

# **The London School of Economics and Political Science**

## *Profit, Piety, and Patronage: Bazaar Traders and Politics in Urban Pakistan*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis studies the political and social practices of prosperous bazaar merchants and traders to understand the dynamics of power and authority in contemporary urban Pakistan. Broadly, it considers how propertied groups, such as traders, maintain their dominant position in Pakistan's political sphere, and how the consent of subordinate classes is structured to reproduce this persisting arrangement.

Drawing on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a large wholesale bazaar of Lahore, this thesis demonstrates that bazaar traders accumulate power and authority through a fused repertoire of transactional bargaining, material patronage, and Islamic civic leadership. By mobilizing voluntary associations, and forming personalized relations of reciprocity with state functionaries and political elites, traders are able to reproduce their material and status privileges through political access and co-optation of public resources. Such networks also position them as patrons and brokers for the urban poor who work in marketplaces, helping the latter resolve pressing issues of everyday subsistence, while sustaining ties of exploitative dependence in the process.

These ties are simultaneously legitimized through an accompanying cultural politics grounded in religious ideals. Bazaar traders remain deeply embedded with Islamist actors and play a central role in administering mosques, seminaries, and religious charities. Therefore, notions of piety, divinely ordained class and status hierarchies, and benevolent civic virtue - disseminated and popularized through their articulation and performance by bazaar traders – shape the cultural frames under which class authority and material conditions are interpreted by subordinate groups in marketplaces.

Ultimately, these processes act as the building blocks of a persisting arrangement, wherein the influence bazaar traders possess through economic resources and their authority over the urban poor is transacted with weak political parties during elections, thus underpinning the reproduction of Pakistan's elite-dominated political sphere.

By documenting the everyday power practices of a dominant group and the micro-processes that feed into the political sphere, this thesis rectifies deterministic statist and structuralist explanations for Pakistan's lasting regime of elite power. It also contributes to ongoing debates on the roles played by the state, political parties, and civil society in the articulation of hegemonic political arrangements.

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## List of Acronyms

AoP	Association of Persons
APAT	All Pakistan <i>Anjuman-i-Tajran</i>
ATMM	<i>Anjuman-i-Tajran</i> Mustafa Market
BHU	Basic Health Unit
BISP	Benazir Income Support Program
BJP	Bhartiya Janata Party
CNIC	Computerised National Identity Card
DC	District Collector/Deputy Commissioner
DCO	District Coordination Officer
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IJT	Islami Jamiat Taliba
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JI	Jamaat-i-Islami
LCCI	Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry
LDA	Lahore Development Authority
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LIT	Lahore Improvement Trust
LWMC	Lahore Waste Management Company
MNA	Member National Assembly
MPA	Member Provincial Assembly
MQM	Muttahia Quomi Movement
PBM	Pakistan Baitul Maal
PCP	Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy
PIAF	Pakistan Industrial and Traders Front
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz
PML-Q	Pakistan Muslim League Quaid
PNA	Pakistan National Alliance
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf
QTI	<i>Quomi Tajir Ittehad</i> (National Traders Alliance)
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
RTO	Regional Tax Office
TMA	Town Municipal Administration
TMO	Town Municipal Officer
TO	Town Officer
UC	Union Council
USD	United States Dollar
WCLA	Walled City of Lahore Authority



## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Laying out the research**

In May 2013, Pakistan held general elections to elect representatives for its national and provincial legislatures. Both the 2013 exercise and polls for local government councils held in late 2015, highlighted strong continuities with trends established in previous elections. The candidate profiles in particular showed traditionally powerful groups – landed elites, and tribal leaders - as well as comparatively newer urban elites – bazaar traders, industrialists, and other types of businessmen - dominating contests across much of the country.

The political system and all the attendant attitudes and actions of different tiers of government reflect this dominance of Pakistan's urban and rural elite. For the past three decades, each government, regardless of its civilian or military-led form, has followed what is loosely called the neoliberal development agenda. Under the tutelage of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, successive governments have privatized state enterprises, reduced overall development spending through the retrenchment of welfare programs, and rolled back pro-poor government subsidies. These have been accompanied by a liberalization of the trade regime, opening up of capital markets, and eradication of employee protection legislation in a bid to 'free up' the labour market (Zaidi 2015: 457-490).

