

The Persistence and Limits of Patronage: A History and Present of State-Society Relations in Naseerabad, Balochistan

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Erstgutachterin: Prof. Dr. Petra Dobner
Zweitgutachter: Prof. Dr. Johannes Varwick

Abstract

Balochistan is often defined by tribalism, nomadism, and insurgency in popular and academic discourse. These dominant analytical frameworks have produced an overly narrow view of the province. Such portrayals overlook regions like Naseerabad, a densely populated, canal-irrigated agrarian division in the *Kachhi* plains, where social and political structures do not conform to these classical depictions. My research examines the long history and present of state-society relations by focusing on land, water, and public employment that have been decisive in shaping power relations and political processes in this peripheral region.

I draw on archival data that encompasses both colonial and post-colonial policies on land and water, to show how the logic of colonial rule at its Upper Sindh frontier with Naseerabad was driven more by the need for security than revenue production. Security imperative informed the relationship between the colonial state and local elites, as manifested in the land settlement policy in this area, which focused on granting *jagir* lands to so-called landless hill tribes for stabilizing the frontier. However, the post-colonial state revised the terms of its relationship with the local elite as it attempted to expand and centralize power along with modernizing agriculture. I illustrate how evolving patronage relations between the state and local elites, negotiated mainly through land reforms (1959, 1972), produced outcomes that challenge the simple dichotomy of failed or successful land reforms in Pakistan.

In addition to these reforms, canal construction, and extension (from 1966 onward) created new types of villages in Nasirabad, called *Baar-e-waal Zamindar Halkh* (villages of small landlords and peasant-proprietors), which were defined by distinct social, economic, and political structures. These villages, as analyzed in the case of Village A, demonstrate how equal land ownership, kinship-based settlement, and proximity to similarly organized villages facilitated successful local political organization and access to state patronage. Such patronage was available in the form of public employment and development funds. However, when the state extended the canal network in the 1990s, it introduced new crop cultivation and water distribution system. As a result, new villages emerged, examined through the case of Village B, that shared similar internal social structures and land relations to Village A but were disadvantaged by their topographical location on the canal network and the presence of more powerful neighboring villages. The challenges for such villages were compounded by increased water scarcity, which led to the seasonal migration of villagers to cities. These factors constrained the ability of villagers in Village B to organize electorally and access state resources to the same extent as Village A.

This study challenges the mono-causal generalization and simplification of political analysis on Balochistan by highlighting how diverse settlement patterns, unintended effects of state interventions, topographical disadvantage, and local power relations shape different political outcomes in present-day Naseerabad. In addition, it contributes to the literature that examines variations in political behavior. While colonial land settlement and its attendant institutions have traditionally been viewed as the key factors influencing contemporary political processes, I show how post-colonial state interventions and center-province power struggles have profoundly reshaped social and political relations in a peripheral area of Pakistan. Historical processes that extend beyond the colonial period continue to inform contemporary politics in villages A and B. This historical and political narrative centers on the persistence and limits of patronage in Naseerabad.

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Glossary

Abadkar: Settler.

Aghwaro: A front yard of a house.

Aggi wero: A front part of the village.

Baaro: The smallest unit to measure the size of land.

Baar-e-waal Zamindar: Small-Landlord or Peasant Proprietor who mainly survives on his yearly harvests.

Bahi: Accounts maintained by creditors before the colonial period.

Bannia: A specific group within the Hindu caste system traditionally associated with commerce and trade. In the case of Balochistan, persons who lend money on interest are called *Bannia*, and to this day, they are Hindus.

Biradari: All individuals connected through direct ancestral lineage in the paternal line.

Biraderi Panchayats: A council of a particular *biradari* that functions as a structure to resolve their conflicts.

Birarзад: Children of a brother.

Braberi: The principle of equality.

Dhurr: The unit of political organization at the Union Council level was mobilized for electoral purposes.

Faislo: Refers both to a decision and the council of elders who resolve a conflict.

Halkh: Balochi word for a village.

Hari: Tenant.

Ghuwarзад: Children of sister.

Gulami: It is a term used to refer to relations of subordination, which come close to the English term of slavery.

Ijara: Lease.

Ilaaqa: This generally refers to the area or place where one resides and socializes.

Ilaqadari: Ethics of neighborhood relations that embody mutual obligations in moments of joy and grief (*shadi-gammi*) and create local networks of conflict resolution.

Jagirdar: Historically, this term refers to the native landed elite who were granted lands exempted from tax or with nominal taxes. In contemporary usage, it is used interchangeably with *zamindar* (landlord).

Jalsa: An Urdu word commonly used to refer to a political gathering.

Jamadar: The manager hired by a landlord to manage his lands in his absence.

Jindh: One's own.

Jirga: An assembly of elders that make decisions by consensus and according to the *riwaj* or custom, an institution that was generalized in Balochistan during colonial rule.

Jora: Refers to a couple.

Kammi: A service-based caste/class in rural Pakistan and India with a specified economic function and social status.

Karia: Old name of the watercourse.

Kacheri: Local Courts.

Khushkhaba: Land irrigated by rain.

Lathbandi: refers to a traditional system of partition or demarcation of agricultural land.

Logh waro: A household/family.

Masat: Related through mother's side.

Maund: A traditional unit of mass used in various parts of South Asia.

Mashwaro: Consultation.

Mazan: Balochi word for leader.

Mazen Zamindar: Landlords with large size of lands, mainly those who do not have to share their source of water with other landlords.

Motabir: A local respectable.

Niabat: refers to administrative division or jurisdiction, mainly used during Khan of Kalat's reign. It refers to a district or region governed by a deputy or officer who acted on behalf of the Khan.

Nindagh Pharagh: Means sitting and standing but refers to the practice of socializing.

Otaq: The communal space of a village, where guests are received, and men gather for festivities.

Paaro: Sindhi word used to refer to a sub-section of a tribe.

Pahaat: The sum of money provided to a family hosting a wedding event to assist in arranging food for both the guests and the poor people.

Parat: Care.

Puthi wero: A backyard.

Rahaak: A Sindhi language word which means peasants.

Rasai: Commonly used to refer to access to state authorities.

Rishtadari: Refers to kinship relations which require certain ethical and moral rights and responsibilities among a kin group.

Sadd: Invitation for a marriage ceremony.

Sanad: Land deeds provided by the Khan of Kalat.

Saotar: Related through father's side.

Sarbarah: Leader of a group, borrowed from Urdu.

Sardar: In common parlance, a term used to describe tribal chiefs.

Seho: The ethics of unity among a group.

Sharaqatdari: It means having a share in something that belongs to more than one person.

Talukat: Connections with those who have power.

Takkar: Old term used to refer to the branch or section of a tribe.

Taraqi: Used in common parlance to refer to development in terms of class mobility.

Thana: Police Station

Wadhi: Those who belong together.

Quom: In Punjab, it refers to social groups in a particular village divided along occupation and status. However, in Balochistan, the term is increasingly used to refer to tribes.

Uzar: Monetary assistance given to a mourning family following the loss of a family member. It is intended to help them arrange food for both the guests and the poor.

Zamindar: Landlord.

Zamindari Karia: Historically, it was used to refer to a landlord's watercourse.

Zarai Islahat: A popular term that refers to the land reforms introduced by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.

Note on Spelling and Transliteration

Throughout this thesis, the spelling “Baluchistan” is used while referring to the colonial period and the immediate post-independence era, as that was indeed the form used historically then. In all other references beyond that time, I have used "Balochistan" in its contemporary spelling.

The spelling “Naseerabad” with double “e” refers to contemporary usage, while “i” refers to the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods. I use each spelling according to the specific period I discuss in the thesis.

Throughout this thesis, Balochi words and sentences are quoted in phonetic form since Balochi is an oral language and does not have a universally standardized written system. I have not followed any transliteration system. Instead, I have resorted to a simple phonetic approach to represent the spoken form of Balochi for clarity and accessibility for the readers. Of course, this will not denote all the subtleties of Balochi phonology but offers a practical way of representing the pronunciation of the language as spoken. I have tried to be consistent in writing the Balochi terms in this way throughout the text.

1. Introduction

1.1. Constructing Balochistan: Stereotypes in the Political Discourse

On January 18, 2024, Siraj-ul-Haq, leader of the *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JI), a religious political party in Pakistan, took the stage in Dera Allah Yar, the capital of Jaffarabad district in Balochistan. It was to endorse his party's provincial assembly candidate, Abdul Majid Badini. His candidacy was no small feat. He faced entrenched competitors from the influential Jamali family of the district: one standing as an independent, the other under the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party ticket. In Jaffarabad's politics, dominated by powerful Jamalis, Siraj-ul-Haq's speech sought to appeal to voters through a peculiar political narrative.

He repeatedly instrumentalized one of the most common tropes in the national discourse of Pakistan on Balochistan through his speech. It represented the province as an underdeveloped region of a subjugated people. He used the metaphor of a "camel ride" to describe the road conditions in the district, a not-so-subtle allusion to the "backwardness" of the province. He presented Balochistan as a place dominated by tribal chiefs (*sardars*), feudal landlords (*jagirdars*), and selfish nationalists. These elites allegedly exploited public resources, stifled *taraqi* (development), and treated ordinary people like *gulam* or "slaves." Thus, in this way, the people in Balochistan claimed Siraj-ul-Haq were denied both prosperity and autonomy. He repeatedly lashed out at Baloch *sardars*, *jagirdars*, and nationalist politicians. He accused them of being corrupt, selfish, and opportunists. He claimed that the nationalist politicians "invoked nationalism only after losing power," thus, in his view, betrayed the interests of the ordinary Baloch. (*Siraj-ul-Haq's Speech in Dera Allah Yar 2024*). He reproduced a broader national discourse that delegitimizes the Baloch nationalist movement and paints it as self-serving rather than genuinely representative of the people's aspirations.

However, Siraj-ul-Haq's speech carried a paradox. Even as he portrayed people as victims trapped under the heel of a parasitic feudal, tribal, and nationalist elite, he also exhorted them to break free by exercising their electoral agency. The same populace he had described as powerless now appeared as agents capable of choosing a different path that would lead them away from the feudal and tribal stranglehold. This tension between victimhood and agency laid bare the paradox. In sum, the framing by Siraj-ul-Haq assumed that the people could exercise independent political choices despite the alleged systemic constraints.

The subsequent electoral victory of Abdul Majid Badini in elections offered a test of this paradox. Despite the narrative of tribal and feudal strongholds in Balochistan, voters in this constituency opted for the candidate of JI. This indicated without ambiguity that their votes did not just follow relations of dependency or fear. It was an act of political agency that ran entirely against Siraj-ul-Haq's characterization of people as "slaves." This prompts a deeper inquiry: **What types of relations and networks do voters mobilize to participate in elections in this part of Balochistan, particularly when these relationships are not defined by dependency on traditional elites? Moreover, how does this reflect their capacity for independent action within seemingly restrictive political structures?**

1.2. Experiencing Balochistan: Impressions from the Field

The limits of the Balochistan constructed in political discourse became evident during my fieldwork in canal-irrigated districts of the Naseerabad division¹ (see Map 1). This region's agrarian economy and settled way of life contrast sharply with the tribal, nomadic, and nationalist identities often associated with Balochistan. My observations in two *Baar-e-waal Zamindar*² *Halkh* or small-landlord villages, referred to as Village A and Village B, to keep them anonymous at the request of villagers, reveal distinct political behaviors and relationships with local political representatives. This also provides insights into the region's unique socio-political order.

1.2.1. Village A: Negotiating with the Politician

In March 2020, an incident in Village A captured the nature of the political relationship between villagers and their elected representatives. Early one morning, messages began circulating on a village WhatsApp group called "Village Chat."³ There was the news that the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from their constituency would soon visit a neighboring Union Council⁴ to attend an event for a wedding. This prompted an immediate

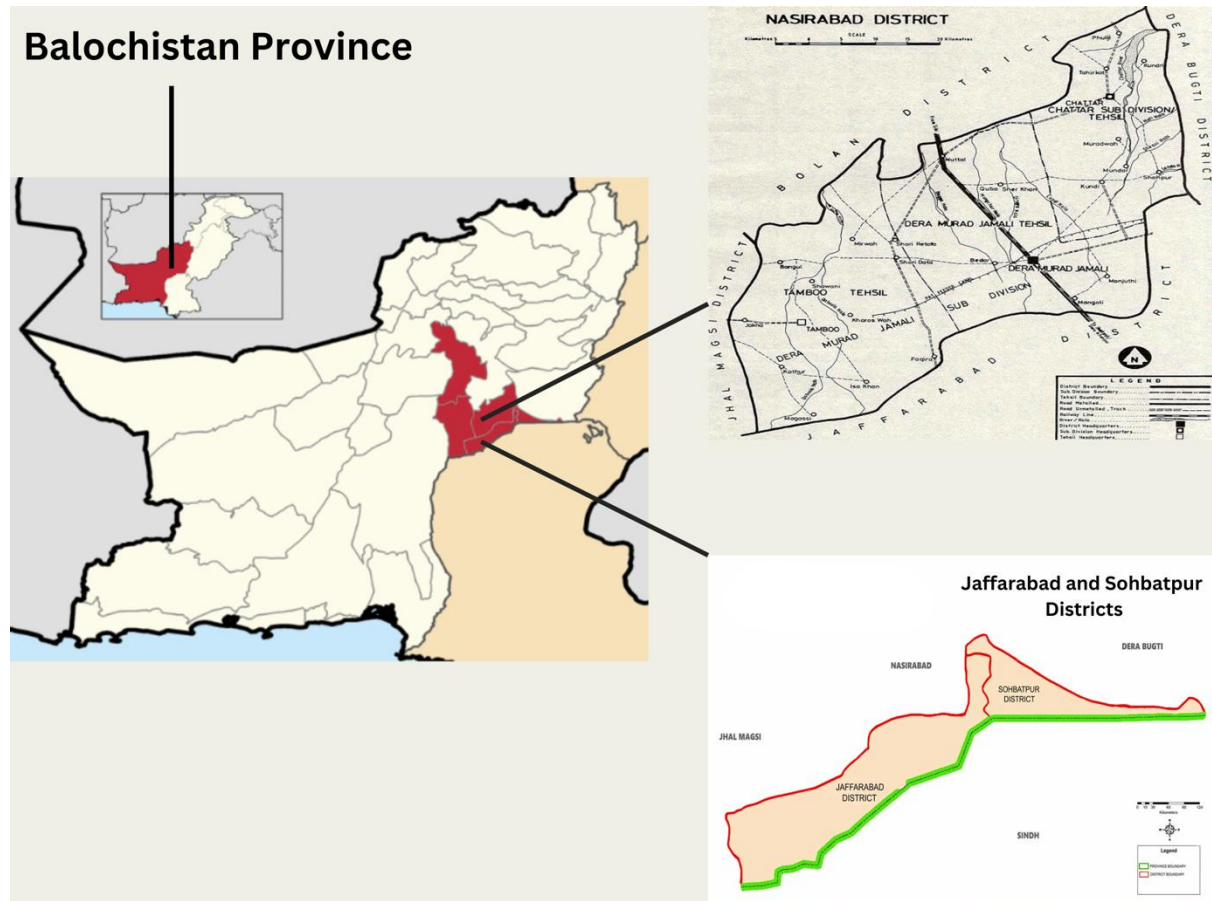
¹ It is an administrative unit in Balochistan that comprises of six districts: Jaffarabad, Naseerabad, Sohbatpur, Usta Mohammad, Kachhi, and Jhal Magsi. Among these, Jaffarabad, Naseerabad, Sohbatpur, and Usta Mohammad are canal-irrigated areas. The historic Naseerabad area has undergone several administrative changes over the last century. It was a *tehsil* as it was brought under the colonial administration in 1903 and was elevated to sub-division status in the 1930s. It remained a sub-division till the mid-1970s when it was elevated to the status of a district. In the 2000s, it became a separate division in Balochistan. The spelling of Naseerabad has also changed as it is now written with double "e" instead of "i" as in the past.

² This a local term used to refer to villages of small-landlords. More description of this term provided in Chapter 2 and 6.

³ I was added to the group by youngsters of a kinship group after spending a few weeks in their *otaq* (communal space).

⁴ A Union Council in Pakistan is the smallest administrative and local government unit.

debate among the group's members over whether their *mazan* (an elder of a kinship group) should meet the politician. Gatherings at weddings often provide an opportunity for such leaders to voice their demands and remind politicians of unmet promises made during the election campaign.



Map 1: Naseerabad Division of Balochistan.

(The areas highlighted in red are part of the Naseerabad Division of Balochistan. However, only those regions adjacent to and bordering Sindh are irrigated by canals that draw water from the Indus River. These include the districts of Jaffarabad, Sohbatpur, and Naseerabad as shown on the right side. Source: Wikimedia Commons and *tehsildar* Naseerabad).

During the discussion in the WhatsApp group, it became clear that the elder or *mazan* had chosen not to attend the event in person. Instead, he decided to send his younger brother. I learned that he was sent to fulfill *ilaqadari*, or neighborly obligations, to the hosts of the wedding. This decision was intentional. By fulfilling his social duty to neighbors whereas choosing not to meet the MNA himself, the elder signaled dissatisfaction with the politician. This was related to unfulfilled commitments for “*sakari nokri*,” or government employment, and “*taraqiat* fund,” or development funds, made since 2018, when the last elections took place (“Personal Communication with the Village Youngsters” 2020).

When I asked if this act risked offending the MNA, the elder of the kinship group brushed off concerns: “He [the MNA] is neither our landlord nor tribal chief; he is a politician. If he wants our votes, he must meet our needs.” (Haibat Khan 2020). This statement is telling. In contrast to the coercive relationships described by Siraj-ul-Haq, the support from this kinship group seemed to rely on tangible benefits. The political ties of the villagers with the MNA were transactional; their votes were contingent on fulfilling their demands rather than loyalty to a traditional authority figure.

The youngsters of the kinship group supported the stance of their elder. One stated, “Why should we waste our time if he does not listen?” (“Personal Communication with the Village Youngsters” 2020). Another added, “If nothing changes, we will not vote for him [the present MNA] again” (Ibid). If promises remained unfulfilled, their threat to withdraw electoral support indicated that they understood their political leverage. They knew that their support in the form of votes was a resource politicians could not take for granted.

By midday, word spread through the same WhatsApp group that the MNA had called the kinship group leader. He had requested to visit the group’s *otaq*, the communal guest space. Within half an hour, the MNA arrived to find chairs arranged and refreshments prepared by the young men of the kin group. The kinship group leader greeted him warmly. First, he engaged in casual conversation before gently raising the key issue: “These young men are making my life hard. They have no jobs and spend their days on their phones. They need to start their lives, but without work, they cannot move forward” (“Observation of a Communication in Otaq” 2020). Responding to this direct appeal, the MNA assured the elder, “*Insha’Allah*, there will be good news soon. Your boys are in my mind, and whenever there is an opening, I will let you know” (Ibid). This exchange shows that the MNA recognized the kinship group’s demands and expectations and his dependence on their political support. The villagers organized through kinship relations, were able to leverage their collective votes to draw the MNA into their *otaq* and secure a renewed promise of providing access to state resources.

This episode captures the distinct political relationship at play in Village A. Rather than passive recipients of top-down authority, as Siraj-ul-Haq framed the relationship of the people in this area, villagers operated as kinship groups that actively negotiated with their

elected representatives. They asserted their demands and exerted pressure by organizing collectively, translating each vote into a bargaining tool. This episode showed that politicians must earn and retain their support.

1.2.2. Village B: Constrained Political Leverage

Approximately 35 kilometers downstream from Village A, located at the tail-end of the canal system, lies Village B. Here, the villagers faced a different challenge. It was rooted in water scarcity and power imbalance with their neighboring villagers. One evening at the village *otaq*, the villagers expressed frustration that influential landlords from a neighboring upstream village had blocked the *gandh* (watercourse) that watered the fields of Village B. I was told that this obstruction was motivated by the demands of the landlords residing upstream for money. This situation represented the entrenched inequalities in water control and access along the canal's tail-end.

As I tried to understand the problem, Faisal, the village head in Village B, explained that the recent conflict emerged as he had attempted a workaround to access water: he sought *aarzi manzoori* (temporary permission)⁵ from irrigation officials to install a direct pipe near the canal minor to bypass the upstream village entirely. This solution, he told me, would have secured access to irrigation water for Village B without submitting to extortion or, as Faisal put it, "blackmail of our powerful neighbors." Yet the attempt to have this direct connection sparked a strong reaction from the upstream landlords, who interpreted it as a threat to their monopoly over water flows (Faisal 2020).

Unlike the elder in Village A, Faisal held no particular expectations that the member of parliament would intervene on their behalf. Faisal said the elected representative had long been absent and openly claimed that water distribution issues lay "beyond his power" (Ibid). Instead of pushing for the impossible, the villagers of Village B had come to accept other, more modest forms of favor, such as small government contracts for school or road repairs. "We accept whatever is possible for us. If not water, then contracts are also fine," Faisal remarked (Ibid). It represented a more constrained form of negotiation with their patron.

⁵ This is a term used for illegal arrangements which are mostly based on cash transactions with irrigation authorities.

The contrasting experiences of Villages A and B highlight the diversity of political leverage within canal-irrigated Balochistan. In Village A, the leader of the kinship group chose to withhold a personal meeting with the Member of the National Assembly (MNA) by not attending the wedding to exert pressure and seek a renewed commitment. In contrast, Village B faced challenges to access water due to powerful neighboring groups and had no assistance from their local representative, which showed the village's weaker bargaining position. Yet, political relationships in both cases were not mediated by the heavy hand of tribal or feudal authority but by complex calculations of patron politicians who calculate the value of extending certain benefits over others.

This contrast raises a key question: **Why do some villages manage to leverage their electoral participation into meaningful access to state resources whereas others must settle for lesser forms of patronage? Broadly formulated, it raises the question of why certain groups excel to access state resources through electoral participation while others face challenges.** Understanding the conditions that enable Village A's strategic maneuvering and Village B's relative accommodation opens the door to a broader analysis of how irrigation, kinship, local structures of power, and political mediation shape the contours of power and politics across the canal-irrigated Balochistan.

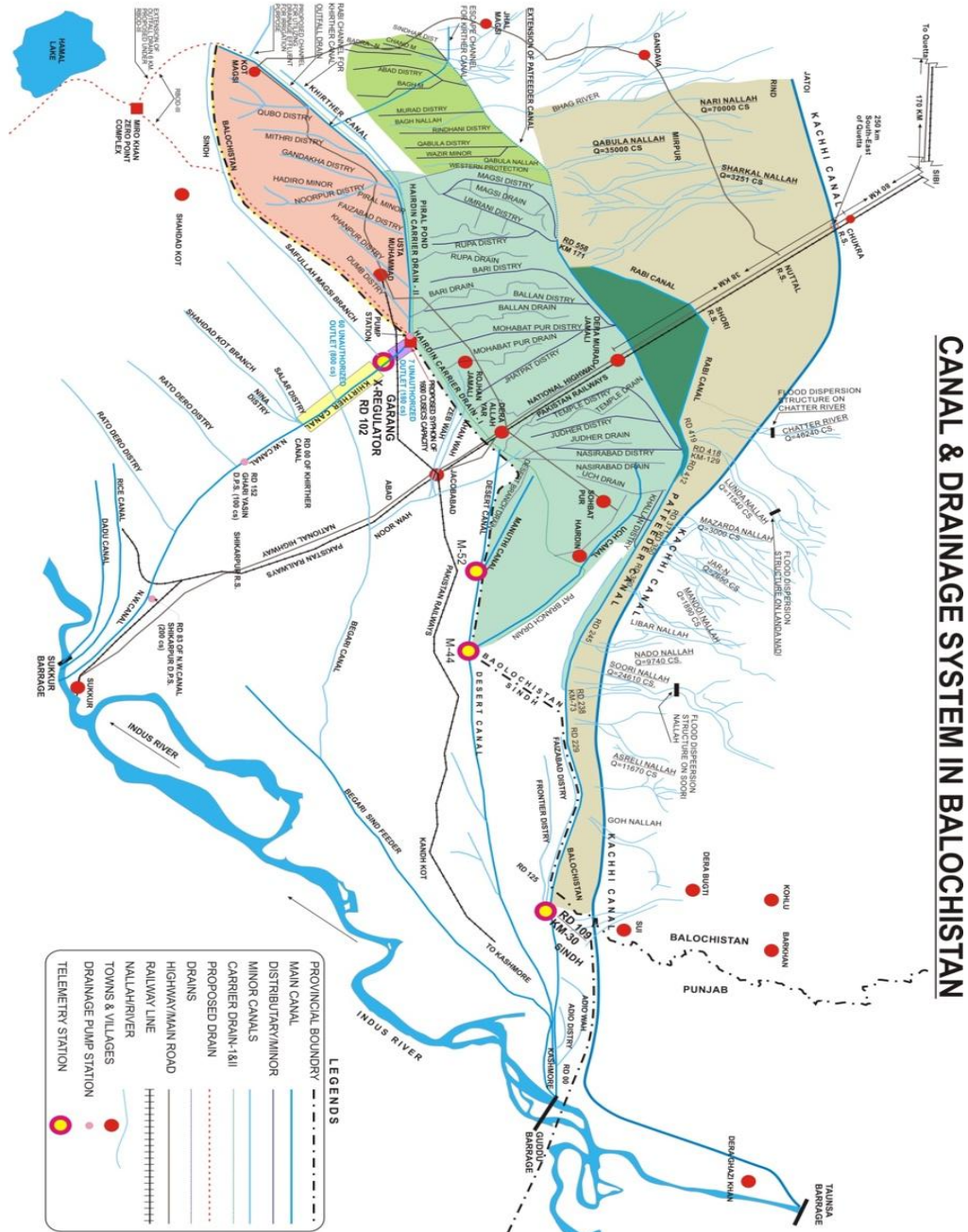
1.3. Unearthing Naseerabad: Layers of Diversity and Difference

As I traveled across Naseerabad, I was struck not only by the area's physical characteristics but also by the profound social and economic variations etched into it. An expanded network of canals carved through the *Kacchi* plains (see Map 2) linked villages that differed in almost every conceivable way. In some villages, large landlords lived side-by-side with their tenant farmers⁶; in others, tightly-knit kinship groups of peasant proprietors tilled their own land and maintained a degree of autonomy.⁷ There were also villages where landlords were absent, their estates managed by *jamadars* (managers), which forced the peasant villagers to circumnavigate local politics on their own.⁸

⁶ This includes areas in Sohbatpur district, where large Khosa landlords are dominant, and certain *tehsils* in Jaffarabad district, where the Jamalis are the dominant landowning group.

⁷ This includes areas in Jaffarabad and Naseerabad districts, primarily served by the Pat Feeder Canal and its branches, such as Judher, Temple, and Mohbatpur, which traverse both districts.

⁸ These villages were primarily concentrated in Khosa and Jamali-dominated areas of the division.



Map 2: Canal Networks in Naseerabad Division of Balochistan

(This map shows the elaborate network of canals in Balochistan. These canals primarily serve the agricultural districts within the Naseerabad Division. Notable canals include the Pat Feeder, Khir Thar, and the newly constructed Kachhi Canal).

This complexity extended beyond the organization of the settlement structure. Waves of historical migration have produced a mosaic of tribes, castes, and ethnicities who live in Naseerabad. They practice their language and tribal customs openly. Sindhi-speaking Jamote

villages, characterized by small landholdings, were situated alongside Brahui-, Seraiki- and Balochi-speaking landlords, with small, medium, and large landholdings. This explains the linguistic diversity of the region: Brahui dominated some villages, whereas neighboring villagers spoke primarily in Sindhi or Balochi.⁹ Therefore, most people in this area are fluent in at least three languages. These social and cultural pluralities, in conjunction with settlement structures, shaped not only how people related to one another but also how they formed alliances, pursued state resources, and formed and engaged with the political structures around them.

As I moved along the canal system, from the canal head to the canal tail, the relationship between infrastructure and inequality became evident. Upstream villages, closer to major irrigation channels, enjoyed reliable access to water. They also had comparatively better schools, functioning dispensaries, and accessible roads linked by bridges. In contrast, downstream villages, mainly small landlord and peasant-proprietor villages faced infrastructural neglect: education and healthcare facilities were often rudimentary, portable water was hard to come by, and rudimentary roads became impassable in bad weather. I was convinced that such disparities were neither accidental nor merely geographic. They must have a connection with historical and political processes.

As I observed these differences, it raised several questions. I asked why villages, which were geographically close, were so different in their social structure and public services. I also wondered whether state interventions of the past not only shaped the canal's physical layout but also influenced the local structures of power and, thus, political processes at the local level. Ultimately, these questions crystallized the last inquiry of my research: **How have historical processes of settlement, land distribution, and irrigation access shaped the socio-political diversity in canal-irrigated Balochistan, and in turn, how do these differences inform contemporary forms of political engagement and negotiation?** By examining these questions, I sought to understand the legacy of past interventions and inequalities that continue to shape the political life of this region.

⁹ According to government data, approximately 55% of residents in the Nasirabad division speak Balochi as their mother tongue, followed by 19% who speak Sindhi, 13% who speak Brahui, and 12% who speak Seraiki. (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2023).

1.4. Literature Review: Exploring Theoretical Frameworks to Develop Hypotheses

1.4.1. Literature on Balochistan: Limits and Gaps

As a starting point, I looked at the rich but thematically circumscribed body of literature on Balochistan. Existing scholarship tends to converge around a limited set of tropes: the predominance of tribal hierarchies, the centrality of nomadic lifestyles, and the significance of nationalist insurgencies are recurring motifs in anthropological, historical, and political analyses. Anthropologists, in particular, have closely examined transitions from tribal to pastoral and settled ways of life. They have looked at how external influences and state interventions impact the traditional way of life. For instance, Pehrson's (1966) classic study of the Marri Baloch tribe in the Suleman Ranges demonstrated how the Marri tribe shifted from raiding to a more diversified economy, including some elements of settled agriculture, as state interventions altered their seasonal movements from the hills to the plains. Similarly, Matheson (1967), through her five-year stay with the Bugti tribe in the 1960s, focused on the persistence of social and religious customs amidst the encroachment of Western technologies and the state. It showed how outside forces reconfigured tribal life.

Subsequent anthropological inquiries challenged simplistic narratives of linear "transitions." Scholz (2002), writing in the early 1970s, disputed the notion that tribal groups simply surrendered their nomadic ways once confronted by the colonial or post-colonial state. He argued that colonialism reshaped and rearticulated internal tribal relations rather than replacing them wholesale. Likewise, Pastner's (1971; 1979) work in Makran and Spooner's (1984) research on nomadic groups in Balochistan highlighted the complexity of economic and social changes. They stressed that policy-driven development initiatives often produced unanticipated outcomes that disrupted a pre-existing balance between pastoral and agricultural activities rather than neatly integrating these different social systems into a modernized sedentary order. More recently, Swidler's (2014) work supports Scholz's argument, as it stresses that what is commonly depicted as a "traditional tribal system" in Balochistan is a colonial construction appropriated by the post-colonial state to deflect accountability for its current governance failures.

Political scientists and historians have approached Balochistan from a different yet complementary angle, they foreground ethnic nationalism, state formation, and center-

periphery tensions in their analysis of Balochistan. The confrontation between an expansionist, resource-seeking state and a putatively static, tribal- and feudal-based society emerged as a dominant theme in the 1960s and 1970s. Marxist scholars, such as Ahmad (1973), assessed land reforms and guerrilla warfare in Balochistan not just as anti-state insurgencies but as conflicts between two conservative actors. Later research, including Harrison's (1981) influential work, turned to the nexus of state expansion, resource extraction, and ethnic nationalism. He showed how the Punjabi-dominated military-bureaucratic apparatus fueled Baloch nationalist aspirations as it exploited the internal tribal fissures. Subsequent studies by Baloch (1987), Redaelli (1997), Axmann (2008), Swidler (2014), and others further expanded on these historical and political processes. They examined the historical emergence of the Khanate of Kalat¹⁰ (Dashti 2012; Baloch 1987), the relationship of tribal leaders with the colonial state (Swidler 2014), and the subsequent development of Baloch nationalist politics (Kausar 1993; Redaelli 1997; Axmann 2008), the center-periphery conflict (G. Khan 2014), and the question of identity in the post-colonial era (Titus 1995).

Taken together, these scholarly engagements paint a portrait of Balochistan in which tribalism, nomadism, and insurgency appear as defining features. Although these frameworks have yielded important analyses, they also produce an analytically compressed image of the province. As a result, they insufficiently account for regions in Balochistan that do not fit these well-worn paradigms. Such is the case with Naseerabad, a canal-irrigated and densely populated agrarian division in the *Kachhi* plains. Unlike the mountainous and arid terrains that dominate classical depictions, Naseerabad's social and agrarian order is not primarily shaped by tribal hierarchies or nomadic pastoralism. Nor does it lend itself easily to the insurgency narratives that so often define state-society relations in the province.

Instead, the historical and political trajectory of Naseerabad has been substantially molded by state-led infrastructural interventions. Most notably, its integration into the Indus Basin Irrigation System (IBIS).¹¹ As a result, demographic shifts have unfolded in the area over the

¹⁰ The Khanate of Kalat was a semi-autonomous princely state in what is now Balochistan, Pakistan. It emerged in the 17th century as a tribal confederacy led by the Khan of Kalat, who acted as a sovereign ruler over a collection of Baloch tribes. For more details see Dashti (2012).

¹¹ It is an irrigation system developed mainly during the British colonial period and later extended after independence. It forms the backbone of agriculture in Pakistan. The system is fed by the Indus River and its tributaries, along with a complex network of barrages, canals, and distributaries.

past century. The construction of the Khir Thar Canal (1932) in the colonial period and the subsequent addition of the Pat Feeder Canal (1966) in the post-colonial period introduced irrigated agriculture on a scale unparalleled in Balochistan. It transformed the region into one of the province's most densely populated agricultural zones. Today, it has a population of 1.4 million ("Balochistan: Households, Population, Household Size and Annual Growth Rate" 2023), as opposed to just 40,000 at the turn of the twentieth century (Smart 1905).

Naseerabad's social and political life is anchored in the politics of water access, land tenure, and settlement policies implemented over the long twentieth century. These factors cannot be adequately understood by relying on existing tribal or insurgent-focused frameworks that have overlooked regions like Naseerabad.

This discrepancy raises interesting questions. How do we understand a region's history and political processes when they are not driven by the logic of tribal authority or nomadic adaptation nor significantly framed by nationalist insurgency? What happens to standard narratives of center-periphery relations and ethnic marginalization when the state's primary legacy is not neglect but interventions? Moreover, what if local hierarchies result from irrigation and land policies rather than lineage-based authority? Most importantly, how can we understand the political behavior of people not informed merely by tribal codes or nationalist struggles?

1.4.2. Developing Hypotheses from Theories in Expanded Literature

Addressing these questions required expanding the analytical lens beyond conventional Balochistan-focused literature. Naseerabad's story compelled me to look elsewhere. I began engaging with bodies of work that study how state-led interventions in irrigation, land settlement, ownership, and social engineering have been important in shaping social and political relations, especially during the colonial period. My engagement with comparative studies of such transformations in colonial and post-colonial South Asia and the political ecology of irrigation projects helped me understand patterns and processes overlooked by dominant narratives on Balochistan. It became clear that these frameworks were key to understanding the complex and varied political reality and behavior in Naseerabad. In doing so, this thesis attempts not only to fill a lacuna in the historical literature on Balochistan but also contribute to broader political science debates on how state interventions and historical processes condition local contexts that subsequently produce peculiar configurations of political behavior and participation.

Drawing on this broader literature, which has established theoretical frameworks, I developed a set of working hypotheses for Naseerabad in the absence of any literature on this area. The narration below gives the reader an idea of my journey as I engaged with the literature on the questions this thesis raises. These hypotheses served as conceptual tools, guided the empirical investigation, and helped illuminate how, in the absence of the paradigmatic drivers of tribal hierarchy or nationalist insurgency, alternative configurations of power may have emerged that influence political processes at the local level.

1.4.2.1. Colonial Objectives, Institutions, and their Legacies

In his examination of state power, Mann (1995) highlights the importance of revenue as a key indicator of the state's relationship with society. This lens also proves helpful for understanding colonial state formation in British India, where revenue extraction was central to the imperial project beginning with the Permanent Settlement in Bengal (Washbrook 1981; Guha 1982; Swamy 2011). The similar logic was at play in the protracted settlement process of the Upper Province (parts of Uttar Pradesh), where Singh (1991) notes that the East India Company was interested in revenue maximization through heavy taxation which led to much misery and resistance in these areas. Bayly's (1996) account captures how land revenue served as the epistemic tool through which the colonial rulers "knew" Indian rural society. He writes, "land-revenue emerged as the determining discipline through which the conquerors 'knew' Indian rural society" (Ibid., 151). This approach made sense in light of British priorities, as Sharma (1990) notes that the colonial rule aimed at extracting agrarian surplus, which was channeled to the metropolitan center for military expenditures and the maintenance of the imperial infrastructure (552).

The transformative nature of these revenue policies is further explored by Bhattacharya (2019). He demonstrates that colonial land settlements, like the Permanent Settlement, *Ryotwari*, and *Mahalwari*, were not just administrative innovations but restructured agrarian relations to serve British fiscal interests. These policies inscribed the logic of revenue extraction in property rights and thus had far-reaching social and economic implications in rural colonial India (Ibid., 109-142). I. Ali's (1979) seminal study on canal colonies in colonial Punjab provides a well-documented example of these processes. It shows how the colonial state and local landed elite forged an alliance for mutual benefit around irrigation projects that enhanced agricultural productivity and generated surpluses that they benefitted from. He notes that the agrarian order in canal colonies increased incomes for both the state

and the class controlling “means of production” and thus made the profitability of colonial enterprise in these areas “an incontestable fact” (Ibid., 19, 280). In addition, he underlined that the colonial state’s interventions, in water control and land utilization were not separate from its attempts at “social engineering” to create a profitable system (I. Ali 1987, 116).

Building on Ali’s work, Javid’s (2012; 2015) work shows how the British conquest of Punjab in 1849 laid the foundations of an administrative framework that continues to influence political processes in Pakistan. This system intertwined the interests of the colonial state and the landed classes. In exchange for maintaining order and ensuring a steady flow of revenue, the landed elites enjoyed economic privileges and political patronage under this system (Javid 2012, 100). However, Sharma’s (1990) qualification reminds us that even though profitable, these arrangements did not result in development in the colonies. The surpluses from the colonies were not reinvested, and commercialization did not necessarily uplift most of the rural population (Ibid., 552). Similarly, I. Ali (1987) carefully shows that those who benefited from the colonial rule were the “better-placed social groups” or in other words, a minority elite (116).

The administrative arrangements to achieve such goals in India were anything but uniform. Naseemullah (2022) conceptualizes the British Empire as a “patchwork state,” a formation that arose from staggered conquests over centuries and was shaped by institutional improvisations that took place in response to local conditions. This fluidity, rooted in different phases of colonial expansion, is also evident within a single province, as Mohmand’s (2011) study of Crown and Proprietary villages in Punjab reveals. In Crown villages administered under “colony law,” landownership was more widely distributed among the village population, and non-landowners had access to homestead land. By contrast, in Proprietary villages, *zamindar*-led village proprietary bodies (VPBs), land ownership was concentrated, and dependency relations were pronounced (Ibid., 40-42). Mohmand argues that the origins of these villages lay in different periods in colonial history in India, which informed the respective policies on land settlement that continue to exert influence on village politics even today.

Indeed, selective accommodation and differential governing methods are confirmed in works that examine other parts of British India. For instance, Ahmed’s (1984) analysis of Sindh highlights the colonial view of that region as an “agricultural hinterland” to feed Indian and international markets, especially the textile centers of Bombay, Ahmedabad, and England

(Ibid., A156). The colonial state in Sindh relied on an extensive irrigation network rather than intensive forms of agrarian improvement and thus focused less on productivity (Ibid.). Haines (2011) supports the patchwork nature of the colonial state through his findings on Sind, where he argues that it was far behind its neighbors in irrigation development under colonial rule. An important finding he provides is that settlement in Sind was piecemeal yet linked with the question of land revenue (Ibid., 40-41). Taken together, the accounts mentioned so far illustrate how the British tailored their rule to diverse local realities as their empire expanded.

Frontier regions and native territories further complicate the understanding of colonial rule. Mamdani's (1999) concept of the "bifurcated state" illustrates how colonial rule in Africa imposed direct rule in urban areas or settler territories whereas it relegated rural areas or native territories to indirect rule under customary law. It was a dual system of power under a single colonial authority (Ibid., 866). Hopkins (2015) applies a similar lens to British India. He describes the "frontier governmentality" in the North-West Frontier Province through instruments such as the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), which labeled specific populations as "wild tribes" and curtailed their political agency (Ibid., 369). An important characteristic of such governmentality at the frontier was what Kolsky (2015) calls "the legal regime of exception" which means that colonial violence at the frontier gave way to engendering exceptions within the law.

Likewise, Haines (2015) notes that at the Baloch frontier of Sindh, the colonial state sought to transform nomadic groups that evaded state control into sedentary agriculturalists. They aimed to make them more amenable to taxation and control (Ibid, 651, 656). In addition to the legal frameworks, colonial infrastructural power was vital. Gilmartin's (2020) work on the Indus Basin reveals how large-scale irrigation projects reshaped not only ecology but also social and property relations. By controlling water distribution, the colonial state could integrate tribal populations into the new system of authority and law, whereby the changes in environment and identity went hand in hand.

These studies demonstrate that the colonial state deployed distinct governing methods rather than acting as a monolithic apparatus. It strategically advanced imperial objectives through varied legal, infrastructural, and administrative means.

Hypothesis (H1): Based on the literature above, it is plausible to hypothesize that during the colonial era in Naseerabad, land settlements, irrigation projects, and administrative arrangements were collectively geared towards revenue generation and imposition of order through reshaping social relations. Like in other colonial contexts, the British likely created a property regime and established a class of privileged landed and tribal intermediaries who facilitated them to collect taxes and administer the local population.

1.4.2.1.1. Institutional Legacies: Influences on Economic and Political Developments

Mamdani's (1999) work illustrates the legacy of colonial institutions. He shows that the structural duality of the bifurcated state often persisted after independence. He shows how the post-colonial elites continued to govern rural populations through indirect rule that reinforced authoritarian practices and entrenched social cleavages. Lowes and Montero's (2021) study of the Congo Free State demonstrates the durability of similar extractive logic in colonial Africa. Rubber concessions, which were secured through violent coercion and indirect rule, effectively undermined native institutions and created long-term deficits in education and health. Even though the population in these concession areas sometimes developed stronger social cohesion to cope with exploitation, they also inherited leadership structures that remained largely unaccountable. Thus, it perpetuated weak public goods provision in the long run. These findings are further confirmed by Huillery (2009) in her work on the long-term impact of colonial public investments in French West Africa. Her findings support the argument that colonial policies, in the form of investments, had continued effects on post-colonial developments, especially related to health and education infrastructure.

Iyer's (2003) comparative work on the colonial land tenure system, namely the landlord-based versus non-landlord system in India, both supports this thesis and adds another layer to it. The land-lord-based system, subject to the Permanent Settlement of 1793, was a system in which "landlords were given the authority to extract as much as they could from the tenants, and as a result, they were in a position to appropriate most of the gains in productivity" (Ibid., 63). In contrast, in non-landlord or cultivator areas, "rents were raised frequently by the British in an attempt to extract as much as possible from the tenant" (Ibid.). Her research reveals that areas with landlord-based systems continue to suffer from lower agricultural productivity and higher social inequality, which shows the long-term ramifications of colonial land tenure policies (Ibid., 72-74). Similarly, Kapur and Kim's (2006) work on India demonstrates that in the post-colonial period, areas with *ryotwari* and *mahalwari* systems,

where cultivators or village communities held property rights, had relatively higher levels of agricultural productivity and urbanization. Notably, the difference in productivity from landlord-based areas was visible even before the colonial period ended (Ibid., 9-10). Nevertheless, these positive outcomes became especially pronounced in the post-independence period, mainly during the Green Revolution. They show how less extractive property rights regimes laid the groundwork for more productive economic development (Ibid).

Apart from economic trajectories, land and administrative structures have also left an imprint on post-colonial political life. For instance, Mohmand's (2011; 2019) work on Crown and Proprietary villages in Punjab shows how these structures continue to shape the political processes at the village level long after colonial rule. She finds differences in voting behavior in the respective villages which are influenced by historic land inequality. As Javid (2012, 2015) shows in his work on Punjab, the path-dependent nature of such institutional legacies shows the difficulty to dismantle existing institutional arrangements once they have been set in motion. These studies, taken together, show that early institutional conditions shape subsequent development trajectories. The evidence indicates that colonial-era institutional structures continued to exercise a powerful influence in the post-colonial period in different realms. Even long after independence, colonial legacies influence economic and political developments.

Hypothesis (H1A): The colonial legacy is postulated to be visible in the patterns of land rights, class structure, and political and economic developments in Naseerabad broadly and, particularly, in its villages.

1.4.2.2. Post-colonial Legacies: State Building through Centralizing Authority

A central challenge in Pakistan's post-independence political trajectory was negotiations on power sharing among multiple actors. The conflicts over this issue have had long-lasting impacts on politics and society in Pakistan. As Jalal (1990) contends that understanding contemporary Pakistan hinges on interrogating its formative decade, during which the nascent state rapidly annexed princely territories and sought to consolidate authority (Bangash 2016, 76–77). This was a development that was not exclusive to Pakistan but also unfolded in post-colonial India (Jalal 1995, 160), especially in the case of Hyderabad and Kashmir (P. Talbot 1949). Within Marxist debates in post-colonial South Asia, Alavi (1972) famously defined

this type of state as an “overdeveloped” military-bureaucratic apparatus that inherited from colonial rule an institutional legacy that wielded disproportionate power relative to political parties and indigenous social classes.

Although the post-colonial state attempted to centralize power, its ambitions clashed with regional and local elites in peripheral areas. The politics in such areas encapsulate the idea of peripherality, as introduced by Rokkan and Urwin (1983). They define it as a relationship of particular areas that possess “minimal resources for the defense of its distinctiveness against outside pressure” (Ibid., 2). Despite such marginality, the local elite complicated the national integration project as imagined by the state authorities. The country’s diverse ethnic makeup compounded these difficulties (Wright 1991). The Alavian “overdeveloped state” apparatus, dominated by some ethnicities (Nasr 1992), often overlooked and repressed such reality in its pursuit of supremacy and engendering uniformity (Jalal 1990). At the same time, debates over land reform did take political space in the immediate post-colonial era (M. Ahmad 1959). The influence of landowning elites sanctioned under the colonial period was intimately tied to land ownership. Thus, efforts to impose centralized authority in an ethnically diverse country not only exposed center-periphery tensions but also inflamed them with ethnic color (Hewitt 1996; Sheikh 2018; F. H. Siddiqi 2012) and paved the way for a federal structure that remains defined by such fault lines to this day (Waseem 2011; 2024).

The accelerated consolidation of state authority left little room for meaningful regional autonomy. In peripheral regions like Balochistan, these tensions manifested in the resistance by tribal and traditional elites. This was particularly strong in the Kalat and the Marri-Bugti Hills, where the tribal elite both sought to preserve their privileges (A. Ahmad 1973, 13) and espoused regional autonomy against a state that was reliant on the use of force (Harrison 1981; Baloch 1987; Sheikh 2018). The state’s highhandedness was best manifested in Ayub’s reign, under which land reforms and military operations against the Baloch elite emerged to centralize power and neutralize them (Berseeg 2001). However, the existing literature shows that these processes did not unfold smoothly, as the local elite was successful in sabotaging land reforms (A. Ahmad 1973) and was able to resist militarily (Harrison 1981; Baloch 1987).

Karrar and Mastowlansky (2018) argue that such a militarized governance style was also deployed in north Pakistan and resembled the colonial frontier management strategies, which effectively marginalized local populations rather than integrating them. In East Pakistan, too,

linguistic and regional grievances against centralized power (Maniruzzaman 1971), dominated by Punjab, blew up into a civil war that gave birth to Bangladesh in 1971 (Ahmed 1972). The failure to accommodate ethnic plurality within the rigid confines of a centralized system revealed the dangers of disregarding local and regional demands in the interest of top-down control and uniformity (Majed, Akhtar, and Karrar 2022). In contrast to marginalized areas of Pakistan, Punjab, as the political and economic core, experienced a more negotiated state-expansion process. Javid's (2012) research reveals how pre-existing patronage networks adapted smoothly after independence (185). Essentially, the landed elite of Punjab successfully created alliances with the military-bureaucratic elite (Javid 2015). This alignment fortified central authority and protected class and ethnic interests (Yong 2007).

The populist interlude under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the 1970s briefly threatened traditional elites, even in Punjab, by mobilizing peasants to demand greater rights (Raza 2023, 341). Through rhetoric and legislative measures, Bhutto emboldened peasants to resist their landlords (Ibid.). N. G. Ali's (2020) work on the *Mazdur Kissan* Party in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) similarly details how tenant activism challenged the feudal elites. However, Herring (1979; 1983) critiques Bhutto's land reforms as largely symbolic: although they introduced land ceilings, these were not enough to dismantle entrenched feudal hierarchies. In peripheral regions like Balochistan, land reforms reportedly functioned as tools to secure Bhutto's political influence rather than empower the local population (Herring 1979, 543).

The state in Pakistan has never enjoyed uncontested authority despite inheriting a formidable administrative and military apparatus. Conflicts between the ethnicized military-bureaucratic apparatus and peripheral elites represent the complexity of consolidating state power. Whereas elites in Punjab benefited from centralized power, resistance in Balochistan and East Pakistan exposed the vulnerabilities of a top-down political system.

Hypothesis (H2): In Naseerabad, I hypothesized that the “overdeveloped” bureaucratic-military elite's attempts to centralize and consolidate power under Ayub and Bhutto would lead to ideological and violent confrontation with local landed and tribal elites in the form of armed struggle, political mobilization, and demands for regional autonomy.

Hypothesis (H2A): Based on the literature above, I further hypothesized that Ayub's land reforms were largely ineffective in altering land relations, while Bhutto's populist measures

achieved partial success, which must be visible in the limited land redistribution and partial erosion of elite privileges.

1.4.2.3. *Influences on Political Behavior*

The relationship of feudal and tribal elites with the state in the colonial and post-colonial periods provides a critical historical background for understanding debates on voting behavior in Pakistan. It has been argued that these entrenched intermediaries between the state and the population operate in socio-political hierarchies that continue into the present and inform the nature of electoral politics (Martin 2009; 2015). With their power still formidable, the factors that arguably shape voting behavior in Pakistan have nonetheless become increasingly complex, mainly due to transformations since the country's birth. A proper understanding of such dynamics thus rests on a brief examination of the relevant body of literature, which could help determine how historical legacies meet and interact with new political and social realities.

1.4.2.3.1. Economic, Social, Political, and Ideological Determinants

Early studies of rural politics in Pakistan focused on the role of economic dependency in shaping voting behavior. For instance, S. Ahmad (1977) observed that landlords, due to their control of both land and subsistence, were able to wield significant influence over the political choices of the villagers (Ibid., 67, 102). The argument was that material resources set the parameters for political action in rural Punjab. Similarly, Martin' (2009; 2015) ethnographic work in Sargodha confirms the persistence of landlord power, reproduced through debt bondage and other dependencies. However, though he noted signs of growing discontent in his work, he finds that elite-dominated structures adapt over time and show historical continuity.

However, Alavi's (1973) classic work allows us to complicate the reality as he showed that not all villagers depend equally on landlords. Among the economically independent sections of the village population, kinship institutions, like *biraderi panchayats*¹², were the center of political organization and bargaining in rural Punjab (Ibid., 55). His work showed that parallel social spheres, besides economic compulsions, also determine political behavior. Waseem (1994) extended this argument by focusing on "primary loyalties," which included

¹² Usually, a council of a particular *biradari* which functions as a structure to resolve their conflicts. For more details see Alavi (1973).

tribal, kinship, and feudal affiliations. His work suggests that primary obligations, rather than land ownership alone, inform voting patterns across regions like Balochistan and the North West Frontier Province (Ibid., 24). Wilder (1999) subsequently challenged the overemphasis on social determinants. He contends that party affiliation, patronage, and national-level issues were increasingly significant in shaping voter choices. He showed how, even in strongly hierarchical contexts, rural voters respond to changing political opportunities and incentives (Ibid., 188).

The research on historical moments of ideological mobilization reveals that class identity and political ideology sometimes override entrenched social and economic factors in influencing voter behavior. Jones's (2003) study of the 1970 elections in rural West Pakistan showed how Bhutto's populist appeals diminished the influence of traditional landlords and shaped the political choice of the rural populations. Likewise, Baxter (1974) and Shaheed (1979; 2007) documented instances when ideology and class-based struggles influenced political participation and politics broadly instead of patronage and kinship ties. Along these lines, research has also shown the significance of ethnic identity as a factor that influences the political behavior of voters in parts of Pakistan, especially in megacities like Karachi and peripheries (Mufti, Shafqat, and Siddiqui 2020). Indeed, such a development is not exclusive to Pakistan, as research on India shows a similar influence of ethnicity on political processes (Manor 1996; Alavi 2011; Chandra 2004b)

More recently, Mohmand (2011), in her work, has incorporated spatial factors to explain rural politics. In her study of rural Sargodha, she examines distance as an indicator of how connections with urban towns affect political relationships at the village level. She shows that villages farther from towns tend to remain under more influence of traditional local power holders. Similar conclusions emerge from nationwide quantitative research in India. For example, Krishna and Schober (2013) show that villages farther away from the towns tend to have poorer access to government services. In addition to the spatial factors, Mohmand (2011) shows that a village's social structure and land inequality also shape voting behavior (Ibid., 23).

Lastly, a growing literature in Pakistan, shows that gender significantly influences voting behavior. Cheema et al. (2019) show a persistent gender gap in political participation in Pakistan mainly due to conservative norms, limited political socialization and structural barriers. In addition, S. Khan (2020) argues that political parties, electoral institutions and

families play an important role in excluding women from electoral participation. Morgan-Collins (2024) confirms these findings based on the data from latest election, as she argues that social barriers and party disinterest are linked with underrepresentation of women voters in Pakistan.

The literature demonstrates multiple intersecting factors the influence voting behavior. Although economic dependence and landlord dominance remain central factors, they are supplemented and often complicated by kinship, party politics, ideology, identity, gender and spatial differences. Rather than one determinant, various factors shape local politics and voter choices in rural Pakistan.

Hypothesis (H3): Although historically entrenched tribal landed elites may remain influential in Naseerabad, their power would neither be absolute nor uniform. The broader literature indicates that variations in local social structures, which include the composition of village populations, the degree of dependency on landlords, and land ownership, may produce political relations that do not conform to a single logic of control. As a result, even when landed interests remain important, political participation may reflect strategic negotiations over patronage, ideological appeals, identity formation, gender dynamics and the geographical integration of a village into the broader political and economic structures. This would mean the polity would most likely be fragmented, and no one factor would explain the voting behavior.

1.4.2.4. Units of Decision-Making and Means of Political Organization

Inayatullah's (1963) early work on rural Punjab in Pakistan lays a foundation for understanding the collective dimensions of electoral behavior. He argues that the rural voter "is an inalienable part of multiple groups which completely overshadow his individuality [...] the family particularly, and the biraderi generally are the basic units which make political decisions" (Ibid., 50). This perspective highlights how individuals rarely act in isolation. Instead, they make political choices as members of closely knit social networks. Building on this, Waseem (1994) reiterates that electoral dynamics in Pakistan are not centered on individual voters. Rather, influential intermediaries, whether tribal, caste-based, or otherwise, deliver entire blocs of votes to politicians. Because these leaders can mobilize "hundreds or even thousands of votes" (Ibid., 236), political candidates concentrate on wooing them instead of engaging each voter independently.

In India, Brass (1965), based on qualitative interviews in Uttar Pradesh, looked at another unit of political organization, namely factions, which he defines as “a vertical structure of power which cross-cuts caste and class divisions” (Ibid., 236). Such factions, existing literature argues, are conflict groups that organize political action (Nicholson 1972; Nicholas 2012; Lyon and Hassan 2022). Alavi (1973) similarly discusses how factions in “peasant societies” unite dependent peasants with their landlords and preclude class-based affiliations. Even where elites are internally divided, lineage and caste ties create alliances that extend across sub-district and district levels. Wilder (1999) further observes that factional loyalties may override *biraderi* identities in Punjab. In this way, they may limit the direct electoral impact of kinship-based voting (Ibid., 186).

Scholars have long questioned the value of using factionalism to understand village politics for various reasons. For instance, Miller (1965), in his work on India, finds the alleged “disruptive” character of village politics through a factionalism framework unconvincing. He, therefore, advocates using the idea of “political groups” instead, which he defines as a “localized version of a competitive party system.” (Ibid., 27). A similar critique has been expressed in the recent work of Mohmand (2011), who goes beyond the settings where such conflictual politics unfolds and employs the concept of “vote blocs” to understand rural politics. They are territorially bounded, informally organized (Ibid., 142), and typically led by landed elites who recruit voters based on varied principles (Ibid., 208). Although socio-economic dependency can draw some members into these blocs, not all join solely because of coercion rather they utilize ties of kinship and clientelism to negotiate. Thus, voters participate in elections as rational and benefit-seeking actors. By extending the lens beyond factional conflict, Mohmand shows how collective electoral behavior can emerge through both dependent and autonomous strategies of alliances.

At the district level of the political system, political parties in Pakistan often prioritize the “electables.” These candidates command local followings via factions, vote blocs, or kinship networks. Thus, parties prefer such intermediaries over creating policy platforms (Javid and Mufti 2020, 145). Mufti, Shafqat, and Siddiqui (2020) describe such candidates as “autonomous, free-wheeling agent(s)” whose support base is only partially reliant on party affiliation (14). As centralized party structures grant district-level power brokers significant sway (Javid and Mufti 2020, 145), such electables remain central in delivering votes. Such politics, however, is not limited to Pakistan. In her research on India, Bussell (2019) shows,

for instance, that brokers who monopolize the distribution of resources locally do not leave many options for the higher-up politicians and parties but contract them to distribute such resources at the local level.

These factors, taken together, encapsulate the collective character of electoral politics in South Asia. It is a politics that often overshadows ideological commitments or policy-driven debates and is dominantly determined by group affiliations rather than individual decision-making.

Hypotheses (H4): In Naseerabad's villages, multiple overlapping groups (factions, vote blocs, kinship networks, etc.) will likely shape the political decision-making of voters. Consequently, political parties and candidates will focus on securing alliances with key intermediaries, which may include faction leaders, vote bloc heads, or other influential figures, rather than directly appealing to individual voters. This dynamic is expected to reduce the significance of ideological platforms or party programs, as the capacity to deliver votes, rather than shared political ideals, will be the primary currency of electoral influence.

1.4.2.5. Village-Level Disparities in Resource Access

Fox (1994) examined Mexico to provide a framework to understand how clientelist structures influence access to state resources in authoritarian contexts in transition. In these systems, elites control goods and services to secure loyalty, which disadvantages individuals without connections to influential brokers (Ibid., 157). Fox introduced the concept of "semi-clientelism," which suggests that although resources still move through patronage channels, there is potential for negotiation when local organizations are strong and work alongside reformist allies within the system. In such "pluralist enclaves," groups can leverage their organizational capacity to counter entrenched dependencies and partly loosen clientelist control (Ibid., 156).

This emphasis on the role of collective organization in shaping resource access echoes studies that center on the importance of social capital. According to Putnam (1994), social capital is the idea of trust, norms, and networks that enable collective action within communities. As a result, membership in such networks can enhance a group's capability to coordinate demands, negotiate with other actors, and improve livelihoods. Consider the study by Mitra (2010) among low-income households in India. It finds that informal contact, kinship, and caste ties are crucial to getting jobs and migrating to the urban labor market (Ibid., 1372). These results

align with the findings of Bebbington and Perreault (2015), who studied the highlands in Ecuador. They suggest that social capital can enhance the access of households and communities to financial and natural resources.

Similarly, Van Deth (2003) claims that the high social capital of groups facilitates a more effective engagement and interaction with the state and other external actors as it reduces transaction costs and strengthens internal cohesion (88). In addition, McCarthy and Zald (1977), in their work on social movements, argue that the success of any movement to achieve its demands lies in the ability of its leaders and supporters to mobilize resources, which include money, labor, organizational capacity, media access, etc. Essentially, they see the ability to mobilize existing resources in conjunction with strategic factors as important in defining success for such movements. The analytical thread running through Fox, Mitra, Van Deth, McCarthy, and Zald's contributions suggests that the social cohesion, trust, and strategic mobilization of available resources by any group condition their capacity to organize and secure their goals successfully.

Auerbach's (2016; 2019) work on Indian slums introduces another political dimension to these dynamics. He examines why some marginalized groups fare better than others in accessing public resources. He finds that where dense party networks exist within slums, competition among party workers enhances accountability and produces better development outcomes (Ibid., 112). In these contexts, local political entrepreneurs, often brokers, must deliver tangible benefits to maintain the support of their followers (Ibid., 122). Similarly, Auerbach and Thachil (2018) argue that brokers vie for client support in competitive brokerage environments by demonstrating their capacity to bring in state resources (775). Conversely, clients exercise their agency by selecting brokers with desirable attributes, like education, bureaucratic reach, or responsiveness (Ibid., 779-780). Competition does make brokers more accountable; the inability to deliver means that clients shift their allegiance to more effective intermediaries. Rather than being passive beneficiaries, such clients actively negotiate to access state resources. Thus, they can pressure brokers to secure benefits or risk losing influence.

Along similar lines, the work of Berenschot and Bagchi (2020) on brokers in Gujarat and Bihar shows that the evolution and fragmentation of broker networks have allowed people to put more pressure on the state to access resources. In other words, they support the argument that a competitive environment is important in facilitating access to the state. All the above

findings suggest that social networks, including existing resources, party competition, and brokerage environments, influence access to state resources. Using a similar argument, Kosec et al. (2018), in their work on rural Pakistan, argue that political competition at the Provincial Assembly constituency level is a good predictor of access to public infrastructure and essential services. They argue that the welfare of the people is linked to the levels of political competition in their respective constituencies.

Hypothesis (H5): In Naseerabad, villages with high levels of social capital, organizational capacity, competitive brokerage environments, and dense party networks are expected to secure greater access to state resources. Social capital, competition among brokers or intermediaries, and party network densities should increase accountability and incentivize intermediaries to deliver tangible benefits to their clients.

1.5. Methodology

In this section, I present a concise summary of the methods used in this thesis, which are elaborated on in great detail in Chapter 2 of the dissertation. The approach has been mixed methods, with both archival research and fieldwork conducted to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. I selected the methods based on the distinctive nature of the questions and hypotheses posed. The data analysis revealed that Naseerabad was a deviant case, as many hypotheses I began with needed to be revised. In this manner, the case study provided an opportunity to test and refine existing theories concerning colonial and post-colonial state policies and voting behavior at the local level.

1.5.1. Secondary Literature and Archival Data Collection

I collected data from existing research on Balochistan to contextualize the case of Naseerabad in the colonial and post-colonial periods. In addition, I looked at the literature on land settlement and canal construction in India, as well as land reforms and modernization in the post-colonial period, to situate the case of Naseerabad in Pakistan's general historical development. Nonetheless, the review made it clear that no academic research exists exclusively on Naseerabad. Therefore, I conducted extensive archival research in the District Record Office, Sibi, and Secretariat in Quetta, Balochistan, to gain access to documents.

I examined colonial-era administrative records, settlement reports, and letters exchanged among colonial administrators regarding the administration of Naseerabad and Balochistan. Most of these documents date from the late 19th century to the late 1930s. In addition, I

analyzed post-independence administrative reports and documents related to Ayub's and Bhutto's land reform, which ranged from 1948 to the early 1970s.

1.5.2. Fieldwork

I conducted four months of fieldwork in the Naseerabad division of Balochistan. I spent three months in two different *otaq* (communal spaces for men), Village A, my first case study, and in the only *otaq* in Village B, my second case study, for one month. Village A is located in eastern Jaffarabad and came into existence in the old Naseerabad sub-division during the 1970s due to the Pat Feeder Canal's construction and Ayub's Land Reforms. It lies at the head of the canal. In contrast, Village B came into existence in the late 1980s and lies at the tail-end of the canal. I conducted a comparative analysis of these two villages by looking at means and units of political organization along with access to state resources. The fieldwork included interviews, informal group discussions, and direct observations in the villages. The duration for the second case (Village B) was shorter as the coronavirus pandemic necessitated traveling back to Germany by suspending my fieldwork in April 2020. However, I conducted online interviews with villagers from Village B to compensate for the lost months of fieldwork.

I interviewed village elders and village youth to understand the political organization at the village level, which was essential to comprehend voting behavior and mechanisms for accessing state resources. All the interviews with villagers were conducted in the village *otaq* or village *dip* (communal and commercial space for locals). The interviews were conducted in Balochi. I made notes of the interviews as I was not allowed to record them. I also interviewed local government officials and irrigation department officers to gain access into their perspectives. The location for the latter interviews was usually government offices. All of these interviews were conducted in Urdu, and I made notes of them as they were performed.

As I lived in the village's communal space, my interviews with villagers became group discussions as many villagers joined these conversations. Instead of seeing this as a problem, I used these group discussions as a data source to comprehensively understand the village's social and political relations. Such discussions were usually one hour to three hours long. I did not moderate the discussions but asked questions for clarification when necessary.

Usually, village elders took on the role of moderators when the discussions unfolded in the *otaq*.

As I began collecting village data on history and politics, I realized that villagers, especially the elders, frequently referred to the past while answering questions about the present. Therefore, I decided to follow this seriously. Later, it emerged as a good choice, as much archival data post-1970s was unavailable in Sibi's record office. Therefore, I used these oral histories to narrate the story of Village A after the 1970s. It is important to note that competing narratives of the past existed within the village, which only go on to show the differences and competition in the village today.

1.5.3. Content Analysis of Data

After finalizing my data collection, I adopted Qualitative Content Analysis, following Krippendorff's (2004) approach, which I used to examine interviews, communications, reports, and letters systematically. This method involved "unitizing the data" (familiarizing myself with the content), making notes and memos, and then open coding to identify key concepts and recurring themes. Finally, I narrated my findings in relation to prior research and theories on other areas in South Asia to highlight Naseerabad's divergence from other contexts. This same process, which involved coding, categorization, abstraction, and narration, also guided my analysis of all the data I collected (for more details on this, see Chapter 2 on Methods).

1.6. Findings

1.6.1. Security Against Revenue: Nasirabad as an Exception (1903-1947)

Until 1903, the canal-irrigated territories of Balochistan were administered as a *niabat* under the authority of the Khan of Kalat, who ruled a confederation known as Kalat. A "*niabat*" was an administrative division overseen by a deputy or officer acting on the Khan's behalf. Nasirabad *niabat* was a fertile part of the *Kachhi* plains that bordered the Upper Sind Frontier of the Bombay Presidency during the 19th century. After protracted negotiations, in 1903, the Government of India agreed to lease the *niabat* from the Khan on a yearly quit rent basis. The prolonged discussions leading up to the lease and the subsequent Settlement Report and annual Administration Reports show the colonial administration's concern with frontier security in leasing this area (see Chapter 3).

Colonial authorities believed that granting *jagir* lands¹³ at the frontier to “landless hill tribes” such as the Marri and Bugti could achieve two interlinked objectives: settle nomadic Baloch tribesmen and thereby pacify this volatile borderland. Unlike in the core agrarian regions of British India, where land revenue served as the chief imperative of colonial land policy (I. Ali 1979; Washbrook 1981; Guha 1982; Bayly, 1996; Javid 2012; Bhattacharya 2019), in Nasirabad, the administrators regularly justified annual revenue shortfalls by emphasizing the necessity of stabilizing the frontier. This approach rested on a patron-client relationship: Baloch tribal chiefs ensured law and order through institutions like *Levy Thana* and *Jirga* System in exchange for concessions, including *jagir* grants and revenue remissions. Such arrangements on the frontier reveal much about colonial governmentality in which geopolitical and security concerns shaped administrative strategies at its peripheries. The Nasirabad case demonstrates that state priorities pivoted from purely economic rationales toward ensuring stability at the frontier (see Chapter 3).

This historical trajectory complicates **Hypothesis H1** and demands refining it. It posited that colonial-era land settlements and administrative measures were geared toward revenue extraction and producing order through social engineering. Nasirabad’s example complicates this assumption by showing that although revenue mattered, the imperial calculus placed an even greater premium on securing the frontier by integrating nomadic groups into a manageable system of control. The colonial policies on land and revenue in Nasirabad thus show that the pursuit of order and security often superseded immediate economic returns. This shows how, in peripheral zones, state rationalities diverged significantly from the revenue-oriented logic that defined the colonial rule in India’s core regions. By adapting Mamdani’s (1999) ideas to Nasirabad in British India, one finds a different configuration of bifurcation that was geostrategic rather than settler-native. This “Janus-faced” nature of colonial rule created a complementary relationship between the frontier and the core: frontier stability enabled economic extraction in the core areas of British India.

1.6.2. Centralizing State Authority: Redefining Patronage Relations (1947-1977)

In the immediate post-independence period, Nasirabad’s traditional landed elite, particularly the Jamalis and, to some extent, the Bugtis, found themselves at odds with the state in

¹³ Lands which were tax free or had reduced assessment rates.

Pakistan focused on centralizing power and modernizing agriculture. Unlike their counterparts in Punjab (Javid, 2012), they struggled to retain their privileges and patronage in the form of land ownership and being part of state institutions. The developments in this period challenge the supposition of **Hypothesis 1A** to the extent that colonial legacies did not completely determine the patterns of land ownership and class structure as the conflicts between the local elite and post-colonial state accelerated and subsequently redefined them. The advocacy for regional autonomy by Jaffar Khan Jamali, a notable Jamali tribal leader and politician, clashed with the bureaucracy and the military's agenda to centralize power. The matter escalated when the 1958 military coup left little space for provincial elites opposed the centralization of state power. Although no insurgency or military operations occurred in Nasirabad, the confrontation confirms the ideological component of **Hypothesis 2**: the local elites contested state-driven centralization, albeit without a full-scale rebellion.

The state's response to elite resistance was swift. The Martial Law Regulation-64 of 1959 resumed large tracts of Jamali and Bugti lands. It distributed them among the migrants from central Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, and civil and military servants. This weakened the agrarian base of power of these elites, especially the Jamalis, who were more dependent on land than Bugtis¹⁴. The decision to abolish colonial institutions like *Levy Thana* and the *Jirga system* further reduced their administrative authority. These measures reflected a calculated effort by the state to displace uncompromising elites and cultivate new local powerbrokers aligned with Ayub Khan's centralization drive. The success of the Khoas in the 1962 and 1965 elections shows that patronage to local elites persisted, but the conditions for its availability changed. This finding runs against **Hypothesis 2A**, which postulated that Ayub's reforms were ineffective in Nasirabad. The findings indicate that the nature of Ayub's policies was such that they increased the diversification of land relations and dismantled old institutions, which meant a transformation in the local power structure (see Chapter 4), which means that it was post-colonial state interventions that influenced local structure of power thus challenged the assumptions of **Hypothesis 1A**.

This situation was akin to what Alavi (1972b) called a relatively autonomous state that pursues its own strategic aims independent of class interests. Complementary to this is Skocpol's (1979a; 1979b) realist understanding of the state, which means that the state is not

¹⁴ The discovery of oil and gas fields in Bugti territories in the 1950s provided them with an additional source of income (see Matheson 1967), unlike the Jamalis, who were exclusively dependent on agricultural land.

a mere site where social conflicts unfold. Instead, it can act independently as it follows its own interests and imperatives. She argues that such autonomy allows the state to even go against the interests of the dominant classes (Skocpol 1979a, 13). She writes that “any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organizations” (Ibid., 12), a claim that finds support in the case of Naseerabad.

By the 1970s, elite politics in Nasirabad experienced another turn. In 1974, the Jamalis, who had previously resisted a centralized political system, realigned themselves with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party (PPP). By doing so, they became part of the counter-elite in Balochistan, which facilitated the persecution of the National Awami Party government as they provided legitimacy to Bhutto and, in return, enjoyed access to state patronage and privileges. This turnaround complicates **Hypothesis 2**, as it shows, how an initial ideological clash gave way to pragmatic negotiation. The local elite, recognizing where power and patronage lay, shifted its stance to secure resources rather than maintain principled ideological opposition (see Chapter 4).

Although the 1970 elections are often regarded as a major victory for ideological politics in Pakistan (Jones, 2003; Mufti, Shafqat, and Siddiqui, 2020), developments in Nasirabad reveal a more mixed picture. Bhutto’s removal of the National Awami Party-Wali government and subsequent policies deepened patronage instead of dismantling it. His land reforms, often portrayed as a serious challenge to feudalism, barely affected major landlords in Nasirabad, especially the Jamalis, who had become Bhutto’s political allies. Bhutto effectively used reforms to expand patronage rather than eradicate elite power as he selectively redistributed state land and left proprietary land holdings intact (see Chapter 5). This validated **Hypothesis 2A**, which contended that Bhutto’s reforms were only partially effective. Simultaneously, the peculiar dynamics of the implementation of these reforms highlight how they reinforced patron-client relations.

Contrary to the notion that patronage flourished fully only under Zia’s regime in the 1980s (Akhtar 2018; Wilder 1999), the Nasirabad case indicates that it was already well-embedded by the 1970s, particularly in peripheral regions. Instead of an abrupt turn to patronage in the Zia era, Nasirabad’s history reflects a progressive entrenchment of patronage-based governing logic that integrated subordinate elites and other groups over time. This trajectory illustrates how the centralization of power and elite resistance collectively defined the

evolving patronage arrangements that shaped Pakistan's political system long before the 1980s.

1.6.3. Negotiating for Resources: Land, Kinship, and *Ilaqadari* Relations

Two major developments influenced the political and social relations in Nasirabad during the 1960s and 1970s. First, the migration of diverse tribal and ethnic groups, including Brahui and Balochi-speaking tribesmen from central Balochistan, the *Kachhi* plains, and Punjabi *abadkars* or settlers from Punjab, altered the region's demography. Second, the opening of the Pat Feeder Canal under Ayub and the partial success of land redistribution under Bhutto reshaped class structure and settlement patterns in the area. Together, these changes created a form of electoral politics in newly established villages that diverged from the feudal and tribal affiliations typically associated with Balochistan (Waseem 1994, 98).

Village A, my first case study, emerged during this period and exemplifies this transformation. Unlike the hierarchical agrarian context of Punjab, which is defined by caste stratification and unequal land relations (Inayatullah, 1963; Alavi 1972, 1973; Rouse 1988), Village A and similar villages in Nasirabad that emerged in the 1970s were composed of migrant kin groups who tilled redistributed land. Social homogeneity, the absence of a landless class, and equal land ownership meant these new villages lacked the entrenched inequalities seen in other rural contexts in Pakistan. In addition, the geographical contiguity of these settlements to other similarly structured settlements, which were concentrated on state-resumed lands in Nasirabad that were redistributed under Bhutto's reforms, facilitated the development of *ilaqadari* (neighborly) relations among these villages. Such relations provided local cooperation networks and conflict resolution, i.e. social capital. In these villages, for villagers who were dis-embedded from older tribal lands and feudal ties, kinship, and neighborhood relations became the organizing principle for political and social life (see Chapters 5 & 6).

At the village level, these kin groups functioned like "vote blocs," where kin groups operated as unified political units that collectively organized political participation. In Village A, the kin-based organizations allowed the voters to use their collective bargaining power in their clientele relationships. The electoral participation improved access to state resources. These villages displayed a more horizontal model of clientelism, different from conventional patronage or feudal relations rooted in vertical dependencies. Social homogeneity and

equitable land ownership gave voters agency, which was evident in their ability to secure significant state resources in the 1980s and 1990s through public infrastructure and employment in Village A.

First, this case confirms **Hypothesis H3**, which posits that the variations in the social structure, especially the social composition of the village and its land relations, may produce political relations that cannot be folded neatly into singular explanations of political behavior. In this case, the combination of kinship-based settlement and the absence of a landless population significantly influenced the political behavior of the villagers. In addition, the emergence of local networks among neighbors for conflict resolution provided local level autonomy to the villagers; it lent them leverage in their relationship with their patron, a variable that was initially not part of **Hypothesis 5**. Thus, it required further refining the hypothesis. Effectively, all these factors, taken together, positively influenced the political behavior of the villagers and, thus, their access to state resources. However, such access was closely tied to external processes, such as the expansion of state infrastructure and the availability of public employment. However, the case also refines **Hypothesis 3** as it demonstrates that access to resources has a dimension that local conditions cannot influence, as the availability of public jobs influences the possibility of getting one. However, local conditions can influence access once resources are made available.

Second, this case also confirms **Hypothesis 4** by showing how group-based logic remained the central means of political organization at the village and Union Council levels. However, it does not confirm a part of **Hypothesis 5**, which posited that increased competition is linked to increased access to state resources, as in Village A, only two vote blocs existed for a long time, yet access to state resources was quite significant as evident in the construction of schools, dispensary, road and availability of public jobs in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, the absence of political parties in Nasirabad rendered the variable of party network intensity as a proxy for the ability of the residents to access state resources inconsequential. Nevertheless, the case of Village A confirms the other part of **Hypothesis 5**, which states that high levels of social capital can lead to greater access to state resources.

In addition, the evolution of “vote blocs” as informal political institutions in Village A revealed their vulnerability to fragmentation. It heightened competition within kin groups, which themselves have split over time. As the village’s settlement patterns and land relations have changed since its creation, with the introduction of a peasant population and increasing

land inequality, the principles that shape the “vote bloc” organization and, thus, means of resource distribution have also shifted. This is a reflection of the village’s changing socio-economic context. Further, demographic expansion, the introduction of local government elections, and the increasing frequency of general elections have encouraged new forms of political organization at the Union Council level, including *dhurr* groups. These groups have reshaped political competition at the local level by politicizing previously relatively inclusive *ilaqadari* relations and rendering them more exclusive. Simultaneously, they have allowed villagers to negotiate actively with multiple intermediaries both at the village and Union Council levels. Heightened competition and the proliferation of intermediaries with a breakdown of vote blocs have increased the number of intermediaries that voters can engage with; this has not translated into greater access to state resources, such as public employment. Indeed, increasing demand on local politicians now outstrips their capacity to deliver demanded resources, calling into question the assumption in **Hypothesis 5** that competitive environments enhance access to state resources. Instead, the enhanced political leverage is increasingly channeled into other forms of patronage and favors that can be more easily secured. In other words, access is shaped not only by the intensity of competition but also by what intermediaries are realistically able to provide in an environment where development funds and external constraints on finances limit what is available at the local level.

1.6.4. Dis-embedding and Reduced Political Leverage in Village B

If Village A’s experience illustrates the benefits of being embedded in local networks (high levels of social capital), **Village B’s** case highlights the consequences of exclusion. State-led interventions in the 1990s to remodel and extend the Pat Feeder Canal for expanded rice cultivation disproportionately affected Village B. Upstream villages at the tail-end of the canal, with large landowners, began to monopolize water access, which placed Village B at a disadvantage. As water access declined with the expansion of rice cultivation in the area, many villagers from Village B began migrating seasonally to nearby cities during the *Kharif* season (October–March) in search of employment. This migration process effectively dis-embedded them from their *ilaaqo* or area. As a result, it undermined their ties to social and political networks at the local level.

