scores and shifts in the basis of vote bloc organisation

Stages	Score	Sahiwal	Tiwanabad / Badhor / Chak 1	Chak Migrant	Chak 2
Socio-economic dependence	-	Sahiwal (1960s)			
	2.43		Tiwanabad (2002)		
Class-based contestation	-	Sahiwal (1970s)			
	7.12		Chak 1 (2002)		
Middle class-based opposition	4.15	Sahiwal (2002)			
	4.18		Tiwanabad (2013)		
Broker clientelism	4	Sahiwal (2013)			
	5.17		Badhor (2002)		
	6.04				Chak 2 (2013)
	6.08			Chak Migrant (2002)	
	6.47				Chak 2 (2002)
Candidate clientelism	7.65		Badhor (2013)		
	8.02			Chak Migrant (2013)	
	8.41		Chak 1 (2013)		

Source: Author.

Except for Chak 1 in 2002, other high-scoring villages had little class-based opposition in general. Voters here are far more concerned about the ability of brokers to help them connect to state offices and to access under-provided public services. Both dependence and confrontation were not an important part of the political stories of the villages that lie within the space of broker clientelism, where leaders consolidate their position through strategic electoral linkages with

powerful candidates, and voters bargain with vote bloc leaders by assessing one vis-à-vis others. The villages that scored the highest in 2013 – Chak 1, Chak Migrant and Badhor – were all those where politics had started to shift away from the village leader-brokers, and were now focused on how much they could gain from particular electoral candidates directly. Voters here had gone from assessing one landed village-based broker vis-à-vis another, to assessing one candidate vis-à-vis another. Leaders of the second or third vote bloc in these villages were less concerned about opposing the *maalik* or *chaudhri*, and far more focused on securing solid strategic connections with external political actors. Parties still meant little here (unless it was the one expected to win) since voters were equally happy to support independent candidates who were accessible and responsive, most often because of their connections with bureaucratic offices.

Where is *biradari*-ism?

None of our six villages are split along *biradari* lines, of which there are many in each village, and each vote bloc brings together multiple kinship groups within its membership. *Biradari*-based political organisation is not immediately obvious as a form of politics in itself. And yet our key respondents made constant references to *biradari*-based voting in most of our villages. In Sahiwal, for example, despite the fact that village residents were voting in unison under Malika in 2013, Fatah insisted that the main logic of voting in the village was that of *biradari*. He counted at least four major *biradari* factions in the village – the goldsmith and potter *biradari*s of the village had about 300 votes each, the *zamindar mattan biradari* had another 150 and the *syed*s had about 100 votes. He had to convince each of these *biradari* factions separately to ensure that they would align with Malika in the election, despite the fact that he suspected they were all going to do so in any case. None of them, he explained, were going to give up an opportunity to be properly courted, so that they could put forth their collective demands. Even in a village as vertical as Tiwanabad, Sultan insisted that '*dharra*s in this village are based on *biradari*s. And these are not organised just for elections. They exist all the time to provide people with strength and support'. In fact, he added, 'The more *azaad* (free) your vote, the more you participate in *biradari*-based factionalism.'

What role exactly does *biradari*-ism play in, or alongside, the other types of village politics listed in Table 7.3? The answer to this lies in Fatah and Sultan's explanations. Kinship-based voting works closely with and through

clientelism, as a form of collective action. Here is how this works. Between one and four vote bloc leaders cater to the demands and needs of an entire village of between 100–600 households. Village residents must strategise to increase their own bargaining power vis-à-vis vote bloc leaders to ensure that their voice is heard when limited resources are being distributed within the village. People strengthen their individual voice by collectivising on the basis of *biradari*s, and group strength is assessed in terms of votes. The head of a kin group organises the various members of the clan as a united faction and may then forge alliances with other similar kinship-based factions to further increase their numbers and their strength. A few *biradari*s may come together – most often within the larger caste (*quom*) categories of *kammi*s, *zamindar*s or *muslim sheikh*s – and the faction leader will then use the fact of being able to control and direct these collective votes to negotiate with the village's vote bloc leaders. This works better in a village where socio-economic dependence is low and vote bloc leaders are competing with one another for members. Therefore, as Sultan explained, the freer your vote, the more it makes strategic sense to be part of a cohesive *biradari*-based faction.

This is also why Sahiwal's faction heads ensured that Fatah negotiated with them before assuring him of their support. With the rising political prospects of Fatah's kinsman, Bahadur Mekan, in the constituency, it made sense to use their numbers to negotiate with him early. It is not just the higher ranked *zamindar biradari*s who play this game. Voters from *kammi biradari*s appear to be the cause of much uncertainty before each election. The fact that they are rarely connected to vote bloc leaders through social ties, and that they were among the first groups to break their economic dependence on the *maalik*s and *chaudhri*s by taking their artisanal skills into the market economy, has given them a fair amount of independence and political space within which competing leaders need to work for their votes. Kinship-based collective action, therefore, has come to define the political power of a rural citizen against landed political elites, and as the main channel through which to strategise access to a distant and largely unresponsive state. This is possibly why Rana in Chak Migrant explained to us, '*Biradari* is the most important thing to everyone here.'

Biradari-ism works most comfortably with clientelism – both its broker- and candidate-based varieties – as compared to the other relational bases of participation. Socio-economic dependence places constraints on the possibility of horizontal kinship-based collective action, while class-based opposition brings

the village's producers and workers together under a very different horizontal grouping that overrides kinship-based segregation. But the logic of clientelism sits quite comfortably with *biradari*-ism. Clientelism is defined by dyadic ties and negotiations, a give and take between two actors. In our villages this happens between the vote bloc leader or an electoral candidate at one end and the head of a *biradari* at the other, representing the collective will and requirements of the whole kin group. The benefits of the arrangement flow in both directions. The leader/candidate receives bulk votes by negotiating with just one person per group, thereby significantly reducing transaction costs, while the *biradari* head gains some benefits for his/her kinsfolk – perhaps a promise of some jobs, or help with some college entries, or a favourable word with the local police.

Biradari-ism is, therefore, a tricky political concept, even though it has been presented in fairly simple terms in the literature on voting in Pakistan. It does not show up as a form of village politics when looked at from above because leaders do not organise vote blocs on the basis of kinship, which they rarely share with more than a few village residents. Vote blocs are more often organised on the basis of clientelism and vote bloc leaders will then use whichever links are available to them to establish connections with electoral candidates, including kinship where this is an option. But *biradari*-ism shows up constantly when looked at from below because it is how village residents self-organise for collective action. This is the first step, and then the second step involves strategic decisions and vigorous negotiations. If they strike a deal with a vote bloc leader, this is broker clientelism. If they strike one directly with an electoral candidate, it is candidate clientelism. By 2013, this seemed to be happening more and more across many of our case villages where smaller factions under newer leaders were striking out on their own to connect directly with different electoral candidates.

Towards a theory of shifts in political engagement

The change in IPE scores in every one of our case villages between 2002 and 2013 shows that village politics are clearly dynamic and that shifts are commonplace. Table 7.3 suggests that there may also be a discernible pattern to these shifts. I use this here to provide the initial threads of a theory of how and why shifts in local political engagement occur. I suggest that vote bloc organisation can move through four stages, but that this is not a linear process – neither do scores increase steadily nor will each village move through the same

stages of political organisation. Instead, scores can both increase and decrease as the logic of local political engagement shifts across these four stages, and villages can move along very different paths from one election to the next. Figure 7.2 illustrates this by depicting the paths along which vote bloc organisation in our case villages shifted between 2002 and 2013.[13] While there is no definite linear path, there does seem to be a movement along broad categories, from socio-economic dependence towards clientelism through class-based organisation.

Figure 7.2 Stages of vote bloc organisation
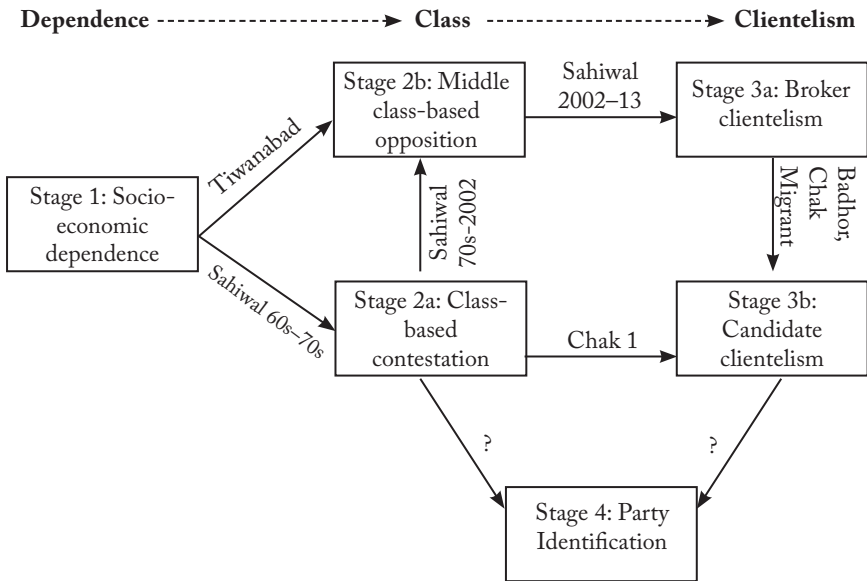
Source: Author.