Furthermore, land redistribution attempts from a brief populist interregnum in the early 1970s have been reversed under a judicial order that declared them as 'un-Islamic' (Alavi 1986: 34). All this time, the state has generally shied away from taxing incomes generated by large landowners and businessmen, while relying on various consumption-based indirect taxes or foreign aid and loans for its fiscal resources (Husain 2009). Simultaneously, analysis of the budgetary and policy priorities over the last four decades shows allocations for public health, education, and social protection fluctuating between a paltry 3.5 and 4% of GDP per annum. This remains the lowest in South Asia (Bonnerjee 2014: 177).

It is thus of little surprise that the country scores poorly on a range of human development and inequality measures. Its HDI score of 0.515 is ranked 146<sup>th</sup> in the world, and stands below the regional average of 0.57 and 31% of the population lives below the government's multi-dimensional poverty threshold (UNDP 2016). While there has been some progress towards reducing chronic poverty, a Gini coefficient of 0.37 shows that socio-economic inequality remains widely prevalent (Burki et al 2015). The existing track record on a number of welfare related indicators has led observers to remark that the country represents a particularly persistent case of elite-biased economic growth with little accompanying benefits for the poor (Easterly 2001).

On its own, the persisting dominance of the propertied classes in Pakistan's politics is not a particularly unique feature. Since the 1980s, elite-led political coalitions have supplanted populist politics and implemented neoliberal reforms in many places across the Global South, most notably in Turkey (Tugal 2009), India (Corbridge and Harriss 2013), and parts of Latin America (Weyland 2002).

There are, however, two inter-linked features that make Pakistan's case somewhat distinctive. In many other countries, increased marketization and commodification have also been accompanied by new political responses. In Latin America, for example, these have taken the shape of indigenous peoples' movements, as in Bolivia and Ecuador (Yashar 1999), or grassroots mobilization by coalitions of middle classes and the urban poor, as in Brazil (Baiochi 2005). Next door to Pakistan, in India, electoral politics since the 1980s has witnessed the steady rise of lower caste based parties (Chandra 2007), and a host of social movements on issues of rights for informal workers (Agarwala 2013), land and tribal rights (Levien 2012), and environmental justice (Haynes 1999). Their spread and popularity may not have displaced the prevailing market consensus, but it has resulted in episodes of state capture (especially at the subnational level) or influencing of state policy by historically marginalized groups, and created some programmatic redistributive opportunities.

In Pakistan, on the other hand, the political arena is characterized by the continued absence of any such mobilization or sustained pressure. The party that stepped into

power for a third time after the 2013 election, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN), prides itself as a champion of industrialists and bazaar traders. The principal opposition party, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) fronts a middle-class inspired clean capitalism and meritocracy agenda. Barring occasional lip service by the considerably weaker Pakistan People Party (PPP), the glaring absence of a popular pro-welfare agenda in the social-democratic or redistributive mold is a constant since the demise of a short-lived populist phase in the late 1960s and early 70s. By and large, all national and regional parties act as vehicles for upper and middle-class political interests, and draw their leadership, their electoral candidates, and their organizational cadre from the same propertied groups. Social movements representing disadvantaged groups – such as factory workers, slum dwellers, informal sector workers, and disenfranchised agrarian communities – are largely non-existent, while competition for control of state resources and political office remains limited to competing factions of urban and rural elites.

In contrast with countries such as India, where mobilization of subaltern populations along caste and class lines demonstrates a degree of political pressure from below, dominant groups in Pakistan have faced only infrequent challenges in recent decades (Candland 2007; Munir et al. 2015). These have largely come from excluded ethnic groups belonging to peripheral regions or, most recently, from transnational Islamist militants.