Over time, this exclusion from local political organizations intensified. As patron politicians increasingly relied on *dhurr* groups, which emerged as the central units of political organization in the area, to mobilize voters and distribute resources, villages not integrated

into these networks struggled to secure access to state resources. The exclusion of Village B from the *dhurr* groups considerably weakened the bargaining position of the village head in his relationship with local-level patrons. Without such integration, the traditional vote bloc leaders lost value for patrons. This case illustrates that political inclusion in local networks is essential for maintaining access to state resources and leverage in patronage relations.

Although land relations and kinship ties between Village A and Village B are relatively similar, the key difference between the two villages lies in the exclusion of the latter from local networks for political organization, namely *dhurr*. This exclusion arose primarily from the unintended effects of state policies related to canal management and crop cultivation, as well as the proximity of Village B to other villages with greater local power and topographical advantages. Thus, Village B's experience strongly supports **Hypothesis 5** insofar as it implies that villages with low levels of social capital may show low levels of access to state resources. Simultaneously, the case study of Village B, like Village A, supports adding additional variables to **Hypothesis 5**, which influences access to state resources. This is the effect of topographical (dis-)advantages in the face of water scarcity and local settlement structure, which influences the composition of water-sharing parties along the canal branches.

The lessons drawn from Village B also manifest the limits to patronage. Although *dhurr* groups can enable collective action and bargaining with patrons, their exclusive nature at the canal end places marginal groups at risk. Through time, exclusionary patterns reproduce inequalities and erode the legitimacy of patronage networks. Moreover, the reliance on migration as a coping strategy for dis-embedded groups introduces a further vulnerability: as households leave their home villages for seasonal work, their ability to rebuild local networks and re-engage with political processes is constrained at least initially in the short term, which creates a cycle of marginalization.

In sum, Villages A and B illuminate two critical dimensions of politics in Naseerabad. Village A confirms that being part of local networks can improve voter agency and access to resources, although this hinges on the availability of those resources. The village's location and proximity to neighboring villages with similar social structures and land relations are important variables that created conditions for its integration into local networks for collective organization. In contrast, Village B's struggles highlight how exclusion from these networks, due to the unintended effect of state interventions in conjunction with local power

imbalances, reduced the sole vote bloc's leverage in its clientele relationships, which influenced its ability to access state resources.

1.7. Defining Patronage

Before going forward, it is important to define the concept of patronage and patron-client relations. The good starting point is the classic formulation by Scott (1972), who defines patron-client relations as a transactional relationship. Here, a higher-status patron uses their influence and resources to offer advantages and protection to a lower-status client, who in turn repays the patron with support and labor (Ibid, 92). Scott highlights reciprocity as the defining feature of these relationships, a point further elaborated by Powell (1970). He stresses that such relations, by their nature, cannot rest on coercion alone; the involved parties must engage in a mutually beneficial exchange, thus he distinguishes patron-client relations from purely oppressive or one-sided arrangements (Ibid., 412). Based on Scott and Powell's understanding, it is possible to apply these ideas on a macro scale to analyze colonial frontiers, where administrators functioned as patrons and tribal chiefs as clients. Although the balance of power was unequal, the relationship was not purely coercive. Instead, it incorporated elements of mutual exchange, even if the looming threat of coercion was ever present.

To situate the discussions on patron-client relations in political science, the foundational work by Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) on the subject is helpful. They observe that patronage as a subject of investigation initially emerged from ethnographic and sociological case studies. During those early investigations, "political clientelism was merely a specific instance of a widespread pattern of social affiliations found in 'traditional' societies, ranging from Southern Italy and Senegal to India" (Ibid., 3). However, after the introduction of universal suffrage in post-colonial states, this focus shifted: political scientists began devoting greater attention to how patron-client relations influence electoral outcomes and party politics. Such analyses proliferated in the latter half of the twentieth century, when researchers explored how newly enfranchised citizens engaged in various forms of patron-client exchanges (Ibid.).

When extended to an electoral setting, patron-client relations take on a distinct political dimension. Scholars often conceptualize political patronage as a strategy used by influential figures, typically from ruling classes, who leverage their public positions and access to the state to deliver goods and services in exchange for political support (Chandra 2004a, 2004b;

Hassan Javid 2019). In electoral contexts, patron–politicians effectively become conduits to state resources for client voters (Javid 2012, 10–11). Chandra (2004a, 2004b) refines this perspective through the concept of “patronage democracy,” in which the public sector serves as a central source of employment and services, and those tasked with distributing these resources enjoy substantial discretion in distributing such resources. This dynamic, as Weingrod (1968) contends, essentially turns political arenas into a marketplace for trading votes in return for public benefits. It is important to qualify that this form of patronage stands in contrast to private patronage, where no public office or voting context is necessary, and patrons support their clients using private resources (Mason 1986).

Finally, Olivero (2021), based on her work on Argentina, offers an apt definition of patronage. She writes, within an electoral context, patronage is a “subtype of clientelism, in which the good that is exchanged is a public-sector job.” (Ibid., 5). This definition comes very close to the formulation by Scott (2005) in his work on American party development, where he equates patronage practice with “the strategic allocation of public jobs by party elites to enhance cadre performance in presidential elections.” (Ibid., 39). In keeping with these formulations, this dissertation employs the concept of patronage to stress both the practice of reciprocal exchange and the distinct political strategies by which patrons and clients negotiate access to state resources.

1.8. Contribution

This dissertation contributes to the scholarship on colonial rule, post-colonial state-making, and rural politics in multiple ways. First, it advances our understanding of British colonial rule on the frontiers of India by showing how security considerations in peripheral areas trumped revenue generation as a goal of colonial land settlement and irrigation projects. Second, this research enriches our knowledge of state-elite relations in the periphery of post-colonial Pakistan. It reveals that contrary to common assumptions about the continuity of elite power in Pakistan after independence, local landed elites in Naseerabad often faced diminishing authority and status under the ambitions of the state in Pakistan, particularly during the Ayub and Bhutto era. It highlights the divergent trajectories of elite power across the center and periphery and challenges notions of uniform elite dominance in Pakistan.

Third, this dissertation sheds new light on Bhutto's rule by showing how patronage, typically associated with Zia, became institutionalized as a logic of the state's function under the country's first democratically elected regime. Fourth, this dissertation highlights a hitherto neglected history of migration, land settlement, and village formation in Naseerabad. It reveals how such processes resulted in some specific patterns of rural politics. The study contributes to our knowledge regarding rural politics in Pakistan by documenting the rise of new forms of villages and their political practices. Compared to what has been generally known, a more heterogeneous and dynamic polity is presented. Fifth, the case of Naseerabad fills the gap in the literature on politics in Balochistan at the local level and challenges the established ways of understanding the province's politics. In so doing, it expands the empirical base of historical and contemporary politics in South Asia. It invites new theoretical reflections on how frontiers, peripheries, and rural spaces are governed and transformed over time. Lastly, it shows the unintended effects of state policies and interventions of the past that continue to influence local politics in diverse ways. Rather than assessing the intended outcomes of state interventions, this thesis shows the afterlives of unintended effects, primarily through the case of Village B, where adverse political outcomes for the villagers are directly linked with state interventions of the 1990s in remodeling and extending the canal along with introducing a new policy on crop cultivation. Finally, it identifies additional variables that influence the ability of voters to leverage their electoral participation to access state resources.

1.9. Limitations

This dissertation acknowledges several important limitations. First, due to conservative norms in the research area, it was not possible to incorporate women's perspectives into the study of village politics. As a result, the analysis lacks a gendered dimension that might reveal other forms of agency and the contours of decision-making inside the household. Second, although the dissertation offers a historical and analytical lens on canal-irrigated Balochistan, it only captures one village variant in a region defined by considerable heterogeneity. Additional research is needed to understand how the proposed analytical frameworks operate (or fail to operate) across the diverse village types in Naseerabad. Third, as the study focuses on a relatively small part of Balochistan, the findings must be contextualized; they cannot be universally extended to other rural settings in the province without careful consideration of local specificities. Finally, although this dissertation

incorporates multiple variables that shape village-level political processes the selection of such variables is not exhaustive. Other unexamined variables may also influence village politics. Thus, this allows room for further research to refine and extend the analytical model presented here.

1.10. Outline of the Chapters

This dissertation comprises nine chapters structured to guide the reader from broader historical and political contexts to a focused village-level analysis. Chapter 2 describes the research methodology and details the methods used for data collection and analysis. These methods include archival research, interviews, and ethnographic observations. Chapter 3 utilizes archival sources from Sibi and Quetta to show the colonial origins of land settlement policies and the administrative framework developed in Nasirabad in the early twentieth century. It establishes the historical backdrop against which subsequent political transformations unfolded. Chapter 4 moves into the early decades of the post-independence era and focuses on the 1950s and 1960s to examine confrontations between the state of Pakistan and local elites, particularly Jaffar Khan Jamali. It documents how state-led centralization efforts provoked local resistance and triggered persecution of elites like Jamali. Chapter 5 explores the 1970s when the Jamalis used the center-province conflicts to access state patronage and defend their interests. Drawing on oral histories, this chapter moves to the lived experiences of villagers during this period. Chapters 6 and 7 then shift the lens to micro-level analysis. Chapter 6 provides a narrative account of Village A, the first case study, and identifies key social and political relationships and processes. Chapter 7 examines how shifts in land relations, demographics, and political conditions since the village's inception have reshaped traditional organizational forms such as kin-based vote blocs and other local institutions. Chapter 8 introduces Village B as a comparative case; it shows how villages excluded from established local networks struggle to secure state resources. It also highlights how migration can create new political organizations that challenge conventional forms of local power. Finally, Chapter 9 brings all the insights from these historical and ethnographic case studies together and offers a concluding analysis.

2. Methodology

2.1. Mixed Methods for Data Collection

I utilized mixed methods to collect data to answer the questions that this dissertation raises. The methods include secondary research, archival research, open-ended interviews, informal group discussions, and direct observations made in the field. I used secondary literature and archival data for my research questions which investigate colonial and post-colonial governing methods and policies in Balochistan and Nasirabad. The secondary literature review was conducted to identify existing debates on the logic of colonial rule and the aims and ambitions of post-colonial state policies in Pakistan. Based on this review, I conducted archival research to collect data on Nasirabad. This involved analyzing historical documents from local and provincial archives and government records in Sibi and Quetta. The details of the data collection process in the archives are discussed in section 2.4 below. The data collected from the archives was analyzed using the Qualitative Content Analysis method.

Fieldwork was conducted to answer research questions that relate to understanding the set of relations voters in *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* Villages use to organize politically and to ascertain why certain groups excel in accessing state resources through electoral participation whereas others face challenges. The fieldwork included a four-month stay in two different villages in canal-irrigated Balochistan. I conducted open-ended interviews, informal group discussions, and direct observations in these villages. The data collected from the fieldwork was also analyzed through Qualitative Content Analysis. Details on the number of interviews, participants, and sampling technique are provided in the section 2.5. on the fieldwork below.

2.2. Naseerabad as a Historical Deviant Case Study

Gerring (2004) defines the case study method as “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (342). He argues that a unit means “a spatially bounded phenomenon,” which may include “a nation-state, revolution, political party, election, or person,” which is observed “at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time” (Ibid.). Following Gerring, this dissertation undertook the case study of Naseerabad during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The unit of analysis was the colonial and post-colonial methods of governing through local intermediaries. Such methods were examined by looking at land grants, land distribution, access and availability of

water, ministries in the federal cabinet, and access to state power. The analysis period on Naseerabad as a unit of study ranged from 1903 to the mid-1970s.

When employing the case study method, it becomes necessary to determine which type of case study one utilizes, as there are many types of case studies in social science. Arend Lijphart's work on various types of case studies has been influential. One of the types that is suited to my case is the Deviant Case method. He describes it as a method that focuses on a single case that deviates from established generalizations. The choice for such cases is based on the interest in understanding the reasons behind such deviation. By understanding such reasons, this method helps to identify variables that have previously been overlooked. Not only that, such a method may help identify additional variables, but it may also assist in refining the existing variables. Therefore, this type has theoretical value because it challenges existing propositions and may propose new or revised postulations. Concerning the validity of such postulates, Lijphart (1971) suggests that they require further comparative research that may confirm the findings (692).

The archival data collected showed that Naseerabad was a deviant case, as existing theories on the logic of colonial and post-colonial governing methods could not wholly explain this case. Based on the existing literature on colonial rule in India, I began by asking whether patronage aimed at producing revenue also informed colonial policies in Naseerabad. The data showed that the colonial interests in this area went beyond revenue generation. In this manner, this case was seen as deviant. Once this was established, this case refined existing propositions on colonial rule by adding that governing logic at colonial frontiers deviated from the core. Yet, it was inextricably linked with other colonial systems of rule. The security was necessary for revenue generation.

In the same way, the case of Nasirabad tested the premises of existing research that argues that in the post-colonial period, local elites in Pakistan could protect their privileges and power by adapting to the new reality. In this period, a unit of analysis was the land reforms introduced under General Ayub in Nasirabad, the abolition of the *Levy Thana* and *Jirga* System, and the exclusion of the local elite from enjoying state patronage through targeted persecution. A necessary explanation for this deviance in Nasirabad was found in two factors. First, the politics of the local elites in the 1950s and 1960s against the centralization plans of the bureaucratic-military elite were seen as a threat, which resulted in an authoritarian

reaction. Secondly, the large size of their landholdings, which were granted and sanctioned under colonial land settlement, made it hard for the local elite to protect their lands. It showed they did not enjoy the same state patronage as other elites in Pakistan, especially in Punjab. In this manner, the case of Nasirabad refines the propositions on state-elite relations in the post-colonial period by adding that the state manifested differently in the country's peripheries and core. So, the landed elite from small provinces, who challenged the centralization plans of the state and owned large tracts of land, were more likely to lose lands under Ayub's reforms.

It similarly tested the proposition that patronage as a logic of state operation expanded in 1980s Pakistan. The data on the provincial politics of Balochistan in the 1970s showed that such expansion was taking place in the peripheral regions like Balochistan, already under the democratic dispensation. This was especially demonstrated through the politics of the Jamali family from Nasirabad, who, by the 1970s, had decided to shun their past politics of agitation and assume a subordinate role at the center. Thus, here again, the case of Balochistan and Nasirabad emerge as diverging from the rest of Pakistan.

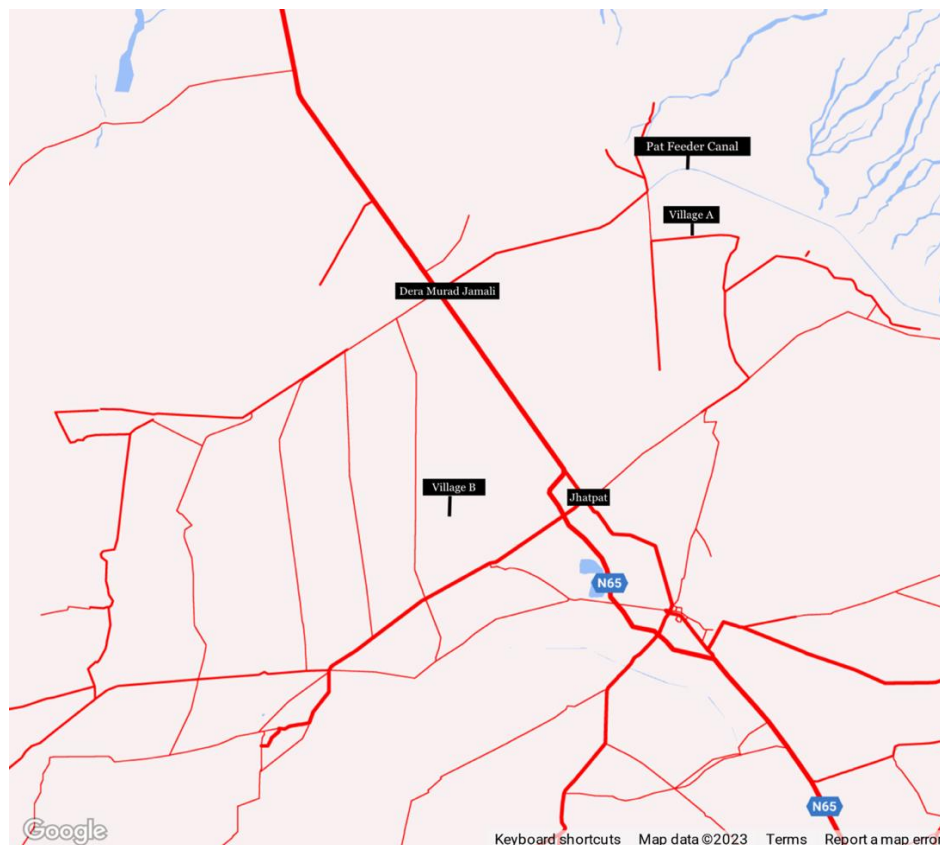
2.3. Village A and Village B as Comparative Cases

To understand how the introduction of the adult franchise influenced the patronage system at the local level, I began my research by including a case study of Village A. I was interested in choosing a village in Nasirabad that differs from villages analyzed in classical studies on political behavior in rural areas of Pakistan, which are defined by high levels of social stratification and land inequality. Thus, Village A was chosen because it showed considerable social homogeneity and equitable land ownership among villagers. The social homogeneity was rooted in its settlement structure, as the villagers belonged to two kinship groups that settled in this village in the 1960s and 1970s. Land relations were equitable because all villagers benefited from the land reforms in Bhutto. As a result, it represented an interesting case to analyze political behavior in the absence of traditional feudal relations and social hierarchies among the village population.

As I was conducting my fieldwork in Village A, I realized that another village, which I call Village B, had strong kin ties with the villagers of Village A. As I learned more about Village B, I became interested in this second case as a comparative case for analysis. This village showed considerable resemblance in terms of social structure and land relations but lacked

much of the infrastructure I found in Village A. For instance, it did not have a basic health unit or a secondary school. Most houses were made of mud, and they did not have a blacktop road connecting them with the local markets where they could sell their harvests. These differences convinced me to look at their political organization and patron-client relations to explain this difference.

When I chose to include the case of Village B in my dissertation, I followed what Maxwell (2013) calls a process-oriented approach, which places substantial value on emergent research design in qualitative research. In his approach, Maxwell recommends focusing on the processes and relationships that connect different aspects of the study under investigation, allowing the researcher to adapt and refine their approach as new data and insights emerge (Ibid., 87–120). In this manner, I decided to conduct a comparative case study of two villages.



Map 3: Village A and B.

(The map shows the two villages in relation to their distance from the canal branches of the Pat Feeder Canal and towns like Jhatpat and Dera Murad Jamali).

A comparative case study is defined as “the systematic comparison of two or more data points (“cases”) obtained through the use of the case study method.” (Beasley and Kaarbo 1999, 372). Two important logics of comparison are employed in this method as identified by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017). Firstly, they argue that it follows the traditional “compare and contrast” logic. Secondly, it involves “tracing across” sites or scales. Such dual logic is useful in understanding how interconnected processes unfold across different contexts and sites. Both of these logics of comparison were utilized to determine the political behavior in villages. It allowed an analysis of electoral politics at two sites with relatively similar social structures and land relations.

To understand the differences between the two villages, I traced the evolution of relationships and networks in these villages, following Bartlett and Vavrus (2017), who recommend refraining from treating them as predefined. This allowed me to trace the historical evolution and genealogy of the two villages to understand present-day social relations and political processes.

2.3.1. Village Characteristics

Villages A and B were settled by kinship groups from the same tribe. In terms of tribal identity, the villages are homogeneous. In Village A, two *paaro* or sub-sections of the same tribe settled, while in Village B, only one *paaro* of the same tribe settled. *Paaro* is a Sindhi word for neighborhood, also used in Balochi. It signifies the closeness of different sections within a particular tribe. The *paaro*’s of tribes are named after men who become leaders of a specific extended kinship group. A settlement structure based on sub-sections means that the caste hierarchy and social stratification prevalent in Punjab and India, in general, are absent in these villages.

In addition, the villages do not have big landlords who dominate the village population, as is the case in Punjab. Land ownership is more equitably divided in these villages, yet it varies slightly in the two villages. On average, villagers from Village B had more land. However, there was a difference in crop cultivation patterns in these villages. Villagers in Village A cultivated crops twice yearly compared to Village B, where crops are mainly grown during the *Rabee* season (October-March).

Regarding public jobs, Village A was well-placed with more public employees. In addition, Village A had better access to local markets with a blacktop road. It also had better health and education facilities as it had a Basic Health Unit and a secondary school. Most importantly, Village A exhibited high political competition, with four vote blocs compared to one vote bloc in Village B (see Table 1).

Table 1: Characteristics of the Two Villages

	Village A	Village B
Population	600	400
Location	Eastern Jaffarabad	Western Jaffarabad
Occupations	Agriculture, Private Sector Jobs & Government Jobs	Agriculture & Wage-Labor in the City
Total Land Owned by Villagers	444 Acres	400 Acres
Time Required to Reach District Headquarters	30 Minutes	40 Minutes
Distance from District Headquarters	Around 21 Km	Around 14 Km
Vote Blocs	Four	One
Kinship Groups	2	1
Harvests	Kharif and Rabee	Rabee and in exceptional years Kharif
Crops	Rice, Wheat, Beans	Onion, Wheat

2.4. Archival Research

In order to collect the data on land history, thus state-elite relations, in the historic Nasirabad area, I had to access archives in various locations in canal-irrigated Balochistan. As I pursued this goal, I visited various locations. My first destination was the Revenue Offices in the districts of Jaffarabad and Naseerabad (part of canal-irrigated Balochistan). Based on secondary literature, I assumed that documents on land history would lay the foundation for historically tracing the region's agrarian order from the colonial to the post-colonial period while focusing on the relationship between the state and local elite.

As I began visiting government offices, I quickly realized that I would face significant obstacles in accessing the records. The Assistant Commissioner's office informed me that all the documents on land and water were "destroyed during the floods in 2010." Initially, I doubted this justification and began using my contacts in the area to ascertain whether such

claims were valid. Soon, I realized it was immaterial if such documents were available in the district as the authorities had decided to block any access to them. On the one hand, this shows the political nature of such records and, on the other hand, the disadvantages of being a native researcher. The latter was evident when the *tehsildar* asked me whether I have land conflicts and I am looking for *sanads* (land deeds) for my court case.

At this point, I decided to try my luck in the Sibi Record Office in the Sibi District of Balochistan. I knew that present-day Jaffarabad and Nasirabad districts were part of Sibi District till the mid-1970s, so there might be some historical records that I can access there. Once I arrived at the Sibi Record Office in the early spring of 2020, I saw a disheartening sight. The Record Office had extensive damages and was in dire condition. Much of the archival material was not cataloged properly; some had fallen prey to termites, and some were exposed to rainwater and sun (see Picture 1 below). However, the Record Officer was kind enough to allow me to sift through all the documents and find whatever interests me.

These conditions made my experience of archival data collection rather arduous and time-consuming. Yet, I was fortunate to find some important documents in which I was interested. This included the Settlement Report of Western and Eastern Nasirabad *Niabat*, administration reports from the Nasirabad sub-division during both the colonial and post-colonial periods, and records on Land Grants. In addition, unexpectedly, I found documents on the *Shahi Jirga* in the post-colonial period, which proved to be very important in reconstructing this period for my dissertation. The most critical discovery was the documents on the Land Reforms of 1959 introduced by Ayub Khan. To my surprise, these were some of the least damaged documents in the Record Office. These documents provided insights into the characteristics, goals, and ambitions of the post-colonial state in the area.

In addition, I found a few files on the Land Reforms of 1972 introduced by Bhutto. These files were related to conflicts between tenants and landlords of Nasirabad. This provided an essential glimpse into the turbulent 1970s. However, no records were found for the period after the mid-1970s when Nasirabad was elevated to district status and separated from Sibi. Nonetheless, all the documents I found were important in reconstructing the history of state interventions and policies governing this area. There was no data after the mid-1970s, so I complemented this with oral history as a data collection method in the villages where I conducted my fieldwork.



Picture 1: Sibi Record Office, English Section

(Taken by the Author, February 2020).

Although I could find some critical documents on Nasirabad, I realized that the available data on the colonial period was insufficient. This led me to travel to Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan. I was surprised to see how well-kept and organized the data was in the Balochistan Secretariat, where most data was archived. I found records on land grants, land

conflicts, colonial proposals for canal construction, revenue data, and decisions of tribal *jirgas*. These documents proved sufficient to understand the colonial period in Nasirabad.

The archival data that I accessed in Quetta and Sibi were crucial to writing Chapters 3, 4, and sections of Chapter 5 of the dissertation. They mainly relate to the policies and governing methods of the modern state, both in its colonial and post-colonial guise, in this area. I could understand present-day settlement structures and land distribution in this area by understanding this history. In addition, it allowed to see continuities and divergences in state policies over time.

2.5. Fieldwork

I began my fieldwork in Village A in December 2019. My contact with Ahsan, who lives in the village, was essential for my acceptance among the villagers. I knew Ahsan through circles of students from Balochistan studying in Lahore, where I pursued my bachelor studies. This connection was important to realize the purpose of my research in data collection in the village. He invited me to a wedding ceremony in Village A, where he introduced me to other villagers. After the wedding ceremony, I was provided a room in an *otaq* in the village, a communal space commonly found in most of the villages in the area. Generally, as a rule, every kinship group that acts as a group in its interaction with other groups inside the village and outsiders has such a communal space for *nindagh pharagh* or socializing. There were four such spaces in Village A, and I could live in two of them during my fieldwork in Village A.

Since I am from the same district in which Village A is located, I did not have any language barriers or “cultural shock” that researchers of the Global North so frequently report. Yet, I was conscious that being from the same area might result in me ignoring phenomena and socio-political processes that I might see as self-evident or obvious. Therefore, I followed the rule of questioning the obvious.

Initially, it was disorienting as I began living in a room in Ahsan’s kinship group’s *otaq*. However, I got used to it, and it became a familiar environment. In the following months, I conducted numerous interviews, participated in various informal group discussions, and made direct observations in the *otaq*. Significantly, the young men in the village showed much

openness towards my research and developed trustful relationships with me. They would frequently invite me for *chai* at the *dip* in the evenings. The *dip* is a common social and commercial place outside villages where tea and other consumable items are sold, and board games are played. As I initially resided in the *otaq* of Ahsan's kin group, over time, through my interactions with other youngsters at *dip* from different kin groups, I was able to switch the *otaq* after six weeks. My interactions with them at *dip* were crucial in developing trust, which allowed them to consider offering me a place in their *otaq*.

During the day, the *otaq* was relatively empty as most villagers left for work. At this time, I met with the old men of the village, who liked to sit there in their free time. My engagement with the elders gave me access to a world in which the past assumed magical and mythical status. These elders were unbelievably patient and listened to my repeated queries without frustration. They patiently explained how politics used to work and how it has changed over time. I could engage with those villagers returning from the day's work in the evenings.

2.5.1. Interviews: Oral History

As I began conducting interviews with village elders, I was interested in understanding village politics in the present. However, quite soon, I realized that for them, talking about present-day politics was only possible by talking about the past. This was evident in how my questions about current political processes would soon shift to discussions of the past. That is why I decided I must take this past seriously and make the interviews open-ended. In addition, as mentioned above, I only had access to archival data until the mid-1970s, when I realized village elders could prove an important source of historical knowledge. Also, as oral history is a well-established means of transmitting knowledge and memory in this area, it made it an appropriate and important means of collecting data for my research. Oral history is understood by Abrams (2016) and Sandino (2008) as a method aimed at gathering information about the past that focuses on individual narratives that contribute to historical knowledge. By relying on such historical accounts, oral history was a complementary alternative to official archives as Jarvis (2021) calls them "anarchive." He maintains that oral accounts of historical events do not refer exclusively to narrating the past. Instead, they always imply meaning-making in the present. I, therefore, also viewed the contesting stories of the past as a manifestation of the continued competition in the village, particularly regarding jobs and development funds. Such interviews with elders were the foundation

through which I started to reconstruct the village's history, presented in Chapters 5 and 6. It was essentially contested.

While interviewing different elders from each kinship group, it became clear that there were multiple competing narratives about the past. Therefore, the open-ended interview allowed me to capture the function and reasons for these competing narratives and to ask questions as the conversations evolved. These interviews unveiled that personal stories were embedded in those competing narratives and have been categorized in literature as “narratives of experience” (Squier 2008). The work of Sandino (2008) is instructive to understand the significance of such stories. She asserts that oral accounts of historical events do not refer exclusively to narrating the past. Rather, they always imply meaning-making in the present.

As I began to take the past seriously, I realized that the village as a site was not merely a contemporary social, economic, and political unit. Instead, it was a historical construction. I became convinced that oral histories were instrumental to exploring the historical specificity of the village and its context to comprehend what was happening during my fieldwork. As I conducted and reviewed these oral histories, the argument made by Jackson et al. (2022), on oral histories informed my approach, which stresses the importance of considering ontological and epistemological frameworks within which oral histories are shared. Only then, they argue, can one see the deeper cultural and historical continuities.

Another idea that informed my oral history data collection was the idea of the historical responsibility of a historian to the dead by Ricoeur (1984). Such responsibility involves a commitment to faithfully reconstruct past events by using all available traces, be it documentary or testimonial evidence. This responsibility was significant for this dissertation as two of the elderly men whom I interviewed multiple times in 2020 have passed away since. Thus, my responsibility to the dead has meant that I carefully interpret their narratives and recognize their contributions by contextualizing them through all available data.

The main criterion for selecting interviewees for oral history was age. In total, I conducted interviews with seven elderly men and one elderly woman from Village A and with two elderly men in Village B. Their ages ranged from 65 to 95 years. Importantly, I was able to have follow-up interviews with all of them, which allowed me to process their initial interviews and develop further on that data. Thus, it allowed me to explore their narratives

thoroughly. All the interviews were open-ended and not recorded with any device; instead, I made notes while conducting the interviews. The location of interviews with men was *otaq*. Since the *otaq* was an exclusively male space, I interviewed Hooran Bibi, the grandmother of Ahsan from Village A, outside the village at a local shrine. This location is significant because it is frequented by both men and women. The inability to interview Hooran Bibi in Village A illustrates the gender division of spaces in the area; however, shrines remain one of the few places where women are publicly visible. This phenomenon can be attributed to old customs in the area, which continue to live despite the immobility of women that has become a norm with transition to agriculture.

2.5.2. Interviews: Current Political Organizing to Access State Resources

As I was interested in analyzing present-day village politics, I also began conducting interviews with other groups in the village. This included old and young men and employed and unemployed villagers. All of these groups were not comfortable with me recording the interviews. As a result, all interviews were documented in my field notebook. Initially, I had created structured questions for these interviews, but once I began interacting with the villagers, it was clear that they preferred to engage in free and open conversations. My decision to switch to unstructured, open-ended interviews is what has been described as a technique in which neither questions nor the answer categories are predetermined (Minichiello et al. 1990, 65). Instead, they emerge out of the interaction between the researcher and the informant (Ibid.). Punch (2013) has described unstructured interviews as a means to understand complex behavior without imposing any *a priori* categorization. These interviews aimed to provide detailed descriptions and interpretations of the informants of the political process in the village (Ibid., 144–50). As a result, my interviews naturally emerged from field observations. Like Patton's (1990) view, the questions were not predetermined. Instead, they were formulated spontaneously as the interviews took place (454).

I followed a systematic writing process in my field notebook as I conducted these interviews. The existing literature has different positions on how much transcription of such interviews is sufficient and appropriate. However, I followed Kaufmann's method of transcription, which he describes as follows: "I only transcribe that which is worthy of interest... beautiful, creative, expressive phrases; interesting, informative situations, intriguing episodes; well-

argued indigenous thought categories” (cited in Porta 2014, 251). This meant that I did not transcribe all the data from my interviews, which included non-verbal sounds, pauses, etc.

In total, I conducted sixty-three interviews during my fieldwork. Fifty-six were conducted with the villagers where I carried out my fieldwork, while seven interviews were conducted with government officials, mainly from the Irrigation Department. I conducted thirty-four interviews in Village A and twenty-two in Village B. As the coronavirus pandemic disrupted my fieldwork in Village B, I continued to stay in contact and conducted ten interviews online, seven before the 2024 elections and three after the 2024 elections. Only the interviews with government officials were conducted in Urdu, while interviews with the villagers were conducted in Balochi.

My sampling technique was snowball sampling. In this method, a few known members of the population are asked to identify other members of the same population. Those identified are then asked to identify others (Handcock and Gile 2011, 369). I followed the same principle by expanding through the networks of my informants.

As mentioned above, it was not possible to interview women, so my data is exclusively drawn from interviews with men. While this is a significant constraint of this dissertation, I did ensure a more representative sample by interviewing individuals from different age groups, kinship groups, occupations, and social statuses.

2.6. Informal Group Discussion Method

Living in *Otaq* gave me a great advantage as all the men frequented the place, and I could approach them without difficulties. However, as I conducted interviews with certain individuals in some instances, other villagers became part of the conversation. Therefore, I incorporated such interventions without stopping my interviews, which metamorphized into informal group discussions. This closely resembles what is in the literature on methods called naturalistic inquiry. Owen (1982), while talking about the naturalistic inquiry paradigm in research, writes, “In the real world, events and phenomena cannot be teased out from the context in which they are inextricably embedded, and understanding involves the interrelationships among all of the many parts of the whole”(6). Such an inquiry values engaging with people in their natural setting and allowing interactions to unfold organically.

Therefore, naturalist inquiry cannot be specified and designed beforehand. This method's emergent design provides much flexibility as the fieldwork unfolds (Ibid.).

As I was part of these informal conversations, they also closely resembled what has been called the participatory research method. Such a method aims to collaborate with the participants to produce meaningful knowledge for the researcher and the informants or community involved (Bergold and Thomas 2012). This method involves the participants whose actions and lives are under study in knowledge production. It brings the research process close to the everyday practices of those under study (Ibid.).

Even though such discussions occurred because I was in the position of interviewer, as people joined in, my role became ambiguous. I was neither a moderator of the discussion nor leading the conversation. Instead, I intervened in the conversations only to ask a question for clarification. Assuming the role of a moderator was impossible because village elders would take over this role as these conversations evolved. This phenomenon revealed much about the village, power structures, and social customs. The participatory approach allowed the conversations to flow naturally. My minimal interventions aligned with the principles of naturalistic inquiry, which call for observing rather than manipulating the study setting (Ibid.).

As such discussions emerged naturally from my interviews, no predefined criteria for who the participants were could be followed, except that they were mainly from the same kin group and men. A diverse mix of villagers participated in such discussions. A notable exclusion from such discussions was the peasants, whom I interviewed separately on the fields.

The size of group discussions ranged between four and ten people, which was clearly beyond my control. The variability in the size also allowed different group dynamics to emerge. All such discussions took place in *otaq* and *dip*. The setting also shaped how the villagers engaged with specific questions; for instance, the youngsters were way more open in expressing themselves at the *dip* than in the *otaq*. This made it clear to me that the meaning of conversations can only be fully comprehended by considering the broader context in which they unfold. Such structures mattered as they revealed much about the social roles and village hierarchies.

Such discussions lasted at least one hour and, in some cases, extended to three hours. They were also documented in my field notes. Keeping track of the discussion as it evolved was challenging, so I decided to jot down the most important points and themes as I felt appropriate. However, I did manage to record such conversations in more detail as they began happening more frequently.

2.7. Qualitative Content Analysis

Once data collection was finalized, I needed to decide what methods should I use to analyze the data. I decided on Qualitative Content Analysis to examine all forms of data I collected through archival research and fieldwork. This method was well suited to my data and the purpose of my research questions. It allowed me to systematically examine the content of the interviews, communications, reports, and letters I was looking at.

Content analysis involves examining the substance in a particular message, it analyzes the content of a specific communication and allows the deduction of conclusions based on the content of the message (Gheyle and Jacobs 2017, 3). It also allows understanding the meaning of messages in diverse forms, ranging from written texts to images, symbols, or audio data. Fundamentally, the method attempts to decode the intended meaning behind the content it analyzes, especially if the data is unorganized and unstructured (Ibid.). When deciphering the meaning behind a particular content, factors like the identity of the message sender (s), the message, and its audience, all are central (R. P. Weber 1985, 9). Such an analysis might encapsulate any technique to draw inferences by systematically and objectively identifying attributes of a particular message (Ibid.).

2.7.1. Preparation, Coding, Categories, Abstraction and Narration

As I employed this method, I exclusively drew on Krippendorff's work. Here, I will illustrate the case of content analysis in the colonial period to show how I followed this method. Krippendorff (2004) provided a detailed step-by-step process for proceeding with this method. First, one must unitize the data collected. This involved systematically differentiating text sections to familiarize myself with the content (Ibid., 356). This step allowed me to comprehend general themes and patterns in the content. As I proceeded, I began making notes and memos on the content to capture my initial impressions (Ibid., 304-306). This allowed me to organize the data for further examination.

As a next step, I moved to doing open coding. This involved systematically identifying and labeling key concepts and recurring themes in the content. I was able to identify several important themes in the data I had. For instance, the data on the colonial period was filled with recurring references to security at the frontier, land grants to loyal tribes, and administrative priorities of the colonial administrators. Once such coding was done, I created broader categories to develop themes. In this case, I categorized them as security and strategic importance, patronage and economic incentives, and governance and administrative simplification. As such categorization took definite shape, I could abstract ideas, which allowed me to see Nasirabad as a frontier region, which was seen mainly through a security lens by colonial authorities. This explains the colonial preference for developing patronage relations with local loyal elites who were granted land and were tasked to administer and govern their tribes at the frontier.

As my writing began, I had to narrate my findings, which was the final step. According to Krippendorff (2004), the narration explains the significance of findings and contributions to the available literature (85). Effectively, the process of narration involved relying on three sources to tell the story. The first was the information from the data I accessed. Second, I used previous studies on colonial rule. Thirdly, I engaged with existing theories on colonial rule in India. In this manner, I could engage in broader discussions on colonial rule in South Asia. My content analysis showed the divergence of the case of Nasirabad with other colonial contexts, especially Punjab. It showed that at the frontier of the empire, security trumped revenue as a goal of colonial administrators even though they relied on patronage to govern the natives.

To analyze the data on the post-colonial period, interviews, and informal group discussions, a similar process of coding, categorization, abstraction, and narration was followed.

2.8. Ethical Considerations and Anonymity

All the interviews and discussions with participants were carried out with their informed consent. The villagers were aware of my purpose for staying. I was conscious of their sensitivities and preferences, which is why my methods of collecting data changed dramatically in the field. I followed and accepted what was comfortable for them. As I

decided to make my interviews open-ended and allowed informal group discussions to be part of my data collection method, it allowed them to tell me what they felt most comfortable with. However, as I had a particular research interest, I insisted on following my plan, which sometimes worked well, and others had to be adjusted. In addition, I have used only pseudonyms in this dissertation to keep my informants anonymous, as they requested me not to use their names or the names of their villages. Lastly, I plan to share my dissertation with my interlocutors who read and spoke English. In my recent trips to the area, many villagers asked me about my research, and I openly shared its development and status.

2.9. Limits

I recognize the limits of this kind of qualitative data collection and analysis. It is indeed hard to replicate such methods in other settings. However, the methods I utilized reflected the reality of where I conducted my fieldwork, which required immense flexibility as a researcher. However, following such methods in similar contexts may be helpful for those interested in similar research questions as investigated in this dissertation. I believe that producing knowledge through what has been called “thick descriptions” (Geertz 2008) can serve as a basis for further investigations that use such data for large-scale analysis.

3. Producing Nasirabad Exceptionalism: Security against Revenue under Colonial Patronage

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines what logic informed colonial land settlement policies and institution building in Nasirabad, a peripheral area at the frontiers of British India. The findings challenge the dominant view that revenue generation drove both colonial land settlement and state formation; the case of Nasirabad shows how security considerations often took precedence over the colonial state's economic objectives. Essentially, the policies of this period would have long-term impacts on the state-elite relationships in this area.

This chapter uses Kenny's (2015) argument that colonial state-building was a moment of condensed changes and Haine's (2015) concept of the frontier as a zone where the colonial state struggled to exert power to situate the annexation of Nasirabad *niabat*¹⁵ into the British Baluchistan Agency Territories¹⁶ (see Map 5). This historical conjuncture was informed by a history of colonial efforts to pacify its Baloch frontier, which the policies of Robert Sandeman had significantly influenced since the late nineteenth century (Tucker 1921: Swidler 2014). However, such policies were deeply contested within colonial circles. In particular, officials debated whether annexing territory from a native state¹⁷ could be justified under the policy of minimal interference in native and princely states, a principle developed after 1857 (Metcalf 1961).

Colonial administrators in British Baluchistan¹⁸ (see Map 4 below) framed the lease of Nasirabad as a remedy for multiple challenges at the frontier. They sought to eliminate dual administrative authority over the frontier population, alleviate the supposed economic

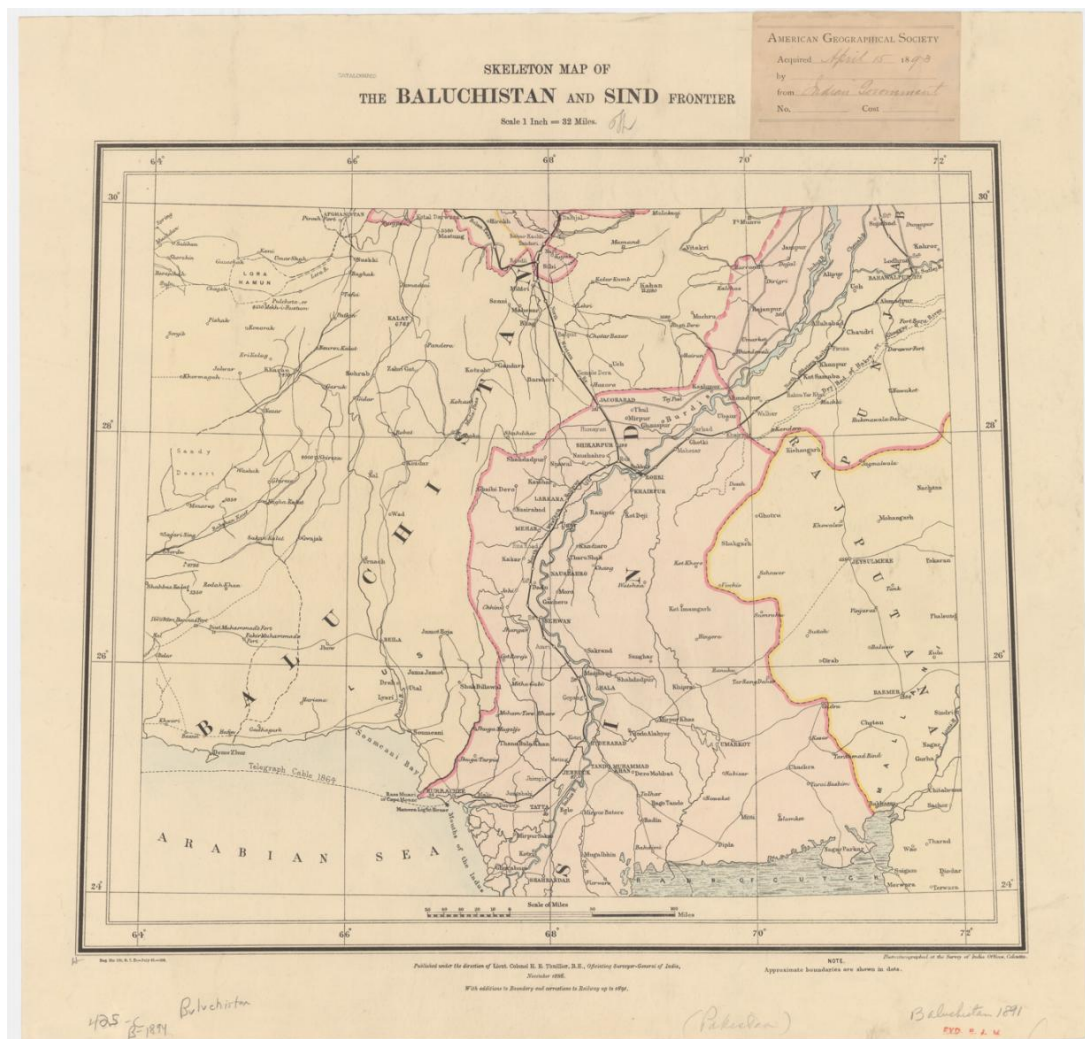
¹⁵ The term "*niabat*" refers to administrative divisions often overseen by a *naib* or deputy of the king or a ruler.

¹⁶ It was created in 1877 after the 1876 Mastung Treaty, which allowed the British to mediate conflicts between tribes. It culminated Robert Sandeman's policy of tribal pacification on the frontier. For more details, see Tucker (1921).

¹⁷ Nasirabad was part of the native state of Kalat. The Khan, as the ruler of Kalat, had control over internal matters, such as local administration. However, his autonomy was limited, particularly concerning foreign policy and military issues, which the British controlled. For more details, see Axmann (2008).

¹⁸ British Baluchistan came into formal existence in 1879 when the British established the Chief Commissioner's Province of Baluchistan after the Treaty of Gandamak following the Second Anglo-Afghan War. This development was part of the Government of India's strategy to secure its western frontiers against potential Russian advances in Central Asia. It was part of imperial intrigues known as "The Great Game." For more details, see Heathcote (2018)

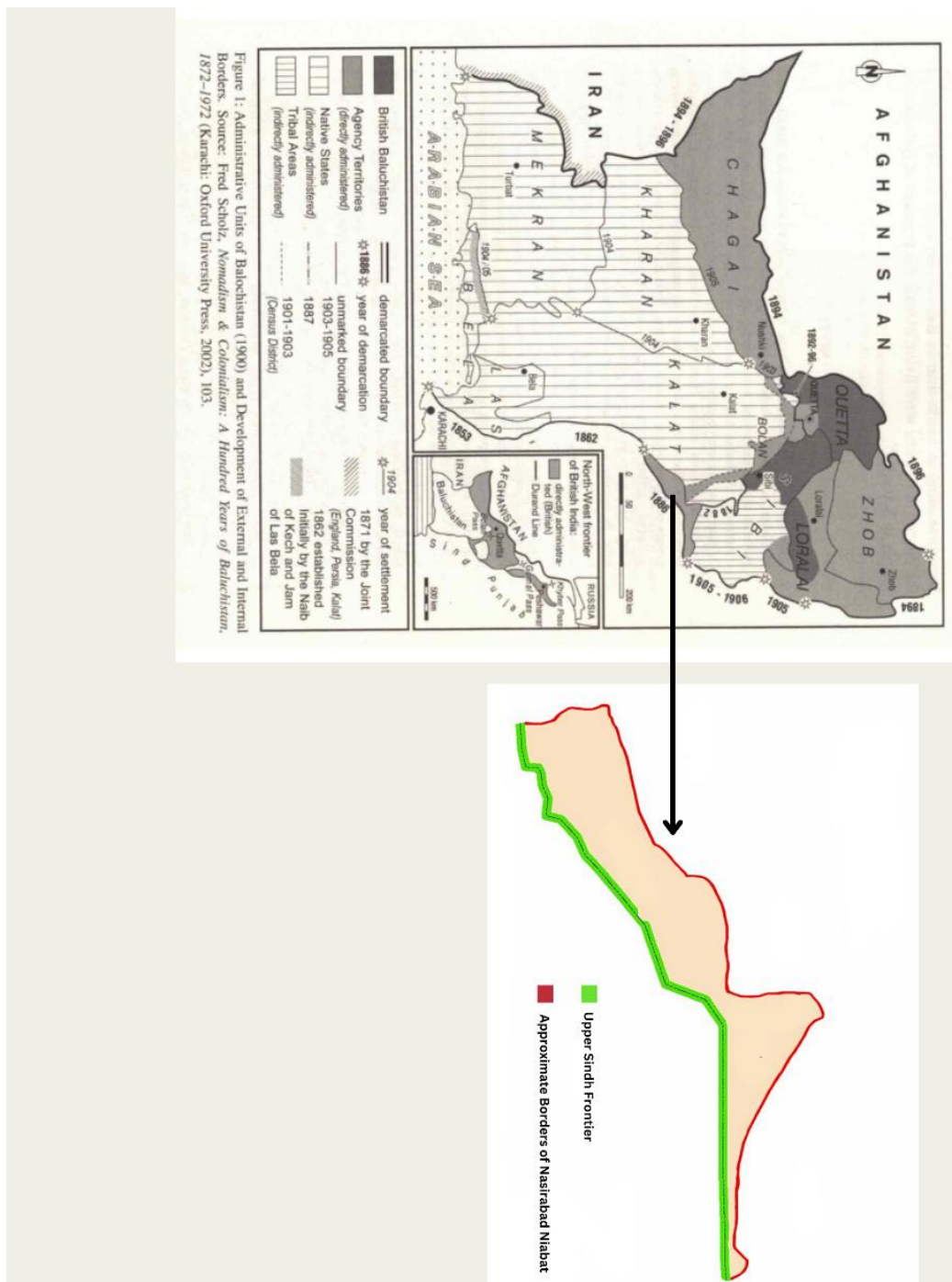
struggles of zamindars, and extend canal irrigation to pacify tribes and boost revenue. This could be achieved by taking over the area from the Khan of Kalat¹⁹ (“File No. 3-Vol-1: Nasirabad” 1903). Yet, the lease brought limited success. The dual administration persisted; the Sind authorities retained control over the irrigation system whereas the Balochistan administration took over the general administration. The projected canal expansion was delayed for almost three decades, and the ambitious revenue projections remained unfulfilled (“File No. 9 Canal/1921” 1921; “File No. 5-C” 1902).



Map 4: Map of the Baluchistan and Sind Frontier separated by a red line.

(Source: Survey of India 1891)

¹⁹ This is a title for the ruler of the Khanate of Kalat, which was a native state with treaty relations with the British.



Map 5: Colonial Baluchistan and Nasirabad Niabat.

(The patchwork of administrative divisions of colonial Baluchistan is on the left (Source: Scholz (2002)), and the approximate borders of Nasirabad *niabat* are on the right.)

Faced with mounting financial losses and administrative obstacles, colonial administrators pivoted to defending the lease primarily on the grounds of security. The problem lay in the policy of tax-free land grants and reduced assessments on the land, which aimed to settle “wild tribes” at the frontier, particularly the Bugtis and Marris, and to co-opt those already settled. In return for colonial patronage, these tribes were to secure the frontier. This task was

to be achieved through institutions such as the *Levy Thana* and the *Jirga* System, through which tribal elites of important tribes transformed into the face of the colonial state at the local level. Although the colonial state's policies aimed to secure loyalty, they deepened social inequalities and sparked conflicts in the region ("Political: Orders Issued under the F.C.R." 1919; Foreign and Political 1935). Nevertheless, the colonial administrators defended their policies as essential to achieve security at the frontier.

Ultimately, Nasirabad became an administrative exception: it failed as a revenue-generating project yet was deemed critical for stabilizing the colonial frontier. By looking at the tension between security and revenue goals, this chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of the colonial rule in peripheral regions. It demonstrates how, at the margins of the colonial empire, the imperative of profit-seeking was suspended in favor of generating security through patronage relations.

3.2. Justifying the Lease

The discussions on leasing Nasirabad began with the proposal to expand the Desert Canal²⁰ in the Upper Sindh Frontier district (see Map 5). In his notes in 1902, the Revenue Commissioner (hereinafter R.C.) Baluchistan, Major A.H. MacMohan wrote that two new canal branches would be constructed to irrigate lands in Khan's territories ("File. No. 3-Vol-1" 1903, 15). As the colonial administrators assessed this situation, they saw the existing dual administration of these territories as a problem that needed to be addressed before the extension of the canal or branches was finalized. This frontier region had a fragmented administration system with shared authority between the Khan and the colonial administrators. The R.C. in Baluchistan noted, "The villagers themselves do not know who is their master, nor whom to apply to in regard to diverse subjects of complaint." (Ibid., 3). The R.C. saw this lack of clear authority as an administrative anomaly that could only be addressed by annexation of this area. For example, the *naib* or deputy of the Khan had the authority to collect revenue, whereas the revenue assessment was the responsibility of the *tehsildar*, who represented the colonial state. Thus, the *tehsildar* had the power to set revenue

²⁰ This canal was dug under Kalhora rule in Sind and had four branches, as noted in the district gazetteer of Sibi by colonial authorities, namely Shahiwah, Rajbah, Uch Rajbah, and Manjhuti Rajbah (McConaghey and Rai 1907). The frontier tribesmen expanded this canal during the 19th century under the colonial policy of pacifying Baluch tribes (Lambrick 1960).

demands but could not enforce them. The *zamindars* paid land revenue to the Khan and the water rate to the British.

These problems extended to the legal domain, for instance, in enforcing legal decrees in the area, especially in cases involving cross-border trade, as most of the agricultural produce from Nasirabad was sold in Jacobabad in Sind. The R.C. labelled the Khan's revenue system as "non-businesslike" and "uneconomical." (Ibid.) The implication was that bringing the area under effective British control would increase profits. This motive became explicit in the following argument R.C. made. He argued that water extension in Nasirabad was a colonial investment, and therefore, the profits should accrue to the Government of India rather than the Khan. The R.C. argued, "All of what the Khan receives in the area is clear profit as he has not contributed anything to the irrigation system that benefits the area." (Ibid., 6).

These administrative issues were intertwined with the colonial aims of pacifying the frontier. The R.C. wrote in his correspondence that, according to him, "extending canal irrigation" and thus leasing Nasirabad was necessary "because the Kalat Tribes are outgrowing the available cultivable land in the area." (Ibid., 16). He went on to mention that in his recent visit to the Khanate, it was found that the Khan was giving the lands to anyone without any discrimination rather than giving it to the tribes like Maris and Bugtis (Ibid.), who resided on the frontier and were involved in raids into Sindh. Therefore, these were the tribes that, for colonial administrators, were important to be "attached to the soil." ("File No. 5-C" 1902, 86). If such attachment to soil did not occur, these tribes would be a constant security threat as they would continue their "predatory lifestyle." (Ibid.). Thus, the colonial administrators envisaged settling mobile landless tribes in this area by extending canals under effective British administration. By providing land to these tribes, the colonial administrator argued they could encourage the tribes to take up agriculture and the peaceful pursuit of livelihood. In this manner, the risks of "raids and unrest" on the frontier could be reduced. In the words of the R.C., the construction of canals will "introduce a powerful stimulus to the settlement and pacification of the wild country on the Sind border." (Ibid, 2). The focus was on introducing a "civilized" way of life, connected with a broader colonial discourse on transforming the "wild" frontier (Haines 2015).

Without water availability, administrative and security concerns could not be addressed. Thus, water scarcity in Nasirabad had been an issue that the colonial state had to deal with

since it annexed Sind in 1843 and began settling tribes on the frontier and collecting revenue in this area. Water scarcity had multiple reasons, including the lower riparian status of Nasirabad. As Sind was the upper riparian area where continued canal expansion happened in the nineteenth century (Haines 2015), water scarcity increased in Nasirabad. This was recognized by the R.C. when he noted that the *zamindars* in Nasirabad had only “secondary claims” on canal water as he wrote, “they could not get enough water and that the cultivators in Jacobabad were favored at their expense.” (“File. No. 3-Vol-1” 1903, 5). Also, he mentioned that the *zamindar* in Nasirabad did not have access to agricultural loans that could allow them to invest in digging canal branches. Even if that was possible, the R.C. claimed that water scarcity was more an effect of the inability of *zamindars* to construct canals in a technically sound manner (Ibid.).

These problems, argued the R.C., could be solved by bringing the area under colonial administration, which would provide credit and extend canal networks in the region, which would address these grievances and increase “revenue in the future.” (Ibid). He provided prospective calculations on revenue increase once the area was leased. These calculations were based on the estimates of the Executive Engineer of the Begari Canal, responsible for irrigating parts of the Nasirabad *niabat*. He estimated that approximately 305,200 acres were already under irrigation, with an additional 178,000 acres deemed irrigable (Ibid., 7). Of this total, only about one-third was actively cultivated, which indicated a significant potential for expanding cultivable land in the region. In the long run, if brought under colonial administration, he argued, this would be a paying project in Baluchistan, meaning that it would cover the costs of its administration and could increase the revenue (Ibid.).

However, the R.C.’s assessments were challenged by the Political Agent²¹ (hereinafter P.A.) in Kalat, who described the proposal to take over Nasirabad as a “panacea of irresponsible persons” and warned that such an annexation would set a precedent for further annexations in Khan’s territory, which was against the British policy of the time (Ibid., 5). This opposition was rooted in the established policy of the Government of India, which did not want to be

²¹ This post was established in Kalat as the treaty relation between the colonial authorities and the Khan were established in nineteenth century. The political agents often served as advisors to local rulers on matters of governance, military affairs, and internal administration, while attempting to influence these spheres in favor of British interests. (“File. No. 3-Vol-1” 1903).

seen as conquerors but as allies and protectors (Metcalf 1961).²² Such an annexation also could influence relations with other Princely and Native states in India.

In response to P.A. Kalat's argument, the R.C. Baluchistan clarified that there was "no question of taking over Kalat but a small portion thereof which already pays revenue to the British Government." (File. No. 3-Vol-1, 5). He argued that he was aware of the government's hesitancy in taking any action that could be interpreted as an annexation. However, he argued, in the case of Nasirabad, "certain responsibilities" already existed, and the Khan could secure quit rent so "he would not have anything to lose." (Ibid.). By specific pre-existing responsibilities, he referred to the practice of revenue sharing, known as "*hakaba*" or water rate.²³ Under this practice, the *zamindars* of Nasirabad had been paying taxes to the Irrigation Department of Bombay since the mid-nineteenth century when Sindh came under British rule (1843). In addition, he argued that Nasirabad was distinct from the rest of Kalat due to its relative fertility and flat terrain, which contrasted with the hilly mountains and deserts in the broader Kalat territory. He based his argument on the existence of these distinct legal arrangements. He argued that "the circumstances are peculiar and very special so that one should differentiate it from an ordinary assumption of management in Native State Territory." (Ibid., 7).

In a moment of exaggeration, R.C. Baluchistan proposed how such a lease would be advantageous for all parties involved. He contended that leasing the area would benefit the "unhappy *zamindars*" or landlords of Nasirabad who constantly complain of water scarcity, provide cultivable lands for landless tribes in Baluchistan, offer the Khan of Kalat a yearly income, and enable the Government of India to generate additional revenue. This could be realized by implementing a more effective revenue assessment method and introducing an efficient administrative system in the *niabat*, particularly after constructing a proposed major

²² Following the 1857 rebellion in India, British colonial administrators strategically shifted towards a policy of treaty relations with native states, which meant reduced intervention. This change was a response to the military challenges posed by the uprising, which exposed the vulnerabilities of direct rule and showed the risks of widespread unrest. Embracing treaty relations allowed the British to delegate administrative responsibilities to local rulers while retaining strategic control over key regions. This pragmatic approach helped consolidate British power across the subcontinent. Politically, this policy of treaty alliances enabled British authorities to portray themselves as allies and protectors rather than conquerors. This mitigated resentment and created stability in the post-1857 era. For more details see Metcalf (1961).

²³ The origins of this peculiar assimilation can be traced back to the late 1840s. Before the establishment of the Baluchistan Agency in 1876, the British permitted the extension of irrigation canals into Kalat territory following the annexation of Sindh. The primary intention was to settle and pacify the tribes at the frontier of the empire (Lambrick 1960).

canal after leasing the area (Ibid.). Eventually, the R.C.'s arguments emerged triumphant as Nasirabad was leased in 1903.

3.3. Settlement Report: Appropriation and Dispossession to Disburse Patronage

After receiving approval from the Government of India to lease Nasirabad, the A.G.G. Baluchistan dispatched letters to the Khan. In these letters, he explained the significance of the two new canal branches, namely Uch and Manjhuti of Desert Canal, that were being extended and widened in Nasirabad *niabat* and the necessity for improved administration practices in the irrigated areas. Therefore, the A.G.G. argued that new supervision and protection of the canals was required. Additionally, introducing “regular laws” was deemed essential to “punish any offense” (Ibid., 22–23). This suggested that the existing laws in the area were considered ineffective in deterring law-breaking among water users. Finally, in 1903, the Khan of Kalat agreed to lease Nasirabad *niabat* in perpetuity in exchange for Rs. 115,000 per annum. This led to the appointment of W. W. Smart, a settlement officer from Bombay, to create a record of rights in Nasirabad *Niabat* (Smart 1905, 317).

Understanding the settlement process in Nasirabad comparatively is insightful as it shows the distinct logic that influenced colonial policies in this area. Consider the case of the canal colonies in Punjab, where the settlement efforts were motivated by the colonial objective of introducing a new agrarian order alongside a new tax regime focused on extraction (I. Ali 1979; 2014). Mohmand (2011) writes that 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.” (33). Similarly, Haine’s (2015) analysis of the settlement process in Sindh in the early twentieth century shows a colonial strategy focused on maximizing agricultural productivity and revenue generation. It was evident in its decision to bring Punjabi *abadkars* or settlers as cultivators. In contrast, the land settlement in Nasirabad had a security objective as colonial authorities brought cultivators who purportedly did not know much about agriculture, like the Bugtis and Marris.

3.3.1. Devising Rules and Laws to Appropriate Land

As the Settlement Officer began his survey of the area, various principles were applied to accept or reject land claims. Indeed, the rules devised and laws introduced in Nasirabad closely resemble what Satya (1998) has aptly labeled as “colonial encroachment” in the case of central India. He argues that such settlement reports served as a mechanism through which colonial expansion could be sanctioned and legitimized.

The Settlement Officer proposed that in the eastern part of the *niabat*²⁴, areas that were irrigated by canal branches for decades before the British arrived, the claimant of land must have paid revenue for at least the last five years and cultivated at least 1/3rd of the land for their claims to be accepted at the time of settlement. Although this may appear to be a standard rule he devised to assess land claims, the settlement officer’s intention extended beyond recording such claims. Indeed, he aimed to dispossess *zamindars* of their occupancy claims on the land. This was evident in the letters he wrote during this time. In one of his letters, he stated, “In such *dehs* where Tahsil records prove that the persons who have paid revenue to the Government and have been cultivating one-third of the ‘*deh*’ or surveyed area of the village for the last five years, it will be very difficult to dispossess them, especially when we consider the fact that they have borne the cost of the survey.” (Smart 1905, 5).²⁵ It is clear from these words that the intention was to dispossess the claimants, but the evidence on the ground made it hard to refuse such claims outright. Therefore, dispossession was limited to the cases where the evidence was refutable. The point was that his interest was not merely in recording land claims but in refuting claims if and when possible.

The appropriation of lands was related to the goal of the colonial authorities to settle tribes like Bugti and Marri. This became quite evident when the Settlement Officer identified the potential for dispossessing claimants of land when he wrote concerning lands irrigated by hill torrents in eastern Nasirabad:

“It is to the North of the Uch that land if available would be most suitably given to the Bugtis. I, therefore, propose that the title to the lands on the north of the *Uch* should be much more strictly investigated, and less liberality of treatment shown to the

²⁴ The Settlement Officer described the eastern part of Nasirabad as “bounded on the north by the low hills of the Bugti country, on the south by the Upper Sind Frontier District, on the east by the Punjab border and on the West by the Jacobabad-Shahpur road.” (“File No. 17-18” 1908, 78).

²⁵ *Deh* was a unit of land revenue and landholding.

claimants than in the case of lands to the South, which have been brought under regular cultivation and demarcated at the expense of the claimants.” (Ibid.).

Hence, the settlement officer proposed different treatment of claimants as he adjudicated land claims in various parts of Nasirabad to ensure the availability of more land for distribution among favored tribal groups. This logic would result in systematic dispossession of tribal groups from Nasirabad, such as the Bajkanis (see Section 3.3.3 below). In this manner, the roots of state patronage for certain tribal groups at the expense of others were inscribed into the settlement process.

Furthermore, the Settlement Officer suggested a rule that the importance attached to *sanads* or deeds of land from the Khan of Kalat would only be secondary in determining the claims on land. He argued that these *sanads* are essentially “incapable of judicial proof in most cases” and “their genuineness will always remain doubtful.” (Ibid., 10). Additionally, he argued that when Khan granted such deeds to the claimants, these lands had little to no value. However, since the colonial state’s plans for canal extension became known to the people, land value had increased. Thus, he reasoned that these lands gained value at the government’s expense, so recognizing each *sanad* or deed would not be justified (Ibid.). As he relegated *sanads* as unimportant, he argued for making evidence of cultivation “the main criterion of a claimant’s right to be entered as an occupant.” (Ibid., 50). He underlined that if the government accepted this principle, only then:

“There should be a sufficient area of prospective irrigable land available for the Bugtis and Marrees. If Sanads of H.H. the Khan are to be interpreted as entitling the claimants to the whole of the land within the boundaries mentioned in them, there will not be a square yard of land available for the Government” (Ibid., 50).

In this way, the settlement officer devised rules to increase land at the government's disposal. Another proposal to achieve a similar goal was regarding the *khushkhaba* or rain-irrigated land. In his letters, the settlement officer proposed that the Government should designate all *khushkhaba* land as Government land. He suggested that *zamindars* would accept this arrangement if given the right to refuse cultivation on the land. According to him, “this course will give the Government free hand in the future as the landlords who are lazy and fail to cultivate and cause the government a loss in revenue will be dealt with properly.” (Ibid., 56). Although revenue considerations were important in classifying land in this area, there was an equal emphasis on providing for tribes perceived as loyal to the British. In the

recommendation, as mentioned earlier, the settlement officer anticipated that it would ensure a greater area of land being made available for the Bugtis and Marris in years of good rainfall, as it was *Khushkhaba* land, but would involve some trouble at the time of settlement (Ibid).

However, the tools to dispossess the existing non-important tribes from their lands also included laws with long-term thinking. Consider the application of the Sindh Fallow Rules in Nasirabad. They served as another means through which the colonial state acquired more land. These rules required that every *zamindar* or landlord cultivate 1/5th of their lands annually; failing this, they were penalized. Under these rules, if the land remained fallow for an extended period, the occupants were obliged to pay the full assessment in the fifth year or relinquish their claim on the land. Given that Nasirabad had problems with water scarcity, these rules implied that, over time, the state could resume a substantial amount of fallow land. The R.C. of Baluchistan candidly expressed this strategy, stating, “The application of these rules will probably largely increase the area at the disposal of the Government since some of the Kalat ‘*Sanads*’ cover vast areas of waste which the holders could not bring under cultivation in the period allowed, and the revenue on which would amount to very large sums.” (Ibid., 92). This reveals the strategic planning of colonial officials aimed at dispossession, not only during the settlement phase but also in the years that followed.

Another noteworthy colonial strategy for land appropriation was to assert that Nasirabad differed from other parts of the province of Baluchistan in that the claim to land in Nasirabad lacked a historical basis. The settlement officer contended that the question of ancient possession in Nasirabad did not exist because “in Nasirabad... we have the case of a country reclaimed from a desert condition within comparatively recent times by irrigation provided by a state agency.” (Ibid., 86). According to the settlement officer, even if the entire area in Nasirabad were declared Government Land, no real injustice would be done since most of this area is irrigated by canals managed and controlled by the British (Ibid., 56). However, after the settlement report was finalized, this argument faced strong opposition in lawsuits filed against the Secretary of State (“File No. Z-1” 1915). Nevertheless, when records of rights were documented and the settlement report was completed, the settlement officer’s rationale was critical in dispossessing tribesmen from the land they claimed.

By devising and implementing these rules at the time of settlement, which were applied differentially across various parts of the *niabat*, around 147,432 acres of land were declared as “Government unoccupied land,” (File No. 17-18, 1908, 14) which were subsequently given in grants to favored tribes during the first settlement in 1906 and second settlement which took place in 1935.

3.3.2. Restricted Tenure

As the finalization of the settlement report was underway, the issue of whether land tenure should be restricted or unrestricted took on significant importance. This question should be considered in the context of colonial experience in provinces such as Punjab. Colonial authorities imposed restricted land tenure through the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900. This meant landlords and cultivators could not surrender their land to moneylenders in cases of defaulting on their credit. It has been argued that this act attempted to protect the rural order in Punjab established by the colonial state (I. Talbot 2011). Talbot has argued that this act effectively “prevented the urban commercial classes from permanently acquiring land held by the ‘statutory agriculturalist tribes.’” (Ibid., 6). Javid (2012) writes that this act effectively secured the economic dominance of the landed elite, which they utilized to gain increased participation in state bureaucracy through legislative assemblies and district boards. As a result, they were positioned to leverage their political power to distribute patronage to clients and constituents at the local level, acting as intermediaries to a state that was otherwise inaccessible (Ibid., 10–11). He states that after their conquest of Punjab, the British established an administrative system that depended significantly on the backing of the province’s influential landed elite. This alliance was mutually advantageous; the British used their landed partners to guarantee order and economic accumulation in return for offering them state patronage (Ibid., 1).

The R.C. of Baluchistan argued in support of similarly restricted tenure in Nasirabad, stating, “future owners to whom grants will be made are from tribes whom it is exceedingly important to attach to the soil.” (“File No. 5-C:” 1902, 86). He asserted that restricting land tenure was essential to prevent “The alienation of the land by the classes whom it is desired to retain as zamindars” (Ibid., 87–88). These words indicate a colonial civilizing logic grounded in the perception that Baloch tribes could not establish a relationship with the land, an idea that has been succinctly challenged by the work of Gilmartin (2020) on the Baloch

frontier of colonial Punjab. However, such a judgment explains the justification for external control as colonial administrators feared that settled tribesmen might revert to their traditional ways. They argued that “the sale to Hindus is also prohibited [...] so that the Baluch are not compelled to return to their predatory methods of living.” (Ibid.). Consequently, the R.C. in Baluchistan stressed, “as much land as possible should be made available for the settlement of the landless tribes of Baluchistan. But it is yet more important that the tenure of the tribes to whom the land is assigned should be such as *to protect them against their own improvidence* (emphasis mine) and to prevent their being dispossessed by money lending classes.” (Ibid., 92).

These comments reflect the older British strategy of transforming the “wild” Baloch tribes into “civilized” subjects by integrating them into the colonial order through land ownership. Hopkins (2015) notes that this strategy represented “frontier governmentality,” where the British sought to control the frontier by incorporating Baloch tribes into the colonial order, turning them from nomadic state evaders into settled cultivators and controllable subjects. This method of settling tribesmen also demonstrated the colonial state’s power on the frontier, where the state struggled to exert control and maintain order. In this context, it becomes clear that colonial authorities perceived their role not only as attaching the Baluch tribes (Marri & Bugtis) to the land but also as ensuring that their position would be legally safeguarded even against their own “improvidence.”

Although colonial administrators provided ideological justification for restricted tenure, it had practical considerations. It was informed by the need to keep administration costs low in the area, where the power of the tribal elite, who assisted in administering the area, rested on land ownership. The safeguard provided by restricted tenure shielded them from dispossession in the event of accumulating substantial debts. The P.A. of Sibi, Major Tighe, established a precedent by rejecting approval for the sale of land from a Muslim to a Hindu in Nasirabad after it came under colonial rule. The rationale behind this decision was grounded in the government’s principle that *bantias* or creditors should not oust the Baluch residents of the *tehsil*, a measure to prevent potential future conflicts (Smart 1905, 75).

Eventually, restricted land tenure emerged as an important principle for the colonial land settlement. This represented a form of patronage wherein colonial authorities safeguarded the

local elite, guided by a specific ideology and practical consideration, who, in turn, served as cheap administrators for the area.

3.3.3. Setting the Stage for Land Grants: Bajkanis vs. Bugtis & Marris

Interestingly, as soon as the survey process commenced, it became evident to the British authorities that most of the lands in the area had already been claimed by the tribes residing in the *niabat*. Consider the land dispute involving two tribes favored by colonial authorities, the Bugtis and Marris, and a smaller, unimportant tribe, the Bajkanis²⁶. This case set the stage for the logic of colonial governmentality in this area. Once the Khan consented to lease the area, a surge of applications for land grants ensued from various tribes, directed both to the Khan and the British authorities. Some of these applications were driven by speculation, with many applicants anticipating the imminent construction of a new canal and seeing ownership of irrigated land in the area as an important investment.

A prominent tribal leader during this period was the Bugti *nawab*, Sir Shahbaz Khan, who began sending urgent letters to the P.A. in Thal-Chotiali, the administrator responsible for dealings with the Bugtis. In these letters, the Bugti chief claimed ownership of tracts of land in eastern Nasirabad. In his letters, he appropriated colonial language as he reproduced the same stereotypes of his tribe as propagated by the colonial administrators in the mid-nineteenth century to gain a favorable response. He wrote, “The Bugti people used to live on plunder and robberies” (“File No. 17” 1908, 16), but due to the peace brought by the British, they now face starvation due to the cessation of these activities. In this letter, he voiced his concerns about potentially losing influence over his tribesmen if he could not meet their needs. Thus, he argued, he needed assistance, specifically in obtaining lands in Nasirabad that would be brought under colonial administration and where a new canal would be built (Ibid).

It is important to remember that the relationship between colonial authorities and tribes at the frontier had evolved and crystallized by the end of the nineteenth century. This letter by the Bugti chief should be seen through within this historical context. Following the hill campaigns of the mid-nineteenth century, tribes in the hills, like the Bugtis, secured land grants in Upper Sindh and found employment in colonial administration (Lambrick 1960).

²⁶ This was a section of the Buledi tribe, which was dispersed across the frontier; many of them resided in Sind (File No. 17-18: 1908, 78).

The Bugtis were given lands in the Upper Sindh District since the time of General Jacob in the mid-nineteenth century. They were also hired as guides at the frontier. Tribes like Bugti's acquired these privileges to safeguard Sindh from external threats and protect the routes traversing the *Kacchi* plains. Over the years, reciprocal exchange materialized between the colonial state and tribal chiefs (Ibid.). The irrigable lands in Nasirabad presented another avenue for British authorities to strengthen their ties with tribal chiefs by granting them land.

The P.A.'s in Sibi and Southern Baluchistan, acting as patrons for the Bugti and Marri tribes, openly supported the claims made by the Bugti chief in their official correspondence with the A.G.G. However, the Bajkani tribe, led by Buland Khan, had more substantial claims to the land. The claim of Bajkanis was essentially based on two complementary proofs. The first was the *sanad* or deed the Khan of Kalat provided to cultivate the land, and the second was the construction of "*bands*" or embankments and *zamindari karias* or landlord watercourses ("File No. 17" 1908, 88). However, these claims contradicted the goals of the colonial authorities, who aimed to appropriate much of the land for the government and settle new tribes in this area for their service to the British.

Colonial authorities did not favor the Bajkanis. The reasons included the smaller size of the tribe and the presence of multiple leaders within the tribe. So, it had a fragmentation of authority. This did not sit well with colonial interests in establishing order and control in the area through a cost-effective administrative system, which required strong leaders like the Bugti chief ("File No. 17" 1908, 31–32). As a result, the P.A. Southern Baluchistan wrote to the A.G.G. recommending the seizure of the cultivation of Buland Khan and his tribe if the land could not be given to the Bugti Nawab (Ibid.). The total land under dispute was around 28,567 acres in Sanhri, eastern Nasirabad.

The Bajkani Chief, in a petition to the A.G.G., accused Captain Winter, the P.A. of Southern Baluchistan, of unjustly favoring the Bugtis and Marris. He expressed concerns about potential breaches of peace if the land was forcibly given to other tribes, as the members of his tribe were "ignorant and uncivilized" (Ibid., 29) and could not be controlled. Again, the tribal chief appropriated colonial tropes to achieve a favorable outcome for himself and his tribe. Also, this constituted a veiled threat that implied that his tribesmen could disrupt peace in the area, as they had the potential to resort to violence. He further alleged that "as they (Bugtis) are very influential men, hence they without any real cause began to tease & provoke

me.” (Ibid., 88). He even went on to allege that the P.A. deliberately made it hard for him to produce evidence for his case, which required retrieving all the documents related to land and revenues paid on it from colonial authorities. This, he argued, “shows bad intention on his part. So, I request you to provide us all of these copies” (Ibid., 28-29). To resolve the issue, he called for establishing a local *Jirga* or assembly to adjudicate the conflict. He proposed that the local tribal chiefs of Nasirabad be involved, who, along with a representative of a Khan, should collectively make decisions as they knew the facts of the case (Ibid.).

As the conflict between these parties intensified, the colonial authorities prohibited Bajkanis from irrigating their land, which resulted in a loss of a potential harvest cultivated on borrowed credit. In his letter to the A.G.G., the Bajkani chief lamented:

“on the 5th instt the water was left and everyone cultivated his own land but I am only prohibited to water my lands by which we will be destroyed and ruined altogether, having left no other *patron* (emphasis mine) to hear my lamentations I therefore, solicit the favour of your honours very kindly to take compassion upon me and to issue an order to allow me to cultivate my lands; if anyone has any claim, he may be ordered to take legal steps against me in the Competent Court and to prove it and oblige”(Ibid., 89–90).

In this statement, the Bajkani tribal elder acknowledged he lacked a patron, unlike the other tribes, and put him in a disadvantaged position. Ultimately, the contested land was divided among the three tribes that included the Bajkanis, Bugtis, and Marris. However, the division significantly advantaged the latter two (“File No.17” 1908, 202-203), who had limited evidence for their claims. The justifications put forth by the colonial authorities for taking over parts of the Bajkani lands were multiple. The final judgment on the case upheld that “the weak point in Bajkani claim is whatever their endeavours may have been, they have failed as a matter of fact to occupy and bring under cultivation the large area of land.” (“File No. 17: Jagirs” 1908, 167). Here, “endeavors” allude to the attempts by Bajkanis to excavate watercourses, which were judicially considered inconsequential since the land for which the Khan had granted them a deed remained uncultivated. This argumentation presented a challenge for tribal groups in Nasirabad, as they were not only lower riparian cultivators but also faced difficulties due to the expansion of canal networks in the upper riparian area, which was under British control and reduced water availability. These facts made successful cultivation rather tricky. This aspect would later become evident to colonial authorities but only when they became administrators of the area (see section 5 below).

Additionally, the judgment maintained that “the present case is not so much a dispute between the various *sanad*-holders as an investigation of the claims of the Bajkanis,” which meant that the case was decided not on the strength of the claims of Bajkanis against the Bugti’s or vice versa, but rather on whether Bajkani’s claims on land were deemed justifiable on their own. In this way, land could be resumed by the Government of India and then subsequently granted as *jagirs*. These legal devices ultimately resulted in over 8000 acres allocated to the Bugtis, the favored tribe (Ibid.) This case symbolized the logic of colonial rule in this area, which was based on preferential treatment. With the final settlement of Nasirabad in 1906, the Bugtis were allocated approximately 19,500 acres only in the eastern section of Nasirabad by a committee appointed by the A.G.G (“Land Acquisition” 1908, 111–12).

3.4. Maintaining the Dual Administrative Setup

The discussion on the future administrative setup in Nasirabad revealed the difference between the Sind and Baluchistan administrations regarding how they saw and valued this area. This related to the question of who would administer the area. The R.C. in Baluchistan argued that it should be brought under the Baluchistan administration, which directly dealt with the Bugti and Marri tribes. In contrast, the Sind authorities claimed that it should be brought under their administration as it was part of the canal networks under its administration. The former strategically saw Nasirabad as it sought pacification through land grants. At the same time, the latter looked at it through the logic of administrative simplification, which could increase revenue. However, the colonial administrators in Baluchistan saw the point in the argument of Sind authorities, but it was deemed politically ill-advised. Major Ramsay, P.A. Sibi, wrote to the R.C. in Baluchistan as he considered Sind’s proposal for taking over Nasirabad, stating, “except for certain Political reasons, which make it perhaps advisable for us to retain in our hands a rich irrigated tract, there are to my mind no advantage whatever in our (Baluchistan) possession of Nasirabad. Its conditions are precisely identical with Sindh and quite different to the rest of Baluchistan, and any irrigation system divided between two administrations seems to me a mistake.” (Smart 1905, 138-139).