Stage 1 is characterised by the socio-economic dependence of village residents on local landed elites, who use their economic control of local resources to recruit voters into vote blocs. At this stage there is only one village vote bloc – or two, only if the landed elite are split across two factions – and both political competition and bargaining power are limited. This stage can exist under both authoritarian and democratic regimes, though it works particularly well with the former, under which the landed elite will bring out the vote to provide legitimacy to military regimes when required.[14] As the countryside

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13 Chak 2 is not represented along these paths because politics here saw no real shifts during this period.

14 This has been studied in detail in Pakistan by Javid (2012) and it also has parallels in other systems

goes through agrarian modernisation, tenants and labourers will find gaps in the landlords' changing fortunes to organise horizontally and start pushing back against their situation of extreme dependence.

This allows Stage 2, characterised by class-based political organisation, to start setting in, and the change will be especially rapid and dramatic if there are political parties present that can provide external support and an alternative basis for political organisation to the rural landless who are actively seeking greater political space. Democracy can help Stage 2 set in faster and last longer. Where such external support does not exist, change is less dramatic and usually led by a middle class of peasant proprietors who are more independent of the economic power of the landed elite (Stage 2b in Figure 7.2). This stage is based on opposition to the landlord's vote bloc by other village classes. The village now has an additional vote bloc of small peasant proprietors, landless tenants and those labourers who have managed to break their dependence on the landlord, largely through access to non-farm jobs, and this bloc will usually connect with an electoral candidate or political party that is sympathetic to their class needs. Stage 2 is characterised by high levels of political contestation. Bargaining power is high for those voters who join the new bloc, but it may shrink for poorer voters who remain in the landlord's bloc, since elites may now resort to greater repression in order to maintain membership numbers.

Not all villages will experience Stage 2; some may move directly to Stage 3, especially if initial land inequality and repression were low enough to not warrant outright confrontation between the different classes. Stage 3 sets in when landed wealth is no longer enough to sustain the power and authority of the landed elite. This compels members of this class to invest in building better connections with state officials and politicians, and in the process, they become the village residents' main conduit to the state. Leaders whose families have cultivated such connections over generations – members of the VPB – are able to offer more to voters and, therefore, will usually have larger vote blocs than newer, emerging leaders. Landless workers engaged in confrontation with the landed elite may realise that they have better chances of accessing scarce resources from a generally unresponsive state through these patrons, rather than through the politicians they have been working with. At this stage much of the village might come together, once again, within one or two vote blocs organised by well-connected landlords.

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such as in Brazil (Hagopian 1986).

This happens because of pressures on both sides. The landlord seeks reconciliation because of the damage caused by the diminished numbers of his/her vote bloc. The workers agree to reconcile because their attempts to connect on their own to an unresponsive state that delivers according to a clientelistic logic – built around networks of the rural, urban and state elites – has not worked out quite as well as they had hoped. The reconciliation reduces the number of vote blocs and political contestation, and puts the landlord firmly in the lead again. But the relationship between leaders and members is now defined by mutual benefit and negotiation that leads to greater inclusion. Landless voters have bargaining power at this stage vis-à-vis their leader-patrons, who must now cater to some of their demands to retain their membership. If there are two competing landlord-led vote blocs in the village, working class voters may be able to negotiate greater strategic gain now than in any of the other stages.

It is at this stage that political action of a different and more muted manner emerges – kinship-based collective action. Under a system of broker clientelism, characterised by Stage 3, horizontal organisation transforms from being based on class-based confrontation to a more conciliatory form based on primordial identities, such as ethnicity, religion, caste or kinship. For those that have transitioned from the class-based political action of Stage 2, this may be a response by the working class to hold on to some of their previous political power. For others, it is a way to further strengthen their bargaining position vis-à-vis the landed leader-patrons. When resources do come into the village – possibly at a higher rate now on account of the larger vote bank that the leader is able to demonstrate to political candidates – those will need to be distributed across the village. At this point, which streets will be paved first and which neighbourhoods will have their sanitation systems repaired will depend on which groups have greater negotiating power within the bloc, based on their collective voice and numbers.

As the process of negotiating and bargaining over public goods and services with brokers, and through them with electoral candidates, matures and becomes regularised various groups may strike out once again on their own to connect directly with candidates and political parties. This creates a variant of Stage 3, called candidate clientelism (Stage 3b in Figure 7.2). Kinship groups may split across political factions, as politically entrepreneurial members of the clan attempt to create political fortunes, and even possible careers, especially in local government elections. These emerging entrepreneurs may appeal to other village residents

on various grounds to enlarge their own vote blocs over time, and both political competition and the bargaining power of voters may be quite high at this time. The larger political parties, and even some influential independent candidates, will find that they have a small vote bank within each village. Such vote blocs can be fairly fluid and unstable internally, as the power of the vote bloc leader gives way to the logic of dynamic electoral politics. Vote blocs may form, reconfigure and disband with greater frequency, depending on the prospects of various candidates and the extent to which they are able to strike deals with them.

The shift from Stage 3a to 3b requires that political parties be present and be looking for more independent vote bases, away from the traditional landed elite. In other words, Stage 3b requires a democracy, and it is possible that at this point the relationship between newer political entrepreneurs and evolving political parties becomes mutually reinforcing enough to push the emerging democracy decidedly towards consolidation. If no such parties are present, villages may continue under the broker-leaders of Stage 3a for a long time. As one of our respondents put it, 'In a democracy, all is fair, anything can happen, and most agreements [with leaders and politicians] will end up giving you something. Under a dictatorship you need to be aligned with the right people to get anything.' In other words, under a democracy, both leaders and voters are willing to take greater risks by aligning with a variety of external political actors, while under authoritarian rule the tendency is to reduce risk by converging around those already in power, both within the village and outside it.

After Stage 3b, any further shifts will possibly be a move away from vote bloc-based political organisation altogether, towards building more sustained linkages and identification with particular political parties, based either on their programmatic policy packages or on stronger, more extensive party machines that organise more stable networks of party brokers. This is Stage 4 in Figure 7.2. At this point vote blocs should start to disappear as their political logic and role diminish. This stage requires that parties build their organisational capacity enough to become the dominant actors within rural politics, even if they do so through party machines that continue to be organised around local political brokers. This is already the story of urban politics in Pakistan but not that of rural politics. Stokes et al. (2013) tell us that eventually, given a set of accompanying economic changes, the mutual distrust and tension that define the relationship between local brokers and political parties will lead to the party cutting out the broker altogether, as soon as it is able to do so. At this

point, parties will organise larger, more stable constituencies of voters across the country based on shared ideas about policy programmes.

This theory of when and how the nature of political engagement within vote blocs changes suggests that two concurrent processes underlie the shift from dependence to candidate clientelism – (*a*) market-based economic changes and (*b*) the development of political parties. For a voter to actually be able to transition from one level of bargaining power to another, she/he has to have freed herself from economic dependence on the landlord, and have access to other sources of employment and political organisation. Therefore, whether political engagement in a village will shift from one stage to another depends on the type of political regime, the nature of political parties and the extent of agrarian transformation. While Stages 1 and 3a – socio-economic dependence and broker clientelism – can function comfortably under authoritarian regimes, the stages of class-based organisation and candidate clientelism require political parties as external forms of political support against the local elite. Therefore, the length of each stage is determined by the state (or lack) of democracy.

However, the political history of some countries – including of entrenched democracies like India and Italy – shows that it is possible for candidate- or party machine-based clientelism to become entrenched, and for this to be mixed liberally with horizontal collectivities based on ethnicity, religion, caste and kinship, rather than on class.[15] Clientelism and kinship-based collective action are natural bedfellows that deliver to under-provided citizens, and they can work together to ensure that political systems do not transition to developing programmatic or ideological linkages between voters and parties. The literature on India is particularly instructive in showing that caste-based horizontal political action can mix with machine clientelism to provide greater political space to marginalised voters, but that this may also ensure that class-based political action and programmatic linkages between parties and their voters do not develop.

