

# **Appraisal of Informal Political Associations for Ongoing Democratic Decentralisation in Punjab**

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**Appraisal of Informal Political  
Associations and Institutions:  
Implications for Democratic  
Decentralisation in Punjab**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Devolving power is currently seen as a way to deconcentrate power, strengthen representative democratic institutions, reduce corruption and increase collective action. These very positive features of decentralisation theory are rather given preference over social, economic and political aspects that influence, effect and shape any such efforts. Pakistan has seen many rounds of decentralisation of government to local tiers. Current phase of decentralisation stands out of all previous plans as it is being done by political not Marshal law regimes. This study by using mixed research strategy disentangled the process by which local governments are formed in Punjab. We have noted that informal political forms play as much an important role as formal electoral procedures. Our results have concurred that informal political institutions deploy traditional cultural norms of reciprocity to confine individual and collective agencies. These informal structures induce and incentivise certain type of political action over others. Political actions of individuals and vote blocs are seemed collective apparently but roles of individuals in any such collectivity are very personal. Such pronounced personalisation of power and politics culminates into a more fragmented polity and very little transformative political and collective action.

*Keywords:* Democratic Decentralisation, Democratisation in Pakistan, Informal Political Associations, Local Bodies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The fourth wave of democratic decentralisation is in process in Pakistan. For the first time transferring of powers have delegated to third tier by a democratic dispensation at provincial level.<sup>1</sup> Democratic decentralisation has attracted the attention of international organisations, civil rights advocacy groups, political parties and states (Manor and Bank, 1999). It has been seen as an instrument, a means to make state more responsive (Heller, 2001; Mohmand, 2008; Mohmand and Cheema, 2007), making executives more accountable (Hicken, 2011), increase economic development (Shah, 1998) and encourage participation through collective action at grass-root level (Manor, 1999). Decentralisation is inherently a political affair as it redefines terms of political participation and association among political agents and between different tiers of state. Institutional arrangements, asymmetrical power relations, culture and social structures contextually determine the political process. As the development of state, polity and society is qualitatively different in post-colonial states (Pakistan for instance), thus the nature of political associations also differ in important ways from those of the developed countries.

Historically decentralisation, in Indian sub-continent, had remained the privileged strategy of governance by all empires which ruled this vast territory (Niaz, 2006; 2011). British Empire also applied the same strategy very smartly to sustain an oppressive social order (Gilmartin, 1988). British have fused modern state with traditional local institutions and land tenure system in Punjab to create a political system marred by patronage<sup>2</sup>. This political system based on personalised power had been inherited by Pakistan. Weakness of Muslim League political organisation coupled with other contingent factors have failed to challenge this system of internal dependency<sup>3</sup>. The presence of skewed land distribution, differentiation of social status along caste/kinship and power asymmetries had neither been confronted nor managed by any policy intervention by State<sup>4</sup>. Even the path of industrialisation was only ends in the

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<sup>1</sup>Earlier such attempts have made by Autocratic regimes for details see (Cheema et al., 2005).

<sup>2</sup>For details see Maddison (1983)

<sup>3</sup>How Patronage causes internal dependency see Flynn (1974).

<sup>4</sup>All three land reforms programmes failed to mitigate seriously that structural inequalities for details see Khan (2002).

creation of Robber Barons<sup>5</sup> completely dependent on their access to state for capital accumulation (Sayeed, 2002). These accumulations at higher level were made at the expense of rural population. The terms of trade, exchange rate regime and subsidies all went against the small farmer who did not get any tangible benefit from green revolution policies<sup>6</sup> (Gardezi, 1998). This stagnancy in agriculture has shifted surplus value and labour to the cities where industries were built through state intervention. However, the rural poor migrating from rural areas also face similar behaviours of dependency and discrimination as the labour rights were never remained the priority of any government in Pakistan<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the social order created and sustained by British largely has remained intact with similar attributes across rural and urban divide in Pakistan.

Political development in Pakistan has usually seen as embedded within the conflicting binary of Democracy and Dictatorship. The need of democratisation has always asserted for making state-society relations more equitable and stable. However, the systems of power that work within both systems do not attract a reasonable attention of scholars in Pakistan (Ahmad, 1980). Both types of regimes in Pakistan, under different constitutional arrangements, have held elections to legitimise their rule. The exercise of power in society also reflects similar patterns and economic policies did not universally benefit all the classes. The system of taxation, justice system, contractual exchange regimes, power of unrepresentative institutions and social structures of inequality have mostly remained intact in this unfolding saga of political development. The personalised networks of political association had sustained through coercion, intimidation, clientelism and patronage and hindered the development of more inclusive political participation. The social hierarchy based on status and economic endowments incentivise vertical political associations at the cost of horizontal solidarity. Akhtar (2012) in his study of patron-client relations in urban centres of Pakistan has provided strong evidence that even migration to cities did not alter the hierarchical nature of social association in Pakistan. The presence of any such hierarchy has strong implications for political participation as the dependence of client on patron seriously jeopardises the freedom of political agents. These social structures deeply effect the process of democratisation and consolidation of a stable democracy (Crook and Manor, 1998).

The political contestation is affected by social structures (Gazdar and Mohmand, 2005) legal arrangements and political institution (Hichken, 2006), structure of economic and political governance (Kitschelt and Wilinkson, 2007)

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<sup>5</sup>Papernaik coined this term to highlight the character of new industrial elite in Pakistan.

<sup>6</sup>For details see Alavi (1973).

<sup>7</sup>For a brief period during earlier years of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB), labour had granted fewer rights but then the same regime dealt with labour dissent by means of force. For details see Khalid bin Saeed (1980).

and economic development (Randall and Theobald, 1998). Political parties in Pakistan, due to multiple reasons, remain weak, dynastic, bureaucratic and less responsive to the demands of people. Therefore, a personalised, candidate-based political competition remained strong here. This absence of programmatic and ideologically coherent political forces has incentivised the privileged individuals, who can themselves amass adequate resources, to use personalised mediums of exchange to win elections. These personalised mechanisms completely change the meanings of electoral competition and strategically better individuals use all their option of intimidation, access to state/government resources and clientelism to buy votes. The institutional variables including election laws and regulations also incentivise these candidate-based strategies in Pakistan. The direct elections of 5 male members, two women members and one youth member along with one chairman and vice-chairman in Punjab incentivise local candidates to exchange votes for provision (promising) of certain benefits (Punjab Local Government Act, 2013). The success rate of independents in both cantonment and KP local elections indicate a strong trend that we assume similar pattern will too replicate itself in Punjab.

From the perspective of voter, the act of voting is not an individual obligation. Local elections in Pakistan are the most hotly contested elections in Pakistan. However, the contestation in itself does not guarantee a more programmatic citizen-politician link sans clientelistic relations. The political association depends on other multiple factors (both exogenous and endogenous) (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007). The voter turnout is always higher in local bodies' elections than national elections and face-to-face interaction between voters, supporters and candidates also push the competition to more personalised ends. Everybody knows that who is supporting whom and that renders the competitors and their supporters more intimately associated with the elections. Biradri act as the pivot around which local bodies politics spin (Ahmed, 2009). This nature of competition is more prone to violence as it was the case in KP province<sup>8</sup>. Mohmand (2011) has concluded that voters in rural Punjab usually vote in groups; she names those groups vote-blocks. These informal institutions negotiate terms with the candidates on the behalf of member of the groups. . How these vote-blocks organise, act and participate in local bodies' elections needs further investigation with a larger sample. However, one could speculate that more intimacy and incidence of face-to-face interactions at local level would dissolve the fine distinction of boundaries among different vote-blocs at local level.

This study relies on the empirics of a survey that had been conducted to understand the perception and practices of people about political associations in multiple villages of District Sialkot. The time and resource constraints have

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<sup>8</sup>More than eight persons died while around hundred got serious injuries in 2015 Local Bodies election in KP.

bound me to keep its scale smaller. The choice of Sialkot was the result of research objectives, as I wanted to see the impact of economic development, occupational changes and education levels on political associations. Sialkot is one of the most developed districts in Punjab that has extensively industrialised and ranks high on Human Development Index (Haroon and Khan, 2007). Due to a high rate of land parcelisation, dependence on agriculture gradually became low while flow of the remittances provided real opportunities for social mobility<sup>9</sup>. Economic development theoretically free the individual from bondage of dependency, enhance cognitive sophistication of voter, scale up social networks density and increase transaction costs of individual exchange (Chandra and Wilkinson, 2007; Hopkin, 2006). These structural and cognitive changes are antagonistic to traditional patron-client relation that had been created and sustained through control on land. How some people who are supposedly economically better off, holding more sophisticated and modern worldview and enjoying higher rates of social mobility use their vote and what would be its implications for democratic decentralisation are the actual objectives of this survey. This study would be divided into following sections 1) Background and Conceptual Framework 2) Review of Literature 3) Research Design and Methodology 4) Findings and Discussion 5) Conclusion and Policy Implications.