While some may read the current situation as one of static continuity, Pakistan's political sphere has in fact evolved in this shape amidst significant, and potentially disruptive, transformations. Over the last four decades, rapid urbanization and the deepening of capitalism have created new social classes in a society traditionally consisting of highly stratified agrarian and tribal orders (Qadeer 2006). In the same time period, various political and institutional transitions – such as the formal shifts from military to democratic rule, frequent elections, and increased party competition – offer, on the surface at least, the potential for a more egalitarian politics. However, these changes stand reflected only in so far as new urban propertied classes have made space

for themselves within the dominant bloc, through the very avenues opened up by mass politics and electoral competition.

Following from this, the second (and related) feature in Pakistan's case is that the political dominance of propertied classes, and broader processes of marketization and commodification under neoliberalism, are sustained by the electoral and social consent of the urban and rural poor. As Akhtar (2008: 16) asserts, the contemporary era is distinguishable from earlier periods precisely because of the wholesale participation of marginalized groups in the reproduction of extant power relations.

The period between the late 1960s and early 1970s is the only time in Pakistan's history when an upsurge of populist politics calling for democratization and economic equality threatened to reconfigure an elite-dominated socio-political order (Toor 2011). However, the years that immediately followed this rupture saw its reversal at the hands of a strong counter-mobilization led by various propertied classes, and the repressive tactics of an authoritarian military regime. Since the 1980s, the need for suppressing popular resistance through coercion stands greatly diminished, as the former has all but disappeared and social and political participation has taken the shape of 'common-sense acquiescence' towards elite authority and an economic project of neoliberalism (Akhtar 2008: 32).

While, the overall shift towards marketization and commodification under a broadly neoliberal consensus is not unique to Pakistan, what sets this case apart from other comparator countries of the Global south is the persisting absence of any organized countervailing forces. Since the 1980s, a redistributive agenda from the Left of the ideological spectrum remains wholly marginal to contemporary patterns of institutional and societal politics. The political arena remains characterized by elite factional contestation through weakly organized political parties, and the arena of claim-making and mobilization largely dominated by Islamist cultural politics. Therefore, the reproduction of both elite power and an unchallenged consensus in favor of

marketization and commodification, through consent rather than coercion, suggests that Pakistan's political sphere exhibits a hegemonic character (Gramsci 1971: 57).<sup>1</sup>

The contemporary shape of Pakistan's political sphere throws up a number of questions that lie at the centre of this thesis. What explains the persistence of this particular arrangement especially when previous arrangements, such as the populist rupture of the early 1970s, proved to be considerably more fragile? How do dominant groups secure and fortify positions of advantage within the existing social order? What accounts for the apparently pliant participatory role played by marginalized groups in reproducing existing social and political hierarchies?

Much of the literature on Pakistan employs state-centred or Marxian political economy frameworks to explain the country's persisting regime of elite power (Jalal 1995; Waseem 1994; Alavi 1972). These accounts are instructive in so far as how both the form of Pakistan's state – characterized by military-led authoritarianism and parochial political parties - as well as the trajectory of capitalist development provides us with the historically contingent institutional and structural determinants of a hegemonic, elite-dominated political sphere. What they fall short of doing is adequately expand on what happens within the localized micro-processes that help constitute and reproduce this particular political sphere. In other words, we are left wondering how large-scale phenomenon such as regime type and economic transformations are determinative in the lived experience of hierarchical social relations, and, in turn, how these social relations feed into and influence large-scale political processes.

Existing scholarship that does accord greater importance to micro-processes of politics is, by and large, centred on village life and agrarian relations (Ahmed 1977; Rouse 1988; Lyon 2002). While this has done much to advance more nuanced understandings of power and hierarchy in a traditionally rural country, demographic and economic transformations have led to the emergence of new elites, new marginalized groups, and new urban spaces of political and social inequality. Barring a handful of recent

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<sup>1</sup> Hegemony here is taken in the sense of political and intellectual leadership by particular groups or classes over others, which exists beyond the exercise of naked coercion. This, however, does not imply that coercion is completely absent in the reproduction of power.

accounts, these transformations and their dynamics within politics remain woefully understudied.