Conclusion

The nature of political engagement across Sargodha's villages is not static across time, but its close relationship with structural inequality means that the

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15   The literature on caste-based organisation in India is extensive. See Colclough (2000) for a discussion of how kinship politics works in northern Italy.

changes that occur are not transformative. The shifts we observed over the
decade between the 2002 and 2013 elections have worked within the confines
of a political system that is defined by unequal social, economic and political
relationships. As democracy emerged at the national level, and with few other
accompanying changes in the distribution of both private and state resources,
vote bloc leaders and voters alike re-strategised to maximise the political space
available to them. And in this both were successful to some extent, with emerging
political entrepreneurs like Fatah and Nawab becoming pivotal players within
the vote blocs of their *maalik*s and *chaudhri*s and expanding deliberative spaces
within their villages. But this is not the type of influence they were looking for.
Nawab and Fatah had both struck out on their own earlier, looking to establish
themselves as vote bloc leaders in their own right. The waning wealth and
power of the landed elite in their village allowed them the space to do so, but
once they crossed the village boundary, they found no political party or other
collective political space to connect with. They would have both been fairly
willing local brokers to a political party machine, but no such offer seemed to
be on the table for them. Eventually, they came back to rely on the links that
Sargodha's landed elite have cultivated over generations with state agencies
and officials, and which they make accessible to other village residents only
through their participation in vote blocs. Voters have been gaining in this process
through increased bargaining power vis-à-vis these local broker-patrons, but
while they may no longer be socio-economically dependent, they know that
their best option for access to public provision is to hedge their bets with the
most connected political actor in the village. And so, despite the shifts and
changes, the landed elite continue to organise village politics, not because of
their ownership of the means of production but because they are the channel
through which the state delivers to its rural citizens. To produce transformative
change, this channel will need to be disrupted and made redundant.

Conclusion

The Future of Pakistan's Democracy

Structural inequality and political engagement in rural Punjab: A summary

This book has been concerned with how and why differently placed rural citizens vote under conditions of extreme socio-economic inequality in an emerging democracy. It was organised around three questions: what happens to the political power of the traditional landed elite in a context where competitive politics co-exists with unequal social and economic structures; how is the political engagement of voters and leaders with one another at the village level affected; and what explains the variations we are able to observe in this engagement across different villages? The conceptual, empirical and comparative analysis of rural politics in a group of villages presented here provides us with a few answers.

We know now that vote bloc leaders are almost all landed, are from upper-caste groups, and almost always belong to village proprietary *biradari*s. All this seems to support what people generally believe about rural voters in Punjab – that their electoral decisions are controlled by the landed elite, so that they vote as they are told rather than as they would like. Indeed, if I had simply interviewed vote bloc leaders this is the impression that we would be left with, for amidst their complaints about not having as much control over village votes as they would like are numerous other stories that the landed elite tell of the extent to which they determine the general fate of their village. And on first glance, the outward deference shown to them by village residents may well convince the visitor that these stories are accurate. But I did not just speak to the village elite. I flipped the question about how complete the power of the landed elite is in rural Punjab and focused instead on how and where it is incomplete, looking beyond just the emergence of new leaders to the internal dynamic of vote blocs and the relationship between leaders and members within these in different types of villages.

We asked voters in village after village about why they join vote blocs. And these stories are different. They show important gaps in what may look at first

glance like the pervasive authority of Punjab's rural landed elite. These stories reveal different types of linkages between voters and leaders – some more equal, others more unequal – and varying levels of autonomy that voters have in making political decisions. We found that hierarchical social structures have a more pervasive effect on political outcomes than land inequality does. As we move up the social ladder from the *muslim sheikh* caste group to the *kammi*s, and from them to the *zamindar* caste group, the relational basis of people's participation in vote blocs becomes progressively more horizontal and they have greater bargaining power. The effect of differences in landownership on political relationships is weaker. Similarly, the VPB status of a vote bloc leader matters more in determining influence than the extent of his landholdings. These findings reveal that the landed power of leaders may be a necessary condition for leadership, but it is not sufficient. Instead, it is their historical, social power that explains why they remain central to village politics.

Another novel finding of this study is that there is real variation in political engagement even across villages that lie close to one another within the same district and the same political constituency. And that this variation is explained by the persisting influence of land and social structural inequality created by colonial processes of revenue generation and collection, and by structures put in place to maintain control of the Punjabi countryside and its population at the end of the nineteenth century. The impact of these institutional structures, unchallenged by the post-colonial politics of Pakistan, has meant that villages that were settled with more hierarchical social structures as Proprietary estates under colonial rule have less competitive village politics and provide less political space to rural citizens even today. Politics here is vertically organised around the continuing political power of landed patrons to whom most voters connect through ties of clientelism, within which they have more limited bargaining power. On the other hand, villages in which social structures were more egalitarian and the social authority of the landed elite was less pervasive under colonial rule have a more competitive and inclusive form of politics today. Different groups of village residents here, including the most marginalised, have greater political space to organise horizontal collective action, within which they have greater bargaining power.

Furthermore, we found that the existence of social structural inequality places greater constraints in particular on local political contestation than on the inclusion of different village residents in vote bloc politics. Even in the most

unequal Proprietary villages political and economic pressures have led vote bloc leaders to become more inclusive – they may listen to the needs of more village residents, and engage more with marginalised voters – but spaces for genuinely contesting village politics are more limited here than in Crown villages, and voters must exercise their expanded bargaining power within contests organised and controlled by the old VPB leaders of these Proprietary villages. In Crown villages, landless groups have a greater ability to express their preferences to vote bloc leaders and to also contest village politics. In other words, democracy works better where land and social structural inequality is lower.

What we have here then is a story of the contemporary political struggles of the rural poor against structures created over a century ago under colonial rule. The story starts with the annexation of Punjab by the British colonial state, and the particular way in which it hierarchically classified households by caste soon after and differentially settled both economic and political authority on elite groups across the province. The settlement of villages during this period provides the most effective measures of variation in socio-economic inequality across villages and households – across different types of Proprietary and Crown villages; across more equal and unequal villages; and across social groups. This is not least because the inequalities created at this time have gone largely unchallenged and unaddressed by the post-colonial Pakistani state.

Here is how the story goes. The British colonial state created and then protected a class of landed elites in rural Punjab. In the post-colonial political environment of Pakistan – by turns unstable and authoritarian – rural landed elites were able to transform their economic and social power into political influence and become central figures within national politics. Bhutto challenged and circumscribed this power of the landed in the 1970s by appealing to rural discontent, and created an electorate that had never before, and has not since, voted overwhelmingly along class lines against the landed elite. The 1970s were also a historical watershed in the study of Pakistan's politics because they marked the transition to a political system in which elections became common fare, even though alternating rounds of unstable civil governments and military regimes continued. In a system with electoral politics but weak political parties, the organisation of the rural electorate was taken up by the traditional landed elite, who bounced back with aplomb. However, the reduction of their landholdings over time had reduced large and ready banks of dependent voters. To deal with this loss of control, the landed elite invested more heavily in village politics and

organised village citizens within vote blocs. These local political institutions became a central facet of how they held on to their political influence in the era of 'mass politics'. Voters in different types of villages – equal and unequal, hierarchical and egalitarian, remote and more urban – connect to national and provincial political actors and state offices through vote blocs, and elites can exert great influence on their political behaviour by controlling these local institutions.

They have, however, had to modify the bases of their authority to remain relevant to rural voters. Landed elites who used to control their villages through a combination of economic and social power now must organise and lead political vote blocs, drop in on the local police officer to pay their respects, and send their managers door to door to gather citizen demands. As village residents lost their ties of socio-economic dependence on village landlords, and started to organise instead around horizontal kinship-based alignments, these elites responded by intensifying their involvement in regulating village affairs, such as the resolution of disputes between different *biradari* groups, and contesting local government elections. These are roles and activities that their grandfathers would, arguably, not have recognised but they reconnected *maalik*s and residents through vertical linkages of political clientelism, allowing landlords to remain central and relevant to village politics.

A landed oligarch's craft now includes competing vigorously for vote bloc members. Electoral politics has created space for new political entrepreneurs to make their mark by creating competing channels of intermediation with political parties, electoral candidates and state offices. Much of the competition is manifested in efforts to forge strategic election-specific alliances with politicians in order to ensure access to public services to the members of their blocs. Members of their class within the village create different vote blocs to connect to as many of the main political parties as possible, so as to reduce the risk of backing a losing candidate and ensure maximum service delivery. Politicians, no longer assured ready vote banks in an increasingly competitive environment, are conducting more face-to-face campaigns with rural voters, who now expect to be able to place their demands directly before politicians, rather than with just their own vote bloc leaders. Everyone, it seems, is bargaining with everyone else in rural Punjabi politics. This was evident everywhere in our case study villages ahead of the 2013 election. Sultan told us that in Tiwanabad leaders were now simply agents of people. In Chak 1, a prominent politician like Cheema had to personally visit Wazir's *akhat* because a simple announcement of the *chaudhri*s' decision would no longer suffice to bring in the votes.