### 1.1. Background of the Study

The beginning of third democratic interregnum at national level in 2008 was a result of political crisis generated by the mobilisation and collusion of different social forces against Musharraf regime. The main opposition parties against Musharraf regime have signed a Charter of Democracy in 2004. The consensus developed in that charter was to strengthen the institutions of representative democracy and making it more responsive to the needs of common people. Eighteenth amendment was the culmination of that agreement that was approved by both houses of parliament in 2010. Article 140-A was also amended and third tier of representative government was made mandatory on all provinces. This Article states that,

*“Each province shall, by law, establish a local government system and devolve political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority to the elected representatives of the local governments”* (Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 2012.). However, no clear-cut instruction for the incumbency period of the local government, the relative nature and extent of authority vis-à-vis provincial government was determined. Another shortcoming was the absence of any time limit

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<sup>9</sup>The flow of remittances is one of the highest in Sialkot District.

that provincial government must adhere to for holding local elections<sup>10</sup>. Either this shortcoming in legislation was left for political reasons is out of the scope of this study but safely it can be said that it has provided provincial political bosses with multiple excuses to transfer power by holding elections. Ironically, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Pakistan Peoples Party, (both beneficiaries of this new democratic interregnum and founders of COD) have showed the lukewarm response to these constitutional obligations and used every kind of dilatory methods to meet their ends<sup>11</sup>.

Punjab government has legislated and passed local bodies' act 2013 that is a classical rendition of 1979 local act. A comparison made by Shafaqat (2014) among all four provinces has concluded that Punjab has passed one of the most un-democratic local bodies law that provide less visible political, fiscal and administrative authority to local tiers. The causative factors influencing reluctance of provincial political elite is the fear of losing political capital that is the necessary condition for earning economic pay-offs that would be invested to consolidate political power<sup>12</sup>. As for third time date of local elections has been announced and first stage of cantonment elections have been piloted under the same law, it can safely be guessed that no real autonomy could be gained out of this practice<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, my field experience has reflected multiple behaviours of local political agents with reference to local government elections.

The local elections in Pakistan are the most competitive political exercise. While during national elections turn out remains abysmally low but local elections have fought in a competitive rivalry. The long history of personalised politics at local level (that has begun during colonial times) has institutionalised a distinct logic of competition embedded within a matrix of parochial local identities. The demand for public goods is although an important component of local political competition but central importance is still attached with personalised exchanges between candidates, patrons/vote-block leaders and vote-block participants. The politics at national and provincial level is becoming more programmatic but local politics is still entangled within candidate-centred

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<sup>10</sup>UNDP (UNDP and Jaffar Hassan, Amjad Bhatti, 2013), PILDAT Seminar on federalism

<sup>11</sup>Development Advocate Pakistan (2014): Volume 2, Issue 1.

<sup>12</sup>The political clientelism is one of the reasons of economic corruption in developing countries. The middle classes can mobilise, through different ethnic, caste or kinship idioms, political power that could upset political elite. Political decentralisation would increase competition for prerequisites attached with political office. The scarce availability of development funds would increase factionalism at local level and party bureaucracies are actually aware of the consequences for such increased factionalism. For middle class mobilisation see M Khan(1999).

<sup>13</sup>Punjab government has already announced 13 district autonomous bodies separately for supervising Health, education, transport and revenue departments that would not come under the purview of any elected council.

political associations<sup>14</sup>. Most of the respondents, key informants and participants were not positive about the introduction of political parties at local level. The most probable explanation could be that political party would destabilise the informal settings of local political alignments. Punjab governments also inclined towards holding non-party based local elections and this accord of dispositions at both ends of political continuum points towards a deep-rooted political logic which is created, nourished and sustained by colonial regime. In the wake of such huge social and economic transformation (discussed below) persistence of such political associations, has a deep implication for all efforts being made to enhance democratisation in a developing post-colonial state like Pakistan.

## 1.2. Research Questions

I have divided this investigation into following interlinked research questions:

- (1) What are the forms and nature of local political associations in relatively modernised rural areas?
- (2) How these informal associations influence the agency of its participants?
- (3) What are the implications for such voting practices on the process of decentralisation?

## 1.3. Conceptual Framework

The political condition of developing countries, at present, could not be comprehended without locating the development of political system in historical perspective (Maddison, 2013; Mamdani, 1996; Niaz, 2011). History shapes the social structure of any society through a cumulative influence of geography, political and economic organisation. Village in India has remained the primary unit of production that generated surplus-value which had been consumed by ruling elites (Gupta, 2001). Contrary to a popular depiction of a social harmony, historically Indian village has remained a socially differentiated location filled with parochial localism (Ambedkar, 1948).

Traditionally village social life was regulated by social hierarchy maintained through caste inequities. Colonial shock did not change this internal social organisation of village and the social inequality among different groups has remained intact. By synchronising customary with legal, colonial regime has created new institutions of governance that were highly differentiated along social and economic hierarchies<sup>15</sup> (Cheema, Mohmand, and Patnam, 2009).

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<sup>14</sup> For details about different kind of political associations in democracy, please see Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007).

<sup>15</sup> This village level governing bodies were named as Village Proprietary Bodies (VPB). The inclusion into these bodies has determined by land ownership and caste category.

These new institutions were responsible for resolving internal conflict and helping state to keep social control intact. Ali (1988) has marvelously demonstrated the negative role played by colonial regime in Punjab that stunted social evolution and political development of rural Punjab. Since then although a lot has changed, such as agriculture has lost its centrality in economic production and increasing opportunities of employment in other sectors have dented this previous social stratification (Hassan, 2002). These customary governing bodies have lost its effective juridical and moral authority and advantage of arbitration in maintaining peace through effective conflict resolution<sup>16</sup>. Increasingly, the trend reflect that most of the disputes have settled through police and court of law which, put high premium on access to these institutions through local patrons/ brokers and politicians <sup>17</sup>(Bodemann, 1982). The competition for political power has also been deeply influenced by economic modernisation; new sources of economic prosperity have attracted fresh competitors from non-agrarian sectors who vie for power, to increase their personal riches and social standing<sup>18</sup>. Some commentators argued that politics itself has become one of the most profitable economic venues in Pakistan<sup>19,20</sup>. However, Gazdar and Mohmand (2006) have argued that reduction in economic inequality is still not able to cut social inequality in villages of Northern Punjab. Mohmand (2011) in her dissertation also highlighted the importance of kinship networks in making political association. Akhtar (2012) in his study of patronage in urban areas has argued that kinship persistence is a sign of hegemony that propertied classes to maintain an inherently exploitive system.

Qadeer (1999, 2000 and 2006) has argued that most of the rural areas in Punjab has reached to a spatial dimension that could not be rural anymore. Agriculture has taken a back seat because of large increase in population and shrinking of land parcel. Population explosion and crisis in agriculture production is pushing people to look for alternative means. The role of kinship as regulating village social life has tremendously reduced while extended family

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<sup>16</sup> Not all of the studied villages had any functioning *panchayat* and if some of its vestiges were present, their effectiveness was questionable and their decisions had usually been challenged by aggrieved party in formal legal institutions.

<sup>17</sup> Another notable trend is the emergence of lawyer as a new intermediary that advocate on the behalf of its client. The lawyer movement has improved the social and economic status of lawyer who is more aggressively defending/favoring his clients vis-à-vis other state institutions (rightly or wrongly). The violent incidents in Daska are rightly indicating the growing tension between state and civil society.

<sup>18</sup> Fifty percent of the respondents in this study have still attached to factions that lead by Agriculturalist while forty eight percent are associated with patrons who are in service/ retail sectors. The landowners themselves expand their enterprise to other sectors but still land is a source of prestige for them, although its economic viability has relatively reduced.

<sup>19</sup> During survey thirty-eight percent of the respondents stated that candidates contest elections for self-enrichment while only three percent have stated serving people as the key reason.

<sup>20</sup> For details, see Annexure 1 in Khan (2009).

is no more remained the central locus of economic organisation. This trend has changed the land-market in villages where demand for housing is reducing the farming space. These socio-economic changes at household and village level have forced/pushed people to migrate towards cities. However, the cultural ethos of socialisation, association and patronage has erected themselves in similar patterns at urban centre. Lyon (2002) has concluded that culture of power at urban centres or rural areas are based on patronage, and its impacts at political associations are quite similar.

The reciprocity is one of the basic human instincts, we associate with others, to build relations, care for others and demand similar from others<sup>21</sup>. The self-centred individual of neo-classical economic theory is not found anywhere across the cultures and regions (Henrich and Boyd, 2005). Just like economic agents political agents do feel the compelling force of reciprocity to influence their decisions about supporting/ voting any party or candidate (Lawson and Greene, 2011). The candidates use these human instincts through provision of personalised benefits to clients and this normative method makes political manipulation of the voter easy. This normative framework also reinforces the clientelistic exchange that provides intrinsic benefits to both parties involved in exchange and reduce the cost of monitoring clients (Lawson and Greene, 2011).

The clientelistic association is an anathema to the idea of democratisation as it creates dependency, block horizontal solidarity, stunt collective action and produce bad policy outcomes (Flynn, 1974; Heller, 2001; Keefer, 2009). This inequality of status, access to skill, knowledge or resources re-enforce a social hierarchy that undermine the development of progressive and programmatic political system that is accountable and responsive to the needs of marginalised social groups. Modernisation theorists like Huntington (1968) and Rostow (1951) has put forward the idea of simultaneous modernisation of politics, social structures along economic modernisation. However, there is ample evidence available across the board about the persistence of social inequalities and clientelistic associations even if the economies become modernised (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007; Scott, 1972). The collective action is not possible without prior horizontal social solidarity demanding for universal non-excludable public goods. However, the negotiated nature of Pakistani state, absence of programmatic political parties and political hegemony of ruling bloc has crucially limited the frontier of redistributive political action in Pakistan (Akhtar, 2008; Chaudhry, 2013; Keefer, 2009; Keefer, Narayan, and Vishwanath, 2003; Mohmand, 2011; Qadeer, 2006). The theory of democratisation and its variants of decentralisation idealise the virtuous function of local democracy in making state/ government responsive. Whether it would

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<sup>21</sup> Sociability is an important human instinct which reminds of gregarious nature of human specie. For details on human instincts please see [https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Angell/Angell\\_1906/Angell\\_1906\\_p.html](https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Angell/Angell_1906/Angell_1906_p.html).

be possible in a polity mired in clientelistic political association, no conclusive answer is yet available (Keefer, 2009)

Social transformation is on course in Pakistan based on changes in economic organisation. Modernisation has the tendency to directly affect the fundamentals of any social order through redistribution of resources among different classes and groups. New social classes demand more share in economic pie through political mobilisation that results in new political settlements between state and society (Khan, 1998; Sayeed, 2002). How these transformations are affecting the political association, structure political competition and influence the perceptions and practices of relatively well-informed and independent citizens in Pakistan? This study using a holistic framework will try to investigate this question.