The Baluchistan administration feared potential tribal unrest on the frontier if Nasirabad was brought under the Sindh administration, which would impose regular law as any such law

would reduce internal sovereignty for the local tribes. They anticipated a rise of conflict and unrest if the tribal population was brought under the authority of Sindh police as it did not have the *Jirga* and *Levy* System of Balochistan, which functioned on the principle of “tribal responsibility” by delegating authority to tribal chiefs (more in sections below). For Baluchistan, this was a matter of political importance in terms of the security at the frontier. Conversely, Sindh authorities viewed the situation more through the economic and administrative simplification lens. They saw Nasirabad as another area that would be irrigated through a canal extension on the Indus Basin. From Sindh’s perspective, uniform administrative control over all regions irrigated by Sindh canals was justified for efficient water use, rational revenue generation, and efficient administration purposes (“File No. 9 Canal/1921” 1921, 17). Mr. Giles, the commissioner of Sindh, reiterated in his correspondence that “all lands irrigated by the Indus should have the same laws for administrative purposes.” (Ibid). Sindh authorities advocated annexing Nasirabad to Sindh based on their understanding that it was part of the canals on the Indus. As no consensus emerged, the Government of India sanctioned the dual administration of Nasirabad, a system that colonial authorities had identified as a problem for the effective administration of the area.

3.5. Inscribing Patronage into State Structure

Naseemullah (2022), in his work, has talked about frugality as one of the most essential pillars of the colonial logic of state-building in India. In his words, “Colonial agents had to obey a strict mandate of governance frugality, deeply embedding a logic of the limitation of costs into state-building investments and subsequent governance practices.” (Ibid., 54). Similarly, the British administrators sought to avoid establishing an expensive administrative system in Baluchistan. They justified this approach by manipulating local traditions and customs to suit their objectives. Superintendent B. J. Gould succinctly expressed this strategy when he wrote:

“The sphere of the administration of law and justice is not, in my opinion, the only direction in which we need to guard against the introduction of complexities which are suited neither to conditions which prevail in Baluchistan nor to the financial limitations within which the Government of India require us to work in this Province. If our Political Agents are to have time for the most essential part of their work, which is executive, and if our cadres are not to be increased, we shall have to consider

simplification of methods in many matters.” (“Political: Orders Issued under the F.C.R.” 1919, 210).

The colonial state introduced a cost-effective approach to administration in Nasirabad, a simplification of administration that strengthened prominent *zamindars* or landlords, *motbars* or respectable, and *sardars* or tribal chiefs. The Government of India granted them official authority to administer justice and wield executive power.

Colonial officials considered establishing authority for tribal chiefs as a decisive aspect of administering the tribes on the frontier. For instance, the land granted to outsider landless tribes was registered in the name of the tribal chief, as recognized and empowered by colonial authorities. For example, in the case of the Bugtis, Sir Henry McMahon, A.G.G. Baluchistan, directed that the grant should be issued in the name of the Bugti *Nawab*, and “the power of distributing the lands among his people or altering the distribution hereafter should be left to him, in order that the grant of land outside Bugti limits might not impair the feudal system of the tribe.” (“Land Acquisition” 1908, 111–12). Colonial authorities viewed this as a precedent for future land grants. Such grants effectively bestowed significant power upon tribal chiefs in their relationship with tribe members. In this way, the figure of chief became highly dependent on the colonial state for his authority. This dynamic facilitated control by colonial officials over the tribal chiefs. Simultaneously, it disrupted the leverage tribesmen had in their relationship with the chiefs (Swidler 2014).

In the case of tribes already settled in the area, their authority was not unchallenged. Instead, it also required the colonial state’s backing. Consider, for example, the comments of the Settlement Officer in the case of the Jamali tribal chief in the western section of Nasirabad. The settlement officer hoped that “the authority of the Jamali Sardar will be maintained if not strengthened and extended to facilitate the administration of the western section.” (Smart 1907, 5). In the past, it was common that the power of *sardars* was precarious. Any failure on their part to meet the needs of the tribes could lead to resistance or the breakdown of tribal loyalty (Swidler 2014, 152-166). With colonial rule, any challenge to their authority was perceived as a challenge to the colonial state, which heavily relied on the firm control these individuals had over their tribes. This sentiment was evident in the words of the Settlement Officer, who remarked that “the existence of independent small landholders who do not acknowledge the authority of any Sardar such as are to be found around Nasirabad is a source

of constant troubles.” (Smart 1907, 5). This also explains why the tribe, like Bajkani’s, with no authoritative chief, struggled to gain the colonial state’s favor, as mentioned above.

3.5.1. *Levy Thanas*

Levy Thana was an important institution through which the power of the tribal chief over the tribesmen to generate security was strengthened during the colonial period. Therefore, it became a critical means of administering the frontier of the empire. It was Robert Sandeman who introduced the *Levy Thana* system with the establishment of the Baluchistan Agency in 1876. The *Levy* was a paramilitary force comprised of tribesmen under the leadership of their chief. It served various functions. For instance, in Baluchistan, the Levies had the tasks of safeguarding the border, collecting revenue, and enforcing laws. As a result, they were tasked with conducting investigations, gathering witnesses, and communicating on behalf of colonial authorities. The *Levies* received training from British officers and were paid by the colonial government. The selection process for *Levy* personnel involved recommendations from tribal chiefs, who proposed individuals for recruitment. It was common for relatives of chiefs, such as their brothers or sons, to hold high positions within the Levies (Swidler 2014, 150-170).

A notable aspect of the *Levy* system was the principle of collective responsibility. Sandeman envisioned *Levy* posts as rallying points for entire tribes during crises (Ibid., 158-159). The compensation provided by colonial authorities to the levy personnel was viewed as contributing to the whole tribe’s responsibility to aid colonial authorities, especially in moments of crisis (Ibid.).²⁷ This presented a cost-effective approach to administration as it only compensated individuals like the chief and his close agnates, yet it could mobilize collective labor for colonial purposes. Even before Nasirabad was part of the British Baluchistan Agency Territories, *Levy thanas* or posts in the area were established for revenue collection and border security in the late nineteenth century. However, after the lease, the posts increased. These *thanas* were established “in conjunction with the general scheme of tribal service and responsibility in Baluchistan.” (File. No. 3-Vol-1” 1903, 83). Some were responsible for “internal” matters of the area and others for “external.”²⁸ (Ibid., 7).

²⁷ In fact, the system exhibited a conflicting duality. Tribal chiefs and their close relatives simultaneously acted as representatives of the colonial state to their tribesmen and as representatives of the tribe to the colonial state.

²⁸ For example, the one at *Bakhra*, in Nasirabad, was responsible for internal issues. Internal issues meant helping the revenue staff to collect tax. There was another one at *Goranari*, which carried out the task of protecting the border of Upper Sindh Frontier. Bugtis manned this thana. (“File. No. 3-Vol-1” 1903, 7).

Different state authorities paid the salaries of the *Levy Thana* personnel, depending on which authority they worked for. However, it is important to remark that tribal administration was a means through which state structure took its form. Being part of this structure was indeed a privilege for the local elite. Only the most significant tribal chiefs and their agnates were given this task, which was highly financially and politically rewarding. It's important to mention that these institutions of the colonial state were instrumental not only in cementing the power of tribal chiefs and their close agnates but also in reducing the power of "independent landholders" as the Settlement Officer had categorized tribesmen who did not recognize the authority of their tribal chiefs. Through this system, the tribal chief amassed power, making such resistance against his authority more unlikely. After Nasirabad was brought under colonial administration, the *Levy thanas* were reorganized, and the establishment was expanded as the tasks to be performed increased in the area. More importantly, there was an attempt to bring them more under the control of the P.A. (Ibid.).

3.5.2. *Jirga* System

The *Jirga* System, introduced to Nasirabad *tehsil*²⁹ from Baluchistan Agency, functioned primarily as a mechanism for resolving criminal and civil cases, and it consisted of a council of elders of the area which was the authority on local customs or *riwaj*, which Hopkins (2015) has called "colonially sanctioned tradition" similar to Mamdani's (1999) representation of such customs as colonial invention. They settled disputes among the locals and administered justice. The markets, cities, and railway lines fell outside its jurisdiction, as they were under regular laws, strikingly similar to the case of Africa, which Mamdani notes in his work. The appointment of individuals to local *jirgas* involved the local, district, and provincial administrations. In case of conflicts, it required the condition that conflicting parties had no objection to *jirga* members. The members belonged to the area and tribes of the conflicting parties to ensure familiarity with the specific case. This familiarity was judged by knowing the *riwaj* or customs of the parties involved in a conflict. Thus, the members were empowered to interpret local customs (*riwaj*). As every tribe had different customs, the system lacked a standardized framework suitable for general application across Baluchistan. Unlike the rigidity of the regular law and its universal application, this variability required

²⁹ A *tehsil* was an administrative unit of a district that, under a tehsildar, exercised certain duties at the sub-district level regarding local self-government, revenue collection, and the maintenance of law and order.

profound knowledge from *jirga* members. The task of the colonial administrators was to ensure that *jirgas* interpreted customary and tribal law appropriately. In cases of doubt or dispute, a District Officer supervising a local *jirga* had the power to refer a particular matter to a larger or more authoritative *jirga* for resolution.³⁰ Effectively, whatever a *jirga*'s decision, the ultimate authority to approve its decisions rested with the British administrators. However, the *jirga* members had the duty to execute the decisions the British administrators finally approved (Political: Orders issued under the F.C.R. 1919).

The effectiveness of the *jirga* system hinged on a homogenous population composition in the settlement pattern of tribal groups. The British administration actively advocated for maintaining homogeneity in the settlement pattern of the area. They saw that diverse tribes settled close by, which could complicate the effectiveness of the *Jirga* system. This explains why colonial authorities argued for settling Bugtis so they were separate from other groups. The A.G.G. in Baluchistan wrote, "In view of their tribal constitution it will be necessary in the interest of law and order, to group such colonists together, and it is considered that no area smaller than 5,000 acres gross, will suffice to maintain a homogenous tribal nucleus of the kind contemplated." (Health, Education and Lands 1933, 5). This resembles the case of settlement policies for *biradaris* in colonial Punjab, where Waseem (1994) writes that "*biradari* considerations were also taken into account by colonial administrators while drawing district and sub-district administrative boundaries. These were often designed to create local strongholds for landed elites and tribal and *baradari* leaders who were co-opted to maintain political stability in their areas of control." (178). This way, areas of influence could be easily marked and responsibilities assigned accordingly.³¹

³⁰ At the district and provincial levels, Joint *jirgas* were established to address conflicts between parties from different district boundaries. The submission of a case to a Joint *Jirga* was grounded in the principle that its decision would impact the administration of two districts or agencies to a degree that justified each having a representation in that decision. The members of higher prestige than those in local or district *jirgas* were members of Joint *jirgas*.

³¹ The *jirga* system worked in a rather straightforward manner. When a local lodged a complaint, it was referred for disposal to a competent magistrate under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (F.C.R), a legal cover that formalized the *jirga* system. The magistrate then examined who the conflicting parties were, investigated their allegations, framed the issues that addressed the core of the dispute, and presented these issues before a council of elders or a *jirga*. With the necessary approval of the Political Agent of a particular district, the magistrate passed his own orders on the *jirga*'s findings. If an aggrieved party demanded a reference to the Political Agent, the magistrate submitted it to him for final orders. All these steps are taken to achieve a "settlement" and not to punish.

The *Jirga* System not only offered a practical and cost-effective means of conflict resolution but was also ideologically framed by the colonial authorities. The A.G.G. of Baluchistan claimed that the system was indigenous to the area and that the colonial authorities had utilized it to settle civil and criminal cases with minimal alteration. Although it was legalized through the implementation of the Frontier Crimes Regulation in 1901, the A.G.G. argued that the *Jirga* System was based on the character and preferences of the local population. Therefore, it was unparalleled in simplicity and effectiveness (Political: Orders issued under the F.C.R. 1919, 1). However, this argument overlooked that the system evolved with and under British colonial influence. It was indeed a colonial instrument that used customary law for its benefit. The ultimate authority rested with colonial administrators, not the tribal chiefs or tribesmen. This contrasted with traditional justice administration. Furthermore, the appointment of individuals to important *Jirgas* was not based on tribal consensus but nominated by British authorities. It represented the introduction of a new system with no historical roots in the region.³² Over time, it became hard to resist the change as colonial authorities grappled with its initial inclination to freeze customary law as defined by them.³³

3.6. Water Woes Continue Under the British Rule

After annexing Nasirabad *niabat* to the Baluchistan Agency, it was given the status of a *tehsil*. Soon after assuming its control, colonial administrators realized the complexity of the water issues faced by the *zamindars* in the area. The situation worsened as the *zamindars*

³² This became clear in the increasing trend of appointing *jirga* members who did not belong to the tribes of the parties in conflict. As early as 1911, many petitions were submitted by applicants that stated that none of the complainants' tribal elders were appointed as members of the *Jirga* handling the case. For more details, see ('Political: Orders Issued under the F.C.R.' 1919)

³³ The A.G.G. Baluchistan addressed this issue extensively in a note. Initially, he observed a rise in the inappropriate referencing of sections from the Criminal Procedures or Penal Code during *Jirga* proceedings. He argued that such references in such proceedings were unnecessary. Another issue emerged as *Jirga* members increasingly began imposing punishments and sentences instead of focusing on *settlements*. This, he saw, as a deviation from customary practices. To rectify this practice, he recommended replacing the words "sentence" or "punishment" with "settlement." In this way, he argued the actual function of *Jirga* could be achieved, which was dispute resolution rather than formal legal punishment. Additionally, he saw a trend where punishments were imposed alongside penalties prescribed by customary or tribal law. This trend was attributed to a mistaken belief among District Magistrates that imprisonment had a more deterrent effect. The A.G.G. advocated against imprisonment, especially in personal, family, and tribal feuds. He proposed that penalties align with *riwaj*. Moreover, he saw increasing trend in District Magistrates prescribing dual penalties for defaulters. One based on customary law and the other on colonial law. This development created complications. Finally, he acknowledged exceptional cases where District Magistrates might justify imposing sentences of imprisonment in addition to other penalties. This was allowed in situations where parties significantly violated their customary and tribal laws or where the offense demonstrated a high degree of contempt for colonial law and authority. For more details, see ("Political: Orders issued under the F.C.R." 1919.)

were subjected to increased revenue assessments under the new settlement.³⁴ Nasirabad's water problems persisted under colonial rule due to its geographical position as a lower riparian area, the unreliability of the Indus River, and the Government of India's decision to shelve the proposed canal construction in the region. Colonial authorities did not adequately consider these factors when they criticized the Khan of Kalat for his "uneconomic" management of the *niabat*. The severity of these struggles was aptly captured in the ten-yearly assessments of whether the colonial administration should extend or revise the existing settlement terms, which are filled with justifications for extending settlement terms without increasing assessment rates mainly because of the water woes of the area.

As early as 1907, Captain Ramsay, the P.A. of Sibi, acknowledged the severity of the problem when he communicated with the R.C. in Baluchistan. He stated, "with extensions of irrigation in Sindh on a very large scale projected, there is likely to be a diminution of the volume of water coming into the canals which affect us, and the course of the river also is affecting us badly at present. An improvement or extension by which we will benefit, especially in the western half of the Tehsil, is urgently needed." (Smart 1905, 318). Ramsay's letter identified two key issues: firstly, the expansion of irrigation networks in Sindh, the upper riparian region, and secondly, the unpredictability of the flow of the Indus. The former could be addressed through colonial infrastructure development, whereas the latter was beyond the control of colonial authorities.

There was limited archival material accessible from the Sibi and Quetta archives on why this project did not begin as planned. However, inferences can be drawn about financial stringencies during this period due to the First World War and the economic downturn in the 1920s. This situation created much frustration among colonial administrations in Baluchistan. On 18th Nov 1921, the P.A. Sibi wrote, "We have been waiting for these possibilities of extension of irrigation ever since we took over Nasirabad 19 years ago in 1903. Scheme after scheme has been projected surveyed and dropped or shelved." ("File No. 1, Vol I" 1926, 34).

³⁴ In 1901, the water rate on the Eastern Section was raised to Rs. 1-8, making a consolidated assessment of Rs. 2-8 per cultivated acre, and about 1904 the rate of rice was raised to Rs. 3. In the Western Section however the water rate was never raised, but a consolidated rice rate of Rs. 3 was imposed in 1905, and also a *Dubari* rate for a second crope, one rupee if watered and eight *annas* if unwatered were levied. (File No. 17-18, 1908, 4).

The gravity of the issue became apparent as the already extended settlement term in Nasirabad neared its end around the mid-1920s, which compelled officials in Baluchistan to either justify extending existing settlement terms or introduce a new, higher revenue rate in the area. If the settlement term was changed, it meant a rise in the revenue rates for the area; primarily, such an increase was based on the expansion of water networks, roads, new markets, and similar infrastructure. Typically, the settlement terms for an area were re-evaluated every decade, which required British administrators to either justify maintaining the existing revenue rates or suggest adjustments based on the aforementioned criteria.

The case in Nasirabad was dismal. Contrary to revenue estimates of around 3,08,000 rupees, approximately 2,40,000 were collected annually for several years in Nasirabad (see more data in Chart 1 below). Out of this, the Khan of Kalat received around 1,17,500 rupees as lease money. After factoring in the administration costs in the area, the annual loss amounted to approximately 75,000 rupees (Ibid.). Baluchistan officials proposed various solutions to address this situation. Some suggested permitting and expanding rice cultivation to generate more revenue, while others contested this proposal. The latter cited insufficient water availability for allowing rice cultivation. Alternately, there were suggestions to raise the existing assessment rates on rice and millet. However, the P.A. of Sibi argued against increases, citing the “uncertainty of the irrigation situation.” (Ibid., 34). Water scarcity meant that revenues could not be raised. This concern of not raising taxes was captured aptly by the P.A. Sibi, who contended that raising taxes would “not be looked on favorably in these times of stringency.” (Ibid., 41). Another comment from 1931, by the R.C., posited that “in view of the present financial stringency, there would appear to be no good justification for re-settlement of the areas.” (Ibid., 110). This implies that the overall financial or economic climate was unfavorable for increasing revenue rates. This situation led authorities to argue for maintaining the current assessment rate (revenue) on lands instead of raising it (Ibid., 31).

The annual administration reports from the 1910s to the 1930s consistently highlighted the persistent issue of water scarcity and the increased indebtedness of *zamindars* and tribal elites in Nasirabad (Government of India 1930). This deterioration occurred despite their continued access to and support from the colonial state. The predicament was as follows: if the administration compelled the local tribal elite and *zamindars* to pay their taxes under conditions of severe water scarcity, it essentially meant jeopardizing the established ruling order in the area. As some influential tribes accrued significant debts to moneylenders and

could not meet their tax obligations, exceptions to the rule were introduced to address this challenge (“File No. 5-C” 1902). These exceptions were justified by colonial administrators in Baluchistan both as a response to the problem of water scarcity and as a political calculation.

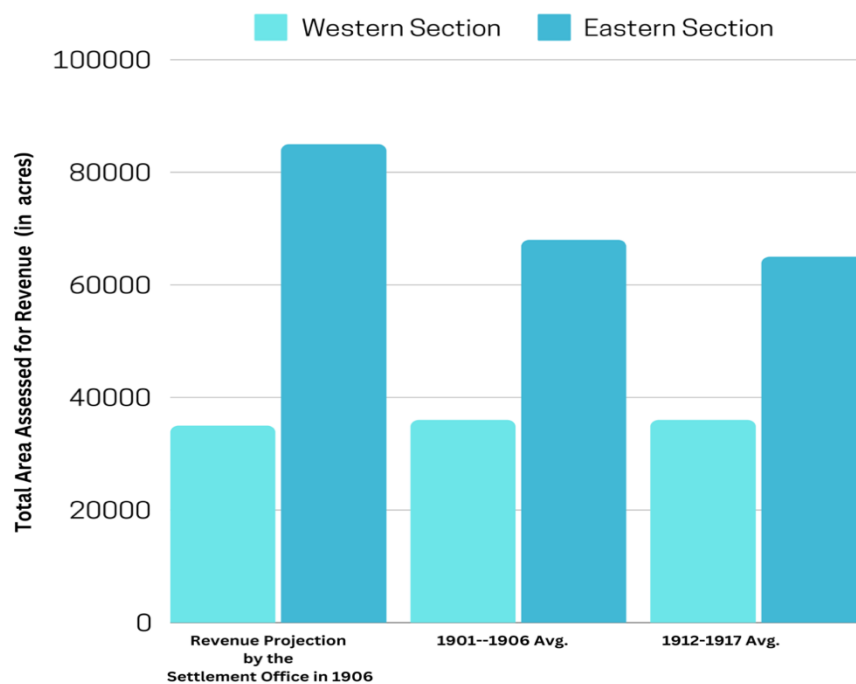


Chart 1: Projections and Actual Revenue Collection Under Colonial Rule

(Source: Consolidated from different archival documents by the Author)

3.6.1. Dealing With Water Scarcity

The case of the Jamali *zamindars* in the western section of the *tehsil* is an instructive example that illustrates the tendency of the colonial administrators to declare exceptions. In 1912, the Jamali landlords from western Nasirabad sent an application to the Baluchistan

administration requesting that their “B” class lands³⁵ under the Sindh Fallow Rules should not be assessed. They argued that water scarcity in the area did not allow them to cultivate these lands. In addition to these lands, they could not, due to water scarcity, cultivate the prescribed 1/5th of their lands classified as “A.”³⁶ (“File No. 1, Vol I”, 1926, 31). This request generated discussions between local and provincial authorities. Finally, a formal request was submitted by the Baluchistan Agency administration to the Government of India for an exemption for the Jamalis from paying the revenue (“File No. 5-C” 1902, 148–49). The A.G.G. in Baluchistan wrote, “The real issue is water, and until better irrigation facilities are provided for western Nasirabad, their cultivation capabilities remain limited. Currently, they have no control over this.” (“File No. 17” 1908, 206). Thus, the A.G.G. recognized problems encountered by local *zamindars*, which necessitated declaring exceptions in realizing land assessment. The A.G.G. simultaneously reminded the Government of India to consider canal construction in this area. Initially, the request was rejected. However, after further exchanges on the subject, the Government of India eventually accepted the request as Baluchistan authorities reminded them of Jamali’s “loyalty and good service” to the colonial authorities (“File No. 1, Vol I”, 1926, 30). The R.C. succinctly justified the exemption with the following words:

“In view of the fact that the supply of irrigation water for these lands has, in recent years, been most insufficient and uncertain; and that the Jamalis have become heavily involved in debt, owing partly to this failure of water supply, and are in no condition to meet a large additional demand on account of land revenue, the Honorable the Agent to the Governor-General has decided that in respect of Jamali holdings, the strict application of the Fallow Rules shall not be insisted on.” (“File No. 5-C” 1902, 148–149).

This explanation highlights that, under colonial rule, landlords faced challenges in paying taxes and managing their debts. To address the former, remissions on revenue were granted to clients of the colonial authorities. At the same time, for the latter, the burden fell on the *bannia*, or the creditors, who had to bear the cost of the political considerations of the empire (see section 3.5.2). Despite the apparent protection afforded to the *zamindars* and local tribal elites by the state through these different measures, the *zamindar* became highly insecure

³⁵ B class lands did not have assured access to canal water, it depended on the amount of water available every season, usually lay at the tails of canal branches and watercourses and were not very well connected with the local market. (Smart 1905).

³⁶ A class land was a land that had access to canal water, and was well connected with the local market and railway stations in addition to having a good quality soil. (Smart 1905).

after the settlement. They continually had to circumnavigate the obligation of paying taxes to ensure that their occupancy rights were not forfeited.

The Jamalis enjoyed a relatively favorable position for colonial administrators as they were a numerically significant tribe, with a clear structure of authority, which facilitated the local administration in governing the western section of the *tehsil*. This was evident in how the R.C. adopted a different argumentation when considering the application of small landholders and less significant landlords in eastern Nasirabad. Concerning the lands irrigated by *Shahi Wah*, a branch of the Desert Canal, he stated, “I am not sure that we should not enforce the Fallow Rules in the case of these lands. If we do not enforce them now, are we never to enforce them? And if not, does not the neglect to enforce them amount to permission to squat on valueless land until it becomes valuable?” (“File No. 5-C” 1902, 227). Here, a distinctly different approach to dealing with the *zamindars* is evident. This shows that the application of law under colonial rule was based on discretionary power. It was flexible enough to protect individuals or groups deemed important and to penalize those classified as squatters.

Selective application of the law was not the only means to protect the native tribal and *zamindari* elite deemed necessary; providing privileged access to water was another tool. When water was scarce, it did not affect everyone in the *tehsil* uniformly. Special requests and arrangements were made to allow water access to loyal tribes. Particularly noteworthy is the request sent to the Executive Engineer, Begari Canals, by the Extra Assistant Commissioner (E.A.C) of Nasirabad, seeking a sluice for Nawab Sir Shahbaz Khan, K.C.I.E., the Bugti Chief, and his tribe. The letter states, “The Nawab has constructed a new *karia* [...] it is of immense importance to the Bugtis to get the land cropped when the next flood season begins in order to give a return on their heavy expenditure.” (‘Land Acquisition’ 1908, 126). The E.A.C clearly demands that Nawab’s investment in digging the *karia* or watercourse pays off. This shows the importance of the Bugti’s getting favorable access to water. The E.A.C concluded the letter by reminding the Executive Engineer, “The Nawab and his family have always rendered most valuable service to the Government.” (Ibid). This clear appeal suggests that the Nawab has fulfilled his part of the contract, and now it is the government’s turn to reciprocate by providing him with favorable access to water at the tail of the Uch Canal. It was common to submit such requests and recommendations for tribal chiefs with close ties to the colonial administration. For instance, the P.A. in Sibi frequently

recommended exemptions from rules for the Bugtis, often justified by their chief's influence over his tribe and their good behavior ("Assignment" 1902, 234).

The examples of the Jamalis, small *zamindars*, and Bugtis in the Nasirabad area under colonial administration show the patronage logic of governance. These instances show differential treatment based on the security and administrative interests of the colonial authorities. Essentially, doling out patronage provided the legitimacy for the colonial state to rule in this area. This situation contrasts with the logic of colonial rule at the "Baloch Frontier" on the Indus. In his research on this frontier, Gilmartin (2020) identified the dual nature of the transformation of the Indus through canal construction under colonial rule. He argues that it was not only an environment-making undertaking but also represented a shift in the relationship between society and the state. He argues that the expansion of irrigation was intertwined with changing notions of state legitimacy. This process occurred as the colonial state redefined its authority by acting as a mediator for the people dependent on new means of water control. This relationship between the environment and state legitimacy is central, argues Gilmartin, to understand how the colonial state sought to position itself as a benevolent power that used irrigation projects as symbols of progress and means of control (Ibid). However, in the case of Nasirabad, where the colonial administration failed to realize the construction of a canal (for three decades after its takeover), the legitimacy of the colonial state rested more on its ability to disburse patronage. This shows how the colonial state's legitimacy could hinge on infrastructure and technological advancement in one part of the empire while it rested on dispensing patronage in the other.

3.6.2. Hindu *bannia* in Nasirabad: Paying the Price for the Colonial Project?

The Hindu *bannias* of Nasirabad were an important source of credit for local *zamindars*. Such credit was utilized to pay for the labor that dug canals, constructed and de-silted watercourses, and procured seed grains. Generally, *bannia* claimed a specific portion of the resulting harvest in exchange. In the period preceding British rule, the *bannias* resided in villages and conducted their business under the protection of local tribes. They maintained running accounts, known as "*bahi*," for village needs. This included the provision of oil, tobacco, salt, and clothing. These accounts were settled during harvest time. Any remaining balance was carried forward to the next harvest ("Political: Orders issued under the F.C.R." 1919, 356).

With the advent of colonial rule, significant and largely adverse changes for the Hindu *bannias* unfolded. After the lease, the colonial authorities were inundated with numerous complaints from money lenders. One such complaint from moneylenders of Nasirabad directed to the P.A. in Sibi detailed their objection to money-related matters being under the purview of the customary law, i.e., the *jirgas*. They requested that these issues be resolved within the regular British court system. The problem stemmed from the fact that those with the power to decide on cases involving moneylenders were the defaulters themselves. This created an unfair situation from the perspective of the moneylenders. However, the colonial policy did not align with the interests of the moneylenders in this area. In response to such applications, the British authorities defended the existing practice that favored their security interests, which necessitated patronizing the tribal elite indebted to the moneylenders (Ibid., 129–130). However, they defended it by maintaining that this was an old custom. Thus, they denied any changes in the relationship between the tribal landed class and moneylenders since the colonial administration took over the area.

This was particularly evident in how the A.G.G., Sir Frederick Johnston, responded after he met with the *Panchayat* (council) of Hindus of Nasirabad in Sibi on 11th March 1926. He noted, “Many generations past their relations with the tribesmen have been carried on mutual forbearance and honesty. As a consequence, relations are good between the communities, debts are paid and general quiet exists. The Hindus are regarded with friendly feeling and are safe in the midst of Mohamedans.” (Ibid., 354). Here, it can be seen that on the part of the A.G.G., there is a complete denial that the local system that existed before the British arrival under which such relations had existed does not exist anymore. He argued against the request of the council for bringing their cases to regular courts by maintaining that “To introduce a legal system (regular courts) with its attendant evils of enforced decrees, selling up Zamindari land, a premium on false evidence etc. etc. would only result in doing away with all these good relations and I would be no party to it.” (Ibid.). Thus, he claimed that such a policy change would disturb the peace between two groups, a surprising conclusion since he was responding to the complaints of one party against the other. This response can be interpreted to mean that if the regular law were to be introduced, it would inevitably lead to conflict.

Nevertheless, the reports from local authorities recognized that there were not many “bad debts” made by the *bannia* in the past, and the tribesmen seldom challenged their accounts.

However, “now even in distant villages the methods have changed and *baniah*’s have to seek redress in courts.” (Ibid., 356). Indeed, the old system had changed from equally sharing the risk between tribesmen and the *bannia* to a more one-sided burden for risks on the latter. It was a reality that A.G.G. refused to acknowledge. This situation resembles the observations made by Bhattacharya (2019) in his work on colonial Punjab, where he argues that such changes represent “imperial paternalism,”³⁷ where colonial authorities positioned themselves as protectors of local interests while simultaneously restructuring traditional systems to serve their own administrative needs. In Nasirabad, this paternalistic approach manifested through policies that undermined the established economic role of the *bannia* by favoring tribal elites who were indebted to the moneylenders. As the moneylenders from Nasirabad continued to send petitions, in response to one such petition, on March 22, 1929, the Extra Assistant Commissioner (E.A.C.) of Nasirabad wrote:

“The hon’ble the Agent to the Governor General has carefully considered the representation made by the Hindus of Nasirabad, and while sympathizing with them in their desire to have their monetary cases with Muslims tried by Judicial Courts, as is done in Sind, he does not feel justified, for the sake of a community that forms only 3 per cent of the population of the Province, to introduce any change in a system that has proved suitable and satisfactory for the remaining 97 per cent of the people of Baluchistan.” (“Political: Orders issued under the F.C.R.” 1919, 136).

This justification provided by the A.G.G. prioritized the numerical majority over the principle of fairness *bannia* were fighting for. Essentially, it showed the prioritization of maintaining the status quo and a reluctance to adapt the legal framework to address the grievances raised by the moneylenders. Nevertheless, Hindu moneylenders continued to send such petitions. This led the E.A.C. to write a letter to the Judicial Commissioner in Baluchistan in 1934 to “enunciate the principles” of the policy as “the need has arisen in the face of complaints.” (Ibid., 202). In a letter dated 20th February 1934, the Judicial Commissioner clarified that the primary justice system prevailing throughout Baluchistan was rooted in “indigenous law and custom.” (Ibid.). He noted that this system, legalized under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, extended its jurisdiction to all individuals born or ordinarily residing in Baluchistan (Ibid., 202). Additionally, it applied to all cases except those involving European British subjects as

³⁷ Bhattacharya’s work challenges the common portrayal of colonial state power as purely about domination and control. He argues that colonial rule was shaped by a complex set of factors, including romantic and utilitarian ideals that were mixed with practical considerations. This perspective contrasts with scholars like Guha (1997), who popularized the idea of “Dominance without Hegemony” to explain colonial rule. For more details, see Bhattacharya (2019).

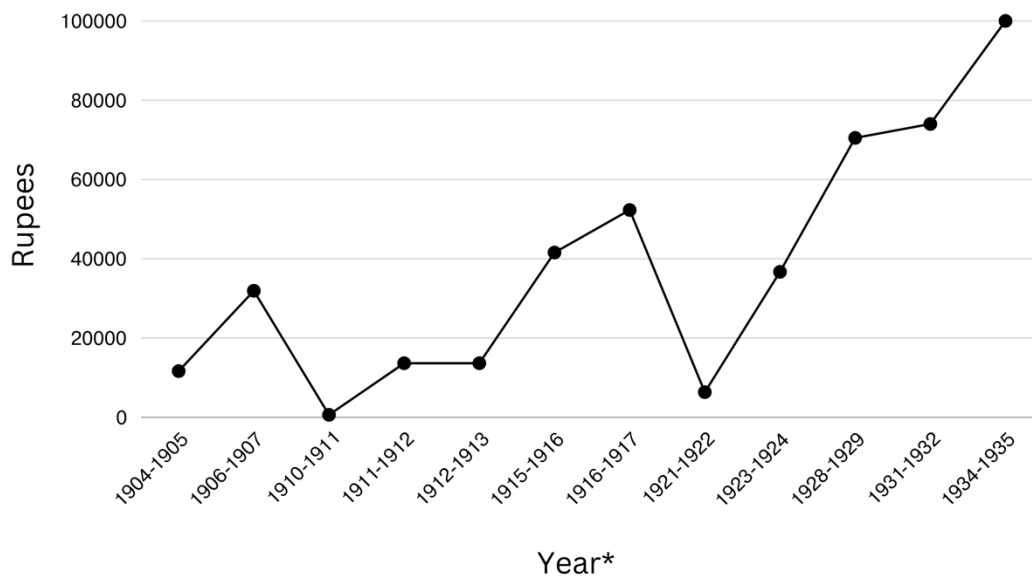
accused parties (Ibid.). Therefore, the letter highlighted that cases involving Hindu parties should be tried under the Frontier Crimes Regulation and indigenous law and custom.

Thus, the Hindu moneylenders of Nasirabad were burdened with shouldering the expenses of a colonial project designed to safeguard tribal groups and elites who collaborated with the colonial administration in overseeing and governing the area. However, this unsustainable situation may explain why Nasirabad's *zamindars* increasingly relied on non-resident moneylenders in Sind (see section 3.6.2. below). This means that Nasirabad moneylenders may have moved or stopped providing credit. The situation in Nasirabad challenged the fundamental principles of a free market, which resembles the case of Indirect Rule in Africa, as narrated by Mamdani (1999). The problem was unlike the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, which Washbrook (1981) describes as rooted in “possessive individualism” and aimed at reducing state intervention to promote economic development through a free market (652), Nasirabad, as a frontier region, represented a departure from such economic philosophies that influenced colonial policies at the core of the empire. The colonial administration in Nasirabad relied on practical arrangements based on patronage. It prioritized stability and control over free-market principles, thus showing why Nasirabad stands out as an exceptional case for how it was ruled during the colonial period.

3.7. Land Sale and Grants in Usta Barrage Area: Security against Revenue

By the late 1920s, Nasirabad became a “project in loss” due to annual revenue remissions in the area (see Graph 1 below). For instance, by 1924, the total accumulated revenue losses since the lease of the area amounted to 31,74,453 Rupees (“File No. 9 Canal/1921” 1921, 142-C). In the fiscal year 1928-1929 alone, 70,484 Rupees were remitted in Nasirabad, accounting for nearly all British Baluchistan’s total remissions of 78,733 Rupees (Government of India 1930, 80). These figures were in stark contrast to the estimates provided by the Executive Engineer in Sindh before leasing this area in 1903.

Remissions on Land Revenue in Nasirabad



*This data is provided only for the years in which separate data for Nasirabad was accessible in yearly Administration Reports for the Baluchistan Agency. In many instances, the data was provided for the Sibi Agency/District, which made it hard to ascertain the figures for Nasirabad exclusively.

Graph 1: Revenue Remissions in Nasirabad.

(Source: Consolidated by the Author based on archival data collected in the Sibi Record office).

The question of Nasirabad being “a project in loss” gained prominence when the possibility of the long-awaited canal construction arose in the mid and late 1920s. Sindh authorities argued that Nasirabad, as it was being run, was a burden the Government of Bombay could no longer afford. The argument was that every part of the future Barrage and its canals should be self-sustainable. Sindh authorities proposed two solutions to deal with this problem, which went against the preferential treatment given to certain tribes. This included the Government of India extending credit to the Bombay Government, which would construct the canal, or Nasirabad paying its debt for the canal construction annually. This proposal sparked intense reaction from Baluchistan administrators, who defended their preferential policies of granting lands and keeping revenue rates low. (“File No. 9 Canal/1921” 1921, 142 B-142 C). The Sindh authorities wanted Nasirabad to be treated like other parts of Sindh, as it was essentially part of the Indus Canal system. They argued that Nasirabad should be required to yield annual returns by fixing a fair interest rate on the expenditure incurred. Such annual return could be gained through two means: first, by paying full assessment on land just like in

the lands in Sind, and second, by returns from sales or leases of “unoccupied land” which would come under the command of the canal (“File No. 9 Canal/1921” 1921, 142–C–142-E).

In his communication with Bombay Government officials, the Commissioner in Sindh contended that preferential treatment by the Baluchistan administration resulted in significant losses for the Government. The commissioner further argued that, for irrigation purposes, Nasirabad should be treated similarly to areas in Sindh. In a bold suggestion, he revived the old debate by proposing the transfer of Nasirabad to Sindh authorities. He argued that this move would “simplify the administration” of Nasirabad (Ibid). This argument echoed the colonial justification for taking over the area, which was to do away with the fragmented administrative authority structure, which remained unresolved.

In contrast, the justification provided by the Baluchistan administration for the yearly loss incurred was provided by the R.C., who wrote, “I have only one remark to make about the yearly loss incurred by the Government of Bombay on our existing canals. Our Jagir lands have been given for services rendered. If we have not given this land, someone would have had to provide cash. Someone would have had to meet this.” (“File No. 9 Canal/1921” 1921, 216). Here, the R.C. was talking about the services rendered by hill tribes, particularly the Bugtis and Marris. They were provided land grants and power through the *Levy* and *Jirga* System to administer the area, which was crucial in protecting Sindh from raids. In exchange for these services, these tribes were granted lands in Nasirabad. The R.C. argued that the government that directly benefits from these tribal services is the Bombay Government, which shares borders with the areas requiring security arrangements. Therefore, the perceived loss should be viewed as “compensation” for the essential services provided by these tribes and not preferential treatment (Ibid).

The issue’s intensity further heightened on the issue of selling “unoccupied Government land” in Nasirabad. As the A.G.G. in Baluchistan revealed that he had committed himself to granting approximately 56,000 acres of land to various tribes, primarily from outside Nasirabad, the Sind authorities feared it would not be possible to raise capital for Barrage construction through selling these lands on the low rates proposed by the A.G.G. In justifying the sale of these lands at a reduced rate, the R.C. in Baluchistan highlighted, “It is not in my opinion politic (sic) to consider this sale of lands as a Sind or Baluchistan question. We protect Sind from outside raids, and the people who do this work must be paid in cash or

kind.” (“File No. 9 Canal/1921” 1921, 217). Thus, by emphasizing the significance of security, the R.C. justified the sale of lands at low prices. As this discussion continued, the commissioner in Sindh explicitly expressed the apprehension that the Baluchistan Administration was reluctant to deal with local discontent if tax rates were increased, which would improve government revenue (Ibid., 142).

This conflict also represented an internal struggle among different departments and state authorities within the colonial state. The demands and objections raised by the Irrigation Department through the Commissioner in Sind perturbed the A.G.G. in Baluchistan. He expressed his frustration when he wrote, “the Irrigation Department are usurping the powers of the District Magistrate Day by day. Let the Department give us so much water for which we pay and their responsibility ends.” (Ibid., 217). The A.G.G. essentially contested that Nasirabad ought to be administered similarly to other parts of British India and instead framed it as an accusation that the Irrigation Department in Sindh sought to expand its power. The A.G.G. dismissed the idea that simplifying administration should be the sole consideration for the Government of India, calling for a security-centered and political perspective that transcended mere administrative convenience in devising rules with universal application (Ibid.). Thus, Nasirabad was to be seen through political calculations that took security concerns seriously.

3.7.1. The Usta Barrage Colony: 1930s Discussions on Pacification

Eventually, the status quo defended by the Baluchistan administration prevailed in Nasirabad. This became evident in the policy choices made in the 1930s when the Lloyd Barrage Canal on the Indus was being finalized. As the Khir Thar Canal, part of the barrage was going to water lands in Western Nasirabad, the discussions surrounding Usta Colony took center stage among colonial administrators. With the new canal, around 129,930 acres of “occupied land”³⁸ and 39,671 acres of “Government unoccupied land” would become irrigable. (Health, Education and Lands 1933).

The colonial officials addressed the old question: should the colony prioritize financial returns or serve as a tool to settle “turbulent people” and bring about “pacification”? The A.G.G. in Baluchistan provided a pretty simple answer, which was the need to pacify and

³⁸ These were the lands claimed and occupied by *zamindars*.

“uplift” what he perceived as the “backward” and “predatory” tribes of the frontier (Health, Education and Lands 1933, 5). He continued that the Usta Barrage Colony was a rare opportunity to “promote the moral and material welfare of the most impoverished and backward tribes of this Agency,” emphasizing that it would be “idle to suggest that moral uplift can be undertaken on a purely commercial basis.” (Ibid.). Thus, he questioned the logic of generating economic returns from these lands.

The Baluchistan administration’s proposals resonated with the Government of India, which agreed that colonization in the Usta area through special assistance to the Bugtis and other tribes was important to help them “transition to agriculture.” Such aid was necessary as these tribes were not “traditional agriculturists” (Ibid., 4). In his notes, R. H. Hutchings from the Foreign and Political Department wrote: “The question of special assistance to the Bugtis at the commencement of their career as agriculturists was also mentioned and would appear to need special consideration and peculiar treatment.” (Ibid). So, the goal was to settle “turbulent tribes” as a means of pacification rather than solely pursuing financial gains. Hutchings captured this sentiment when he maintained that the project’s success should be measured in terms of its ability to induce tribesmen “to settle down gradually and adopt a more peaceable and reasonable mode of living,” (Ibid., 5). with financial returns being a complementary goal rather than the primary focus.

These discussions also related to the legal aspects of such land distribution. The plan was to allow the colonists to settle as tenants-at-will, meaning they had no full occupancy rights during the initial settlement phase. Once such colonists fulfilled the conditions of the grant, which included paying nominal taxes and being loyal, they could eventually choose to continue paying taxes as occupants or purchase the occupancy rights in installments (Ibid., 17). This flexible tenure arrangement aimed to provide the colonial state greater control over land use and subsequent policies based on evolving economic and political developments.

However, the British policy of granting lands in western Nasirabad faced resistance from the Jamalis, who were historically one of their favored tribes and helped them administer Nasirabad. Since the Settlement Report of 1906, they had contested the Settlement Officer’s categorization of certain lands in their territory as “Government unoccupied land.” They challenged this by claiming they had ancestral rights on these lands, which they had cultivated when the Khan of Kalat had provided them *sanad* for these lands. However, their claims had been frequently rejected by the colonial state (“File No. 5-C” 1902). The matter

never really exploded as the value of these lands was not so significant that any of the parties had any incentive to break the mutually beneficial relationship. The colonial authorities in Baluchistan saw the claims of Jamalis on the land as legally untenable. They argued that since the area was leased to the Government of India, land rights had also been transferred to the British (“Secretary of State for India v. Sardar Rustam Khan” 1945). However, when legal means failed to achieve their objectives, and Bugti colonists began settling in the area, the Jamalis decided to forcefully remove the colonists (Foreign and Political 1935).

3.7.2. The Jamali-Bugti Confrontation: Differential Patronage

In June 1935, the grievances of the Jamali tribe’s chief, Rustam Khan, reached a tipping point. On the 19th of June, he sent a telegram to the officials of the Government of India in Shimla. He alleged that the authorities in Baluchistan were forcibly taking possession of Jamali lands and giving them to outsiders. He argued that this threatened the property rights of Jamali’s, which, for their protection, required urgent intervention from the Government of India. If such assistance was not provided, there was a strong possibility of violence, and a law and order situation would arise (Foreign and Political 1935, 16).

As no action was forthcoming, the conflict escalated. The Jamalis raised a *lashkar* (armed group of tribesmen) of around 200 men, and the reports showed that they attacked the Bugti settlers in Western Nasirabad, where they were in the minority. After the attack, it was reported that Jamalis migrated to Sind, fearing the response of the colonial authorities (Ibid., 5–6), a classic law and order situation that the colonial state so meticulously tried to avoid at the frontier.

The A.G.G. Baluchistan claimed that the Jamali disturbances were being supported by Sindhi Hindu *bannias*, who were vested in supporting Jamali’s claims on lands in Nasirabad. The argument was that since the Jamalis were entirely in debt to these moneylenders, “latter see no way of recovering their debts unless the Jamalis establish their claim to the immensely valuable colony lands.” (Ibid., 24). Therefore, the British administrators claimed that this was a Jamali effort to take possession of some lands in the colony area because only by doing so could they provide evidence for their ongoing court case against the Government of India, which was still pending.³⁹

³⁹ This was the case filed by Rustam Khan in the Privy Council against the Secretary of the State of India.

However, what occurred during these disturbances revealed the limits of the colonial patronage system. The Assistant Political Agent (hereinafter A.P.A.) in Nasirabad was “powerless as the only forces at this disposal were Jamali levies, the majority of whom belonged to the disaffected section of the tribe and could not therefore be relied on to assist.” (Ibid., 26). Thus, the A.P.A. had no force from the state to confront Jamalīs, as they were the ones who were used to bringing order to the area and had now turned against the colonial administration. This situation highlighted how tribal chiefs representing the colonial state opposed the colonial administration that had granted them tribal authority. This placed the colonial authorities in a difficult position, as those expected to maintain order at the frontier became the ones causing disorder and resisting the colonial administration.

Subsequently, Chagai Levies from central Baluchistan were brought to bring order into Nasirabad. In the aftermath of this disturbance, the Jamali Sardar Rustam Khan was stripped of his chieftaincy, and rival Jamali section leaders were recruited to replace him (Ibid.). This method was a classic colonial weapon to keep the prospective dissenters in check. Thus, internal divisions of tribes always came in handy in moments of crisis. In this manner, the Jamali chief lost his clientele relationship with the colonial state by engaging in an act that was anything but representative of disloyalty. The new *Sardar* was appointed, which meant the levy forces were also taken away from his control and replaced by “more reliable persons.” Tangianis took over the one *Levy thana* belonging to Rustam Khan in the area, and one was given to the Shahalianis, who were “definitely on the side of Government.” (Ibid.) Tangianis and Shahalianis were two other tribe sections with their own chiefs. Such internal tribal divisions were important for colonial authorities as they allowed them to punish those who acted in a manner deemed inappropriate and reward those who accepted their subordinate role.

As the British administration in Baluchistan took away the chieftaincy of the problematic Jamali *Sardar*, he did not quite accept his fate. He decided to pursue a legal case against the Government of India to gain possession of these lands distributed among colonist tribes. His case, after years of legal processes, finally ended up for hearing in the Privy Council, which decided in 1941 in favor of the Government of India.⁴⁰ This allowed the Baluchistan

⁴⁰ Rustam Khan’s claims were based on the deeds the Khan had given them for the land in western Nasirabad and the nature of the lease between the Khan and the Government of India. First, they provided historical

administration to continue its policy of pacifying the frontier by entrenching preferential treatment among various groups in Nasirabad. This case also shows that although Jamalis were an important tribe, they were not seen as being a security threat like Bugti and Marris, who represented the true “wild Baluch” landless tribes; thus, one can understand the reason behind the colonial preference for such tribes when it came to its land settlement policies.

3.8. Conclusion

The case of Nasirabad *niabat* sheds light on the nature of the colonial rule in the area. This chapter showed that during the formative years of state formation in the area, the patronage relationship between colonial administrators as patrons and the local elite as clients thrived. It started with land grants and grew to encompass remissions on land revenue, privileged access to water, and protection from moneylenders. When faced with the inability to realize ambitious revenue projections, the colonial authorities in Baluchistan focused on the political objectives of having leased the area, which encompassed questions of security for the empire. In addition, they also admitted their limits in increasing water availability; thus, their selective relaxation of revenue demands was made possible. The rise in the indebtedness of *zamindars* and frequent crop failures especially challenged the notion of rational and effective management of lands under colonial administration. It revealed the inherent constraints of colonial administration. It was manifested clearly in the interdepartmental and interprovincial conflicts, most evidently in the disagreement between Baluchistan and Sind authorities. These conflicts showed the complexities of managing areas with fragmented

records on how and when the Khan gave them the right to cultivate these lands. Second, they argued that the agreement between Khan and the government of India was a commercial agreement for revenue collection in the area, which did not give any powers to the British government to invalidate prior claims on land grants. The Government of India claimed that the Jamalis did not cultivate the land for which the grant was made, which meant that the purpose of the grant was not fulfilled, which is why Jamali claim to these lands was weak. In addition, the Government of India also argued that the lease was between two Sovereign actors, giving them sovereign rights over this area. The point was that Khan's sovereign powers were seized by leasing the area. So, the argument continued that acts of States, like the 1903 lease, can not be challenged in municipal courts, for they have no jurisdiction. The Government of India used the legal precedent of the Secretary of State vs. Kamachee Boyce Sahiba case, where the East India Company had acted as a sovereign power when it seized lands and was subsequently ruled that such acts of the state cannot be challenged in municipal courts. Then, they cited the Cook vs. Spigg case, which had set a precedent that rights under previous sovereigns do not automatically continue after a change in sovereignty unless recognized by the new ruler. Lastly, it used the Secretary of State v. Bae Rajbai case, which had set a precedent that a cession of territory transferred all rights to the new sovereign, and prior rights were only valid if the new government recognized them. The case was decided in favor of the Government of India, and Sardar Rustam Khan Jamali lost his claim to land. This allowed the colonization of Usta to go ahead without any further problems, where many Bugti and Marri tribesmen settled during the 1930s and 1940. For more details, see (“Secretary of State for India v. Sardar Rustam Khan” 1945).

administration. Ironically, by the end of the colonial rule in Nasirabad, the situation was brought full circle as it reproduced the allegedly ineffective and uneconomic governance of the area, which had supposedly prompted the initial lease of the area in 1903.

4. Post-colonial Transformation of Nasirabad: Redefining Patronage for Nation-State Building

4.1. Introduction

How did the post-colonial developmental state's dual objectives of agricultural modernization and centralizing power reshape land relations and institutional arrangements in Nasirabad, and what were the socio-political ramifications for local elites and the class structure of Nasirabad as a result of these political and historical processes? During the post-colonial period, Nasirabad, as a sub-division of Sibi District, underwent significant transformation due to the policies and programs of the developmental post-colonial nation-state that were informed by two primary goals. Firstly, the state aimed to increase agricultural productivity and state revenue in Nasirabad. This rendered the colonial view of the region as a frontier area designed to protect British India from incursions and raids of hill tribes increasingly obsolete. Instead, the region emerged as a potential source to increase food production and state revenue (Government of Pakistan 1950). Secondly, there was a consistent effort to align the politics of the local and provincial elite with national goals ("File No. 877–S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali" 1954) that the bureaucracy and military defined (Jalal 1990). These concurrent goals created tension in how the state functioned in Nasirabad. On the one hand, the goal for agricultural modernization and revenue generation required the state to have a collaborative relationship at the local level as the traditional *zamindari* and tribal elite remained central for the administrative function in the first decade after independence (Government of Pakistan 1950). On the other hand, the goal to bring conformity in the politics of the local elite with the visions of the military-bureaucratic elite on the question of the future political system of the country increasingly led to punishing and persecuting those with diverging visions ("File No. 877–S/54" 1954) .

This tension was demonstrated in the figure of Jaffar Khan Jamali, a local landlord and tribal chief, who collaborated with the local state authorities to administer the area and collect revenue. Simultaneously, he was at the forefront of the resistance in West Pakistan against the centralization plans of the bureaucracy and military through the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, for the local authorities, he emerged as a loyal *zamindar* and tribal leader. However, for the authorities in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, his loyalty increasingly became questionable

with his politics. This eventually led to loyalty becoming the primary criterion for him to access state patronage in the form of his seat as a member of the *Shahi Jirga*. (Ibid.).

This fundamental tension was resolved during Ayub's reign, which began in 1958. He targeted political figures like Jamali, who were seen as working against the regime's plans for centralization. Actions taken included resuming lands under the Land Reforms (1959), merging Nasirabad into Khairpur Division ("File No. 4/59: Administration" 1959), which abolished the tribal *Levy Thana* and *Jirga* system, opening corruption inquiries, political persecution under the Elected Bodies Disqualification Order (EBDO), and support for rival local Khosa elites in 1962 and 1965 elections ("File No. 877-S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali" 1954). Under Ayub's rule, the post-colonial state effectively redefined patronage relations established during the colonial period by equating loyalty with blind acceptance of center-imposed policies.

This conflict between the state authorities and local elites, which not only included Jamali but also Bugtis, significantly impacted the Nasirabad sub-division. One of the most important was changes in land relations in the area. As Jamalis were systematically targeted for their politics, the state resumed thousands of acres of land from them under the land reforms of 1959 (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959a; 1959b). A similar resumption of the *jagir* lands of Bugtis happened under Ayub (Ibid.). Subsequently, the state sold these lands under the Sales Scheme and leased the rest under the Lease Scheme (Ibid.). Although these schemes faced significant hurdles as they were introduced, they nonetheless successfully introduced a new type of land relations through which the state assumed more control of how the land was utilized. Simultaneously, many migrants from central Balochistan and Punjab migrated to Nasirabad during this period, attracted by the Sales and Lease Scheme of the Land Reforms (1959). As a result, a new class of landlords and *khatedars* (landholders) emerged in the area. They were more manageable clientele of the state as the former became indebted to the state and the latter had precarious lease relations (Ibid.). The birth of this class was more akin to what has been labeled as the strengthening of the "middle farmers" under these reforms (Jalal 1994, 160). In this way, the class structure of Nasirabad became differentiated, and tribal and ethnic heterogeneity in the area increased.

4.2. Nasirabad, Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali and the Local Administration

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Nasirabad remained under administration from Quetta by the Agent to the Governor General⁴¹ (hereinafter A.G.G.) and was categorized as a settled area and a sub-division within Sibi District. In this district, local administration was controlled by a Political Agent (hereinafter P.A.). The district operated under a *Levy Thana* and *Jirga* System under Frontier Crimes Regulation (hereinafter F.C.R.), enacted in the colonial period (Swidler 2014; Hopkins 2015). There was an amalgamation of tribes living in Nasirabad, including the Jamalis, Khosas, Bugtis, Marris, Umranis, Domkis, and Lehris (Smart 1905). Of these, the Jamali's were among the most dominant numerically and politically, who inhabited the western part of the sub-division. They owned large tracts of lands, administered *Levy Thanas*, and were members of the local and *Shahi Jirga* of Balochistan. Before and after independence, Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali, a landlord and respected tribal figure, was active in Balochistan's politics. He was a leading Muslim Leaguer from British Baluchistan and had played an active role during the 1940s in championing for a homeland for Muslims in the Subcontinent (Awan 1985).

Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali's relationship with local authorities was amicable, as reflected in the annual administrative reports from post-1947 Nasirabad. He was continually appreciated for his efforts and willingness to cooperate in the management and administration of the area and for his loyalty to the state. To completely grasp the significance that figures such as Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali held for local administration, one must explore the justifications for his recognition in the A.G.G.'s speech at the annual *Sibi Durbar*, a tradition inherited from the days of British rule. For example, in 1948, Jaffar Khan Jamali collected 800 tribesmen to assist the Irrigation Department in managing the flood situation in the sub-division. The P.A. of Sibi remarked on this and reported in the official communication with the Secretary to the A.G.G., suggesting its inclusion in the annual speech. He wrote, "thanks are due to the Zamindars of Nasirabad sub-division, especially Mir Jafar Khan Jamali, for the invaluable services rendered by them in connection with controlling the situation created by floods in the Indus resulting in breaches in the Desert and Kirthar Canals during March and August last." ("File No. 1/28 Durbar Vol II" 1928, 25).

⁴¹ The A.G.G was a senior official which represented the Governor-General in a particular region. The role was to maintain communications between the central authority and regional authorities. This was a common administrative position in colonial administrative structure.

Later in the same year, Jamali tribesmen provided labor to desilt the canals of their area to ensure water availability. The A.P.A. reported that this effort had significantly helped in “averting a serious situation which might have resulted in enormous losses to the Zamindars as well as the Government” (Ibid., 63). The Jamalis also helped the local administration to police the border with Sindh. For instance, Jaffar Khan Jamali and K.B. Sardar Rustam Khan Jamali assisted the local administration in arresting the *Hurs* of Sindh, who had taken refuge in this sub-division after making “troubles” in Sindh in 1949 (Ibid.). The official reports of the local administration recognized and appreciated the loyalty of Jamalis under Jaffar Khan and recommended these events for mention in the yearly *Sibi Durbar*. In addition, the Jamalis were also among the largest landowners in the area. They paid land taxes to the local administration, which the local administration perceived as a demonstration of loyalty. The A.P.A. of Nasirabad highlighted this view in his official correspondence in 1953, stating, “200,000 *Maunds* of wheat was procured in Nasirabad Sub Division... and are a token of an ever-increasing loyalty and cooperation of the Zamindars of this Sub Division” (Ibid., 65).

During the early years after independence, local authorities also collected funds for migrants from India. In his correspondence with the A.G.G. in Quetta, the P.A. of Sibi advocated for official recognition of Jamali’s contributions to collecting funds with the local administration. The P.A. wrote: “Jamali has always been helpful to the Administration. He has himself contributed liberally to the various funds from time to time and he also collected large donations from others. His service [...] have earned the Agent to the Govern General’s commendations” (“File No. 877–S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali” 1954, 27).

4.2.1. Local Administration and *Zamindars*: Modernizing Agriculture

Beyond the loyalty of local tribal and *zamindari* elite, which was mentioned in administrative reports in the immediate post-independence period, the reports frequently mentioned the measures taken to enhance land utilization related to cultivation and management practices. This was a shift from colonial policy, which primarily focused on settling tribes on the frontier for security purposes. This development supports Waseem’s (1983) thesis. He argues that the state’s mode of operation in Pakistan changed in the post-colonial period. He contends that this shift occurred “particularly as a result of efforts to promote modernization through agricultural and industrial development.” (Waseem 1983, 2).

Naz (1971), supports this by arguing that in the post-colonial period, the state understood that agriculture was the backbone of Pakistan's economy and essential for industrial progress. Therefore, by recognizing this important link, the state attempted to boost agricultural productivity for economic development. Such transformation, it was believed, could achieve several goals. First, it would allow the state to meet the increasing food demands of agricultural and non-agricultural populations. Second, by increasing mechanization and efficiency in agriculture, more workforce for industrial jobs would become available, supporting industrial growth. Lastly, it was believed that higher agricultural productivity would also create a market for industrial goods, further stimulating economic activity. (Ibid.).

The attempts for improved land utilization began as early as 1948-49. In response to the food shortage in Pakistan, the government initiated the *Grow More Food Scheme*. Under this scheme, the Jamali *zamindars* of Nasirabad were persuaded "to bring as much area under food crops as available." ("File no. 1/28" 1928, 135). They responded positively to this policy, which is evident in the increased area brought under cultivation in the following years (Ibid.). In 1949, another scheme called the *Wheat Seed Distribution Scheme* was introduced to enhance agricultural productivity in Nasirabad. Under this scheme, approximately 90,000 *maunds* of wheat seeds among local *zamindars* were distributed. The new seeds were anticipated to yield, on average, one *maund* more than the previously used local mixes (Ibid.). In the same year, around 6,500 *maunds* of paddy seeds were imported from neighboring districts in Sind. This import aimed to introduce a purer seed type, distinct from the local *kangni* seed (Ibid., 137). The reports suggest that local authorities also initiated the distribution of rust-resistant wheat seed varieties and fertilizers such as ammonium sulfate (Ibid., 148). The local administration also reported that they had created "Demonstration Plots" to educate the local farmers. The aim was to teach them how to prepare seed beds, determine suitable irrigation frequencies, employ improved agricultural implements, and effectively utilize fertilizers and manures (Ibid.). There were also reports of local administration organizing "Agricultural Shows," which taught local farmers advanced agricultural methods for land utilization (Government of Pakistan 1950, 10).

The administration's attempts at modernizing agriculture seem to have been positively received by Jamali landlords. In their official correspondence with bureaucrats in Quetta and Sibi, the local authorities in Nasirabad reported that Jamali *zamindars* were actively encouraged and became interested in purchasing tractors for their lands (Ibid, 4-5). These

initiatives indicate that local authorities were charged with enhancing crop production, which would, in turn, boost both food supply and state revenue. To achieve this, local *zamindars* were supposed to play a key role by cooperating with the state. For instance, they were given incentives such as exemptions from water tax and land revenue on any additional lands they cultivated, which explains the expansion of cultivation during this period ("File no. 1/28" 1928, 135).

4.2.2. Problem with the Colonist Absentee Landlord

The archival data reveals that the productivity-oriented logic drove the local administration in Nasirabad in the immediate post-independence period. This was evident in their concerns about the alleged negligence of the “colonists” in the area. They used the word “colonists” to refer to the Marri and Bugti tribesmen who had settled in Nasirabad under colonial patronage in the early 1900s and 1930s. In 1948, the Colonization Officer and A.P.A. of Nasirabad expressed dissatisfaction with the approach of colonists to land management in his correspondence with the P.A. Sibi. He wrote, “the colonists in Usta, especially the Marris and Bugtis, do not take a keen interest in their holdings. It appears that they leave their lands under the care of their agents and seldom take the trouble of supervising the land themselves, and the result is that cultivation and production fall short of the required standard, leading to demands for remissions. This is not satisfactory, and the owners should take more interest to improve their lands” (File no. 1/28 Durbar Vol II 1928, 13). These concerns represent a shift in the post-colonial period in terms of the function of landlords for the state. The A.P.A., in his comments, highlighted two problems. Firstly, the prevalence of land relations that lead to under-utilization of land, i.e., are unproductive. Secondly, absentee-landlordism arrangements lead to revenue losses through requests for remissions. His comments should be seen as a critical instance in the archival records as the “colonist” tribes were, for the first time, categorized as unproductive in their land management practices. Thus, Bugti and Marri tribes were not seen through the colonial lens of pacification of “wild tribes” but as landlords with the potential to increase productivity and, thus, state revenue.

This issue gained the attention of provincial authorities when it eventually reached the Commissioner’s office. While responding to the observations of the local authorities, a decision was taken in Quetta. The Commissioner’s office proposed that in future “it would, therefore, be more just and advisable if the occupancy rights are sold to persons who are

actually cultivating the land or, alternatively, the colonists are compelled to cultivate the land themselves.” (“File No.3/56-S & S” 1956, 9). These comments show that the bureaucracy in Quetta also followed the policy of enhancing land productivity through self-cultivation, which indicated that a particular responsibility on the part of owners could lead to improved productivity. Consequently, this approach was anticipated to raise revenue and reduce the need for requests for remissions.

This approach represents a clear shift in the post-independence period. In the colonial era, these lands were initially granted to Marri and Bugti tribesmen with the intention of “attaching them to the soil” (see Chapter 3). However, a particular pattern of land utilization emerged during the colonial period. The initial grantees evolved into absentee landlords who delegated estate management to their *naibs* or agents. The colonial state did not see much problem with these arrangements. However, this was considered problematic by the local administration only in the post-colonial period. This distinction between the colonial and post-colonial periods is significant because it shows how agricultural productivity took center stage post-1947. The political compromises made during the colonial period, which allowed absentee landlordism to take root, appeared problematic for state officials at both the local and higher levels during the post-independence period. Nasirabad, no longer classified as a border area, was now seen by state authorities as a place with the potential for better land utilization arrangements and increased revenue generation. These preferences become more comprehensible considering the severe financial challenges the newly created nation-state faced (Jalal 1990, 30–31). This shift in priority reflects the economic priorities of the post-colonial state.

4.2.3. Water Scarcity as an Impediment for Productivity

Nasirabad saw significant canal expansion in the 1930s with the construction of the Khir Thar Canal in 1932 (see Chart 2 below) as a part of the Lloyd Barrage Project. Nevertheless, water scarcity remained a persistent issue in the area during the 1950s, as the revenue remissions data shows (see Graph 2 below). As a result, tail-end *zamindars* often requested remissions on their tax assessments (“File no.3/56-S & S”1956, 9). For state authorities, land productivity, specifically in terms of increase in food crops and revenue, was hard to increase without efficient and stable water availability for agriculture. Water scarcity was particularly severe for *zamindars* in the eastern section and those at the tail end of existing canals. An

important factor that contributed to water scarcity was the expansion of rice cultivation in upper riparian areas in Sindh ("File No. 9 Canal/1921", 55). Another factor that compounded the problem was the unpredictability of the Indus River's flow. These factors led to discontent among *zamindars*, who were heavily indebted to the government (Government of Pakistan 1950, 71).

In 1955, the World Bank delegates visited Nasirabad as the Indo-Pakistan water dispute continued. This visit was related to the potential expansion of canal networks in Nasirabad, pending an agreement between the two countries. During this visit, Pakistani delegates argued that expanding the canal network could transform vast tracts of "wasteland" in Nasirabad into arable land, a claim that Indian delegates disputed. As a result, an experimental cultivation trial was conducted in Nasirabad, where a potential canal would be built to assess the land's fertility with adequate water supply. According to the reports of local officials, the trial was successful. The experimental cultivation yielded higher output per acre compared to other parts of the sub-division. This led to severe discussions about constructing a new canal in the area ("File no. 1/28" 1928, 109). The new canal project materialized after the finalization of the Indus Water Treaty in 1960.

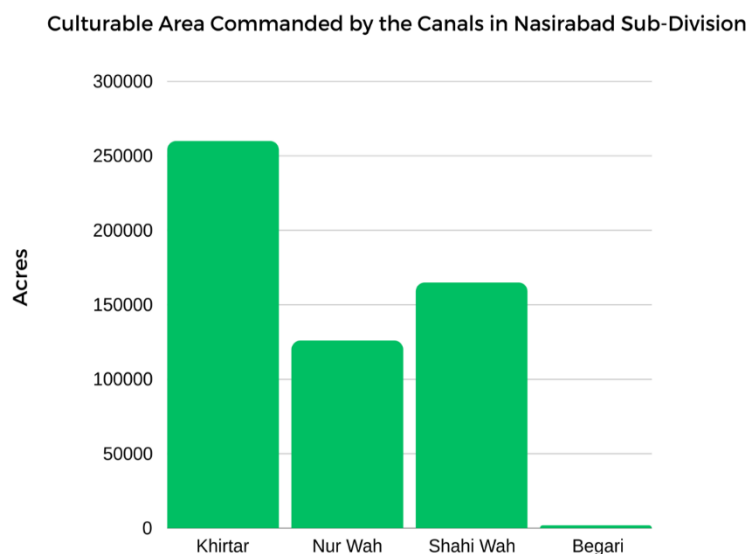
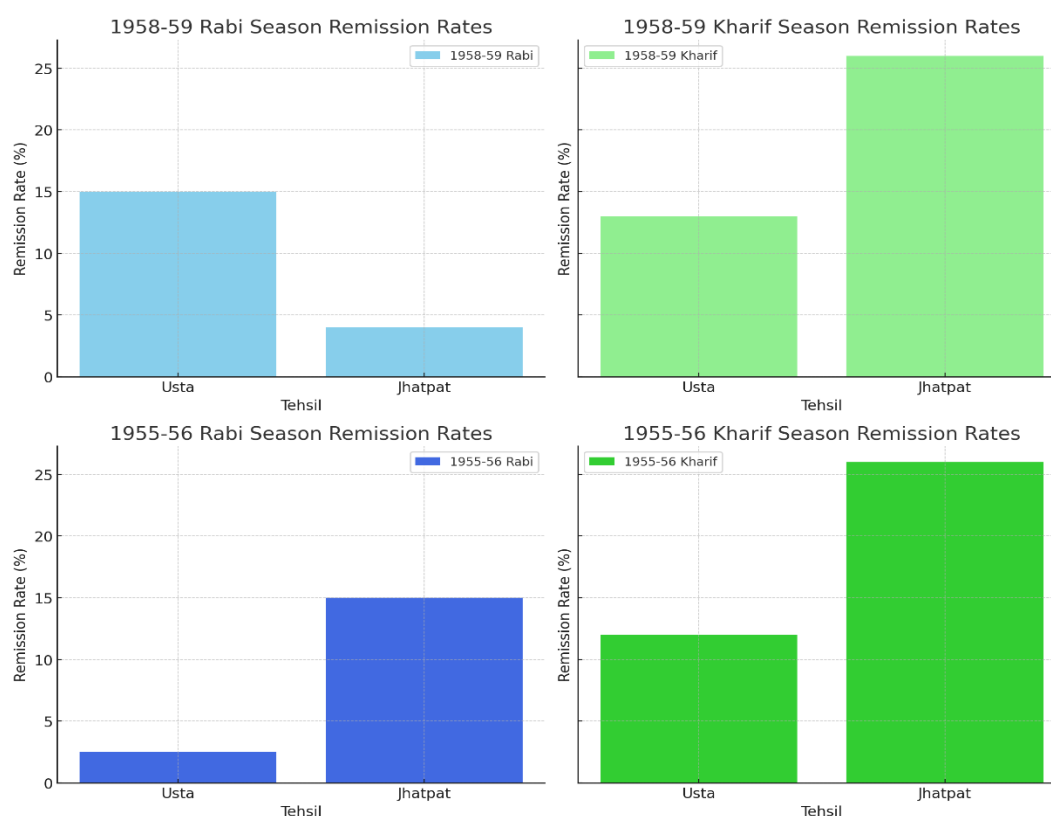


Chart 2: Culturable Area Commanded by the Canals in Nasirabad.

(Source: Consolidated by Author from different documents in the Sibi Record Office).



Graph 2: The comparison of remission rates across Usta and Jhatpat Tehsils.

(Source: Consolidated by Author from different documents in the Sibi Record Office).

However, water scarcity remained a critical concern until the canal construction project could be finalized. This resulted in discussions at the higher bureaucratic level in Balochistan. For instance, during the monthly meetings of the Revenue Officers on 9th November 1957, this issue was deliberated. The specific issue was the application of the Sindh Fallow Rules in the area in the 1950s. Colonial authorities initially devised these rules for their political project of appropriating land for the colonial government (see Chapter 3). However, during this meeting, the revenue department officers concurred that “these rules should not be applied to the Sibi District where there is an acute shortage of water, and the land is allowed to remain fallow because of such a shortage and not due to any negligence on the part of the cultivators.” (File no.3/56-S & S, 1956, 9). This recognition of water scarcity reflected a departure from the colonial narrative that labeled cultivators as “lazy” and “squatters” (see Chapter 3). Instead, it acknowledged that the fallow land directly resulted from water scarcity.

4.3. The Federal Question and Conditions for Accessing Patronage

As the local administration focused on modernizing agriculture, discussions about Pakistan's federal structure were heating up nationally. In the mid-1950s, regional nationalist movements in West Pakistan, particularly among the Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi-speaking areas, intensified their opposition to the government's policies for centralizing power. This conflict was most notably manifested in the resistance against the One Unit scheme (F. H. Siddiqi 2012; Aslam and Ahmad 2022; Waseem 2024). Officially, the scheme aimed to simplify administration and promote national unity by reducing provincial differences. However, the real intent was to counterbalance the demographic dominance of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) by merging all the provinces of West Pakistan into a single entity (Jalal 1995, 53; Waseem 2011, 216). Different ideas on the potential federal structure of the country significantly impacted the relationship between the state and local elites in Nasirabad.

Among the critics of this policy in the 1950s was Jaffar Khan Jamali, from Nasirabad, Balochistan. He owned thousands of acres of land and served as a member of the *Shahi Jirga*⁴² of Baluchistan and Sindh. He was a prominent Muslim Leaguer actively involved in the 1940s in advocating for the creation of a homeland for Muslims in the subcontinent (Awan 1985). In addition, Jamali also enjoyed a tenure in the Sindh Legislative Assembly. He had three stints in the Sindh Assembly, representing the Upper Sindh Frontier and Jacobabad District, respectively ("Website of Provincial Assembly of Sindh," n.d.). Essentially, he was rooted both in Sindh and Balochistan.⁴³

4.3.1. Jaffar Khan Jamali and "Matters of the State"

Jamali's politics attracted much state scrutiny. In 1954, he was accused of anti-state activities. Local intelligence sources reported his meetings with the Afghan Consul in Quetta. In this meeting, Jamali purportedly conveyed messages between the Afghan Consul and the Khan of Kalat ("File no. 877-S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali" 1954, 3-4), who had serious reservations about joining Pakistan and wanted independence (Axmann 2008, 226). Therefore, this meeting must be seen against the backdrop of the contentious accession of the Khanate of Kalat with Pakistan, along with a military operation to suppress resistance in 1948 (Ibid.,

⁴² Membership in this *jirga* was restricted to tribal chiefs. Despite not holding the position of tribal chief among the Jamalis, Jaffar Khan garnered significant respect and support within the tribe. His potential inclusion in the *Shahi Jirga* was facilitated by the fact that the rightful chief was still a minor. ("File no. 877-S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali" 1954, 25).

⁴³ These ties exemplified the limitations of early twentieth-century colonial efforts to enforce clear jurisdictional boundaries among frontier subjects (see Chapter 3) who had historically been mobile (Haines 2015, 6).

234). Moreover, Afghanistan disputed the boundaries with Pakistan (Omran 2009) and provided refuge to those who resisted Balochistan's accession to Pakistan (Axmann 2008, 234). These factors added to the suspicion of Jamali's intentions. When confronted by state authorities about his role as an intermediary between the Khan and the Afghan Consul, Jamali maintained that "nothing connected with politics of any kind was discussed in these meetings." ("File no. 877-S/54: Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali" 1954, 5). Nonetheless, this was the beginning of state repression of local political elites opposing the policies aimed at so-called national unity and integration.

After Jamali had denied engaging in political matters in his meeting with the Afghan Consul, his surveillance by state authorities continued and expanded. A few days later, a daily situation report prepared by the Police Superintendent in Quetta made serious allegations against him. Jamali was reported to have engaged in three political activities perceived as threats. The first was that Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali was garnering support from several Constituent Assembly⁴⁴ members, influential figures, and press editors against the proposed merger bill for the One-Unit Scheme (Ibid., 5). Secondly, Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali allegedly told a source that he was discussing the merger question with the Honorable Pirzada Abdus Sattar, the Chief Minister of Sind. The latter had publicly expressed that the Merger Bill could not become law "against the wishes of the Baluchistanis." (Ibid.). The Police Superintendent argued that if Jamali gets the support of Sardar Muhammad Khan Jomezai and Mir Abdul Qadir, the Jam of Lasbela, representatives of Baluchistan and Baluchistan States Union, respectively, in the Constituent Assembly, he would leverage his influence with the Central authorities to prevent the introduction of the proposed bill (Ibid.). Lastly, Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali was reported to have communicated to Abdus Samad Achakzai, the *Waror-i-Pashtun*⁴⁵ leader in Gulistan, urging him to come to Quetta. The message indicated that he carried a communication for him from Abdus Ghaffar Khan, from the North West Frontier Province (Ibid.). The claims and purported actions in the report suggest that Jaffar Khan was involved with opposition groups like *Usthaman Gal*⁴⁶ in Balochistan and similar other groups

⁴⁴ The Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was formed in August 1947 to draft a constitution for the newly independent country and also functioned as its first interim parliament.

⁴⁵ In 1954, Samad Khan established the *Waror-i-Pashtun* Party during a brief period of political freedom as most of his life in the post-colonial period was spent behind bars. The primary goal of this party was a call for a referendum to decide whether the Pashtun regions of Balochistan should merge with the North-West Frontier Province. This initiative reflected the Pashtuns' desire for regional unification and greater autonomy (Titus and Swidler 2000, 53).

⁴⁶ *Usthaman Gal* became part of the Pakistan National Party (PNP) in 1956 (Paul Titus and Nina Swidler 2000, 51)

across Pakistan, who were actively resisting the centralization plans backed by the country's powerful bureaucratic elite (Ibid.).

Based on this report, Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali possibly had strong connections with the opposition circles across the peripheries of West Pakistan that resisted the One-Unit scheme. In Sindh, leaders like Pirzada Abdul Sattar, in the 1950s, had emerged as vocal opponents of the scheme; he had publicly made the case that the One-Unit would strip the people of Sindh of their legislative power and cultural identity (Siddiqi 2012, 83–84). In this period, he was at the forefront of demands for constitutional changes to preserve provincial autonomy, which culminated in his efforts to pass resolutions in the Sindh Assembly against the One Unit policy (Ibid.). Similarly, Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai of *Wror-i-Pashtun* was an important political figure in Balochistan. He advocated for creating a province along linguistic lines, a demand that meant merging the northern Pashtu-speaking belt of Balochistan with the North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P) (Awan 1985, 173; Siddiqi 2012, 73–74). Abdul Ghaffar Khan, from the N.W.F.P, with whom Jamali appears to have been in contact, was also a staunch advocate for provincial and regional autonomy. Likewise, *Usthman Gal*, a political party led by figures like Gul Khan Nasir, Mohammad Hussain Anqa, and Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo in the 1950s, was actively mobilizing against the One-Unit Scheme and for provincial autonomy (Berseeg 2001, 207). These connections with diverse individuals and groups highlight Jamali's involvement in the broader resistance circles in West Pakistan against the central government's policies during this period.

As surveillance of Jamali continued, on July 17, 1954, the Secretary to the A.G.G in Baluchistan communicated with the P.A. Sibi, stating:

“Kindly summon Mir Jafar Khan Jamali once again and caution him against engaging in activities likely to create confusion among people and making statements or taking actions contrary to the decisions and policies of the Government. While Mir Jafar Khan Jamali, as a citizen, has the liberty to hold any opinion and preserve it, he will not be permitted to exploit any position or influence gained through his connections with the Local Administration. It must be explicitly conveyed to him that if he persists, as alleged, the Local Administration will have no choice but to disassociate itself from him and publicly declare this disassociation” (File no. 877–S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali 1954, 11).

These directives show that Jamali's role and privileges within the state's administrative setup were directly tied to his adherence to “government” (bureaucracy) policies. The explicit warning was that non-compliance would lead to public disassociation and loss of access to

the benefits his position in the local administration afforded him. In the following weeks, intelligence reports took a different turn. Reports indicated that Mir Jaffar Khan Jamali was considering sending Fazle Ahmed, quoted as “the Anti-Pakistan Suspect,” to Karachi. The mission was to establish a branch of their party with the aim of garnering support from “the Baluchis(sic) of Pakistan” and members of the Constituent Assembly. The objective appears to have been to advocate for the partition of Baluchistan based on linguistic and cultural considerations (Ibid., 12). Additionally, it was suggested that Jamali intended to invest substantial money to finance this scheme (Ibid.). The reports indicate that Jamali favored Achakzai and other Pashtun leaders of the *Waror Pashtun*’s demand to divide Baluchistan based on linguistic lines between Pashtun and Baloch-speaking regions. This division would result in most erstwhile British Baluchistan being excluded from the future Baluchistan province (Ibid.). All of these policy positions were effectively anathema to the post-colonial bureaucratic elite obsessed with the centralization of power and gaining parity with East Pakistan.