Voters are now more vocal in their demands, and their bargaining power appears to be emerging from the constrictions placed on it by static historical and social categories. They use electoral competition, where and when it exists, to bargain and negotiate their membership with competing leaders – using kinship to strengthen their collective bargaining positions, and clientelistic linkages to negotiate access to under-provided public goods and services. Both kinship and clientelism are, therefore, significant explanations of voting behaviour, not in themselves, but because they both enter powerfully into accounting for why so many people – about 80 per cent of them in all – are participating in vote blocs. Voters use vote blocs to advance their political interests strategically vis-à-vis the landed elite. People participate in vote blocs regardless of their social status or the type of village they live in. But how they engage politically within these is conditioned by both these factors – their *quom* and the manner in which their village was settled a century ago.

These are important findings. They counter the popular notions that rural Punjabi voters are dependent and coerced by their landlords into making electoral decisions, and that national elections can be won on the basis of this dependence or through networks of kinship that extend across the countryside. Most importantly, the finding that structural inequality is an explanation of variations in political engagement underscores the fact that for the rural poor to now gain real political agency and to become a collective force within national politics, socio-economic inequality and its political impact must be mitigated. Despite the gains that poorer voters have made, it is still hard to imagine, for example, that the interests of the *muslim sheikh* caste will come to be represented consistently across different villages by political leaders from within this group any time soon. And this essentially defines the impact of a severely unequal context on democratisation. The imperatives of intense electoral competition at the national and provincial levels compels local leaders to include more village residents in their vote blocs, especially the numerically dominant landless voters. But structural inequality means that there will not be a more diverse group of leaders that are more representative of the interests of different village residents, and that connect these interests up to national politics. Democracy can empower marginalised voters in highly unequal places, but there are limits on how much it can achieve in such contexts.

Oligarchies and the problem of collective action

One part of the larger puzzle about why voters vote as they do under inequality still remains unanswered. This has to do with why we do not see more political collective action within marginalised groups that are numerically dominant, given how electoral politics functions. Essentially, if rural voters are no longer socio-economically dependent on their landlords, and they have enough bargaining power to strategise ties of kinship and clientelism, we should be able to observe more instances of landless voters using their sheer numbers to organise politically within vote blocs of their own. But while 70 per cent of the population in our sample villages is landless, only 2.63 per cent of our vote bloc leaders fall within this group. Why is it that the story of class-based organisation in Chak 1 is not also the story of the rest of the district, and why have the residents of Chak 1 not been able to participate in collective action beyond the boundaries of their village, connecting with other similarly placed citizens to create supra-village collectivities? The various chapters of this book have provided different parts of the answers to these questions. I bring these together here to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the ways in which structural inequality works to prevent more diverse and representative political leadership.

Oligarchies of the landed

The first part of the answer has to do with the fact that the elite of rural Punjab have demonstrated a remarkable ability to constantly adapt to changing circumstances and to reinvent themselves so as to remain central and relevant to the lives of the rural population. Chapter 3 provided the details of such a transformation by the *maalik*s of Sahiwal. When their power was first challenged in the 1970s the two *maalik* families reacted to their loosening control over the village by putting aside their antagonism and coming together in one political faction to counter the mounting opposition of the sharecroppers and labourers. When this proved to not be enough, one of them joined the PPP and came on to the side of the landless classes. When Zia banned the party, the *maalik*s shifted their allegiance to the party supported by the new regime and so avoided being marginalised from access to state power. When their economic power was reduced by market forces, the *maalik*s took a two-pronged approach – they became more involved in activities that allowed them to continue to govern

the village, such as contesting local government elections and resolving village disputes, and they intensified their own investment in the state in order to become the main channel through which the village could access state officials and services. Elite vote bloc leaders have, therefore, managed to ensure their continuing relevance in a context defined by change.

But these strategies have worked largely because this change has not included institutional reforms that could alter the structural basis of inequality, such as effective land reforms; access to land markets that could transform the initial distribution of land; access to sufficient levels of public goods, like education and health, by village citizens to enable economic and social mobility; and supra-local channels for political organisation. Instead, rural change has largely consisted of land fragmentation, a reduction in tenancy, the growth of urban centres in rural districts and the coming of electoral competition. The political power of the landed may no longer be underwritten by economic power derived from the ownership of the means of production, but it is now underwritten by the nature of the state and its inability to institute more transformative change.

This is only the intra-village story. The rural elite have also ensured that while their individual landed power may have reduced, their power as a group – as an oligarchy of the rural landed – has been maintained through alliances outside the village. Alavi (2001) explained that the *biradari*s of VPB *zamindar*s use their resources and power to extend their ties of kinship beyond the village to form alliances and coalitions with large landowners in other villages. These alliances are formed through old school networks, through marriages between the big landed families of not just the district but also the province, and by being part of the same extended social circles. The pursuit of such alliances can result in formidable class-based political blocs of landed vote bloc leaders who can strengthen their position vis-à-vis electoral candidates and political parties, as well as against other non-elite contenders (covered in some detail for rural Punjab by Javid [2012]). While such leaders may compete against one another to expand their own vote blocs, they also reinforce each other's political dominance in ways that maintain the power of the entire group. This was evident in the discussions and re-strategisation that happened within the landed elite of Sargodha district when the PML-N withdrew support from a landed candidate, Qureshi, just before the 2013 election. Even landlords in villages who were not part of the same constituency and who had always voted for the PML-N were now weighing their support to the party against the need to come out in support of Qureshi. They were contemplating punishing

the PML-N for turning against one of their own by taking their vote banks to other political parties. This supports older narratives about members of the landed class acting as a 'class-for-itself' in Pakistan, though more recent work insists that the pursuit of political power by landed groups is more fragmented and individualised (Akhtar 2018).

Another way in which the district elite is able to hold on to political power is through their involvement in the process of party ticket allocation by political parties at election time (Cheema, Javid and Naseer 2013). This actively restricts access to political power by more marginalised groups. Emerging leaders are, therefore, not just pitted against their own landlord but against the larger landed class within the constituency and beyond. However, many new entrants are able to contest elections as independent candidates. We found that a number of local government politicians who came to prominence as district or *tehsil nazim*s, most with no previous political experience or support, ran for elected office in 2013 as independent candidates without party tickets, which in many cases were awarded to more experienced, supposedly safer, and often more landed candidates. Many of these independent candidates won and then joined the PML-N. Independent candidacy is particularly visible for provincial seats – a level that is now more important after the devolution of many service ministries from the centre to the provincial level in 2010. While this has opened up some space for non-VPB candidates, the expense of running as an independent means that it is not an option for most poorer rural aspirants.

The salience of caste and kinship

The second part of the answer is provided by the fact that the non-agricultural *quom*s are not as cohesive as agricultural *quom*s. Punjabi villages are highly fragmented, organised as they are in kinship-based networks that divide the village into many small, disunited groups. While *biradari*-ism manifests itself as collective action at the village level, and while *biradari* and class may often overlap, mobilisation on this basis (as on religion or ethnicity) works against class-based organisation by fragmenting tenants and labourers across different lineage groups. This disaggregates resistance and action across small groups, and creates a fractionalised political system. Arguably for this reason, the political narratives of vote bloc leaders constantly reproduce the salience of caste and *biradari* as a traditional basis of organisation. '*Quom* is in the Quran, we haven't made this up,' one vote bloc leader told me while explaining how political organisation works.

Even when certain upwardly mobile groups build alliances beyond the village, they do so with members of their own *biradari*s in other villages and towns, so that the alliances do not amount to the building of 'supra-local solidarities among the deprived and the dispossessed' (Jalal 1989, 11). Emerging leaders may build electoral alliances on the basis of *biradari* to strengthen their position against the landed elite, such as in the case of Fatah aligning with Mekan in Sahiwal and Rana's electoral alliance with Ghaus in Chak Migrant. These alliances remain, however, between village-level leaders and politicians, and do not represent direct linkages between the villages' producing classes and electoral candidates or parties. The nature of social and political organisation in Punjabi villages helps prevent ideological, class- or party-based opposition to the power of landed oligarchs and so it helps maintain them in their positions of leadership. Poorer voters have created greater political space for themselves within village vote blocs, but for these changes to pay greater dividends in the form of more political power and better public provision, they will need to expand their fragmented, kinship-based collective action to a broader type of political action that can connect them to similarly placed voters across the district and the country.

The logic of clientelism and targeted service delivery

The third part of the answer lies in the way essential services are delivered to the rural population. The Pakistani state rarely delivers non-discretionary, rule-based services to villages. The rules provide for a primary school in each village, a health centre in each union and, more recently, a cash transfer to women whose household income falls below a specified threshold. The delivery of most other services provides room for higher tier politicians and bureaucratic staff to exercise discretion in making expenditure decisions, and so delivery can be diverted to target specific areas or groups. This has distortionary effects since the targeting is done not on the basis of greater need but to support political imperatives and interests. Such delivery processes provide the ideal space within which local landlords can build connections with politicians and the bureaucracy to build local reputations as 'workers' and 'deliverers' of essential public services. They deliver services, and people deliver votes within blocs. Broker clientelism thrives on this targeted pattern of public service delivery, which keeps leaders relevant as brokers of public services. Programmatic, non-discretionary service delivery would shift most of the credit to political parties, and so reforms to this effect are resisted by the oligarchies of the landed.