Thus for this study I have used multiple analytical tools borrowed from literature. As the focus of this study is the impact of informal associations on the new institutionalisation of local bodies in Pakistan, therefore I have divided the analytical tools into three categories of a) state formation and local governments in colonial times b) postcolonial state society relations and its transformation and c) how these transformations are associated with changes in local informal political associations particularly in rural Punjab.

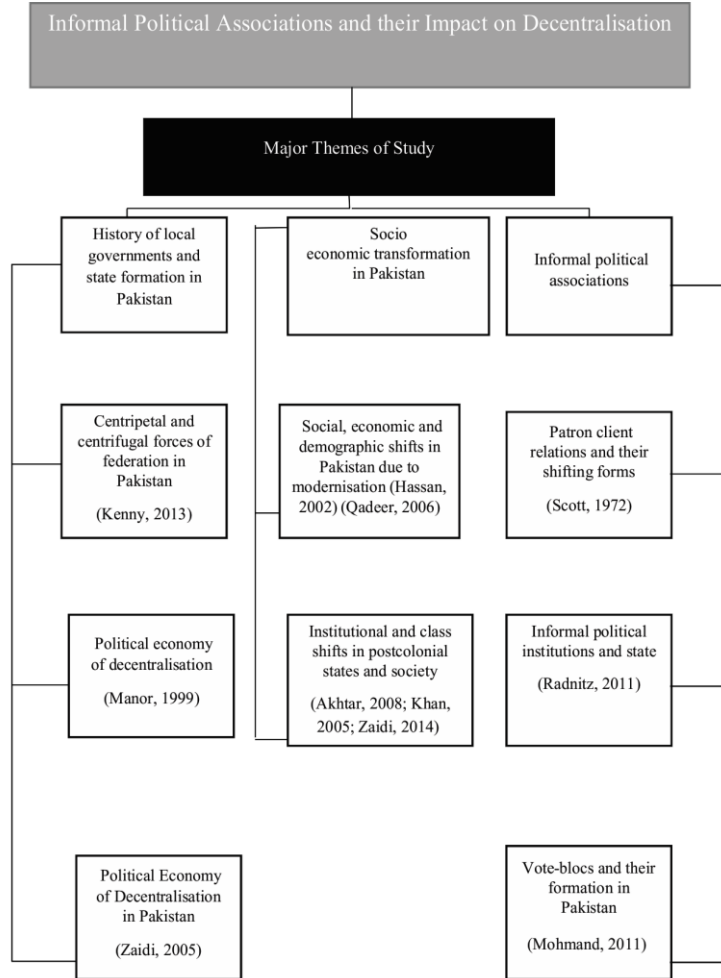
It is in this context that I have borrowed concept from Kenny (2013) who asserts that centripetal and centrifugal forces force ruling elites to opt for any type of state formation. In this lieu Manor (1999) explicates a well-knit explanation of forces that pushed states at the start of 21<sup>st</sup> century to pursue decentralisation as one of the key policy options to avoid fragmentation. Similarly, Zaidi (2005) and Cheema et al. (2005) also narrate the political economy, context and causes of different forms of local bodies experimented by different regimes. We have borrowed from them the conceptual understanding of local context in which local bodies are historically located.

Second category we used in this study is borrowed from an ongoing debate of social transformation that has implicated and transformed Pakistan. Hassan (2002) professes that Pakistan has changed in many unprecedented ways, historically, spatially, demographically and socially. Qadeer (1999, 2006) particularly focuses on spatial and demographic aspect of this transformation and introduced a new concept of 'Ruralopolise' to understand these changes and their impacts on social and political lives of individuals. Akhtar (2008) introduced a concept of 'overdeveloping state' to challenge old theorisation of state by Alvi (1972) in Pakistan. He used this concept to emphasise the important and evolving role of intermediate classes in political economy of Pakistan.

Last analytical category I have borrowed from literature is the role of informal political associations and how these shape agency of individuals, communities and state. Shandana (2011) has used the concept of vote-bloc to depict the informal associations at local level in Punjab. We have borrowed this

concept and patron-client relationships (Scott, 1972) to study that how these institutions effectively shape agencies and formal institutions of political contestation.

**Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework**



## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overall shortage of research in Social Science coupled with quality concerns have made it very difficult to study transient and changing societal phenomenon in Pakistan (Gardezi, 2002; Zaidi, 2002). The only rescue is the rich empirical and theoretical data available across the globe for sharpening methodologies to study conditions within the host country. Concept of clientelism, patronage, patron-client relations, particularistic model of political

participation has been treated differently by researchers working in diverse disciplines of Social Science (Graziano, 1976). This diversity in methodological framework makes it difficult to capture the essence of clientelism for any meaningful analytical purpose (Hicken, 2011). The illusive nature of this concept presents further quandary when it is used for comparative studies that span across the boundaries of countries and disciplines. To identify and locate the nature and functioning of clientelistic association with reference to democratic decentralisation also puts another limitation on this review. Therefore, keeping in focus abovementioned constraints this section will try to build a synthesis from literature over clientelism, its properties, consequences and implications for democratic decentralisation.

## **2.1. What is Clientelism**

Hicken (2011) has rightly argued that resilience of clientelism to sustain itself in all kinds of societies, political systems and cultures has been a source of anguish for researchers across disciplines. It is present in highly developed economies and even flourishing in the old democracies of America, Europe and Asia (Boix and Stokes, 2007; Roniger, 2004), relish high incidence in the urban alleys of South America (Auyero, 2000), function perfectly well through-out the great expanse of Africa (Berman, 1974), and present in its myriad forms in Asia stretching from Arab world to the urban communities of Taiwan (Scott, 1972). To comprehend such a resilient set of practices in varying contexts divide the political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists and economists globally over the structural and political properties of clientelism. Graziano (1976) and Hitchens (2011) with an interlude of half a century both agree that dyadic structure of exchange is the central pivot of clientelism. However, both borrow this insight from Scott (1972) who has noted that patron-client relation could only exist between persons with unequal economic resources, social status or position. Graziano (1976) has argued extensively, building on the theoretical insights of Mancur Olson that both programmatic (multi-agent) and inter-personal types of clientelism could subsume into dyadic structures. The modernisation of economy, expansion of voting franchise and population explosion in developing countries, by changing structure of social relations, have turned this dyadic relation into Triade and a new agent is now entering between patron-client; political broker (Muno, 2010). Many brokers are now functioning under the tutelage of one patron and connecting client with high patron (Muno, 2010).

Hitchens (2011) has added three more elements for structurally delineating the concept of clientelism for analytical means, namely contingency, hierarchy and iteration. However, Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) have propounded a separate model for understanding clientelistic exchange. Their conceptualisation explains the concept by using principal-agent model of

political delegation, which has been commonly used in political science (Hitchens, 2011). Muno (2010) has seen asymmetry of power, personalised face-to face interaction, reciprocity and voluntarism as primary elements that structure clientelistic associations. On the other hand, another line of postcolonial theoreticians like Chatterjee (2013), Gupta (2012) and Pandey (2015) have located the roots of clientelist politics embedded within the indifference of political system for marginalised segments of society. This differentiates society in different blocs that vie for scarce resources vis- a-vis state. These marginalised groups have no other options but to unite their voting powers to defend their rights (Chatterjee, 2013). However, these theoreticians particularly ignore the existence of power and its transmission mechanism carried off by these networks (Martin, 2014). The presence of monitoring, asymmetrical power relations and absence of any meaningful opportunities have made clientelistic exchange viable, resilient and exploitive (Hicken, 2011; Lyne, 2007; Muno, 2010).

Building on these insights over the structuring of clientelism, other theoretical propositions labeled these kinds of analyses as situational analyses, which provide micro snap but neglect the larger picture. The equilibrium of internal dependency that support the class power at national level is sustained by these micro-structures of association and exchange present in every neighborhood (Flynn, 1974; Rothstein, 1979). Theorists working in Marxist and Dependacia schools have highlighted the interlinkages that exist between capitalist development and clientelist politics (Flynn, 1974; Frank, 1969; Rothstein, 1979). Akhtar (2008), in his expanded study of post-Bhutto politics in Pakistan, has considered clientelism as an outcome of politics of common sense forced by hegemonic bloc to blunt the politics of resistance. Mohmand (2011) also highlighted the targeted nature of public goods that have created a clientelistic association of politics in Punjab, Pakistan. Summarising the structural debate over clientelistic relation, I now move to my next objective. What are the political properties of clientelistic association?