In a subsequent letter dated 18th of August 1954, the Secretary of the A.G.G. wrote, “In order to maintain proper balance amongst the public and to avoid confusion it should be made very clear to Jaffer Khan Jamali and everybody else that they cannot oppose Government in *matters of State* (emphasis mine) and continue to expect considerations from Government which give you the importance and influence to mislead the General public” (Ibid., 121). He was “expected to demonstrate a better sense of responsibility.” The Secretary explicitly stated, “I have no concern with political views which he may hold and the parties with which he may align himself, but he certainly has to be trained *if he wished to continue to enjoy any patronage from the Government* (emphasis mine), to prove himself worthy of it (Ibid). This indicates that “matters of State” were seen as any policy position by the bureaucracy, which should not be contested by those within the state apparatus (*Shahi Jirga*) and benefiting from their roles. Non-compliance meant losing state support. Importantly, such individuals were deemed in need of “training,” which is a clear suggestion that they should be disciplined to ensure compliance in the future. The P.A. Sibi wrote to Commissioner Quetta along similar lines, stating that absolute loyalty and faithfulness to the state were prerequisites to enjoy its patronage (Ibid., 145).

As a result of these communications, an agreement was reached within the provincial bureaucracy that Jamali could not continue to receive state patronage if he persisted in

engaging in political activities that contradicted the prioritized policies of the bureaucracy. The P.A. Sibi evaluated the proposal by the Secretary to the A.G.G. for the removal of Jamali from the *Shahi Jirga* and its impact on the local administration of Nasirabad. In his evaluation, he provided a picture into the nature of Jamali's influence and various aspects related to the decision. In his analysis, "Jafar Khan [...] owing to his considerable wealth and government patronage [...] commands more influence and garners [...] respect among the Jamalis." (Ibid., 25). He also observed that Jaffar Khan was not the legitimate *Sarbarah* or tribal leader by *riwaj* or custom but had risen to leadership because the actual leader was "non-descript" and had "weak character" and thus lacked the necessary personal attributes (Ibid). According to P. A.'s analysis, Jamali's influence and respect in the area were partly due to governmental patronage and his personal qualities. He concluded that his removal would not significantly impact the administration in Nasirabad. He believed that without state patronage, he could not command the same level of respect and support (Ibid.).

However, once Jamali was removed from *Shahi Jirga*, the P.A. began sending letters supporting Jamali. He requested that he be reinstated to the *Shahi Jirga*. Allegedly, Jamali assured the P.A. of his commitment to refrain from activities deemed inappropriate by the government. Subsequently, he was reinstated in 1954 to his position as a member of the *Shahi Jirga*. Despite these assurances and efforts, Jamali resumed his perceived "anti-Pakistan" political activities, which led to his eventual permanent dismissal from the *Shahi Jirga* in the same year (Ibid., 25). Notwithstanding the efforts of the local administration in Sibi to shield Jamali mainly due to administrative considerations, the national interests defined by the higher bureaucracy ultimately required his removal from the *Shahi Jirga*.

The decision to remove Jamali from *Jirga* highlighted a fundamental expectation from the tribal elites: accept the bureaucracy's policies to prove your loyalty to the state so that you continue to access state patronage. This decision showed the conditional nature of the patronage provided to the tribal elites. Fundamentally, it was contingent on their adherence to and acceptance of government-initiated policies. If they failed to comply with these policies, their privileges would be futile from the perspective of the state bureaucracy. It can be contended that the policy adopted during this period redefined and expanded the definition of loyalty; it went beyond merely assisting the state in administering the area. It now demanded total submission to the political project of nation and state-building.

4.3.2. Jaffar Khan under Ayub's Dictatorship: Anti-Pakistan Agitator?

Jalal (2014) notes that General Ayub's planned reforms aimed at the comprehensive centralization of power (102). This goal sharply conflicted with the politics and personal interests of Jaffar Khan Jamali. His resistance after the 1958 coup by Ayub Khan revealed the extent of this conflict. Jamali persisted in mobilizing prominent leaders from Balochistan against the One-Unit Scheme and the military rule in Pakistan. In addition, he showed public and strong opposition against the proposed merger of Nasirabad into the Khairpur Division, part of the erstwhile Sindh province ("File No. 4/59: Administration" 1959). Such a merger would result in dismantling the *Jirga* and *Levy Thana* system and the prospect of partitioning provinces along linguistic lines, which explains his rejection of this policy. In addition, he opposed the 1959 Land Reforms, which resulted in large Jamali landholders losing more than half of their landholdings in Nasirabad (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1971). As a result of his resistance, he encountered punitive measures from the military regime, which included restrictions on his travel within Balochistan for political activities, the launch of corruption investigations against him, legal action under the Elected Bodies Disqualification Order (EBDO) of 1959 (see sections below), and the state support of a rival candidate in his area to counter his political influence, which operated on the logic of "differentiated patronage" (Jalal 1994).

4.3.2.1. Centralization and Administrative Restructuring: Merger of Nasirabad into Khairpur Division

In 1959, the military dictator Ayub Khan created the Provincial Re-Organization Commission to initiate administrative reforms in Pakistan. The Commission was given the mandate to recommend administrative changes. It considered a proposal to merge Nasirabad sub-division with Jacobabad District and incorporate it into the Khairpur Division ("File No. 4/59: Administration" 1959). The Commission argued that administrative simplicity could be attained by bringing Nasirabad under the jurisdiction of the Sindh Irrigation Department. As Nasirabad was part of the Indus Basin and watered by canals managed by authorities in Sindh, it would simplify its administration, which was bifurcated between Sindh and Balochistan as it was part of the latter. Jamali vehemently opposed this proposal. Instead, he proposed that districts like Shikarpur and Jacobabad, where the local population predominantly spoke Balochi, should be incorporated into a prospective Balochistan province for Balochi speakers (Ibid., 2).

In addition, it can be assumed that Jamali was concerned that such an administrative restructuring would undermine his political influence in Balochistan, as such a merger would exclude him from Balochistan politics. In addition, in conjunction with regular civil law and police stations in Jacobabad, would weaken his authority. The *Levy Thana* and *Jirga* System was an important instrument of authority for tribal elites. A combination of these factors intensified Jamali's opposition to the merger. However, it might be an overstatement to suggest, as intelligence agencies did, that Jamali's resistance was solely aimed at preserving local control and dominance through the FCR and *Levy* System ("File no. 877-S/54" 1954, 94).

Jamali sought to increase opposition to the merger of Nasirabad by encouraging other political leaders in Balochistan to denounce it publicly. Following the Commission's recommendation for the merger, four Jamali chairmen of the Union Council in the Nasirabad sub-division issued a collective resolution that rejected the recommendation (Ibid., 94). Despite these efforts, Jamali's campaign against the merger remained insignificant. In July 1960, he, along with all the Jamali Basic Democrats from the Nasirabad sub-division, met with the President to convince him against the proposed merger (Ibid., 94–95). Nonetheless, Nasirabad was merged into Jacobabad district in May 1961 and remained part of it until Balochistan was granted provincial status in 1970, when it became part of Sibi District again (Government of Pakistan 1972).

4.3.2.2. Persecution and Resistance:

By the early 1960s, the military regime had begun exerting pressure against politicians who resisted through the Anti-Corruption Department, which launched investigations across Pakistan. Its target was individuals officially labeled as "ex-politicians," including Jamali ("File no. 877-S/54" 1954, 102). The department's Additional Director began compiling a case against Jaffar Khan Jamali around October 1960. The Baluchistan administration aided him by gathering evidence and materials (Ibid., 102–3).

Furthermore, a case was initiated against Jamali under the Elected Bodies Disqualification Order (EBDO). It was a law intended to prevent politicians from participating in politics by disqualifying them for at least eight years. Although this law was primarily aimed at politicians from East Pakistan, Jamali was also implicated in this measure in 1961 for his alleged "subversive activities" (Ibid., 110). Notably, all defense witnesses named by Jamali in

his defense were subsequently targeted by intelligence agencies (Ibid.). The systematic nature of the persecution of Jamali encapsulates the scale of state power utilized to persecute politicians across Pakistan under Ayub's regime.

Jamali also emerged as an opponent of Ayub Khan's Basic Democracies⁴⁷ (B.D) system. Jalal's (2014) analysis helps us understand the function of this system. She notes that Ayub's regime sought to circumvent political parties and strengthen the state's control over society. This was achieved by expanding the reach of bureaucratic patronage at the local level. This was a strategy embodied in the system of Basic Democracies introduced by Ayub (Ibid., 106). Despite being an opponent of this system, Jamali fielded candidates for the Union Council elections in the Nasirabad sub-division. His supported nominees secured five out of the ten available seats ("File no. 877-S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali" 1954, 94). Following the elections, he was reported to be displeased because some candidates who were elected, he alleged, had been unfairly declared victorious by the local authorities. These candidates mainly included Khosa politicians from the sub-division (Ibid.).

By late 1961, Jamali was actively preparing for the elections of 1962. He began contacts with leaders of the National Awami Party (NAP) in Quetta, including figures such as Mohammad Husain Anqa, Abdul Aziz Kurd, Mohammad Hassan Nizami, and Abdul Qadir Shahwani, some of whom were active in *Usthan Gal* in mid-1950s. During this campaign, Jamali faced accusations of organizing a public meeting in August 1962 when in his speech he had expressed opinions critical of the One-Unit scheme and the Constitution (Ibid., 129). Due to these activities viewed as threatening public order, Jamali was prohibited from entering the Quetta Division (Ibid., 133). Nonetheless, Jamali made an unsuccessful attempt to challenge the influence of Ayub Khan's supporters in Balochistan, particularly as he tried to mobilize against the Raisani and the Satakzai tribal leaders in Sibi and Kachhi (Ibid.), who had allied with the military dictator.

Jamali faced a significant setback in the 1962 elections as he was defeated by an Ayub backed candidate in Mir Darya Khan Khosa (Ibid., 129), a *zamindar* from eastern Nasirabad.

⁴⁷ President Ayub Khan promulgated the Basic Democracy system in Pakistan in 1959 under which over 80,000 representatives known as Basic Democrats were directly elected. They were elected throughout the country into local village, union, and district councils. These councils were entrusted with responsibilities regarding local self-government. The Basic Democrats elected the President of Pakistan; thus, they functioned as an electoral college for Ayub Khan.

Although Khosa was not a prominent political figure in Nasirabad⁴⁸, perhaps due to this reason, he was supported by the military regime as part of a strategy to counter Jamali. Waseem's (1994) argument is incisive for understanding the strategies of the regime and the defeat of Jamali. He argues that Ayub's electoral system was designed to create a manageable group of electors who operated directly under the district administration's guidance (Ibid., 14–15). In Khosa's case, similar logic appears to be at work. His political rise was mainly due to state power rather than local political support. As a result, this made him a manageable figure for the regime. So, Ayub's electoral system was designed to cultivate a cadre of politically pliable individuals at the local level as Jalal (2014) also argues.

With this logic, one can also understand Jamali's subsequent unsuccessful bid for a National Assembly seat in the 1965 elections. This time, he was again defeated by an Ayub-backed Khosa candidate ("File No. 877–S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali" 1954; "Election Commission of Pakistan," n.d.). In this manner, Ayub introduced a patronage system where loyalists were rewarded while dissenters were sanctioned. The reward and punishment centered around access to state patronage. Jalal has called this strategy "differential patronage." (Jalal 1995, 253). This involved providing patronage to local elites who were pliable and supported the central government, whereas those deemed problematic were denied access to patronage.

Jalal's (1995) work helps us situate Jamali's case within the broader political developments of this period. She has argued that the tensions between the central power and regional actors in South Asian nation-states are more deeply rooted in the historical circumstances of the post-colonial period than in cultural or economic differences. After independence, South Asian states prioritized asserting control over culturally and economically diverse territories to create unified nation-states. This was manifested in agreements made with regional elites based on differentiated patronage to maintain the center's dominance. However, in the long run, such arrangements have impeded the practical realization of democratic ideals (Jalal 1995, 160). Jalal's argument stands confirmed by the developments in center-province relations in Pakistan, especially in the 1970s (see Chapter 5).

⁴⁸ Since colonial period, the Khosa's of Nasirabad were not seen being as important a tribe as Jamalis, which explains why the latter were better integrated into the state structure. Interestingly, this logic was also the reason why Jamali vs. Bugti conflict on lands in 1930s exploded out of control, as the colonial state preferred the latter over the former. Such preferences had material effects in land distribution and role in local administration. For more details, see Chapter 3.

4.4. The West Pakistan Land Reforms Regulation: Success and Failures in Nasirabad

Another policy question where the conflict between the regime and Jamali became visible was the Land Reforms introduced in 1959 after the suspension of democracy, or what could be loosely termed as such. This ushered in significant changes in Nasirabad, particularly regarding land relations, which were targeted under the Martial Law Regulation-64 related to land reforms. The case of Nasirabad challenges the narrative that these reforms were insignificant. Such an opinion is epitomized in incorrect assertions like “The absurdly nominal land reforms of the Ayub period could not be implemented in Baluchistan.” (A. Ahmad 1973, 14). The evidence presented below suggests that the reforms introduced by Ayub may have had the most significant impact in areas such as Nasirabad, notably due to its distinctive patterns of land ownership and the politics of its landed elite. This case starkly contrasts what has been observed in Punjab, where scholars have argued that “landed power continued largely unabated post-independence. The first real challenge it faced was during the 1970s regime of Zulfikar Bhutto” (Mohmand 2011, 32). In the 1960s, the power of the local elite in Nasirabad did not continue unabated; instead, significant loss of landholdings and privileges occurred.

According to Beringer (1962), under Ayub’s land reforms, a set of measures was introduced to achieve a more equitable distribution of land ownership and to establish the framework for a gradual enhancement in the productive capacity of the agricultural sector through appropriate tenancy reform. However, his analysis of the application of these reforms in the North Western Frontier Province revealed that the impact of the land reforms was entirely restricted (Ibid.). This limitation was primarily due to the excessively high ceilings on the amount of land that large landlords could retain. Likewise, Hussain (1984) views these reforms as unsuccessful. He states, “Considering that the 1959 land reforms established the ceiling based on individual rather than family holdings, coupled with other shortcomings in the provision, the majority of large landlords managed to navigate around the ceiling, retaining their land without having to declare any portion as exceeding the limit.” (Ibid., 46).

These reasons may justify the argument that these reforms failed to redefine power relations in most rural areas of Pakistan. However, a closer examination of archival material on the Nasirabad sub-division paints a more complicated picture. The primary factor contributing to this complexity is the extensive size of land owned by a select *zamindar* and *jagirdar* (Jamali and Bugti) in this region, which resulted in the resumption of large tracts of land. An

additional factor was that the *zamindars* of Balochistan did not receive the same level of protection as their counterparts in other parts of the country, mainly if they openly adopted “anti-state” policies. This situation was notably true for both the Jamalis and the Bugtis, the major landholders in Nasirabad. That is why in Nasirabad, an area encompassing 130,540-9 acres was resumed⁴⁹ from only 46 landlords after they had transferred parts of land as gifts to their family members (“File no. 1/28 Durbar Vol II” 1928, 172), which showed that, on average, each of them possessed around 3000 acres of land exceeding the imposed ceilings. The presence of landlords with substantial landholdings in this region can be traced back to the colonial era when the colonial authorities allocated thousands of acres to tribal *sardars* and their kin (see Chapter 3).

The government data shows that the resumed proprietary lands were provisionally allotted to 4735 tenants, each receiving an allocation ranging between 16 and 64 acres (Ibid, 162). This constituted 6% of the total population of the Nasirabad Sub-Division at that time, which was 80,510 (Ibid., 164). Suppose one considers each tenant heading a household of five members each, which was the average family size in Balochistan in the 1950s (Shah 1951, 25) In that case, the proportion of the population that received land would probably approach 30% of the area’s total population. This suggests that the reforms impacted a significant segment of society. In addition, at least initially, these tenants were provided financial assistance. A sum of Rs. 3,75,000/—was distributed as a *taccavi* loan for the purchase of bullocks and wheat seed among tenants (“File no. 1/28 Durbar Vol II” 1928, 162).

According to Martial Law Regulation-64, landlords were restricted from owning land exceeding 36,000 Produce Index Units (P. I. Us), which was calculated as an indicator of the gross output value per acre of land, categorized by soil type, thereby serving as a gauge for land productivity. In Nasirabad, the categorization of produce index units differed from other parts of the country. It broke down into different categories: Irrigated (flow) land equaled 26 P. I. Us per acre, irrigated (lift) land equaled 17 P. I. Us per acre, and *barani* or *Khushkhaba* (rain-fed) land was 6 P. I. Us per acre (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1978, 17).

⁴⁹ This means the state taking possession of the land as part of land reform.

4.4.1. Resuming the Land in Western Nasirabad Sub-Division

Before providing details on the fate of Jamali lands under Ayub's reforms, it is important to remember that state authorities saw Jaffar Khan's politics as "anti-state," which meant he was a threat. They were determined to ensure he did not emerge victorious from his confrontation with the state (File no. 877-S/54" 1954, 96). This was stated in a top-secret official document noting that Jamali, in his struggle against state policies, must not be allowed to achieve favorable outcomes. The document maintained that if he succeeded in achieving his political objectives, he would severely tarnish the regime's reputation. The fear was that such outcomes would elevate Mir Jaffar Khan to an unparalleled political leadership position. It may even transform him into "a hero" and "instilling fear among state officials." (Ibid.).

One such policy that Jamalis of Nasirabad fought against was Ayub's land reforms of 1959. Take, for instance, the case of Haji Muhammad Murad Khan Jamali, cousin of Jaffar Khan and a tribal leader, who had to surrender large tracts of land under Ayub's reforms. His declaration forms show that he owned 16,500 acres of land in 1959. Under the rules of the reform, he was allowed to retain approximately 1,400 acres. This indicates that most of it was likely flow-irrigated by calculating P. I. Us for this region, which means that these lands had stable and secure access to water. The archival data shows that the state resumed the remaining 14,000 acres. He was allowed to gift 1,124 acres to his two sons (562 acres each), 192 acres to his mother, and 187 acres each to his two sisters (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1971, 37). The state resumed around 84.85% of Murad Khan's land after he distributed parcels of it to family members as gifts. His case shows that the size of the landed estate in Nasirabad was too substantial to shield the landed elite from the reforms challenging the conclusions of Beringer (1962), A. Ahmed (1973), and Hussain (1984).

However, resuming lands under these reforms took much work; it contained significant contestation. A prominent instance was the dispute initiated by the Jamali tribal leaders, including Mir Abdur Rehman, Mir Zafaullah Khan, Mir Muhammad Murad, Mir Taj Muhammad, Mir Sikandar Khan, and Mir Abdul Ghaffar Khan. They contested the argumentation used by the Land Commissioner in Quetta to resume their lands (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1970a, 40). The issue surrounded the Commissioner's decision to calculate the P.I.Us of Jamali lands on a flow basis. This choice effectively reduced the size of lands they could retain under these reforms. By claiming that their lands were irrigated on a lift basis, Jamalis tried to retain large tracts of land for themselves.

However, when the land commissioner declared their lands flow-irrigated, large tracts of Jamali lands were resumed (Ibid.).

In their appeal, Jamalis argued that the water flow in their lands was insufficient, which meant that the Commissioner miscategorized the land as flow land (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959a, 65). Their desperation to retain their land became somewhat unhinged as they proposed abandoning cultivating rice if their lands were categorized under the lift category. However, the desperation only exposed the fact that they had successfully cultivated rice in the past, which was not possible without good access to water that only lands under the flow category had. After much discussion, the Land Commissioner in Quetta ruled that their lands would be categorized as flow-irrigated, which effectively meant the resumption of more landholdings from Jamalis. As the Commissioner announced this, the Jamalis demanded assurance from the state that the lands they will retain must be guaranteed access to water. However, the documents do not show what happened to this request. Regardless, Jamalis had to surrender their lands (Ibid.).

After Jamalis failed to retain lands in Quetta, Mir Muhammad Murad Khan Jamali and Jaffar Khan Jamali went to great lengths to protect their lands from being resumed. They tried to secure a meeting with the President of Pakistan in Karachi to discuss the matter (“File no. 877–S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali” 1954, 96). However, this attempt was unsuccessful. As a result, they sought to form alliances with other *zamindars* in West Pakistan. They tried to create a united front against the land reforms. They argued that since Nasirabad was the only sub-division of Quetta Division⁵⁰, where land reforms were applicable, it should also be exempted from the reforms. Land reforms in Balochistan were only applied to Nasirabad because it was the only area with a canal irrigation system (Ibid.). Despite their opposition, the state went ahead with the land reforms.

Overall, the Jamalis of Nasirabad were required to relinquish approximately 70,087-36 acres of state-leased land in the *Beroon-e Khirtar* area under Ayub’s reforms (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959b, 17). This land was on the verge of becoming irrigable due to the construction of the Pat Feeder Canal. Based on the data presented above, it can be argued that the reforms substantially impacted the Jamali tribal elite in the western section of

⁵⁰ This was before its merger with the Khairpur Division in 1961.

Nasirabad (for more data on land reforms, see Chart 3 below). Although some of the land they surrendered may not have had good access to water and good soil quality, it still constituted a significant area. Nevertheless, Jamali's managed to retain their most fertile landholdings as they distributed them to their female dependents and legal heirs ("File.No.3/59-LR" 1959, 152). This case significantly differs from that of the landed elite in Punjab, where studies indicate that they continued to benefit from state patronage in the post-colonial period (Javid 2012, 3), including the ability to safeguard their lands from confiscation (Hussain 1984).

4.4.2. Resuming the Land in Eastern Nasirabad Sub-Division

The eastern section of Nasirabad had Bugtis and Khosas as the prominent landowning tribe. Upon examining the official data, it becomes apparent that the Bugtis predominantly lost land under these reforms, especially with the abolition of *jagirs* in 1959 (Office of the Deputy Commissioner Sibi 1970), granted during the colonial period. This is also confirmed by the work of Pherson (1966), who, while doing fieldwork in Balochistan in the 1960s, remarked that the reforms had "reduced his extratribal estates" (21). The archives also refer to Khosa landlords who had to relinquish their lands under the land reforms.

As shown in Chapter 3, the Bugti chief, his close agnates, and the tribesmen were granted thousands of acres of land in eastern Nasirabad as *jagirs* under colonial rule. This land was exempt from taxes as they provided their services in administering the frontier, which was also seen as a testament to their loyalty. However, in the post-colonial period, other concerns of state authorities became dominant. As shown above, the "colonist" tribes were seen as unproductive in their land utilization patterns. In addition, the confrontation between state authorities and Bugti Nawab in the post-independence period was no secret (Awan 1985, 229), especially after the discovery of Sui Gas in Bugti territories (Matheson 1967). The Land Reforms of 1959 emerged as a critical inflecting point in this historical context. Under these reforms, Akbar Khan Bugti, the chief of the Bugti tribe, had to surrender a significant portion of the land granted to him by the colonial state as *jagir*. The state resumed 7859 acres in eastern Nasirabad, in *deh* Chattan Patti, Gazi, Ghurri, Hamidpur, and Sanhri. The Shahi Wah and Uch Rajwah irrigated these lands (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959b, 18/1-18/2). Some parts of this land were *khushkhaba* (rain-fed), which later became irrigable after the construction of the Pat Feeder Canal in the 1960s. The chief was not alone in being

forced to give up land. His close agnates also had to surrender the land. For instance, Sardar Ghulam Mustafa Bugti had to relinquish around 1921 acres of land in eastern Nasirabad (Ibid., 49/1–49/2). This shows that the preferential treatment given to the Bugtis during the colonial period ended in these years.

Although the archival records indicate that the Khosa of eastern Nasirabad also had to surrender some tracts of their land, they offer limited evidence regarding the size of the lands resumed. For example, Mir Nabi Bakhsh Khan Khosa reportedly acquiesced to the land reforms with minimal opposition (“File no. 877–S/54: Mir Jafar Khan Jamali” 1954, 84).



Chart 3: Total land resumed under MLR-64 across the Usta and Jhatpat Tehsils.

(Source: Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959).

4.4.3. Sale of Resumed Lands to Tenants and Small Landlords

Under these reforms, the *zamindars* were to be compensated for the land resumed from them. One of the measures to compensate them was the Sale Scheme under the reforms. The

scheme envisioned selling land to cultivating tenants and small landlords and then use sale money to reimburse the landlords. In Nasirabad, under this scheme, around 23,039-12 acres of proprietary resumed land were sold to 1,631 sitting tenants within a year of the promulgation of reforms. Each acre was priced at Rs. 8 per produce index ("File no. 1/28 Durbar Vol II" 1928, 172). The payment was supposed to be recovered from purchasers through 50 half-yearly installments. Once all the installments were paid, the land would officially be transferred into their possession (Ibid.). Simultaneously, there was an attempt to devise supportive instruments for tenants and smallholders. This included providing them with loans. These loans were intended to assist them in acquiring seeds and fertilizers and investing in the land to increase productivity (Ibid., 162).

Nevertheless, the whole process encountered severe hurdles. This became evident as many new landowners defaulted on the payments they were obligated to make. Observing this worrisome trend, the West Pakistan Land Commission sent a series of urgent letters to local authorities urging them to recover the outstanding funds ("File No. 31/60" 1960). However, recovering installments proved challenging as the new landowners began sending complaints about the land's bad quality and water scarcity. For instance, Mir Jan Jakhrani, who had just bought lands under the scheme, began sending desperate letters to local revenue authorities. He wrote that he had no water to cultivate the land he purchased under the reforms (Ibid., 114). As more such applications were received, the local authorities began defending the defaulters in communicating with the land commission office. They stated that the lands allocated to the applicants lacked a permanent source of irrigation. As a result, they could not repay the installments (Ibid., 159).

In response to the information provided by the local administration concerning rising defaults among the new landowners, the West Pakistan Land Commission quickly changed the initial policy of selling the lands to cultivating tenants and small landowners. It issued a notification that stated that "the Chief Land Commr. has been authorized by the Commission to sell any land immediately by public auction, instead of attempting, the first instance, sales to other tenants and small landowners authorities" (Ibid., 3/3). This policy shift indicates that the reforms were not focused on aiding the poor; financial considerations took precedence over welfare objectives. This shift was even more apparent in the argumentation of the commission, which justified public auctions by stating it would result in "fetching higher prices." (Ibid., 3/1–3/3). Therefore, Ayub's reforms were not necessarily aimed at benefiting

the tenant class. Instead, it was interested in breaking the large landholdings and selling them at good prices, which created a new class of landlords.

In addition to the policy shift regarding selling land to sitting tenants and small landowners, the West Pakistan Land Commission issued new directives concerning untenanted and tenanted resumed land, which could not be sold under the Sales Scheme. The new directives stated that all such land that the tenants concerned could not or did not purchase should also be sold through open auction. The Deputy Land Commissioner was to oversee this process. The land was divided into lots, categorized as subsistence or economic holdings. The reserved price of Rs. 8.25 per produce index unit was fixed for these lands (Ibid).

The West Pakistan Land Commission also introduced new conditions for successful bidders in conjunction with these new rules. Under the revised direction, the highest-paying bidder was now required to pay 25% of the land price on the auction day. The remaining amount was to be paid within six months from the date of confirmation of the sale by the Chief Land Commissioner. Once the successful bidder had made the full payment, the possession of the land would be transferred (Ibid). Despite or maybe due to the new rules, the auction process in Nasirabad was far from successful. Approximately 16,355-32 acres of land were made available for sale in 1961, but only around 5900-21 acres could be sold successfully (Ibid., 6, 74).

As the auction process in Nasirabad remained unsatisfactory (see Chart 4 below), authorities at the Land Commission became suspicious. In official correspondence, the officials wondered whether interference from big landlords was the cause for such low levels of interest in public auctions (Ibid., 81). The local authorities refuted this possibility in their response (Ibid). They came up with a list of issues that explained the lukewarm response to the Sales Scheme. The A.P.A. Nasirabad presented four reasons. Firstly, most of the land available was either sandy or affected by salinity, which required substantial expenditure and labor from potential purchasers to reclaim and develop land for successful cultivation. Secondly, most of the land resumed was located at the tails of minors and water courses, which meant they lacked a regular and assured water supply. Thirdly, he argued that the classification of these lands was from 1945 and needed to align with the current soil conditions. In other words, inappropriate classification resulted in higher price demand from potential purchasers for land which had undergone fertility loss and was *kalarish* (saline). He

summarized his response by stating that these factors meant that land could not be cultivated even in cases where water was available. He argued that the new policy of paying the total amount within six months went against the capacity of potential buyers in the area (Ibid., 94–95).

Applications sent by defaulters to the land commission confirm A.P.A.'s assessment. Many applicants were already beginning to file applications to withdraw from their purchase agreements by requesting reimbursement of their initial payments. Consider the case of Hijwani Jamalis. They submitted an application that maintained that at the time of purchase, they could not know the accurate location and survey numbers of the land they were purchasing due to their "illiteracy." They continued that only after purchasing the land did they realize that the land they bought was *kalarish* and situated far from the water source (Ibid., 75).

A reason that A.P.A. ignored to mention in his response but which frequently popped up in applications sent by the defaulters was the problematic role of local bureaucracy in this whole process. For instance, a purchaser of land in *deh* Gharri, Halka Bagar, and Tehsil Jhatpat mentioned in his application that there were no clear boundaries or *lathbandi* markers on the purchased plots. This lack of demarcation made it difficult for him "to identify" the exact parcel of land he owned (Ibid., 71). He appealed to the A.P.A. for instructions to be issued to the *Patwari* and *Kanungo* to demarcate the borders of each bought plot. Only once such demarcation was carried out could he begin cultivating (Ibid.). Many other defaulters submitted a similar request. These applications cast the local bureaucracy in a problematic light as many buyers frequently complained that they were unaware of the land they were purchasing (Ibid., 75).

The problem with local bureaucracy was not only its inefficiency but also intentional wrongful behavior towards small landlords who bought lands under this scheme, as reported by many applicants. For instance, tenants of *deh* Gharri reported on May 10, 1961, that land was being allocated to non-resident outsiders in their area. They argued that this was against state policy. In their application, they maintained that the said land was *khushkhaba* (rain-fed), owned by Sardar Ghulam Mustafa Khan Bugti, for whom they worked as *haris* or tenants. This land was resumed by the government in 1959. As the land was being auctioned, despite their presence, it was allocated to strangers (*Punjabis*) from the Punjab. So, a clear

preference for certain groups as potential land buyers existed for state authorities, which overlapped with their ethnic identity. The applicants wrote, “We being bona fide and hereditary *haris* are in this way disclaimed due to “Rasai” of these “Punjabis” with local Revenue Staff.” (Ibid., 96).

Given that local bureaucracy in the post-colonial period was dominantly from Punjab, such *rasai* (access) by outsiders seems plausible. The applicants requested a careful review of the matter to ensure that poor, landless *haris*, residents of the area who have been cultivating these lands for an extended period, “were not disclaimed (sic)” (Ibid.). The bureaucratic inefficiencies and favoritism, water scarcity, soil quality, and high prices emerged as obstacles for the existing and potential purchasers of land under these reforms.

4.4.4. *Khatedari* on Resumed Land

Although the Sales Scheme was one of the main components of these reforms, it was complemented with an additional Lease Scheme. This scheme was supposed to increase revenue and improve land utilization. This was achieved through annual lease agreements called *yak-saali ijara* to *khatedars* or landholders. Land not sold under the Sales Scheme was made available for leases. A lease rate of 2.5 rupees per acre was fixed in Nasirabad (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959a, 151). This policy facilitated the rise of a new class of landholders who leased land from the state and organized labor for cultivation. This mechanism represented an economic-centric logic for land utilization and revenue generation. Leaders of kinship groups, entrepreneurs, and civil servants dominantly utilized these leases. They hired labor in the form of kinship groups for whom they acted as their *khatedar*. It is important to remember that these landholders were not part of the local elite.

An example of one such *khatedar* is Haji Jam Bhangar. He and his kinship group secured a lease for approximately 640 acres. The group had previously cultivated the same land for the tribal chief Sardar Akbar Khan Bugti in the Chattan Patti area in eastern Nasirabad (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1970b, 29). They effectively changed their lease relationship from the tribal chief to the state. The one-year lease, which needed to be renewed yearly, gave the state much control over the lease-holders. This transition should be seen as the state’s strategy to marginalize large landholders who were politically problematic and engaged in inefficient land utilization. Bugtis filled both criteria, as the reports from the local authorities cited above in the immediate post-independence period categorized Bugti as

absentee landlords who did not take an interest in their lands. In addition, Bugtis had been engaged in a prolonged conflict with the state in their native territory in the 1960s (Matheson 1967). The new lease system gave the state more control and made the *khatedar* more precarious, for it had to be renewed yearly. As a result, *khatedars* emerged as important intermediaries under this arrangement for land utilization.

Khatedars were not a homogenous group. One type included tribal kinship groups who sold their livestock to lease land and settle in the area. They predominantly originated from central Balochistan (Hakim Khan 2020). Another group consisted of small-scale entrepreneurs who saw land leasing as an attractive venture, a case that will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Thirdly, individuals with ties to the state also became *khatedars*. This included low-level retired civil servants and military officials from Punjab. These developments were central in forming an emergent middle class and diversification of population composition in Nasirabad in the 1960s. These changes were poignant, especially since the colonial settlement policy in this area was, in the Settlement Officer's words, "not to mix up the present Zamindars with the new settlers." ("Land Acquisition" 1908, 29). This was to avoid the *zamindars* of one tribe sharing water channels because if such an eventuality unfolded, it would increase conflicts and, thus, the work of the colonial state. This policy resulted in the clear territorial separation of tribes in the settlement structure of the area. However, by the 1960s, this policy was being ignored in the interest of modernizing agriculture and generating revenue.

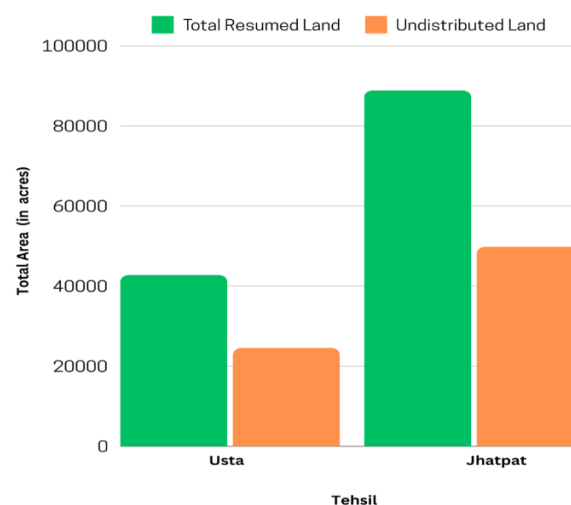


Chart 4: Total amount of land resumed and the total undistributed.

(Source: Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959).

4.4.5. Consolidation and Upgrading Scheme

Another pillar of these land reforms was the Consolidation and Upgrading Scheme. This scheme had numerous objectives. Firstly, the scheme aimed to reorganize fragmented and scattered land holdings into compact and manageable units to increase productivity. Secondly, it aimed to correct and update old revenue records that had become inaccurate. It was believed that the neglect of regular land surveys created grievances among landowners, which, once resolved, would bring more land under cultivation. Thirdly, the consolidation effort included the allocation of land for communal needs. This meant expanding villages, providing land for graveyards, and allocating land for essential infrastructure like roads (“File no. 1/28 Durbar Vol II” 1928, 119).

This scheme introduced the limits for Subsistence Holding (16 acres) and Economic Holding (64 acres), allowing land sale within these prescribed limits. For instance, on November 4, 1967, the West Pakistan Land Commission directive allowed landowners with holdings at or above the economic threshold to sell their land to individuals willing to buy land equal to prescribed parcels (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1961, 26). It also allowed landowners in a particular area to sell any portion of their holdings to outsiders⁵¹, with the condition that the purchaser acquired a minimum of an economic holding. This flexibility in land purchase was a significant shift in land settlement policy. First, it facilitated the entry of outsiders into areas where other tribal or caste groups resided. Second, allowing such sales and purchases compromised the colonial policy of maintaining homogeneity in settlement patterns. This effectively diversified settlement patterns, as observable to this day in Nasirabad Division (see Chapter 6 for more details).

Under the Upgrading scheme, small landlords and tenants were supposed to buy land within the prescribed limits. In this manner, their land size would become economical and large enough to be utilized efficiently. However, there was an important caveat. The *haris* (tenants) of proprietary lands were not entitled to acquire land under this scheme. This meant that the existing landlord-tenant relationships were not to be disturbed. The rules maintained that

⁵¹ Those who did not reside in the area where the land was located, meaning homogeneity in settlement would not be the preferred policy anymore.

peasants working on state-resumed land were entitled to purchase more lands within prescribed limits. Due to this condition, most of the land sold under this scheme was in eastern Nasirabad, where most of such land existed. For instance, in tehsil Jhatpat, around 8,000 acres of resumed land were sold under this scheme (“File no. 1/28 Durbar Vol II” 1928, 119).

4.4.6. The Challenges and Compromise

The Land Commission encountered significant challenges in recovering its dues from purchasers of land it sold. The Land Commission began canceling the purchase agreements with the buyers without compensation to deal with rising defaults. However, this policy also faced severe challenges.

An important case of defaulters in Nasirabad included petitioners from eastern Nasirabad who bought lands under the Sales Scheme. These petitioners included Baloch, Punjabi, and Sindhi landowners. The tribes and *biradaris* in the petition included Khokhar, Lehri, Sial, Umrani, Lashari, Jamali, Panwar, Soomra, Chandia, Sial, Ramdani, and Manjhu (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1970c, 189–90). The petitioners represent the diverse groups who bought lands under this scheme and go against the claim made in the literature on these reforms, which argues that only Punjabi *abadkars* and civil-military servicemen benefited from them. For instance, Berseeg (2001) maintains that “in the Pat Feeder area near Kalat [...] land was distributed among military and civil bureaucrats under Ayub Khan.” (Berseeg 2001, 75). He continues, “Punjabi *abadkars* (settlers) [...] had been allocated the most fertile lands in schemes such as the Pat Feeder Canal area.” (Ibid., 250). In contrast, the list of defaulters in Nasirabad shows a diverse range of landlords from different tribal and ethnic groups who bought lands under Ayub.

In their joint application, the defaulters raised economic and moral questions regarding the state’s decision to cancel their purchase agreements. They claimed that if the state decided to take away their land due to non-payment of installments, it would discourage further investment in these lands by new landlords, which meant that such drastic measures would negatively influence the state’s revenue in future. Then, they argued that if the state decided to grant these lands to “wealthy individuals,” it would effectively create “large landowners,”

which would contradict the state goal of the reforms, which was to provide land to the “landless *haris*.” (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1970c, 189–90).

In response to the petitions filed by 173 tenants against *Khata* Cancellation, the Deputy Secretary (Lands) wrote to the Secretary of the Land Commission on May 29, 1968. In this correspondence, he maintained that the land should not be canceled from the names of the petitioners. He also recommended not adopting any coercive measures to recover installments from them (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1970c, 157). However, the local administration still tried to delay the process and tried to cancel the purchase deed with the groups mentioned above. The petitioners sent new applications to the Deputy Secretary as this struggle continued.

As a result, a directive dated November 27, 1969, from Mr. S.M. Hasan, CSP, Secretary, West Pakistan Land Commission, was sent to all Land Commissioners in West Pakistan. It ordered the restoration of all the deeds canceled for the purchases of resumed proprietary and State/jagir land under the Sale/Upgrading Scheme due to the non-payment of installments. The directive gave the purchasers additional time to clear the arrears of their installments, along with interest, up to January 31, 1970 (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1970c, 157). This directive is a clear indication of reconsideration and leniency. The information from 1971, in Nasirabad sub-division, indicates that the land commission failed to collect a substantial portion of their outstanding dues. The total recovery was only 14.7% of the total demand (Ibid.).

4.4.7. Reviewing Land Reforms

To understand the significance of these land reforms in Nasirabad, it is essential to recognize the center-province conflict of the 1950s and 1960s and the modernization plans of the post-colonial state. The first factor explains why the state was adamant about targeting Jamalīs, who stood for provincial autonomy and thus lost large tracts of land under Ayub’s reforms. In the case of Bugtis, both factors came together to explain why they lost their lands in Nasirabad. These cases also exemplify how Alavi (1972) has defined the post-colonial state in Pakistan as being “overdeveloped.” The state’s ability, regardless of its limits and the resistance it faced, to act relatively independently in Nasirabad resembles Alavi’s conception. In addition, one notices similarities with Skocpol’s (1979a; 1979b) realist conception of the

state, whereby class relations or social forces do not necessarily dictate the actions of the state. Instead, it may act in its own interest, irrespective of the fact that such an interest may be defined problematically in normative terms.

When it comes to assessing whether these reforms were successful in systematically altering land relations, the judgment has to be qualified. The data on the Land Reforms of 1959 presented above shows that even though reforms did not profoundly alter land relations to benefit *haris*, they still resulted in forming a new class of precarious *khatedars* and indebted small landlords (for more data, see Table 2 below).

These findings support the research that argues that the Land Reform Commission of Ayub had acknowledged the omission of labor issues from the reforms it introduced. Gazdar (2009) argues that the Commission recognized the precarious labor conditions of the agricultural workers in Pakistan but chose to defer addressing this issue later. These were not to be addressed through these reforms. The commission admitted the necessity of eventually granting agricultural laborers security and protection (cited in Gazdar 2009, 22). So, the conditions of *haris* were not the focus of these reforms, whereas challenging the power of the largest landowners and creating a new class of landholders and landowners seems to have been the goal of these reforms as they unfolded in Nasirabad.

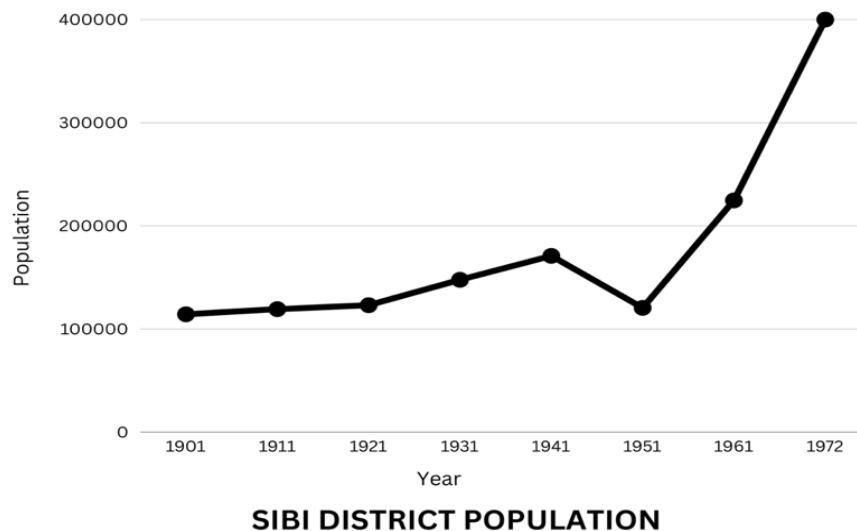
Table 2: Land Sold Under MLR-64 for Different Categories

Category	Jhatpat (acres)	Usta (acres)	Total (acres)
Area given to Tenants (Proprietary)	8856-12	17187-25	26043-37
Area given to Tenants (State)	1750-01	6-00	1756-01
Area given under the Upgrading Scheme (Proprietary)	7144-28	84-17	7228-45
Area given under the Upgrading Scheme (State)	951-10	-----	951-10
Area given to small landowners (Proprietary)	588-12	84-17	672-29
Area sold in auction (Proprietary)	13580-10	773-24	14353-34
Area Sold to other departments (State)	5573-28	-----	5573-28
Area Sold to Small Land Owners	588-12	84-17	672-29

(Source: Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959)

Here, it is helpful to use Jalal's (1994) analysis as it offers incisive perspectives that help situate Nasirabad within the broader developments in Pakistan. She claims that Ayub Khan's

1959 land reforms aimed to expand the regime’s support base by transferring land from the landed aristocracy to “middle farmers.” This new group comprised a significant portion of his political base. Jalal contends that the reforms did not benefit small peasants or landless individuals. She observes that a considerable fraction of the beneficiaries of these reforms were ex-military and civil officers (Jalal 1994, 160). Jalal’s claims apply to Nasirabad with some caveats. In Nasirabad, the reforms paved the way for a new class of landlords and *khatedars* to emerge. They also expanded the tenant class due to the increased availability of land for cultivation due to the Pat Feeder Canal (see section 4.5 below). Subsequently, the arrival of tenants, small landlords, and *khatedar* migrants profoundly changed the demographic makeup of Nasirabad (see Graph 3 below).



Graph 3: Population Growth in Sibi District

(Source: Government of Pakistan 1972).

4.5. The Pat Feeder Canal

In order to modernize agriculture, effective land utilization and new land relations were needed. It also necessitated the expansion of canal networks in Pakistan, which became a critical policy that Ayub Khan followed, especially as the Indus Water Treaty was finalized. The land reforms in 1959 were complemented by the construction of a new canal called Pat Feeder in the Nasirabad sub-division in the 1960s. This canal was part of networks of canals emerging from the Guddu Barrage on the Indus River. Once finalized in 1966, this canal, which mainly waters eastern areas of Nasirabad, around 185000 hectares of land became

irrigable. The Pat Feeder Canal doubled the size of the total land irrigable in Nasirabad (see Chart 5 below). Most of the land under its command was earlier uncultivated and partially leased under a lease scheme in the 1960s. This area included large tracts that were previously *jagir* of the Bugti tribe. An important policy that emerged in the 1960s was not to allow land sales under Pat Feeder's command (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1970a, 4). This policy was adopted due to a land dispute between *khatedars* and tribal elites who attempted to buy these lands. As a result, the Civil Court in Jacobabad issued a stay order disallowing any sales in this area (Ibid).

In 1970, the Pat Feeder Ordinance was promulgated, which annulled all temporary injunctions and stay orders previously issued by the Civil Courts (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1970b, 16). This policy shift was introduced after a long conflicting process between the executive and judiciary regarding the fate of lands under this canal. The judiciary was superseded through an ordinance, and eventually, land under the canal became available for the Sales Scheme. However, this proved to be a short period, as a new set of reforms was introduced by Bhutto in 1972 (see Chapter 5).

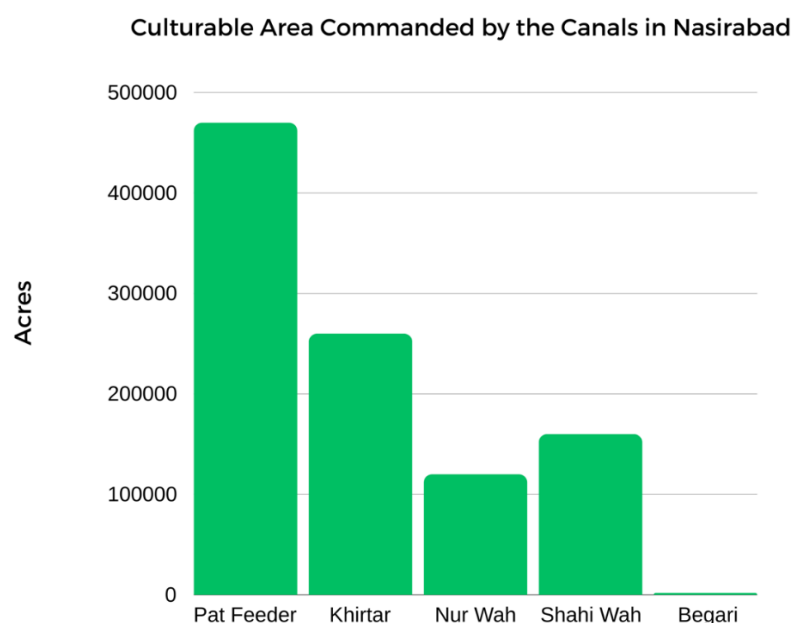


Chart 5: The total cultivable land in Nasirabad around 1970.

(Source: Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1959).

4.6. Conclusion

In the two decades following Pakistan's independence, relations between local elites and the state in Nasirabad underwent significant change. The experiences of Jaffar Khan, other Jamalis, and the Bugtis clearly illustrate this. In the immediate post-independence period, debates over federalism demonstrated that access to state patronage increasingly depended on alignment with central policies dictated by the bureaucracy and military. At the same time, the push for agricultural modernization gained momentum, culminating in the Land Reforms of 1959. These reforms systematically reduced the landed influence of elites who resisted centralized authority. At the same time, Ayub Khan's concurrent focus on modernizing Pakistan's agriculture was reflected in constructing a new canal in the region, which increased land irrigation significantly. As a result, Nasirabad saw the rise of a new class of *khatedars* rather than the mere reproduction of the power of the pre-existing landed elite. In contrast with areas such as Punjab, where colonial legacies continued to influence local power structure, the 1960s was a break in Nasirabad, evident in the formation of new settlements, changes in demography, and new forms of land relationships.

5. Expanding Patronage and its Effects under Democratic Dispensation

5.1. Introduction

This chapter draws on Witsoe's (2013) framework of linking "contemporary political practice" to "longer histories" (2), to identify the 1970s as a critical juncture for understanding the functioning of the patronage system in Balochistan. Although existing scholarship rightly highlights the conflicts between the National Awami Party (NAP) and the central government during this era (Harrison 1981; Hewitt 1996; Sheikh 2018; Malik 2020), it often overlooks the deepening and broadening of patronage politics under Bhutto which was introduced in earnest by Ayub's regime (see Chapter 4).

The dismissal of the NAP government in Balochistan and its replacement by a hotchpotch of elites under Bhutto was a watershed in the province's history. It intensified the authoritarian nature of the center-province relations and entrenched non-ideological politics, best described as patronage politics. In this period, compliance with the center allowed provincial elites to secure cabinet positions, chief ministership, and governorship (see Section 5.2.1.) as they provided legitimacy to Bhutto for his militaristic Balochistan politics. This period thus expanded the logic of patronage as a *modus operandi* in the province well before the Zia era, contrary to prevalent consensus in the literature (Waseem 1994; Wilder 1999; Akhtar 2018). Bhutto's approach in Balochistan resembled Waterbury's (1970) "division of spoils" model of patronage where key positions and privileges were allocated to loyalists to entrench his own power.

During this time, the Jamali family in Naseerabad recognized that shifting party affiliations and abandoning ideological politics facilitated access to state patronage. In contrast to their earlier ideological politics (see Chapter 4), the new generation adopted a pragmatic, non-confrontational approach that prioritized access to patronage and power. Consequently, Taj Muhammad Khan Jamali, son of Jaffar Khan, served twice as a cabinet minister under Bhutto (Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, n.d.).

Simultaneously, center-province conflict in the 1970s yielded unintended benefits for tenants in Naseerabad. Herring (1979) argues that Bhutto's land reforms were largely a "political

instrument for winning the hearts and minds of the masses in politically hostile territory” (543). Through these reforms, “State Resumed Lands,” concentrated in eastern Nasirabad, were redistributed, especially under Martial Law Regulation-117 of 1976, while “Proprietary Resumed Land” remained mostly untouched (see section 5.2.2.). Interestingly, many of those who gained land rights under Bhutto were the migrants who tilled state-leased lands that were distributed under Ayub’s earlier reforms (see Chapter 4).

To illustrate how certain *khatedars* lost their leases whereas some tenants gained proprietary rights, this chapter examines Village A, established in 1976. Shifting from elite politics, it adopts a “history from below” (S. Bhattacharya 1983) method that draws on the narratives of those directly affected. This approach aligns with the use of oral histories, which capture how “interpersonal relationships are situated within the intersections of biographical and historical time” (Ryan 2023, 24). In other words, it reveals how the historical time operates at the intersection of sociohistoric and the personal (Elder Jr., Johnson, and Crosnoe 2003, 9). These accounts reveal that kinship emerged as a significant factor that shaped political behavior at the local level, diverging from findings on Punjab’s 1970s elections, where ideology reportedly outweighed traditional affiliations (Baxter 1974; Wilder 1999; Jones 2003).

5.2. The 1970s Election: National and Provincial Dimensions

In December 1970, Pakistan held its first general elections since its independence. By the time these elections took place, several political parties were advocating for regional autonomy and opposed the One-Unit scheme and the centralization policies of the Ayub regime (Ziring 1971; Burki 1972). Such politics had gained significant traction across Pakistan. This sentiment was reflected in the electoral victory of the Awami League in East Pakistan, the People’s Party (PPP) success in West Pakistan, and support for regional parties like the NAP in Balochistan and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Wilder (1999), in his analysis of these elections, aptly observed, “The 1970 elections proved to be a watershed in Pakistan’s electoral and political history. For the first time, the legacy of representative rule won a battle against the legacy of bureaucratic rule.” (Ibid., 24). In other words, according to Wilder, this was the first time public representatives rooted in the colonial constitutionalist tradition managed to assert themselves over the colonially entrenched military bureaucratic establishment.

The military bureaucracy oligarchy saw Awami League's win and its six-point agenda that called for regional autonomy as a threat to the overly centralized and Punjab-dominated state (Maniruzzaman 1971). This explains why General Yahya Khan's administration, which had allowed the elections to take place under pressure and subsequently administered them, banned all political activities in the aftermath of election results, which paved the way for the breakup of the country and the subsequent civil war (Titus and Swidler 2000, 59). In contrast, regional political parties, like NAP, understood the demands of the Awami League as justified. Unsurprisingly, the NAP leaders from Balochistan met with Awami League leader Sheikh Mujib in Dhaka after the elections. These leaders declared their readiness to cooperate with the Awami League and supported its six-point program. The party believed this stance would benefit Balochistan (Ibid).

However, the political power in the country lay in what Alavi (1972) has called the "overdeveloped" post-colonial state and not political representatives. Therefore, its actions were more significant than those of political alliances made by political parties. Ahmed (1972) has provided a convincing analysis of this critical period. He asserts that the military refused to convene the assembly session unless the Awami League made concessions during the extra-parliamentary negotiations, which involved Mujib-ur-Rahman, the leader of the Awami League, Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan People Party, and General Yahya Khan (Ibid.,11). He claims that Bhutto had Yahya's overt backing in these negotiations. This was visible in his support for Bhutto's declared boycott of the assembly session slated for March 3, 1971 (Ibid). The military demanded an absolute capitulation from the Awami League even before the assembly session was called. Ahmed argues that the non-cooperation movement erupted in East Pakistan due to such unilateral measures. Once this movement was underway, it persuaded the junta's semi-fascist faction that the use of brute force, which was previously employed in Balochistan and the Northwest Frontier Province, was the only solution to suppress Bengali nationalism (Ibid.).

Thus, military operations began in East Pakistan, which turned into civil war. By the end of 1971, India intervened in the conflict, which ultimately led to East Pakistan's liberation as Bangladesh on December 16, 1971 (Haider 2009). On December 20, General Yahya Khan resigned under mounting public and political pressure due to his failure to manage the crisis in East Pakistan (Jones 2020, 48). This allowed Bhutto to assume the presidency and become Pakistan's first civilian Chief Martial Law Administrator (C.M.L.A). With the military's

surrender in Dhaka, the military retreated from politics temporarily. This created an opportunity for Bhutto to fill the power vacuum. From 1972 to 1977, Bhutto consolidated his position as the sovereign authority in Pakistan. Such consolidation was grounded in his party's electoral victory and the aftermath of the East Pakistan crisis for the military (Ibid.).

Although this period presented an opportunity for "representative rule" to strengthen, particularly after the military's humiliating defeat, Bhutto's politics and leadership proved excessively authoritarian and anti-democratic. He further entrenched the state's centralized authoritarian tendencies rather than responding to the 1971 crisis by decentralizing power (Malik 2020, 98). Such tendencies were evident in Bhutto's approach to dealing with the provincial government in Balochistan and North Western Frontier Province led by the NAP. The first instance of such an authoritarian tendency was Bhutto's decision to appoint Sardar Khair Bux Raisani as the Governor of Balochistan, even though the majority parties in the provincial government were against such an appointment (Berseeg 2001, 241). Bhutto was subsequently forced to retreat from his decision as protests erupted in Balochistan against the decision. The protests were led by Sardar Khair Bakhsh Marri, Ataullah Mengal, Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, and Sardar Akbar Khan Bugti (Ibid.).

On the political chessboard of Balochistan, the Jamalis occupied a peculiar position. In the 1950s and 1960s, Jaffar Khan was a notable figure in opposing the One-Unit and Baluchistan's Merger Scheme and faced repercussions for his positions till he died in 1967 (see Chapter 4). He aligned with the politicians across Pakistan, including leaders of NAP, and was also connected with the Pakistan Muslim League (Council) in opposing the Ayub regime in the 1960s. Jamali stood for provincial autonomy but remained part of the Muslim League, which he had supported since the 1940s (Awan 1985, 182). This historical connection was evident when his son, Mir Taj Muhammad, contested the national assembly seat from Quetta on the Pakistan Muslim League Council ticket in 1970 (Election Commission of Pakistan n.d.). Similarly, Mir Shah Nawaz Khan Shaliani, leader of a different *takkar* or branch of Jamali tribal, ran for a provincial assembly seat on the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) seat. Both parties shared opposition to military rule, akin to NAP, but chose a different path.

In the provincial assembly elections, NAP won eight out of the total twenty provincial seats, winning seats in Kalat, Kharan, Makran, Chagi, Quetta, and Sibi. Although Mir Shah Nawaz

Khan Shahliani won his seat in the provincial constituency of Sibi III, Mir Taj Muhammad Khan Jamali lost to Sardar Khair Bakhsh Marri in the national assembly constituency of Quetta (Ibid.). Consequently, NAP formed a coalition government in Balochistan, with Sardar Ataullah Mengal as the Chief Minister and Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo as the Governor. As Jamalīs from Nasirabad secured just a single seat in the provincial assembly, their impact on the province's politics was limited, at least in the immediate aftermath of the elections. In contrast, the NAP was dominant in shaping the politics in the province.

5.2.1. The Center-Province Conflict: Beneficiaries and Losers

In the backdrop of Bangladesh's independence, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto assumed power as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. He had deep suspicion of the NAP leaders in Balochistan. Despite these concerns, negotiations between Bhutto and NAP took place. The agreement between the two parties was based on the promise by Bhutto that he would lift martial law, introduce a democratic political system under the new constitution, and protect regional autonomy (Berseeg 2001, 289–90). This explains why the NAP became part of the constitutional consultation process, which Bhutto initiated by appointing Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo as a member of the constitutional committee (Jalal 2014, 188). This was important for Bhutto as it ultimately led to the adoption of the new constitution on February 2, 1973, for a country reeling from losing its other half.

This cooperation, however, was short-lived. Although Bhutto had agreed to allow NAP to form governments in Balochistan and NWFP as he promised to lift the martial law and allow the provincial parties to appoint governors, Bhutto was deeply suspicious of NAP's nationalist agenda, which included the creation of *Dehi Muhafiz* (Rural Police), attempts of promoting Baloch culture and language and to “Balochistanise” the provincial administration along with establishing its press (Berseeg 2001, 239–44). Bhutto's suspicions in the context of Bangladesh's separation gained momentum. He came up with an allegation that NAP leaders were part of the so-called “London Conspiracy,” which was aimed at compromising the federal structure of the country. NAP denied being part of any such plan. Nevertheless, Bhutto dismissed the NAP government in 1973, just weeks after the constitution was adopted with NAP's blessing (Ibid.).

The political persecution of provincial leaders after the dismissal of NAP in Balochistan is aptly described by Waseem (1994), who writes that “the incarceration of the Baluch tribal

leadership and destabilization of their support base at the hands of the federal government and army operation in the 1970s had created a vacuum in that province.” (98). This crisis was compounded by Bhutto’s decision to deploy the military in the province, as he ordered an operation against the tribal militias (Harrison 1981; Titus and Swidler 2000).

Following the dismissal of the NAP, Bhutto sought alternative political leadership to govern Balochistan. In order to understand Bhutto’s politics, it is helpful to cite Jalal (2014), who argues that he, through his experiences, had learned that “the only way to rule Pakistan was to divide.” (192). This he applied well to Balochistan when Bhutto successfully turned Nawab Akbar Bugti against the NAP government. This is not to say that Bugti did not have his grievances against the NAP government, but Bhutto was an expert in using such cleavages to his benefit. Awan (1985) writes that Bugti had thrown himself, heart and soul, behind the election campaign of the NAP by supporting its candidates but was disappointed when his efforts were not reciprocated once the NAP came into power (243).

Eventually, Bugti broke ranks with the NAP leader of Balochistan in collusion with Bhutto. Berseeg (2001) captures Bhutto’s maneuvering well when he writes that Bhutto “played off the Marris and the Mengals against the Bugtis, and then in a volte-face, the Bugtis against the others.” (250). Bugti’s action was rewarded by Bhutto, who subsequently appointed him governor of Balochistan. In an act of reciprocity, Bugti bolstered Bhutto’s case against the NAP government by distancing himself from his previous allies and confessing to conspiring with them to acquire foreign arms to establish an independent Balochistan (Titus and Swidler 2000, 61). The instrumental relationship between Bhutto and Bugti resembles Waterbury’s (1970) analysis of the politics of the King of Morocco. The king, he observed, as “the commander of the faithful,” distributed rewards among the political elite of various factions. Such awards were aimed at preventing the consolidation of opposition by creating internal divisions in it.

However, being the mercurial figure he was, Bugti fell out with Bhutto within months. As a result, Bugti was replaced by Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baloch, the last Khan of Kalat, in early 1974, who would remain Governor of the province under Bhutto’s rule. It is important to note that Ahmed Yar Khan, like Jaffar Khan Jamali, actively participated in the anti-One Unit movement in Pakistan (Awan 1985, 227–28). He was imprisoned on sedition charges in 1958. His arrest triggered the famous Nauroz Khan insurgency in 1959, which was later crushed by

the military under Ayub's rule (Ibid.). The only way to understand this shift in Khan's politics is to recognize the power of the carrot-and-stick policy that the center adopted toward Balochistan's provincial elite based on the logic of patronage. It punished them when they resisted; it rewarded them when they became subdued. This explains why many erstwhile champions of provincial autonomy, like the Jamalis and Khan of Kalat, supported Bhutto as he persecuted the NAP-W leadership in Balochistan.

Eventually, the Khan of Kalat, Sardar Ghaus Bux Raisani⁵², and Mir Taj Muhammad Khan Jamali of Naseerabad emerged as reliable allies for Bhutto in Balochistan. They provided Bhutto with some semblance of legitimacy and tried to fill the vacuum created by the incarceration of NAP leaders. The principal on which this relationship worked was access to state power and patronage for these elites in the form of governorship and cabinet positions, and the protection of their privileges was made possible by the expectation that they would accept a subordinate position vis-a-vis the center. In contrast, those who did not accept such a position, like the NAP leaders, were punished and persecuted. This approach of the center in dealing with provincial elites echoed an older pattern of central government strategies in the post-independence period, where failure to generate compliance frequently resulted in the dismissal of provincial governments. This practice had been evident from Jinnah's time to Iskandar Mirza and continued into Ayub's era (Waseem 1983, 279–80). However, Bhutto mastered it well and executed it perfectly in Balochistan by increasing the cleavages within the tribal elite.

The political journey of Taj Muhammad Khan Jamali, son of Jaffar Khan Jamali, sheds light on this type of politics of the 1970s. As mentioned above, he was defeated by the NAP leader Khair Bakhsh Marri for the NW-136 Quetta II seat in 1970. However, Marri had also won a provincial assembly seat in the elections, which he had chosen to retain as he was more interested in power at the provincial level. This allowed Jamali to run again for the national assembly seat. This time, Taj Muhammad ran on the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) ticket and, by doing so, switched his party as he had run on the Pakistan Muslim League-Council (PML-C) ticket in the 1970 elections ("Election Commission of Pakistan," n.d.). This change in party affiliation, though now a common practice in politics of Pakistan, represented the first

⁵² Raisani was accommodated in Bhutto's first cabinet as the Minister of Food and Agriculture after he was forced out from Governorship position. (Siddiqi 2012, 71).

instance in this particular constituency by local political elites. Jamali was running against Salim Bugti, son of Akbar Bugti, and won the closely contested election (Ibid.). Jamali became the province's first publicly endorsed PPP candidate to win elections after the dismissal of the NAP government. He also gave PPP the only national assembly seat from Balochistan province; the rest of the three were divided between NAP and JUI, who were in coalition with the provincial government (Ibid.).

The rationale behind such a switch can be understood by looking at what happened after he won the election. He was given a position in Bhutto's cabinet as the Minister of Natural Resources on Oct 22, 1974 (Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, n.d.). This was not a recognition of his merit but part of Bhutto's strategy to incorporate politicians from Balochistan willing to accept subordinate roles. Through such positions, politicians gained a share of the spoils. Jamali was important to Bhutto as he allowed Bhutto's PPP to have some presence in the province, where he faced severe resistance. In the run-up to the 1977 elections, Bhutto increased the size of his cabinet to reward his loyalists before the elections took place. In his expanded cabinet, which now consisted of eighteen members, he gave Jamali the portfolio of Minister of Health and Population Planning (Ibid.).

Wilder's (1999) astute observation helps comprehend Jamali's politics during this period. He writes, "Politicians only have access to patronage if they win an election and, in particular, if they end up in the winning party" (Ibid.,193). Jamali knew that switching parties, especially after the NAP leadership was being persecuted, would increase his chances of winning elections from the same seat. Jamali's shift from politics of provincial autonomy to aligning with the center can only be understood through such an interpretation. It also reflects the difficulty politicians face when their access to state power and patronage is blocked, which happened to Jamalis in the 1960s (see Chapter 4). Such a tendency exists among politicians in Pakistan's patronage system even today; as noted by Ali (2020), "many politicians have found it difficult to cope with patronage avenues being closed to them." (192). The attraction of cabinet positions and state patronage for politicians in Pakistan's political system has continued to be of the highest value. This phenomenon is underlined by Javid & Mufti (2020), who note that offers of prestigious roles, from cabinet appointments to Senate nominations, attract electable candidates to political parties (156). Waseem (1994) contends, "Access to bureaucratic patronage has continued to be a supreme social and political value for the local elite, which has increasingly sought public office through elections." (11-12).

Simultaneously, understanding Bhutto's politics becomes possible through Jalal's (2014) observation that "Bhutto knew that the only way to alleviate the sense of marginality on the part of the non-Punjabi provinces was to provide them with more effective representation at the center." (192). So, in addition to the access to state patronage that such portfolios brought, this representation symbolized Balochistan's share within the spoils system. The alliance between Bhutto and Taj Muhammad Jamali thus reveals the instrumental logic that drove their relationship and shows the pragmatic nature of political alignments in Pakistan.

Bhutto was skilled in the tactics of divide and rule and a master of political messaging, as demonstrated by his formal abolition of the "Sardari System" in Balochistan (Titus and Swidler 2000, 60). Ironically, Bhutto had made alliances with tribal and feudal elite in Balochistan to get rid of the NAP government. The move was even more odd given that the system had already been abolished by the very NAP leaders he had imprisoned (Ibid.). This political symbolism was materialized through enacting a presidential ordinance during Bhutto's 1976 tour of Balochistan at the height of military operations. It essentially served more as a political gesture than a substantive reform. The contradiction in Bhutto's policy was apparent, given that his allies in the province were the tribal elites like the Raisanis, Jamalis, and the Khan of Kalat, who differed from undesired *sardars* as they were willing to accept subordinate roles and align with his central government.

Even though Bhutto tried to neutralize political and military resistance in the province through a combination of military repression, the banning of NAP, and the cultivation of a compliant local elite via state patronage, he could not abate instability in Balochistan under his rule. This persistent instability highlighted the limitations of Bhutto's divide-and-rule strategy that not only ignored popular sentiments but also suppressed them. Bhutto's focus on short-term political gains failed to address the deeper socio-political grievances in the province. Ironically, it would take a military dictator to initiate appeasement in Balochistan in the late 1970s (Waseem 1994; Titus and Swidler 2000). Nevertheless, Bhutto set a precedent for what was deemed acceptable politics for provinces like Balochistan in Pakistan's federal system. Figures like the Jamalis of Nasirabad exemplified this. The patronage political system would benefit those who espoused loyalty to the center by accepting their subordinate position.

5.2.2. Land Reforms under Center-Province Conflicts

Bhutto's era is distinguished not just by his authoritarian streak and controversial actions in Balochistan but also by the land reforms he introduced in Pakistan, which complicates his political legacy. One of his election campaigns was "*zamin kashtkaron ko*," or land to the tiller (Wilder 1999, 23). Accordingly, as the Chief Martial Law Administrator (C.M.L.A), he introduced the first series of land reforms via Martial Law Regulation-115 in 1972. These reforms were implemented country-wide but were selectively implemented in Balochistan as they targeted only the Sibi and Kachhi Districts (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1978). In the Sibi District, they were primarily applicable to the Nasirabad sub-division.

MLR-115 followed MLR-64 of 1959 as it also focused on setting ownership ceilings. However, it lowered these ceilings from 1959 limits of 500 acres for irrigated and 1,000 acres for non-irrigated land to 100 and 200 acres, respectively. A key feature of Bhutto's reforms was that land would be resumed without offering compensation to the landowners and then distributed to the tenants for free (Sayeed 1980, 91–93). The scholarly literature regarding the effectiveness of the 1972 land reforms in achieving its primary aim of dismantling feudalism suggests that these reforms fell short of the stated objectives (Alavi 1983; Herring 1979; 1983).

Bhutto introduced a second set of land reforms dedicated to the Pat Feeder Area of Nasirabad with the Martial Law Regulation-117 in 1976 (Rashid 1985, 47). It aimed to redistribute land in areas the Pat Feeder Canal command, which targeted approximately "half a million acres and allow[ed] for the resettlement of a significant number of impoverished farmers." (Herring 1979, 543). Herring points out that Bhutto's land reforms had the most substantial impact on Balochistan compared with other regions of Pakistan. He argues that political objectives drove these reforms in Balochistan. He posits that the land reforms served a dual function for Bhutto, acting "as a political instrument for winning the hearts and minds of the masses in politically hostile territory while simultaneously weakening the local opposition power elite, primarily the great landed families" (Ibid).

It is pertinent to present Balochistan's internal dynamics to fully appreciate the selective application and limitations of Bhutto's land reforms, which scholars like Herring oversimplify. Although Herring (1979) correctly identifies the political motivations behind these reforms, he fails to specify the geographical and political realities within Balochistan.

Contrary to the sweeping claims, most of the province remained largely unaffected by the reforms. Key NAP politicians such as Bizenjo, Marri, and Mengal were minimally impacted, primarily because they were from non-agricultural areas where the reforms were not applicable (Office of the Deputy Land Commissioner Sibi 1978).

The land reforms, instead, had a considerable effect on tenants in the Nasirabad subdivision, who were unaffiliated with the politically targeted figures and became unintended beneficiaries of the center-province conflicts of the 1970s (see section 5.2.2.1.). However, even within Nasirabad, the impact was uneven. The Jamalis, aligned with Bhutto at the center, were largely exempt from these reforms. As a result, tenants on Jamali's proprietary lands were left out of these reforms. In contrast, substantial portions of land in eastern Nasirabad, leased to various *khatedars* under Ayub's rule or middle farmers, became the primary focus of Bhutto's reforms (see section 5.3.).

The effectiveness of these reforms was contingent on being a tenant of the state-leased land in specific locations in Nasirabad, such as the Pat Feeder Canal Command area. Lessees of state-resumed land⁵³ and tenants of landlords in eastern Nasirabad were the most successful in securing land rights, particularly when compared to lessees of proprietary resumed land⁵⁴ and tenants in western Nasirabad. Bhutto's reforms in eastern Nasirabad effectively dismantled the intermediary class of small landholders that Ayub's policies had previously strengthened, a class that had once exploited labor to their advantage and that of the state (see Section 5.3.4. below).

5.2.2.1. *Land Reforms in Archives*

This section will rely on archival material found in the Sibi Record Office to demonstrate the impact of the land reforms in Nasirabad in general but the area under Pat Feeder Canal's command in particular. The official archival material available at the record office primarily consists of applications from tenants, associations of tenants, landholders, and landlords after the introduction of land reforms in 1972. Unfortunately, the material on these reforms in the

⁵³ State-resumed land refers to land previously owned by the state but on *yak-saala* or long-term leases. For more details, see Chapter 5.

⁵⁴ Proprietary-resumed land refers to land that was privately owned. Under the land reforms of 1959, the government resumed this land as it exceeded the reforms' land ownership ceilings. For more details, see Chapter 5.

Sibi record office was not as extensive as expected. It was reported that most of the records had been destroyed by forces of nature. In Sibi, termites were the culprits for consuming the records, while in Jaffarabad and Nasirabad, the floods of 2010 and 2012 were to blame (Tehsildar Jhapat 2020). The selective destruction by natural forces of some of the most vital documents on land relations in this area is conspicuous. Given the limited archival data available for this period, the next section will rely on interviews with former tenants to reconstruct a historical account using the “history from below” methodology.

5.2.2.2. Nature of Applications: Evictions, Corruption, & Intermediaries

This section examines the petitions sent to the Chief Minister’s office after the land reforms were announced. These applications show the substantial upheaval caused by the reforms in the region. The archival documents on these reforms show three interlinked phenomena in this area. Firstly, complaints from tenants and tenant associations of their illegal eviction from lands by powerful landlords. Secondly, grievances about corruption and unfair practices perpetrated by the local bureaucracy, as reported by the tenants and *khatedars*. Lastly, the important role of intermediaries in settling land disputes, a phenomenon dealt with in more detail in the section 5.3. below.

5.2.2.1.1. Evictions

Jalal (1994) has argued that during the early years of Bhutto’s rule, small peasant proprietors, tenants, and field laborers felt that Bhutto had liberated them from landlord power. Despite the ability of landlords to circumvent the PPP’s land reforms, they were nonetheless compelled to relinquish some of their feudal privileges (Ibid., 162–63). This argument is supported by research on South Punjab, where “inspired by the populist pro-peasant rhetoric of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his PPP, peasants confronted *jagirdars* in the early 1970s, demanding fairer sharecropping arrangements and an end to forced labor (*begar*).” (Ali 2020, 341). A similar sentiment was evident in Nasirabad, where tenants started submitting applications to state officials seeking assistance to assert their rights to the land as they faced evictions from their landlords. For example, Umer, Hayat, and Gulam Khosa filed a joint application against Mir Nabi Bakhsh Khosa, the most prominent landlord in the eastern Nasirabad sub-division, seeking state intervention to regain possession of the land they had cultivated but from which they had been unjustly evicted following the announcement of land reforms (“File No. 6/1974-LR” 1974, 49). Similarly, other tenants like Rehmatullah Khosa

from *deh* Ghari submitted an application against Mir Nabi Bakhsh Khosa for unlawfully evicting him and his family from their lands (Ibid.).

These were not isolated incidents; complaints came not only from individuals and groups organized along tribal and caste identities but also from groups organized based on class identity. For example, the *Hari Union of Pat Feeder Deh Mazoi* filed a complaint on June 16, 1974, accusing Mir Nabi Bakhsh Khosa of evicting the members of the union and requesting the officials in Quetta to act immediately “to protect the tenants against the *zulm*” or injustice of landlords. The *Hari Party of Deh Nozband* in the Pat Feeder area lodged a similar grievance against Nabi Bakhsh, complaining about his evictions and requesting state intervention (Ibid). These applications reveal that the tenants communicated their grievances with the hope of being supported by state authorities against influential landlords like Nabi Bakhsh.

In western Nasirabad, cases similar to those reported in the eastern part of the sub-division were also documented, albeit in significantly fewer numbers in the documents available in Sibi Record Office. One case involved Karim Dino, son of Khan Muhd. Mugheri, from *deh* Khanpur, where the Jamali landlords owned extensive tracts of land. In his application written on May 24, 1974, Dino wrote about his forced eviction by Nawab Atta Muhammad Khan Jamali. (Ibid., 28). He was the first cousin of Jaffar Khan Jamali and uncle of Mir Taj Muhammad Khan Jamali. Similar complaint from the same area was made by the *Anjumane Kashtkaran* Tehsil Usta Muhammad (Union of Cultivators of Usta Muhammad), which lamented the aggressive eviction of *haris* or cultivators by influential Jamali landlords, who disregarded their rights. In this application, the union sought the reinstatement of tenancy rights (Ibid., 1). Additionally, joint complaints from peasants sharing tribal and caste identity, who were ejected from their lands, were also received by provincial authorities. A notable instance involved five hundred Sohrani Jamalis who sent an application challenging their influential landlord’s illegitimate claim over their lands in Goth Imam Dad Khan (Ibid., 21). This shows the considerable disturbance triggered by the land reforms in Nasirabad.

The response of landlords towards cultivating tenants in the form of evictions was not an exception in the case of Nasirabad, as a similar trend of evictions was observed across Pakistan. Jalal (1994) has argued that as the cases ended up in the courts, the landlords realized that the judiciary was increasingly open to the cases being brought by the tenants

(162), a phenomenon that is confirmed by the case of tenant groups like Sohnu and Janu and their neighboring villages (see section 5.4. below). Like the Judiciary, the provincial bureaucracy in Quetta, which received these applications and directed lower officials in the sub-division to act, acknowledged the tenant's situation. The evictions by landlords were a preemptive measure to prevent their lands from being resumed by the state.

5.2.2.1.2. Corruption

It is important to note that the state revenue officials, like the *tehsildar*, had the power to determine the status of a peasant. Such state officials were not just executing the reforms without any prejudice; they had to deal with a complex reality where they faced pressure from various directions, from higher-level bureaucracy to influential landlords. An interesting case that shows this complication was a complaint against the *tehsildar* of Jhatpat for incorrectly categorizing individuals as tenants who were subordinates of a prominent landlord. Muhammad Yusuf and Muhammad Sadiq Khosa's made this complaint from *deh* Manjhuti in eastern Nasirabad. In their complaint, they wrote that they were the original tenants of the land irrigated by the Pat Feeder Canal. They had worked and managed these lands even before the canal became operational in 1966. Their main point was that their labor made the land arable. However, the *wadera* and *zamindar* (notable landlord) approached the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) as they reforms were announced and registered his "personal servants" and "*chamchay*" (cronies) as his *hari* or peasants ("File No. 6/1974-LR" 1974, 75). Consequently, these lands were allocated to the landlord's aides. The rightful tenants, claimed the applicants, were left without rights on the land. This application by Yusuf and Sadiq symbolizes the complexity surrounding a tenant's identity. Merely cultivating the land did not suffice if the tenants were not officially registered as such in the state records. This made it possible for state authorities to deny them the right to ownership of lands they historically cultivated. Yusuf and Sadiq's grievances appear valid when considering research from South Asia, which shows the significant discretionary power held by local administrators, especially in the early post-colonial period. For instance, Drèze, Lanjouw, and Stern (1992) conducted an ethnographic study on the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) in Palanpur, India. Their research revealed that the village development officer, tasked with creating a list of eligible beneficiaries for the program, possessed the latitude to recommend nearly anyone of his choosing (Ibid).