At the same time, clientelism and kinship-based vote bloc politics reproduces incentives for such distortionary, targeted delivery by state departments. Let us look at the reinforcing incentives of each actor in turn within this system. My findings show that a significant proportion of respondents participate in vote blocs to gain access to public services. If voters are certain that services will come to the village only through the politics of these vote blocs, it makes little sense to remain outside the bloc of the strongest leader with the most state-based connections. It also makes little sense to support a vote bloc for ideological or party-based reasons since these would gain the voter little by way of material benefits. From the point of view of the voter, ideological, class- or party-based identification is trumped by the short-term need to access essential goods and services that are under-provided and not universally delivered. And it makes sense for voters to support leaders with the most effective links to line departments, law enforcement agencies and politicians, often cultivated over generations. Such leaders are rarely from within poorer, landless groups.

The same logic applies to the relationship between vote bloc leaders and political candidates. It is not in the interest of the leader to build programmatic linkages with candidates or parties because it would bring in few benefits to pass on to his supporters. The electoral candidate campaigning and striking deals across the countryside would simply thank him for his ideological support and then take his limited resources to the next village where the leader has no such ideological sympathies, and requires material benefits in return for providing electoral support. It, therefore, makes much more sense for vote bloc leaders to simply build election-specific strategic alliances without allowing the politician to become too certain of support before an exchange has been transacted. Everyone in rural Punjab, it seems, is a swing voter. As Rabba of Chak 2 put it, 'I am a PPP supporter at heart but the PPP candidate here is very weak and I need a road.'

As for politicians, the political incentives to target delivery to a fragmented electorate are equally strong. Most politicians understand the fact that their success 'depends on their personal reputation for providing goods, jobs and government access to individuals with whom they have had contact … Such legislators have little interest, as a consequence, in providing public goods that benefit a broad range of the public' (Keefer, Narayan and Vishwanath 2003, 17). Instead, politicians prefer to deliver services that are tangible, visible and directly attributable to them so that they can be used to maintain or expand the vote bank. Programmatic provision cannot be used as easily or visibly to reward

or sanction voters at the village level. This means, for example, that a provincial order to upgrade all girls' primary schools to middle and high school levels has been ignored for years, despite the fact that we found immense demand for this within villages.[1] Malika was repeatedly credited as one of the few leaders in our sample villages who had made higher levels of education available to girls in her own village, Sahiwal, based on her influence within the provincial government. However, her position and influence had not led her to push for such change across all schools in the province, or even the district. Rana in Chak Migrant explained that MNAs had found ways to continue to provide personally even after a significant proportion of service delivery was decentralised to the district and *tehsil* levels in 2001, and later when 17 ministries were devolved from the centre to the provinces in 2010. 'Why would they give up trying to provide? It means votes,' he said.

Political parties as conglomerations of clientelistic networks

The final part of the answer lies in the nature of party organisation in Pakistan. Political parties here do not function to represent 'the interests of different classes', they are not 'a democratic translation of the class struggle' (Lipset 1981, 230), and they do not campaign on the basis of broad national policies aimed at providing more and better services to people, as did the PPP with its 'roti, kapra, makan' slogan[2] in the 1970 election. Instead, the personalisation of politics in Pakistan post-1970s and the constant manipulation of political parties by military regimes have left them as little more than large conglomerations of multiple clientelistic networks that are based on the personal power of individual members. These parties look to the local landlord to organise and deliver the local vote, who organises this through non-ideological forms of identification. In such systems elections serve the purpose not of strengthening democracy but of simply providing an opportunity and rationale for vote blocs to be renewed, their logic reproduced, and the linkages they embody strengthened.

Jalal points out that this political system has sat well with the landed in Pakistan for whom political power has become a central facet of their local influence but who do not want the imposed discipline of an external party

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1   The main reason for this demand is that while boys are able to travel to other villages or towns for higher education, social conservatism makes girls less mobile. Therefore, for girls to get higher education, village schools need to be upgraded to offer higher levels of classes.

2   Literally, 'food, clothing and shelter'.

structure (1999, 322). Political systems that are based around such oligarchies are rarely conducive to the rise of new entrepreneurial leaders from within the landless population of a village that seek to organise the poor in opposition to the landlord.

The answer to why we do not see more political collective action within marginalised voters, despite their numerical strength, is thus to be found in the many ways that structural inequality manifests to limit leadership opportunities for poorer populations. Only one question now remains: Can the impact of social structural inequality be mitigated?

Pakistan's democratic prospects

The analysis presented in this book shows that where social structural and land inequality is low, there are more democratic, inclusive processes. Where such inequality is high, political engagement is more exclusive and citizens have little political agency. This suggests that the further democratisation of Pakistan's politics is dependent on the mitigation of persistent structural inequality. While this obviously includes a case for reforms that can redistribute land more evenly across the rural population – including effective land reforms and access to land markets – the findings of this study provide enough evidence that land reforms in the absence of complementary measures to reduce social structural inequality will not make democracy more representative of the interests of the rural poor.

Social structures are sticky, and a combination of political and administrative reforms are required to override the constraints imposed by structural inequality. Figure 8.1 depicts the trajectory of rural politics in Pakistan from 1970 to the present day. It shows that in the 1970s Bhutto's 'roti, kapra, makan' campaign moved voters away from links of dependence straight to class-based identification with a political party. Since then, however, the political system moved simultaneously along two different paths through the 1980s and 1990s, and well into the 2000s. The autonomy of voters increased but in more hierarchical and unequal villages it did so within vertical relationships with local landed patrons that moved the political system towards broker clientelism. At the same time, voters in more egalitarian and equal villages started to organise more horizontally, but they did so not within supra-village, class-based collectivities but, instead, within village-based kinship networks. Voting behaviour in Punjab now lies in the two spaces that are defined by broker clientelism and kinship at the top-left

and bottom-right corners of Figure 8.1. What are the pathways that will lead this system from these corners back towards a more ideological and representative form of democracy (depicted in the top right corner) in which poorer voters align with political parties that represent their special class interests?

Figure 8.1 Paths of change
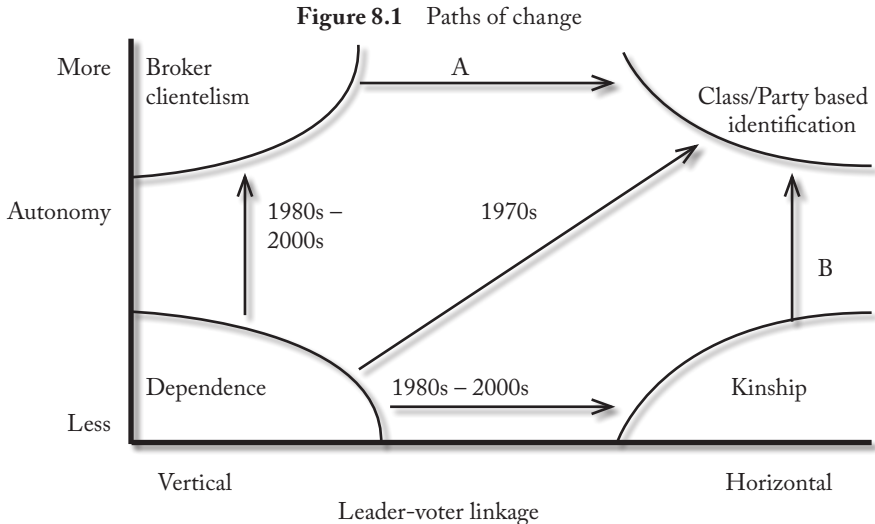
Source: Author.

There are two defined paths, 'A' and 'B', that would move those which identify as clients or kin to more class or party-based organisation. These suggest two sets of complementary reforms: (*a*) greater, non-discretionary and effective service delivery by the state to reduce the relevance of local intermediaries, and to provide access to sufficient levels of public goods like education and health, in order to enable economic and social mobility of village citizens and (*b*) the strengthening of political parties and their penetration of the countryside to provide supra-local channels for political organisation.