## **2.2. Clientelistic Associations and Politics**

Politics in Pakistan is factional and factions are formed around personal loyalties (Lyon, 2002). Individuals allied to these alliances prefer long term benefits and securities over short times perquisite and the nature of loyalty is instrumental/ contractual rather than affectional; instrumental between clients and patrons while contractual among patrons (Barth, 1959). The continued opposition among competing factions of Swati Pathans was the for control of the scarce resource—Land. However, the same opposition could exist among opposing factions for capturing other forms of scarce resources i.e. access to state or market (Akhtar, 2008; Mohmand, 2008). Scott (1972) has concurred that

interpersonal relations are located into a continuum of social exchange. Goods, gifts, favors, perquisites all travel from one pole of the continuum to other with a binding obligation of reciprocity. Exchanges made in economic sphere would demand reciprocity in political sphere. Graziano (1979) has bifurcated the benefits accrued from any social exchange into a) intrinsic benefits b) extrinsic benefits. Most of the clientelistic exchanges made between clients have intrinsic benefits attached to these and thus structure an internal dependency of client over patron. Blau (1964) has also asserted that the two basic functions of social exchange are to a) create bonds of friendship and b) superordination. The less privileged section of society, for developing consensus, are manipulated and coerced to exchange their “power of vote” for material inducements (Javid, 2011; SK Shandana Khan Mohmand, 2011). The lack of any direct connection between state and people has forced them to look for other means of intermediation that could provide security (Lyon, 2002). The continuous meddling with democratic process in Pakistan has reduced any scope for consolidation of horizontal solidarities at local level (Akhtar, 2008). On the contrary dictatorial regimes have instrumentalised the use of vote for gaining legitimacy (Alavi, 1972; Mohmand, 2011 and 2008). General Ayub Khan has tried to counter the hegemony of landed elite through aligning middle-class farmers of canal colonies with regime (Sayeed, 2002). Genral Zia ul Haq and General Pervaiz Musharraf regimes treaded the same path of patronising new political entrepreneurs who banked over clientelistic political associations to secure their seats<sup>22</sup>. The atomisation of individual, refusal of state for provision of any security and dwindling opportunities for social mobility have serious consequences which increase the propensity of individual to depend more on patrimonial and localised networks to gain at least a semblance of security and psychological stability (Güneş-Ayata and Roniger, 1994; Niaz, 2014). Mahmood Khan (2004), Gazdar (2003) and Javed (2013) have found significant presence of inequality, poverty and skewed opportunities for social mobility in Pakistan. These all studies indicate a highly stratified society with inequalities in economic resources, social status, access to state and information: a perfect breeding ground for clientelistic politics to prevail.

Another strand of researchers including Lawson and Greene (2011) have attributed that clientelism prevails through the manipulation of instincts of reciprocity by politicians. It is an interesting perspective because every day needs at local level are usually fulfilled by a new type of patrons, who are not coercive and foolhardy (Shami, 2010). The stagnation of economy, corruption, red tapism and rising cost of living have forced people to get into these kinds of social exchanges that could only be sustained by reciprocity of the clients in

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<sup>22</sup>Qadeer (2006) has pinpointed the subsiding role of kinship as an organising principle of social life in Pakistan. However, its importance in political arena is actually increasing.

political sphere. However, the unequal distribution of wealth, resources and status are the underlying structures without which such personal exchanges would not be possible (Mohmand, 2011; Shami 2010).

Patron-client relations have deep implications for political development. Huntington (1965) noted that the key element of political development is participation or mobilisation. Modernisation usually awoke social forces that in pursuit of social and economic power gradually politicised the whole structure of governance (Khan, 2002; Niaz, 2010). New political alliances are forged and elites use this increasing participation rate for their own intra-elite struggles (Keefer, 2009). This kind of participation and mobilisation could not lead to any mature, concrete and progressive collective action that would challenge the exclusive and exploitive political/ economic institutions grafted by colonial powers in most of the developing countries (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). Modernisation although push forward the thrust of democratisation through expanding political franchise but local modes of thought, social structures and cultural values effectively shape these developments (Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Qadeer, 2006). The process of social modernisation is as much necessary as its economic variant for development of any political system. Nevertheless, ironically in any programme of decentralisation implemented in Pakistan the aspect of social modernisation has attracted little attention of policy makers. The informal rules that organise primordial identities become an instrument through which resourceful patrons forge alliances and disseminate patronage (Cheema, Khwaja, and Qadir, 2006; Lyon, 2002; Mohmand, 2008; Mohmand and Gazdar, 2007). The penetration of market exchange in social formation of Pakistan has changed the class structure of Pakistan (Rahman, 2012). Nayab (2011) has estimated that sixty-one millions of population in Pakistan is now enjoying middle-class life styles. Do their (Middle-class) political associations, worldviews, cultural norms and social practices have seen any change? If yes, what is the nature of this change? Unfortunately, very little we can say with the present state of information.

However, generally a tacit consensus is present over the importance of middle classes as an agent of sustainable economic development (Easterly, 2003), stable political system (Collier, 1999; Leventoglu, 2005), economic growth (Banerjee and Duflo, 2007) and deepening of democracy Birdsall (2000). However, theorists of South Asian political economy Khan (1999), Sayeed (1995 and 2002) and Akhtar (2008) have highlighted a very different role that middle classes played in the postcolonial history of these countries. These classes by aligning themselves with ruling bloc have popularised a peculiar idiom of politics that strengthen patronage based political system. There is a huge gap in literature that could help, by zooming-in at micro-level, to understand the actual political practices of middle classes in Pakistan. Generally, there is a consensus that middle classes in Pakistan welcome autocratic regimes

and work as a patron of upper classes to downplay the building of any resistance movement (Akhtar, 2008; Hassan, 2002). This study would also add to literature the middle class political practices in Pakistan.

### 2.3. Decentralised Centralisation in Pakistan

The disenchantment with centralised and bureaucratic state has lost its developmental fervour and charm globally and democratic decentralisation has turned into a new-born faith (Heller, 2001). The voodoo of democratic decentralisation is so much intoxicating that its proponents have forgotten that most of the developing countries have controlled and managed by colonial power through decentralised methods of governance. Kenny (2013) has proposed another analytical framework to understand the uneasy relationship between centralisation and decentralisation by locating the state formation in the social forces of centripetal and centrifugal forces in developing countries. State managers in Pakistan remained occupied with actual or imagined threats since very first day and thence the colonial model of governance with few cosmetic changes have remained intact (Waseem, 1997). The internal dissent against over-centralisation has curtailed through dual tactics of coercion and consent. In the wake of external and internal threats of aggression and disintegration the central state has relented to a political settlement, which in the absence of any useful description could be said 'decentralised centralisation'. The centrifugal forces of dissident regional elites, urban middle classes and disgruntled elements were circumvented using controlled decentralised centralisation. Cheema et al. (2005) have decried the use of local governments by dictatorial regimes to build clientelistic networks that could help the regime at the cost of society and political system. Waseem (1997, 2011 and 2012) has identified that personalisation of politics is the direct outcome of devolved political systems of Martial Law regimes. These practices of dictatorial regimes have developed a peculiar kind of political attitudes and practices that hindered social transformation; most valued objective of democratic decentralisation. Ironically, it has led to depoliticisation of politics and rendered socially marginalised groups unable to build horizontal solidarities. The international donors that have pushed funded and facilitated developing states to decentralise paradoxically helped these very states to penetrate the isolated village societies in the name of development (Ferguson, 1994). After the recent attempt of decentralisation during Musharraf regime one can observe the offices of provincial and district administrative agencies dealing with citizen with the similar *Hauteur* of higher bureaucracy; A relic of by-gone days of Raj. The scarce public goods (health, sanitation facilities, roads, schools and other social utilities) are largely demanded by all section of society (accept those who can purchase them privately). The preferential provision of these social utilities had tied obnoxiously to a complex clientelistic network that linked villages with towns

and town with capitals. The personalisation of politics, as concurred by Waseem (1992) has bonded local politicians with voters/citizen in dyadic structure of exchange facilitated through primordial loyalties. Hicken (2011) has argued that with modernisation of economy the role of information has increased manifold to meet the economic ends. The shift in occupational structure forced migration to urban centres or daily commutation to find work a routine (Gupta, 2005). The ignorance and lack of information for a migrant or commuter makes it necessary to get it from a patron/ broker who is from his village or Biradri. Blau's social exchange framework has embedded exchange within the logic of reciprocity (PM Blau, 1964). The information exchange, provision of social utilities to a village/ community, getting a job for son/ daughter, getting a birth certificate or registration of Nikah, all these exchanges have conducted within clientelistic structure of unequal exchange. The norms of reciprocity demand from the beneficiary to return these favors through voting to get the supply of these goods intact. This exploitive cul-de-sac for a common person is the product of already de-centralised experiments of Pakistani state, which de-centralise to control political fallouts of socio-economic transformation (Rafi et al., 2006). Therefore, there is a need to look at successful decentralisation attempts that actually decentralise more power to local communities. Heller (2001) in his comparative study of three states has drawn few conclusions that demands attention from all stakeholders in Pakistan. He argued that success of decentralisation in Kerala, Port Algere and South Africa has stood upon a) high incidence of political mobilisation of people b) programmatic and ideologically cohesive political parties that have support of local volunteers c) vibrant civil society. While in Pakistan the civil society is weak, political parties are dynastic and ideological debate is absent opting for clientelistic politics is more rewarding for both politicians and voters.