The corrupt collusion between the landed elite and the local bureaucracy to evict rightful tenants from their lands was a common allegation in many applications sent by the tenants. Application by Nabi Bux Brohi, Haji Abdul Rahim Silachi, and Ali Muhammad Machi is illustrative of the problem. In their application, they contended that the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) had committed grave injustices against the *haris* of Tehsil Usta Muhammad. They accused influential landowners of influencing the appointments of the *qanungo* (revenue officer) and the *patwari* (land record officer), calling on higher authorities in Quetta to replace these officials with more honest personnel to ensure fair land distribution under the land reforms. They wrote, “On the sake of God and Holy Quran Sharif the above *ahalkars* be transferred from the area and any other *ahalkars* (honest) officers be sent there for the justice of land and obliged.” (Ibid., 107). The applicants also expressed concern about the potential future promotion of the SDM to the post of commissioner of Nasirabad, ominously suggesting that if such a scenario were to unfold, the fate of the area would be in the hands of divine providence or, as in their words “Jhatpat Nasirabad [will] run on the name of Allah” (Ibid.). This application sheds light on the alleged corrupt practices in Nasirabad. It particularly highlights how local officials attempted to safeguard the interests of powerful *zamindars* in matters involving resumed proprietary land.

These complaints not only highlighted the favoritism shown by local state officials towards landlords but also exposed corrupt practices aimed at benefiting the officials themselves and their family members. This was the case described in the application of Sikandar Ali and Mai Lal Khatoon of *deh* Baro, who lodged a grievance against Mr. Illahi Bux Soomra, the clerk, and the peon over the wrongful allotment of land in early April 1974 (Ibid., 8). Similarly, an application by Mohd. Bakhsh, son of Allah Dad Brohi, alleged that the land in his cultivating possession was allotted to the son of the Clerk named Asadullah, which he called “sheer injustice” (Ibid., 37) and asked the state authorities to intervene in his favor. Numerous similar applications were submitted by *haris* (tenants) alleging that local officials had allocated lands to “strangers,” lands to which they, being “*morusi haries*” or long-standing tenants, had a more legitimate claim (Ibid.). The “strangers” in the applications were primarily Punjabi *abadkars* with connections to the local bureaucracy, which was also predominantly Punjabi.

However, when it came to the cases related to government-leased lands, one observes a different presentation and complaint of state bureaucracy. Such lands were leased to

khatedars or landholders in the 1960s. They had become critical contributors to the new land utilization system based on yearly leases under Ayub. Suddenly, they found themselves stripped of their leases and, in some cases, even harvests. In their complaints sent to Quetta, the actions of the same government officials appeared to have increased independence. Nevertheless, the complaints against state authorities were marred by allegations of injustice. These lessees lodged numerous complaints against peasants who took possession of the produce by claiming it belonged to them (Ibid., 25). In addition, these applications mentioned the lack of assistance from local officials in reclaiming the produce.

One case involved Allah Rakhio Manjhani Khoso, who sought justice against his tenants for the “unlawful” appropriation of produce from 100 acres of land leased to him by the state (Ibid., 25). Several lessees of government land dispatched urgent telegrams to the provincial authorities in Quetta. They criticized the Sub-District Magistrate (SDM) of Nasirabad for unfair practices. They accused the SDM of favoring certain tribal groups over others and neglecting to consider the actual details of each case. These lessees framed the conflicts over land and harvests with their tenants as tribal disputes. For instance, *khatedar* Haji Abdul Razak accused the SDM of “lacking experience, causing trouble, jeopardizing his means of living,” and inciting potential violence between the Jamalis and Magasis by siding with the Jamalis. He requested the officials in Quetta to conduct a fair investigation into the SDM’s decision to revoke his lease on approximately 300 acres of land in *deh* Manjhuti, in the Pat Feeder area (Ibid., 34). Thus, one notices a different representation of the local bureaucracy in these applications, where they appear to be siding the tenant population against the *khatedars*.

5.2.2.1.3. Intermediaries

These applications also show that local influential figures, or *motabirs*, acted as intermediaries for peasants to access local state officials as the complaints piled up after the land reforms were announced. For instance, an application was submitted by Muhammad Sadiq and Muhammad Yusuf Khosa from *deh* Manjhuti to the Board of Revenue in Quetta. In their application, they reported the fraudulent actions of their landlord, Wadera Abdul Rashid Khosa, a relative of the influential Mir Nabi Khosa, against whom several applications were submitted, as noted above. Sadiq and Yusuf argued that they were the rightful tenants of the land they cultivated since it was a *khushkhaba* land when the Pat Feeder Canal was still under construction (Ibid., 75). They had undertaken the necessary soil preparation and cultivation

efforts (*lathbandi*) of the land following the construction of the Pat Feeder Canal. Despite their labor which contributed to making the land arable, *Wadera* Abdul Rashid Khosa registered his personal servants and “*chamcha*” or sycophants as tenants in the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) office (Ibid.). As a result, the SDM wrongfully allocated these lands to these individuals instead of the rightful tenants. Their application further noted that in the face of this injustice, they sought intervention from Mir Abdul Ghani Jamali and Mir Jabal Khan Jamali (nickname for Zafar ullah Khan Jamali), who were both influential political figures of the area and well-connected with the state authorities. The applicants narrate in their story that these notables accompanied them to the SDM office to make their case, as they knew the facts of the case well. As a result of this mediation, they reported that the SDM recognized their claims and realized that their landlord had misled state officials. The applicant argued that their labor made the land cultivable, which gave them the right to claim ownership under the law. At the end of their application, they underlined that they were poor peasants and had the responsibility to feed families. They pleaded for the land to be officially allotted to them, as their entire livelihood depended on it (Ibid.).

The role of Jamalis as an intermediary in a case involving Khosa landlords and peasants complicates any straightforward analysis of land reforms that focuses solely on class dynamics. The action of Jamali landlords against Khosa landlords, as noted in the application above, can only be understood as being politically driven and shows no class solidarity. As the Manjhuti area has no Jamali population, instead consisting of Khosa and other tribes, such Jamali intervention on behalf of Khosa tenants should be seen as their attempt to punish their Khosa political competitors. It is helpful to remember from the previous chapter that Khosa emerged as allies of the Ayub regime in this area when Jamalis were punished. So, it makes perfect sense to see this act as revenge from Jamalis, and this case goes beyond simple class analysis. In addition, such an act can be seen as a means of political campaigning in the constituency by giving favors to those needing access to the state. This intention of Jamalis was also revealed in the oral histories I collected from Village A. More on this will be shown below in the case of Janu and Sohbat Khan.

5.3. Zooming in on Village A: *Zameen, Hari, Khatedar*, Patron, and the State

This section focuses on the oral history accounts of those who lived through the 1960s and 1970s. These accounts are based on the interviews conducted with village elders in Village A,

who migrated to this area during Ayub's period and became landowners under Bhutto in 1974. These narratives of the past are important as the interactions with village elders about present-day politics always go back to their past. In addition, they complement and add to the archival data on this period that was collected in the Sibi Record office.

Collecting these oral accounts aligns with the methodology of "history from below," which tried to incorporate and accentuate the voices of those ignored in elite-driven historical and political analysis (Bhattacharya 1983). It gives the right place to such historical experiences, which are used as historical records for this and subsequent sections. These historical accounts have a profound significance for the villagers who narrated them. They passionately discussed a difficult past that they and their ancestors overcame in a new place called Nasirabad. However, these narratives are not homogenous. Instead, there emerged competing narratives of the past. These differences overlap with the two competing kinship groups that settled in Village A after Bhutto's land reforms. In this manner, these competing narratives revealed much about the ongoing political competition between the kinship groups in the village. Such competition finds the most visible expression in electoral politics, a phenomenon that will be analyzed in-depth in the following chapters. By weaving together these multiple narratives of the past, this chapter will foreground the subsequent evolutions in the village's politics.

5.3.1. *Ladd Zeeragh* (To Migrate)

In my conversations with village elders, the early 1960s consistently emerged as an important time. This was when their ancestors migrated (*ladd zeertash*) from central Balochistan to the Nasirabad sub-division in search of livelihood (Haibat Khan 2020; Hakim Khan 2020; Khatun 2020). It was also a decade of Pakistan's first military rule. Archival research, detailed in Chapter 4, presented the emergence of landholders known as *khatedars*, who were granted land leases in Nasirabad during this decade. These *khatedars* needed labor to cultivate the leased lands, a need that directly influenced migration patterns.

5.3.2. The Search for "*talukat*" or Relations

After leasing the lands under the *yak-saali ijara* (yearly lease) system, Qaisar Khan, a *khatedar*, activated his tribal networks to inform his tribesmen in his native village in central Balochistan of the opportunity to work on the lands in Nasirabad. His reliance on such

networks, an important means of mobilizing labor in the area, resembles Benz's (2013) observation of similar networks in north Pakistan. In his study, he observed that networks of solidarity rooted in various forms of shared identities had contributed to initiating, directing, and facilitating migration movements in northern Pakistan's small town of Gojal in the 1940s (Ibid., 1). Soon after Qaisar's communication, two kinship groups led by Janu Khan and Sohbat Khan⁵⁵, migrated (*ladd zeerthash*) to Nasirabad. They, with their kinship groups, began working as his tenants (Haibat Khan 2020; Hakim Khan 2020; Hooran Khatun 2020; Rustam Khan 2020). All involved parties, including the new tenants and the *khatedar*, were members of the Rind tribe but belonged to different *paaro* or branches of the tribe.

Although migration offered these groups new livelihood opportunities, they were dis-embedded from their native area physically and socially. I borrow the concept of embeddedness from Korinek, Entwisle, and Jampaklay (2005), who have worked on migrants. They define embeddedness as something that "emerges through a variegated web of social ties" that migrants have with their kin, co-villagers, or those with similar backgrounds (Ibid., 782). Developing on this concept, one can understand the concept of *ladd* (to migrate), which village elders frequently refer to. Elderly villagers often described the initial years following migration (*ladd*) as a period when "we had no relationships in this area." (Rahmu Khan 2020). This shows *ladd* as a process that entailed losses in *talukat* or essential social relations (Rustam Khan 2020). An elderly woman, a young girl in the 1960s, shared in conversations that "in this area, we started from nothing." (Hooran Khatun 2020). This sentiment of being on their own in the initial years of migration was a recurring theme in discussions with the villagers. The story of being alone is a constant reminder of the challenges they faced as they left everything behind to start anew.

In this context of dis-embedding through migration, the older generation's firm focus on *seho* or unity as a critical virtue becomes understandable (Rustam Khan 2020). This unity was the basis of collaborative existence for these kinship groups in a new environment. This unity was not just a social norm but also a tool that facilitated the organization to engage with the neighbors in the *ilaaqo* (area). Thus, acting with *seho* served multiple purposes: it provided security in interactions with neighbors and strengthened the group's internal cohesion.

⁵⁵ These pseudonyms are employed to preserve the anonymity of the villagers who requested that their stories be shared without disclosing their identities.

However, this sense of unity was often limited to members of the same *paaro* within the tribe. This is indicative of the boundaries of such kinship groups. The unity was not an all-encompassing character. Instead, it was exclusive to those who belonged to the same kinship group. *Seho* ensured security for the group in its external relations and cultivated ethics of care and mutual support within the kinship group. This internal solidarity helped the group adapt to their new environment (Hooran Khatun 2020; Rustam Khan 2020).

5.3.3. 1970s Elections for Tenants Organized as Kin Groups

The experiences of Janu and Sohbat Khan in Village A show that tenants in regions like Nasirabad were not driven by ideological motivations in their political decisions, as the existing literature claims (Waseem 1994; Wilder 1999; Jones 2003; 2020). Instead, their political choices were shaped by the specific historical context in which the electoral process was new and subject to varied interpretations. Their means of political decision-making and political organizing were rooted in kinship ties. Ideology did not influence their decision-making. One interviewee told me “*Main siyasat bhajiya che kaar aa*” or “what did we have to do with politics.” (Rahmu Khan 2020).

5.3.3.1. Kinship Relations, Talukat, and Elections

As detailed in Chapter 4, the 1960s saw a significant diversification in the population composition of Nasirabad. This diversification added complexity to the electoral campaigning in the area. It meant that elections could not merely be expressions of tribal loyalty. The newcomers to the area lacked tribal affiliations with the local elites, a relation which has been seen as a factor influencing people’s political choices (Waseem 1994, 98). This complicated the task of local elite mobilizing electoral support based solely on tribal loyalty. Furthermore, the rise of a new class of small landlords and *khatedars* in the area meant more than traditional land relations were needed to secure electoral support. These circumstances collectively highlighted the importance of campaigning.

Grasping the novel nature of elections as a means for peasant groups to express political choice is essential. The initial reactions to electoral campaigns in the region were mixed. This is evident in the diverging choices made by the kin groups led by Janu and Sohbat Khan. With the announcement of the 1970 elections, a campaign led by a young Jamali political leader of the area named Zafarullah Khan Jamali was carried out. He was campaigning for his

relative running for the national assembly seat. Janu Khan and his kinship group saw the elections as a moment to develop *taluk* or connection with the area's notables, especially since they did not know anyone (Haibat Khan 2020; Hakim Khan 2020; Hooran Khatun 2020). After discussions within their kinship group, Janu Khan assured Zafarullah Khan Jamali that he and his kin would collectively support his candidate in the forthcoming elections. Despite Jamali being a prominent landlord in the area, Janu and his kin were not related to him through land or tribal relations; instead, it was a largely political relationship with expectations on both ends.

In contrast, Sohbat Khan and his kinship group abstained from voting. Sohbat's cousin Rustam Khan, who is still alive, described in an interview that his kinship group and its leader felt perplexed as the campaign for the 1970 election began. He told me how there was discomfort with voting for one individual over another as both candidates running from their constituency were held in high regard. Therefore, he noted, we asked ourselves, "Why should we involve ourselves in the disputes of others?" (Rustam Khan 2020). This decision can be understood as stemming from the value that prefers compromise over competition. As a result, they thought that choosing one candidate over the other would "make it hard to develop good relations or *taluk* with notables in the area." (Ibid). This shows that the decision-making of the kinship group was not influenced by landed power or tribal identification but rather by their desire to develop good *taluk* with the local elite. In both cases, kinship relations served as the means of political decision-making.

The two kinship groups from similar backgrounds understood elections differently and made choices aimed at a similar purpose: having a good relationship or *taluk*. One group saw elections as too divisive and chose to stay out of it to keep good relations with everyone involved in the competition. The other group saw it as a chance to develop *taluk* by picking a side. However, they acted and made decisions collectively based on relations of kinship. This case also shows the absence of ideological mobilization rooted in class consciousness for political organization or participation.

5.3.4. Navigating "*Zarai Islahat*" through Kinship as a Unit of Organization

The current literature on Bhutto's land reforms focuses heavily on data (Hussain 1984; Herring 1979). However, an important factor to understand these reforms in its entirety is to know the stories of those tenants who successfully obtained land rights. Only recently, the

research on *Hashtnagar* conducted by N.G.Ali (2020) has tried to focus on the stories and experiences of these tenants. By collecting and recounting the lived experiences of the tenants during that time, one gains understanding into the relationship between the state and society. These narratives hold historical significance and are central to understanding how they influenced the perceptions of the state and the interactions of tenants with it. Therefore, these stories and experiences were worthwhile for research on land reforms and state-society relationships. In this regard, the following section will discuss the stories of Janu and Sohbat Khan, leaders of two peasant groups working on leased lands. Their stories reveal the complexity and unpredictability that followed the announcement of the reforms. These stories also tell much about how land ownership transformed the lives of tenant groups and represent the experiences of not just a handful of peasants but thousands in Nasirabad.

5.3.4.1. How to Get What is Being Promised: Two Different Choices

A wave of excitement swept through the landless class across Nasirabad as the news of *zarai islahat* as land reforms are popularly remembered spread in the area. This excitement quickly metamorphized into practical questions rather quickly. One interviewee captured the severity of the situation well and noted, “Being promised something is one matter; actually, obtaining your rights is quite another.” (Hooran Khatun 2020). In the aftermath of the announcement of these reforms, much disruption, uncertainty, and challenge to existing land relations unfolded. These reforms were instrumental in showing the tenants that the big promises at the national level did not automatically translate into favorable actions from the state functionaries at the local level. In other words, the announcement of *zarai islahat* left peasant groups grappling with the dilemma: how to secure rights on land promised by a state seemingly powerless to support them on the ground.

In *deh* Manjhuti of the Pat Feeder Canal Command area, tensions rose as Janu and his kin group claimed ownership over the land they cultivated under the lease of *khatedar* Qaisar Khan following the declaration of *zarai islahat* (Rustam Khan; Hooran Khatun 2020). The situation intensified as verbal disputes turned into concrete actions. Janu Khan and his kin refused to hand over the harvest to their landholder. They claimed full ownership of the harvest under the new reforms, a claim deemed illegal by the *khatedar* (Hakim Khan 2020; Hooran Khatun 2020; Rustam Khan 2020). This incident confirms the nature of the conflict that was reported in the applications of the *haris* and *khatedars* presented in the previous section. The conflict over the harvest between Janu and Qaisar spiraled as it drew the

attention of district officials in Sibi and provincial authorities in Quetta. The position taken by Janu and his kins effectively annulled their previous agreement with their landholder, Qaisar Khan. It was indeed an agreement that had the state's backing for a decade, starting in 1963 (Hakim Khan 2020; Haibat Khan 2020). The agreement was that the tenants had half of the share in the produce after the landholder paid *ijara* (lease). The announcement of reforms created a space for such a confrontation. Nevertheless, it did not ensure its quick settlement. Janu and his kin quickly realized that their complaints to local state authorities will not result in automatic resolution of the conflict. That is why, they started "*dast phaara janu, taa k maar mai haq mili*", or "making arrangements to make sure we get our right." (Rustam Khan 2020).

In contrast to Janu Khan and his kinship group, who took a confrontational approach, the tenant group of Sohbat Khan and his kins pursued a more reconciliatory strategy. As Janu and his group chose a path of confrontation, the *khatedar* proposed to Sohbat Khan that, as the current leaseholder, he would be willing to get his group registered as the exclusive tenants of the land by the revenue officials (Rahmu Khan 2020). Such a possibility was not wholly unimaginable given the nature of applications found in the archives that reported corrupt practices of local state functionaries, as shown above. The agreement between the two parties was that the land, once successfully claimed by Sohbat after his successful registration as a tenant, would be divided equally. Sohbat Khan accepted this proposal, hoping to secure claims on the entire leased area of approximately 270 acres (Ibid).

The agreement narrative between the two parties (*Hari* and *Khatedar*) is testified by the descendants of Sohbat Khan, who claim that the landholder had the right to register any individual as a tenant on his leased land (Rahmu Khan, 2020). Sohbat's descendants add that an agreement with the *Khatedar* had granted their group rights to the entirety of the land. Conversely, Janu's faction contended that the state owned the land and was merely leased to the *khatedar*; thus, it was a legal right of those who cultivated it (Rustam Khan 2020). Here, we see different interpretations of what a lease meant; it resembles how the peasants saw elections. The conflict between the two peasant groups contrasts with the situation in *Hashtnagar* in Khyber Pakhtun Khwa, where there was peasant solidarity against landowners

in the form of the Mazdoor Kisan Party (Ali 2020). In this case, class solidarity was absent⁵⁶; instead, kinship groups emerged as the primary means of identification.

The conflict between Qaisar Khan and Janu's kin group escalated dramatically when Qaisar chose to forcefully reclaim the harvest. What made the matter worse was that Sohbat and his group allegedly supported Qaisar in this process (Hakim Khan 2020; Hooran Khatun 2020). In my interviews with descendants from both groups, many factual details surrounding *zarai islahat* were the same. However, they diverged considerably on this particular point. Janu's kin views this incident as a betrayal by their fellow tribesmen. It has become an unforgettable part of their collective memory, as was said numerous times during my interviews with descendants of Janu. For them, Sohbat and his kin's participation in Qaisar's attempt to retrieve the harvest has become a deep-seated grievance. Sohbat's descendants, in contrast, acknowledge that they were in alliance with Qaisar but deny ever being part of the group that retrieved the harvest from Janu's group.

Here, Portelli's (1991) understanding on the significance of memory in oral history are particularly relevant. He argues that the value of oral sources lies in what they reveal about the processes of memory and meaning-making rather than in their factual accuracy. The conflicting narratives from Sohbat's and Janu's descendants show how each group constructs its historical identity. For Janu's group, the event continues to be a moment of betrayal, whereas for Sohbat's descendants, it is a made-up story that aims to present them in a negative light. The fact that the occurrence of this incident is challenged allows us to uncover the underlying tensions and divisions within Village A that exist even today.

Let us continue the narratives of what happened next under the reforms. As if losing the harvest was not enough, Janu and his relatives were also forcibly evicted from their lands by the *khatedar*. Once this occurred, the kin group and their leader traveled to Jhatpat to file a complaint against their *khatedar*. However, I was told, "Nobody listened to our pleas." (Hooran Khatun 2020). This situation showed Janu and his kin that their rights as tenants would not be realized automatically. They recognized the necessity of having an intermediary for *rasai* or access to local state authorities. This phenomenon was also mentioned in

⁵⁶ It was impossible to ascertain how the associations of *haris* from Nasirabad acted in this period. Their names can only be found in the archives, while in the field, I was told multiple times that these are names of associations that might have emerged in moments of crisis and dissipated after that (Rahmu Khan 2020).

applications sent by tenants to higher authorities, as shown in the archival data section above (section 5.2.2.1.). Such a *rasai* could ensure that their claims on the land were recognized. Most importantly, it could provide protection against the landholder's retaliatory measures.

Ultimately, Janu and his kin group turned to Zafar Ullah Khan Jamali, who also appeared in the applications as an intermediary, for help. Being a politician, Jamali agreed to assist Janu and his kin upon their request by engaging with local state officials to mediate the conflict with their landholder. Meanwhile, Qaisar Khan, the landholder, tried to have Sohbat Khan and his kins officially registered as the sole cultivators on his leased land. This effort proved challenging, given his status as a landholder in contrast to the influence of figures like Zafarullah Khan Jamali in the local administration (Rahmu Khan 2020; Rustam Khan 2020).

Determining the precise motivation of Zafar Ullah Khan Jamali to help tenants like Janu and his kin is hard. However, based on the account of Janu's kin, Jamali helped them because they had voted for his relative in the 1970 elections (Haibat Khan 2020). In addition, the fact that Jamali belonged to a tribe different from Janu and his kin renders tribal explanation for this support moot. Also, this relationship can not be understood through the class lens, as Jamali was a big landlord. This situation can be best understood as a patronage relationship. Through such intermediation between the state and tenants, Jamali established a network of supporters who would support him when needed. This was especially ominous since the tenants he was supporting lived in the area where Khosa landlords like Nabi Khan, Jamali's rivals in local politics, were dominant.

After going through a period of uncertainty and conflict, both tenant groups ultimately secured a positive outcome at an open *katchehri* (court) convened by the Assistant Land Commissioner (A.L.C) of Nasirabad. The A.L.C. held the court directly on the contested lands. In his decision, he divided the land between the two primary tenant groups, who were in cultivating possession of the land. The Sohbat Khan group was awarded roughly 160 acres, while Janu Khan and his relatives were granted about 75 acres (Haibat Khan 2020, Hakim Khan 2020, Rustam Khan 2020). In this manner, both tenant groups gained proprietary rights on the land. Subsequently, the Revenue Board in Quetta, which upheld the A.L.C.'s decision in 1974, further subdivided the land within the kinship groups in the name of male family heads.

Consequently, the two kin groups were formally recognized as the legitimate owners of the land they had been tilling since 1963. Qaiser, the landholder, had to forfeit all his claims to the land and subsequently moved out of the area. With the land rights officially established, the two tenant groups became permanent neighbors, which would shape the politics of the village for the coming decades (Haibat Khan 2020; Hakim Khan 2020; Hooran Khatun 2020; Rustam Khan 2020).

Ali's (2020) examination of the Mazdoor Kisan Party's (MKP) class-based struggles in *Hashtnagar* during the same period provides a useful analytical parallel to the kinship-based case analyzed here. Ali's analysis reveals how the state strategically co-opted the local tenant movement to reinforce its authority. He argues that the militancy of the peasant movement was mitigated by the state that favored upwardly mobile tenants as it attempted to settle land disputes. This co-optation process, as Ali explains, redefined the political identities of tenants. Through ownership of land, their identities were transformed from collective actors in a class struggle into individuals vested with patriarchal, liberal rights over private property (Ibid., 273). Ali's analysis suggests that this transformation was not an inevitable outcome of agrarian change but rather a contingent process that strengthened the state's hegemonic project, which molded local identities as well as increased its relative autonomy vis-a-vis society. (Ibid).

Similarly, the resolution of the conflict in Village A illustrates the state's role in formalizing property rights. It effectively fractured the identities of tenants into a contradictory duality: membership of a kinship group and an individual with property ownership under a liberal legal framework. This intervention by the state did more than resolve a conflict over land. Resolving the conflict extended the state's mediatory role in the social and political life of the tenants. In addition, conferring individual proprietary rights on land laid the ground for subsequent individualization processes in the village, which did not create citizens in a liberal sense but influenced the working of kinship relationships in the village. However, there is an important distinction between the two cases. Whereas the tenants under the MKP developed "collectivist political identities" rooted in class struggle, the tenants in Village A retained a collectivist social identity anchored in kinship relations.

5.4. Claiming Rights on Land & Dealing with the State through Intermediaries

For kinship groups like those led by Janu Khan and Sohbat Khan, Nasirabad also represented a new chapter of politics. For one group, securing land rights involved engaging with the politician they voted for in the elections. His supporters deemed his involvement central in enabling them to assert rights over the land they cultivated. Consequently, elections became a critical event over which their relationship was negotiated. Following these reforms, Janu actively cultivated his relationship with Zafarullah Khan Jamali, motivated by a clear objective: to have *rasai* or access to the state (Haibat Khan 2020; Rustam Khan 2020).

The political awakening of Janu Khan and his kin was not an isolated incident. Such developments echo with observations made by scholars on migrants in urban areas in countries like India. For instance, Piliavsky (2014) has argued that patronage connections help the poor obtain resources through patrons or support immigrants in accessing state services. It has been noted that patronage and electoral politics frequently coincide; patronage encourages participation in elections, which, in turn, leads to the creation of new patronage relationships. The foundation of ‘traditional’ politics is built upon patron-client relationships, serving as the primary political instrument for tribes, peasants, and the urban disadvantaged (Ibid., 6–7).

Another important reason for developing *taluk* or a relationship with a patron lies in the fundamental need to deal with the state. For example, Janu’s group relied on the support of Zafarullah Khan Jamali to deal and engage with the local state bureaucracy to secure the rights promised by the state. Sohbat Khan and his kin also realized the significance of having *taluk* with someone who has *rasai*. Even though their *rasai* was made possible through the landholder, who was weak compared to Jamali, he still acted as an intermediary to engage with local authorities.

In addition, due to these reforms, the people began to perceive the state as a primary resource provider. Despite the challenges in realizing the promises of the reforms, this period is fondly recalled as the *inqilabi daur* (revolutionary period) by village elders of both groups. These reforms heralded a period of economic security and political engagement for these groups that would have been impossible otherwise (see Chapter 7). Another essential experience for groups like Janu’s was that although the state eventually acted in its favor, the initial announcement of reforms was an abstract promise of rights yet to be fulfilled. Ultimately, the

struggle of claiming rights on the land transformed into an effort that necessitated the engagement of mediators to assert their claims on the land.

5.5. Impact of Land Reforms in Pat Feeder Canal Command Area

Although so far, I have narrated a story of two kinship groups along with stories of tenants and tenant unions from the archives on Bhutto's land reforms in Nasirabad, the impact of these reforms, broadly speaking, was concentrated and limited to areas where state-resumed land from the Ayub era existed. Such a concentration of area where land redistribution took place created pockets of settlement in Nasirabad, which diverged from existing settlements in the area regarding land relations and social structure. This was most clearly visible in the case of the former Pat Feeder sub-division, where most of such land was redistributed successfully. Today, most of this area lies in the eastern parts of Naseerabad District and the northeastern and northwestern parts of Jaffarabad District.⁵⁷

A new type of landlord emerged in these areas, commonly known as *Baar-e-waal*, a term that refers to the small size of land these landlords own. As such landlords were concentrated in certain areas, one notices high levels of heterogeneity in tribal and ethnic composition in settlement patterns. This diversity is an effect of the small size of lands *Baar-e-waal zamindar* owns, plus the geographical contiguity of their settlement. The area is home to various tribal groups, including the Bangulzai, Neechari, Jamote, Lango, Magsi, Manjhu, Marri, Gola, Umrani, Dombki, and Lehri.⁵⁸

In contrast to these areas, mainly under the command of the Pat Feeder Canal, other areas of present-day Jaffarabad District, which was carved out of the historic Nasirabad, show increased levels of tribal homogeneity in settlement patterns and increased levels of land ownership inequality. Consider, for instance, Usta Muhammad, the capital of today's Sohbatpur District. It has a high concentration of Khosa, who are one of the largest landlords in the whole of canal-irrigated Balochistan. This area is irrigated by canals extended during

⁵⁷ The old Nasirabad district of the 1970s has since been subdivided into three distinct districts due to the area's population increase: Naseerabad, Jaffarabad, and Sohbatpur. Presently, the Pat Feeder Canal command areas are divided among these three new districts.

⁵⁸ Umrani and Lehri are numerically the dominant groups in the area. These tribes had lands in this area even before colonial rule began (Government of India 1930). However, their lands became canal-irrigated only in post-independence period. That is why they own more land than other tribes who are settled in this area, who migrated there in the 1960s and 1970s.

the colonial period, including the famous Desert Canal, which has branches like Manjhuti, Uch, and Shahi Wah. The Naseer Branch of the Pat Feeder Canal exclusively irrigates the lands of the Khosa landlords.

Moving towards western Jaffarabad, one also observes increased levels of tribal homogeneity, especially in the areas that the Begari and Khir Thar Canal irrigate. The former was built before the colonial period, and the latter under colonial rule in 1932. Here, one finds the Jamali tribe to be the dominant tribal group in terms of demographic and political factors. Although other tribal groups also settled in this area, like the Bugtis and Marris, during the colonial period in the 1930s, these areas do not have the same levels of heterogeneity that one finds under the Pat Feeder Canal command. In addition to social homogeneity, this area also differs regarding landownership patterns. For instance, the largest landlords of the canal-irrigated Balochistan are in this area, mostly Jamalis.

The differences do not stop at tribal composition and land ownership patterns in these areas; they also involve a very important variation in terms of the social structure of villages in these different areas. The new *Baar-e-waal* villages, for instance, have high levels of social homogeneity, which means that those who live in the village mainly belong to the same section or sub-section of a tribe and are patrilineal kin groups. The term villagers use is *paaro*, or a branch of the tribe they belong to. The term *paaro* is commonly used to denote distinct patrilineal lineages within the same tribe. This homogeneity means no other groups from different tribes reside in these villages. This makes them homogenous units in terms of social identity⁵⁹. In this manner, although such villages are situated in areas where tribal heterogeneity exists, they show high levels of internal social homogeneity.

This contrasts with old villages of big landlords, where tribal homogeneity in the broader sense of settlement structure exists. However, internally, such villages have social stratification between those who own land and those who are landless, often overlapping with the tribal and ethnic identities. These villages resemble the villages of Punjab, which are characterized by land inequality among villagers and social division, as noted by Alavi (1972).

⁵⁹ For instance, there emerged villages exclusively comprising members of a specific *paaro* or branch of the Balochi-speaking Umrans, as well as villages solely inhabited by a section of Manjhus of Sindhi speakers.

Recent government data on land ownership patterns in the Jaffarabad and Naseerabad districts support these on-ground observations that I have presented (see Chart 6 below). It also shows that these reforms significantly impacted areas under the Pat Feeder Canal command. The available data shows that lands with the highest proportion of “owner-operated,” those who own and till the land themselves, is around 76% of the total in the present-day Naseerabad district, which was in the past called Pat Feeder sub-division. In contrast, the Jaffarabad district shows 66% of the land being operated on tenancy relations, which means higher levels percentage of landless class and thus inequality in terms of landownership (“Agricultural Census: Tabulation Balochistan Province Report” (2010)). In Naseerabad, land on tenancy relation is only 17% of the total land, which shows the difference between these two districts of canal-irrigated Balochistan (Ibid.).

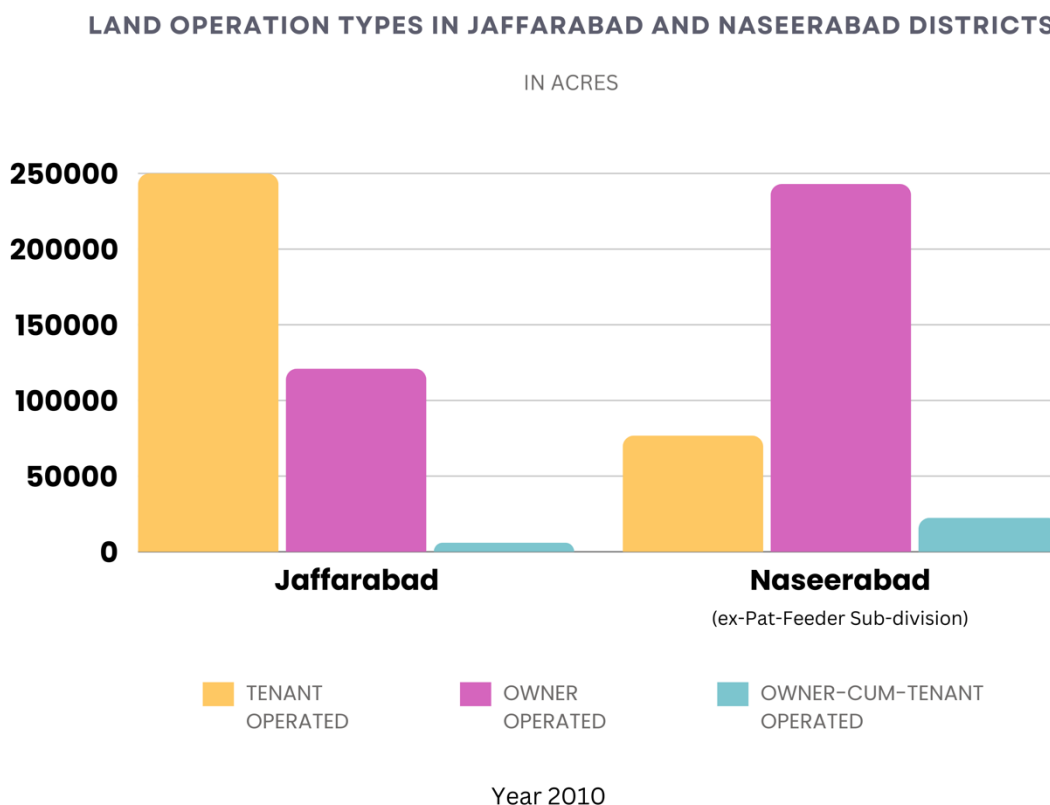


Chart 6: Land Ownership in the Jaffarabad and Naseerabad Districts.

(Source: “Agricultural Census: Tabulation Balochistan Province Report” (2010)).

This highlights the legacy of colonial and post-colonial state interventions in defining land ownership in the canal-irrigated Balochistan. To recap, the lands redistributed successfully were those resumed by the state in 1959 and leased during the 1960s under the category of

state-resumed land. Colonial authorities initially allocated these lands in the early twentieth century to various “landless tribes” for their services (see Chapter 3). Initially, smaller tribes like the Bajkanis were dispossessed by the colonial regime, and later, the Bugtis, described as “colonists,” were targeted by the post-colonial state in the 1959 reforms. These lands were then leased to *khatedars* in the 1960s and eventually redistributed to the peasant cultivators in the 1970s. The evidence above suggests that although many traditional large landowners retained their extensive landholdings, the smaller landholders of leased state-resumed land were effectively removed from their role as middlemen.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the center-province conflicts of the 1970s, particularly the dismissal of the NAP government, influenced local elites in Nasirabad as it expanded the scope and depth of patronage networks. The integration of the “history from below” approach with an analysis of high-level political developments showed that the tumultuous national and provincial tensions reverberated in Nasirabad in complex and sometimes unpredictable ways.

The case of Mir Taj Mohammad Khan Jamali illustrated how local elites adapted by adopting non-ideological, pragmatic politics to secure state resources and power. His decision to switch parties and subsequent inclusion in Bhutto’s cabinet showed Bhutto’s role in refining a patronage-based model of domination for Balochistan. Significantly, the extension of the adult franchise opened new avenues for new social groups, as demonstrated by Janu Khan’s experience of leveraging his relationship with Zafarullah Khan Jamali to claim land rights. This suggests that what Wilder (1999) later termed the “democratization of patronage” was already unfolding in parts of Balochistan during the 1970s.

Meanwhile, Bhutto’s selective application of land reforms further transformed land relations and settlement structures in Nasirabad as he sought to “win hearts and minds” in a province viewed as politically hostile. Although these measures sometimes benefited tenants, they also made clear that claiming promised rights often required intermediaries or those with *rasai* (influence). All of these developments show how the 1970s served as a critical juncture in the evolution of patronage politics in Balochistan.

6. Negotiating for State Resources: Village-Level Political Organization and Participation

6.1. Introduction

In his analysis of rural politics in Punjab in the 1970s, Alavi (1973) contends that understanding peasant societies requires moving beyond analyzing a single specialized “political structure.” Instead, one must examine economic and kinship relationships central to the political process (Alavi 1973, 52). Given the interdependence of such processes, he contended that the notions of “function” and “autonomy” within specialized structures carry methodological implications and have limited and unsatisfactory analytical focus (Ibid.). This chapter builds upon Alavi’s framework of examining the interdependence of relationships in shaping political processes at the local level. It will undertake a detailed analysis of structured relations in Village A, created in Nasirabad in 1976 due to the land reforms and canal construction. The chapter will answer the question of how land reforms, social homogeneity, and kinship-based political structures shape political organization and resource distribution in Village A and what these dynamics reveal about the evolving role of patronage and informal institutions in *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* villages in canal-irrigated Balochistan during the 1980s and 1990s?

Village A consisted of two branches (*paaro*) of the same Rind tribe settled there with comparable landholdings, with no landless population. This social and economic uniformity influenced political organization, as villagers formed horizontally structured vote blocs, in contrast to the more common vertical patron-client ties seen in rural Punjab and other parts of South Asia (Alavi 1973; 1974; Rouse 1988; Breman 1989; Ruud 1999). Alongside kinship and land relations, proximity to similarly structured villages generated additional networks of mutual obligations through the *nindagh pharagh* or socializing principle. This created *ilaqadari*, or neighborly relations and networks for social cooperation and conflict resolution among neighbors. This enhanced the autonomy of villagers from external patrons or state intervention (see Section 6.2. below).

During this period, like the 1960s and 1970s, broader forces, such as the influx of US aid during the Afghan war to Pakistan (Wilder 1999, 139-140), expanded what Soifer (2008) calls the state’s “infrastructural power” through which it channeled resources via patron-

client networks at the local level. The pursuit of state resources by villagers in this period rested on kin-based vote bloc organizations with their kin leaders as mediators. Resource distribution in these vote blocs depended on the strength of kin ties (*zor*) and a moral obligation to fairness (*insaaf*). In addition, *Mashwaro khanag* (consultation) provided a forum for collective decision-making for the vote-bloc members. The ability of the vote bloc leader to cultivate ties with powerful patrons and maintain kin loyalties was equally pertinent for ensuring access to state resources for the members of the bloc (see Section 6.5 below).

6.2. Birth of a *Baar-e-waal Zamindar Halkh* and its Web of Relations

After Bhutto's land reforms, two kinship groups, led by Janu Khan and Sohbat Khan, who had previously been tenants, became owners of the land they cultivated. Their cluster of settlements officially became villages under the homestead reforms around 1976. Many villages with similar social structures and land relations came into existence, concentrated in certain parts of Nasirabad, thus making them contiguous. Such villages today are categorized by villagers as *Baar-e-waal Zamindar Halkh*⁶⁰. There was a high concentration, mainly in the areas under the command of the Pat Feeder Canal (see Chapter 5). These areas were partially already settled by tribes who relied on *khushkhaba* or rain-fed irrigation. However, there was a significant influx of newcomers in the 1960s and 1970s. Some migrants spoke Brauhi and Balochi, while others spoke Sindhi and Punjabi. Due to the migration, the area's population increase was so significant that it necessitated the elevation of Nasirabad to the status of a district in Balochistan (Government of Pakistan 1981, 9).

6.2.1. *Yakh Jora Yakh Handh* or One Pair One Share: Equal Division of Private Property

Bhutto's land reforms granted land rights to certain tenant groups in Nasirabad; however, these reforms did not ensure equitable land division within tenant groups. As discussed in the previous chapter, kin groups frequently worked jointly on lands. For instance, Janu and his kin group of seven *joras* (couples) received 75 acres. Initially, this land was allocated unequally among the group's members (Rustam Khan 2020). The Assistant Land Commissioner's decision (File No. 6/1974-LR, 1974, 35) mentioned only the names of the two kin leaders and omitted any mention of the kin group members. When these cases reached the Revenue Board in Quetta, the land had reportedly been unevenly distributed

⁶⁰ *Halkh* is a Balochi word for village.

within the kin group⁶¹ (Hooran Khatun 2020; Rustam Khan 2020). Nevertheless, following the official decision, the kinship groups themselves collectively redistributed the land using the principle of “*yakh jora yakh handh*” or “one pair, one share,” whereby each *jora* (or couple) was allotted an equal portion of land (Rahmu Khan 2020).

This egalitarian redistribution suggests a continuity with older tribal customs, which traditionally focused on relatively fair division of resources among tribesmen (Rustam Khan 2020; Paryal Khan 2020). Yet the reforms also introduced a novel dimension: the importance of private property. Ali (2020) observes a parallel process in *Hashtnagar*. He notes that Bhutto’s reforms “were premised on the confirmation of patriarchal, individual rights in liberal private property” (Ibid., 283). The same dynamic was evident in Village A, where households headed by men became formal owners under these state-led reforms.

This shift illustrates a broader argument advanced by Alavi (1973). He maintains that the internal structure of peasant societies is closely entwined with their relationship to the state. As the state legitimizes and enforces property rights, it becomes a key axis of social differentiation. A “law and order” system regulates both property and commodity exchanges, which also shape local hierarchies (Alavi 1973, 37). In Village A, the introduction of private property led to similar processes and differentiations. Although kinship groups initially distributed land in a manner that adhered to tribal customs, private ownership of land embedded them in state-imposed legal and economic structures. In so doing, state intervention reinforced its own authority while also redefining local practices.

Over time, land ownership in Village A evolved as a fusion of traditional tribal codes and private property principles. Equal distribution among *joras* was complemented by patriarchal norms of inheritance. For instance, upon the death of a male head of a household, the land was divided among his male heirs. Widows retained a right to subsistence from the land’s produce during their lifetime, but daughters did not inherit (Hooran Khatun 2020; Paryal Khan 2020). In this way, private land ownership perpetuated patriarchal hierarchies and gendered asymmetries in property rights.

⁶¹ This detail could not be verified through the perusal of documents from the Revenue Board, yet it remains a significant narrative that reveals much about the workings of kinship relations in the village and the values associated with them.

These shifting property arrangements also gradually altered the division of labor. Initially, communal farming practices, such as assisting kin members with harvests, remained common. Over time, however, they grew irregular. As one elder put it, “*waqt phajiya hr kasse wadhi zameen ae zimadar bhi shuda*,” meaning “with time, each individual took responsibility for their own land” (Hooran Khatun 2020). Eventually, *joras* with formal property rights became independent labor units, reflecting the broader move toward individualized agricultural production.

In the immediate aftermath of the reforms, almost all villagers cultivated their own land, with children from each *jora* providing labor. These family units functioned as peasant proprietors who engaged in agriculture mainly for subsistence and, in a limited manner, for the market. For example, wheat, a common during the *Rabi* season, was grown mainly for household consumption, with any surplus sold in the market. Meanwhile, rice and onions were cultivated for sale as well as for personal use (Hooran Khatun 2020; Rustam Khan 2020; Rahmu Khan 2020).

The two main kinship groups in Village A displayed slight disparities in landholdings. Households under Sohbat Khan tended to own slightly more acreage than those under Janu (see Charts 7 and 8). However, this difference was not so significant as to decisively alter the local power balance. Overall, land was relatively evenly distributed among households, and notably, there was no landless population during this period.

Average Land Ownership of a Family of Kinship Groups in Village A in 1976



Chart 7: Average Land Ownership of a Household in Village A

Land Distribution Between Kinship Groups in Village A in 1976

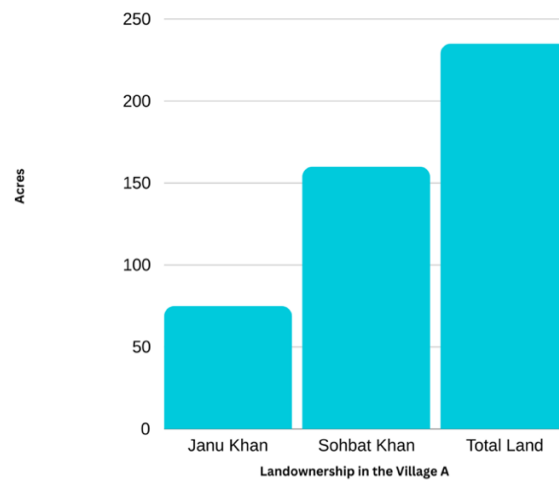


Chart 8: Total Land Ownership of the Kinship Groups in Village A

6.2.2. Kinship Relations: Patrilineality, Homogeneity, and Cooperation

Although households became the primary labor unit for agriculture in Village A, kinship ties continued to shape the village's social organization. These ties remained the key framework for cooperation among kinship group members, particularly in their engagements with the other kinship group in Village A and neighboring villages (see Section 6.2.3 below).

Moreover, villagers leveraged these kinship connections to interact with local politicians competing for office (see Section 6.5 below).

A core element of this kin-centered structure was the principle of *braberi* or equality among kin. As discussed earlier, equal land division among members illustrated how *braberi* guided the land distribution process. Yet, this commitment to egalitarianism did not eliminate internal hierarchies. For example, during Bhutto's land reforms, kinship group members held a *mashwaro* (consultation) to grant extra land to their leader, Janu Khan, to recognize his role as an elder during a "moment of crisis." According to several accounts, Janu declined the offer out of humility and a sense of shared responsibility (Hooran Khatun 2020; Rustam Khan 2020). his narrative reveals the delicate balance between a sense of equality among kin members, respect for the elevated status of the elder, and recognition of the qualities that define an ideal elder.

Village elders employ terms like *jind* and *wadhi*, which mean "one's own", to define the boundaries of their kin group. These relationships are broadly referred to as *rishtadari*. Typically, a kinship group traces descent from an immediate male ancestor, spanning no more than three or four generations. This pattern echoes Pherson's (1966) findings on Marri Baloch, who used similar categories for group identification (34). A patrilineal logic underpins such groups, explaining why property inheritance through male heirs became standard practice and intra-village marriages became increasingly significant over time.⁶² This dynamic is comparable to Alavi's (1972 a) observations in rural Punjab, where *biraderi* members closely regulated marriages to safeguard kinship cohesion (7).

The two kinship groups in Village A descended from different immediate male ancestors, often referred to as separate *paraos* or branches (Masti Khan 2020). However, they still shared a distant ancestor from the same *quom* or tribe. This distant kinship resembles Eglar's (1960) understanding of *baradari*. He describes it as "all men who can trace their relationship to a common ancestor, no matter how remote." (Ibid., 75). In practice, however, this broader affiliation had little day-to-day impact on building close social ties between the two groups. Instead, Alavi's (1972a) concept of the "*biraderi* of recognition", adapted from Mayer, better

⁶² Initially, affine relationships within the kinship group were not of great significance, primarily due to the small size of kinship groups in relation to the large size of households. This meant that intermarriages among kin members were less competitive. For example, Janu Khan had six sons who married daughters from different households within his kinship group (Hooran Khatun 2020; Rustam Khan 2020). Similarly, Sohbat Khan had five daughters who married into different households within the same kinship group (Rahmu Khan 2020).

captures Village A's kinship dynamics. This idea shows that not only descent but also mutual acknowledgment among group members were important for identification (Ibid., 3). Hence, although both groups belonged to the same *quom*, the primary reference point for identity in Village A was *jind*, denoting those bound by direct blood and marriage ties.

Alavi (1972a) also posits that *biraderi* solidarity is most pronounced among independent peasant proprietors. They typically practice endogamy and organize under *biraderi* councils (Ibid., 3). Although Village A did not feature a large-scale *biraderi* network, certain parallels existed. Both kinship groups consisted of independent peasant proprietors who had established informal councils where male leaders settled internal disputes (Haibat Khan 2020; Hakim Khan 2020; Rustam Khan 2020). These councils sometimes assume broader political roles, as later sections will illustrate.

Importantly, since two kinship groups belonged to the same *quom*, there was equality in terms of social status, which facilitated intermarriages between them over time. Despite this, the village remains physically segregated: one group inhabits the *aggi wero* (front yard) and the other the *puthi wero* (back yard). This spatial separation has persisted through the years and was also evident during fieldwork in 2020.

Another facet of kinship involves mutual financial responsibilities. For instance, when a member of a kinship group passes away, it is customary for each household to contribute both financially and physically to organize the funeral. This financial contribution is known as *uzar*, which involves all married male kin members sharing the costs of the funeral arrangements equally. Similarly, for marriages, married male kin members are expected to provide financial contributions called *pahaat*. This follows the same principle of shared financial responsibility. (Rahmu Khan 2020; Rustam Khan 2020).

There is an important distinction between marriages and funerals regarding kinship participation. In the case of marriages, attendance is contingent upon receiving an invitation, known as a *sadd*, from the host household. In contrast, attendance at funerals is discretionary and does not require an invitation from the host household, as it is based on the choice of those belonging to the same kinship group. If someone does not receive an invitation to a marriage or chooses not to attend a funeral, it is often perceived as a sign of a break in kinship ties. This highlights the critical role that ceremonies have in maintaining and

reinforcing kinship relationships. Furthermore, the obligations toward kin can be considered voluntary since the decision not to extend an invitation for a marriage or to attend a funeral ultimately lies with the individual households.

It is important to note that all kin relations of a kin member were not seen as similar despite the principle of *braberi* (equality) among all kins in a broader sense. For instance, Kinship through the mother's side, commonly referred to as *masaat*, while the father's side called *saotar*, have historically been differentiated in their significance. The latter assumes more centrality than the former in life of a kin member. Likewise, relationships with a brother's children, known as *birarзад*, and those with a sister's children, called *ghuwarзад* are differentiated (Hooran Khatun 2020). Particularly, ties through the father and brothers are deemed more significant than the mother's and sisters' side.

Now, moving to the process of choosing a kin leader or *mazan*. Historically, it was chosen based on two principles: ascriptive and selective. The ascriptive principle involves selecting the eldest sane son of the previous leader, whereas the selective principle focuses on the potential leader's qualities. Important traits for a leader include being just, addressing the group's needs, and demonstrating bravery (Paryal Khan 2020; Rustam Khan 2020).

6.2.3. Neighborly Networks of Sociality and Conflict Resolution: *Ilaqadari* Relations

The new villages in Nasirabad, lying contiguously, gave rise to neighborly networks rooted in the ethics of *ilaqadari*. The term *ilaqadari* is derived from the Balochi word *ilaaqa* or the Sindhi word *ilaaqo*, meaning "area." The suffix "*-dari*" signifies ownership or authority. Thus, *ilaqadari* refers to local authority or influence over a specific area.

Older villagers fondly recalled how their elders were embedded into the *ilaaqo* (area). This embeddedness was facilitated by *nindagh pharagh* (sitting and standing), which refers to socializing. Through *nindagh pharagh*, villagers became part of each other's life events, such as birth and death. Such participation was essential for maintaining and strengthening social bonds among neighbors. These villages were geographically contiguous, providing perfect conditions for *nindagh pharagh* in *ilaaqo*. Typically, the responsibility for attending these events lies with the leader and elders of a particular kinship group. Essentially, obligations

towards neighbors had a collective nature in that kinship groups were expected to be present (Rahmu Khan 2020).

Although *ilaqadari* relations required reciprocal exchanges of social obligations among neighbors, they also proved handy for resolving conflicts among them. The older practice of *faislo*, meaning a decision on a conflict, was adopted by the *ilaqadars* or neighbors as a means of conflict resolution. In the past, tribal elders led councils for conflict resolution; however, local respectable or *motabir* became the key members of these councils instead. Given the tribal and ethnic diversity in settlement structures in the area, tribal leaders became less significant in local conflict resolution, which shifted to local respectable, who gained authority and responsibility. (Masti Khan 2020).

In cases of conflict, the involved parties had the right to select the composition of the council that would decide their case. Once the respectables were called upon to give a *faislo* or decision, the conflicting parties were obligated to accept the decision. This demonstrates that specific rules, norms, and trust facilitated these structures in resolving conflicts. Thus, such networks had characteristics that have been seen as being necessary for social capital (Putnam 1994; Van Deth 2003). The respectables on the council were required to be from the *ilaaqo*; their involvement signified trust in the neighbors, and once they made a decision, the conflicting parties were expected to accept it. Such councils of elders enjoyed respect and authority within the *ilaaqo*. They served as important means of intra-village dispute resolution and were much appreciated for their knowledge and wisdom. As one elder said, “They knew what the problem was and thus could solve it.” (Paryal Khan 2020). There are similarities between this council and the *jirga* discussed in Chapter 3; however, a key difference exists in that the conflicting parties and council members did not belong to the same tribe but were required to be from the same area, which reflected the realities of new villages in Nasirabad.

The kinship leader of the parties involved in conflicts was expected to represent their group. Although such council meetings occurred at predetermined times and locations, social events often served as important occasions for locals to raise issues that needed to be resolved. During these social gatherings, the authority of council elders was further reinforced. Both social events and *faislo* typically took place in a designated village *otaq* or communal space. In this way, this practice was integrated into the social fabric of the area.

Beyond their social functions and conflict resolution, the *ilaqadari* networks also had an economic function. This was inscribed in the requirement of financial contributions from neighbors to social events. Similar to the practices among the kinship groups, like *uzar* for funerals and *pahaat* for marriages, they were expected from respective kinship group leaders residing in the *ilaqo*. These contributions mirrored practices observed in other contexts, such as “*vartan bhanji*”, observed among *biradaeris* in Punjab by Alavi (1972a). It was a practice of exchange rooted in fraternal ties (Ibid., 3). However, a significant difference distinguishes Nasirabad: unlike the fraternal ties in Punjab, the relationships were based on mutual and voluntary obligations grounded in shared residency rather than common ancestry. This distinction shows the unique social and settlement structure of Nasirabad.

Certain functions of *ilaqadari* networks resemble the case of migrant associations Chatterjee (2004) describes in his work. He discusses how slum-dwelling migrants from rural India formed associations after coming to Calcutta. These associations facilitated internal dispute resolution among migrants. They also supported their interactions with the state and other powerful actors, including the police and political parties (Chatterjee 2004, 54–55). The kinship and *ilaqadari* networks in the case of Nasirabad similarly were central in resolving conflicts at the village and local levels. Over time, these networks have evolved into more organized structures that facilitate patron-politician interactions (see Chapter 7 for more details). An important difference distinguishes the networks in Village A from those examined by Chatterjee. The associations by migrants in Calcutta were formed around an act of illegality: a collective occupation of public property (Ibid.). This act served as the foundation for the formation and identity of a particular group. In contrast, the *ilaqadari* networks in Village A originated from the need for migrants to create new social networks with social, economic, and political functions.

6.3. Expanding State, Development, and Elections in Village A

Like other newly established villages, Village A lacked the basic infrastructure typically found in older villages. These new villages had only elementary facilities. These included access to canal water and dirt roads to nearby market towns for selling agricultural produce. The village did not have a school, dispensary, or even access to electricity or gas. (Paryal Khan 2020; Masti Khan 2020).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the village experienced development of basic infrastructure and facilities. This included roads, bridges, schools, medical facilities, and electrification (Ibid.). Weingrod (1968) has argued that development is contingent upon the expansion of the state. He writes that “development implies the establishment of new national or regional organizations, the initiation of new agricultural and industrial programs, the recruitment of cadres of workers, the commitment of huge capital funds, etc.” accomplishing these developmental goals necessitates a specific state structure to oversee and execute these tasks” (Ibid., 383). Under Weingrod’s framework, state expansion is intertwined and symbiotic with infrastructure development.

The financial viability of such investments in development was possibly connected with the geopolitical context of the time. Thanks partly to Pakistan’s strategic role as a critical ally of the United States against the Soviets in Afghanistan, it had stable access to global financial institutions. Wilder (1999) argues that there was relative prosperity in Pakistan in the 1980s. This was due to “foreign aid due to the Soviet Invasion in Afghanistan, increased remittances, good harvests, increasing drug money.” (Ibid., 139–40). Similarly, Baxter (1991) writes that “because of the invasion [Soviet] [...] President Carter referred to Pakistan as a “frontline” state and set in motion the steps that led to [...] economic and military assistance as well as the provision of aid to the Afghan *mujahidin* (rebels, or, literally, holy warriors) during the Reagan administration.” (Ibid., 479). This geopolitical reality should be seen as an important context that allowed the state to expand public employment and development spending in areas like Nasirabad when the villagers got jobs and basic services in this period (Paryal Khan 2020; Masti Khan 2020).

Classical literature has argued that state expansion leads to homogenization and the standardization of society and politics. For instance, consider the influential work of Weber (1976) on France. His work showed how the homogenization of French society unfolded in the 19th century with the expansion of the state. This was evident in the construction of roads and railroads and changes in conscription practices in bureaucratic employment, such as among schoolteachers throughout the country. These processes were critical in unifying societal structures across France. In this manner, it made it possible for the state to turn the peasants into Frenchmen (E. Weber 1976).

Based on Weber's work, Soifer (2008) analyzed state building in Latin America. While examining the state capacity, he considered factors such as fiscal resources and the employment of teachers. Soifer measured the state's "infrastructural power" by examining indicators like military and police presence, taxation levels, and public primary education. He argued that the state's role in managing schools, defining educational content, and collecting taxes showed its "infrastructural power," which was subsequently reflected in its ability to influence and integrate various aspects of societal life (Ibid., 247). Building on Weber's work, Soifer shows that state expansion is important in homogenizing and integrating society.

The case of Nasirabad will demonstrate that it experienced state expansion in terms of its "infrastructural power," which was defined by increased development projects and public employment (see sections below). Despite this expansion, no societal homogenization took place. Instead, it mainly served an integrative function, a concept that Soifer also deals with in his work on state expansion. The local population was integrated into the state structure by increasing public employment. However, homogenization and standardization remained slow (more on this in the next Chapter). This slow homogenization process was mainly due to the prevalent patron-client relationships in the area, which significantly shaped the distribution of public jobs and developmental projects. This, in turn, partially reinforced social divisions along with political mobilization. So, in the 1980s and 1990s, socially differentiated identities persisted in the village rather than identifying with an abstract idea of a nation.

6.3.1. The Value and Function of Public Jobs:

A primary school and a dispensary were built in the village under General Zia's military dictatorship (Bismal Khan 2020; Paryal Khan 2020; Masti Khan 2020). Not only did these facilities provide educational and health services, but they also created employment opportunities for villagers. This included positions such as teachers, headmasters, dispensers, nurses, and gatekeepers. It also created construction jobs for villagers who began contracting and providing labor. The importance of such facilities extended beyond their primary functions as described by the state; they were vital for employing the villagers as demographic and technological changes were rendering many without jobs (Ibid.).

As the villagers received small parcels of land under Land Reforms, the demand for public sector jobs naturally increased. Agriculture alone was insufficient to sustain the financial

security and growing needs of peasant proprietors expanding families. This situation echoes the findings of Breman's (1989) work on Gujarat in India in this period, in which similar insecurity among small landlords intensified concerns about social decline. As a result, such concerns increased the search for alternative livelihoods. Similarly, in the case of Village A, as kinship groups expanded and the limited land was divided among descendants, villagers were compelled to seek employment outside farming. This resulted in two primary options: migration or securing a government job locally. During these years, the state emerged as the principal employer outside of agriculture, which explains its increasing presence and influence on village life (Paryal Khan 2020; Mastin Khan 2020).

In her work on India, Chandra (2004) has argued that the political significance of even a few government jobs per village is substantial. She attributes this to the fact that each job affects not only the recipient but also their dependents. This explains why the villagers saw such jobs with high esteem. When government jobs began opening in Village A, there was an informal agreement among two kinship groups and their patron that no outsider would be eligible for a job in their village. In this way, they ensured that all job openings were reserved for members of the two competing kinship groups (Rustam Khan 2020; Rahmu Khan 2020). Consequently, employment prospects were significantly shaped by one's kinship group affiliation and the group's relationships (*talukat*) with the local patron politician (see charts 5–7 at the end of the chapter). Over the years, the fortunes of these kinship groups have fluctuated, which have primarily depended on whether their supported patron-politician (a) won elections, (b) became part of the governing coalition, and (c) fulfilled his promises. The likelihood of accessing state resources increased when all of the conditions were met. However, these chances diminished if one or more conditions failed to materialize.

This situation reveals the significance of the relationship between the villagers and their patrons in facilitating the former's access to state resources. Chandra (2004) observes that "the essential element influencing voting behavior in India is not simply the dominance of the state, but the ability of those who control the state to exercise discretion in the implementation of state policy." (116). Similarly, in the case of Pakistan, such an approach of targeted and selective distribution of public resources has been scrutinized and analyzed by S. A. M. Ali (2020). She argues that the priority for politicians, and, by extension, political parties, remains the distribution of patronage through targeted goods. These goods often include employment opportunities exclusively for citizens who pledge their electoral support

to patrons (Ibid., 182). This shows how the strategic allocation of state resources is important for reproducing the political power of patrons and parties.

6.4. Contours of Patronage System

Weingrod (1968) argues that “patron-client ties can be seen to arise within a state structure in which authority is dispersed and state activity limited in scope, and in which considerable separation exists between the levels of village, city, and state.” (383). Similarly, it has been argued that patronage links bureaucracies, traditional political systems, urban centers, rural areas, and governments and citizens; paradoxically, this contributes to the modernization of “developing” states (Piliavsky 2014, 7). These observations apply to the case of Nasirabad, where patronage was the primary link between the local population and the state during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Interestingly, this dynamic persisted even after the introduction of universal suffrage. However, the adult franchise introduced an additional layer to the patronage network that connected the local to the national. For instance, by the late 1980s and 1990s, elections were redefining how state resources were made accessible at the local level. In pursuit of state power, the local political elites, such as the Jamalis, utilized state resources to create a patronage network of client voters. Elections increasingly became a mechanism through which access to state resources for villagers became possible, with patrons as intermediaries. The politicians, in reciprocation, increasingly distributed state resources selectively.

6.4.1. Understanding *Talukat*

As shown in Chapter 5, tenant migrants like Janu and Sohbat Khan actively pursued *talukat* or connections with influential individuals, whether patron politicians or a *khatedar* of state-leased land. Such connections held immense significance for villagers and went beyond the political sphere to include social and economic spheres. So, a good relationship with a neighbor was also a *taluk* worth having. However, *taluk*, in the political sphere, acquired a peculiar form. Such a connection was nurtured and reinforced through mutual social obligations between the patron and the client; for instance, the latter was expected to visit the patron on *Eid*. In reciprocation, the patron was expected to visit the wedding and funeral events in his client's village in person or by delegating such responsibility (Paryal Khan 2020). This practice was based on the code of *nindagh pharagh*. When it came to the financial aspect of these relations, clients did not, for instance, make monetary contributions

when attending the wedding of their patron's child. Instead, their participation in the event sufficed as a symbol of respect they showed towards their patron. However, the patron was supposed to contribute financially when attending the wedding ceremony of his client's son. A patron could not merely rely on the symbolic gesture of presence at the wedding ceremony; a financial contribution was an expectation (Haibat Khan 2020; Hakim Khan 2020; Rustam Khan 2020). This represents the roles and expectations characteristic of such political relations. It encapsulates the obligations and expectations that define unequal political relationships. This supports Powell's (1970) characterization of such relationships as an exchange between individuals of unequal socioeconomic status (412). A critical factor to remember is that the cessation of social obligations between a client and patron signaled the termination of their relationship.

Beyond these social and financial aspects, elections emerged as a main instrument for developing and reproducing *talukat* (connections) between a patron and client. Elections have become an important event that provides kinship leaders with opportunities to solidify their authority by securing resources for their kin and vote bloc members. The case of Janu exemplifies how regular participation in elections to develop *talukat* influences the fortunes of clients and may strengthen patron-client relations. Today, kin members of Janu frequently recall how he effectively leveraged his connections to secure employment for his kinship group members. He obtained jobs for them as school teachers and dispensary staff during the 1980s. Additionally, Janu secured coveted employment opportunities for his son and nephew at the newly established government bank in the area during Jamali's tenure as the Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture, and Cooperatives in Zia's Cabinet from 1981 to 1985 (see Charts 9 & 10 below). Later, when Jamali served as Chief Minister of Balochistan and was a member of the Senate in the 1990s, Janu successfully secured even more jobs for his kin. This was all possible as Jamali was in power at the provincial and federal levels and kept his promises, thus making him a good patron as the villagers fondly remember him (Rustam Khan 2020; Haibat Khan 2020).

The story of Janu and his kin underlines the centrality of *talukat* (relationships) in accessing state resources. Village elders often describe Janu as a "*taluqdari ae mahir aa*," meaning he was an expert in cultivating relationships (Hakim Khan 2020). Despite his modest beginnings as a head of the kin group, which consisted of peasant proprietors, Janu was able to nurture *talukat* with Jamali. He could do this by actively engaging in the *ilaaqo*'s social and political

life. I was told he was there for everyone's happiness and sorrow (*shad-o-gham*). This supposedly enhanced his respect in the area and his value to the patron. Moreover, he commanded the respect of most of his kin members, who viewed him as a just leader. Janu and Jamali's relationship is often cited as an example of a mutually beneficial alliance. Both men are remembered as *kharo* (honest), *siddha* (straightforward), and *pakko* (strong). This characterization reflects the traits that underline successful leaders in the *ilaago*, where personal integrity, directness, and strength are highly valued. (Ibid.)

Furthermore, Janu and his kin member's story shows the implications of successful patron-client relationships. By securing jobs and resources for his kinship group, Janu improved his status within the village and secured cohesion among his kin by providing economic stability. Figures like Janu bridged the gap between villagers and the broader state apparatus, which could be dealt with and negotiated with through patrons who assumed the role of gatekeepers.

This case also sheds light on the role of elections in reproducing patronage networks. For patrons like Zafar Ullah Khan Jamali, having good relationships with kinship groups and vote bloc leaders like Janu was essential for mobilizing electoral support. Such relationships were fundamental to maintaining and sustaining his political power. Individuals like Janu, as clients, organized voters for patrons like Jamali and, as leaders of kin and vote blocs, attempted to deliver tangible benefits to their kin. This enabled such leaders to secure their social and political standing. As the villagers recount the patron-client relations of the past, these narratives of good relationships or *juaaen taluk* of the past show how elections were central to creating and renewing clientele relationships (Bismal Khan 2020). Patrons like Jamali were critical in connecting the locals with the provincial and national level of state apparatus.

While Janu's story shows how successful clientele relations help access state resources, Sohbat's story tells us the fate of those who are clients of politicians who fail to win or become part of the governing coalitions at the provincial level. To better understand Sohbat's case, it is helpful to remember, as discussed in Chapter 5, that he and his kin lost some of their land claims in the 1970s when Zafar Khan Jamali intervened in favor of their rival kin, his clients, namely Janu and his kin. In the wake of this, Sohbat Khan aligned himself with the Jamali's rivals, namely Khosa politicians. However, this alliance proved less fruitful than Janu's relationship with Jamali. As Jamali became an important politician at the provincial

and national level, all the resources he made available to the villagers in Village A were exclusively for his clients, viz. Janu Khan and his kin. This explains why Sohbat secured significantly fewer jobs for his kin members (see Chart 11 below). Janu's descendants frequently cite this disparity as evidence of Sohbat's perceived ineffectiveness as a leader. They argue that despite the numerical strength of his group, he failed to deliver the same level of opportunities to his kin members (Rustam Khan 2020).

Sohbat's inability to secure comparable resources highlights the risks inherent in patronage relationships, especially in clientele relationships with patrons who either fail to obtain significant ministerial positions or end up in opposition, which was the case with Khosa politicians he supported. His descendants, while referring to Sohbat's inability to access as many state resources as Janu and his kin, maintain that it is a matter of luck or *naseeb ae haal* (Saifal Khan 2020). In this way, they express that even good *talukat* (relations) do not guarantee success in accessing state resources. For instance, when the patron fails to become part of the government or loses elections, the good relationship does not translate into accessing state resources or development funds. Essentially, the case of Sohbat represents the exclusive and precarious nature of patronage politics (Rahmu Khan 2020). In addition, these differences between the two kinship group-based vote blocs in accessing state resources reveal that variables at play that influence their ability to access state resources go beyond the question of competitive environment in the area, as Auerbach (2016), Berenschot and Bagchi (2020) find in the case of India and Kosec et al. (2018) in their work on rural Pakistan. Instead, despite village and district-level competition, the availability of state resources depended on factors contingent upon external factors, such as the possibility of patrons becoming part of ruling coalitions.

In cultivating such relations, only voting for a patron was not enough. It involved fulfilling certain additional obligations during election campaigns. Kinship group leaders, like Sohbat and Janu, were expected to assist in organizing campaigns for their patron in their *ilaaqo*. This meant assisting in recruiting other potential vote bloc leaders and providing their kin labor on the polling day (Bismal Khan 2020; Paryal Khan 2020). The latter practice has become part and parcel of the political custom of the area as kinship and vote bloc leaders routinely draw on the labor of their members for election campaigns. As kin provide such labor, it is not without expectation; they entitle the kin to claim resources when they become available.

In the context of electoral politics at the village level, *taluk* represents the alliance that the vote bloc leaders form with patron politicians. These relationships are building blocks of the patronage network, where at the village level, votes and labor are exchanged for benefits such as public employment. On the one hand, Janu's experience from Village A demonstrates that these relationships can be highly beneficial. On the other hand, the case of Sohbat shows how fraught and uncertain such relationships can be. The differing outcomes for Sohbat and Janu show how a patron who is part of the government and fulfills his promises determines the availability of resources. It also shows the contingent and precarious nature of patron-client relationships in Village A.

6.4.1.1. Jamali as Ideal Patron in Pakistan's Patronage System

As the narration above shows, the patronage relations at the village level are intertwined with the politics at the provincial and national levels. The access to resources that Janu and his kin had depended on their patron Jamali's politics at the provincial and national level. Without his calculated decisions and political maneuvering, the patronage that benefitted clients like Janu could have been much more restricted. One strategy that Jamali followed was to be a pragmatic politician who was not corrupted by any ideology, which is an anathema to the patronage system.

Let us recount his political trajectory to understand better the strategic and pragmatic nature of Jamali's politics. In the 1977 elections, the Jamalis of Nasirabad ran on Pakistan People's Party (PPP) tickets for the National Assembly seats NA-197-SIBI I and NA-198-SIBI II and won the seats uncontested. This demonstrated their solid local and provincial political power, which would be impossible without a strategic alliance with Bhutto (see Chapter 5). Their success was due to two main factors. Firstly, the persecution of NAP leaders created a political vacuum that the Jamalis skillfully exploited. Secondly, they made a strategic arrangement with the Khosa family of Nasirabad. The Jamalis struck a deal with the Khosas, which allowed the latter to contest elections on two provincial assembly seats in exchange for not opposing the Jamalis at the national assembly constituency. This arrangement ensured their victories in the National Assembly elections (Haibat Khan 2020; Rahmu Khan 2020).

It is important to remember that the alliance of Jamalis with the PPP was never ideologically driven. Instead, it was a pragmatic arrangement. A fact that became evident after the military

coup of 1977. Although Jamali benefited from Bhutto's rule by joining his party and, subsequently, his cabinet, they quickly shifted their loyalty to the new regime. Such loyalty was rewarded when Zafar Ullah Khan Jamali secured a position in Zia's cabinet as early as March 1981. He was given the portfolio of the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Cooperatives. Jamali's switching loyalty should be seen in the broader political developments in Pakistan, where scholars have shown that Zia "provided patronage to the political leaders and political parties that were willing to accept military hegemony and confronted any who opposed it." (Mufti, Shafqat, and Siddiqui 2020, 28). In this manner, Jamali's switch from PPP to being part of Zia's cabinet can be explained by looking at patronage as the central logic at play. Jamali's ability to navigate Pakistan's shifting patronage politics was further demonstrated when he became a minister in Muhammad Khan Junejo's first cabinet in 1985 (Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan n.d.). He was given the portfolio of Minister of Water and Power. In 1988, he was ensconced as Chief Minister of Balochistan. In the 1990s, he had two terms as a member of the Senate of Pakistan. Eventually, Jamali's non-ideological politics would culminate in his appointment as Prime Minister of Pakistan under General Musharraf in 2002 (National Assembly of Pakistan, n.d.).

Jamali's political trajectory demonstrates his political acumen, which rested on the deliberate uncoupling of his politics from ideological commitments, which is a critical skill in navigating Pakistan's patronage-driven political system. Thus, his career is a testament to the fact that most successful politicians avoid ideological positioning in Pakistan. It is a country where political survival depends on access to patronage, be it under military rule or civilian. Jamali's political trajectory underlines the critical lesson within Pakistan's political system, especially those from small provinces like Balochistan: success and longevity in politics often belong to those who master the art of non-ideological pragmatism.

6.5. Political Organization at the Village Level

Let us shift our focus to the village level. To explore political processes at this level, it is pertinent to understand the basic unit of political organization mobilized for accessing state resources. Inayatullah (1963), in his work on Punjab, noted that voters were integral parts of multiple groups that overshadowed their individuality. He identified the family and *biraderi* (kinship group) as the primary relations influencing political decision-making (Ibid.). Similarly, Rouse's (1988) research from the 1980s identified kinship groups in a village in

Sargodha as central to political analysis. She argued that these groups, called “*quom*,” were fundamental units of political solidarity and factional difference in the village (Ibid.). Thus, examining how kinship relationships as an organizational principle took on a political character for electoral participation in Village A is essential.

6.5.1. Rival Kinship Factions

Despite belonging to the same *quom*, Janu’s and Sohbat’s kinship groups in Village A remained rivals.⁶³ To explain this continuing antagonism, it is helpful to draw on Lyon’s (2003) notions of equality and superiority, which he applies to rural power dynamics in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtun Khwa. According to Lyon, rivalries are often rooted in individuals’ or groups’ ongoing contestation of each other’s claims to equality or superiority (Ibid.). Applying this perspective at the group level in Village A helps clarify the rivalry between Janu’s and Sohbat’s kinship groups. Specifically, Sohbat Khan and his group perceived Janu and his kin as weaker, owing to their smaller size and lesser landholdings (Rahmu Khan 2020). Conversely, Janu’s group viewed themselves as strong, based on the claim of their successful *talukat* (connections) (Rustam Khan 2020). Over time, these competing perceptions have fueled the rivalry. Even as Janu’s group achieved material wealth, reflected in higher rates of government employment (see Charts 9 and 10), the historical fact of being smaller landlords persisted. Thus, it continued to shape both their social identity and the competition within the village.

In Village A, this rivalry between two kinship groups came to overshadow other forms of identification. To further illuminate its dynamics, Nicholson’s (1972) work on factional politics offers helpful framework. He sees factions as vertically organized “conflict groups” that emerge and persist through ongoing rivalry. Their defining features are internal cohesion and a perpetual drive to assert dominance or counter threats from rivals (Ibid.). Although the kinship groups in Village A do not exhibit the classic vertical organization typically associated with factions, they share a similarity: they function as “conflict groups” by continually contesting access to state resources. For instance, if Janu’s group supported Jamali, Sohbat’s group automatically backed Khosa. Such alliances were chosen less out of

⁶³ This longstanding rivalry stemmed from intense legal disputes over land ownership in the 1970s, where each group accused the other of claiming more than their rightful share, a concept expressed by the interlocutors as “*wadhi haq ash wadhiq lothug*” (Haibat Khan 2020; Hakim Khan 2020) meaning taking more than what was justly theirs. For more details, see Chapter 5.

genuine preference and more as a direct opposition to the rival group. This behavior parallels factional dynamics documented elsewhere, including Punjab, where rivalries can decisively influence electoral outcomes by preventing any single candidate from achieving overwhelming support in a particular constituency (Inayatullah 1963, 176).

Beyond the village level, similar patterns of factionalism appear at the district level in Nasirabad. Since 1988, electoral support in the area has been split primarily between two prominent political patrons, Zafarullah Khan Jamali, and Nabi Bakhsh Khosa, each backed by a different kinship faction from Village A. These alignments reflect the broader entrenchment of “conflict groups” and show how local rivalries reinforce electoral fragmentation. As Geertz (1965) argues in the context of Indonesia, factions often transcend formal party allegiances and become entrenched social entities in their own right (127–128).

Nicholson (1972) further suggests that factions tend to emerge in settings undergoing “rapid social change” (48). Village A exemplifies this phenomenon: Bhutto’s land reforms transformed land relations and sparked new rivalries among kinship groups, which conferred factional traits on them. As a result, kinship groups here are not merely social networks but active conflict groups defined by mutual opposition. In contrast, Waseem (1983) posits that factionalism is characteristic of static, “immobilist” contexts (58), yet Village A challenges this view. Its experience shows that far from dissolving with economic and social transformation, these kinship-based conflict groups were actually created by new developments. Consequently, rather than diminishing over time, the rivalry between Janu’s and Sohbat’s groups intensified, which led to more electoral fragmentation (see Chapter 7).

In summary, although these kinship groups in Village A do not adhere to the conventional image of vertically organized factions, they function in a manner that closely aligns with the idea of factions as “conflict groups.” Their constant competition for resources and influence has sustained a longstanding rivalry that functions and reproduces at local and district-level politics.

6.5.2. Understanding Vote Bloc

To understand how voters organize in Village A, it is helpful to look at Mohmand’s (2011) framework for understanding voting behavior in rural Punjab, which centers around the concept of vote blocs. She defines them as “territorially-bounded, informal institutions that

are organized and led by local political brokers or intermediaries.” (Ibid., 142). Mohmand differentiates vote blocs based on the types of relationships between vote bloc members and their leaders. She uses a matrix that distinguishes between vertical and horizontal linkages between the members and the leader, which may be political or extra-political. Individuals with unequal status, for instance, have a vertical linkage, as in the case of a landlord and his tenants. In such cases, the leader’s authority is rooted in economic power, which reduces the voter’s autonomy. In contrast, individuals with equal status have horizontal linkages, often based on kinship or caste ties. Such relations, as they are extra-political and have strong social obligations, reduce the autonomy of the voters (Mohmand 2011, 151-152).

It has been shown that in Village A, the vote blocs emerged from kinship groups. Thus, they were rooted in affine relations which were defined by horizontal and extra-political ties. Mohmand (2011) categorizes such vote blocs as being based on ascriptive affinity, where vote bloc members typically lack autonomy due to strong social obligations and the extra-political nature of the ties. However, the case in Village A reveals a complex nature of affine relations. The principle of equality within the kinship group, as evident in the land distribution after the reforms (see section 6.2.1. above), were central in informing the shape and form of these vote blocs. The ownership of land granted vote bloc members, who were also kinship members, a degree of independence in their relationship with their kin and vote bloc leaders. This material independence, informed by the principle of “*yak jora, yak handh*” (one pair, one share), conferred autonomy upon these members.