Path 'A' requires that services be delivered to rural citizens more effectively by the state, and in ways that reduce the role and relevance of landed broker-patrons as intermediaries. The rural elite continue to organise village politics in large part because the pattern of delivery by the bureaucracy and the judiciary has allowed them to retain disproportionate power as political intermediaries. People may no longer be dependent on landlords for jobs, but they continue to be dependent for access to an unresponsive and distant state. However, we saw that public service networks even in the extremely unequal village of

Tiwanabad shifted at great speed from being centred around the *maalik* to coming together instead around the small peasant proprietor, Sultan, after his election as union mayor. This means that it is possible to reduce the entrenched power of the *maalik* fairly quickly through the creation of officially sanctioned channels for access to public services within which informal intermediaries play no role. This was visible even in some other networks, such as those around school management in Sahiwal, where the government functionary, the school headmaster, had a larger network size than the *maalik*, Nazim. It seems that villagers will seek direct connections with government functionaries whenever these are available and accessible, and that a large part of the problem is the limited visibility of the state in Punjab's villages.

Local government reforms provide a particularly effective way for bringing state functionaries closer to people within villages, and can potentially restructure public provision and formalise delivery channels. However, in order for such reforms to accomplish this, local governments must be empowered to make expenditure decisions and have enough financial and administrative resources to make these expenditures possible. Furthermore, the decisions must be taken by representatives of those most directly affected by these expenditures. This requires that more spaces be reserved within local governments for the participation of different groups of rural citizens, especially marginalised groups, in decision-making bodies such as union and village councils, and in user committees on education, health, sanitation, and so forth.

Pakistan's experience with decentralising service delivery to district and *tehsil* governments in 2001 led to the emergence of new leaders such as Sultan and Baba Ali, who used state offices to push against the constraining impact of structural inequality. But these local government reforms did not go far enough in being truly transformative in their impact. For one, the process was abandoned after the fall of the Musharraf regime in 2008, and no new local government elections were held after local councils completed their tenure in 2009. They were only recently reinstated in 2015–16, but the new system is even more limited than the previous one in devolving substantive financial and administrative decision-making powers and resources to elected offices at the union and district levels, and it provides few spaces for participation by village citizens. There are reservations for marginalised groups – conceptualised as labour, minorities, women and now youth in the most recent 2013 incarnation of the law – but these are for offices of union and district councillors only, rather

than for leadership or executive positions. These groups have no real role to play in budgeting and development planning procedures, which are located at higher tiers of local and provincial government. Furthermore, councillors on reserved seats are not elected directly by voters, but rather indirectly by the other 'general' members of the council, who are themselves directly elected by local constituencies. This means that councillors from marginalised groups on reserved seats have no constituencies of their own and must look to those elected on regular general seats (usually more elite groups) for political support and patronage.

For decentralisation reforms to be transformative in overriding the impact of structural inequality more effectively – and in enabling a larger number of representatives from non-elite groups beyond the few Sultans and Baba Alis that have made the system work for them – reservations for women and lower caste groups are required in leadership positions, at least at the union level, as was instituted in India through Panchayati Raj in 1993. The literature on the transformative impact of such reservations in India is extensive,[3] and it establishes the fact that they increase the interaction between lower caste groups and more elite residents of a village, improve the social standing of such elected members, provide them with linkages to higher tiers of government, advance the special interests of women, and improve the delivery of public services to marginalised groups. The location of substantive power closer to village representatives is also more likely to enable collective action by the poor by reducing the costs of organisation across large political units.

Local government reforms can thus provide political incentives both for marginalised groups to organise away from the constraining power of landed elites in accessing state services, and for these elites to accept and engage with such advances. In fact, if democratisation continues in the absence of substantive reforms to correct for the inequitable and uneven delivery of public services – a lack of quality education and healthcare provided in rural parts, targeted delivery of basic essentials like street paving and sanitation only to the more connected residents of a village, biases within the police and judiciary against poorer groups – we can expect that clientelism will continue to define the major form of political mobilisation in Pakistan.[4] Heath and Tillin (2017) conducted a

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3   This includes Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004), Jayal (2006) and Chauchard (2017).

4   Based on Fukuyama's (2014: 134) argument that clientelism is a 'natural outgrowth of political mobilisation in early-stage democracies' and that it is more pervasive when democratisation precedes public sector reforms.

comparative study in bordering villages of two states in India, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, to find that institutional reforms that improve the efficient, reliable and programmatic delivery of services can significantly reduce the appeal of the clientelistic distribution of public goods through local intermediaries. And as the salience of clientelistic appeals diminishes, the possibility of more direct appeals to voters by political parties increases (Keefer and Vlaicu 2008).

This represents Path 'B' in Figure 8.1, along which political parties organise rural citizens directly and link them up into larger, less fragmented networks that can lead to supra-local solidarities that are connected to political representation. The evidence presented in this book and by Stokes et al. (2013) suggests that the tension that exists between parties and brokers, and between brokers and voters, makes clientelistic political systems amenable to pressure and change. It seems that parties and voters both prefer direct linkages with one another to the mediated ties provided by brokers, but Pakistan's history of intermittent military rule, the concerted weakening of political parties, and the consequent survival of the political power of the landed elite have limited the presence of political parties in its districts and villages. This does not mean, however, that more direct linkages are not possible within this context. The 1970 election provides an important example of the extent to which the transformative agenda of a political party can strengthen the political independence and class-based organisation of the rural poor even in the face of structural inequality. That election took place before Pakistan's second round of land reforms in 1972, and before the market-based changes that have now reduced the size of many large landholdings. Within a context that was much more unequal than the one we find in Sargodha today, a sea change in political behaviour and village politics occurred when the rural poor were mobilised directly by a new political party, the PPP, that chose to bypass local landlords to campaign with rural voters and to appeal to them on on the basis of class. When given an opportunity and external support, the class interests of rural voters trumped all other ties of feudalism, *biradari*-ism and clientelism, even while landholdings were still fairly large.

It is not difficult to imagine that a party that chooses to campaign once again with a transformative, programmatic agenda may be able to capitalise fairly quickly on the spaces created by the rural poor at the village level to draw a substantial vote. The very few PPP voters that still remain in Sargodha's villages today continue to be referred to as the *nazriati* (ideological) vote,

but no other party's vote bank is ever referred to as being based on ideology or even party identification. Political parties in Pakistan do not have stable, core support bases within its rural majority that can bring together the large numbers needed to win an election just on the basis of ideological alignments. Party-based constituencies of voters, especially those built around numerically dominant poorer voters, can create spaces for more inclusive deliberation; an autonomous political society built on these deliberations; and deeper, more stable roots in this society for political parties (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Linz and Stepan 1996; Chatterjee 2004). This, says Varshney (2000), has worked to reduce social structural inequality in India, if not economic inequality, and provided even the lowest caste groups with faith in democracy's ability to reduce their socio-economic deprivation.

Once again, local government systems provide an effective channel for building such direct and stable links between parties and voters by drawing party structures right down into villages. Local government elections that are held on a party basis connect political parties to rural voters more directly and link local leaders up into party-based electoral contests. This can shift the logic of village politics away from being embedded in structural inequality to being organised instead around broader national politics. However, this may simply draw the landed elite from their informal positions of influence into more formal ones within political parties. It is, therefore, important that political reservations for marginalised groups within local government councils and within leadership positions be instituted more effectively, so that the rural poor can nominate candidates of their own choice from amongst their own class, and can organise horizontally to elect these candidates to office. This will ensure that the poorer rural majority of voters come to be represented in government by those who better understand their interests – the rural poor.

The two pathways outlined above may reinforce one another, and pushing forward on one may build momentum along the other. As the restructuring of public service delivery leads to a smaller role for local broker-patrons, a larger space for more class-based organisation of the poor may open up. At the same time, the local vote bloc leader may be driven towards more stable relationships with and membership of political parties in order to maintain their relevance, and in the process, be constrained by the political imperatives and prerogatives of the party. And as political parties become more central and dominant players within the rural political system – relying less on the organising capacity of

these leaders and more on their own broader appeal – they may have greater incentives to initiate and push for policy changes that benefit larger groups of rural voters, and for public sector reforms that can deliver better services more effectively and universally. Similarly, as reservations for marginalised groups within local governments make local politicians more important in both organising the vote of poorer citizens and in taking decisions regarding service delivery, political parties may have greater incentives to include them within their own organisational structures. Over time, the growing pressure within political parties for more representative and accountable internal structures may ensure that members of marginalised groups are able to move up through party ranks.

What does all this tell us about Pakistan's democratic prospects? Most analyses of democratic consolidation look at the relationships between elected and non-elected institutions of the state. This is important. The amount of space that the military is willing to cede to elected political actors in Pakistan will determine the future of Pakistan's democracy to a great extent. However, I argue in this book that much also depends on the interactions between political actors at a much more micro-level of analysis – that of villages where a majority of Pakistan's voters live. The extent to which political parties can mount a challenge to the military complex at the centre depends on the extent to which they can count on broad-based support from voters. Military regimes in Pakistan may have been unstable and democratisation may be underway, but the balance has not yet shifted decidedly in favour of political parties, which continue to operate without solid and stable constituencies, gathering votes from citizens constrained within extremely unequal socio-economic structures. Ultimately, a good part of the answer to how democracy will fare in Pakistan depends on the extent to which political parties can address this inequality. It will also depend on whether they can convert the space created by poorer rural voters for themselves within village vote blocs into mass support bases that they can organise more directly, whose particular interests they can represent within national politics and whose support they can then depend on against the political manipulations of non-elected institutions.