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The approach of research that attempt to investigate an evolving, transitory and varied social reality should be eclectic (Qadeer, 2006), iterative (Mohmand, 2010) and mixed (Lieberman, 2005). Longitudinal observations are required to collect qualitative data that help in getting reflexive understanding of social approaches. Postcolonial states and societies have faced the impacts of modernity and modernisation differently from their Western counterparts (Kaviraj, 2000). The political integration preceded social integration and the role of state increased manifold in offsetting the drastic impacts of socio-economic transformations (Chatterjee, 2011). The role of tradition, indigenous social structures and modes of production in sub-continent was completely at odds with Western experience (Kaviraj, 2005). Therefore, contestation over state has remained a peculiar aspect of postcolonial politics. The modernisation ironically reinvented tradition in both these countries which is evident in the consolidation

of political Islam/ Hindutva, politicisation of caste and emergence of Biradri as an instrument of political mobilisation (Niaz, 2010 and 2012). Qadeer (2006) has called it as grafting of modern political form on traditional/ customary social forms and instrumentalisation of kinship to build political capital. The economic modernisation does not give way to the social and political modernisation as once modernisation theorists believed it. As the focus of our research is to describe the political actors, structures, economic relation and effect of all these on democratic decentralisation largely and especially its political aspect therefore this study has used descriptive research design.

### 3.1. Research Methods and Sampling

Different research paradigms<sup>23</sup> use different set of methodological techniques to inquire social reality (Neuman, 2006). Purists on each side have argued about the suitability and rigor of their own research techniques (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This study has used mixed research methods to triangulate and compare the validity of different observations and results. Triangulation becomes a necessary technique, especially while investigating a case where the responses could show biasness or completely wrong, value bound and infest with endogeneity (Jick, 1979). Especially the political associations have mostly layered meanings for both the patron and client. Respondents feel uneasy about telling the exact nature and extent of their associations. Therefore, building a rapport is a foremost requirement for getting the actual knowledge about overlapping entanglement of political, social and economic spheres of life at grassroot. For that purpose, I have stayed within local community for an extended period of three months. Daily life interactions with villagers of every caste/ class and denomination have enabled me to get firsthand knowledge of the locality, community and its associations.

Mapping the political context was the next exercise that was conducted. What are social categories dividing people along the axes of classes/castes? How power has distributed among these social categories? What social, economic, historical and general characteristics affect political settlements? These questions need a qualitative framework for identifying the dimensions and variables that could be operationalised for data collection. Power analysis is a method usually used by donor organisations (Pearce, 2012; Petit Jethro, 2013) for understanding the political economy of any area<sup>24</sup>. Interviews with local patrons, candidates and voters were conducted to understand the local political context.

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<sup>23</sup>Neuman (2000) has discussed about three different research paradigms 1) Positivist, that use natural science methodology 2) Interpretive, more inclined to use ideographic methodological techniques 3) Critical Social Science, use reflexive ontology to criticise both subject and content.

<sup>24</sup>Therefore 12 in-depth interviews and 6 Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs) (one for each village) were conducted.

For conducting survey, we have used multi-cluster sampling technique to draw a representative sample from Daska Tehsil of Sialkot district<sup>25</sup>. Total number of Union Councils, according to 1998 census, were 24 and 20 percent of these, 6 were selected in the sample. The distance from district/ Tehsil headquarters and economic organisation of the village were controlling variables<sup>26</sup>. The introduction of these controls had been carried out for better understanding the effects of modernisation on social structures and political associations at village level. The primary unit for survey was household and from each village forty households were selected through stratified random sampling. Caste was the variable around which sampling strata were constructed. Alongside household questionnaire, a village questionnaire was also used to collect social, administrative and economic data of the selected villages of all six Union Councils.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This section is divided into two parts. In first part I have developed, a village based political itinerary of household-candidate associations. Banking on the fieldwork and qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews/ participation observation and FGDs I divided villages into two categories a) candidate based villages b) non-candidate based villages. The second section also covers the perceptions of households about the usefulness of democratic decentralisation and limitation of political participations at local level, while the impact of modernisation on the structure of political participation is assessed through changes in class structure. This section also includes the implications of these political associations for 1) Social/ Political development 2) Accountability 3) Collective action 4) Democratic decentralisation.

##### 4.1. Politics in Village

The sampling scheme has led me to choose six Union Councils randomly and then one village from each Union Council was randomly selected. The village selection was treated with another qualification; whether or not the candidate for Union Council chairmanship resides in chosen village. This criteria is being used by scholars in Pakistan to measure the distribution of social utilities during Musharraf era (Cheema and Mohmand, 2006). We use it for checking its impact on the formation of political associations.

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<sup>25</sup> I have used Population Census Report 1998 as my base for sampling. However, in 2002 another Tehsil has carved out of Daska, Sambrial, and half of Daska Union Councils have pushed into Sambrial. Therefore, this survey covers two out of four Tehsils of District Sialkot.

<sup>26</sup> Access to village also played an important role for this selection as the nature of questionnaire demanded rapport building and confidentiality therefore to get such data local intermediation was an important factor.

Table 4.1

*Village Level Micro Data*

Non-Candidate Based							Candidate Based					Village	
Village	Commuters	City	Gas	PD	Non-farm	Voters	Commuters	City***	Gas	PD**	Non-farm*	Voters	
Ralioke	60%	15km	Yes	Gujjar	60%	800	75%	12km	No	Jatt	75%	4000	Ghoinkay
Badoke	60%	7km	Yes	Jatt	40%	5000	50%	10km	No	Jatt	50%	9000	Gojra
Lodikay	70%	8km	Yes	Jatt	95%	550	50%	7km	No	Jatt	40%	2500	Jinddo Sahi

\*Percentage of population employed in non-farm sector \*\* Politically Dominant Biradri \*\*\* Distance of nearest Tehsil Headquarter

As the data has already revealed that with respect to social utilities non-candidate based villages score better while with respect to non-farm employment non-candidate based villages mark differently. Candidate based villages are large and economy is more agriculture oriented and access to city for all villages is approximately same. In the following I discuss the nature of their political association by choosing one village from each category.

#### 4.1.1. *Politics in Non-Candidate Based Village*

Ralioke is a non-candidate based village inhabited and dominated by Gujjar<sup>27</sup> Biradri. The structure of political association is relatively amorphous and dispersed in contrast to candidate based village. Relative affluence and equality of social status also leads to further fragmentation of community as competition among different power brokers catches in. Villagers feel easy while discussing about the caveats of one or other candidate and radiate a freer attitude with an air of confidence. The fragmentation of village social life has reached very high levels and Dera system of feudal times has completely lost its vitality and utility. Intimidation, harassment and coercion despised by everyone in strong words. At face value, every individual evokes high moral standards in explaining his political inclinations and associations. While when the same questions were triangulated, answers become quite different and sometimes even opposite. For example, when I asked about the qualities in ideal type of politician/ candidate the answer usually was related to different connotations of non-discriminatory. While in real life the same person could be active participant in one of the competing vote-blocks. The reasons for this dissonance in thinking and praxis are structural and indicate a relative repugnance that people feel from existing state of politics.

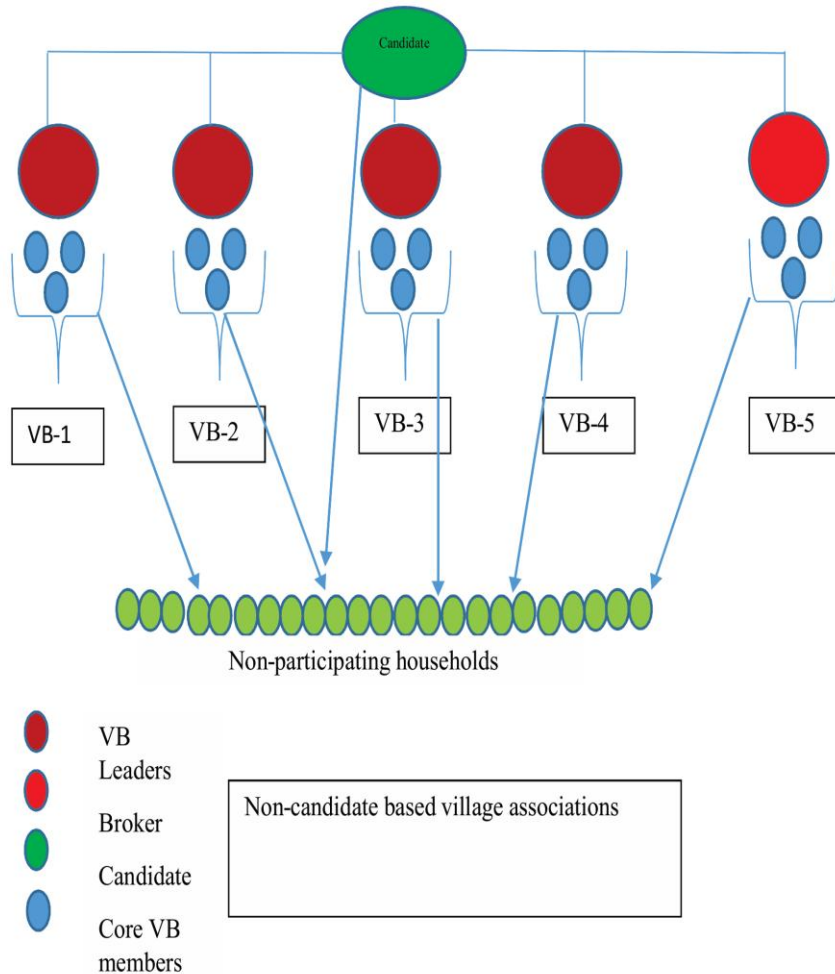
Biradri as a prime face of political activity dominates local government political assessments and alignments.<sup>28</sup> However, there is an increasing

<sup>27</sup>One of the biradri dominated every village and there is no association found between candidate/ non-candidate based classifications in dominance of any kinship network.