To address the gaps highlighted here, this project studies the everyday political and social practices of bazaar traders - a group that has expanded and benefitted greatly under neoliberal capitalism, and persistently dominates political and social life in Pakistan's burgeoning towns and cities. Drawing on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in a large wholesale market, located in Pakistan's second largest city, Lahore, this thesis shows that bazaar traders play an integral role in reproducing the contemporary urban political order, and their dominant position within it, through a fused politics of transactional bargaining, material patronage, and moral civic leadership.

Bazaar traders cultivate ties of reciprocal benefit with local state officials and political party elites, often through the use of collective marketplace-based platforms known as the *Anjuman-i-Tajran* (Association of Traders). These ties help them secure key material advantages and greater autonomy for their largely undocumented practices of capital accumulation. Crucially, the access and influence forged through this process also provide traders with a greater say in urban governance and the distribution of key material resources, such as housing, public healthcare, and use of public space. Their dominant social position is thus produced and sustained in two ways: first in their role as economic elites with considerable financial clout, who are major employers in cities and towns, especially of low-skilled migrants from rural areas; and secondly, as patrons and local authority figures who have access to public officials, and can resolve problems of basic urban subsistence for subordinate groups working in the bazaar economy.

However, it is important to mention that their dominant position – exemplified, in part, by a lasting authority over subordinate groups - is not just down to the provision of material patronage, nor is it solely an outcome of coercive structural forces that condition cross-class relations in the neoliberal economy. Neither of the two are able to fully account for long-term consensual reproduction, which is a characteristic hall-mark of cross-class relations in contemporary Pakistan.

Instead, this research shows that class authority and domination in the bazaar are simultaneously legitimized and normalized through an accompanying cultural politics grounded in Islamic ideals. Bazaar traders are deeply embedded with religious actors and play a central role in administering mosques, madrassahs, and religious charities. This provides them with an amplified voice in the moral and ideological contours of an urban geography in which marketplaces and mosques function as public arenas for prolonged cross-class interaction. Therefore, notions of a collective Muslim identity, ideas about divinely ordained material inequities and hierarchies, and the images of 'benevolent and pious' patrons that are made popular by the discourses and practices of bazaar traders end up disseminated as the cultural frames through which class authority and material conditions are interpreted by marginalized groups operating in the same urban spaces.

Through the joint exercise of personalized patronage politics and moral-cultural leadership, bazaar traders play a central role in the management and pliant resolution of structural tensions and contradictions found within cross-class relations in urban Pakistan. Drawing on extant political economy analyses, this thesis proposes that contemporary power arrangements are indeed contextualized by both Pakistan's historically authoritarian state structure and its experience with neoliberal capitalism. The former limits institutional space for a more egalitarian politics and enshrines the social and political dominance of economic elites, while patterns of marketization and commodification under the latter create urgent conditions of precariousness that need to be negotiated by the poor for their survival. However, this thesis moves beyond more determinative accounts by suggesting that none of the contemporary outcomes are automatic or pre-determined. Instead, lasting power relations ultimately germinate and take their shape through the functioning of everyday interactions. It is the material and ideological substance of such relations, and the way they are politically and socially organized by different actors, that contributes towards their persistence and their reproductive capacity.<sup>2</sup> In the case presented here, it is the influence cultivated through reciprocal ties of benefit with public officials, marketplace relations of patronage with

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<sup>2</sup> Essentially, I seek to merge social structural analysis, which operates with macrosocial categories, with anthropological insight into relations between particular actors.

subordinate groups, and their simultaneous legitimation through religious ideals and practices of piety and Islamic civic virtue, which help sustain the dominant position of bazaar traders in the urban social hierarchy.

Ultimately, the processes of domination described here act as the 'building blocks' of a persisting arrangement, wherein the influence bazaar traders possess via control of economic capital and their culturally legitimized authority over the urban poor is transacted with weak political parties during elections, thus underpinning the consensual reproduction of Pakistan's elite-dominated political sphere.