Annex 1
Chronology of Political Events in Pakistan*

1849	Annexation of Punjab by the British colonial government.
1871	The Punjab Land Revenue Act is passed which incorporates customary law of the Punjab tribes as part of the formal legal system.
1900	The Land Alienation Act of 1900 is passed that divides rural Punjab into agricultural and non-agricultural tribes, and limits landownership to agricultural tribes only.
1906	Muslim League formed as a political party to represent the Muslims of India.
1920	Jinnah quits the Congress Party and joins the Muslim League.
1937	First elections to Provincial Legislative Assemblies are held. The Muslim League suffers defeat in all provinces.
1946	Second elections to Provincial Legislative Assemblies are held. The Muslim League realigns itself with various regional groups, including the Unionist Party in Punjab, and wins the election in NWFP, Punjab, Sindh and East Bengal. The party's main demand is a separate country for India's Muslims, called Pakistan.
1947	Independence from colonial rule, and the partition of India and the newly created Pakistan. Pakistan is divided into West and East Pakistan, between which lies 1,609 kilometres of Indian territory.
1947–58	Quick succession of various heads of a Constituent Assembly, while a Constitution is written.
1948	Jinnah, Pakistan's founder and first Governor General, dies after a protracted illness.
1948	Pakistan's first war with India over the disputed territory of Kashmir.

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* This has been compiled from various printed sources, all of which are included in the bibliography. More recent events have been put together from news sources. Many events have also been compiled from my own recollections.

1951–54   Elections to the Provincial Legislative Assemblies are held in Punjab (1951), NWFP (1951), Sindh (1953) and East Pakistan (1954). All of these are later described as 'a farce, a mockery and fraud upon the electorate' by an Electoral Reform Commission (Kamran 2009, 82).

1956   The first Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is promulgated, calling for the country's first election.

1958   Pakistan's first military coup, led by General Ayub Khan.

1958–69   Pakistan's first Martial Law regime under General Ayub Khan.

1959   Pakistan's first set of land reforms.

1959–60   Pakistan's first local government elections are conducted under the 'Basic Democracies system' to create an electoral college to endorse Ayub Khan as Pakistan's first President.

1962   A second Constitution of the Republic of Pakistan is promulgated.

1964   (September–October) Local government elections are held again under the Basic Democracies system.

1965   (January) Presidential election in which Ayub Khan, at the head of the Convention Muslim League (CVML), ran against Jinnah's sister, Fatima, who was the candidate of the Combined Opposition Parties (COP). Only basic democrats elected three months earlier were allowed to vote.

           Pakistan's second war with India over Kashmir.

1968   Anti-Ayub social movement led by students and labourers that eventually brought down Pakistan's first military regime.

1969   General Ayub Khan steps down and hands power to General Yahya, who announces Pakistan's first general election.

1970   (December) Pakistan's first general election takes place, in which Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's newly created Pakistan People's Party (PPP) sweeps the election in West Pakistan while Mujib-ur-Rehman's Awami League sweeps East Pakistan. In the opposition are the various Muslim Leagues – Convention Muslim League (CVML), Council Muslim League (CML) and Qayyum Muslim League (QML), and the National Awami Party (NAP). Awami League, which has the majority seats, is not allowed to form government,

leading to protests in East Pakistan and a brutal military crackdown.

1971 (March) Civil war breaks out in East Pakistan as it attempts to secede to become Bangladesh, after years of struggling to make Bengali a national language and to get equal status with the less populous but dominant West Pakistan. It continues through the year.

(December) Third war with India breaks out when it steps in to support East Pakistan in the civil war. West Pakistan is defeated only days later and Bangladesh comes into existence. In what is left of Pakistan, Yahya Khan resigns and hands power to Bhutto.

1971 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto becomes Pakistan's first elected President.

1972 Pakistan's second set of land reforms.

1973 The third, and still in effect, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is promulgated. Under this, Bhutto goes from being President to becoming Pakistan's first elected Prime Minister.

1975 Reform of land tenure laws.

1976–77 National Charter for Peasants instituted and land ceilings reduced further.

1977 (March) Pakistan's second elections held, slightly earlier than scheduled. PPP wins again, but riots break out over rigging allegations.

(July) Soon after, Bhutto is overthrown in a military coup led by General Zia-ul-Haq.

1977–88 Pakistan's second military regime under General Zia-ul-Haq.

1979 Bhutto is sentenced to death and executed.

1979–80 Zia holds party-less local government elections for district councils under the Local Government Ordinance of 1979.

1983 Another round of party-less local government elections held.

1985 Zia holds party-less elections that he had promised in 1979. Mohammad Khan Junejo becomes the Prime Minister and confirms Zia as the President. After various religious laws and amendments are added to the 1973 Constitution, including one that places all powers in the office of the President (Article 58-2[B]), Martial Law is lifted and the Constitution is revived.

1986	Rise of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). Bhutto's daughter, Benazir, returns to Pakistan from exile to lead movement.
1987	Further local government elections are held.
1988	Zia dismisses the government using Article 58-2(B), and institutes *shariah* law through the Shariat Ordinance in June. In August, Zia is killed in a mid-air plane explosion, along with the entire top brass of his army. Ghulam Ishaq Khan takes over as President and announces an election.
1988	Pakistan's third party-based national election brings the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) back to power with Benazir Bhutto as the new Prime Minister. However, the government is dismissed in less than two years (20 months) by the President, who dissolves the National Assembly on charges of corruption using powers provided to the President by Article 58-2(B).
1990	Pakistan's fourth national election brings the opposition Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI – a coalition of the various Muslim Leagues and other regional and religious parties) to power with Nawaz Sharif, a Zia protégé, as the Prime Minister. Again the government is dismissed in 32 months on corruption charges by the same President, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, using Article 58-2(B). The government is restored by the Supreme Court, but the President and Prime Minister both resign a month later in July 1993 under military pressure.
1993	Pakistan's fifth national election brings Benazir Bhutto and the PPP back to power, again for about 37 months, and again dismissed on corruption charges by a different President, Farooq Khan Leghari, using Article 58-2(B) in November 1996.
1997	Pakistan's sixth national election brings Nawaz Sharif and his Pakistan Muslim League (PML) back into power for 32 months before he is overthrown in a military coup by General Pervez Musharraf on 12 October 1999, only a few hours after he tries to dismiss the military leader.
1999–2008	Pakistan's third military regime under General Pervez Musharraf. Nawaz Sharif is exiled to Saudi Arabia and Benazir Bhutto is in self-exile in Dubai.

2001   Pakistan has party-less local government elections after Musharraf introduces new decentralisation reforms in 2000.

2002   Pakistan's seventh party-based national election brings to power a new political party engineered by Musharraf, the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), which is made up largely of a breakaway faction of Nawaz Sharif's PML (now called the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz [PML-N]), and a few members of the PPP (who called themselves the Pakistan People's Party Patriots [PPPP]).

2005   Pakistan's second local government elections under Musharraf, again party-less, are held.

2007   Musharraf has a Presidential election to lengthen his rule in October, but fears over the Supreme Court ruling unfavourably on his eligibility as a candidate leads him to dismiss the Chief Justice for the second time that year. A lawyers' movement to restore the Chief Justice, started after the first dismissal in March, gains momentum. In November Musharraf declares Emergency Rule, during which he alters the Constitution, takes another oath as President and indefinitely postpones elections. Emergency is lifted six weeks later on 15 December, and elections are announced. Bhutto and Sharif both return to Pakistan from exile, in October and November, respectively, to prepare for the election.

        Benazir Bhutto is assassinated on 27 December in Rawalpindi.

2008   Pakistan's eighth national election is held on 18 February that ousts Musharraf's PML-Q and brings back into power the PPP with Yusuf Raza Gilani as the Prime Minister and Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, as the President.

2010   The Constitution is returned to its 1973 state through a repeal of all Zia and Musharraf-era amendments, and Article 58-2(B) is finally removed, leading to a return of all powers to the Prime Minister and Parliament.

        The 18th Amendment to the Constitution also devolves 17 ministries to the provinces, a long-standing demand of Pakistan's political parties.

2013   Pakistan's ninth national election is held on 11 May. It marks the first time an elected government has completed its full term since

the 1970s. PML-N wins by a landslide and PPP peacefully hands over power. A new party, the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf), led by the country's most popular cricket player, Imran Khan, marks a significant electoral performance at the centre and forms government in one province, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.

2014   The PML-N government faces a serious challenge through an extended sit-in protest by the PTI in the public grounds outside Parliament, believed by many to have been orchestrated by the army. Opposition parties, led by the PPP, stand by Sharif as he weathers the storm, but the government concedes significant power over defence and foreign affairs to the army.