<sup>28</sup>We have taken the definition of Biradri same as Alavi (1976). 'Horizontal fraternal ties between contemporaries'.

fragmentation within Biradris along internal lineages (Sub- Biradris) that act as an important factor of political organisation<sup>29</sup>. The reasons for block formation, supporting one or the other candidate, therefore become much personalised in nature and effect political competition.

**Fig. 2. Non-candidate Based Villages**



The structure of political association in this village is infested with presence of multiple vote blocks. For local politics, different blocks inside village, developed around individuals who act as their representative to the

<sup>29</sup> Internal fissures within Biradris are associated with both acquired wealth and social status by different households working in modern sectors.

politician. Basic principle around which vote-block is organised could be Biradri, neighbourhood or intersection of mutual benefits of members. Vote-blocks are not permanent and mostly last only for election. The reasons behind formation of such vote-blocks are to develop a pressure group that could extract benefits in future.

The village is divided into five unstable vote-blocks. Most of the households usually manifest their formal attachment with politics just by voting. While few participate in political field with higher frequency and for them, differentiation between social, political, and economic fields disappear. Along the continuum of participation these categories could describe the intensity of political participation a) voter b) supporter c) broker d) candidate. Voters have limited concern for formal politics other than casting vote, while supporters and brokers show long-term interest in politics for various reasons<sup>30</sup>.

The relationship between VBL and its associates is both horizontal and vertical and VB comprises two types of membership a) permanent/core b) seasonal. The relationship between cores of vote-block is usually horizontal as it provides the strategic power to the leader and seasonal membership come whenever their interest is aligned with them.

All vote-block leaders belonged to high social status groups<sup>31</sup>, although agriculture is not their source of political authority and wealth anymore. Two of them are employed in public sectors and draw political power through using their office for patronage distribution. Third one ran a successful business enterprise and earned enough with effective market links to provide small-scale loans and employment to villagers. Fourth, leader has had the financial support of influential brothers working in multinational corporations. Last vote-block is formed of Malik Biradri, who felt despised by other Gujjar households and act as political brokers of an influential political family of the region.

The associational structure of village politics is graphically explained above. These informal institutions of vote-block perform an important function of regulating power within village<sup>32</sup>. All factions struggle for dominance, to earn respect and prestige vis-à-vis other rivals. The differences usually among them are petty and very personal in nature. Every household is free to join one or another block by making an astute cost benefit analysis. The physical coercion is negligible but monetary losses and threats of job loss are usually deployed to maintain loyalty. One of the most important and self-sustaining element of reproduction of this associational structure is the instrumentalisation of

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<sup>30</sup> The reasons could be personal, social and economic. Brokers usually get attach with any bigwig and establish a parasitic relationship that connects politicians with voters. Supporters are friends or family (extended) members who increase their status or future material opportunities by supporting a candidate.

<sup>31</sup> Agricultural Castes.

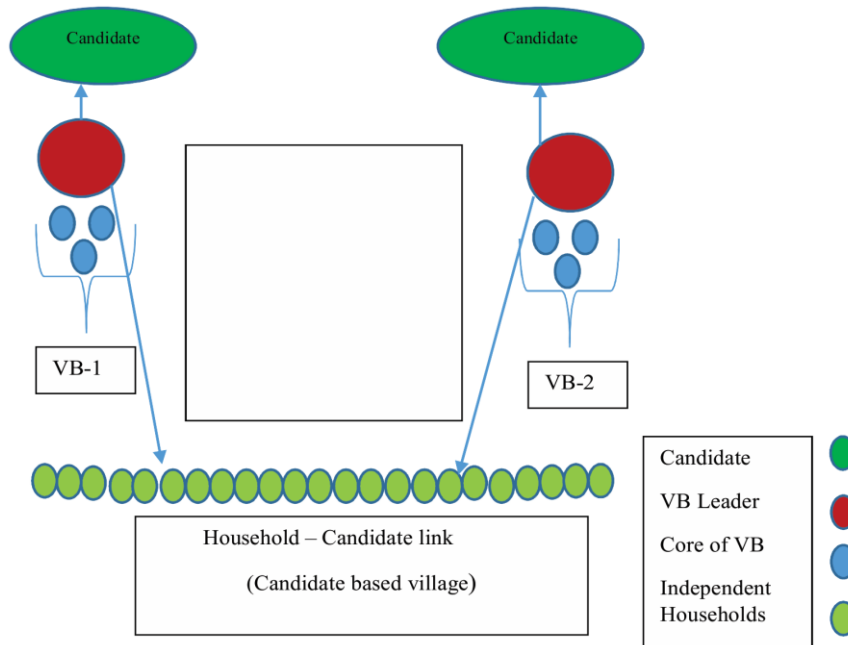
<sup>32</sup> Vote-blocks use both as guard against excessive power by low status kinship groups and for welding power by others.

traditional norm of reciprocity. The inequality in physical endowments, educational attainment and differential access to scarce public and market resources increase the importance of intermediate brokers. The villagers with their lesser interaction to outside world and cultural inhibitions feel comfortable to rely on their Biradri or village fellows for daily life issues. Moreover, in the face of shocks, most of households become vulnerable and in absence of any safety nets, the very same people rescue them. This has led to cementing a relation of reciprocity constructed around exchange. The broker/ patron expects that his noble act of generosity should be paid albeit in different currency, by casting a vote on his recommendation. Thus a subtle form of association emerges out that has developed new fancy tools of curbing and limiting the popular function of participation by manipulating affectional ties and human instincts.

#### **4.1.2. *Politics in Candidate Based Village***

Jindo Sahi is a candidate based village and the associational structure for local politics is very traditional. Physical infrastructure related to sanitation, education and communication in this village was relatively in poor condition from other studied villages. The population size was large and poverty was much more evident. The social structure was also more pluralistic as between Jatt and Rajput Biradri a large portion of Christian and Rawal Biradri part of village community. The tension between rival vote-blocks was visible and geography of village settlements itself speak about that. The Jatt and Rajput households were neatly separated by large settlements of Christian and Rawal households. The politics was regarded as a sensitive issue and the freedom of association and easy attitude towards politics was mostly missing in this village.

Jindo Sahi (candidate based) village pronounced a neat division into two competing factions formed around primordial identities of caste and represent all social categories inhabiting the village space. Rajput family heads one of the vote-block whose core made up of few households belonging to Gujjar and Kashmiri Biradri. Rajputs are relatively large landowners and migrants from Gurdaspur Tehsil. The other block is composed of Jatt Biradri and earns good fortunes via employment in public sector jobs. They are locals (*muqammi*) and use this identity to cement their internal group solidarity. There are also present about 35 households of Christian community, which are mostly employed in low-scale government jobs. Rawal Biradri was made the majority of this village that is relatively poor and mostly self-employed in small scale vending jobs. This village lacks any sanitation facility, no high school for boys or girls and without the provision of gas. Most of the households lament that all surrounding villages enjoy cheap fuel but due to intra-village factionalism around petty issues, their village denied the supply of gas fuel.

**Fig. 3. Political Associations in Candidate Based Villages**

Due to the presence of strong vote-blocks<sup>33</sup> with strong outside linkages through their association with political parties use their access to coercive forces of state to further their own agendas. The choice available to the households is limited because they have either to vote one block or other. To get the support of the Rawal or Christian Biradri use of intimidation is common from both sides. The low-income status of majority populations, lack of alternatives forced them to enter into clientelistic relations with either of the blocks. Most of the spoils offered by patterns remain intrinsically personal garnish by emotive appeals to any gift exchange in recent or distant past<sup>34</sup>. Even the presence of political allegiance with national parties does not improve the bargaining power of junior partners of vote-blocks vis-à-vis leaders of their respective vote-blocks. The extent, intensity, and dependency that clientelism produces is found to be higher in candidate based than non-candidate village.

<sup>33</sup> Who are strategically aligned with two factions of Pakistan Muslim League

<sup>34</sup> One of the key informants has narrated an incident that how during one of the election campaigns one of the vote-block leader (VBL) went to a household asking for votes for a particular candidate. The timing of the visit was after midnight when all members of the household were sleeping. The reason behind this audacity was that some ten years ago the VBL has helped in securing public job for one of the son. Naturally, he was expecting some kind of reciprocity for that his act of generosity.

Both villages receive almost similar level of development projects, are at similar distance from city centres, linked with towns through metaled roads and majority of population is employed in non-farm sector. Then why difference in associational structure of politics exists? The most reasonable explanation could be the emergence of hostility around kinship identity, its politicisation and the bearings of direct competition between candidates based in same village. The structure of competition directly influences the structure of association. The freedom of choice got limited and that certainly disturbed the development of social forces in ways different than the other category village. This example also highlights the still abundant influence of social structures on political association in Pakistan in spite a lot of economic transformation. The social transformation, a noble objective of politics, is still not in sight.