Within Pakistan, this study is primarily concerned with the province of Punjab and its capital city, Lahore. The choice of both region and city is dictated by several reasons. Punjab happens to be Pakistan's most populous province. By virtue of its demographic weight, the province has the largest number of seats in the national legislature.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, forming a stable government requires the support of a large section of Punjab's electorate. It is also the most rapidly urbanizing region in the country, and its urban elites play an outsized role in the country's politics just as its landed elites have done historically (Javid 2011).

Punjab's capital city, Lahore, is of particular interest as a research site since the political strength of its propertied classes – most notably, bazaar traders - has proven to be highly durable over the past three decades. The city, and the province of which it is the capital, Punjab, is governed by the Pakistan Muslim League– Nawaz (PML-N) a political party catering largely to business and middle class interests with little input from other social groups. This stands in contrast to the 1960s and 70s where Lahore, out of all urban centres in the country, witnessed the highest degree of populist mobilization around a redistributive agenda (Malik 2013). The scale and acuteness of this contrast makes the city an appropriate site to uncover mechanisms through which contemporary relations of power develop and operate.

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<sup>3</sup> Punjab hosts 148 out of 272 constituencies in the lower house of Parliament, the National Assembly.



In the absence of existing scholarship on urban politics and bazaar traders in Pakistan, research in the field was guided by the following questions:

- What role does the bazaar play in urban politics?
- How and to what extent are bazaar traders able to attain salience with state functionaries?
- What is the role of the bazaar in the cultural sphere?
- What relationships do bazaar traders hold with the urban poor, and how do they shape the latter's political participation and representation?

At a theoretical level, through an exploration of the social and political practices of bazaar traders in the city of Lahore, this research contributes to several areas of inquiry. First and foremost, it provides a corrective, theoretically-motivated addition to extant accounts of power and politics in Pakistan. It does so by shifting sole causal attention away from the institutional configuration of the state (marked by a powerful military), and the changing structure of capitalism, towards micro-processes and constitutive undertakings of particular actors that help build and sustain an elite-dominated political sphere. It also provides an empirical contribution by shedding light on the activities and relations of a particular dominant group – bazaar traders - that has emerged and entrenched itself in the country since the late 1970s, but has received little scholarly attention.

Secondly, the account presented in chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis offer critical engagement with the bifurcated conceptualization of civil and political society in post-colonial countries put forward by Partha Chatterjee (2004, 2008). According to Chatterjee, the politics of the propertied classes lie as part of 'civil society', the exclusionary domain of bourgeoisie claim-making that attempts normative congruence with ideas of formal citizenship rights and rule of law. In contrast to propertied groups, subaltern classes – such as the urban and rural poor – are seen strategically engaging the state through a repertoire of informal practices and negotiations in 'political

society'.<sup>4</sup> These count as their collective efforts to obtain the rights and resources otherwise denied to them. Given the apathy of mainstream politics, and the onward march of neoliberal capitalism, such informal practices and bargains are posited as the primary way that the marginalized can secure their own survival.

In line with recent work (Martin 2014, Schindler 2014, Whitehead 2015) this thesis argues instead that the activities of propertied classes do not necessarily correspond to a bourgeoisie rights-bearing sphere of civil society that is separate from the informal domain of patron-client relations, or what Chatterjee calls 'political society'. In the case presented in this thesis, traders are adept at using informal relations with the state to enhance their undocumented business privileges and co-opt real material advantages. Simultaneously, they use their privileged position to provide patronage for the dependent urban poor, fortifying exploitative relations in the process. Thus it is fair to state that these processes, embedded as they are within what Chatterjee terms 'political society', benefit propertied groups far more than the urban poor, and serve to sustain existing cross-class arrangements of power.

Lastly, this thesis engages with contemporary studies of hegemony, politics, and social change in countries across the world. A key consideration in this literature, as in this thesis, is assessing factors that explain the persistence (or failure) of power arrangements. What determines the extent to whether particular dominant groups and classes are able to garner the consent of marginalized ones? How are they able to limit opposition to processes of marketization and commodification?