Most importantly, the affine relations in Village A were differentiated. For instance, the strength (*zor*) and influence (*chikh*) of these relationships vary, which impacts the chances of members in accessing state resources. For example, connections through the father’s side (*soater*) are perceived as having more strength and influence than those through the mother’s side (*masat*) (see Charts 9,10 & 11 below). Such vote blocs function on a peculiar principle of differentiated ascriptive affinity. Here, not all kinship ties are equal. Some have more significant influence, thus higher chances of accessing resources. As a result, this case differs from Mohmand’s analysis of ascriptive ties in Sargodha, where the constraining effects of social obligations appear to be the main characteristic of affine relations within vote blocs. In addition, this case also shows that when state resources are available, the likelihood of vote bloc members to access them is tilted in the favor of those who have a closer affine relation with the leader.

Thus, in Village A, a member's ability to access state resources is enhanced by the number and density of their linkages with the vote bloc leader. For instance, a son-in-law enjoys a dual connection as a kin member and as the husband of the vote bloc leader's daughter. Such dual linkages increase the likelihood of leveraging these relationships to access resources. This case aligns with Mohmand's assertion that "the extent to which rural citizens are able to negotiate with vote bloc leaders through their vote varies based on the relationship that exists between them." (Mohmand 2011, 15). The denser and more numerous the linkages between a member and the leader, the greater the potential for members to use these relationships to access state resources.

The distribution of jobs within a vote bloc was based on multiple principles. First and foremost was the strength of kinship ties. For instance, the jobs with high grades, such as Officer Cadre jobs, were typically reserved for close kin like sons or nephews of the vote bloc leader (see Charts 9-11 below). Although close kin relations typically provide an advantage to members with such ties in accessing resources, the leader must also maintain a sense of fairness among the members of his group to maintain its cohesion. For instance, distant relatives who take on additional responsibilities, such as organizing campaign events, may be rewarded with positions (see Charts 9-11 below). Thus, the principle of *na-insaafi* (injustice) is a moral check on the leader of the vote bloc. It reminds the leader that overly favoring close relatives at the expense of distant kin could lead to defections from the vote bloc (discussed in Chapter 7 in detail). Therefore, although kinship strength (*zor*) is critical, a successful vote bloc leader must maintain justice (*insaaf*) in resource distribution within the group. Only then can he ensure that all members are satisfied. In this way, the vote bloc leader has to handle the dual pressures of maintaining the requirements of strong connections with close kin and distributing resources fairly to uphold the demands of justice. This balancing act sustains the loyalty and cooperation of the kinship group (see Chapter 7 for more details). Such dual pressures can be seen as productive tension insofar as the vote bloc leader attempts to strike a balance. Thus, the functioning of the voting bloc is informed by the differentiated ascriptive links and the moral idiom of *insaaf*.

It is key to remember that kin relations are not static but fluid. Such fluidity is an effect of intermarriages through which the relationships within the vote bloc change over time. Thus, a member's influence may change. This fluidity allows for shifts in the ability of vote bloc

members to access resources as relationships within the kinship network evolve. As a result, the changing relationships between vote bloc members and their leaders add another layer of complexity.

Despite the difference in the strength of the relationship between vote bloc members and their leader, the bloc members possess a degree of leverage because every vote matters for the vote bloc leader. The numerical strength of the vote bloc significantly bolsters the leader's negotiating power with patrons. A means through which vote bloc members exercise their power is the practice of *mashwaro khanag*, or consultation. It refers to pre-election meetings of vote bloc members with their leader in the village *otaq*. During these gatherings, members collectively decide whether to support one patron over another and whether their needs and demands were met, thus allowing them to express their dissatisfaction (Rahmu Khan 2020; Rustam Khan 2020).

Mashwaro khanag became formalized in the late 1980s and 1990s with the rise of vote blocs as organizational structures for electoral participation. It granted some leverage to the vote bloc members. Members may develop alliances to exert collective pressure on the leader through this practice. Such lobbying may ensure that their demands are taken seriously by the leader. A successful leader, who depends on the bloc's cohesion to maintain influence, typically listens to the complaints and demands of the members. This practice shows the delicate balance of power within the vote bloc, where the leader must satisfy the members to preserve his authority (Ibid.).

Even though such consultation provides members a voice, their influence is still mediated through the leader, who remains their sole conduit to the patron. Members lack direct or independent access to the patron. This makes them reliant on the leader. Such dependency shows the continued asymmetry in the relationship, even as *mashwaro khanag* introduces an element of collective deliberation that tempers the leader's authority.

All of the factors mentioned above show how intertwined power, influence, and dependency within the vote bloc are and reflect the strengths and limitations of such political organizing in Village A (for a detailed presentation, see Table. 3 below).

Table 3: Factors Affecting Vote Bloc Function and Resource Access

FACTOR	INFLUENCE ON THE WORKING OF THE VOTE BLOC	INFLUENCE ON ACCESS TO STATE RESOURCES
DIFFERENTIATED ASCRIPTIVE LINKS	This creates a hierarchy within the vote bloc based on kinship ties (e.g., <i>soater</i> vs. <i>birarзад</i>), which gives some members more influence.	Stronger kinship ties (e.g., <i>soater</i>) give such members a higher chance of accessing resources through closer links with the vote bloc leader.
USE OF MORAL IDIOMS	It provides members, especially distant kin, with a tool to make claims on the leader, thus allowing their needs/demands to be considered.	It increases the potential for a more equitable distribution of resources, thereby reinforcing group cohesion.
FLUIDITY OF RELATIONSHIPS	Alters kin relations within the vote bloc over time, thus chances of accessing state resources, as intermarriages create a more fluid network of relations.	They allow for evolving alliances between members and leaders and create different knots of pressure on the leader.
LEVERAGE OF VOTE BLOC MEMBERS	Leverage within the vote bloc depends on members' material independence and moral claims of equality.	This allows members to critique the unfair distribution of resources, thereby influencing their allocation.
MASHWARO KHANAG (CONSULTATION)	It provides a platform for members to voice concerns, needs, and demands, which tempers the leader's authority.	By collectively addressing issues of resource distribution, the group members put pressure on leaders, which may provide more favorable access to state resources.

Vote Bloc Leader and the Patron

The ability of a vote bloc leader to negotiate effectively with a patron depended on several interlinked factors. First, the leader must be recognized by all bloc members as their legitimate authority since his capacity to deliver votes hinged on their collective support. Second, his personal qualities were critical: only a competent leader could resolve internal conflicts and maintain group cohesion. Third, the size of the vote bloc itself shaped the balance of power, as a larger bloc offered its leader greater leverage in dealings with the patron. Finally, the leader's embeddedness in his *ilaaqo* (area) was indispensable, because it lowered the patron's campaign costs and thus enhanced the leader's value.

Although the relationship between vote bloc leaders and patrons may include affective ties, it was primarily instrumental. This instrumental character stemmed from two key sources. On the one hand, the vote bloc leader's independence, which was rooted in land ownership and the ability to mobilize kin, empowered him to negotiate rather than merely comply. On the other hand, both parties pursued the clear goal of electoral success, which ensured that their relationship remained grounded in mutual benefit rather than personal sentiment.

Even though the vote bloc leader was in a structurally unequal position relative to the patron, he could exert considerable influence. By delivering votes and reducing campaign costs, he gained leverage to negotiate the terms of their relationship. In this sense, vote bloc leaders constituted a critical link in local-level patronage networks. They created a reciprocal dynamic in which patron and client drove value, albeit in different ways, from their working relationship.

6.6. Vote-Bloc-Based Patronage Democracy

Javid and Mufti (2020) define patronage democracy as a system “in which the public sector remains an essential provider of employment and services, and in which those charged with distributing state resources can exercise considerable discretion in doing so” (150). Building on this definition, we can see how democratic practice in Nasirabad, broadly speaking, fits within a patronage framework, albeit with distinct local characteristics.

To illustrate how patronage typically functions within a party-based system, Weingrod (1968) explains that “resources of jobs and funds are typically administered or controlled by political party members or by persons designated by the parties: since the parties are seen as the ‘spearhead’ of development, the party hierarchy and rank and file are likely to be closely associated with the major development agencies” (383). This party patronage model envisions a centralized and formalized channel for distributing state resources. However, in Nasirabad, a different pattern emerged. Rather than relying on formal party structures, patrons allocated resources through personal ties, effectively bypassing official hierarchies. This demonstrates the informal, relationship-driven nature of patronage in Nasirabad.

A second body of scholarship helps clarify these informal dynamics. Berenschot and Aspinall (2020) propose the concept of “community-centered patronage democracy,” which is defined by weak party control over state resources and a heavy reliance on personal, non-party networks (Ibid., 3). Their research on Indonesia and the Philippines notes that “clientelistic practices more often take the form of one-off exchanges of money and community gifts” (Ibid.). Nasirabad partially aligns with this model, particularly in terms of the absence of formal party networks, yet diverges from the *one-off* transactional approach. Instead, it features long-lasting patron-client relationships between the vote bloc leader and the patron,

kept strong by a steady flow of resources and benefits. These relationships are instrumental but also sustained through continuous reciprocal exchanges, which explains why bloc leaders remain aligned with their patrons for extended periods.⁶⁴

Given these distinctions, describing the 1980s and 1990s political system in Nasirabad may be most accurate as a “vote bloc-based patronage democracy.” This label underlines how village-centered dynamics shaped resource allocation through personal relationships and strong, long-term relationships. The structured vote blocs were central to mobilizing villagers. It highlights how local power was exercised in durable patron-client ties rather than fleeting individual transactions.

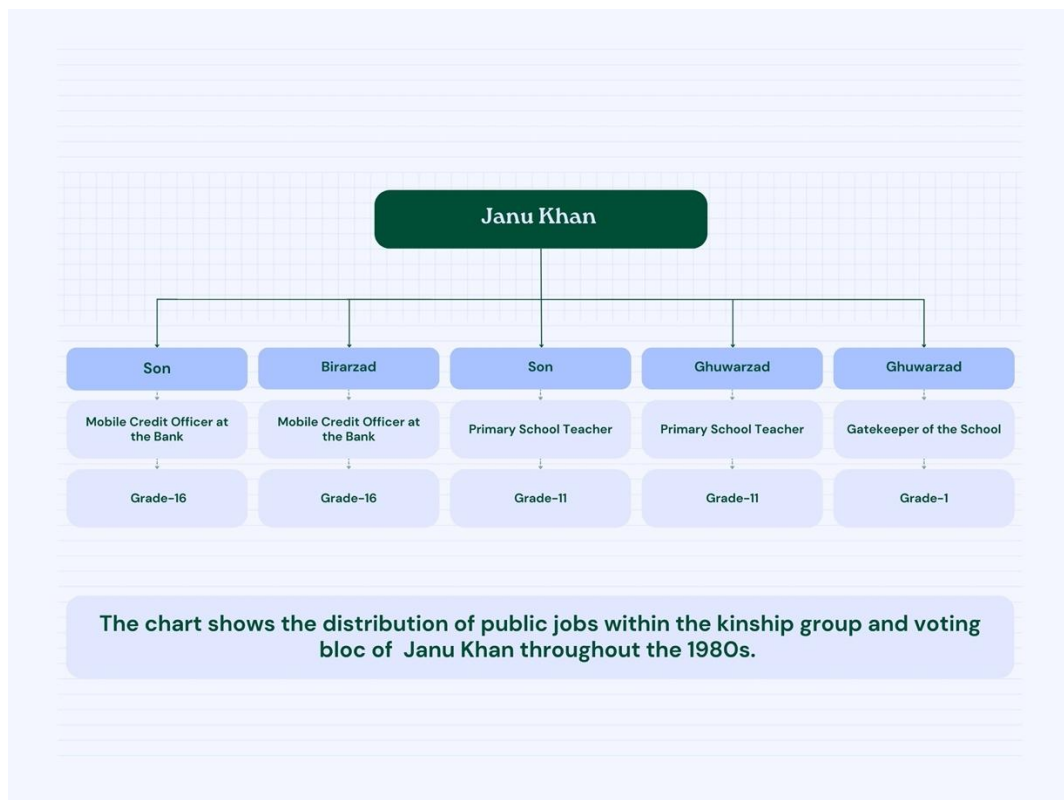


Chart 9: Distribution of Jobs in Janu Khan's Vote Bloc in the 1980s

⁶⁴ Janu Khan remained a client of Jamali till 2005 local government elections, so their relationship lasted for more than thirty years.

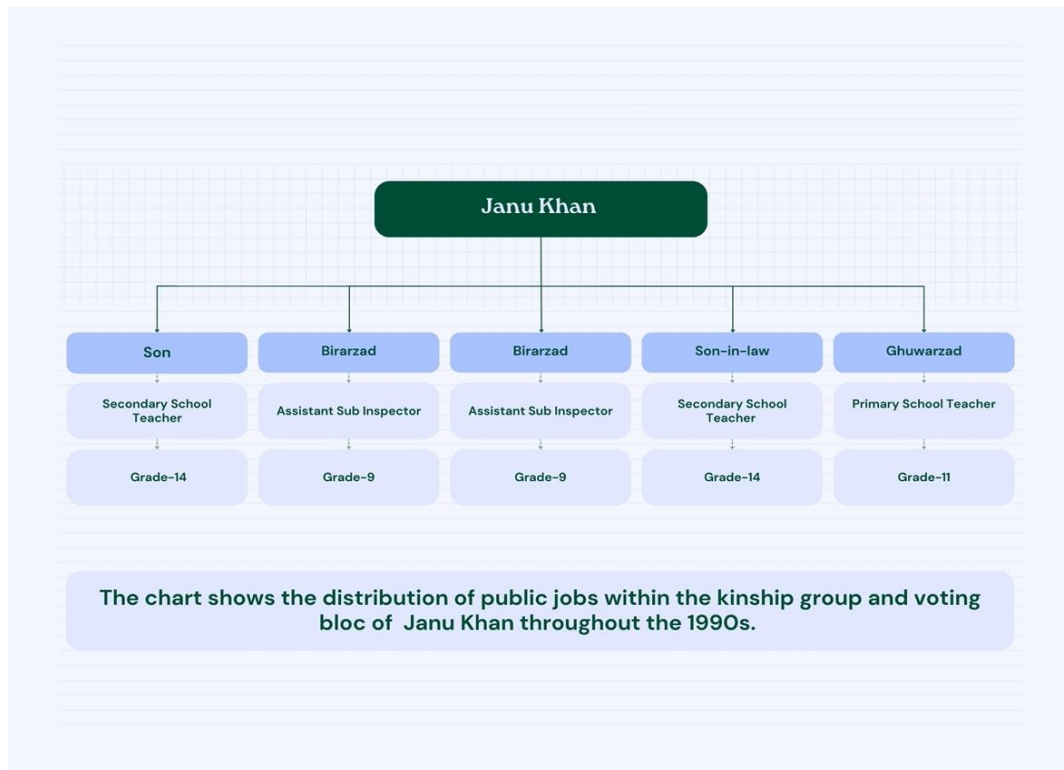


Chart 10: Distribution of Jobs in Janu Khan's Vote Bloc in the 1990s

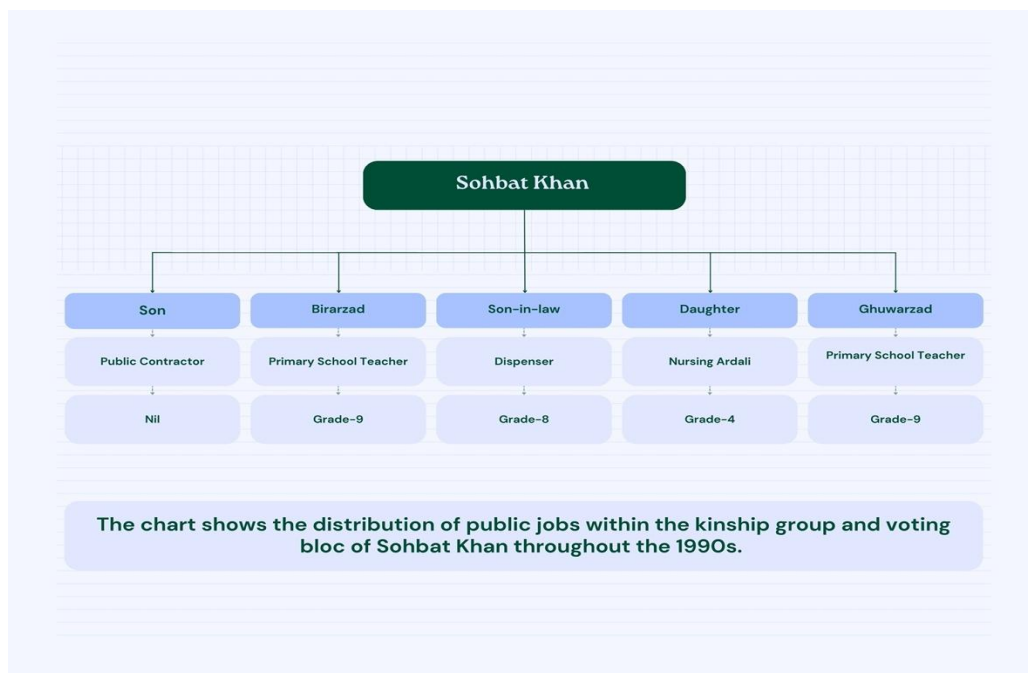


Chart 11: Distribution of Jobs in Sohbat Khan's Vote Bloc in the 1980s

6.7. Conclusion

The case of Village A illustrates how a new type of village emerged in Nasirabad during the 1970s as a direct consequence of land reforms and canal construction. Three interrelated

factors shaped the village's politics: relatively equal land ownership, strong *ilaqadari* (neighborhood) ties, and horizontally organized vote blocs rooted in kinship relations. These elements set Village A apart from the more traditional patron-client relations observed in rural Pakistan and India.

Rather than showing hierarchical dependency, where clients have limited agency, Village A's politics evolved through multiple principles embedded within the vote bloc's functioning. *Zor* (the strength of kinship ties), *insaaf* (fairness), the fluid nature of kin connections, and *mashwaro khanag* (consultation) all influenced how resources were allocated. Inevitably, tensions arose in balancing ascriptive affinities and the moral imperative of *insaaf*; the ability of local leaders to negotiate these competing demands was important for maintaining the cohesion of the group through effective leadership.

Within this broader context, patronage, a persistent logic of state operation, manifested at the village level through vote-bloc-based mobilization. Local leaders drew on kin networks and connections to higher-level patrons at the provincial and national levels to secure jobs and resources. Yet, villagers retained a considerable degree of autonomy, thanks to the relatively equitable distribution of landholdings and local networks. Consequently, the politics of Village A in the 1980s and 1990s cannot be reduced to a purely vertical form of clientelism. Instead, it should be understood as a blend of kinship-based organizing interlinked with intra-village patronage ties. It reveals a more complex mode of local political engagement.

7. Change and Continuity in Village A: Analysing Vote Bloc Evolution and Adaptation

7.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the historical emergence and characteristics of sets of structured relationships at the village level were examined through the case study of Village A. At the intersection of the structured relationships were vote blocs as a political organization and resource distribution unit. The focus of this chapter will shift to tracing the evolution of vote blocs in Village A. It will focus on three key features of this evolution. Firstly, it will analyze the emergence of new decision-making and political organization sites in the village and at the local level, namely the household and the *dhurr*. The analysis will show how vote blocs today are inserted between these two sites, which are increasingly becoming assertive. Secondly, the analysis will show how new recruitment principles with vertical linkages have emerged in the relationship between the vote bloc leader and its members, changing the functioning of vote blocs. Thirdly, the analysis will explore the increasing competition in the village to access state resources, manifested in the fragmentation of old vote blocs and the proliferation of new ones.

Essentially, while trying to capture these developments at the village level, where vote blocs remain the focus of analysis, this chapter assesses how informal political institutions evolve and adapt. Although existing political science research in Pakistan has much to say about informal institutions, such as the works of Waseem (1993), Wilder (1999), and Mohmand (2011), offer useful understandings, there still needs to be a systematic understanding of their evolution. As a result, this chapter uses Helmke and Levitsky's (2006) work on informal political institutions in Latin America to analyze the evolution of informal institutions and their relationship with formal institutions. This chapter will extend its scope of analysis by considering broader social, political, and economic transformations that influence the informal political institutions at the village level.

7.2. Transformations in Village A

In his work on rural Southeast Asia, Kelly (2011) argues that the dynamics of change in rural Southeast Asia have traditionally been understood through the framework of peasant studies.

These studies focused on capitalist commodification to understand the agrarian transition related to changes in agricultural production and labor arrangements (Ibid., 479-480). Effectively, these studies, he argues, “were concerned with how changing relations of production and the resulting processes of class differentiation and inequality might (or might not) lead to political dissent” (Ibid.). He argues for recognizing that capitalist commodification is not the sole driver of social and economic changes in rural areas. It is more accurate to speak of “agrarian transitions” in the plural. The point is that such transitions are an effect of numerous processes. This may include but is not limited to, global commodity chain structures, international regulatory frameworks, national policies on agriculture, relations of power at the local level, household dynamics, and a specific endowment or configuration of natural assets (Ibid., 483-484).

In their work on rural India, Reddy et al. (2016) support such an analytical framework when they argue that rural transformation should be understood as a broad process of societal change. They say such transitions may result from diversification of the rural economy, reduced reliance on agriculture, increasing dependence on distant places for goods, services, and ideas, migration to cities and towns, and cultural assimilation into larger urban clusters (Ibid., 144). Breman’s (1989) study of rural Gujarat captures the complexity of such changes well. It was one of the influential works on transformations in rural India at the turn of the twentieth century. His work showed that demographic growth increases pressure on agricultural resources. He presented how the agricultural sector’s development provided new employment opportunities, but mechanization simultaneously reduced the demand for unskilled labor (Ibid., 305). In his analysis of the household, he noted that the small peasantry needed to diversify its occupations to ensure the next generation’s prosperity. Such a process involved sending their children to college for education and supplementing their household income with non-farm activities (Ibid., 308, 310). He showed how, despite these strategies, employment opportunities may not keep up with the growing landless population (Ibid., 303).

Against this broader theoretical backdrop, Village A exemplifies how rural areas can experience complex agrarian transitions. This case confirms the conclusions of Kelly, Reddy et al., and Breman’s analysis. Multiple factors have converged to produce substantial changes in the village. These include the need for new sources of livelihood for a growing population, the unintended effects of state interventions, and the introduction of new labor relations.

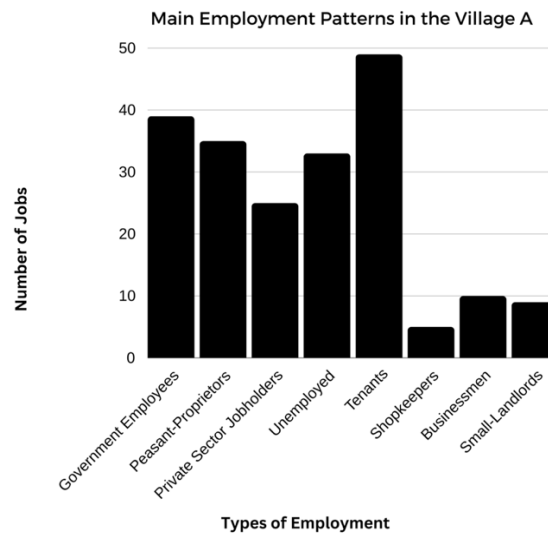
Since its founding in 1976, the village's population has grown from roughly 100 residents, consisting of two kinship groups, to about 600 individuals by 2020 (see Graph 6). Two factors explain this sixfold increase: improved healthcare, which raised child survival rates (Haraan Khatun 2020), and the introduction of a tenant population starting in the late 1990s and early 2000s (see Section 7.3.1. below). Although this demographic expansion partly signifies better health and living standards, it also introduces challenges for labor absorption. Insufficient opportunities for the growing population have profoundly affected both social and political relations in the village.

State policies helped shape the introduction of tenancy in Village A. As public-sector jobs became available in the 1980s and 1990s, villagers who secured these positions ceased working in their own fields. Demand for labor also surged in the 1990s because the Pat Feeder Canal was remodeled and extended (see Chapter 8), and water- and labor-intensive rice cultivation was legalized. These intertwined processes required more tenant labor, and over the past two decades, new tenants have become integral to the village economy. Importantly, their presence has reshaped vote blocs. Whereas vote blocs were once based purely on kinship (horizontal ties among equals), they now encompass vertical linkages: tenants align themselves with a vote bloc leader, which creates more hierarchical relationships.

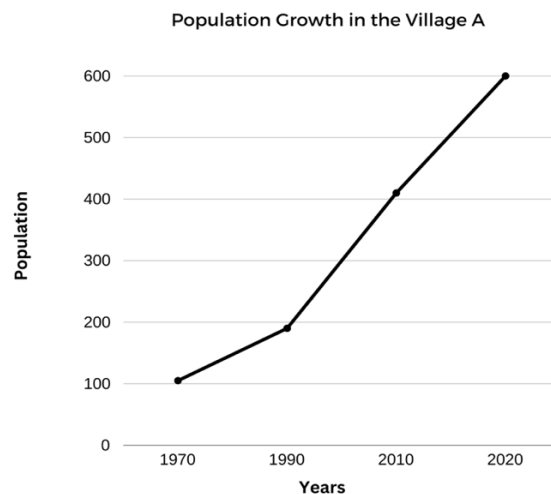
Another salient factor in Village A's evolving politics is the mismatch between the demand for government jobs and their diminishing supply (see Graph 5). This shortfall has exacerbated competition for scarce resources and intensified pressure on traditional kin relations (see Section 7.5.). Nevertheless, women's employment has risen in the past decade, particularly in education and health departments (see Graph 7). This trend is challenging traditional gender roles and shows the growing significance of households as sites where political decisions are made, which is adding complexity to the work of vote-bloc leaders.

Over the past twenty years, a new informal political institution, the *dhurr*, has also taken shape at the Union Council level. Two primary factors underpin its rise. First, the local and general elections in Pakistan have incentivized political organization beyond the village level. Second, demographic pressures now make it increasingly difficult for patron politicians to maintain intimate, direct ties with every vote bloc leader. As a result, the *dhurr*, functioning as an alliance of vote blocs, has become central both for political campaigns and resource

distribution. It has evolved into a more exclusive and politicized network rooted in old *ilaqadari* ties (discussed in Chapter 6). The advent of this institution has fundamentally altered old political arrangements and reshaped clientele relations between patrons and vote bloc leaders, as well as between leaders and their vote bloc members. (see Section 7.5.).

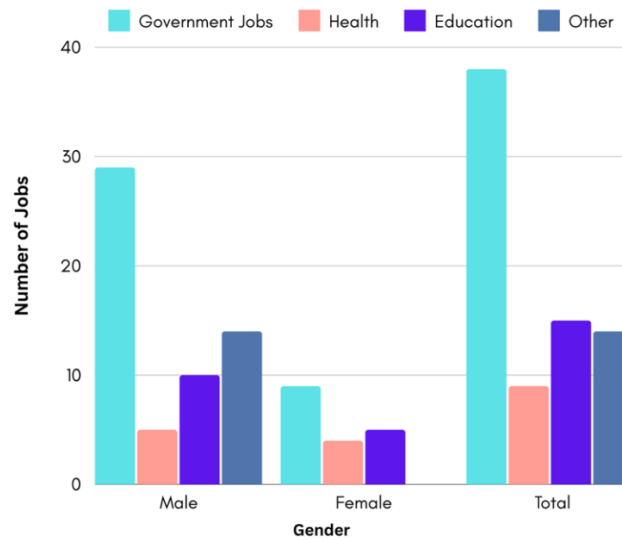


Graph 4: Employment Patterns in Village in 2020⁶⁵



⁶⁵ This represents the main occupation of villagers. This means that Government employees who are also landowners but mainly depend on their salary have been categorized as Government employees. Those who are categorized as small landlords are the ones who primarily rely on their land but do not engage in agricultural labor themselves; however, peasant-proprietors are those who cultivate their land. Tenants, commonly called “*bazgar*” or “*rahaak*,” cultivate land on a share-cropping basis. This arrangement means that they share the harvested crop equally with their landlord. Tenants have a temporary right to reside on the lands of their landlord, which can be revoked at the landlord’s discretion. In exceptional cases, tenants may terminate the agreement once their debts are paid.

Graph 5: Population Growth in Village A (1976-2020)



Graph 6: Gender Distribution in Government Jobs

7.3. Tenancy Relations: Employment, Increased Landholding and Rice-Cultivation

Landholdings in Village A have expanded from 240 acres in 1974 to approximately 450 acres in 2020. This growth resulted primarily from land sales by absentee landlords and the rising purchasing power of some villagers (Paryal Khan 2020; Bismal Khan 2020). Nevertheless, the average landholding per household has declined because population growth has outstripped the pace of land acquisition.⁶⁶ Simultaneously, inequality in land ownership has increased, partly linked to the number of male heirs in certain families and the unequal allocation of jobs among vote bloc members.

Landowners who own more land than they can farm themselves often hire tenants through crop-sharing arrangements. This practice, which was absent thirty years ago, has introduced new social stratification in the village. This arrangement allows landowners to earn income from their lands without directly cultivating them. Tenants, however, are highly dependent on the landlords: they live in mud houses built on land provided by their landlords and share

⁶⁶ Average household land ownership is approximately 4.5 acres. However, this figure does not accurately reflect the distribution of land ownership among households. There are many landless households in the village today. This average is used merely as an indication of the population increase relative to land availability. In reality, some villagers own more than 20 or 30 acres, while others have no land at all.

seed and fertilizer costs equally, which landlords initially cover but reclaim as debts at harvest time. Although tenants still form a smaller proportion of the population than the kin groups who are old village residents, they have become increasingly valuable for village vote bloc leaders. This dynamic is exemplified in the case of Master, the village schoolteacher, who is challenging the old vote bloc leaders by attempting to form his own bloc by politicizing tenant votes (see Section 7.3.1 below).

7.3.1. Making Sense of the Tenancy Relations

In Village A, relationships between landlords and peasants are diverse. Peasants are typically engaged for relatively short durations, usually 5-6 years (Gul Khan 2020; Muzafar Khan 2020). This reflects a more transactional relationship with small landlords⁶⁷, the numerically dominant group in the village population. This contrasts sharply with traditional tenant relations with big landlords, defined by long-term, generational ties and affective relations, as in Punjab (Waseem 1994; Martin 2015; Mohmand 2011; Lyon 2003) and India (Breman 1989). Such relationships often include elements of classical patronage relations, where landlords assume moral obligations to protect and support the families of their tenants, who, in turn, remain loyal and subordinate (Scott 1972; Breman 1989). Unlike big landlords, small landlords in Village A generally do not engage in social obligations such as providing monetary gifts for weddings or extending credit during funerals.

The economic arrangement between the peasants and small landlords is distinct as their relationship tends to remain debt-free except for seasonal debt in the form of the costs of seeds and fertilizers that the small landlords pay. This is an apparent deviation from the relationship between big landlords and their peasants, where the latter is highly indebted. Thus, the relationship between the small landlord and his peasant varies regarding expectations and responsibilities. Nevertheless, such an arrangement does not mean the peasants working for a small landlord are better off. Instead, they experience high levels of insecurity as the small landlord exploits his labor efficiently to get the most out of his limited land. This explains why the peasants working for small landlords prefer to work on large plots of land because, in this way, they attempt to increase their share of the harvest. However, this arrangement requires intensive labor. Such exploitation, combined with a lack of substantial indebtedness, creates conditions for the breakdown of relationships. In addition,

⁶⁷ This means all those who have less than 10 Acres of land, including those in government employment.

small landlords quickly replace peasants they perceive as “lazy” or who demand too much credit (Gul Khan 2020: Muzafar Khan 2020). These factors, taken together, make such tenancy relations highly precarious. As a result, peasants working for small landlords tend to be more mobile. This reflects the instability and uncertainty of their working conditions. This situation is similar to Breman’s (1989) observations in South Gujarat. In the late 1980s and 1990s, he observed that agrarian relations shifted from traditional patronage to market-driven tenancy arrangements.

A notable characteristic that encapsulates these relations in Village A is the physical separation between the homes of landlords and their peasants. This adds another segregation layer as the village is historically spatially separated between two kin groups. In the case of peasants, however, the segregation assumes another dimension: tenants exclusively live on the land they cultivate. Their houses are, in some cases, a few kilometers away from their landlords. Such segregation of space is not common in villages of big landlords, where the two primarily reside adjacent to each other. This kind of separation, which exists in Village A, reproduces and symbolizes the decreased level of social responsibility that small landlords feel towards their peasants. It reveals the transaction nature of their relationship, which is based on labor exploitation even as political developments bring tenants closer to their politically active landlords.

7.3.2. Tenants in Vote Blocs

The Provincial Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) representatives in Quetta visited Dera Allah Yar, the district headquarters of Jaffarabad District, in the final week of February 2020. The primary purpose of the visit was to address electoral issues in the area, one of which stemmed from Village A. The village’s primary school teacher, also known as Master, had filed a complaint in which he reported severe discrepancies in the village’s voter registration record.

Master’s complaint shows the growing significance of tenant votes in village vote bloc politics. In his complaint, he maintained that 166 persons were improperly registered as voters in Village A. These individuals, he claimed, were former tenants who had left the village a decade earlier. Despite their migration, their National Identity Cards (NICs) were in possession of their former landlords. The reason was that these landlords allegedly used these

cards to cast votes in the 2013 and 2018 elections (Master 2020). The complaint continued to state that Master faced problems in registering current villagers (his tenants) as voters. This problem was ascribed to the *talukat* or influence of Haibat Khan, a vote bloc leader in the village, who purportedly held sway on the local bureaucracy (Ibid). Master requested that the ECP officials take action to rectify these electoral malpractices. He appealed that the political rights of the villagers, who were being disenfranchised, must be upheld.

The alleged landlord Haibat Khan is the son of Janu Khan, a prominent kinship and vote bloc leader (see Chapter 6). What made this complaint interesting was that Master was making allegations against a landlord and vote bloc leader whom he had supported in the past. This situation shows tensions within the vote blocs today and represents critical and increasing value of tenant votes for the vote bloc leaders.

In the following days, my discussions with both Haibat Khan and Master made it clear that the issue extended beyond concerns of illegal practices and disenfranchisement of tenants. The root of the problem lay on the claims of fairness (*insaafi*) relating to the equitable distribution of resources within the vote bloc. Master's grievance stemmed from unfulfilled promises by Haibat Khan, who had pledged jobs and development funds in return for Master's electoral support in the 2018 elections. Master and his entire family, including his five brothers, their wives, and his parents, had reluctantly voted as members of Haibat Khan's vote bloc (Ahsan 2020; Master 2020; Shakir 2020). By 2020, however, Master accused Haibat of doing *na-insaafi* (injustice). He alleged that Haibat distributed resources exclusively to his *soatar* and *birar zad* (kin related through father and brother) while neglecting distant kins like Master. This allegation was not unfounded, given the increase in fortunes of those closely related to the vote bloc leaders in the village, a pattern that began accentuating in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

This conflict demonstrates how kin members within vote blocs increasingly assert themselves by voicing dissatisfaction with their kin and vote-bloc leaders. This conflict encapsulates the importance of fairness as a moral idiom through which claims on vote bloc leaders are made. Master's recourse to the state to resolve his conflict is a prime case of villagers instrumentalizing the formal rules to fight for their notions of fairness. This was expressed by Master eloquently when he said, "I will fight for my rights in whatever way possible as long as there is no fairness (*insaafi*)."

 (Master 2020). The invocation of state intervention in this

dispute should be seen as a mere tool in the persistent negotiation between vote bloc leaders and their members.

Haibat Khan's reaction to Master's allegations revealed a prevalent attitude among established vote bloc leaders. He framed individuals like Master as inherently greedy. He claimed that no number of resources would ever be enough to satisfy such individuals (further details in section 7.4 below). Additionally, he saw Master's complaint to state authorities on "internal village matters" as highly "disrespectful" (Haibat 2020). He argued that such issues should be resolved through reasonable dialogue among kin. The moralization of Master's action by Haibat reflects how appeals to state intervention in vote bloc politics change how disputes are managed.

The conflict between Haibat and Master illustrates the growing challenges vote bloc leaders face in distributing resources and preserving bloc cohesion. As demands escalate alongside widening inequality, leaders must struggle ever harder to uphold their promises and manage the rising expectations of kin. Where once kinship ties offered a cohesive social foundation, those same ties are being increasingly politicized and weakened by unequal access to jobs and development funds. Consequently, many vote bloc members now seek tangible benefits in exchange for political support. This is transforming previously kin-dominated relations into overtly transactional ones.

At the same time, this dispute highlights the increasing significance of tenant votes in Village A's electoral dynamics. Tenants constitute a more dependent, and thus more easily manageable, voter base for vote bloc leaders who find it challenging to satisfy the demands of kin members used to equal treatment. As kin members grow dissatisfied with unmet promises, leaders are increasingly turning to vertical, patron-client relationships with tenants. They view them as a more reliable source of political support. In this way, tenant votes not only provide increased leverage to vote bloc leaders but also further erode the leverage of kin members.

7.3.3. Differentiated Political Behavior of Tenants

As the conflict between Master and Haibat Khan raged, their peasants were preparing the fields for rice cultivation, which is a reminder of the everyday concerns of the peasants and

their separation from the politics of their landlords. I could engage in extended conversations with Balu, who has been Haibat's tenant for five years. As our conversations began, I asked frequent questions about water and how it has been managed on the land since the 1990s, which gave Balu the impression that I was interested in buying land. His doubt made sense since absentee landlordism has increased in the last decades. However, I was able to clarify my purpose, which was academic, and then our conversations moved towards politics in the village.

A comment that struck me, which Balu repeated more than once, was, "*siyasat zamindar ae kaar ae*," or "Politics is the job of landlords." (Balu 2020). This sentence reflects a commonly held belief among the tenants in the village that politics is something beyond their reach. Thus, it can be understood as an expression of their political disenfranchisement. As our conversations became more in-depth, he narrated how he and his family had migrated from neighboring Sind to Balochistan in 2015 when they started to work for Haibat. Upon their arrival in Village A, Haibat swiftly registered them as voters (Ibid). This was possible, as Balu maintained, because Haibat leveraged his extensive *talukat* (connections). This practice shows how landlords and vote bloc leaders instrumentalize tenant votes. Registering their votes represents the political utility of peasants as vote bloc leaders try to expand their voter base and consolidate power. Here, it is important to remember that the non-kin status of these peasants did not exclude them from being members of Haibat Khan's vote bloc. It represents the flexibility of vote blocs regarding recruitment principles and the instrumental value of non-kin voters for landlords seeking to maintain and strengthen their political influence in local politics.

Such political instrumentalization was evident as Balu revealed that he and his family voted as members of Haibat's vote bloc in the 2018 elections. Yet, in our conversations, it became clear Balu and his family's relationship with Haibat Khan was not without expectations, especially because they had voted for him. This was evident in the idiom of *parat* or care that he frequently used to narrate how he made claims about his landlord (Ibid.).

Such expectations took various forms of claims for assistance he and his family made on Haibat Khan. He recounted receiving medicines from the village's Basic Health Unit and food supplies from an NGO with which Haibat had connections. Most importantly, he told me about Haibat's intervention in securing his son's release from police custody following a

minor theft allegation in the city (Balu 2020). These instances are representative of classic clientelist relationships. The patron (Haibat) secured the loyalty of his clients (Balu and his family) through the provision of tangible benefits. This relationship not only reinforced the patron's authority but also deepened the peasant's dependency. Such give and take locked them into a cycle of reciprocal obligations. It reinforced and expanded the landlord-peasant linkages in the vote bloc. This pattern resembles the land-lord peasant relations in Punjab, as Martin (2009; 2015) observed.

Although Balu represented Haibat as being a good landlord and leader, he expressed some dissatisfaction. This concerned his struggle to register his wife as a Benazir Income Support Program beneficiary.⁶⁸ He talked about Haibat's promises to help him register her quickly, yet the process had become excessively drawn out. He noted, "*ajeeb ae haal ae*" or "it is a puzzling matter," that Haibat has been unable to do this given his *talukat* and influence (Balu 2020). Balu's comment reveals the inherent limits of clientelist relationships: as they provide tangible benefits, they also create heightened expectations that may remain unmet, similar to what Piliavsky (2014) observes in India (25). Balu's situation can be understood as a gap between the perceived and actual power of the patron. It will be shown later that although Haibat Khan has been able to access state resources and has connections with local authorities, he struggles to get more from his patrons. Ultimately, the case of Balu reveals the reduced leverage tenants have as vote bloc members. In other words, it shows the reduced leverage that result from vertical linkages within vote blocs.

As I interacted with other peasants over the following weeks, I noticed that they were organized hierarchically based on their relationships with different landlords in the village. Although peasants may seem like a homogeneous labor group, the stratified nature of their position in the village became clear through their varying abilities to access state resources. This ability was influenced by the power and involvement of their respective landlords in village politics. Take, for instance, the case of Karmu, who was a tenant of Master. Karmu's relationship with Master was in stark contrast to Balu's relationship with Haibat Khan.

⁶⁸ It is a poverty alleviation program in Pakistan, which was launched in July 2008 to support low-income families. Named after former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, BISP provides monthly cash transfers to poor families. The program mainly focuses on women from poor households.

The case of Balu showed that his family could use the political support of Haibat to access some basic public services. The case of Karmu, in contrast, shows how even such basic access may become hard for certain tenants. In one of our conversations, he noted, “*mai kaar kashtkari ae*,” meaning “our work is the cultivation of land,” and that “*zamindar wadhi laya siyasata khano*,” or “landlords do politics for themselves.” (Karmu 2020). These comments reflect both Karmu’s opinion of and expectations in his relationship with his landlord. Initially, I thought his views were similar to Balu’s, but I quickly realized that Karmu lacked access to even essential public services that Balu had. This difference explains why Karmu perceived the politics of landlords as self-serving. Karmu told me that he expects a fair share of the harvest from his landlord and nothing more. He told me, “*mai kaar rozi roti ae*” or “my work is bread and butter.” (Ibid.). This clearly indicates that Karmu did not have high expectations from his landlord to facilitate access to state resources. This lack of expectation highlights that tenants like Karmu accept the limited political power of their landlords. This situation differs from the relationship I observed between Balu and Haibat, where there were more expectations. Karmu’s attitude also reflects a broader trend among peasants working for less influential landlords. Essentially, the political apathy of these peasants stems from the insufficient political power of their landlords.

Similarly, peasants of absentee landlords showed reduced political engagement and organization. These peasants were the least integrated into the village’s vote blocs. This can be explained mainly as a function of the reduced involvement of their landlords in the village’s daily political life and diminished interest in actively influencing their tenants’ political choices. Theoretically, the tenants of absentee landlords should be well-organized. One may expect them to collectively bargain in the absence of direct control. However, in reality, no vote bloc leader actively pursues their votes. Without direct land relations, such peasant voters do not appear as a priority for vote bloc leaders recruiting new members. This discrepancy, in addition, shows another vital element of the patronage networks in the area. As the tenants are closely tied to their landlords and vote bloc leaders, they lack direct access to intra-village level networks of political organization and patrons. As their landlords are embedded in the *ilaaqo* (area) and organized into *dhurr*, the units of political organization at the Union Council level, it becomes almost impossible to engage without such intermediaries. Without a strong, well-connected landlord or vote bloc leader, these tenants lack the necessary network and connections to mobilize effectively. This shows the critical role of embedded local leaders in maintaining patronage system.

7.4. Household

Tenants in Village A are increasingly engaged in agricultural labor and in providing domestic labor for landlords.⁶⁹ This shift is closely tied to the rising employment of women in state institutions and the broader concept of *taraqi* or development, which is associated with class mobility. These changes are beginning to significantly alter the traditional patriarchal structures that have long governed village life.

In Village A, the traditional division of labor within households is changing. This is evident in the developments whereby women's domestic labor and limited mobility are increasingly traded for social security and family stability. This traditional arrangement is being renegotiated as women gain access to public employment and increased mobility. This is leading to shifts in gender dynamics and household roles (Hooran Khatun 2020). It resembles the idea of a "patriarchal bargain," introduced by Kandiyoti (1988), which refers to the calculated bargain women make within the constraints of a conservative society to maximize their autonomy. This shift also echoes Agarwal's (2003) analysis, which shows how employment and land ownership can enhance women's social and economic status. As a result, it transforms their roles within the household.

7.4.1. *Logh* (Household) Against *Otaq*

Recent changes in gender norms have sparked considerable gossip among the men in the village. In particular, men married to working women are often viewed with a mix of jealousy and suspicion. The jealousy stems from anxieties about the financial stability of such households, whereas suspicion revolves around the masculinity of these men. One gossip I closely observed in the *otaq* was related to Master, whose wife is also a school teacher. This gossip gained significant traction following Master's complaint to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), which I mentioned in detail above.

⁶⁹ The employment of peasant women in domestic labor for landlords has not been smooth. I saw opposition to this trend. In particular, brothers of peasant women resisted their sister's involvement in such work. In contrast, their husbands often supported their wives in securing these jobs. As the households among peasants are also increasingly becoming family-oriented, the support from husbands can be seen as a pragmatic acceptance of the financial benefits of such employment to their household. In contrast, the opposition from brothers reflects patriarchal concerns over the erosion of traditional gender roles. Such erosion has implications for family honor and status.

The village men evaluated his past behavior based on his present actions. They could identify signs they had missed to see before. For instance, one old man talked about how during the customary *mashwaro khanagh* or consultation meeting before the elections of 2018, Master had hesitated to confirm his support for Haibat's patron in the upcoming elections (Paryal Khan 2020). Master was noted to have said that he wanted to consult with his "*logh waro*" or household members before making a final decision. This situation, argued the men who support Haibat, was a sign that Master needed "*mokal*" or permission from his wife before he could commit his support to Haibat. In addition to this particular event, another elder remarked that Master had become disengaged from *otaq* in recent years, which was also a sign. The elder claimed that disengagement from *otaq* at the expense of *logh* or household naturally increased the feminization of Master's behavior. This, the elder continued, was particularly evident in his tendency "to complain frequently." (Rustam Khan 2020).

The case of Master represents the broader societal anxieties that villagers are contending with. This refers, in particular, to the erosion of traditional patriarchal structures as new gender relationships emerge, which provide the household with more importance which influences the salience of *otaq*. This effectively challenges the conventional markers of masculinity and authority, rooted in the latter and not the former. Traditionally, men were supposed to socialize in the *ilaaqo* and *otaq*. Only then could the villagers develop *taluk* with their kin and neighbors. The household is challenging the centrality of these social values and customs.

7.4.2. Household and Vote Bloc Leader

However, the relevant question is how these changes alter the relationship between the vote bloc leader and its members. To understand this, conversations with the vote bloc leader, Haibat Khan, were critical. He was an open and welcoming person when it came to discussing village politics. However, he expressed apprehension about recent developments in our conversations very quickly. Particularly concerning Master's actions and attempts to create a new vote bloc or join competing ones. While commenting on Master's "unthankful" behavior, Haibat nostalgically recalled the exemplary leadership of his father (see Chapter 6). Haibat attributed his kinship group's survival and success in gaining land rights, public employment, and development funds to his father's strong leadership and the *seho* or unity among kin members.

As he began reflecting on the present, he remarked, “*zamano badal ji shur*” or “times have changed.” This was supposedly evident in the fact that “*mardum shukar a nakhano*” or “people are not content with what they have” and “*lalach baaz wadhr shur*” or “greed has become a general vice” (Haibat Khan 2020). He made these comments to frame and present Master’s behavior in a particular light. He recounted how his father had secured a teaching job for Master in the mid-2000s before he passed away. Afterward, Haibat claimed that it was he who had helped Master’s wife obtain her teaching position at the village school in 2014. Despite providing him with two public jobs, Haibat felt that Master’s demands were insatiable. He lamented, “What kind of world do we live in? Where gratitude and respect for the other have vanished, we need more and more.” (Ibid.). Indeed, this situation in Village A confirms Wilder’s (1999) assessment of the patronage system at the national in Pakistan. He argued, “The problem with the patronage politics is that there is never enough patronage to keep the majority of voters happy.” (Ibid., 232). Haibat’s moral framing of Master’s dissatisfaction echoes Wilder’s observation on the nature of patronage politics.

Haibat’s moralization of Master’s behavior also reflects the challenges confronting vote-bloc leaders as they attempt to satisfy their members’ growing demands. His critique is best understood through Scott’s (1977) concept of moral economy. He introduced this concept to highlight how rural life in Southeast Asia once revolved around moral reciprocal obligations between peasants and landlords through which claim-making unfolded. With the advance of modernization, these norms gradually eroded. In the case of Master, as shown above, the idiom of *insaaf* epitomized his moralization of the issue. In contrast, the notion of greed, as voiced by Haibat multiple times, pointed to what he saw as the weakening of time-honored values. This included the idea of being *shukarguzar* (thankful). Master’s actions, from his perspective, breached these expectations and thus rendered him *na shukar* (unthankful), especially given the past support he received from Janu Khan and Haibat.

From Haibat’s vantage point, Master’s gravest mistake lay in “bringing the state into a village conflict,” a move he framed as being shameless. He lamented the shrinking of *tameez* (manners) and *izzat* (respect) among villagers who are, paradoxically, becoming *paiso-waaro* (wealthy) (Haibat 2020). On the one hand, this economic prosperity signaled the improving fortunes of the villagers; on the other, it signified the dissolution of the older moral order that

once knit kin together. Master's case thus encapsulated the frictions that arise in a village fast transitioning away from a traditional framework of reciprocal obligations.

Notwithstanding Haibat's fixation with past, he was aware of the changes that have occurred in the last decades. In our conversations, he noted, "The old times when the MPA could make a phone call and get you a job are over. Now it is increasingly difficult, and money matters." (Ibid.). This remark relates to the increasing trend in the area whereby monetization of public jobs is unfolding. This trend has overlapped with the increase in demand for such jobs. This phenomenon is not exceptional to this area, as it is a pattern that Wilder (1999) had observed in Pakistan's patronage system at the national level at the turn of the century. He wrote, "Patronage leads to commercialization of politics" (Ibid., 205). Due to these changes, Haibat struggled to deal with this increasing trend of old public jobs not being accessible on the same principles as past anymore.

It is important to note that the monetization of public jobs does not mean they are not provided based on the logic of patronage. Instead, it means that supporting a patron in elections may not be sufficient to secure such jobs anymore. The villagers discussed this change rather frequently, especially the youngsters, who maintained that finding jobs has become challenging even though they have acquired educational qualifications. They problematized a recent discourse propagated by some patrons that the allocation of jobs has become more meritorious now, which youngsters see as an attempt to obscure the underlying economic interests that perpetuate the illusion of fairness (Ahsan 2020; Shakir 2020). Given that it has become increasingly difficult to secure jobs, it is possible to explain why development funds have become a central resource many vote-bloc leaders demand (see Section 7.6.). Increasingly, these funds serve as a means to maintain patron-client relationships in an environment where traditional forms of patronage are becoming less viable.

However, the question of securing public jobs has many perplexing dimensions. For instance, Haibat has secured two jobs for female members of his vote bloc. One job he gave to his daughter and the second to his daughter-in-law in 2019. He justified these appointments as being "based on merit" (Haibat Khan 2020), a common claim that patron-politicians also make on the district level. He tried to suggest that the practice of *sifarish* or corruption typically associated with securing jobs for male candidates arises from an oversupply of

qualified male candidates. In the case of female candidates, claimed Haibat, there are very few qualified women in the village, which is why it was easy to get such jobs (Ibid). Even if one accepts this argument at face value, the fact that his daughter and daughter-in-law were more qualified than other candidates in the village shows the inequalities reproduced over time. Most importantly, such jobs by women have become the most desired jobs by households in the village.

Even though Haibat provided for the needs of particular households in his vote bloc, he also reminisced about the “good old times” when men would gather in the *otaq* to make collective political decisions. He lamented the current state of affairs where *otaq* was becoming a secondary place for many villagers, he claimed disagreements and internal conflicts did not hinder such a collective deliberation in the past. He stated, “*marshi mard loghash bahra faislo a khane taa zaal ash maara ware*” or “Today, if a man makes a decision outside of the household, he gets beaten by his wife” (Ibid). Although no such instances of “beating” were reported during fieldwork, this exaggeration reflects Haibat’s resentment, especially common among the older generation, towards the younger generation’s increasingly family-centric focus. The hyperbole serves as a means of shaming men perceived as weak or overly influenced by their households (*logh waro*). Nevertheless, the figure of Haibat should be seen as a midwife who facilitates the transition that the village has been going through, whereby he is not only catering to the demands of households by providing jobs but also accelerating the significance of households as they become entrenched units of political-decision making.

According to Haibat, these developments have significantly increased his labor. He now campaigns for his vote bloc from one kin household to another. He noted, “Today every house has four walls; in the past, there were no such separations. You left your room, and you were in the *aghwaro* (public space).” (Ibid). Haibat, in this statement, was referring to recent trends in the village, as young families have begun constructing walls around their houses. Such walls represent the separation of the household and symbolize the breakdown of the joint family system of the past, under which many households resided together with a shared *aghwaro*. Recently, young couples increasingly prefer to live separately as soon as they marry. This is the change that Haibat alluded to when mentioning the construction of walls.

In the past, the *aghwaro* (public space) was a shared space for multiple families within a joint family. It allowed for social interaction without gender segregation. However, this communal

space has largely disappeared with the construction of individual household front yards. This trend has significant implications for the vote bloc leader because decisions of the past that could be met in the *aghwaro* have moved to a privatized household space. This shift has increased the work of vote bloc leaders like Haibat, who now must engage with every household separately for the electoral campaign. Given that he must promise something to every household of his kin who negotiate separately, he finds it challenging to maintain their support when he struggles to access patronage.

7.4.3. Understanding Individualization Historically

The reflections of Haibat, presented above, represent the tension between traditional decision-making processes that are being replaced and the increase in demands for resources that are becoming highly difficult to secure. The erosion of communal values and kin ethics is connected to the rise of private property and the individualized nature of public sector jobs. Here, it is essential to note that both of these developments are associated with the expansion of the state and market relations. It was shown in Chapters 5 and 6 that the privatization of land and public employment was connected with state expansion in the 1970s through the 1990s. So, it can be argued that such changes in the village are intertwined with state interventions.

Private property and public jobs are predominantly beneficial for households, and as a result, the past values of obligation and mutual support that undergird kin relations have weakened. This explains why households are increasingly becoming the center of decision-making and dislocating the *aghwaro* and *otaq*'s significance. Such disruptions are an effect of new expectations prioritizing the individual and the advancement of the family. In this manner, such frictions are reshaping the social fabric of Village A. These developments echo the changes observed in rural China. Yan (2020) argues that a critical feature of individualization is dis-embedding of individuals from traditional social categories as the intergenerational bonds are replaced with conjugal ties as the central axis of family relations. This has led to a decline in patrilocal post-marital co-residence in East Asian societies. Yan contends that the pursuit of conjugal intimacy, freedom, and independence by the rural youth has accelerated the division of families. Many young villagers tend to create their own nuclear families immediately after marriage. This disregards the age-old customs (Ibid.).

These changes have had a significant influence on how vote blocs function and how vote bloc leaders act. Helmke and Levitsky (2006) argue that informal institutions adapt and respond to the pressures and opportunities created by formal institutions. In this case, the privatization of property and increasing individualization along with family-centered lives are connected with the relationship between state and society, where the interventions of the former influence the latter. As a response, the vote bloc leaders deal with the effects of such processes. As Helmke and Levitsky highlight the characteristics of adaptability of informal institutions, vote bloc leaders, such as Haibat, now engage more directly with individual households. This reflects the adaptation process of vote blocs to the socio-economic transformations reshaping the village's social and economic life.

7.5. Birth of *dhurr* through Politicization of *Ilaqadari*

In addition to the introduction of tenancy relations and the rise of households as important sites of political decision-making, the emergence of *dhurr*, an informal political institution at the Union Council level, has also changed how vote blocs function, organize, and engage with patron politicians. The relationship between these two informal institutions, vote blocs and *dhurrs*, is complementary. Although the emergence of *dhurrs* has reduced the significance of vote blocs as the sole unit for engaging with patrons, it has not diminished their role as units of political organization.

7.5.1. Politicization of *Ilaqadari*

The politicization of *ilaqadari* may be understood to mean the process through which traditional local network relations among neighbors are increasingly subject to political calculus and strategy. Thus, local networks of the past, mainly to serve social obligations and conflict resolution, have become political units. Recent developments have transformed *ilaqadari* from a primarily social network to one that deeply intertwines with political alliances at the local level. Traditionally, *ilaqadari* networks cultivated a strong sense of communal obligation. It brought social cohesion and encouraged mutual support (see Chapter 6) but now they have become means of selective socialization and thus political exclusion.

With the increasing politicization of *ilaqadari*, the traditional sense of social obligation has changed. For instance, in 2020, I observed how attendance at social events was becoming selective. Villagers attended events of the neighbors with whom they had “*juaaen taluk*” or

good relations (Gul Khan 2020). This concept of good relations often overlaps with political alliances called *dhurrs* (more details discussed below). The overlap of social and political affiliations indicates that political considerations now heavily influence social obligations between neighbors. This selective engagement has introduced new cleavages and social divisions in the *ilaaqo* or area. It has weakened the cohesion of the *ilaqadari* relations of the past, which were not exclusive.

The patron-politicians at the district level have capitalized on this fragmentation in the *ilaqadari* networks to their advantage. The competing *dhurr* groups at the local level provide them with more leverage in their relationships and organizational capacity. On the one hand, they provide an ideal level for voter mobilization at the local level that goes beyond the village as it has increased organizational capacity. On the other hand, competition among rival *dhurrs* allows patrons to negotiate with them simultaneously to increase their bargaining position.

Furthermore, the politicization of *ilaqadari* relations has disrupted traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution since litigations in civil courts or *diwani adalatein* (literally meaning “delirious courts”, a derogatory term used by villagers) have increased in recent decades. This increase is indicative of an increasing involvement of the state in local affairs, which the villagers often view as a negative development. (Haibat Khan 2020; Rahmu Khan 2020; Rustam Khan 2020).

7.5.2. Understanding *dhurr*

The rise of *dhurrs* represents the changes unfolding in terms of local political organization in the recent past. A particular *dhurr* is necessarily composed of more than one vote bloc from different villages in a Union Council. Although it operates at a higher level than the village, it remains an informal political institution. The rise of *dhurrs* can be attributed to three factors. First, as the elections took place over time, the existing networks of *ilaqadari* provided a structure for local political mobilization at a broader level, which increasingly politicized them. Secondly, it allowed patron politicians to organize voters on a larger scale, so they began engaging with political actors beyond the village level. Thirdly, the increasing population has led to a proliferation of vote blocs, which has subsequently required more coordinated management of demands by patrons.

Each *dhurr* is led by a leader, typically the most charismatic and influential vote bloc leader within the *ilaaqo* or area. This supports the claim of Javid and Mufti who sees personal charisma as a source of “of autonomous political power... that is, the possession of personal attributes or qualities that inspire devotion from followers.” (Hassan Javid and Mariam Mufti 2020, 150). In this context, leadership is defined by several key traits which are highly valued. This includes but is not limited to *rob* (confidence), *bahadur* (fearlessness), *khidmat khanag waro* (a caretaker of others), *khular bhajiya halengh waro* (a unifier), *sabar khanag waaro* (the one with patience), and *haal a pakko* (someone who keeps promises) (Hakim Khan 2020).

The selection process of potential *dhurr* leaders varies. Generally, it is typical for a group of vote bloc leaders to come together to nominate a potential leader to assume the role of their *sarbrah* (leader) role. Such a request is informally conveyed to the likely candidate; once such a leader accepts the request, a public nomination occurs in the *otaq* or the future *dhurr* leader. However, not all *dhurr* leaders are selected through such a process, as aspirational vote bloc leaders may campaign in the *ilaaqo* for their leadership of a *dhurr*. This type of leader is generally ambitious but may be driven by resentment against the existing *dhurrs*. They campaign in the *ilaaqo* by being actively involved in each other’s social life on the code of *nindagh pharagh*. Such socialization allows them to make contacts to garner support from existing or potential vote bloc leaders in the *ilaaqo*. Generally, people view the first type as respectable because such leaders are seen as men of good character; the latter type generally represents greed and disunity (Shakir 2020). In summary, different types of *dhurr* leaders exist in this area.

Regardless of the path taken to become a *sarbarah*, once a leader of a *dhurr* group, the leader takes on the responsibility of negotiating on behalf of all the vote blocs with the patron-politician. The *dhurr* leader negotiates with the patron when campaigns are underway and is responsible for distributing state resources to the vote bloc leaders. The relationship between the *dhurr* leader and the patron has a higher value for the latter than the relationship with a typical vote-bloc leader. Patrons strive to maintain this distinction and hierarchy in their interactions. The simple reason is that the *dhurr* leader commands the confidence of many vote bloc leaders, thus serving as a gatekeeper to many votes. This organizational capacity of

the *dhurr* and control over the local vote bank makes *dhurr* leaders an important building bloc of the patronage network at the local level. (Rahm Ali 2020).

Indeed, with the emergence of the *dhurr* leaders as important actors in this network, vote bloc leaders have increasingly assumed clientele attributes through their dependence on the *dhurr* leader to deliver when resources are available and to bargain with the patron. Thus, the *dhurr* leaders have become essential in the patronage network. Through them, the interests of the patrons, that is, the votes, and those of the vote bloc leaders, that is, access to state resources, are negotiated. In this sense, *dhurr*, as an informal institution of politics at the local level, epitomizes the evolution of local political organizations that used to be concentrated at the village level in the form of vote blocs. This transition suggests that the reliance of patrons has shifted from solely depending on kinship-based networks to a more hierarchically organized intermediary political structure at the Union Council level. The patronage network resembles a political machine in comparative political science literature, which is defined as: “Layers of political actors between the voter and the elected parliamentarian.” (Liaqat, Cheema, and Mohmand 2020, 131). *Dhurr* functions as an intermediary layer between the villagers and the patron, thus serving as a building bloc of a political machine of patronage in this area.

However, the function of *dhurrs* is not limited to mere electoral mobilization. They have also increasingly performed a critical role in conflict resolution within the Union Council but only for their members. The adequate handling of local disputes by the leader produces legitimacy among its members. Also, by providing this function, *dhurrs* become critical in maintaining social order. It could thus be argued that *dhurrs* perform a stabilizing function. This role of the *dhurr* is significant in a context where the politicization of *ilaqadari* has delegitimized older, more traditional means of conflict resolution. If, however, a *dhurr* cannot resolve the conflicts of its members, it is exposed to the danger of breaking down. This can be explained by unresolved disputes being brought to the patron’s notice to be resolved. In this respect, the role of the patron becomes critical. They try to mediate and resolve local-level disputes which might threaten the group’s unity. The inability of *dhurr* leaders to resolve such conflicts lends them a bad reputation. Once such issues are brought to the patron, it does not merely reproduce his authority but also expands his influence and power in the social life at the Union Council level, as observed in the last decades. Although traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have weakened, the patron’s involvement has become increasingly important for

maintaining stability and order. In such a way, the role of the patron has become more and more institutionalized politically and socially.

The emergence of *dhurr* has influenced the nature of power relations within the village. The political influence in dealing with the patron of individual vote bloc leaders has diminished, relative to how it was in the past, with the rise of this intra-village level political organization. This has mandated that village-level vote bloc leaders must align with these larger units of political organization. Otherwise, they risk their political marginalization, a situation discussed more in Chapter 8. Consequently, vote bloc leaders are incentivized to become part of these broader structures. Especially as they have become increasingly crucial for the political mobilization and resource distribution structure of patron-politicians. This realignment requires vote-bloc leaders to adapt to new political realities. Now, collaboration and coalition-building with other vote blocs are essential for maintaining power and influence at the village level.

Interviews with two vote bloc leaders – Haibat Khan and Rahm Ali – show what this transformation entails. They maintained that the vote blocs remain essential for obtaining support at the village level (Haibat Khan 2020; Rahm Ali 2020). However, political decisions and negotiations among vote bloc leaders usually happen at the Union Council level. Haibat explained that in the 2018 elections, his vote bloc allied with other vote blocs in the Union Council to form a *dhurr*. He claimed that such coalition-building makes sense for politics. He argued that having a larger number of vote blocs increases the leverage against the patron-politician because “the more vote blocs there are in a *dhurr*, the more forceful (*zor*) it is.” (Haibat Khan 2020). This means that *dhurr* must consist of numerous vote blocs to have value for the patron-politician.

Due to their organizational efficiency, many vote blocs in a *dhurr* are invaluable for patron politicians. However, an overly large *dhurr* at the local level might present certain disadvantages for *dhurr* leaders. Indeed, striking the right balance is the key. As Rahm Ali, another vote bloc leader in Village A, observed, “*mazay toloo, mazay maslo*,” or “the bigger the group, the bigger the problems” (Rahm Ali 2020). Rahm Ali’s comment does not necessarily negate Haibat’s point. Instead, it shows that *dhurrs* should not be so large that they become unmanageable for the *dhurr* leader. Consequently, internal and external pressures typically keep most *dhurrs* from exceeding five or six vote blocs.

Liaquat, Cheema, and Mohmand (2020) while discussing machine politics, have argued that “The power relationship between higher-tier politicians and members of their political machine may be asymmetric in favor of the politician or more symmetric, with the local politicians and political workers having a lot of leverage due to their personal local followings.” (133). In the case of *dhurr*, the latter is valid with the qualification that the *dhurr* leader does not have a personal following but rather allies who accept his legitimacy and authority to negotiate for their needs with the patron-politician.

The rise of *dhurrs* should be understood within the broader context of socio-political changes. As households become more critical for political decision-making and tenancy relations, introduce new linkages in vote blocs, *dhurrs* aggregate these diverse elements into a broader political organization. This integration and the emergence of intra-village level political organizations reflect the evolving nature of local politics. Essentially, the traditional structures of vote blocs are increasingly being formed by internal and external pressures.

7.6. Local Government Elections and Vote Bloc Fragmentation

It has been argued that the “local governments play a crucial role in the acquisition and delivery of patronage as they constitute the lowest formal tier of the patronage system.” (Javid 2019, 224). Scholars working on local government have argued that the role of the Union Council chairperson has become central in the electoral machine, particularly in allocating projects and funds within the Union Council (Liaquat, Cheema, and Mohmand 2020, 134). This local leadership is critical within the broader patronage system, as local governments constitute the lowest formal tier of representation.⁷⁰ According to Javid (2019), the scale and nature of patronage at this level differ from those of the provincial and national tiers. Despite these differences, local governments often act as the first point of contact for clients seeking access to the state (Ibid., 224).

⁷⁰ Pakistan’s local government system is composed of three levels: Districts, Tehsils, and Union Councils. District governments oversee broad administrative tasks, tehsil councils handle mid-level responsibilities, and Union Councils focus on local issues like public services and development.

7.6.1. Significance of Local Government Elections

It is helpful to examine why local government elections matter to the villagers. One of the most important factors is the financial rewards for winning local government elections. Elected union councilors receive yearly funds from the provincial Local Government Department. A councilor is allocated a fixed amount of money each year for his ward⁷¹, which can be used for planning and maintaining infrastructure such as roads, bridges, culverts, and water drains. Additionally, every councilor receives a quarterly contingency fund to maintain his office. Vote blocs that form alliances as a *dhurr* and win elections choose their councilors. They aim to utilize these funds to their benefit. The funds are partially used for proposed projects and partially divided among the vote blocs of the winning alliance. (Ahsan 2020; Rahm Ali 2020).

These resources are highly valuable for the *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* villages (small landlord villages). This explains why there is intense local competition to access them. As one of the vote bloc leaders remarked, “Local government elections are truly our elections; provincial and national assembly elections are fought for others.” (Rahm Ali 2020). This sentiment encapsulates the spirit of local government elections in the area. During the fieldwork, the consistent reference by villagers to past local elections showed the importance of these elections. Villagers called local elections “*mai election*” or “our elections” (Master 2020). Local politics acquires an independent shape at the Union Council level because villagers organize all negotiations, campaigns, and meetings. They do not campaign for candidates running for provincial or national assembly elections. Although city and district-level political alliances are connected with local alliances, local politics remains independent insofar as there is no significant interference from higher levels. This means there is no substantial external influence on how people will vote and who they will vote for. Vote bloc and *dhurr* leaders have a free hand in developing alliances.

7.6.1.1. Local Government Funds

During the fieldwork, interlocutors frequently highlighted the changing fortunes of individuals who won local government elections. These political actors were described as having experienced significant “*taraqi*” (development) after they became part of the local

⁷¹ It is a subdivision of a city, town, or district. It is represented by one or more elected officials, who are called councillors.

government. Such individuals were subjects of admiration and criticism (Shakir 2020). A particularly notable figure in Village A was Rahm Ali, a cousin of Haibat Khan. He created a new vote bloc and emerged as its leader in 2005, before the local government elections in the area. Rahm Ali's decision to create his vote bloc and to break away from Janu Khan's vote bloc was driven by his dissatisfaction with how Janu Khan distributed resources. He claimed that "the best jobs and funds went to his sons and closest kin." (Rahm Ali 2020). He also alleged his vote bloc leader, like Master of *na-insaqfi* (Ibid.). This breakaway vote bloc marked an inflection point in village politics.

In 2020, when I met Rahm Ali, he had been a vote bloc leader in the local government elections of 2005 and 2015 and general elections in 2008, 2013, and 2018. The villagers claimed that he amassed significant wealth throughout these years. During the fieldwork, he was investing in constructing a rice mill on bank credit, which I was told he secured through connections cultivated during his political tenure (Ahsan 2020). Beyond this, affluence was symbolized in his ownership of a new Toyota Corolla and his home being equipped with three air conditioners. As Rahm Ali amassed newfound wealth, many who knew him before his political rise continued to recall his earlier life when he struggled to buy a motorcycle (Muzafar Khan 2020). This contrast is supposed to show the dramatic transformation in his fortunes before and after entering politics.

Rahm Ali's rise in village politics was riddled with allegations of corruption. For instance, during his stint as the Union Nazim under General Musharaf's local government system, he had allegedly engaged in financial malpractices. He is supposed to have used significant funds for personal gain. This included purchasing agricultural lands, constructing shops on canal lining, and opening an illegal *irani* petrol pump. Indeed, his vote bloc members verified and defended these actions by arguing that "everyone does that." (Qasim Ali 2020). This indicates a broader acceptance of utilizing public resources to benefit when in power.

These investments have allowed him to provide jobs to his vote bloc members. He told me this was the only way to give them jobs when government jobs were unavailable (Rahm Ali 2020). This is a new development as the vote bloc leaders try to meet the needs of their members. Instead of merely attempting to get public jobs, which have become increasingly scarce, Rahm Ali has used state resources to provide job opportunities for his members of the vote bloc. This is a sign that vote bloc leaders, such as Rahm Ali, pragmatically adapt to the

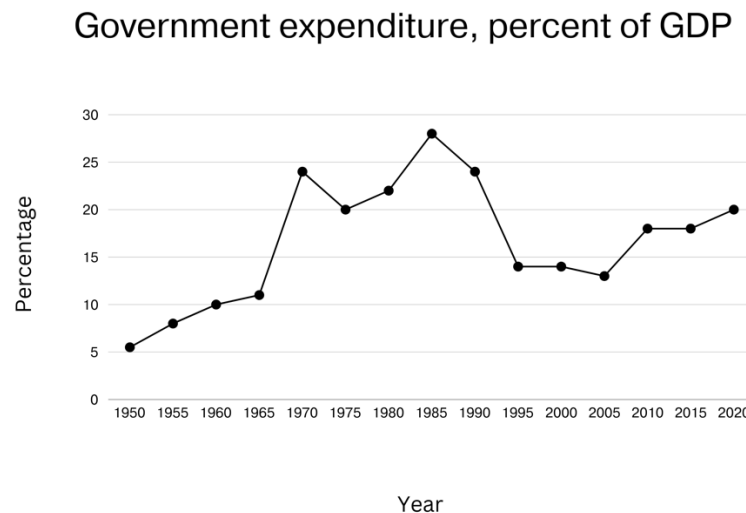
reduced availability of state jobs. This also epitomizes flexibility in finding alternatives to fulfilling their responsibility as a bloc leader. The situation supports Waseem's (1983) analysis when he states that expanding market relations increases differentiation in the local social structure as clientele networks expand. This, in turn, enables even the less well-off to emerge as patrons of their own (Ibid., 55). Rahm Ali's story is no different, as he has also emerged as a patron in his own right.

The contrast between Rahm Ali and Haibat Khan exemplifies the evolving nature of vote blocs. It also shows the complex nature of patronage politics. Haibat Khan told me he focused on securing public employment for his vote bloc members. He argued that the real benefit to the voters accrues only when jobs are permanent. He stated, "*mardum sarkari nokri aam hi khush raho sago*" or "people can only be happy with a government job." (Haibat Khan 2020). He compared himself to Rahm Ali and maintained that demanding public jobs from the patrons was legal and a right.

In contrast, claimed Haibat, the type of jobs Rahm Ali provided to his vote bloc members was a means of creating "*nokar*" or "servants." He suggested that such positions increased the dependency of Rahm Ali's vote bloc members. He said this was obvious in the ingratiating behavior (*chaaploosi*) among Rahm Ali's vote bloc members (Haibat Khan 2020). Whether Haibat's intentions were really to secure only secure and permanent jobs for his vote bloc members is difficult to know. However, here, the difference between the old world of patronage, in which Haibat was trained by his father, and the new world, in which Rahm Ali has cut his teeth, becomes apparent.

The differing strategies of Haibat Khan and Rahm Ali reflect broader socio-economic transformations. Perhaps public sector jobs have become scarcer due to decreasing and low government public expenditure (see Graph. 8 below) and neoliberal privatization policies in Pakistan (Brown 2016). Therefore, the traditional model of providing stable government employment is increasingly untenable. In addition, the rapid expansion of the village population has made it nearly impossible to satiate the demands for public employment. That is why Rahm Ali's case shows the adaptability of vote bloc leaders. A new type of leader is emerging who is steering the changing economic conditions by employing new methods to maintain influence and support. Although Haibat's focus on public jobs represents the old guard approach, Rahm Ali's success in catering to the needs of his vote bloc members shows

the value of new strategies in a difficult time. Essentially, the shift towards privatized patronage alters the nature of political dependency and is a reflection of the growing socio-economic inequalities within kinship groups.



Graph 7: Pakistan's public spending expenditure as a percentage of its GDP.

(Source: International Monetary Fund 2022).

7.6.2. Temporary Jobs and the Fight Over It

The career of Rahm Ali as the Union *Nazim* demonstrates the power and possibilities such positions provide. For instance, I was told that Rahm Ali gave his younger brother, Feroz Khan, a non-permanent but government-paid job as the gatekeeper for his non-existent office. The position was nominal, but Feroz drew a monthly salary for a job entailing no work. Moreover, the positions held by Rahm Ali allowed him to spend the local government funds on development projects with “*wadhi mardum*” or “one’s people.” (Ahsan 2020). One such project was the construction of bridges in the Union Council. I was told they were so poorly built that they could not withstand more than a season’s weather. Another example quoted was the funds allocated for improving the village school and dispensary, which were never utilized for the said purpose. Although funds were ostensibly released for street lining the main streets in the village, the actual execution of these works was limited to the street where Rahm Ali’s own house was located (Ahsan 2020; Master 2020; Rahmu Khan 2020; Shakir 2020).

Such authority and discretion are seen as symbols of power and privilege in the village. But they are often transient. For instance, Rahm Ali's vote bloc and *dhurr* lost the local government elections in 2015. The new chairman, Haibat's cousin, quickly dismissed Feroz for absenteeism. This was a claim marked by irony, given that villagers told me the chairman seldom visited the office. The position was then given to one of the chairman's nephews. Rahm Ali resisted this by appealing to the Local Government Department in Quetta for his brother's reinstatement. However, the job's temporary nature (*kachoaen nokri*) hindered success. Even though he received some promises of support from patron politicians through his *dhurr*, his attempts at re-instating his brother remained futile. The new chairman's decision to terminate Feroz, who lacked alternative income sources, was perceived by Rahm Ali and his vote bloc as particularly petty. After the fieldwork ended, this conflict over a non-permanent job led to violence in the village (Qasim Ali 2020).

This episode also reveals that electoral defeat decreases the likelihood of access to state resources and involves potentially disastrous consequences for those who are on the losing side. The lack of job opportunities, decreasing public employment prospects, and a growing population exacerbate this problem. Hence, this is the backdrop on which the situation creates intense competition, growing politicization, and the possibility of conflict. Traditional structures are increasingly becoming inadequate to absorb the demands of villagers.

7.7. Explaining Vote Bloc Proliferation

Mohmand (2011) argues that "in rural Punjab the number of vote blocs in a village are a better and more effective measure of competition than the number of candidates running for a constituency seat" (14). This is indeed applicable to the case of Village A. The two vote blocs of the past have broken down into four vote blocs today. This indicates the increased competition to access state resources in the village. The cases of Master and Rahm Ali epitomize how these factors come together to produce a situation where one created a new vote bloc while the other was attempting to create his own.

Several interlinked factors can explain the rise of new vote blocs. One is the dissatisfaction of kin vote bloc members, which they usually frame through the moral idiom of *insaaf*. This is usually related to their inability to access resources their competing kin members have access to. It includes how fairly the resources are distributed by the vote bloc leader in addition to

the availability of those resources. If the leader fails to meet the needs of his vote bloc members, he risks fragmentation of his vote bloc. On the other hand, if resources are scarce, the vote bloc leader will struggle to gain support and establish his authority. Lastly, Union Council-level politics also incentivize aspirational vote bloc leaders to form political alliances at the intra-village level. The likelihood of vote bloc proliferation increases with the strengthening of *dhurr* as a structure of political mobilization.

7.7.1. Evolution of Vote Bloc as an Informal Political Institution

Vote blocs, which were a cohesive unit of political organization, have adapted to changes over time. As shown in the previous chapter, they were a tightly knit group, with a leader who directly engaged and negotiated with the patron to access resources. One of the key characteristics was the horizontal linkages between the kin members and the vote bloc leader. In the last decades, new vertical linkages have been introduced in the village vote blocs, connected to the expansion of the tenant population. In addition, the vote bloc's centrality as a unit of decision-making concerning political decisions is being challenged by inter and intra-village factors. The increasing centrality of households, evident in the nature of jobs and property relations, is chipping away at the power vote blocs once exercised as the only means of political decision-making. At the Union Council level, the birth of *dhurr* has also dissipated the organizational monopoly of vote blocs for elections and resource distribution.

Now, vote bloc leaders try to register their tenants as voters, engage with individual households for campaigning, and develop alliances with *dhurr* to engage with patron politicians. In addition, the kin members of old vote blocs have become increasingly assertive in their demands and have challenged their leaders in cases where they see real or perceived *na-insaafi*. Essentially, figures like Master represent the changing behavior of kin-members of the vote bloc. Such changes also influence the principle on which negotiations between the members and leaders occur. These developments show how vote blocs have changed over time and are trying to adapt to the effects of the transformations in the area.

A new type of vote bloc leader is emerging in the village. Epitomized by figures like Rahm Ali. He has used state resources to invest in projects that can help him financially and provide jobs to his kin clients. However, in contrast to the public jobs of the past, these jobs are highly precarious. His clients are increasingly dependent on him. In this manner, the horizontal kin linkages are becoming more vertical. All of these transitions should be seen in

the backdrop of local government and general elections in Pakistan. This moment has overlapped with increasing population growth and reduced availability of public jobs in the village. An important development due to the proliferation of vote blocs is the increase in competition in the village, which has not translated into increased access to state resources for the voters. This challenges the findings of scholars like Berenschot and Bagchi (2020) in India, who have shown that fragmentation of broker networks increases competition and, thus, pressure on brokers and the state.