2017   Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is disqualified from office on corruption charges by the Supreme Court in the aftermath of the 2016 Panama papers leak. He resigns but the PML-N government continues under a new Prime Minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

2018   Pakistan's tenth national election is held on 25 July. It marks the completion of a second full term in power by an elected government. PTI wins the election and forms government at the centre and in Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa.

Annex 2

Index of Political Engagement (IPE) Scores for 38 Villages

Village name	Contestation			Inclusion			Index of political engagement (IPE) score
	NVB	Independence of lowest caste group	Total for contestation	Basis of vote bloc membership	Participation in decision-making	Total for inclusion	
Proprietary estates							
Ahmed Sher Garh	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	2.00
Muzafarabad	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.08	0.00	1.08	2.08
Noor Pur Noon	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.17	0.00	1.17	2.17
Tiwanabad	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.43	0.00	1.43	2.43
Marray	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.69	0.00	1.69	2.69
Kot Fateh Khan	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.88	0.00	1.88	2.88
Kot Hakim Khan	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.24	1.00	2.24	3.24
Gurna	1.88	0.00	1.88	1.66	0.00	1.66	3.54
Bharath	1.59	1.00	2.59	1.12	0.00	1.12	3.71
Loran Wali	1.23	1.00	2.23	1.58	0.00	1.58	3.81
Sahiwal	1.21	0.00	1.21	1.44	1.50	2.94	4.15
Kot Ghazi Khurd	1.59	1.00	2.59	1.70	0.00	1.70	4.29
Badin	1.95	1.00	2.95	1.38	0.00	1.38	4.33
Ahmad-E-Wala	1.63	1.00	2.63	1.77	0.00	1.77	4.40
Nabi Shah Khurd	1.73	1.00	2.73	1.70	0.00	1.70	4.43
Dhal	2.05	1.00	3.05	1.72	0.00	1.72	4.77
Badhor	1.00	0.00	1.00	1.17	3.00	4.17	5.17
Bharath Shariff	1.84	1.00	2.84	1.59	1.00	2.59	5.43
Chak Shaikha	2.00	1.00	3.00	1.56	1.00	2.56	5.56
Jada	1.92	1.00	2.92	1.84	1.00	2.84	5.76
Noon Kalu	1.00	0.00	1.00	2.00	3.00	5.00	6.00
Thatta Panah	3.88	1.00	4.88	1.22	0.00	1.22	6.10
Hafiza Bad	1.57	2.00	3.57	1.81	1.00	2.81	6.38
Awan	2.89	2.00	4.89	1.86	0.00	1.86	6.75
Jara	2.80	1.00	3.80	1.53	2.00	3.53	7.33

Contd.

Contd.

| Village name | NVB | Contestation | | Inclusion | | Total for inclusion | Index of political engagement (IPE) score |
		Independence of lowest caste group	Total for contestation	Basis of vote bloc membership	Participation in decision-making		
				Crown estates			
Chak 65 SB	1.28	0.00	1.28	1.80	0.00	1.80	3.08
Chak 6 NB	2.11	1.00	3.11	1.64	0.00	1.64	4.75
Chak 7 ML	1.92	1.00	2.92	1.84	0.00	1.84	4.76
Chak 62 SB	2.15	1.00	3.15	1.62	0.00	1.62	4.77
Chak 3 SB	2.36	1.00	3.36	1.53	0.00	1.53	4.89
Chak 13 NB	1.92	1.00	2.92	1.67	1.00	2.67	5.59
Chak 124 NB	2.15	1.00	3.15	1.76	1.00	2.76	5.91
Chak Migrant	1.00	0.00	1.00	2.08	3.00	5.08	6.08
Chak 10 SB	1.71	1.00	2.71	1.41	2.00	3.41	6.12
Chak 2	1.74	1.00	2.74	1.73	2.00	3.73	6.47
Chak 120 NB	1.85	1.00	2.85	1.76	2.00	3.76	6.61
Chak 1	1.59	2.50	4.09	1.53	1.50	3.03	7.12
Chak 115 NB	2.39	1.00	3.39	1.76	2.00	3.76	7.15

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Annex 3
Research Instruments

Research instruments used in case study villages

1. Qualitative field notes based on ethnographic observations.
2. Open-ended interviews with 15–20 key respondents per village.
3. Surveys with about 35–45 per cent of randomly selected households per village using questionnaires that probed networks and relations within the village. This generated a dataset of about 700 households.
4. Census surveys of the full village population to get data on land inequality, literacy rates, poverty and demographic composition in terms of caste and kinship groups.
5. Archival data on village history and historical land inequality using colonial *Village Inspection Reports* from the archives of the District Revenue Office.

Research instruments used in survey villages

1. Structured interviews with 2–3 key respondents per village.
2. Surveys with 45 randomly selected households per village, which generated a dataset of 1,572 households in total.
3. Census surveys of the full village population to get data on land inequality, literacy rates, poverty and demographic composition in terms of caste and kinship groups. This rendered a dataset of over 9,000 households.
4. Archival data on village history and historical land inequality using colonial *Village Inspection Reports* from the archives of the District Revenue Office.

Annex 4

Detailed Descriptions of Household Variables Used in Multivariate Regression Analysis

(in Chapter 6)

Main household level explanatory variables

1. Caste: I measure social status of a household through a caste variable that orders the village social hierarchy as follows: VPB (1), *zamindar* (2), *kammi* (3) and *muslim sheikh* (4).

    The census survey that we conducted in each village allowed us to stratify the population by caste. We used the three main caste, or *quom*, categories: (*a*) *zamindar*s, which included all agricultural castes of the village, (*b*) *kammi*s, which are the village artisanal castes and (*c*) *muslim sheikh*s, who are agricultural and domestic labourers. The *zamindar* category was further divided to separate out *biradari*s of the village elite, the historical VPBs, from other *zamindar biradari*s. This was based on information contained in the colonial *Inspection Reports* and the *Sargodha Gazetteers*. To be considered part of a village's colonial proprietary body, a *biradari* needed to have historically met two conditions: (*a*) it had to have been granted property rights to land, a land grant or land lease in the village by the colonial state and (*b*) it had to be from the *zamindar quom*, since the 1900 Land Alienation Act stipulated that a land grant or lease could only be given to someone from the designated 'agricultural castes'. The colonial *Village Inspection Reports* listed all the *biradari*s that had received land grants during the time of the colonial village settlements.

2. Economic status: I use two different measures of wealth: *number of acres* owned, which is a continuous variable that records the number of acres that each household owns; and *brick house*, which is an ordinal variable that records whether the house is a mud or brick structure, and is a proxy for poverty. Twenty-three per cent of the population of the 35 villages lived in mud houses at the time of our census surveys.

3. General characteristics: I use three other independent variables to measure differences in characteristics of rural voters that I believe may impact their voting behavior. I measure each of these using the following variables: *age*, which is a continuous variable that records the age in years of the household head; *education*, which is a continuous variable that records the education in years of the household head; *occupation*, which records the occupation of the household head in ordinal categories. In my sample the average age of a household head was about 49 years, and the literacy rate was about 56 per cent though the average years of education was only five. The two main occupations in which they were involved were agriculture as an owner or tenant (37 per cent) and daily or agricultural labour (28 per cent). Another 10 per cent were involved in trade.

These household level explanatory variables are summarised below.

Table A4.1 Description of household-level independent variables (35 villages)

	Variable	Type	Measurement	Mean	Range	
					Min	Max
1.	Caste	Ordinal	Caste of household: 1. VPB 2. *Zamindar* 3. *Kammi* 4. *Muslim sheikh*			
2.	Land owned	Continuous	Number of acres owned by household	7.44	0	450
3.	Wealth	Ordinal	Type of house: 1. Mud 2. Mud with stones or brick 3. Brick			
4.	Age	Continuous	Age of household head	49	15	98
5.	Education	Continuous	Number of years of education attained by household head	5	0	16
6.	Occupation of household head	Categorical	Unemployed Agricultural/day labour Agriculture-owner/tenant Artisan Monthly contract labour Business/trade Professional			

Source: Author.

Main village level explanatory variables

The village level explanatory variables I use in the regression analysis are explained in detail in Chapter 6. They are summarised in the table below.

Table A4.2   Description of village-level independent variables (35 villages)

Variable	Type	Measurement	Mean	Range	
				Min	**Max**
1. Type of village	Dichotomous	0 Proprietary 1 Crown			
2. Land inequality	Continuous	Gini coefficient of land inequality	0.84	0.66	0.97
3. Distance from nearest town	Continuous	Distance of village from nearest town in kilometres	20	3	45
4. Poverty	Continuous	Per cent brick houses in the village	32%	17%	60%
5. Plurality	Continuous	Number of caste groups in a village	32	9	55

Source: Author.

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