In recent works, some scholars point to the role played by political society – the constellation of political parties, their activists, and associated organizations - in constructing hegemonic arrangements (Desai 2015, 2016; Tugal 2009). Drawing on the concept of articulation, they argue that concerted political action and strategizing reconstitutes particular identities and cleavages as more salient than others. It is through this process that new (and more compliant) kinds of subjectivities and subjects

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<sup>4</sup> Chatterjee's usage of the terms civil and political society differs from how they are deployed in conventional Gramscian analysis, as detailed ahead.

are created, which are ultimately more supportive of broader political projects (De Leon et al, 2009).

However, this thesis shows that while political parties are important for the protection and perpetuation of class privileges through the electoral realm, hegemonic arrangements are in fact possible without the existence of mass, well-organized parties with deep roots in urban society. The case of Pakistan represents an interesting counter because while all mainstream parties remain unchallenged in their articulation of pro-market policies and representation of dominant class interests, they remain ideologically shallow and badly organized (Mufti and Waseem 2012). Existing explanations for this phenomenon that suggest an autonomous military is responsible for sustaining the political power of the elite 'from above', fail to account for local dynamics of participation and consent.

Therefore, this thesis suggests that the role of elite-controlled civil society - in this case, bazaar traders and their voluntary associations - its involvement in the cultural sphere, and its interactions with the state, political society, and marginalized groups, cannot be ignored in accounts seeking to understand the reproduction of power relations.<sup>5</sup> The research presented here from Lahore shows that in the absence of a deeply-rooted political society, the incorporative functions needed to maintain the hegemony of dominant groups in urban Punjab are partially carried out through the personalized patronage relations of bazaar traders and the social and cultural activity within the bazaars themselves.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, bazaar traders are able to leverage the influence accumulated through these processes with weakly organized political parties for protection and perpetuation of their class privileges through the political sphere.

In conclusion, the principal empirical aim of this research is to account for the social and political dominance of bazaar traders, and the everyday processes through which they help with the reproduction of Pakistan's highly unequal political sphere. At a

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<sup>5</sup> Here I borrow Gramsci's (1971: 2) conception of civil society that it is the sphere for the administration and representation of private interest (economic or non-economic).

<sup>6</sup> In one way, this is a return to the classic Gramscian understanding of civil society as the domain in which hegemony (and counter-hegemony) of particular classes is articulated (Buttigieg 1995; Laclau and Mouffe 1985)

theoretical level, the project is motivated by the differing roles played by dominant and subordinate classes, civil society, the state, and political parties in the construction of persisting political hegemony. Additionally, this exploration of hegemonic power, which links culture together with economic and political micro-processes, is both informed by and carries strong comparative implications for research in other Muslim countries, particularly Egypt and Turkey (Tugal 2009; 2016). While a full comparison is beyond the scope of this thesis, it remains worthy of future consideration as, historically, both countries have exhibited institutional configurations similar to Pakistan, with the political arena dictated by the institutional footprint of the military, an extensive embrace of neoliberalization in the preceding three decades, and the mobilization of religio-cultural movements with varying degrees of success.

The next section highlights the bazaar's prominence within the dynamics of capitalism in Pakistan. It also provides an overview of why the political and social role of bazaar traders merits a full exploration. Section three briefly goes over the insights and gaps in the available literature on class, political power, and the state in Pakistan. Finally, section four details the research design and methods used for the empirical part of this thesis.

## **Why the Bazaar?**

For a significant portion of its 70 yearlong history, Pakistan was classified as an agrarian society. At the time of independence in 1947, the proportion of the population residing in villages was 84%. The economy was largely dependent on the production and processing of agricultural commodities, which accounted for nearly 60% of gross domestic product (GDP) (State Bank 2015: 3).<sup>7</sup> As a result, policy-oriented and academic research in the early years of statehood remained fixated on issues of village community life, rural poverty, and agrarian class structures.