Thus, the evolution of vote blocs demonstrates the adaptability of informal political institutions in responding to broader socio-economic and political shifts. Helmke and Levitsky's (2006) work categorizes the relationship between formal and informal institutions along following categories: complementary, accommodating, substitutive, and competing. When applying these categories to Village A, it becomes a difficult task to keep the distinctions intact. Vote blocs and *dhurrs* in Village A and the Union Council, where it is situated, defy easy categorization within this framework. They exhibit multiple characteristics that make them hard to classify. For instance, vote blocs and *dhurr* complement formal political parties as they function as units of political organization in an area where party structures are nominal. Regarding the relationship between formal rules of the state and the logic of resource distribution followed by vote blocs, they emerge as competing informal institutions. This was evident in the cases of Rahm Ali and Haibat Khan. Both leaders use state resources for purposes they deem appropriate rather than their intended uses. In addition, for conflict resolution at the village and local level, vote blocs and *dhurr* assume a substitutive role to formal state institutions. This is mainly due to their function as a parallel and alternative to formal state institutions, which struggle to resolve local conflicts. Thus, one can see how these informal institutions, namely vote bloc and *dhurr* show highly eclectic nature of relations with formal institutions like the political parties and the courts.

7.8. Limits of Vote Blocs: The Unemployed and Ideological Youth

Although the older generation dominated the public discourse of the village, it did not translate into uniformity of opinions. I observed a counter-discourse in the village as well. This discourse, at times, came into confrontation with the dominant discourse and, at others, remained separated. This can be seen as a "counter-public," similar to Fraser's (2014) concept of "subaltern counter-republics", which involves subaltern groups creating spaces where their

ideas circulate even when they are marginalized. This counter-public was composed of mostly unemployed and primarily young men. Importantly, all of them were educated in different cities of Balochistan and Pakistan. However, they struggled to find jobs after their qualifications, which is why they returned to the village.

This group was particularly open to my research project. They assisted me in establishing connections within the village and *ilaaqo*. What struck me as peculiar initially was that these unemployed, young, educated men did not value *ilaqadari*. This translated into their behavior of not engaging in socializing with neighbors. This also included not participating in socially significant events. As a result, this became a hot topic for village elders. They saw this as a worrying sign. One elder lamented that “*noojawana nindagh pharah isht daar*” or “the youth has withdrawn from social obligations.” (Rustam Khan 2020).

Several factors have contributed to this behavior. Firstly, as these young men left to study outside, they were dis-embedded from their native area for the period they were gone. Second, they felt unnecessarily targeted by their neighbors, who constantly asked about their employment status at such social events. Thirdly, they told me they see little point in engaging with “*kurara*” or “old men” who hold different worldviews. One interlocutor described old men being overly “sensitive to change” (Ahsan 2020). This was a comment concerning the disagreement my interlocutor had on the question of what the correct behavior is when receiving guests in the *otaq*. He was accused of being a bit too informal as he received respected neighbors. Others argued that engaging with the older generation was hard because they equated disagreement with disrespect. As a result, “*mardum ko haala na khanay sagen,*” or “one cannot utter a single word.” (Ahsan 2020; Shakir 2020).

These issues manifested neatly in the case of Ahsan. He was a very open and active young man. He became an important interlocutor in the field. He is the youngest brother of Master. As I began my fieldwork, he had just returned with a BA in Gender Studies from Lahore, Punjab. He was jobless during this period. One evening, while sitting in the *otaq*, Ahsan became the target of derogatory remarks from the older men. He was mockingly called “*kamrade*,”⁷² a bastardization of “comrade.” This was due to his political mobilization

⁷² In the Balochi vernacular, “*kamrade*” has multiple meanings, all of which carry negative connotations. It refers to someone who has no real responsibilities in life and is engaged in meaningless activities. Additionally, it describes a person who has no power, someone who cannot do anything and therefore should not be taken seriously.

activity in the city. Ahsan had recently begun organizing with unions in Dera Allah Yar. He justified his activism by stating it was good “to fight for the rights of the poor of the country.” (Ahsan 2020). The older men laughed at Ahsan’s justification. They dismissed the value of fighting for anonymous urban workers. They told Ahsan to focus on earning a living. They viewed his political mobilization as an excuse to avoid facing his responsibilities. In response, Ahsan told village elders they were “*tang nazar*” or “narrow-minded.” He continued to allege that they did not see beyond themselves and did not understand the value of the “*qulai bhalai*” or “greater good” (Ahsan 2020).

During our conversations, he attributed his joblessness to the prevalence of *Sifarish* culture. This means getting jobs through *talukat* or connections. This was a complaint that I heard frequently from many young men. I noticed that most of the complaints against the existing politics unfolded in the absence of these elders. These expressions also took their form in the public space but only when shared by those with a specific characteristic, i.e., being unemployed and man. This was evident, for instance, when Ahsan, after the elders would leave *otaq*, would proudly tell other young men about his union activities in the city.

To take another example, let us move to Ahsan’s elder brother, Shakir, who had recently returned after studying at a religious school in Hyderabad, Sindh. Like Ahsan, Shakir made all possible efforts, although unsuccessfully, to find a government job during fieldwork. To bridge the gap until the desired job was found, Shakir got involved with *Jamat-e-Islami*, a religious political party active in the city. He actively encouraged other young men to join in its activities. Shakir also offered to conduct the prayers in the village mosque as the village prayer leader fell ill. Shakir, having had religious training, appeared to be the natural choice. Nevertheless, Shakir’s reformist religious background did not save him from the criticism of village elders.

The elders did not view prayer leader jobs as permanent or highly respectable. This sentiment was captured by an old man in the *otaq* who quipped, “*maulvi dummi ai tukr chakha palo*” or “The mosque leader survives on the crumbs of others.” (Rustam Khan 2020). This represented old values, as villagers have never been overtly religious. Shakir put this response as follows, “they sit the whole day in this *otaq* but would never consider going to mosque except on Friday and Eid, and they think they are Muslims?” (Shakir 2020).

The criticism of Shakir by village elders extended beyond economic considerations to include ideological aspects in the subsequent weeks as he began his duties in the mosque. His fiery Friday sermons earned him a reputation for being extremist. The elders in *otaq* declared that his speeches were unnecessarily dark and paranoid. He was accused of presenting a narrow picture of the human and divine relationships. One elder quipped that Allah Almighty “*maaf khanagh waaro ae*” or “is the one who forgives.” (Rustam Khan 2020). This meant that panic was unnecessary even if his creatures were misguided and did not fulfill their obligations.

In contrast, Shakir’s speeches were overtly focused on punishment for those who have gone astray. Rustam Khan, a ninety-year-old man, told me he had stopped going to the mosque for even Friday prayers since Shakir started giving sermons. He said, “Will *Allah* punish me now, after I spent my whole life raising children and providing for my family, just because I did not pray?” (Ibid.). He claimed that *Allah* cannot be as petty as Shakir portrays Him. Rustam Khan represented a different worldview where the importance of caring for kin members and one’s household was the primary task.

Effectively, the village elders saw both Ahsan and Shakir as being distracted from the actual purpose of life. According to them, this was to earn a living and maintain and reproduce social order (*logh hulainegh*). These generational differences highlight broader changes that have occurred in the village. The older generation values concrete relations and immediate social networks; in contrast, youngsters like Ahsan are beginning to engage with more abstract ideas. For instance, the “workers,” “collective good,” and “the poor of the country” are just a few examples. This divergence has accelerated as the new generation has become part of what Anderson (2016) has called it “imagined communities.” In this context, the educated youth of the village represent how broader identities are becoming important that transcend local and peculiar ones. Ahsan’s public school education and exposure to external ideas and organizations explain his involvement in broader ideological and political movements. It is also a reflection of his identification with *imagined communities*. Simultaneously, Shakir’s example shows the broader influences of religious movements at the village level, which are also transforming the identity and politics of the villagers, especially in terms of membership in a particular community. For the elders, the kinship group and then the family are the most important groups to which one belongs. For Shakir, it is a specific branch of Islam first, and the rest comes later. This shows that although the

youngsters remain embedded in the village's relational structures, they can access other networks and ideas in the city. In this manner, new cleavages are being created in the village.

7.8.1. Voting in 2024 Elections: Master, Ahsan and Shakir

Given the tensions and conflicts presented above, mentioning what happened in the 2024 elections is necessary. Many of the issues culminated in an inflection point for village politics. As the villagers prepared for the polls in 2024, the Master's wife was appointed Presiding Officer⁷³ of the area's female polling station. This position of his wife gave Master a boost. He was overjoyed by the prospect that there would be no malpractice by those who had relied on casting votes of tenants who did not reside in the village (Master 2024). The most significant change this time in Village A was the breakaway of Master and his family from the vote bloc of Haibat Khan. They did not join any other vote bloc in the village but created a new one that allied with a *dhurr* at the local level. Master and his extended family voted for a candidate running on the ticket of *Jamat-e-Islami*.

The three brothers (Master, Ahsan, and Shakir) had different reasons for their choice. Master maintained that he was disillusioned with the "*purano ae nizam*" or the "old (patronage) system." Because he argued that it had failed to deliver on its promises. Ahsan claimed he voted for *Jamat-e-Islami* because of its humanitarian work after the 2022 floods (Ahsan 2024). On the other hand, Shakir voted for the party because it championed religious piety and values in the area (Shakir 2024). This was in addition to him being concerned about the welfare of the people. This break from the traditional vote blocs by three brothers echoes with the findings that socioeconomic status and employment changes do have influence on political behavior, with younger generations often at the forefront of such changes (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995).

7.9. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the evolution of vote blocs in Village A. The main focus was on the changing recruitment principles of vote blocs, the increasing importance of the households in the village, and the subordinate and complementary role of vote blocs to *dhurrs*. It was shown that these transformations are influenced by various factors, which

⁷³ A presiding officer is a central authority in ensuring the smooth operation of a polling station on election day. Appointed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) from among government employees, often school teachers, the presiding officer is the person who oversees the entire voting process at their assigned station.

include state interventions of the past, the expansion of market relations, population growth, and the relative unavailability of public jobs. It was shown how tenancy relations, households, and *dhurrs* are changing how vote blocs recruit, organize, and function. The new tenant population has provided a new target group for vote bloc leaders to recruit potentially dependent vote bloc members. Simultaneously, the increasing significance of the household as a place of decision-making is reducing the influence of the vote bloc as a unit of political organization and decision-making. Lastly, the rise of *dhurrs* has redefined political organizing. It has consolidated multiple vote blocs into larger coalitions that enhance collective organizational capacity at the local level. Yet they are also diminishing the influence of individual vote bloc leaders. The changing socio-economic realities have compelled local vote bloc leaders to adapt their strategies. Leaders like Rahm Ali have leveraged market relations to create private job opportunities. However, figures like Haibat Khan continue to focus on securing public employment for their vote bloc members.

8. Cascading Effects of being dis-embedded: Water Scarcity, Political Exclusion, and Political Behavior in Village B

8.1. Introduction

In Chapter 7, it was demonstrated that the success of a vote bloc in accessing state resources increasingly depended on the bloc leader's ability to develop alliances with other vote blocs in the form of *dhurr*, an intermediary informal political institution at the Union Council level. This chapter presents the case study of Village B, which, just like Village A, is a *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* village where small landlords, peasant proprietors, and tenants reside. However, Village B has only one vote bloc compared to four vote blocs in Village A. The sole vote bloc in Village B has failed to become part of the local *dhurr* groups (see Section 8.5 below). Thus, the primary aim of this chapter is to explore the factors that hinder political organization at the Union Council level for the vote bloc in the village. In addition, it examines the consequences of this inability to organize within *dhurrs*, which relates to the nature of the patron-client relationship of the vote bloc leader with his patron and his kin members. This chapter will examine the relationship between Faisal, the vote bloc leader, and his patron to illustrate the effects of exclusion from local networks of political organization. One such outcome has been the reduced leverage such vote bloc leaders have in their relationship, which reduces their ability to access state resources. This reality has contributed to the search for alternatives, which I will present through the case of Ahmed, who is a member of Faisal's vote bloc, lives in the city, and has been active in finding alternative means of political mobilization (see Section 8.6. below).

The inability of the vote bloc in Village B to organize at the local level, it will be shown, is connected to water scarcity, which paradoxically increased with the extension and remodeling of the Pat Feeder Canal in the late 1990s. Water scarcity has had a cascading effect on the lives of Village B (see Section 8.3. below). It will be shown how, in the Naseerabad Division, successful access to and equitable water distribution at the tertiary level of the canal system depends on local networks of collective action based on *sharaqtdari* relations. When these relations fail to emerge, it precipitates a broad dis-embedding of those unable to access water from their *ilaaqo* or area (see Section 8.4. below). It affects their social, economic, and

political life. This dis-embedding is manifested in shifting livelihood patterns, altered preferences for participating in mutual social obligations, and the ability to develop alliances and coalitions in *dhurr* for electoral participation. Essentially, the water-scarcity-induced migration is the cause of such a dis-embedding process, which excludes villagers from their old networks of sociality and conflict resolution. Such migration also includes a collapse of old means of political organization, which has prompted the search for new means of political engagement.

However, over time, the dis-embedding of villagers through migration from their area has also provided an opportunity to re-embed in the city. This transition is epitomized in the case of Ahmed, who has been increasingly engaged with *Jamat-e-Islami*, a religious political party based in the city (see Section 8.6. below). This party has successfully mobilized in the city in the last decades, mainly due to frequent floods in the area, which allowed it to engage in humanitarian work (see Section 8.7. below). Thus, increasing urbanization in the region, the inability of old patronage relations to deliver, and frequent climate disasters in the floods of 2010, 2012, and 2022 have provided an excellent opportunity for the religious party to gain support in the area through its humanitarian work. This case contrasts with Siddiq's (2020) work on Sindh, which shows that such a crisis provides a space for the state to renew its social contract with society. In Naseerabad's case, crises have proved to be instances that have delegitimized the old patronage structures. Yet, the resilience of patronage as a logic that informs the relationship between voters and politicians cannot be underestimated, as it became quite clear after the historic victory of Badini, *Jamat-e-Islami* candidate for provincial assembly from Jaffarabad district in the 2024 elections (see Section 8.8 below).

8.2. Birth of Village B

In March 2020, I received a *sadd* (invitation) from Faisal, my interlocutor Ahsan's relative, to attend a wedding ceremony in his village. Ahsan suggested meeting his distant relatives and observing their village for my research, which, he claimed, would benefit me because of the differences between the two villages. Intrigued, I decided to attend the marriage ceremony in Faisal's village, which I will call Village B. Upon arrival, I immediately noticed significant differences between the two villages. In contrast to Village A, which had a secondary school, a basic health unit, a community hall, and a blacktop road connecting it to the local market, Village B had only a primary school and a dispensary. I was told this was built in the early

1990s, with no subsequent infrastructure development in the village. The occupations of villagers also differed significantly. In Village B, landlords did not hire *rahaak* or tenants as was the custom in Village A but instead engaged their less affluent kin to till their lands. Thus, there was no distinction between tenant and kin in this village, yet there was a clear labor distinction within the kinship group. The social structure of this village was homogenous insofar as no outside tenant groups lived in this village, which was the case in Village A (see Chapter 7).

Additionally, unlike Village A, where many villagers held government jobs, only a few elderly villagers in Village B had such public employment. The structure of houses further showed the disparity between the two villages. Most homes in Village B were made of mud, unlike Village A's *pakka* (permanent) houses. All these preliminary observations convinced me that this contrast and difference between the two villages needs to be understood. Therefore, I decided to include Village B as a comparative case study for this dissertation.

8.2.1. Background

As I followed the second case study Massey's (1994) observations on places appeared convincing. He notes that places are "articulated moments" within "networks of social relations." (Ibid.,154). I used this insight and extended it to see places as an articulation not only of networks of social relations but also as an articulation of political interventions of the state. Looking at the village in this manner finds resonance with Gupta and Ferguson (1997), who argue that sites or places are not "autonomous" but are influenced by external actions, including the state. As I pursued the second case study, it confirmed my initial proposition based on the historical analysis of Village A that villages in Naseerabad were not autonomous sites but spaces influenced by external actions, be it in the form of Land Reforms, canal construction, or rehabilitation of existing canals.

To understand both the networks of social relations and political interventions that created the conditions for the birth of Village B, keeping the historical connection between the two villages I researched is key to comprehending their divergences. Mewa Khan, the kin leader of the villagers in Village B, was the distant kin of Janu Khan from Village A. In the 1960s, Janu and his kinship group migrated to Naseerabad, while Mewa Khan remained in their native area, working as an overseer of lands for a tribal chief (Eitbar Khan 2020). However,

due to tribal conflicts in the 1980s, Mewa Khan and his kinship group moved to Naseerabad. They sold their cattle and some lands and purchased approximately 400 acres of land in the western section of Jaffarabad district. Big landlords like Bugti, Marri, and Jamali dominate this area. Village B emerged on the newly bought lands by the kinship group. An essential distinction in the case of Village B was that the land was acquired through personal means of kin members. The size of land each kin family received was proportional to the size of cattle and land they owned previously (Ibid.). In this way, landownership in this village, since its creation, was not equal, as was the case in Village A. Thus, there existed land inequality. Yet there was no landless population in the village.

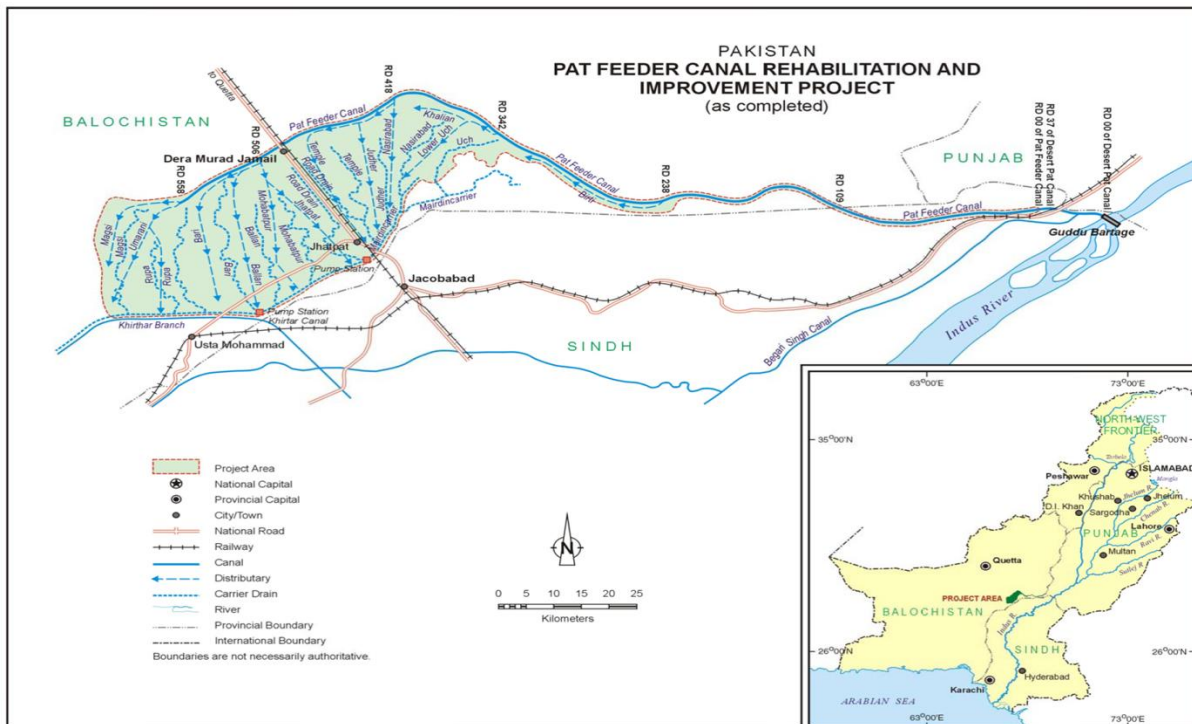
Faisal, the grandson of Mewa Khan, recounted that the initial transition for his migrant ancestors in the 1980s was relatively smooth. The villagers cultivated their lands during the *Kharif* (April-September) and *Rabi* (October-March) cropping seasons. The village received water from a minor on the Muhabatpur Distributary of the Pat Feeder Canal. The minor was shared among three villages, two of which are *Maze'n Zamindar* (Big Landlord) villages of Bugtis and Marris, which lay upstream, and Village B, which lies at the tail-end of this minor water distribution system. (Faisal 2020).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the villagers had good relationships with their neighbors and had a patron in Zafarullah Khan Jamali, the same patron Janu Khan of Village A had. During this period, the villagers secured a primary school and a dispensary from him in exchange for their votes. These public institutions also provided the villagers with job opportunities in the form of school teachers and medical staff. However, the situation for Village B changed for the worse around 1996 as rice cultivation increased manifold following the Pat Feeder Canal's remodeling and extension (Eitbar Khan 2020; Haji 2020). In the following years, water increasingly became scarce for the tail-enders, which led the large landlords residing upstream to block the watercourse of Village B. With their water channel blocked, villagers began migrating to cities across Balochistan and Sindh. This essentially broke old *sharaqtdari* or water-sharing arrangements among these villagers. This had a cascading effect insofar as the neighborly relations (*ilaqadari*) also suffered as these neighbors disengaged from each other's lives. In addition, the unavailability of water made it hard for them to reproduce their social relations with their neighbors broadly, excluding the groups with whom they had water-related conflicts (Ibid.).

If one looks at the government statistics from this period, it presents a contrasting picture, which can be interpreted only as success. As reproduced by the aid agencies, such data focus on the types and yields of different crops and how there was a significant increase in cultivation intensity in the area. For instance, rice production rose from 117,900 tons in 1986 to 290,500 tons in 2002 under the Pat Feeder Canal Command area (cited in Japan International Cooperation Agency 2002). The increase is attributed to the remodeling of the canal. The abstract nature of these statistics fails to differentiate between those at the head and tail of the canal. The experience of Mewa Khan and his kinship group from Village B represents a story of hundreds of villages in the area that government statistics do not consider, as it is more interested in numbers. This global obsession has been called the “seductions of quantification” (Merry 2009). For hundreds of villagers, the remodeling was a failure of epic proportions. Since the project was finalized, the landlords and peasant proprietors in tail-end villages have harvested only during the *Rabi* season. In excellent years, when water is abundant, they may manage to harvest twice (Eitbar Khan 2020; Haji 2020). To understand the scale and nature of changes, let us briefly review the state intervention in the form of the Pat Feeder Rehabilitation and Improvement project.

8.3. Pat Feeder Rehabilitation and Improvement Project

In 1996, the Rehabilitation and Improvement Project of the Pat Feeder Canal was finalized (see Map 6 below). Earlier, the Pat Feeder Canal was a non-paddy and non-perennial canal. The report on this project notes that the canal’s discharge capacity at the entry point into Balochistan (RD 109) was 90 cubic meters per second (c3/sec). In the 1970s, after the canal began functioning, the cropping intensity during the *Kharif* season was around 30%. However, with the construction of the Tarbela Dam in the late 1970s, more water became available for the *Rabi* season. This led to an increase in the cropping intensity to around 77%. Despite these improvements, an Asian Development Bank (ADB) report noted that “only about 142,410 hectares of the total cultivable command area of 185,000 hectares were irrigated due to a shortage of water.” (Asian Development Bank 2004, 1).



Map 6: Map of the Pat Feeder Canal Extension and Rehabilitation Project Area.

(Source: Asian Development Bank 2004).

In response, the Government of Pakistan, in agreement with the Government of Balochistan, initiated the Pat Feeder Canal Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (see Map 7 below). It was financially supported with loans from the Asian Development Bank. Firstly, the project aimed to increase agricultural productivity, create jobs, and boost farm income. Secondly, the project aimed to address waterlogging and salinity issues by constructing a new drainage system in the area to prevent such issues in the long term. According to the ADB report, “these objectives were to be achieved primarily by renovating and improving the existing facilities, and by providing drainage and flood control facilities. The improved system, complete with more effective management and enhanced agricultural support services, was to increase crop yields as well as cropping intensities” (Ibid., 2). After initial appraisals, revisions, and several delays, the project was completed in 1996 at a cost of approximately 8,597.92 million Rupees. Although the Pat Feeder Canal project achieved the goal of increased agricultural output (see Graph 8 below), it also created migration in tail-end villages.

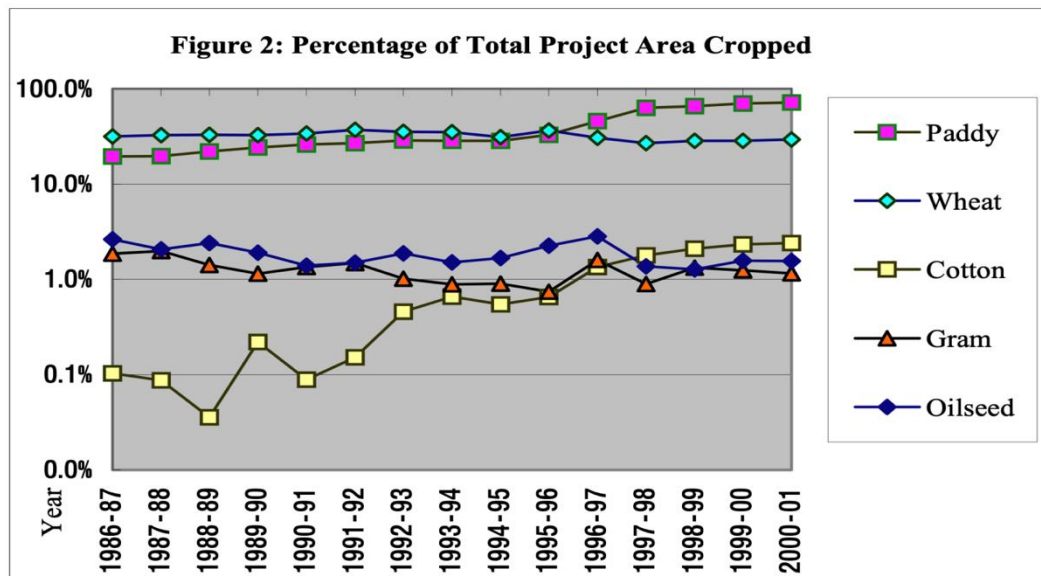
One of the significant components of this remodeling was introducing a new minor distributary system designed to improve water management and distribution. This new system was supposed to overcome old inefficient and problematic methods whereby water

channels drew water from immovable, permanent structures with fixed sizes on the distributary, which gave the irrigation department less control over water flow (SDO Irrigation Naseerabad 2020). This was seen as a problem because it reduced the ability of the department to distribute water efficiently. In addition, as such structures were constructed at long distances, a significant amount of water was lost to evaporation as water channels for fields were unnecessarily long. To resolve these problems, the new minor distributary system constructed moveable structures for minors and increased their numbers. This remodelling was supposed to introduce better distribution and improve water use efficiency (Ibid.).



Picture 2: Moveable Structure of a Minor Distributary at Judhair Branch Canal.

(Source: Taken by Author in 2020).



Graph 9: Percentage of Total Project Area Cropped 1986-2001.

(Source: Japan International Cooperation Agency (2002))

8.3.1. Explaining the Water Scarcity:

After more than two decades of its remodeling, when I traveled to areas irrigated by the tail branches of the Pat Feeder Canal, such as Umrani, Magsi, and Rupa, in 2020, I saw the scale of water scarcity firsthand. Most of my interactions were with *Bar-e-waal Zamindars* at the tail of the branches. These conversations revealed that most of them had been cultivating crops only once since the remodeling of the canal. To understand the problem fully, I also engaged with officials of the Irrigation Department. In my interactions with the department officials, the issue of water scarcity in the area was externalized. They attributed the problem to various factors. First, they alleged that Sindh, an upper riparian province, took more water than what was its fair share under the Apportionment of the Waters of the Indus River System signed in 1991. Secondly, I was told that influential and politically connected landlords acted against the law by appropriating more water than allocated without repercussions. Thirdly, I was informed that water-wasting cultivation methods of illiterate cultivators at the head of canals were a problem. Fourthly, I was told that the scale of recent floods was so immense that the canal network was choked with silt and is in urgent need of massive de-silting funds (SDO Irrigation Naseerabad 2020).

In contrast, my engagements with tail-end cultivators painted a different picture. They blamed the department for being inefficient and corrupt. They referred to hundreds of illegal

water pumps in the non-command area of the Pat Feeder, which pumped water around the clock during the peak *Kharif* season for rice cultivation. Secondly, they also showed me numerous direct pipe outlets sanctioned by the department on canal minors that influential landlords illegally constructed in complete knowledge of the department, which took money in return. According to them, such practices contributed to water scarcity in the area. I was told that despite the provincial authorities releasing millions of rupees to maintain canals, little de-silting of the canal and its branches has occurred recently, especially since the floods (see Picture 3 below).⁷⁴ This factor has also influenced water availability for those at the tail-end of the canals. However, the small landlords and peasant proprietors maintained that the floods only worsened the pre-existing problem rather than being the source of the problem. (Rashid Khan 2020; Haji 2020).

When I engaged with government officials again, based on the knowledge I gained through conversations with the tail-end landlords, I was given a new reason for why the water scarcity was so acute, namely, in the words of the irrigation department official, “we do not have the money to buy the ‘right machinery’ to efficiently de-silt the canals.” (SDO Irrigation Naseerabad 2020). Therefore, he continued, the department must make do with less efficient excavators to de-silt the canals. Thus, the justification continued that under current conditions, with silted-up canals, the department keeps water discharge in canals and branches low to avoid flooding and breaches. As a result, there is reduced water flow, and cultivators farther from the canal head receive less water. (Ibid).

The claims by the Irrigation Department did not corroborate reality, as I was able to travel to canal branches where the largest landlords of the district have their lands, especially Jamali and Khosa landlords. These canal branches were de-silted impressively. Thus, the argument that technical limitations hamper the ability of the department to desilt the canal did not seem plausible. However, Sindh taking more water and some landlords using more water than allocated were plausible explanations. The former has been a long-running issue for Naseerabad, in fact, since the mid-nineteenth century, mainly as it is the lower riparian area. The latter justification was correct, but it put blame only on the landlords, which was not the case.

⁷⁴ According to the Public Sector Development Program around 500 million Rupees were approved and finally release to improve the canal systems of Jaffarabad and Nasirabad from 2016 onwards. (Government of Balochistan 2018).



Picture 3: Judher Branch (Pat Feeder), silted up since the floods.

(Source: The picture was taken by Ahmed, interlocutor from Village B).

Based on these interactions with different actors, it becomes necessary to look at these intertwined problems in the context of the legalization and expansion of rice cultivation in canal-irrigated Balochistan with the remodeling of the Pat Feeder Canal in late 1990s. Since the remodeling, the primary goal of most landlords in this area has been to cultivate rice in the *Kharif* season, which has the highest yield per acre compared to other crops. So, rice cultivation has increased the water demand to such an extent that even if the department does not engage in corrupt practices, it will struggle to provide water to everyone.

8.3.2. Financial Burden on *Bar-e-waal Zamindar* under Uncertainty of Water Provision:

After the remodeling, which introduced a new minor distribution system, the existing water channels, which had taken several generations to develop by negotiation along the canal

network between landowners, became irrelevant.⁷⁵ Thus, the *dugh* or path for water channels needed to be renegotiated among landowners due to the new location of minors, and this process, in turn, required huge financial and labor investments since water channels had to be *dug* anew. Thus, these costs fell on petty landlords and peasant owners.

The grievance of the small landlords and peasant-proprietors was that the landlords with large landholdings had their lands located at the head of the canal or its branches and refused to provide *dugh* as they speculated water scarcity with the permission of water-intensive rice cultivation in the area. The few of them who had given *dugh*, like the Bugti and Marri landlords in the case of Village B, withdrew from their commitments and blocked their water course in 1997. (Haji 2020; Saleem Khan 2020).

Thus, paradoxically, the remodeling and the permission for rice cultivation, intended to introduce a better and more efficient water distribution system and bring prosperity, worsened water availability and caused significant financial losses for tail-enders. This has also led to the devaluation of lands at the tail end of the canal and its branches. Thus, it has further exacerbated the economic difficulties of the villagers (Eitbar Khan 2020). The financial challenges of negotiating new *dugh* or paths and the inequitable water distribution have had significant socio-economic and political implications which will be discussed in detail below.

Water scarcity was the beginning of the precarity the tail-end landowners faced. It led to their inability to obtain credit for seeds and fertilizers from banks or the *bhalwan* (commission agents). According to one manager at *Zarai Tarqati Bank* in Naseerabad Division, “the recovery rate from the tail-end farmers is very low, and hence such loans are a high risk for the Bank.” (Bank Manager 2020). For fear of default, they shy away from giving them loans. Instead, the lenders provide loans to those with a good payment history, usually the landlords at the head of the canal and its distributaries.

Therefore, such landlords increasingly relied on *bhalwan* or commission agents for credit. However, such loans come at high interest rates. In an interview, one *bhalwan* reported that the interest rates for loans given to the tail-end landowners are very high because they are too

⁷⁵ Indeed, this was also the case with Village A where water distribution principles were renegotiated after the remodeling of the canal.

risky and take a long time to recover (Bhalwan 2020). In the process, the tail-end *Bar-e-waal Zamindars* are placed in an economically precarious position. This explains the increasing land sales at the tail end of the canals. Often, the large landlords are willing to invest in these lands. This looks like a high-risk investment, but it can be very lucrative for those tied to state bureaucracy and local politicians. For instance, the case of Fateh Ali Umrani and Gafoor Lehri from Naseerabad is particularly indicative. They have acquired hundreds of thousands of acres in the region. Such acquisition has been complemented with bringing their own tenants to settle (Rahm Ali 2020). This has considerable political implications, especially regarding the numerical strength of voters in elections, a matter not discussed in detail in this dissertation but worth investigating.

8.3.3. Understanding Why Village B Fails to Access Water in *Kharif* Season

The case of Village B is particularly instructive since it helps explain why Village A does not suffer from severe problems in terms of access to water. The first factor is topography: villages farther down from the head of the canal are less likely to get water. Village B lies at the tail end of the canal, while Village A is at the head, and thus, Village A enjoys a pretty obvious topographical advantage. The second, more interesting factor is the extent of equality between the parties who share the water source. Equality in this context means rough numerical equality in the size of the kinship group, the size of land ownership, and integration into the state structure through employment in public service. The more equality among the parties who share water, the greater the likelihood of fair water distribution.

Conversely, the greater the inequality between parties, the less likely the emergence of equal water-sharing mechanisms. Thus, along with topographical disadvantage, inequality among co-sharers diminishes the likelihood of any successful water-sharing agreement. Such a reduced likelihood of a successful water-sharing mechanism diminishes the economic, social, and political status of the disadvantaged. The most frequent result of such inequity is that migration amongst the small landlords and peasant proprietors at the tail of the canal increases, thus directly impacting their local political participation.

Table 4: Typology for the Likelihood of Successfully Accessing Water

Topographical Advantage	Equality Among Co-sharers	Likelihood of Establishing Fair Water	Characteristics	Data Basis	Type of Crops	Terms of Water Access
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		Distribution Mechanisms			Cultivated in Kharif	
High	High	Very Likely	Proximity to canal head, equal land ownership, and high state integration* among co-sharers	Empirical Data from Village A	Rice	Equitable and managed by <i>sharaqatdari</i> relations
Low	Low	Unlikely	Distant from the canal head, unequal land ownership, and low or unequal state integration among co-sharers.	Empirical Data from Village B	Onions (irregular**)	Inequitable and monetized depending on availability

*State Integration means the number of public government jobs in a particular village.

**Note: Irregular cultivation for onions takes place in years of good water supply at the tail-end of the canal.

As the older means of water sharing through *sharaqatdari* arrangements have broken down at the tail-end of the canal, this has also influenced the *ilaqadari* relationships among neighbors who have engaged in conflicts on water. This is how water scarcity influences not only the economic situation of such villages but also their social world.

Nevertheless, water scarcity does not exist the same way for the whole year in such villages. Water becomes relatively abundant in Rabi when crop cultivation occurs without serious water conflicts. Since the villagers in Village B do not have a *dugh* or water path for the *Kharif* season, they need alternative water channels to access the available water. As a result, they have improvised a new method to access water. A standard solution for villagers in Village B, which is also popular in the area, involves repurposing drainage channels built in the late 1990s as makeshift watercourses. Typically, villagers place illegal pipes each season at the minor, which pumps water straight into the SIM (Sub-surface Irrigation Management) or drainage channel, where the motor pumps lift the water.

According to the Irrigation Department, these drainage channels are intended to manage excess water and prevent flooding and not for irrigation (SDO Irrigation Naseerabad 2020). However, villagers have repurposed them out of necessity. In the case of Village B, villagers have grudgingly negotiated with big landlords to obtain a *dugh* for a 500-meter stretch of their land that their watercourse must cross before entering the drainage channel. Interestingly, these landlords, who refuse to provide *dugh* during the *Kharif* season, are open to assist in the

Rabi season in exchange for money. This arrangement allows the villagers to access water for their *Rabi* crops despite the fact that they are unhappy about this reality.⁷⁶

However, this method has challenges. The drainage channels are typically at a lower elevation. This as a result requires motor pumps to lift the water, which increases the cost of accessing water. Despite these difficulties, this workaround has become a generalized method for irrigating lands at the tail end of the canal. The effectiveness of using the SIM or drainage channel lies in the fact that these channels occupy government (departmental) land acquired by the government during the 1990s remodeling project.

8.4. *Ladd* or Migration: Seasonal and Permanent

Given that the villagers have not been cultivating their lands for *Kharif* for most years, they have increasingly engaged in seasonal migration to the cities across Balochistan and Sindh. As young village men leave behind their families and neighbors in their area, their web of relations in their *ilaaqo* becomes less variegated and partially loose, which are seen as characteristics of being dis-embedded (Korinek, Entwisle, and Jampaklay 2005). Migration reduces the time invested in these relationships. Even for those who stay back, mainly the elders, the breakdown of neighborly relations with their immediate neighbors resulted in partial dis-embeddedness. Thus, as migration provides opportunities for alternative livelihood, it also accelerates dis-embedding them from their *ilaaqo*. This process is significant as it was shown in Chapter 6 that participation in local networks of sociality and conflict resolution provides an immense advantage when organizing for political purposes, such as elections.

Although, initially, most of such migration was seasonal, over time, some migrants have chosen to stay in the city permanently. Such permanent migration occurs when they find good jobs. However, this is not the dominant trend, and most migration in Village B remains seasonal. This pattern is consistent with broader migration trends observed in rural areas facing environmental stress, where economic opportunities drive temporary and sometimes permanent migration to urban centers. The situation of Village B echoes Breman's (1989)

⁷⁶ This was clearly evident in the conflict between the villagers of Village B and their powerful neighbors as the former have made attempts to gain access to water by bypassing the latter as described in the introduction of this thesis. For details, see Chapter 1.

observations on rural Gujarat, India, who notes that migrants to the plains of South Gujarat go there “because rural ecological conditions make it impossible to find work in their home areas. There are recurrent water shortages in the hinterland, caused not only by monsoon failure but also by deterioration of the environment in consequence of large-scale tree-felling during past decades.” (Ibid., 314). Thus, migration has become a phenomenon that has been unfolding on a large scale across South Asia.

8.4.1. Discussion on Changing Patterns and Purpose of Sociality

The question of *nindagh pharagh* or socializing continued to be discussed in the village even though such a practice has declined over the years. When I was in the *otaq* one evening in late March 2020, villagers exchanged views and judgments on changing patterns of sociality. An elder complained that the young men “*waqta zaya khano*” or “waste their time” in the *dip* (Saleem Khan 2020). A *dip* is a public place exclusively for men, with multiple functions for the villagers. In Naseerabad Division, one notices many *dips* outside the villages. Usually, some board games are available at dips for entertainment, and there is a tea stall. In recent years, many shops have emerged on *dips* where one can buy essential household items. During elections, *dips* become important for news, rumors, and campaigning. Many people gather there and interact with their allies to discuss politics.

In the absence of old *ilaqadari* relations, the youngsters have chosen to visit *dips* instead of *otaqs*, which are considered more formal spaces for socialization. So, the increasing trend among young men to spend time in the *dip* near their village was framed as a distraction by the village elders. Another elder remarked that the young men have increasingly avoided going to *shadi-gammi* (Eitbar Khan 2020). Instead, they spend their time at the *dip*. Here, it becomes evident that the old men still consider neighborly relations necessary. They expect the youngsters to engage in such relations when they return to the village during Rabi season, when most weddings occur.

Young men like Ahmed, who spends his time in the city and village, saw such an expectation to be “*chukaron*” or “childish.” He responded to the elders, instead, in a bold manner, by stating, “*ilaqadar mai che kaar akhton hama tema maa aaf laya tarsagun*” or “what benefit are the neighbors for when we suffer due to water scarcity.” (Ahmed 2020). So, for Ahmed, such relations have a function: to resolve their conflict on water. If such relationships cannot

resolve their problem, then what is the benefit of socializing with them? The elders contended that neighborly relations are not merely for resolving such issues but “*hazaar dummi wajha da astan*” or “there are thousand other reasons.” (Saleem Khan 2020). They argued that socializing with neighbors, excluding the ones with whom they had a conflict, could be beneficial in unpredictable and unknown ways. For instance, it helps young men polish their character and develop relationships that may help them with other issues. Nevertheless, Ahmed claimed that he saw the *dip* in its entertainment value and liked spending time there (Ahmed 2020).

To understand the significance of the change in these values, the concept of “social foci” is useful. The research on network formation and its reproduction places significant focus on “social foci,” which have been defined as “social, psychological, legal, or physical entities around which joint activities are organized” (Lubbers, Molina, and Mccarty 2021, 532). The concept of social foci brings networks into connection with places. This helps us understand the evolving form of embeddedness in places. (Ibid.). Since the youngsters in the village avoid going to the *shadi-gammi*, it means that the *otaq* of other villages where such events occur have ceased to be social foci, while the *dip* is emerging as an alternative. The shift signifies their dis-embeddedness from the old relations of *ilaqadari*. Such changes show how villagers in tail-end villages relate to their neighbors, especially when they cannot use those relations to access something as fundamental as water. Migration has prompted questioning of the self-evident reality from which young men have become dis-embedded. As villages at the tail-end adapt to these new realities, where they have no functional relations with their neighbors, their social and cultural norms are evolving.

8.5. Electoral Participation

Breman (1989) in his study of seasonal migrants in South Gujarat, observed that “In contrast to local agricultural laborers [...] the huge army of seasonal migrants is politically powerless. As a prominent politician of Gujarat told me: cane-cutters do not vote, either in the villages where they come from, or where they work.” (Ibid., 318). Following this logic, the question emerges whether similar disenfranchisement occurred in Village B due to migration.

As voters from Village B do not have good relationships with their neighbors and increasingly rely on the city for their livelihood, they have experienced a phase of political

disenfranchisement. As they were dis-embedded from their area, their ability to organize politically at the local level where their village is situated was reduced. Since they share their Union Council with influential landlords who have blocked their water channels, they have struggled to become part of local *dhurr* groups dominated by them. In contrast to Village A, where we saw increased intra-village level political organization at the Union Council level, Village B shows no such political activity. Most significantly, Village B has a single vote bloc, which indicates no political competition at the village level. However, after long being excluded from local politics, they have begun utilizing other means of political organizing that the city has made available. In recent years, they have increasingly engaged with the *Jamat-e-Islami* (JI) in Dera Allah Yar, the district headquarters of Jaffarabad.

8.5.1. Single Vote Bloc and Exclusion from Local *Dhurr*

As I delved into analyzing the nature and dynamics of Village B's political organization, it took very little time to realize that the competitiveness that defined Village A's political environment did not exist here. It emerged that the villagers did not participate at all in local government elections. This was explained by one villager who noted, "*main phajiya khase jor tor laya tayar na ae*," or "nobody is ready to do alliances with us," (Ahmed 2020) which was a clear indication of their political exclusion in their Union Council. This made complete sense, given the local *dhurr* groups were headed by the same landlords with whom they had an old dispute over water-related matters. Thus, such an exclusion had placed them in a weakened position within their *ilaaqa*, both economically and socially, and politically. Here, it can be argued that membership in networks of political mobilization at the local level is an important variable that influences the chances of villagers to access state resources.

As detailed in the previous chapter, patron politicians have started to rely more on Union Council-level *dhurr* groups for organizational purposes which has weakened the status of vote-bloc leaders at the village level. Villagers understand they remain secondary in their patron's calculations and know that their absence from such *dhurr* groups reduces their political importance. This exclusion translates into a relationship with the patron, in which the villagers have a reduced leverage to negotiate for more resources. Nevertheless, they are not entirely irrelevant to the local politicians seeking political office since their votes count. In the absence of local *dhurr* group membership, the villagers have thus focused their efforts on using *seho* or unity within the village, and this explains why there is only a single vote bloc in Village B.

The village vote bloc is led by Faisal, who is only 25 years old. His father was bedridden due to health issues and, therefore, decided to disengage from active *siyasat* or politics. Faisal is an educated young man who studied in Lahore with Ahsan, my unemployed interlocutor who organized the workers in the city when I was doing my fieldwork in Village A. In contrast to Ahsan, Faisal, the kinship group leader's son, was already a registered contractor active in Dera Allah Yar. When I met him, he worked on a government project involving school repairs and building construction. Faisal traveled regularly between his village and Dera Allah Yar, where he had his new house, which villagers call *chobaro*. The villagers, when in the city, stay at Faisal's *chobaro*. This practice confirms the contention of Gardner and Osella (2003), that "migrants rely on financial and practical support provided by networks of kin, friends, neighbours, etc." (viii–ix).

Like Rahm Ali from Village A, Faisal has realized that getting government jobs for his vote bloc members is beyond his reach. However, in Faisal's case, it is not only the high demand for jobs in short supply that he cannot get but also because his vote bloc is isolated in his area. Yet, as he needs to meet the demands of his vote bloc members, who are also his kin, he has been actively hiring them to work as laborers at construction sites where he works as a contractor. Almost all of such jobs are based in the city. When I asked him if he had asked the patron to provide government jobs to his vote bloc members, he laughed off the question by saying, "*siyasat am mardum aar khabar beegi chahiye k mardum chia gire saghen*" or "In politics, one must know, what one can ask for." (Faisal 2020). This response aptly describes his tenuous clientele relationship with the patron.

Faisal gave me the example of water to explain the nature of his relationship with his patron. He noted, "I never ask him [the patron] to give us water; we know he will not do anything about it, but I call him dozens of times when there is any contract I can get. He can do such favors for me." (Ibid.). Faisal's candid response should be understood by considering the following interlinked factors. First, water has become a scarce resource with an immense value in the area. As Faisal has a vote bloc with no local alliances, the value of making such a resource available to him is low for his patron, and the cost of doing this favor is high as many more powerful and politically well-organized groups in the area want the same water. Second, Faisal's patron is interested in securing votes from the local *dhurr* in his UC. Therefore, any such favor for Faisal would increase the likelihood that the competing local

patron would ensure support for this *dhurr*. Given Faisal's reduced ability to develop alliances at the local level, the patron does not see any benefit in changing the status quo, which has high costs, especially when he is interested in gaining the support of the dominant group in the conflict. Thus, patron politicians, assess the vote bloc leader's worth based on the numerical strength of the vote bloc as well as his embeddedness in the *ilaago* in the form of being a member of the local *dhurr* group. As a result, vote bloc leaders like Faisal make demands that they believe are commensurate with their importance to the patron.

This, however, does not negate the fact that Faisal and his patron have a relationship with a different set of expectations. Faisal has proved himself to be a good contractor and a reliable vote bloc leader who has authority over his vote bloc. Therefore, Faisal has gotten contracts for different projects in the last few years. Through such contracts, Faisal provides his kin temporary jobs and gets a cut for himself. Not only this but on every contract he gets from his patron, he gives the patron a fixed commission or percentage depending on the departmental contract. Ironically, the contracts of the irrigation department have the highest commissions for all parties involved, which includes the bureaucracy, politicians and the contractors. However, such agreements are the most difficult to get. During my fieldwork, Faisal still had to secure a lucrative contract from the Irrigation Department (Faisal 2020). Once again, revealing the precarious nature of Faisal's clientele relationship.

As a cascading effect of Faisal's reduced leverage in his relationship with the patron, the vote bloc members in Village B also have a reduced leverage in their relationship with Faisal as there is only one vote bloc in the village. The members cannot use the threat of switching their vote bloc to increase pressure on him. There are structural explanations for why no additional vote blocs have emerged in Village B since they struggle to secure access to state resources. For any potential aspirational vote bloc leader in this village, the fact remains that they cannot become part of the local *dhurr* groups, which have systematically excluded them from local political organizing. Thus, creating a new vote bloc will not only reduce the attraction of Faisal for the patron as he will potentially lose members in his bloc but also reduce the value of the new vote bloc, which will have a small number of followers. These factors explain why there is no vote bloc proliferation in Village B.

As a result, the ethics of *seho* or unity, described in detail in Chapter 5, is strictly followed by the villagers in Village B. Unsurprisingly, the villagers proudly compare themselves with

other villages where more than one bloc exists. They appear to romanticize the unity in their village. I heard multiple comments where villagers compared themselves with villagers of Village A (Haji 2020). They lamented the disunity in Village A, where multiple vote blocs have emerged, and conflict-ridden politics has become the norm among the kin members. In addition, even though the villagers in Village A have more public jobs and better financial status, the villagers in Village B do not see it as any success, at least publicly. They have specific means for justifying their relative poverty, which includes the fact that their village has more peace, happiness, and respect for each other. For instance, consider the following statement of a village elder while referring to the villagers of Village A, who noted, “*paiso ash insaan aar ko Khushi thori mile,*” or “money (being rich) does not bring happiness to a human being.” (Saleem Khan 2020).

8.5.2. 8.5.4. Success and Failures of the Vote Bloc

Although Faisal tries to provide for his kin members, he still struggles to manage their expectations and increasing demands. In the village *otaq*, I was part of several discussions where villagers talked about the problem of unemployment among young men. In the best case, they found challenging and precarious jobs in the city. I asked Faisal about this issue. He told me that old times are gone when the patron could get you a government job when in power, echoing the claims of Haibat Khan from Village A. He continued, “*baaz nokri merit chaka aan,*” or “most jobs are on merit.” (Faisal 2020). He further noted, “One needs to be qualified and smart enough to get a government job.” (Ibid.). Here, it is important to note the discourse of merit that youngsters in Village A problematized when discussing the chances of public employment. Faisal, to make his point referred to the increase in the National Testing Services (NTS) that have become popular for hiring purposes in different government departments in recent years, which have replaced old departmental hiring procedures. However, this pattern has been relatively limited to the education department, which has also recently been the case in Punjab (Ali 2020, 189). Faisal’s response resembles Haibat Khan’s justification for his inability to get more public jobs for his vote bloc members, as both used the illusion of fairness as a reason for their failure to get jobs. It was relatively common knowledge that such jobs have been monetized in terms of how patrons allocate them in recent years as the demand for them has exploded.

I did not have to look far to hear this argument. When I poached the same subject with Faisal's kin members, they had different views. Young unemployed men told me that the actual jobs go to politically well-connected people with money. One remarked, "*maag doein nayan*" or "we do not have both." (Ahmed 2020). That is why, according to these young men, the whole system is corrupt. One either needs money or *sifarish* to get such jobs. Ahmed even claimed that "*qabil ae mardum qulaansh wadiq azaab aam maan ae*" or "people with good credentials are the ones who suffer the most." (Ibid.).

After interacting with youngsters like Ahmed, I wondered why Faisal accepted his marginal clientele relationship when talking about water but refused to use the same justification when discussing government jobs. One factor that could explain this difference is the increasing trend of downpayment to get public employment, especially for the low-grade levels. Disclosing his financial weakness might have been an uncomfortable admission for him. Another reason could be that this was his way of responding to the demands of his kin members. He implied that they were not qualified enough, and that is why it was beyond his power to secure jobs for him. Regardless, his justification that everything is on merit appeared rather unconvincing.

Nevertheless, as getting contracts is the primary means of getting access to state resources, I decided to delve into the details of this process to understand better how Faisal's clientele relationship with his patron played out through securing such contracts. Faisal told me that getting contracts is not an easy task. He told me that the more commission one promises to the politician on the contracts, the higher the chances of getting one. Once such a commission is paid, as agreed, trust between the two parties develops. Cultivating such trust was essential in making it possible for him and his relatives to find jobs and access state resources. He admitted that he also kept a commission for himself on every contract he got, which allowed him to cater to his family's and kin's demands. Most of the contracts he could get were the yearly development funds his patron received. (Faisal 2020).

He told me that being a contractor was perilous as one might get no contracts for years, especially when one's patron is out of power. He told me that such precarity for the contractors in the city had led them to create a union. With a limited number of registered contractors, this union gets a 2% commission on every government contract awarded (Ibid.). This money is subsequently divided among all the contractors, irrespective of their clientele

relationship. In this manner, all contractors have a permanent source of income, regardless of their respective patrons being in power. Although such a mechanism has allowed contractors to create some security for themselves, such a continued income stream does not suffice for the demands and needs of Faisal and his kin. Therefore, Faisal told me he plans to diversify his work in the coming years. He planned to open a factory for popular tough tiles in the area. Such tiles are used to make streets and footpaths under development funds. He quipped, “As I already have developed connections with other contractors, I can use those contacts to sell my product.” (Ibid.). In this manner, he would become “*azaad*” or independent. Thus, Faisal formulated his dependent relationship with his patron.

8.6. City as a Place of New Kinds of Political Engagement:

So far, it has been shown how the process of dis-embedding from their *ilaaqo* or area has negatively affected the villagers of Village B, especially in terms of their political power to negotiate for state resources. However, now we will move to the opportunities migration has created for such migrants. Such opportunities have nevertheless emerged after a long period of political marginalization.

The research on migrants in the cities uses the emplacement concept to refer to how they build new networks after their migration. It is “the social processes through which a dispossessed individual builds or rebuilds networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city.” (Schiller, Caglar, and Guldbrandsen 2006, 2). This concept highlights the values and process of network formation. A similar emplacement process began for the villagers of Village B, who had migrated to the city at a very slow pace.

Ahmed, Faisal’s distant cousin and frequently stays at his *chobaro*, represents how the migrants emplace or re-embed themselves in a new city environment. As I visited Faisal in his *chobaro*, I quickly caught up on the ongoing conversations among the villagers on Ahmed’s political activism. Haji, who is Ahmed’s father and also works as Faisal’s cook in the *chobaro*, held reservations about his political activities (Haji 2020). He was especially concerned about Ahmed’s social media posts that everyone was talking about (Ibid). Ahmed had posted some fiery posts on Facebook that openly criticized the local politicians and their politics. Haji believed that they had migrated to the city to find jobs and good education for their children and not for such politics that Ahmed had begun subscribing to.

Finally, after a week, when I got to talk with Ahmed, he was pretty clear in his criticism of the existing politicians in the area and how he wished to change it. He believed that traditional politics benefits only a few, a politics which, according to him, had no future. He told me that he was upset with this type of politics, so he joined the *Jamat-e Islami*-run *al-Khidmat* Foundation as a volunteer in 2020. He told me that through this organization he wanted to “*gareeb ae mardum aen khidmata khana*” or “serve the poor.” (Ahmed 2020). During this time, when we interacted, he actively participated in the *al-Khidmat* Foundation and *Jamat-e-Islami*’s activities, which included organizing religious fests and events. According to him, only through parties like *Jamat-e Islami* traditional politics could weaken in the area.

Such public posturing, I believe, might have affected Faisal, who was a client of politicians that Ahmed was criticizing online rather frequently. So, I decided to ask Faisal about Ahmed’s vocal political positions. Faisal was dismissive in his response and told me, in the presence of Haji, “Ahmed is just a young boy who gets emotional too quickly and does not realize the practicality of politics in the area, where one has to make compromises.” (Faisal 2020). In my subsequent conversations with Ahmed, he went so far as to label village politics as “blackmail” because people use personal familial relations to pressure each other to vote for politicians (Ahmed 2020).

Things took a very political turn when Ahmed posted online that he would organize a *dharna* or sit-in in his native Union Council against the Irrigation Department and influential landlords in the *Kharif* season 2020. This *dharna* was supported by the *Jamat-e-Islami* party as it encouraged people on social media to join the protestors. This situation further intensified the discussions among villagers in Village B. As I talked with Haji about this matter, he told me that “*aafae maslo waqai na-haq aen, hamshi krya humein theeken kaar ae*” or “the issue of water is unjust; therefore, this protest is a good action.” (Haji 2020). I was surprised to see this change of heart, given that Haji had been suspicious of his son’s politics. However, I realized rather quickly that Haji made a distinction between criticizing the patrons and fighting against the dominant landlords, as he told me, “*humshi aam siyasatdaan ae che khaar ae*” or “this (water issue) has nothing to do with the politicians.” (Ibid). Faisal, in contrast, did not draw this distinction. He told me that given what Ahmed had posted in the past, there can be a “misunderstanding” of his purposes as there are many

“*shar pasandaen mardum*” or “people with bad intentions” (Faisal 2020). Faisal’s response was cryptic and indicated cautiousness as he tried to avoid linking patrons with the water issue the villagers faced since Ahmed had been posting against the patrons during this time. Nevertheless, the protest went ahead. Effectively, the case of Ahmed shows how migration has provided alternative means of political organization and created interlinkages between village-city relationships by bringing in new political actors on the ground. Since 2020, *Jamat-e-Islami* has been at the forefront of organizing protests on the water unavailability issue in rural areas.



Picture 4: Hunger Strike Camp at the Tail-End of Judher Distributary Organized by Landlords and Jamat-e-Islami to Protest Water Shortage.

(Source: The picture was taken by Ahmed, interlocutor from Village B).

8.7. 2022 Floods and Ahmed’s Rise as a “Social Worker”

The 2022 floods devastated canal-irrigated Balochistan. They destroyed harvests and displaced thousands of villagers, including those from Village B. The scale of destruction was so immense that traditional patrons of the area, along with state authorities, struggled to cater to the needs of the climate refugees. As more and more villagers from Village B came to Dera Allah Yar, Faisal realized his limit in helping them all simultaneously. He began to contact his

patron within a week of the floods for assistance without any positive response (Faisal 2022). Meanwhile, various non-governmental organizations became active in providing relief to climate refugees. One of the most well-organized actors providing relief in these floods was the *al-Khidmat* Foundation of *Jamat-e-Islami*. As soon as the floods hit the area, this organization activated its network of volunteers and members to rescue flood victims and provide ration to those in need.

In one of our online interviews, Faisal told me he had asked Ahmed if it would be possible to manage some assistance through *al-Khidmat* for their kin members. When I asked him whether his patron was also helping in this dire humanitarian crisis situation, Faisal told me “*aan ta zahir hi nae na*” or “he is not even visible,” meaning that he had left the area for Karachi (Ibid.). Therefore, he told me, “*mana ko umeed nae*” or “I have no hope” that he will assist me in this matter (Ibid.). As the patron failed to respond, Ahmed leveraged his contacts inside the party and foundation to mobilize humanitarian aid for his relatives.

The first instance of such assistance was the provision of tents in the “tent city” created by the *al-Khidmat* foundation for the climate refugees of the area. Later on, Ahmed emerged as the primary contact person for the villagers to get rations, sanitary products, clothes, etc. During this immense crisis, I was lucky to connect with Ahmed online. When I asked him what he was doing these days, he told me it was “*mardum aen khidmatam makhtiyaaon*” or “I am involved in serving the people.” (Ahmed 2022). In our conversation, he categorized himself as a “social worker” which implied his non-political ambitions in doing such a revered work of serving “*Allah ae makhlooq*” or “God’s creation.” (Ibid.).

However, when I saw his public posts, I realized that his social work was deeply intertwined with his politics. Almost every second post he updated on Facebook had a political commentary on how traditional politics was not good for the locals and why they needed new, honest leadership in the area. *Jamat-e-Islami* was only interested in serving the people without expectations. He asked where the patron politicians were in this moment of crisis. He problematized their absence, though justifiable, but not apolitical.

The effective response by welfare organizations like *al-Khidmat* during this crisis was highly positive, even by those who did not support the religious ambitions of the political party it was associated with. This case illustrates the potential for non-state actors to fill governance

gaps, especially in crisis. A. Siddiqi (2020) has researched the aftermath of the 2010 floods in Sindh. She argues that the crisis of 2010 allowed the state to renew its social contract with society as it capitalized on the crisis by providing the relief needed. In contrast, in Naseerabad, the crisis emerged as an opportunity for organizations like *al-Khidmat*, which actively propagated a discourse to delegitimize state authorities and old patron politicians of the area, who indeed failed to respond to the needs of the climate refugees. *Al-Khidmat* foundation was able to successfully step in to fill the void the state and traditional patrons left. It provided immediate relief, which increased its legitimacy in the public eye. In turn, this provided political capital that it used for the campaign for elections of 2024. This crisis exposed the inadequacies of traditional patron-politicians, who were conspicuously absent in this difficult time. Eventually, it further delegitimized their authority.

8.7.1. Faisal and *Jamat-e-Islami*

The floods of 2022 were a momentous event that made Faisal realize the limits of his clientele relationship, which affected his ability to provide for the needs of his kinship group and fellow villagers. In one of our online interviews, he told me this when he claimed that “all the district politicians were in Karachi, and his patron had stopped picking up his phone calls.” (Faisal 2022). He praised the humanitarian activities of *al-Khidmat* in our conversations. Haji, also praised the integrity and dedication of *al-Khidmat* members and contrasted them with traditional patrons who had abandoned the area for the comfort of urban centers like Karachi.

A few weeks into the flood relief work, I asked Faisal if he still thought Ahmed’s association with the *Jamat-e-Islami* and his politics was foolish. This time, he gave me an unexpected response: “Who do you think funded the *Jamat-e-Islami* protests near our village in 2020 when you were here?” (Faisal 2022). I was somewhat surprised by this response because, from what Faisal had previously said, I thought he viewed Ahmed’s political activism as “childish.” The situation also exposed my inability to understand the dynamics of the protest in its entirety, which is a task that is very difficult when political actors choose to hide their intentions. The latent patronage of protests here was perhaps a calculated move by Faisal to display his support toward a party that took water-related issues seriously, which was not given enough attention by the patron politicians. Though symbolic, JI’s protest sit-ins reverberated among the tail-end villagers; this was the first time someone publicly spoke about their concerns.

The food distribution and relief activities of the *al-Khidmat* Foundation after the floods considerably expanded *Jamat-e-Islami's* support base in the area. When the election campaign began in the latter half of 2023, it was pretty evident that the traditional patron elites would find it hard to retain their support base, which was visibly very angry due to the response of the former during the 2022 floods. In addition, intra-Jamali family political competition further weakened the position of the traditional elite and increased their electoral vulnerability. Thus, in the run-up to the elections, Faisal showed no restraint in announcing his support for *Jamat-e-Islami*, signaling a definitive break from his old patron.

This shift reflects broader trends of discontent with established politicians who failed to address local grievances. This was sharply formulated in post-flood observations by Haji, who noted, “A common human being is of no value for the politicians only when they need their votes.” (Haji 2022). This reflects a sentiment of disenchantment with traditional patronage politics. Faisal publicized his association with Badini, JI's candidate from the constituency, who had spearheaded relief efforts after the 2022 floods. JI's campaign capitalized on its humanitarian efforts and previous advocacy for equitable water distribution. Both of the issues resonated with tail-end villagers whom traditional political actors disillusioned. Like Ahmed, Badini identified himself as a “social worker” rather than a politician (“MPA Jaffarabad” 2024). So, being a social worker framed his political ambitions as humanitarian and not self-serving.

This has allowed the villagers of Village B to forge new political alliances, especially after the floods of 2022, which weakened traditional patronage networks. The case study of Village B reveals how environmental factors and unforeseen policy consequences influence local political dynamics and thereby shape electoral outcomes. This trend of religious party support in Village B confirms that socioeconomic deprivation may lead to support for alternative political organizations in a patronage system where electoral competition is not suppressed, which was the case in this district.

8.8. Electoral Win for *Jamat-e-Islami* and Limits of Change

As Faisal and his kin had openly declared their support for *Jamat-e-Islami*, they began vigorously campaigning for Badini, the party's candidate, before the election (Haji 2024;

Faisal 2024; Ahmed 2024a). Most of the campaigning was confined to the city and at the tail end of the canal branches. In the villages, the previously unorganized small landlords and peasant-proprietors mobilized under the *Jamat-e-Islami* banner. When I talked with Faisal and Ahmed, tensions and anticipation were running high, and there was just a day before the election. The day itself passed without any significant incident. The villagers of Village B voted in their Union Council polling station, where most were registered. Those who were in town, including Ahmed, came back to vote. Even though they were voting in a polling station in a village belonging to the big landlords with whom they had long-standing disputes, fears of confrontation did not come to fruition.

As the polling closed and the results began to pour in, it became immediately apparent that this would be a nail-biting race. The two Jamali traditional politicians, Faiq Khan and Umer Khan, were neck and neck with Badini, the *Jamat-e-Islami* candidate. Suspense mounted throughout the night until it was announced in the morning that Badini had won the election, (“Election Commission of Pakistan,” n.d.) a first defeat for the Jamalis in this constituency.

This result represented noteworthy changes within the constituency. First and foremost, it symbolized the lack of effectiveness on the part of Jamali politicians in meeting the needs of the locals for some time, especially as patrons were conspicuously absent in a moment of crisis. Second, it represented an increasing demand for actors that can address the needs at the local level. Lastly, it portrayed the effect of urbanization since the supporters of the *Jamat-e-Islami* candidate had links with the city of Dera Allah Yar. The last point supports Mohamand’s (2011) argument broadly, showing that such connections with the city influence local politics. However, it has been a long process of marginalization, after which this type of political mobilization could be realized.

8.8.1. Limits of Change

As noted previously, winning elections is not sufficient, but becoming part of governing coalitions is necessary. The post-election developments confirmed this. The significance of being part of the ruling government and coalition can be ascertained by the fact that in Pakistan, “Legislators in both the upper and lower houses of Parliament have since 1985 been entitled to constituency development funds that are disbursed, increased, or even withheld at

the direction of the parties heading the relevant provincial or national governments.” (Javid and Mufti 2020, 156).

With the election victory of Badini, the classic question arose: how could he become part of the ruling coalition to gain access to the resources needed to satisfy the demands of his voter clients? Although Badini had run on a platform that criticized the district’s old patronage system, he found himself constrained by the realities of the political system. Badini realized that the only way to get access to the resources he needed to serve his constituents was to try to join the ruling coalition. He joined the coalition of the old guard of Balochistan politics in the provincial assembly of Balochistan and was made a Secretary of Transport. Asked about the apparent contradiction of joining a government led by elites, a system he was earlier opposed to, Badini was candid in his response: “I must serve the people who voted me into power.” (“MPA Jaffarabad” 2024). Indeed, for Badini, serving his voters without being part of the ruling government was unimaginable. Thus, Badini’s need to align himself with the provincial elite to secure resources shows that even openly reformist politicians are often forced to work within the established patronage system to meet the demands of their voter base. His ideological opposition to the patronage system was, in effect, applicable only at the district level, and his stance was soon to be challenged further.

In the months after Badini became a member of the Balochistan Assembly, I had many conversations with Ahmed and Faisal, who were both immensely glad about the change that had unfolded in the district. Ahmed opined, finally, “*mardum aam shaoor aakhta*,” or “People finally have become conscious.” (Ahmed 2024a). Both were enthusiastic about Badini’s electoral success and how this would benefit the district and the city. Faisal told me that Jamalis have learned that “*khidmat ae bgair mardum vota na dayun*” or “without service, people do not vote.” (Faisal 2024).

With the initial euphoria of *Jamat-e-Islami*’s electoral victory slowly waning, the *Kharif* season started in April 2024. In my conversations with the village elders of Village B—who were still living there—many would say hopefully, “This year, we will get water because “*Badini taqat am ae*” or “Badini is in power.” (Saleem Khan 2024). The tenants and peasant proprietors started land preparation for growing rice, and hopes from Badini were high.

Soon, social media was flooded with videos and images showing illegal water pumps and

pipes operating in the non-command areas of the canals (Ahmed 2024b). Most fell within the Naseerabad district, which shares the Pat Feeder's water with Jaffarabad. The intent behind these posts seemingly had to do with identifying the culprits and punishing them. As social media was central to Badini's electoral success, he quickly responded by releasing videos of his meetings with the Irrigation Department and district administration, apparently to sort out the issue (Jammat-e-Islami 2024). However, social media messaging was inadequate in clearing the growing misgivings. In May and June 2024, Jaffarabad district faced an acute water shortage. Ironically and critically, it happened in Dera Allah Yar, where Badini won the most votes. The population in the city struggled to have enough water for its basic needs as all the tankers and *talab* (ponds) were running out of water fast.

Badini called a press conference to respond to the growing dissatisfaction throughout the district, and he identified three culprits responsible for water scarcity. First, he identified Sadiq Umrani, the irrigation minister of Balochistan, who hails from the neighboring district Naseerabad, where most of the illegal water pumps and pipes were allegedly located. Badini added, "People call him, and he calls the irrigation department, which is a problem," (*Current Water Situation and Problems Faced by People in Jaffarabad* 2024) suggesting that the minister's support was getting favorable treatment at the expense of the residents of Jaffarabad. He then addressed the issue of politicization of the local administration, saying, "All this transfer and posting business must stop." (Ibid). This reference was meant for old patron politicians who had brought their favorite bureaucrats into important positions within the district and were still trying to use their connections to make it hard for Badini to have a compliant bureaucracy. In this manner, Badini claimed that bureaucracy was not working impartially. Ultimately, Badini sought to persuade the people of Jaffarabad that "these problems are temporary. Have patience, and we will resolve this problem in the long term," (Ibid.), an admission, after all, of his limited power to ensure access to water for his supporters before rice cultivation and for the city dwellers who needed it for their daily use.

To understand the limits of Badini's power to bring change in Jaffarabad, it is helpful to consider the work of scholars on Pakistan's patronage politics. Wilder (1999) for example, analyzed the effects of patronage networks in Punjab. In his work, he gave the example of Nawaz Sharif's patronage system and how it negatively impacted the political fortunes of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Punjab. He argued that while in power, Sharif had "twelve years to develop ties with the Punjab provincial bureaucracy" (Ibid.,138), which enabled him

to consolidate his power and influence as the bureaucracy became subservient to his political goals at the expense of the PPP (Ibid.).

Such control over the bureaucracy is important for maintaining political dominance. It also reflects a broader trend in Pakistan, termed the “politicization of the state” by S. A. M. Ali (2020, 181). The research at the central level of Pakistan’s political system confirms similar trends. So, at the national level, this politicization involves placing loyalists in key bureaucratic positions, such as provincial chief secretaries, department secretaries, and heads of administrative districts, which allows ruling political parties to ensure that state institutions align with their agenda (Ibid.). Once bureaucracy is politicized in this manner, the party and politicians can control the flow of resources and patronage, which is vital for future electoral success and political survival.

Going back to Badini’s case, although he came to power with the strong support of the people in Jaffarabad, he faces a deeply politicized state apparatus that continues to align with the old entrenched Jamali patrons. Thus, Badini’s struggle is not just about delivering resources to his clients but about dealing with a local bureaucracy and administration that remains loyal to the old power holders. This explains the limitations of his ability to bring about substantial change, as his political victory has not translated into administrative control just as yet.

Badini’s case presents a paradox whereby structural constraints such as politicized bureaucracies are hard to dismantle even as an electoral win creates an appearance of change. His news conference was a partial acceptance of defeat in his capacity to resolve the water crisis for those who supported him. It revealed that without access to administrative power levers, even an electoral mandate is inadequate to bring real change. This also helps explain why optimism quickly turned to frustration following his electoral victory when he failed to improve water availability as my conversations with Ahmed revealed. Badini’s struggle reflects the broader constraints imposed on politicians in Pakistan seeking to challenge entrenched patronage networks. Immediate reformist expectations collide with real politics that are beholden to traditional elites.

After the press conference by Badini, I had an online conversation with Ahmed to get his opinion. His frustration was evident when he said, “He is right, but we need water.” (Ahmed 2024a). Ahmed’s response perfectly expresses the tension between electoral promises and the

reality on the ground. His response symbolizes the people's immediate needs, like water for irrigation and personal purposes, which have yet to be fulfilled. Part of the problem is increased expectations due to the change in who is in power. Ahmed and Faisal had viewed Badini's election victory as a watershed and felt they had facilitated a significant transition in local politics. Having given their mandate to a candidate who railed against the Jamali's, the people expected quick fixes for pressing problems. However, Ahmed's disillusionment points to a disconnect between electoral success and the delivery of promised goods in a system where administrative power of the state is still beholden to old patron-elites. The urgency in Ahmed's response also speaks to something: political legitimacy is linked with delivering on promises. Although Badini acknowledged his structural limitations at the press conference, his supporters focused more on the immediate water scarcity crisis. Ahmed's frustration is thus symbolic of the precarious position that politicians like Badini face: their inability to handle problems that can very quickly affect their political capital, for which they worked so hard through all the humanitarian work during the floods.

Another instance further exposed the limits of Badini's ability to address the problems faced by his constituents. After dealing with severe water scarcity in May and June, the residents of Dera Allah Yar had to deal with a flooding situation in August following the monsoon rains. A drainage channel near the city was breached in mid-August. It caused widespread panic among the city's residents, many of whom still vividly remembered the devastating floods of 2022. In response to the crisis, Badini and his party members, still calling themselves "social workers," rushed to the site and contacted the Irrigation Department for assistance (Jamat-e-Islami 2024). However, the officials allegedly demanded "fuel money" before they could respond. This situation left Badini and his team to take matters into their own hands. Badini and his party workers spent the entire night attempting to fill the breach by preparing and placing gunny sacks at the site where the breach had taken place (Ibid.). Despite their efforts, the makeshift solution was washed away the following day. Badini's failure to secure meaningful help from the district administration again represents his severe limitations. It shows a deeper systemic issue: the lack of bureaucratic cooperation essential for addressing such crises.

This incident illustrates what Waseem (1994) observed at the national level when he wrote, "Access to bureaucratic patronage has continued to be a supreme social and political value for the local elite, which has increasingly sought public office through elections" (11–12).

Thus, the harsh realities of the patronage system in Pakistan, where electoral victory alone means little, are epitomized in Badini's case. In the absence of bureaucratic patronage, politicians like Badini, who are essentially outsiders, can be rendered impotent in terms of being able to deliver. Therefore, the attempts of Badini to deal with the flood damage with his personal labor, although commendable, reflect his inability to mobilize the state apparatus, which continues to be insensitive and beholden to entrenched elites.

These events illustrate the limits of change in Jaffarabad. The initial enthusiasm surrounding Badini has gradually led to realizing how to control bureaucracy and cultivate good relationships at the provincial level. However, this will be a long and arduous process for Badini, especially as his supporters have already begun making demands that challenge his fight against patronage. For example, in one conversation, Faisal mentioned his expectation that Badini would secure him a contract for road construction to connect his village to nearby towns. Faisal said this was not favoritism, as he believed he was qualified for the job and had supported Badini during the elections. He argued, "We still do not have water, so this is our right" (Faisal 2024). In this way, Faisal claimed that political support should be reciprocated with tangible benefits.

The claims by Faisal echo Waseem's (1994) observation that "It is the quest for patronage, not demand for policy, which explains the prevalent mode of electoral politics in Pakistan" (25). This speaks volumes about how deeply entrenched patronage is as a guiding principle in relationships between politicians and voters. Although Badini's electoral platform spoke of reform and breaking away from the old system, the expectations of his supporters suggest that the logic of the patron-client relationship continues to have influence. The demand for favors, such as contracts, underlines the continued prevalence of patronage, even when framed in terms of rights.

The tension between the proclaimed ideals of Badini and what his supporters expect of him illustrates part of the more significant challenge facing him: how to reconcile his campaign promises of reform with the pragmatic imperatives of retaining political support in a system in which patronage is deeply embedded. Whether or not Faisal gets a contract, the expectation signals how old political norms persist, even under new leadership. This means Badini's time in office is likely to be very tricky. On the one hand, he will have to implement his promises for the voters, many of whom voted for him, hoping to move away from the old

patrons. On the other, he will have to negotiate the very system of patronage that still defines much of Pakistan's politics. How well he walks this tightrope of keeping his ideals and yet serving the needs of his constituents will determine his political future. It will be increasingly difficult for him to meet the expectations of his supporters and maintain a reformist position. In light of the dynamics between Badini and his supporters, one is reminded that electoral change is a part of the longer process where deeply entrenched political logics have a long life.

8.9. Conclusion

This chapter presented the complex dynamics of political organization in Village B. It began by narrating how and why the only vote bloc in the village has failed to establish alliances with the local *dhurr* networks. This phenomenon was explained by using the concept of dis-embedding of the villagers from their *ilaaqo*, which unfolded with water scarcity in the late 1990s. This water scarcity was linked to the remodeling and extension of the Pat Feeder Canal and the introduction of rice cultivation in the region. As water scarcity increased, the villagers had conflicts with powerful upstream neighbors. Eventually, they began to engage in seasonal migration to the cities in pursuit of other means of livelihood. Such migration, along with their political exclusion, diminished the leverage of village vote bloc leaders in their relations with their patron, as illustrated by the case of Faisal, who struggled to gain access to water.

Simultaneously, the city has emerged as a site for new political and social organizing. The example of Ahmed, who, during my fieldwork in 2020, began volunteering for the *al-Khidmat* Foundation, shows how the city can provide other forms of political mobilization. The floods of 2022 acted as an important moment within this context. It exposed the traditional patrons and provided the *al-Khidmat* Foundation, and by extension, *Jamate-e-Islami*, an opportunity to fill the vacuum by providing relief. The crisis gave this party much-needed political capital, which translated into its electoral success in 2024.

Within months of his triumph at the ballot box, however, the victorious Badini realized the limits of his abilities to fulfill what he had pledged; where the people believed he would change the situation with water availability, Badini faced barriers put by politicized bureaucracy. This struggle had an internal dimension, too, as illustrated by Faisal's

expectation to get a government contract in return for his support for Badini in the election. It showed how deeply the logic of patronage permeates the area. What this case illustrates, however, is the complex transitions underway in Village B and the canal-irrigated Balochistan. New political actors and organizations have come forward, but a deeply entrenched patronage system still influences political processes. The tension between the aspirations of reform and the realities of entrenched political practices thus reveals the limits of change. The challenge that politicians like Badini face in maneuvering these contradictions, which means balancing the promise of reform with the continued expectations of patronage from his voters, will inform the future political developments in the area.

9. Conclusion

An important starting motivation for this dissertation was to challenge the analytically compressed portrayals of Balochistan in existing literature. I began by highlighting the limitations of these portrayals, which too often overlook the province's local complexities. This concern led me to engage with a broader body of South Asian scholarship which indicated that an analysis of the colonial period was indispensable, given its influence on post-colonial political institutions and structures. Because I was particularly interested in village-level politics in Naseerabad, I initially assumed that colonial legacies would substantially explain contemporary local politics. Although my archival research confirmed that colonial interventions did establish important structural conditions, the actual contours of village politics of my case studies, namely Village A and B, took shape in the post-colonial period. This conclusion challenges dominant accounts that diminish the importance of post-colonial developments in Pakistan especially in regions like Balochistan. It is only by showing how centralization, modernization, and land reform policies in the post-colonial period profoundly reshaped local power structures in Naseerabad that it becomes obvious that we must look beyond colonial histories to understand political developments in Balochistan. Notwithstanding the salience of post-colonial politics and history, the colonial archive itself proved fascinating, as it illuminated how colonial governing logic and strategies laid the foundations for later developments and conflicts. By attending to both the colonial history and the post-colonial developments, this study ultimately argues for a more complex perspective on Balochistan's local politics, which acknowledges old structural legacies while recognizing the transformations and disruptions of more recent state interventions.