It can be concluded from the abovementioned discussion that candidate based villages tend to provide little political freedoms to socially marginalised groups. The political dependency in the candidate based village is high. The animosity between two rival factions block emergence of any alternative at local levels. Although in non-candidate based village the element of coercion weighed little still political dependency is available. This political dependency is usually caused by the inequality of status, income and differential access to other scarce resources. This inequality incentivises the households to choose one or other faction to increase its access to these valuable resources. Although the bargaining power vary in different villages among households, vote-block leaders and candidates but in absence of any horizontal solidarities candidates and faction leaders extract more benefits out of this relationship. The clientelistic nature of such relations is mostly remained hidden because of the norms of reciprocity that made it possible for both patron and clients to label this association in more humane manner. However, this type of political association creates an internal dependency that negatively influences development of social and political institutions.

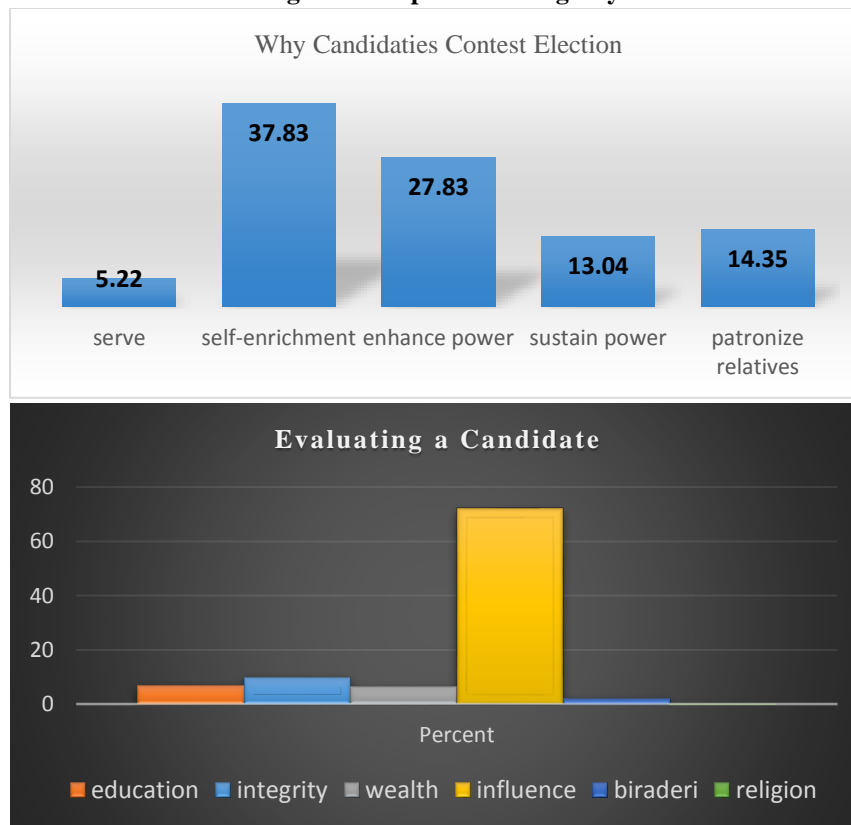
#### **4.2. Agency and Perceptions in Local Political Field**

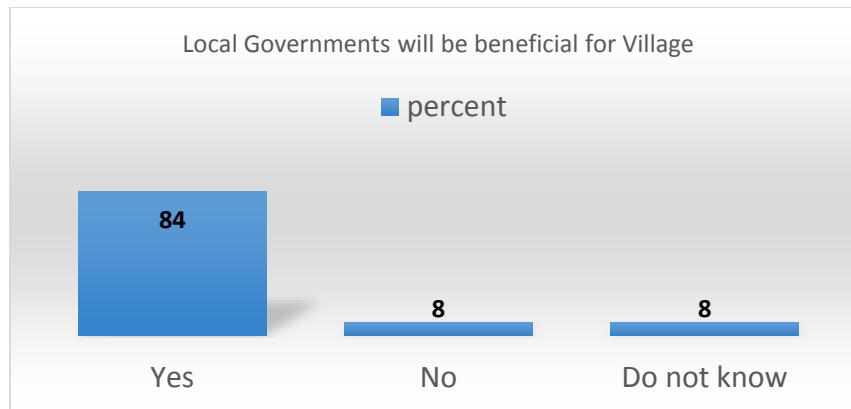
Households overwhelmingly supported democratic decentralisation, as it will increase efficiency in the provision of public goods and increase opportunities for creating political agency. This positive response is very much in agreement with decentralisation proponents who suggest that representative governments are the only way through which local demands of people could be satisfied. In policy literature the political aspect of decentralisation has also been emphasised that provides local governments legitimacy and support of the population (Mohmand, 2008). The democratisation literature also emphasised the importance of accountable executives to their principals. Without this accountability, the excesses of power (for which bureaucratic system is notorious for) could also affect the democratic decentralisation. To make an

executive accountable it is important to develop political institutions that decrease opportunities for moral hazards.

Therefore, to unravel the crisscross of representation the key is to find out the ways, methods and underlying reasons that guide candidature at local level. Responses of households in this regard tend to diverge all theoretical assumptions that policy makers so often propound to support the supposed democratic dividends of decentralisation. When asked about the reasons for which candidates contest elections the responses were negative, bordering cynicism. Majority of the voters have lamented that reasons for candidates getting into election competition are usually to sustain power or acquire self-enrichment (Fig; 3). This implies a strong divergence between the desires of the *ideal* and unfolding of the *real* that is influenced by the presence of inequalities inherent in local structures (Vries, 2007). The people at gross level actually want empowerment and more say in managing their social lives but social inequality, personalization of politics and complete obsolescence of previous social collective institutions block realization of these ideals.

**Fig. 4. Perceptions and Agency**





‘Influence’ is an important barometer that voters use for measuring the efficacy of any candidate (Fig: 5). In local parlance ‘Influence’ has different meanings for different people. Fieldwork observations<sup>35</sup> have highlighted that voters evaluate influence of any candidate with respect to a) their access to state agencies b) private enterprises in market i.e. financial and industrial sector c) muscle to protect their supporters from any intimidations of other political players. Why these kinds of qualities are required in any candidate? One of the explanations could be that only a person with such qualities could do politics of spoils and protect its voters from any kind of reprisals from opponents. As the saying goes “*Politics is not a job of decent man*”<sup>36</sup> in Pakistan” only a powerful man with high stocks of contacts and influence over *thana* could afford doing politics. During my stay at one of the villages, I have observed police, through increasing police patrols, intimidation also played as an election strategy to manage dissent<sup>37</sup>.

With decreasing efficacy of extra-legal (thuggish<sup>38</sup>) channels of coercion, intimidation has gown down new forms of legal coercions developed through state agencies to meet political ends. In one of the sample villages the last LG elections (held in 2005) were also rigged as the ruling party connived with local administration in favor of one of the candidates<sup>39</sup>. This reflects the alarming level of ineptitude and incapacity on the part of state agencies to draw a universal principle for provision of basic amenities at local level. These

<sup>35</sup> Interviews with different elements of local politics during mapping exercise have provided us with differential meanings different respondents attach with the term *influence*.

<sup>36</sup> Siyast Sharif Aadmi ka kam nahin ha.

<sup>37</sup> That candidate is nephew of an incumbent MNA of ruling party. The intimidation is very much part of political culture in Pakistan.

<sup>38</sup> The patrons to retain their social control in Punjab relied heavily on thuggish elements called *Rasa Geer* in local parlance.

<sup>39</sup> Village Six in our sample and then ruling party was PML (Q).

divergences in perceptions about political decentralisation give way to different practices that are in conflict with the demands of democratic participation.

All responses indicate an underlying cynicism about the nature and form of politics. Nevertheless, in real life households have no other options than to vote the same old people whom they perceive not as their well-wishers. They have to join the political arena and cast their votes but on terms which are not determined by them. Why this is the case? In the following is discussed structural imperative of participation and its ideological undertakings in next section.

#### **4.3. Is Voting a Good Proxy for Democratisation?**

Participation rate in local elections is remained lacklustre recently.<sup>40</sup> Party pull in local election factors in very low and voter turnout explicitly depends upon the efficacy of political machine that a candidate managed to create on Election Day<sup>41</sup>. This machine consists of his (candidate) supporters, vote-blocks that he managed to pin with him and independent voters who exchange their votes for any promised/ given benefits. Therefore, even if the voter turnout increases in some constituencies the terms and limitations of such participations must be examined keenly for considerate comprehension of the phenomenon.

As most of the households interviewed have shown keenness towards making their contribution in political process, about ninety percent of the households vote regularly in elections, but the inspiration for such participation does not come from any abstract notions of participative democracy or collective action but for immediate, contingent and emotive reasons<sup>42</sup>. The village as a unit of production hit very badly due to the crisis in Agriculture. The erstwhile principle of social organisation that knits a village into one little communitarian unit has lost its vitality, Anthropologists has called that system as Vartan Bhanji<sup>43</sup> (Alavi, 1972; Eglar, 2010). This informal system, which was rooted in affective ties earlier, has given rise to other forms of informalisation that pivots around instrumental relations. In addition, that instrumentalisation is evident from the actual voting preferences that respondents have made during political deliberations<sup>44</sup>.

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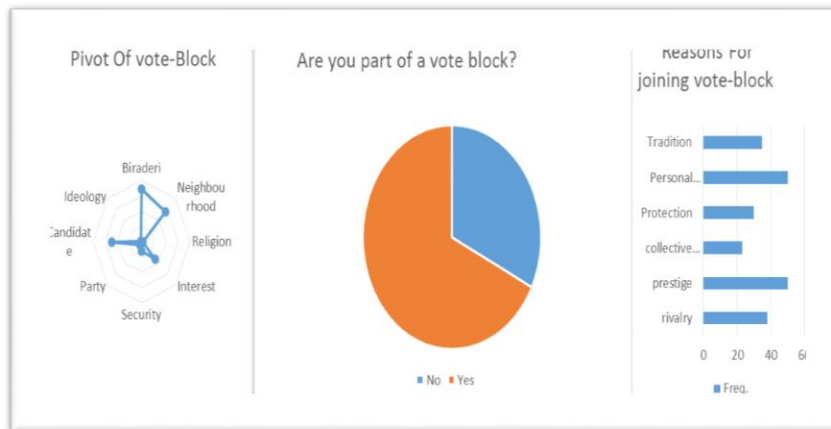
<sup>40</sup> <http://www.Tribune/story/876025/low-turnout-mars-lg-in-cantonment-boards>.

<sup>41</sup> One usually heard a lot this one saying about election 'Half election has been fought before election day and other half on election day'.

<sup>42</sup> Yes, response from any household head does not mean that all members of that household would participate with similar enthusiasm. In addition, emotive elements play important role especially in the making of core vote-block groups.

<sup>43</sup> An indigenous informal/unwritten code of conduct that regulate social exchange in Punjabi Village life.

<sup>44</sup> Although local government elections are yet to be held in Punjab but before the postponement of elections in 2014 all election practices were taking place in 2014.

**Fig. 5. Conditions on Participation**

The informal political institutions of vote-block<sup>45</sup> are present in each village studied in this research. The constitution of vote-blocks varies in candidate and non-candidate villages. The candidate villages are divided more neatly in cohorts and freedom of choice is limited as well as the bargain power for any household. Non-candidate villagers enjoy relatively greater freedom for political association with higher bargaining power. The findings tend to diverge from SK Mohmand (2011) as thirty percent of the respondents do not agree that they vote as being part of any faction. This reflects that historical variables i.e. land tenure system, migration; state-led modernisation and climate have a differential impact on the formation of political associations in old settled districts of Punjab. There are also certain similarities as the sway of kinship idiom on the alignment of political associations is significantly present. Figure 6 illustrates that Biradri and Neighborhood still hold important position with reference to the formation of political association. However, while interpreting these responses following caveats ought to be observed. 1) both categories are not exclusive, as same Biradri groups inhabit most of the neighborhoods. 2) vote-blocks membership is not permanent and changes by every election 3) schism within Biradri is abundant and same Biradri could be divided into many antagonistic vote-blocks 4) occupational castes usually vote independently from Biradri vote-blocks<sup>46</sup> 5) the independence of voter from traditional bondage does not provide any substantial awareness about how to use this freedom 6)

<sup>45</sup> I have used vote-blocks/ factions interchangeably for this study.

<sup>46</sup> Occupational castes have usually considered as marginalised segments of village community. However, larger part of occupational caste populations have migrated to cities (both small and large) and remaining enjoy relatively more prosper life. However, the agriculturalists are not happy with this state of affairs as they complain about the changed attitudes of Kammiss.

inequality in status, access to job market, credit market, information and state agencies push voters to depend on personal networks to access these scarce goods<sup>47</sup>. Most of the households participate and vote for much personalised reasons. Any candidate who could deal with such fragmented population increases his chances in elections. However, the terms he will offer to these rival blocks would depend upon the organisational capacity and electoral size of these blocks. Meeting the contingent demands for club goods, private favors, provision of loans and buying of votes are strategies that now candidates use in local elections.<sup>48</sup>

With little availability of development funds, low level of social expenditure and lack of uniform access to information at market place means these scarce resources would be captured by those who have a greater access to state and market. Households in my data set are neither ignorant nor economically dependent for their livelihood. Therefore, they use their votes as an instrument, a token of investment in distant future. The vote for an individual does not carry the same meaning or purposefulness as it for an American or European citizen.

The above-mentioned household responses about their political practices are although only reflections of personal opinions but point towards certain trends those other scholars have also found in other parts of the country. All these responses echo the presence of a clientelistic relation between Principal (Citizen) and Agent (Politician) banded through affective ties of kinship and sustained through norms of exchange-reciprocity. So, much dispersed and inherently weak principal divided along multiple cleavages provide greater strategic advantage to candidate in this political game. But for candidate to actually have the upper hand few things are necessary a) Good name b) His personal networks c) Good amount of fortune d) Access to the state institutions. These highly prized attributes provide an edge to candidate against his opponents<sup>49</sup>. Then once again, it is left with the ingenuity of candidate to play his card intelligently to secure a win<sup>50</sup> why such influence is important for evaluating a candidate? It has lot to do with the overall insecurity and patriarchal norms of society and other veils of oppression existing in Pakistani society (Gazdar, 2007).

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<sup>47</sup> These observations have been made during my extended stay at field locations in 2014 and 2015.

<sup>48</sup> While interviewing different political brokers, ex-union council Nazim and potential candidates for new elections we have come through another insight. One of the ex-Nazim from UC 1 has claimed that local elections are the most expensive elections as the role of money has increased manifold in these elections.

<sup>49</sup> *Thana* and *kitchehri* played very important role in local elections and having good influence over these

Institutions increase winning chances for a candidate.

<sup>50</sup> A male vote-bloc leader at village 1.

#### 4.4. Conclusion

Last sections discussed, with the help of household data, about the political perceptions and practices of households at local Union Council level politics. The trends emerged out of data reflect that, voters at large, shown a cynical disposition towards politics but at same time positively hope that democratic decentralisation will improve the provision of social utilities. Then most of them vote regularly but their motives/ causes behind voting are completely at odds with agreed universal practices of vote casting. At the very local level of village where there is contingent and face-to-face interaction, affectional ties, envies and rivalries go hand in hand with inequalities of social and economic status, voting gets a personalized activity. The modernisation has greatly altered the economic organisation of the rural society but inequalities of social status and modes of cultural affinities are still present. Due to the incidence of inequality of access to scarce public resources and information, vertical political associations dominate the sphere of political association. Horizontal, rules and norm base impersonal ties are just present among core groups of vote-blocks who always belong to higher social status groups and mostly fall in high-income brackets too. Their internal solidarity and access to information increase their power of organisation and political mobilisation in election times. Through holding this access to stock of resources, they induce a political culture of patronage. And common voter/ household has no choice but to get into an exchange-relationship either with one of the vote-blocs or directly with candidate himself, who himself also heads one of the vote-bloc. In the absence of any programmatic political party, which can provide an alternative way of political organisation, these informal ways of politicking would undermine all efforts of political development through grassroots democratisation.

### 5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The introduction of political parties at local level is a welcoming decision<sup>51</sup>. However local government election results in cantonment areas and KP province clearly shows some disturbing trends. 1) Incumbent party at national/provincial level will lead the local elections 2) Independent candidates will remain in second position.

Firstly, conceptual framework clearly explicates that incumbent political government at higher tiers would influence the outcome of local elections through legislative procedures, bureaucracy and their local incumbents. Thus, the provincial governments tried their best to avoid any opponent party to come into power. Secondly, the political parties have ridden with factions locally and it would be difficult for parties to organise party based elections at village level.

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<sup>51</sup> Village councils have elected on non-party bases in KP.

KP government already has experimented with election of non-party elections for village councils. The local government law explicitly states that chairman/vice-chairman of village council would be contesting jointly. This would create problems for both candidates and parties. Parties would be inviting intra-factional tensions at local level while candidates would find it difficult to put joint candidates. Therefore, non-party based elections would be the most appropriate policy option to manage the dissent and chaos local level.

Nudging away the village council, the recent election results have shown that either siding with incumbent party or independent is the safest option for any candidate. Parties because of their meddlesome internal affairs have still to develop a free and fair internal mechanism to award tickets, money, access to party leaders or influence at local level are standards for distribution of nomination tickets. All parties in Pakistan are without any internal democracy and dynastic machines of dispensing patronage (UNDP, 2013). Party organisations are dubious and internal elections are out of agenda. Rather than giving any ideologically cohesive programme these parties rely on power politics and distribute nomination tickets to those who has his/her own personal following. This means that candidate has to finance his whole election campaign himself and party would not share any of the burden. This financial cost paved the way for politically induced economic corruption that is used for both self-enrichment and patronage extension (M. H. Khan, 1998). The way local political associations have created and managed means the candidate will neither be accountable to voters nor its party bosses.

Secondly, independent candidates would themselves feel free to join or make alliance any of the party after elections, and most probably, it would be the incumbent party. The huge success of independents indicates two trends 1) Voters still feel happy to negotiate with local patrons whom they know personally 2) The trust on political parties, with reference to local elections, is very low. This is because political parties in Pakistan are political machines and political bosses are not answerable to their supporters. The irony is that voters depend on these local (independent or party based) political patrons to access scarce public resources. Therefore, following policy inferences are extracted through this study:

- (1) New holistic political economy research agenda is required that helps in providing new insights for effective transformative policy formulation.
  - (2) Political parties lacked ideological support at grassroot level. Until this can't be done personalisation of politics will rule the political roost at lower level. Therefore, the need is to make political parties internally more democratic and representative to people.
  - (3) Informal intermediary institutions exist and influence the outcomes.
- It is the need of the time that rather than practising European models

for grassroots our policy discourse should incorporate local informal institutions into legal structures which will eventually reduce the cultural alienation that people feel from these types of local government institutions especially in rural areas.

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