9.1. Colonial Period (1903-1947): Security Against Revenue Generation

I began by showing how the colonial administration failed to realize most of the justifications it provided for the lease of Nasirabad *niabat* from the Khan of Kalat in 1903. The colonial administrators provided such justifications for annexing Nasirabad as they began extending canal branches into the Khan's territory at the turn of the twentieth century. Such water control was an important tool of colonial policy that dated back to the mid-nineteenth century and aimed at "pacifying the wild frontier." (see Chapter 3). The justifications included the ineffective and cumbersome dual administration in the area, which was shared between the

British administrators and the Khan of Kalat, water scarcity, the indebtedness of *zamindars*, the ineffective revenue system of the Khan, and Nasirabad's potential for providing large tracts of lands for settling landless hill tribes of Kalat.

As the Khan of Kalat accepted the terms of the lease of Nasirabad, it was annexed to British Baluchistan Agency Territories in 1903; however, after the lease, the system of dual administration of Nasirabad persisted, water scarcity intensified, and indebtedness among *zamindars* increased, and the prospective canal construction was delayed. Therefore, the colonial administrators did not achieve their early goals of improved administrative efficiency, increased water availability, and revenue generation. Yet, their goal of "pacifying the frontier" continued unabated during this period.

I argued that the inability of colonial administrators to solve all of the problems lay in the peculiar patronage system they introduced in Nasirabad, which was mainly focused on generating security. This finding thus challenges Hypothesis 1 I developed, which postulated that revenue generation as a critical colonial objective. This policy preference was evident right after the area was leased. For instance, the 1906 land settlement had a significant focus on land grants (*jagirs*) in Nasirabad, which revealed the logic of the colonial rule. The land settlement not only attempted to attach certain tribes to the soil to generate security at the frontier but also shaped the rules introduced at the time of settlement related to recognition of land rights and the privileges attached to such land ownership. The land settlement (1906) provided tax-exempt *jagir* lands to Marri and Bugti tribes, which colonial administrators believed needed to be "attached to the soil." Such a land settlement was interlinked with the subsequent administrative system introduced in the area, where these tribes, along with already settled tribes like Jamalis, were given a critical role in maintaining law and order through institutions like the *Levy Thana* and *Jigra* system. The tribal elite of these tribes were to provide a cheap administration in reciprocation for their privileges and status. By bestowing land rights selectively, the British authorities introduced and developed a patron-client system that centered on securing alliances rather than generating revenue or investing in material development. The logic of patronage relations aimed at producing security shaped the contours of the relationship between the colonial state and the tribal elite and, thus, colonial rule in Nasirabad.

During this period, the colonial administrators hesitated to raise revenue rates as they failed to increase water availability in the area. As a result, the colonial administrators in Baluchistan, in their reports and letters, became ever more security-oriented in their reasoning for maintaining control of Nasirabad. Governance and administration by reliance on patronage thus became a hallmark of this period and simultaneously created conditions for instability in the long run. For instance, when the highly anticipated Khir Thar Canal was finally built in 1932, rather than assuaging the situation of highly indebted *zamindars* in Nasirabad, it led to conflicts between the colonial state and local tribes as the former tried to appropriate large tracts of lands that it could give in grants to favored tribes outside of Nasirabad. These new tracts amplified tensions over land rights and tribal privileges and reflected how irrigation-based expansion represented the primacy of land in shaping local hierarchies.

This was shown through the conflict between Jamali and the Bugti tribe in Usta Colony in 1935. Not only did the British Baluchistan administration face resistance from Jamalis, who saw the colonial administrator's preference for Bugtis as a problem, but the Baluchistan administration fought against the colonial authorities in Sind, who championed a more effective administration of Nasirabad so that more revenue could be generated in the area. Despite yearly revenue losses, the Government of India sided with the British Baluchistan administration, which championed revenue remissions for security purposes, which goes on to show how security trumped revenue generation as a colonial goal at the frontier. Ironically, revenue remissions, instead of decreasing, increased drastically after the canal was constructed in mid 1930s. Thus, I showed that the colonial rule in Nasirabad was deeply informed by a logic of patronage aimed at securing the frontier. This was shown through the land settlement policies, which legitimized the patronage system.

This form of colonial rule contrasts with the existing literature on Punjab and other parts of erstwhile colonial India, as revenue generation took a secondary role. Thus, it challenged Hypothesis 1, which I developed to explain the colonial history in Nasirabad based on existing literature. For instance, the work of Ali (1979), Javid (2012), and Bhattacharya (2019) has shown that profits and accumulation were essential goals of the colonial state in Punjab. Similarly, the work of Washbrook (1981) and Guha (1982) shows how it informed colonial land settlement in Bengal. Nasirabad, in contrast, shows that at the frontier of the colonial empire, security took precedence over revenue generation. Thus, this case urges us to

look at colonial rule in a differentiated manner, to connect the dots that appear to be in tension but remain complementary to each other. In other words, without security at the colonial frontier, revenue generation at the core would have remained unattainable. Therefore, frontiers like Nasirabad emerged as a zone of exception, where exemptions on revenue generation became the norm.

The prioritization of security over revenue in Nasirabad also overlaps with Mamdani's (1999) notion of the Bifurcated State, as used in the African context. Although this framework was developed for the colonial experience in Africa, it does provide a broad insight into the colonial administration in Nasirabad with some crucial distinctions. The distinction between settler and native that Mamdani insisted upon played a much lesser role in colonial India due to the absence of any significant settler population. Instead, the bifurcation in India took on an imperial geostrategic form whereby there was a distinctive way in which governance at the core or center of the empire differed from that of its more peripheral frontier regions. This duality in governing logic, i.e., security vs. revenues goals, revealed the "Janus-faced" nature of the presence of the colonial state (Mamdani 1999, 15). This duality, in the final analysis, should be seen as a complementary between the frontier and core.

9.2. Post-colonial Period (1947-1970): Redefining the terms of Patronage

As I moved to the post-colonial period, I showed how this relationship underwent redefinition when an essential concern of the nation-state was a sustained effort to align the politics of the local elite with national objectives, as Jalal (1990) so rightfully maintains. Loyalty to the nation and allegiance to the state emerged as a key criterion for the local elite seeking access to state patronage. However, the state's mission for creating compliance was somewhat at odds with the dual goals of revenue collection and agricultural modernization. Each of these required a cooperative partnership at the local level with the very elite from whom compliance on the questions related to the country's political future was desired. These dual goals created tensions in how the state acted in this area. This was exemplified in the case of Jaffar Khan Jamali, an influential landlord and tribal leader who helped the local authorities administer the area as he mobilized against the centralization plans of the bureaucracy and military in the 1950s and 1960s. Initially, Jamali was able to leverage his local authority to evade the actions of the higher bureaucracy. However, he soon realized the limits of the local

administration to protect him. This became especially true with his dismissal from *Shahi Jirga* in the mid-1950s and the resumption of thousands of acres of land from Jamali in 1959 under Ayub's land reforms.

In this period, conditions for accessing patronage were redefined. Ayub's revised conditions safeguarded the privileges of compliant local elites aligned with the policies of the developmental nation-state, which included no resistance toward its centralization plan. Land rights and the *Levy Thana* and *Jirga* System emerged as key instruments in generating these new loyalties. For instance, the 1959 land reforms were used to penalize those who resisted the centralization policies of the state by resuming their landholdings.

As Jamali did not stop his politics of championing regional autonomy, he was persecuted under various charges of corruption and spreading public disorder. Jamali was further sidelined as the Ayub regime implemented land reforms strictly in 1959 and merged Nasirabad into the Khairpur division in 1961, which effectively dismantled the Frontier Crimes Regulation system and the tribal Levy System. Not only this, the Ayub regime successfully propped a counter-local elite in Khosa's to keep Jamali out of politics, as evident in the 1962 and 1965 elections, which reveals how patronage was not merely about resource distribution but a means of political engineering, designed to secure local compliance and neutralize opposition. Thus, a recalibration of the patronage system occurred during this period, where loyalty to the nation-state in blind acceptance of policies emanating from the center became a cornerstone of enjoying privileges. (see Chapter 4).

These developments both supported and challenged the predictions of Hypothesis 2, which postulated a conflict between the "overdeveloped state" and local elite on the question of regional autonomy in the form of political mobilization and armed resistance. The case of Nasirabad showed that, like other parts of Balochistan, the politics of regional autonomy unfolded against the centralizing authoritarian state policies. Yet, such conflicts did not translate into armed conflict, which makes Nasirabad a deviant case from other parts of the province.

An important by-product of the persecution of Jamali through land reforms (1959) and the modernization of agriculture through canal construction in 1966 was the introduction of new tribal and ethnic groups to Nasirabad, which influenced its class structure and demographic

composition. Under the Sales and Lease Scheme of land reforms, many migrants, mainly from central Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab, came to Nasirabad. These newcomers were settled chiefly in the eastern parts of the sub-division of Nasirabad as small landlords and *khatedars* on state-leased land. These groups settled in the area as kinship groups, cultivating land as tenants. By redistributing land in this manner, the state not only diversified the local population but also reshaped patron-client networks, as new settlers became beholden to the district bureaucracy for acquiring and maintaining their leases. The developments challenged the assumptions of Hypothesis 1A, which postulated that land rights and class structure in Nasirabad would reflect the legacies of colonial-era policies. The case of Nasirabad reveals that colonial-era land grants and thus class structure were increasingly challenged and redefined in this period due to the ambitions of the post-colonial state and the conflict it generated with the local elite.

Essentially, state intervention in the form of land reforms and canal construction was instrumental in creating new types of village settlements, a discovery that complicates how we think about rural politics especially in terms of its link with the colonial past. Such transformations were seen as an illustration of the effects of the post-colonial state interventions, or what Soifer (2008) has called the “weight of the state,” as they influenced social structure and land relations in rural Nasirabad. In this manner, I demonstrated how the conflict between the state and local elite, along with the ambitions of the post-colonial state to modernize agriculture, produced effects that influenced local class structure, settlement structure, and demography that subsequently influenced the contours of patronage politics at the local level under a democratic dispensation. (see Chapter 4). This realization was fundamental to argue that in Nasirabad, the post-colonial state and its interventions have been significant in shaping political and economic developments, which adds to the studies in South Asia (Iyer 2003; Kapur and Kim 2006) that situate such changes largely in colonial period.

The politics of this period was understood through the theoretical framework provided by Alavi (1972b). His idea of an “overdeveloped state,” was helpful as it explained the ability of the post-colonial state in Pakistan to sideline local landed and tribal elite in Nasirabad. This concept shows the ability of the military bureaucracy oligarchy in post-colonial contexts to dominate social classes. Such dominance, as Alavi argues, is rooted in the colonial experience, as all native classes are brought under colonial domination. Although Nasirabad

was indirectly ruled, the ability of the bureaucracy and military to sideline the local elite had its roots in the colonial period, as these institutions eventually prevailed over the local elite, which had a different vision for the country's political system, namely with more provincial autonomy. These conflicts of the 1960s underlined further how the questions of ownership and control over land had become a central weapon of state strategy that reinforced the relative autonomy of the post-colonial state from the demands of local elites. In addition to Alavi's theoretical framework, the behavior of the post-colonial state in this period was similar to the realist understanding of the state by Skocpol (1979a; 1979b), who sees it as an actor with its own interests that goes beyond the interests of a particular class or social formation. Only through such an understanding could one explain the behavior of the post-colonial state in Balochistan, which significantly diverges from how it acted in Punjab for instance.

Thus, while the broader literature on post-colonial Pakistan often suggests that colonial-era elites effectively preserved their influence and privileges (Beringer 1962; A. Ahmad 1973; Ahmed 1984; Hussain 1984; Rashid 1985; Gazdar 2009; Javid 2011), the experience in Nasirabad illustrates a more complex reality in peripheral regions. This experience challenges the postulation made in Hypothesis 1A and 2A; the former projected that landed power and class structure would reflect the legacy of colonial policies, and the latter that the continuity of landed elite power would be visible. In Nasirabad, elites like the Jamalis, whose power was institutionalized under colonial rule, faced increasing pressure from military and bureaucratic authorities. The latter sought to recalibrate power structures through the selective application of land reforms and the introduction of administrative changes. This shows how, in peripheral areas, the post-colonial state incapacitated local elite dominance, contrary to the findings of the prevailing literature and the hypotheses I developed from it.

9.3. Patronage Democracy (1970 Onwards): Expansion and Limits

Further transformations occurred in Nasirabad with the advent of elections in the 1970s, which granted citizens in Pakistan voting rights and consequently empowered them to negotiate with local elites competing for political office. Hence, I presented patronage as a logic inscribed within the state structure from its inception that continued as a central idea through which state-society relations continuously operated. The existing scholarship on Balochistan's electoral politics of the 1970s focuses on the National Awami Party-Wali

(NAP-W) and its conflicts with Bhutto and the central government (Harrison 1981; Baloch 1987; Hewitt 1996; Berseeg 2001; Khan 2014; Sheikh 2018; Anushay Malik 2020).

However, I showed that this literature overlooks a key development of this period: the deepening of a patronage politics model for local elites interested in political office that was introduced under Ayub's regime. In Nasirabad, this model not only persisted but became more entrenched, mainly through Bhutto's strategic use of land reforms and electoral politics to consolidate central authority. This finding challenges the simplistic assumption of Hypothesis 2A that Bhutto's land reforms were partially successful; rather, it shows the concrete political nature and context of Balochistan politics that shaped the implementation of these reforms in Nasirabad which did not benefit all peasants equally.

As the NAP-W government in Balochistan was dismissed, Bhutto employed patronage strategically. This was evident when he rewarded compliant provincial elites in Balochistan with cabinet positions, chief ministership, and governorship. I showed that the expansion of patronage, as analyzed by scholars such as Wilder (1999) and Akhtar (2018), was already taking place in Balochistan during the 1970s, which they attribute to the Zia era, which began earlier. The case of Jamalis shows that state persecution and exclusion from accessing state patronage forced them to switch sides in the 1970s. In concrete terms, they sided with the center against those fighting for provincial autonomy.

The by-elections of 1974 were a turning point for the Jamalis. They left their oppositional politics of the 1950s and 1960s behind to assume the role of compliant representatives of Balochistan at the center. This realignment represented a political about-face from Jaffar Khan Jamali's earlier opposition to the center. In return for accepting the subordinate position to the central authority, the Jamalis could access ministries and state patronage. This shift demonstrates how elite survival strategies in peripheral areas like Nasirabad were deeply tied to the evolving patronage politics that remained the central logic of political control under a highly centralized state. This case says much about the Balochistan politics of today. The provincial elite in power operates on this principle that Jamalis learned half a century ago: the road to state power and resources is paved by committing to non-ideological politics.

At the same time, however, the effort of Prime Minister Bhutto to consolidate central control over Balochistan in general, and during military operations against guerillas in Balochistan, was based upon the tactical application of land reforms and the abolition of the *Sardari*

system as a means of garnering local support. In the Pat Feeder Canal area, large tracts of state-resumed lands from the Ayub period existed, which were politically utilized by Bhutto. As Herring (1979) pointed out, these reforms intended to “win hearts and minds,” particularly in the volatile province of Balochistan. The archival data and the interviews indicated that the success of the reforms had a critical caveat: the landholdings of Jamalis were primarily left intact, and the reforms were limited to the Nasirabad sub-division of Sibi District, where most of the state-resumed land was located. Thus, Bhutto’s reforms targeted the redistribution of state-resumed land already leased to *khatedars* under Ayub Khan’s previous land reforms. This selective redistributive policy further entrenched hierarchical power relations in Nasirabad and ensured that Jamalis remained loyal allies as middle-level intermediaries were selectively marginalized with Bhutto’s reforms. Unfortunately, such peculiarities of land reforms in Pakistan have been ignored so far. Focusing exclusively on failure and success, as most of the literature on land reforms in Pakistan does, negates the ability to appreciate the nuance of processes that unfolded due to such reforms. Indeed, unpredictable winners and losers emerged that were context-specific.

The selective redistribution strategy underlines that Bhutto’s land reforms were targeted not at denting the power of large landlords, like the Jamalis, but rather at getting rid of the middlemen that exploited the labor for the state, thus complicating the narrative of success and failure of land reforms as implicit in Hypothesis 2A. The tenants in the Pat Feeder Canal command area thus became the inadvertent beneficiaries of the conflict between the state and the provincial elite represented through NAP-W. This manifested a character of patronage politics, as Bhutto, in his attempts to exert control, used land reforms to eliminate local intermediaries as he strengthened his alliance with powerful landlords.

Whereas in Punjab, and indeed mainly in South Asia, land reforms have often been discussed within a broader agenda of economic modernization (Deininger, Songqing, and Hari 2009; Gazdar 2009) and fight against feudalism (Herring 1979; Bandyopadhyay 1986), in Nasirabad, these reforms were overtly political tools geared to ensure the loyalty of the local elites. In other words, Bhutto further strengthened the patronage model initially introduced by Ayub a decade ago. This model operated on the principle of persecuting those who resisted the center’s policies and rewarding those who accepted a subordinate role. From this decade onwards, the Jamali elite of Nasirabad consolidated their position within the patronage

system of Pakistan as cooperative and loyal local partners. They increased their material wealth and strengthened their political position at both the provincial and federal levels.

Thus, this *longue durée* of state presence in Nasirabad showed that colonial policies initially reflected colonial concerns of security, which influenced the patronage relations as they were inscribed into the state structure. With the post-colonial period, a dual process began: perpetuating established patron-client relations while concurrent reassessment under a new paradigm, whereby centralization, modernization, and nation-building informed the relationship between the state and local elite. This dual process represents a divergence from the findings of the dominant literature on Pakistan's immediate post-colonial political history. This literature shows continuity in elite privileges across colonial and post-colonial periods, especially in Punjab (Herring 1979; Gazdar 2009), Sindh (Ahmed 1984), and Khyber Pakhtun Khwa (Beringer 1962) except the recent and timely works of N.G. Ali (2020) and Raza (2023) who have complicated the understanding of this historical period. Essentially, in peripheries like Nasirabad, the privileges of the elites were far more precarious, contingent upon their alignment with central authority and state priorities.

9.3.1. Political Organization at the Village Level to Access Patronage

In subsequent decades, elections decentralized and expanded the structures through which patronage filtered down to the village level. To show how elections added another layer to the patronage system at the local level, the dissertation shifted its focus to analyzing political processes at the village level, starting from the elections of the 1970s. The first village case study, Village A, was founded amidst the larger conflicts and transformations caused by state interventions, which included canal construction, land reforms, and the persecution of local elites, that transformed the socio-economic reality of Nasirabad in the 1960s and 1970s.

The analysis at the village level also aimed to highlight the experiences of those whose lives transformed due to the state-elite conflicts during this period. I utilized the "history from below" method to collect historical narratives on this period. Such a method contrasted with the elite-centered narratives in the existing literature and Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation. This approach underlines not only the fact that state policies and electoral processes filtered down and reshaped local power structures but also how, at the village level, state policies were negotiated and implemented, such as the land reforms of Bhutto. Importantly, as these

new village settlements arose in response to the broader political upheavals, the case study illustrated how macro-level conflicts shaped micro-level social and economic arrangements. In addition, such an analysis widened the understanding of how patronage networks evolve and adapt in response to electoral politics and state-driven development projects.

The case study of Village A presented a longitudinal narrative based on interviews with the village elders. Village A emerged in eastern Nasirabad in 1976. These villagers migrated to Nasirabad during Ayub's period when land on lease and canal construction attracted migrants. The land reforms implemented during Bhutto's tenure provided them with land rights. As a result, the land titles to tenants on state-resumed lands contributed to the proliferation of new types of villages during this period, concentrated in eastern Nasirabad. These villages were called *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* Villages. In this way, Village A represents how state policies, rooted in Nasirabad's history of state and elite conflicts, shaped new settlement patterns, land relations, and subsequently political engagement.

9.3.1.1. Social Homogeneity, Equitable Land Ownership, and Ilaqadari: Local Level Dynamics

To understand how village-level political organization aimed at accessing state resources unfolded with the introduction of elections in 1970, I used Alavi's (1973) theoretical framework on the interdependence of sets of relationships in shaping political processes at the village level. I showed how, in the *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* villages, social homogeneity, equitable land ownership, and membership in local social and conflict resolution networks (*ilaqadari*) increased the bargaining power of villagers in their interactions with patron politicians competing for political office. Thus, it partially confirmed Hypothesis 5, which postulated that increased social capital and organizational capacity would increase the chances of accessing state resources.

The political unit for political participation in Village A resembled what Mohmand (2019) calls vote bloc, which she categorizes as an "informal political institution" at the village level. I showed how, since the birth of the village, the villagers were organized as two vote blocs, which were initially the extension of two kinship groups in the village. Thus, such vote blocs were socially homogenous, as all the members were related to each other through kin relations. In addition, the land reforms of Bhutto provided the villagers in Village A with proprietary rights on land, which were equally divided among the kin. Therefore, land

ownership by kin members gave them a certain autonomy in their relationship with their leaders. Lastly, as these new villages emerged in concentrated tracts of state-leased lands, it resulted in the birth of geographically contiguous villages, which created local networks of conflict resolution and sociality encapsulated in the ethics of *ilaqadari*. It represented a social institution born from local conflict resolution and mutual support networks among *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* villages. This provided them a means of resolving local conflicts without relying on the state and patrons, thus endowing them autonomy in their local affairs. As a result, these results confirmed Hypothesis 4, which postulated that different groups would shape the political organizing and decision-making at the village level in Nasirabad, which included kinship and *ilaqadari* relations. In addition, this also showed the significance of the settlement structure, which went beyond the village, in shaping local networks of political organization, which were instrumental in accessing state resources. Thus, the case of Village A presented an additional variable that influenced access to state resources, which required refining Hypothesis 5.

Rather than recreating top-down structures of dependency, as in the feudal-type patron-client relationships found in regions such as Punjab in Pakistan (Inayatullah 1963; Alavi 1972a), Gujarat, India (Berman 1989), and Uttar Pradesh in India (Brass 1965), social homogeneity, land ownership, and *ilaqadari* provided villagers to engage in clientele relationships from a relative strength rather than simply dependency. These factors gave birth to a type of patronage wherein politicians had to actively seek out the support of villagers who could demand benefits in the form of public employment, infrastructural development, and access to state resources. These factors confirmed Hypothesis 3, which posited that multiple variables would influence the political behavior of the villagers but added to it by showing that land ownership, social networks, and relations positively influence political outcomes for the villagers.

In this manner, I further demonstrated how this form of patronage departed from the more commonly studied models of clientelism in rural South Asia, defined by class distinctions, social stratification, and occupational divisions that often dictated the flow of resources and power (Inayatullah 1963; Alavi 1972, 1973; Berman 1989; Martin 2009; 2015). Village A represented a more egalitarian political engagement than the hierarchical patronage systems typical of South Asia (Brass 1965; Ruud 1999; Chandra 2004; Witsoe 2013). In this case,

with no class structures in the 1980s and 1990s, villagers could negotiate with patron politicians through their kin leaders instead of influential landlords.

The patron-client relationships in the villages of *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* emerged as a tool of more participatory local politics in which patronage was not utilized as a means by which political elites merely consolidated power but was also a mechanism through which villagers could extract benefits in return for electoral support. This was captured in the fact that villagers could influence political outcomes using their collective bargaining power.

Therefore, the historical analysis of Village A provides a critical point of departure since this case illustrates how the local interdependent social networks may provide a condition that increases leverage in negotiation in electoral politics. This confirms Putnam (1994), Van Deth (2003), Mitra's (2010) argument on the potentials of social capital, which increased the leverage enjoyed by vote bloc leaders and thus ensured that resources flowed into the village, as reflected in Village A in the form of increased public employment. This confirms Hypothesis 5, which predicted a direct link between increased social capital and access to state resources.

9.3.1.2. The Functioning of a Vote Bloc

Once resources were secured through patronage, they were allocated according to a complex set of principles. First, among these was differentiated ascriptive affinity, in which closer kin were more likely to gain access to resources than distant relatives, which was inscribed in the principle of *zor* and *chikh* (strength and influence). This principle was tempered by the countervailing notion of *insaaf* (justice), which pressured the vote bloc leader to distribute benefits equitably among his vote bloc members as focusing solely on ascriptive ties risked fragmenting the group's cohesion. Over time, ascriptive affinity showed its fluid character: through intermarriages, members of a kinship group could develop stronger ties to the leader, thereby increasing (or decreasing) their chances of accessing resources like public-sector jobs, depending on shifting kinship relations. In addition, the material independence of the kin members rooted in their land ownership and moral claims of equality (*braberi*) among kin provided them with leverage in their relationship with the vote bloc leaders. Finally, I showed how *mashwaro khanag*, or (consultation), allowed vote bloc members to make demands on their leader. This mechanism helped them press him to fulfill their needs, as failing to address these demands threatened the *seho* (unity) of the vote bloc.

Taken together, these findings suggest that access to state resources at the local level is determined by an interaction of factors operating at multiple scales of patronage network. Although possessing social capital may benefit a vote bloc as a whole, individual members deal with different constraints and opportunities. Accordingly, the success of a voting bloc in securing state resources does not necessarily translate into equal gains for each member. Nevertheless, each factor mentioned above shapes the likelihood that a specific individual within the vote bloc will obtain access to state resources. This complicates the question I formulated when I began my research, which related to knowing why some political actors successfully access state resources while others do not. Although my question was narrowed to the village level, the distinctions that I noticed within the village compelled me to deconstruct the village as a homogenous unit despite many factors, as mentioned above, regarding land relations and social homogeneity might dictate so. Therefore, I engaged with the inequalities within the village in addition to the differences between the two villages I was interested in.

Therefore, I also underlined the exclusivist logic that underpins the patronage system at the village level. For example, vote blocs that backed losing candidates in elections frequently found themselves marginalized, as seen in Village A through the case of Sohbat Khan. Despite his attempts to secure government jobs for his kin, he failed to gain them as they were consistently passed over in favor of Janu's kin simply because Sohbat's patron repeatedly lost at the polls. This case illustrates the precarity at the heart of patronage-based politics in which resource access hinges on shifting power balances within and between vote blocs. Those aligned with weaker patrons risk being continually disadvantaged, which creates a self-reinforcing cycle of exclusion that highlights the limits of patronage as a mode of resource distribution. Winners can leverage their enhanced access to state resources to fortify their positions and accumulate wealth that further deepens existing inequalities. This was epitomized in the case of the kin group of Janu Khan. Thus, the access to state resources based on kinship relations also produces inequalities among the competing groups.

9.3.1.3. Resource Availability at the Village Level: Pragmatism and Success of Patrons

I also demonstrated how resource availability at the village level was inseparable from the pragmatic politics practiced by patron politicians at the provincial and national levels. Their political party switching illustrated the benefits of non-ideological politics and opportunism within Pakistan's patronage system. For instance, the decision of Mir Taj Muhammad Khan

Jamali to align with Bhutto and the PPP allowed them to consolidate their power in the area. This was reflected in their uncontested victory in the 1977 National Assembly elections. Their lack of ideological commitment became clear when they quickly changed their loyalties after Zia's coup and were adjusted to his federal cabinet by 1981. This ability to engage in non-ideological political maneuvering explains why the Jamalis remain unchanged faces representing Balochistan in Pakistan's political system.

Such pragmatic politics have effects that resonate at the local level. For instance, they also influenced clients like Janu Khan in Village A, where patronage took the form of schools, basic health units, and road construction. The allocation of this resource strengthened Jamali's influence and reinforced patron-client ties. It showed how local-level resource distribution depended on patrons' ability to direct and engage with national power structures. This confirmed the findings of Wilder (1999), Martin (2015), and Auerbach and Thachil (2018) that the qualities of an intermediary, like his bureaucratic reach, make him attractive to voters. Chapters 5 and 6 showed that this pattern persisted well into the 1990s when repeated elections reproduced and stable patron-client relationships.

Over time, traditional tribal and feudal elites increasingly acted as patron-politicians. They wielded considerable power to direct state resources and local bureaucracies to serve their constituents, which simultaneously shored up their authority as Waseem (1994) notes in his work. In this way, I revealed how resource availability at the village level was intertwined with the success of a patron in securing a position in the governing coalition and delivering on promises. This ultimately showed the multi-tiered nature of the patronage system in Pakistan, where politicians from provinces like Balochistan, where political party support is extremely fragmented, must develop coalitions both at the provincial and national levels. These findings required adding another variable to explain success in accessing state resources, which required refining Hypothesis 5 even further by adding the politics at the provincial and national levels as an important factor that influences resource availability at the local level.

9.3.2. Evolution of Vote Blocs: Tenants, Household and *Dhurr*

As the investigation proceeded to village-level politics, I traced the emergence and evolution of the vote bloc as the political unit of organization. I explained the changes in its functioning

as an outcome of the socioeconomic transformations in the village during previous decades. This included the exponential expansion of the village population, the rise of tenancy relations, the expansion of market relations, and the increasing competition over state resources. These changes in the social, economic, and political spheres have altered kinship relations and availability of resources and changed how vote blocs function today. This narration resisted and complicated the more superficial understanding of patronage politics as being static and unchanging in its nature. I showed how local structures interact with and respond to larger transformations. Although various studies have engaged with informal political institutions in the political science literature in Pakistan, including Alavi (1973), Waseem (1994), Wilder (1999), Mohmand (2019), Mufti, Shafqat, and Siddiqui (2020), no longitudinal analysis of such institutions as they evolve has been conducted. Therefore, the analysis of vote blocs in Village A adds to our knowledge of such informal political institutions at the village level.

To fill this gap, I relied on Helmke and Levitsky's (2006) work on informal political institutions in Latin America. It provided the theoretical framework to understand how informal institutions adapt to pressures and opportunities from formal political institutions. I showed that, in the case of Pakistan, the informal institutions, namely vote blocs, are not unchanging but fluid and adapt continuously as a response to the broader social, economic, and political changes. Here, such adaptation at the local level explains the resilience and flexibility of patronage systems within an evolving political environment. This shows how informal political institutions continue to mediate state relations in the form of resource distribution in a changing context.

Three critical factors became important for my analysis as I explored the transformation of vote blocs in Village A. First, new sites of decision-making and political organization at the local level have developed, namely the household and the *dhurr*, which are much more actively present in village politics today. The vote blocs are sandwiched between the two. As a basic unit of social organization, the household and the *dhurr* at the Union Council level have become critical sites where decisions and political strategies are articulated. I demonstrated how vote blocs are constituted within these spaces. I teased out how micro-level familial dynamics interact with broader collective political organizations to shape local power structures today. I argued that the household as a decision-making unit is linked to the introduction and expansion of private property and the nature of public jobs, which primarily

benefit families and not whole kin groups. The rising importance of *dhurr* in local politics is attributed to several factors, including population growth, local government elections, and the preference for cost-effective political campaigning methods by patron politicians. This shift has come at the expense of traditional voting blocs.

Second, my analysis revealed how new recruitment principles in vote blocs have changed how they function today. The relationship between vote bloc leaders and their members has changed, and new vertical linkages have increased over time. This is exclusively the case with the membership of tenants in the village vote blocs. This change has reconstituted how loyalty and membership are negotiated within vote blocs compared to old horizontal linkages exclusively based on kinship ties. Now, vote blocs are a mix of these vertical and horizontal linkages. The changing nature of these linkages speaks to a broader transformation in how informal political institutions adapt in response to the increasingly diverse population due to the introduction of tenancy relations in the village. The increase in tenancy relations was mainly explained by focusing on the availability of public jobs for the villagers and the introduction of labor-intensive rice cultivation, factors directly linked with the interventions of a formal institution, i.e., the state.

Thirdly, I discussed how increased competition for state resources at the village level has resulted in the breaking up of the older vote blocs and the proliferation of new ones. Access to state resources has been more contested with the growth of the population in the village, which has given rise to a diverse type of political actors and diversification of patron-client networks. This was shown through the case of Rahm Ali and Master in Village A, who have emerged as new types of political actors who are challenging the authority of traditional vote bloc leaders struggling to meet the demands of their vote bloc members. These changes show that local politics is dynamic and competitive, with vote blocs no longer functioning as merely an extension of kin groups but breaking up with increasing demands. Such fragmentation and proliferation underline the competitive and dispersed nature of power inside villages as new political actors challenge the old entrenched order.

These findings demand refining Hypothesis 5, which was based on the works of Auerbach (2016), Auerbach and Thachil (2018), Berenschot and Bagchi (2020), and Kosec et al. (2018). The hypothesis posited that a competitive environment and intensity of party networks lead to greater access to state resources. In Village A, village-level competition in

the 1980s and 1990s was relatively low, measured through the number of vote blocs in the village. Yet, the number of jobs and development projects that villagers could access was significant. Over time, the competition increased, which was evident in the fragmentation of vote blocs. Thus, this case showed that competition stems from the scarcity of desired resources (i.e., public employment) and the increasing difficulty of securing them. Simultaneously, the rise of intra-village level political organizing has created an environment with numerous local actors engaging in electoral mobilization, which can be seen as a proxy of the intensity of networks, yet this has not translated into increased access to state resources. Thus, competition and intensity of local networks do not necessarily lead to increased access. (see Chapter 6 and 7).

The success of the vote bloc leaders in accessing the increasingly scarce state resources depends, in turn, upon their success in developing strategic alliances with the local *dhurr*, which has emerged as a larger unit of political organization at the Union Council level. This finding supports Hypothesis 5, as one of the variables it posits as being influential in shaping the ability to access state resources is the organizational capacity of the people. The *dhurr* has evolved as a significant means for patron politicians to manage election campaigns and the distribution of resources. It is a more extensive and hierarchical system of political organization. I showed that all vote bloc leaders in Village A are now members of local *dhurrs*, underlining that political leadership has become more integrated into expanding patronage networks. More particularly, this integration has become necessary with the considerable population growth across the area, which has increased the demand for state resources. Ultimately, the factors influencing the function of vote blocs closely correlated with the demographic shifts and the birth of new political structures in the form of *dhurr*. These changes reflect the resilient characteristic of informal political institutions that adapt to changing reality.

9.3.3. Costs of Political Exclusion and Opportunities in the City and Crisis: Alternative Political Organization

Given the salience of membership in such political organizations at the local level, the case of Village B revealed the costs of not being part of such *dhurrs*. Although Village B is similar to Village A, it is also a *Baar-e-waal Zamindar* village. It also consists of small landlords, peasant-proprietors, and tenants, yet it has only one vote bloc in comparison to four vote

blocs in Village A and lacks membership in the *dhurrs* of its Union Council. I examined the factors that impede political alliances at the Union Council level for the voting bloc in Village B and presented the consequences of its inability to organize locally. The analysis focused on the patron-client relationship of the vote bloc leader with his patron through the case of Faisal, the leader in Village B.

I analyzed how water scarcity since the mid-1990s when the Pat Feeder Canal was remodeled, has had cascading effects on villagers in Village B. It has dis-embedded them from their economic, social, and political life arrangements of the past, which essentially means the breakdown of old means of existence. The case shows how, without water, rural agrarian order cannot exist. Unlike Village A, which was settled earlier and enjoys proximity to the canal head, Village B's tail-end location on the Pat Feeder Canal has put it at a significant disadvantage. The water problem, or as the villagers call it, "*aafaa maslo*," emerged when the canal was remodeled and extended along with the policy change that legalized water-intensive rice cultivation in the area. Since then, the villages at the tail-end of the canal have faced severe water scarcity (see Chapter 8).

The water scarcity was an effect of policy intervention and the topographic disadvantage of Village B. The settlement conditions of the village further compounded this. In the 1980s, the kin group of Mewa Khan purchased land in the western section of the Jaffarabad district. It was an area dominated by powerful landlords. Although Village B initially benefited from good relations with neighbors and shared the same patron as Village A, the canal remodeling and extension, along with expanded rice cultivation, changed their relationships with upstream big-landlord (*Mazen Zamindar*) villages, which left smaller villages like B at a disadvantage. The traditional water-sharing relationships (*sharaqatdari*) between upstream and downstream villages broke down due to irrigation infrastructure and policy changes. As a result of water scarcity at the tail-end, there has been an increase in migration from Village B to cities across Balochistan and Sindh. This migration has disrupted the ability of villagers to participate in old social networks, such as the *ilaqadari* relations, which were instrumental in conflict resolution. Over time, such exclusion in the social sphere with migration has translated into exclusion from political organizing at the local level. In recent years, such marginalization has prompted the search for new political engagement, a phenomenon that resonates with the findings of the work on migrants by scholars like Ryan (2023), who show their capacity to "re-embed" after unsettling events in life.

In sum, Village B's inability to integrate into local *dhurr* networks, as an effect of the canal's restructuring and growing inequalities in water access, has accentuated its political isolation, which translates into the reduced ability of villagers to access state resources. The inability to access water and the subsequent breakdown of social ties in conjunction with the reliance on a single vote bloc show the precariousness of patron-client bonds. By considering the intersection of political exclusion and geographical disadvantage, this case reveals how state-driven interventions, such as canal remodeling and shifting agricultural policies in the 1990s, reshaped local power dynamics and exacerbated existing inequalities at the tail-end of the canal. Effectively, such past interventions continue to exert influence on the social, political, and economic life in Village B.

Thus, this case shows that the land ownership and social composition of Village B, which has significant similarities with Village A, appear insufficient to influence their ability to leverage their political participation to increase their chances of accessing resources like water and public employment. As a result, this confirms part of Hypothesis 5, which posits that high levels of social capital and organizational capacity, measured in terms of membership in local social and attendant political organizations, increase the chances of accessing state resources. Political competition at the local level, measured in the form of *dhurr* groups at the Union Council level, from which the villagers of Village B are excluded, does not result in better access to state resources, which challenges Hypothesis 5 insofar as it sees a positive link between the two. This case suggests that inclusivity in local networks is an important variable that tells more about access to state resources than competition among local political actors.

As the migration has disrupted the old social networks and conflict resolution methods of villagers, it has also led to the search for new political engagement. An excellent example of the changing dynamics of political organization in the Jaffarabad district in Naseerabad Division is the recent involvement of migrants from village B with *Jamat-e-Islami*, a religious political party hitherto based in urban areas. Growing urbanization, increasing dissatisfaction with their traditional patrons, and repeated climate disasters, most notably floods in 2010, 2012, and 2022, have provided *Jamat-e-Islami* with a foothold through its humanitarian efforts. While Siddiqi (2020) uses the case of Sindh to show how crises provide an opportunity for the state to renew its social contract with society, in Naseerabad, these crises have had the reverse effect of undermining the legitimacy of traditional patronage

networks and the state. Such crises have emerged as the failure of the old structures of patronage to effectively respond to the new challenges that have created space for alternative forms of political engagement, notably those that are underpinned by religious and humanitarian outreach, like the *Jamat-e-Islami* associated *al-Khidmat* foundation.

This shift, however, has not succeeded in dislodging patronage politics as a governing logic. *Jamat-e-Islami*, which campaigned on the promise of abolishing the old system of patronage in the area and won the elections in Jaffarabad in 2024 elections, has quickly found itself in a dilemma. The historic 2024 electoral victory of Badini, although hailed by his party members as a turning point for the area, has led to initial setbacks. The fact that the local bureaucracy continues to be beholden to the old patron elites has made it hard for the party to deliver on its promises. In addition, as time passes, its supporters have begun making claims of the party that are anything but beyond “old patron logic” that the party wants to eliminate. Hence, even as old patronage structures may be collapsing, the logic of patronage nonetheless continues to underpin political behavior in the area. It implies that such forms of political logic are much more flexible and resilient than they might seem initially.

9.4. General Implications of the Findings

To synthesize the broader findings of this dissertation, it is justified to suggest that state interventions, even in what we understand as the peripheries of empires and nation-states, have a lasting impact—albeit one that cannot be pre-determined. Such interventions, whether in land grants, land reforms, construction, expansion of irrigation projects, or public-sector employment, do not operate in a social vacuum. While these policies are ostensibly designed to achieve specific goals—such as securing the frontier, improving agricultural productivity, or expanding the nation-state’s power—their far-reaching, unintended consequences reshape local social and political relationships in ways the state does not and cannot always foresee. What appears as a straightforward policy directive from above is always intertwined with local micropolitics. These interventions may generate unintended conflicts as well as opportunities. Therefore, a close examination of both the intended objectives and the unintended consequences may provide deeper insight into how state interventions, through various policies, interweave with social and political realities at the local level.

In other words, state interventions are never simply a top-down translation of policies but are co-produced by local actors who reinterpret and reappropriate such measures within their own social realities—realities shaped by questions of power, kinship relations, political ambitions, and specific fears. Only by recognizing the dual nature of these interventions—the official intent and the local-level responses—can we sharpen our understanding of the complex processes by which power and policies are negotiated and inequalities are either reproduced or contested. Moving forward, scholars and policymakers will benefit from a deeper understanding of the local conditions that mediate the impact of even the most well-intended reforms.

In addition, the two case studies revealed the persistence of patronage as a central logic through which political relations at the local level take shape. Although it may appear as a broad principle mediating unequal relationships, it is anything but uniform. The case studies demonstrate that patronage takes different forms depending on a set of variables. However, what remains constant is its exclusionary logic, whereby some benefit while others are disadvantaged. Taken together, the people of the area display ambivalent attitudes toward patronage: some see it as just in normative terms, others find it problematic but do not wish to see it disappear, and still others challenge its existence. Patronage is a logic that can sustain itself as long as it has sufficient support, yet this support always remains contingent and is not merely an imposed status quo. Thus, the victory of an ideological political party does not necessarily signify the end of patronage as the defining structure of political relations; rather, it may signal resistance to the terms on which patronage is distributed.

At the local level, voters' ability to access state resources is contingent upon multiple factors, many of which are historically pre-determined. The effects of state-elite conflicts at particular historical moments may persist long after their occurrence. Village A exemplifies this phenomenon. Historical equality in land ownership, social homogeneity, a contiguous settlement structure with similar villages, and geographical location determined this village's success in accessing state resources. These variables were shaped by political conflicts and strategies in the 1960s and 1970s. This case highlights the significance of embeddedness in local networks as a crucial factor influencing voters' ability to access state resources—an aspect that has so far received little attention in the existing literature. While history plays a significant role in shaping the politics of Village A, no place is merely trapped in the past; social and land relations evolve slowly and unpredictably, influencing contemporary political

processes. These changes may be linked to the introduction of private property, public employment, market expansion, and population growth.

In contrast, the case of Village B exemplifies the unintended consequences of a well-meaning but poorly conceived policy intervention, which inadvertently disenfranchised tail-end villages of small landlords and negatively influenced local politics. Ironically, policies enacted in the name of the marginalized may end up producing further marginalization. Yet, those who are marginalized arduously navigate this complex reality to secure the best possible outcomes within their constraints. Thus, not all politics is strictly determined by history. Political actors exercise agency, as seen in the efforts of young people in both villages who strive to engage in politics on their own terms. However, at least in the short term, structural constraints limit what is possible. Nonetheless, these constraints do not determine all the possibilities that the future may hold.

9.5. Future Research

This dissertation traced the persistence and evolving nature of patronage politics in Naseerabad, yet several areas remain open for further research. My focus on Village A and B provided a window into the local political process. However, future studies might expand this lens both geographically and thematically. One way to do this could be by investigating how similar patronage networks operate in other districts of Balochistan. This would reveal the extent to which the patterns observed here hold true for other socio-economic contexts of the province. Such comparative work would also help identify local peculiarities of patronage politics by shedding light on how people negotiate access to state resources in a rapidly changing society.

Another avenue for future research relates to a deeper exploration of gender dynamics. Although my analysis has touched upon increasing employment opportunities for women and their participation in household-level decision-making, I believe that more detailed work could consider how changing social norms reshape the roles women have in village politics, especially in relation to vote blocs. This could be done through longitudinal studies that trace the generational change in women's access to education, employment, and, thus, political participation. This could be done by asking how patron-client relationships adapt to accommodate or resist changing gender expectations.

Beyond local electoral politics, scholars may also investigate how larger forces, such as national party politics, changing administrative boundaries, and state interventions, impact the socio-political space we call village. Furthermore, future research might explore in greater detail the relationship between technology, such as smartphones or social media, and political mobilization by looking at how digital tools open up new negotiation spaces or reinforce existing hierarchies. Social media has increasingly become an important space in rural Balochistan, and it needs to be analyzed to understand political processes fully.

Finally, environmental and economic changes that range from water scarcity and abundance to market relations are changing how patronage functions at the local level. Future scholars may look at how global economic pressures and processes of environmental disasters affect rural politics by focusing on changes in livelihoods, migration patterns, new political strategies, and collective action. These questions might follow from the historical and ethnographic observations made here and help them consider what changes in patronage networks can be expected as broader structural changes come into play. They can further elaborate on the complicated relationships between local agency, political processes, state power, and global forces.

10. Zusammenfassung

I. Belutschistan wird in den meisten akademischen Diskursen gleichförmig untersucht: Tribalismus, Nomadismus und Aufstandsbewegungen beherrschen eine verengte Sichtweise auf die Provinz auf dem Kacchi Plateau im Südwesten Pakistans. Das führt dazu, dass ganze Regionen strukturell übersehen werden. Das gilt auch für Naseerabad, eine dicht besiedelte, kanalbewässerte Agrarregion in den *Kachhi*-Ebenen – sie ist Forschungsobjekt dieser Dissertation.

Ausgehend von den unzulänglichen Verallgemeinerungen des Diskurses über Belutschistan zeige ich Naseerabad als eine Region, deren soziale und politische Struktur eben diesem nicht entspricht. Stattdessen veranschaulicht die Untersuchung der kolonialen Geschichte sowie der gegenwärtigen Beziehungen zwischen Staat und Gesellschaft in Naseerabad, wie unterschiedliche Siedlungsmuster, unbeabsichtigte Auswirkungen staatlicher Eingriffe, topographische Gegebenheiten und lokale Machtverhältnisse im heutigen Naseerabad prägen. Sie fügt den monokausalen Generalisierungen und Vereinfachungen der politischen Analyse Belutschistans ein differenziertes Bild hinzu.

Die Untersuchung stützt sich auf Archivdaten, die sowohl koloniale als auch postkoloniale Politiken bezüglich Land und Wasser umfassen. Es geht darum aufzuzeigen, dass die Logik der kolonialen Herrschaft an der Grenze zu *Upper Sind* mit Naseerabad eher von Sicherheitsbedenken als von Wirtschaftsinteressen geprägt war. Das Sicherheitsimperativ beeinflusste die Beziehung zwischen dem kolonialen Staat und den lokalen Eliten, was sich in der Landverteilungspolitik in dieser Region zeigte. Diese Politik konzentrierte sich darauf, nomadische und landlose Bergbewohner:innen mit sogenannten *Jagir*-grants auszustatten. Dabei handelt es sich um nichtbesteuertes Land, diese sollten vor allem dazu dienen, die Grenze zu stabilisieren.

Der postkoloniale Staat hingegen überarbeitete die Bedingungen seiner Beziehung zu den lokalen Eliten, indem er versuchte, seine Macht zu zentralisieren und die Landwirtschaft zu modernisieren. Ich zeige, wie sich die Patronagebeziehungen zwischen Staat und lokalen Eliten – insbesondere durch Landreformen (1959, 1972) – auf eine Weise auswirkten, die die einfache Dichotomie zwischen gescheiterten oder erfolgreichen Landreformen in Pakistan in Frage stellt.

Zusätzlich zu diesen Reformen führte der Bau und die Erweiterung von Kanälen (ab 1966) zur Entstehung grundsätzlich neuartiger Dorftypen in Naseerabad, die als *Baar-e-waal Zamindar Halkh* (Dörfer kleiner Grundbesitzer und bäuerlicher Eigentümer) bezeichnet wurden. Diese Dörfer, analysiert anhand des Beispiels von Dorf A, zeigen, wie gleicher Landbesitz, auf Verwandtschaft basierende Ansiedlungsmuster und die Nähe zu ähnlich organisierten Dörfern eine erfolgreiche lokale politische Organisation und den Zugang zu staatlicher Patronage erleichterten. Diese Patronage zeigte sich in Form von öffentlicher Beschäftigung und Entwicklungsfonds. Als der Zentralstaat in den 1990er Jahren damit begann, das Kanalnetz weiter auszubauen, führte er ein neues System für den Anbau von Nutzpflanzen und die Wasserverteilung ein. Dadurch entstanden neue Dörfer, untersucht anhand des Beispiels von Dorf B. Dieses weist zwar ähnliche soziale Strukturen und Landverhältnisse wie Dorf A auf, wurde jedoch durch ihre topographische Lage innerhalb des Kanalnetzes sowie durch die Präsenz bereits etablierter Nachbardörfer insgesamt benachteiligt. Die Herausforderungen für diese Dörfer wurden durch zunehmende Wasserknappheit noch verstärkt, was zur saisonalen Migration der Dorfbewohner in die Städte führte. Diese Faktoren schränkten die Fähigkeit der Bewohner von Dorf B ein, sich politisch zu organisieren und in gleichem Maße wie Dorf A auf staatliche Ressourcen zuzugreifen.

Während koloniale Landverteilungen und die damit verbundenen Institutionen traditionell als zentrale Einflussfaktoren für zeitgenössische politische Prozesse betrachtet werden, zeige ich so, wie postkoloniale staatliche Eingriffe und Machtkämpfe zwischen Zentrum und Provinz die sozialen und politischen Beziehungen in einem peripheren Gebiet Pakistans tiefgreifend verändert haben. Somit leistet die Untersuchung einen Beitrag zu der wissenschaftlichen Literatur, die sich mit Variationen im politischen Verhalten befasst: Historische Prozesse, die über die Kolonialzeit hinausreichen, prägen weiterhin die gegenwärtige Politik in den Dörfern A und B. Dieses historische und politische Narrativ konzentriert sich auf die Persistenz und die Grenzen von *Patronage* in Naseerabad.

II. Die folgenden drei Fragen stehen im Mittelpunkt der Untersuchung dieses Komplexes:

1. Welche Arten von Beziehungen und Netzwerken mobilisieren Wähler, an Wahlen in diesem Teil Belutschistans teilzunehmen, insbesondere wenn diese Beziehungen nicht durch Abhängigkeit von traditionellen Eliten definiert sind? Wie spiegelt sich darüber hinaus ihre Fähigkeit zu unabhängigem Handeln innerhalb scheinbar restriktiver politischer Strukturen wider?
2. Warum gelingt es einigen Dörfern, ihr Engagement bei politischen Wahlen in einen gewinnbringenden Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen umzuwandeln, während dies bei anderen nicht der Fall ist? Bzw. verallgemeinert: Warum können sich bestimmte Gruppen durch ihre Wahlbeteiligung bzw. ihr Wahlverhalten staatliche Ressourcen sichern und andere nicht?
3. Wie haben historische Prozesse der Besiedlung, Landverteilung und des Zugangs zu Bewässerungssystemen die sozio-politische Vielfalt im kanalbewässerten Belutschistan geprägt, und wie beeinflussen diese Unterschiede wiederum zeitgenössische Formen politischer Beteiligung und Verhandlungen?

III. Um diese Forschungsfragen zu beantworten, verwende ich einen Mixed-Methods-Ansatz. Die Methoden umfassen Sekundärforschung, Archivforschung, offene Interviews, informelle Gruppendiskussionen und teilnehmende Beobachtungen im Feld.

Für die Untersuchung kolonialer und postkolonialer Regierungsstrategien und Politikmaßnahmen in Belutschistan und Naseerabad wurden Sekundärliteratur und Archivdaten genutzt. Die Sekundärliteraturrecherche diente dazu, bestehende Debatten über die Logik der kolonialen Herrschaft sowie die Ziele und Bestrebungen postkolonialer staatlicher Politiken in Pakistan zu identifizieren. Auf Grundlage dieser Analyse wurde weitere Archivforschung durchgeführt, um spezifische Daten zu Naseerabad zu sammeln. Dies beinhaltete die Untersuchung historischer Dokumente aus lokalen und regionalen Archiven sowie Regierungsunterlagen in der Distrikthauptstadt Sibi und der Provinzhauptstadt Quetta. Die aus den Archiven gesammelten Daten wurden mithilfe der qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse ausgewertet.

Die Feldforschung wurde durchgeführt, um den Forschungsfragen nach den sozialen Beziehungen der Wähler in den *Baar-e-waal Zamindar*-Dörfern nachzugehen. Sie umfasste einen viermonatigen Aufenthalt in zwei verschiedenen Dörfern im kanalbewässerten Belutschistan. Dort führte ich offene Interviews, informelle

Gruppendiskussionen und teilnehmende Beobachtungen durch. Auch die im Rahmen der Feldforschung erhobenen Daten wurden durch Verfahren der qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse ausgewertet.

IV. Die Ergebnisse meiner Dissertation stellen sich wie folgt dar. Bis 1903 wurden die kanalbewässerten Gebiete Belutschistans als *Niabat* unter der Autorität des Khan von Kalat verwaltet, der eine Konföderation namens Kalat regierte. Ein *Niabat* war eine Verwaltungseinheit, die von einem stellvertretenden Beamten im Namen des Khans beaufsichtigt wurde. Das Naseerabad-*Niabat* war ein fruchtbares Gebiet der *Kachhi*-Ebenen, das im 19. Jahrhundert an die Upper-Sindh-Frontier der Bombay-Presidency grenzte. Nach langwierigen Verhandlungen stimmte die Regierung Indiens im Jahr 1903 zu, das *Niabat* vom Khan auf Basis einer jährlichen Pachtgebühr zu übernehmen. Die langwierigen Diskussionen, die zu diesem Pachtvertrag führten, sowie der anschließende Settlement Report und die jährlichen Verwaltungsberichte zeigen, dass die koloniale Verwaltung bei der Pachtung dieses Gebiets vor allem an der Grenzsicherheit interessiert war.

Die Kolonialbehörden waren der Ansicht, dass die Vergabe von *Jagir*-grants an der Grenze an "landlose Bergstämme" wie die Marri und Bugti zwei miteinander verbundene Ziele erreichen könnte: die Ansiedlung nomadischer Belutschen und damit die Befriedung dieser unbeständigen Grenzregion. Anders als in den landwirtschaftlich geprägten Kernregionen Britisch-Indiens, in denen Landsteuern die zentrale Motivation der kolonialen Landpolitik bildeten (I. Ali 1979; Washbrook 1981; Guha 1982; Bayly 1996; Javid 2012; Bhattacharya 2019), rechtfertigten die Administratoren in Naseerabad regelmäßige Steuerausfälle mit der Notwendigkeit, die Grenze zu stabilisieren.

Diese Strategie beruhte auf einer Patron-Klienten-Beziehung: Die belutschischen Stammesführer gewährleisteten durch Institutionen wie das *Levy Thana* und das *Jirga*-System die öffentliche Ordnung und erhielten im Gegenzug Zugeständnisse, darunter *Jagir*-grants und Steuererlasse. Solche Vereinbarungen an der Grenze geben Aufschluss über die koloniale Regierungsführung, bei der geopolitische und sicherheitspolitische Überlegungen die Verwaltungsstrategien an den Peripherien bestimmten. Der Fall Naseerabad zeigt, dass die Prioritäten des Staates sich von rein wirtschaftlichen Erwägungen hin zur Sicherung der Grenze verschoben.

Durch die Analyse wird eine historische Entwicklung aufgezeigt. Durch die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse wird insbesondere die in der bestehenden Literatur verbreitete Annahme infrage gestellt, dass die kolonialen Landvergaben und Verwaltungsmaßnahmen hauptsächlich auf Steuererhebung und die Schaffung von Ordnung durch soziale Kontrolle abzielten (I. Ali 1979; Guha 1982; Javid 2012; Bhattacharya 2019). Das Beispiel Naseerabad zeigt, dass, obwohl Einnahmen eine Rolle spielten, die imperialen Prioritäten stärker auf die Integration nomadischer Gruppen zur Stabilisierung der Region ausgerichtet waren. Das Vorgehen der Kolonialregierung bei der Landvergabe und Steuererhebung in Naseerabad zeigt somit, dass das Streben nach Ordnung und Sicherheit oft die wirtschaftlichen Interessen überlagerte. Dies verdeutlicht außerdem, wie sich die staatliche Rationalität in peripheren Gebieten erheblich von der wirtschaftlich-orientierten Logik, die die britische Kolonialherrschaft in den Kernregionen Indiens bestimmte, unterschied. Wenn man Mamdanis (1999) Konzept der “bifurcation” auf Naseerabad in Britisch-Indien anwendet, zeigt sich eine andere Konfiguration: Hier verlief die Trennung nicht entlang der Linie von Siedlern und Einheimischen, sondern geostrategisch begründet. Dieses Janusgesicht der kolonialen Herrschaft schuf eine komplementäre Beziehung zwischen der Grenze und dem Kerngebiet: Die Stabilität der äußeren Grenze ermöglichte die wirtschaftliche Ausbeutung im Inneren der Kernregionen Britisch-Indiens.

In der unmittelbaren Nachunabhängigkeitszeit geriet die traditionelle Landelite Naseerabads, insbesondere die Jamalis und in gewissem Maße auch die Bugtis, in Konflikt mit dem pakistanischen Staat, der auf Machtzentralisierung und Modernisierung der Landwirtschaft setzte. Anders als die Eliten in Punjab (Javid, 2012) hatten sie Mühe, ihre Privilegien und Patronage in Form von Landbesitz und Positionen in staatlichen Institutionen zu bewahren. Die Entwicklungen in dieser Zeit stellen die Annahme infrage, dass die kolonialen Strukturen die Muster des Landbesitzes und der Klassenstruktur vollständig bestimmt hätten (Mohamand 2011; 2019), da sich die Konflikte zwischen der lokalen Elite und dem postkolonialen Staat in dieser Phase verschärften und diese Muster neu definierten.

Der politische Einsatz für regionale Autonomie durch Jaffar Khan Jamali, einen bedeutenden Jamali-Stammesführer und Politiker, geriet in direkten Gegensatz zur Bürokratie und dem Militär, die auf eine Zentralisierung der Macht hinarbeiteten. Die Spannungen eskalierten weiter, als der Militärputsch 1958 den provinziellen Eliten, die sich gegen die Zentralisierung

wehrten, kaum noch Handlungsspielraum ließ. Obwohl es in Naseerabad keine bewaffnete Rebellion oder militärische Operationen gab, zeigte die Konfrontation, dass die lokale Elite den Staatszentrismus in Frage stellte – wenn auch nicht in Form eines offenen Aufstands. Die Reaktion des Staates auf diesen Widerstand der Elite folgte schnell. Mit der Martial Law Regulation-64 aus dem Jahr 1959 wurden große Teile des Jamali- und Bugti-Landes enteignet und an Migranten aus Zentralbelutschistan, Sindh, Punjab sowie an zivile und militärische Bedienstete verteilt. Dies schwächte insbesondere die agrarische Machtbasis der Jamalis, die stärker vom Landbesitz abhängig waren als die Bugtis. Die Abschaffung kolonialer Institutionen wie des *Levy Thana* und des *Jirga*-Systems schränkte zudem ihre administrative Autorität ein. Diese Maßnahmen waren eine gezielte Strategie des Staates, um kompromisslose Eliten zu verdrängen und neue lokale Machtstrukturen zu schaffen, die mit Ayub Khans Zentralisierungsstrategie übereinstimmten. Der Wahlerfolg der Khoas in den Jahren 1962 und 1965 zeigt, dass die staatliche Patronage für lokale Eliten weiterhin existierte, jedoch unter veränderten Bedingungen. Diese Entwicklung widerspricht der bestehenden Forschung, welche die Reformen Ayubs als ineffektiv betrachtet. Meine Ergebnisse deuten darauf hin, dass Ayubs Politik nicht nur die Landverhältnisse diversifizierte und alte Institutionen auflöste, sondern auch lokale Machtstrukturen umgestaltete. Dies zeigt, dass nicht koloniale Erbschaften, sondern postkoloniale staatliche Interventionen die lokalen Machtverhältnisse maßgeblich beeinflussten – eine Erkenntnis, die den Annahmen der bisherigen Literatur widerspricht.

Stattdessen entspricht diese Situation dem, was Alavi (1972b) als einen relativ autonomen Staat beschreibt, der seine eigenen strategischen Ziele verfolgt, unabhängig von den Interessen der dominierenden Klassen. Hinzu kommt Skocpol (1979a; 1979b) realistische Sichtweise des Staates, die besagt, dass der Staat nicht einfach nur eine Arena sozialer Konflikte ist, sondern eigenständig handeln kann, indem er seinen eigenen Interessen und Imperativen folgt. Sie argumentiert, dass diese Autonomie es dem Staat sogar ermöglicht, gegen die Interessen der herrschenden Klassen vorzugehen (Skocpol 1979a, 13). Sie schreibt: "any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organizations" (Ibid., 12). Diese Aussage bestätigt sich im Fall Naseerabad.

In den 1970er Jahren nahm die Elitenpolitik in Naseerabad eine weitere Wendung. 1974 schlossen sich die Jamalis, die zuvor gegen ein zentralisiertes politisches System gekämpft

hatten, der Pakistan People's Party (PPP) von Zulfikar Ali Bhutto an. Dadurch wurden sie Teil der parallelen Elite in Belutschistan und spielten eine Rolle bei der Verfolgung der Regierung der National Awami Party (NAP-Wali). Diese Allianz verlieh Bhutto Legitimität und brachte den Jamalis im Gegenzug Zugang zu staatlicher Patronage und Privilegien. Diese Entwicklung zeigt, wie ein ursprünglich ideologischer Konflikt schließlich pragmatischen Verhandlungen wich. Die lokale Elite erkannte, wo Macht und Patronage konzentriert waren, und passte ihre Strategie an, um Ressourcen zu sichern, anstatt eine prinzipielle ideologische Opposition aufrechtzuerhalten.

Obwohl die Wahlen aus dem Jahr 1970 oft als Sieg ideologischer Politik in Pakistan angesehen werden (Jones, 2003; Mufti, Shafqat und Siddiqui, 2020), zeichnet sich in Naseerabad ein differenzierteres Bild ab. Bhuttos Entmachtung der NAP-Wali-Regierung und seine anschließenden politischen Maßnahmen verstärkten die Patronage, anstatt sie abzubauen. Seine Landreformen, die oft als ernsthafte Herausforderung für den Feudalismus dargestellt werden, hatten kaum Auswirkungen auf die großen Landbesitzer Naseerabads, insbesondere auf die Jamalis, die sich zu seinen politischen Verbündeten entwickelt hatten. Bhutto nutzte die Reformen geschickt, um seine Patronage-Netzwerke auszubauen, anstatt die Macht der Eliten zu beseitigen, indem er staatliches Land selektiv umverteilte, während private Großgrundbesitzer unbehelligt blieben. Dies bestätigt bestehende Forschungsergebnisse, die darauf hinweisen, dass Bhuttos Reformen nur teilweise effektiv waren. Gleichzeitig zeigt die spezifische Dynamik der Umsetzung dieser Reformen, dass sie die *Patron-Klienten*-Beziehungen weiter festigten.

Entgegen der weit verbreiteten Annahme, dass sich das Patronagesystem erst in den 1980er Jahren unter Zia-ul-Haq vollständig etablierte (Akhtar 2018; Wilder 1999), deutet der Fall Naseerabad darauf hin, dass dieses System bereits in den 1970er Jahren tief verwurzelt war – insbesondere in peripheren Regionen. Statt einer plötzlichen Hinwendung zur Patronage in der Zia-Ära zeigt die Geschichte Naseerabads eine progressive Verankerung eines auf Patronage basierenden Regierungsstils, der über die Zeit hinweg untergeordnete Eliten und andere Gruppen integrierte. Diese Entwicklung verdeutlicht, wie die Zentralisierung der Macht und der Widerstand der Eliten gemeinsam die sich entwickelnden Patronagestrukturen formten, die das politische System Pakistans schon lange vor den 1980er Jahren prägten. Zwei bedeutende Entwicklungen beeinflussten die politischen und sozialen Beziehungen in Naseerabad in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren. Erstens veränderte die Migration verschiedener

Stammes- und ethnischer Gruppen, darunter Brahui- und Belutschisch-sprechende Stämme aus Zentralbelutschistan sowie die *Kachhi*-Ebenen und Punjabi *abadkar* (Siedler) aus Punjab, die Demographie der Region. Zweitens führte die Eröffnung des Pat Feeder-Kanals unter Ayub Khan und der teilweise erfolgreiche Landumverteilungsprozess unter Bhutto zu einem Wandel der Klassenstruktur und der Siedlungsmuster. Zusammen schufen diese Veränderungen eine Form des Wahlverhaltens in den neu entstandenen Dörfern, die sich von den feudalen und stammesgebundenen Zugehörigkeiten unterschied, die typischerweise mit Belutschistan assoziiert werden (Waseem 1994, 98).

Dorf A, meine erste Fallstudie, entstand in den 1970er Jahren und steht exemplarisch für diesen Wandel. Anders als die hierarchische Agrargesellschaft Punjabs, die durch das Kastensystem und ungleiche Landverhältnisse geprägt war (Inayatullah, 1963; Alavi 1972, 1973; Rouse 1988), bestanden Dorf A und ähnliche Siedlungen in Naseerabad, die in den 1970er Jahren entstanden, aus verwandtschaftlich verbundenen Migrantengruppen, die umverteiltes Land bewirtschafteten. Soziale Homogenität, das Fehlen einer landlosen Klasse und gleicher Landbesitz bedeuteten, dass diese neuen Dörfer nicht die tief verwurzelten Ungleichheiten aufwiesen, die in anderen ländlichen Regionen Pakistans üblich waren. Darüber hinaus förderte die geografische Nähe dieser Siedlungen zu anderen, ähnlich strukturierten Dörfern – die auf vom Staat wieder aufgenommenen Ländereien in Naseerabad errichtet wurden, die unter Bhuttos Reformen umverteilt wurden – die Entwicklung von Ilaqadari-Beziehungen nachbarschaftlicher Zusammenarbeit. Solche Beziehungen schufen lokale Kooperationsnetzwerke und Mechanismen zur Konfliktlösung, also eine Form von sozialem Kapital. Für die Dorfbewohner, die von alten Stammesgebieten und feudalen Bindungen losgelöst waren, wurden Verwandtschafts- und Nachbarschaftsbeziehungen zum zentralen Organisationsprinzip des politischen und sozialen Lebens.

Auf Dorfebene fungierten diese Verwandtschaftsgruppen als "Vote Blocs", in denen Verwandtschaftsgruppen als geschlossene politische Einheiten agierten und gemeinsam die politische Partizipation organisierten. In Dorf A ermöglichte diese verwandtschaftsbasierte Organisation den Wählern, ihre kollektive Verhandlungsmacht in ihren klientelistischen Beziehungen einzusetzen. Die Wahlbeteiligung verbesserte den Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen. Diese Dörfer zeigten ein horizontales Modell des Klientelismus, das sich von der herkömmlichen Patronage oder feudalen Abhängigkeiten unterschied. Die soziale Homogenität und der gleichmäßige Landbesitz verliehen den Wählern mehr

Handlungsspielraum. So erhielten die Bewohner von Dorf A, in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren, erhebliche staatliche Ressourcen in Form von öffentlicher Infrastruktur und Arbeitsplätzen.

Insgesamt wird deutlich: Erstens bestätigt dieser Fall, dass Unterschiede in der sozialen Struktur, insbesondere die Zusammensetzung des Dorfes und die Landverhältnisse, politische Beziehungen prägen, die nicht in gängige Erklärungen politischen Verhaltens passen. In diesem Fall beeinflusste die Kombination aus verwandtschaftsbasierter Siedlung und dem Fehlen einer landlosen Bevölkerung das politische Verhalten der Dorfbewohner erheblich. Die Entwicklung lokaler Netzwerke trug zur dezentralen Konfliktlösung bei und gab den Dorfbewohnern lokale Autonomie. Dadurch bekamen die Dorfbewohner Verhandlungsmacht gegenüber ihrem jeweiligen Patron – ein Faktor, der in der bestehenden Literatur kaum berücksichtigt wird. Alle diese Faktoren zusammen hatten einen positiven Einfluss auf das politische Verhalten der Dorfbewohner und ihren Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen. Allerdings war dieser Zugang eng mit externen Prozessen wie dem Ausbau der staatlichen Infrastruktur und der Verfügbarkeit öffentlicher Arbeitsplätze verknüpft. Während lokale Bedingungen beeinflussen können, wer Zugang zu bereits vorhandenen Ressourcen erhält, können sie die Verfügbarkeit dieser Ressourcen nicht immer direkt steuern.

Zweitens zeigt dieser Fall auch, dass die gruppenbasierte Logik das zentrale Mittel der politischen Organisation auf Dorf- und *Union Council*-Ebene blieb. Er zeigt jedoch nicht, dass eine höhere Konkurrenz automatisch zu einem besseren Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen führt. In Dorf A existierten über lange Zeit nur zwei Vote Blocs, dennoch war der Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen beträchtlich, wie sich an der Errichtung von Schulen, einer Krankenstation, Straßen und der Verfügbarkeit öffentlicher Arbeitsplätze in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren zeigt. Das Fehlen politischer Parteien in Naseerabad, nach Auerbach (2016) “party network intensity”, war für den Zugang der Bewohner zu staatlichen Ressourcen irrelevant. Dennoch bestätigt der Fall Dorf A, dass hohes soziales Kapital zu einem besseren Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen führen kann.

Drittens zeigt die Entwicklung der *Vote Blocs* als form informeller politischer Institutionen in Dorf A, dass diese anfällig für Fragmentierung sind. Die zunehmende Konkurrenz innerhalb der Verwandtschaftsgruppen, die sich im Laufe der Zeit aufgespalten haben, führte zu neuen politischen Dynamiken. Mit der Veränderung der Siedlungsmuster und Landverhältnisse –

insbesondere durch die Einführung einer bäuerlichen Bevölkerung und zunehmende Landungleichheiten – veränderten sich auch die Prinzipien der *Vote Bloc*-Organisation und damit die Verteilung staatlicher Ressourcen. Dies spiegelt die sich wandelnde sozioökonomische Realität des Dorfes wider.

Viertens haben Bevölkerungswachstum, die Einführung von Kommunalwahlen und die zunehmende Häufigkeit von allgemeinen Wahlen neue Formen der politischen Organisation auf *Union Council*-Ebene gefördert, darunter Dhurr-Gruppen. Diese Gruppen haben die politische Konkurrenz auf lokaler Ebene umgestaltet, indem sie zuvor relativ inklusive Ilaqadari-Beziehungen politisiert und exklusiver gestaltet haben. Gleichzeitig ermöglichen sie den Dorfbewohnern, mit mehreren Patronen sowohl auf Dorf- als auch auf Union Council-Ebene zu verhandeln.

Allerdings haben diese zunehmende Konkurrenz und die Zunahme von Vermittlern nicht automatisch zu einem besseren Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen, insbesondere öffentlichen Arbeitsplätzen, geführt. Tatsächlich übersteigt die steigende Nachfrage nach staatlichen Ressourcen die Fähigkeit lokaler Politiker, diese bereitzustellen. Dies stellt die Annahme infrage, dass eine höhere politische Konkurrenz automatisch zu einem besseren Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen führt (Auerbach 2016, 2019; Auerbach und Thachil 2018; Kosec et al. 2018). Stattdessen wird der gestiegene politische Einfluss zunehmend in andere Formen von Patronage und Gefälligkeiten kanalisiert, die leichter zu sichern sind. Mit anderen Worten: Der Zugang zu Ressourcen wird nicht nur durch die Intensität des Wettbewerbs bestimmt, sondern auch durch die realistischen Möglichkeiten der Politiker, welche an “development funds” und finanzielle Zwänge auf lokaler Ebene gebunden waren.

Während die Erfahrung von Dorf A die Vorteile einer Einbindung in lokale Netzwerke (hohes soziales Kapital) veranschaulicht, zeigt der Fall von Dorf B die Folgen von Ausschluss. Die staatlich gelenkten Eingriffe in den 1990er Jahren zur Umgestaltung und Erweiterung des Pat Feeder-Kanals für den verstärkten Reisanbau hatten überproportionale Auswirkungen auf Dorf B. Oberliegende Dörfer am unteren Ende des Kanals, in denen große Grundbesitzer lebten, begannen, den Zugang zu Wasser zu monopolisieren, wodurch Dorf B benachteiligt wurde. Da sich der Zugang zu Wasser mit der Ausweitung des Reisanbaus in der Region verringerte, begannen viele Dorfbewohner aus Dorf B, während der Kharif-Saison (Oktober–März) saisonal in nahegelegene Städte zu migrieren, um Arbeit zu suchen. Dieser

Migrationsprozess führte dazu, dass sie sich zunehmend von ihrem *ilaqo* (Heimatgebiet) entfremdeten. Infolgedessen wurden ihre sozialen und politischen Netzwerke auf lokaler Ebene geschwächt.

Mit der Zeit verstärkte sich dieser Ausschluss von lokalen politischen Organisationen. Da patronagebasierte Politiker zunehmend auf Dhurr-Gruppen angewiesen waren – die sich als zentrale politische Organisationseinheiten in der Region herausgebildet hatten –, um Wähler zu mobilisieren und Ressourcen zu verteilen, hatten Dörfer, die nicht in diese Netzwerke integriert waren, Schwierigkeiten beim Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen. Die Nicht-Einbindung von Dorf B in die *Dhurr*-Gruppen schwächte die Verhandlungsposition des Dorfoberhaupts erheblich gegenüber lokalen Patrons. Ohne diese Integration verloren die traditionellen Führer des Wahlblocks an Bedeutung für patronagebasierte Politiker. Dieser Fall zeigt, dass politische Integration in lokale Netzwerke entscheidend ist, um den Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen und Verhandlungsmacht in Patronagebeziehungen zu sichern. Obwohl sich die Landverhältnisse und verwandtschaftlichen Strukturen zwischen Dorf A und Dorf B relativ ähneln, liegt der entscheidende Unterschied darin, dass Dorf B von lokalen Netzwerken zur politischen Organisation – insbesondere *Dhurr* – ausgeschlossen wurde. Dieser Ausschluss war in erster Linie das unbeabsichtigte Ergebnis staatlicher Maßnahmen im Zusammenhang mit der Kanalbewirtschaftung und der landwirtschaftlichen Nutzung, verstärkt durch die Nähe von Dorf B zu anderen Dörfern mit größerer lokaler Macht und topographischen Vorteilen. Somit bestätigt die Erfahrung von Dorf B die Annahme, dass Dörfer mit geringem sozialem Kapital einen begrenzten Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen aufweisen können (Mitra 2010; Bennington und Perreault 2015). Gleichzeitig unterstreicht diese Fallstudie, dass weitere zusätzliche Variablen den Zugang zu staatlichen Ressourcen beeinflussen. Dazu gehören die topographischen Vor- und Nachteile angesichts von Wasserknappheit sowie die Siedlungsstruktur, die die Zusammensetzung der Wasserverteilungsgruppen entlang der Kanalzweige beeinflusst.

Die Ergebnisse aus der Fallstudie zu Dorf B verdeutlichen zudem die Grenzen der Patronage. Obwohl *Dhurr*-Gruppen kollektives Handeln und Verhandlungen mit Patrons ermöglichen, setzt ihre exkludierte Struktur am Ende des Kanals marginalisierte Gruppen einem erheblichen Risiko des Ausschlusses aus. Im Laufe der Zeit verstärken sich Ausschlussmuster, werden Ungleichheiten reproduziert und die Legitimität von Patronagenetzwerken untergraben. Darüber hinaus führt die Abhängigkeit von Migration als

Überlebensstrategie für ausgegrenzte Gruppen zu einer weiteren Verwundbarkeit: Wenn Haushalte ihre Dörfer für saisonale Arbeit verlassen, wird ihre Fähigkeit, lokale Netzwerke wiederherzustellen und sich in politische Prozesse wieder einzugliedern, zumindest kurzfristig eingeschränkt. Dies schafft einen Zyklus der Marginalisierung.

Zusammenfassend beleuchten die Erfahrungen von Dorf A und Dorf B zwei entscheidende Dimensionen der Politik in Naseerabad. Dorf A bestätigt, dass die Einbindung in lokale Netzwerke die Handlungsfähigkeit der Wähler und den Zugang zu Ressourcen verbessern kann – vorausgesetzt, diese Ressourcen sind verfügbar. Die Lage des Dorfes und seine Nähe zu benachbarten Dörfern mit ähnlichen sozialen Strukturen und Landverhältnissen schufen günstige Bedingungen für dessen Integration in lokale Netzwerke zur kollektiven Organisation. Im Gegensatz dazu zeigen die Schwierigkeiten von Dorf B, wie der Ausschluss aus diesen Netzwerken die Verhandlungsmacht des einzigen Wahlblocks erheblich reduzierte.

V. Damit leistet diese Dissertation in mehrfacher Hinsicht einen Beitrag zur wissenschaftlichen Literatur über Kolonialherrschaft, postkoloniale Staatsbildung und ländliche Politik. Erstens erweitert sie unser Verständnis der britischen Kolonialherrschaft an den Grenzen Indiens, indem sie zeigt, wie Sicherheitserwägungen in peripheren Gebieten die Erzielung von Einnahmen als Ziel kolonialer Landbesiedlung und Bewässerungsprojekte übertrumpften.

Zweitens bereichert diese Untersuchung das Wissen über die Beziehungen zwischen Staat und Elite in der Peripherie des postkolonialen Pakistan. Sie zeigt, dass entgegen den gängigen Annahmen über die Kontinuität der Elitenmacht in Pakistan nach der Unabhängigkeit die lokalen Ladeliten in Naseerabad angesichts der Ambitionen des pakistanischen Staates häufig mit abnehmender Autorität und Status konfrontiert waren, insbesondere während der Ayub- und Bhutto-Ära. Sie verdeutlicht die unterschiedlichen Verläufe der Macht der Eliten im Zentrum und in der Peripherie und stellt die Vorstellung einer einheitlichen Elitenherrschaft in Pakistan in Frage.

Drittens wirft diese Dissertation ein neues Licht auf die Herrschaft Bhuttos, indem sie zeigt, wie Klientelismus, der typischerweise mit Zia in Verbindung gebracht wird, unter dem ersten

demokratisch gewählten Regime des Landes als eine Logik der Staatsfunktion institutionalisiert wurde.

Viertens beleuchtet die Dissertation eine bislang vernachlässigte Geschichte der Migration, Landbesiedlung und Dorfbildung in Naseerabad. Sie zeigt, wie diese Prozesse zu spezifischen Mustern ländlicher Politik führen. Die Studie trägt zum Wissen über die ländliche Politik in Pakistan bei, indem sie die Entstehung neuer Formen von Dörfern und deren politische Praktiken dokumentiert. Im Vergleich zu dem, was allgemein bekannt ist, wird ein heterogeneres und dynamischeres Gemeinwesen dargestellt.

Fünftens füllt der Fall Naseerabad die Lücke in der Literatur über die Politik in Belutschistan auf lokaler Ebene und stellt die etablierten Methoden zum Verständnis der Politik in der Provinz in Frage. Auf diese Weise wird die empirische Basis der historischen und aktuellen Politik in Südasien erweitert. Sie lädt zu neuen theoretischen Überlegungen darüber ein, wie Grenzen, Randgebiete und ländliche Räume im Laufe der Zeit regiert und verändert werden. Schließlich werden die unbeabsichtigten Auswirkungen staatlicher Maßnahmen und Interventionen der Vergangenheit aufgezeigt, die die lokale Politik weiterhin auf vielfältige Weise beeinflussen.

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