However, extant academic research has largely failed to keep up with major structural transformations in Pakistani society. Due to fairly rapid socio-economic changes over the last four decades, Pakistan now stands as the most urbanised country in South Asia. Conservative estimates place 40% of its population (about 73 million individuals) as residing in urban centres. Urban areas have grown at an average rate of 3% per year since 1947 and the urban share of the population is expected to rise to 50% by 2030. In other words, cities and towns will host a total of 116 million people in another 16 years (World Bank 2012).

Over and above growth in big metropolitan centres like Karachi and Lahore, urban expansion through smaller cities and towns remains a hallmark feature of the country's socio-economic transformation. Using GIS-based techniques, researchers have shown that nearly 90% of all rural settlements in Punjab are no further than 1.5 hours of travelling time away from a town of at least 100,000 individuals (Zaidi 2015: 551). Beyond outdated urban-rural classifications employed by government bureaucrats and the census administration, this statistic shows that the experience of urbanism - urban lifestyles and new economic conditions - is now supremely widespread in a country that has historically been characterized and analyzed as agrarian (Qadeer 2006: 116).

The structural transformation of the last few decades is also discernible through the country's economy. Manufacturing and the services sector now contribute nearly 76%

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<sup>7</sup> All GDP figures throughout this thesis are given at current factor cost.

of GDP, and employ 60% of the total labour force (State Bank 2015: 7, 81). Within the urban economy, the services sector alone now accounts for 54% of total GDP, and employs approximately 40% of the working population (*ibid*). By way of comparison, employment in the manufacturing sector has remained stagnant around the 20% mark since 1980. Therefore, in terms of labour absorption from rural areas – a key characteristic in urban growth – the services sector has taken the lead over these past three decades.

The services sector as a whole is bifurcated into different sub-sectors, with large internal variation in terms of employment absorption and value-addition. The largest amongst these is the bazaar sector, i.e. retail and wholesale trade, which commands substantial space in Pakistan economy.

The bazaar sector, which lies at the centre of this thesis, currently contributes 18.4% to total GDP, and employs approximately 18% of the total labour force, and 41% of the working population in towns and cities. While overall economic growth has averaged a paltry 3.5% over the past 8 years, the retail-wholesale sector has grown by nearly 6% in real terms during the same time period. The estimated value of the sector is approximately USD 42 billion, with annual sales (consumption) reaching USD 155 billion through 1.3 million establishments (Ministry of Commerce 2013).

Given the figures mentioned above, it is not misplaced to suggest that Pakistan’s urban reality – both in big metropolitan centres, as well in the numerous secondary and tertiary cities and towns – is one centred on an entrenched, and continuously burgeoning bazaar economy.

Another important facet of the bazaar sector is its role in the growth and consolidation of the informal economy.<sup>8</sup> The mushrooming of unregistered enterprises using

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<sup>8</sup> “The informal sector consists of economic units that produce goods and services legally, but engage in operations that are not registered or regulated by fiscal, labour, health, and tax laws. Informal workers include the self-employed, who own and run a business in the informal sector with few or no employees, as well as casual labour, who work through subcontractors either for an informal or a formal sector enterprise. The primary difference between informal and formal workers is that the latter are protected and regulated under state law while the former are not.” (Portes et al. 1989)

contractual labour regimes is a feature found under late capitalism in many parts of the world. Contrary to certain interpretations, the informal economy has neither diminished in size nor in scope after the loosening of government regulations and the advent of neoliberalism. If anything, it continues to expand with urban growth and the deepening of capitalism. This has led to the assertion that in reality the informal sector is closely networked with the formal sector and both operate through ties of mutual dependence.

As in other countries of the Global South, available data on Pakistan shows a thriving informal economy operating with the bazaar sector at its centre. According to most recent figures, the section of the economy functioning without registration and government oversight is 91% (USD 240 billion) of the size of the formal economy. In terms of employment, 73% of the total urban labour force is informally employed. That means approximately 11.6 million individuals are working beyond the ambit of social protection and minimum wage laws and without any recourse to social security and employment benefits.

A significant portion of this informal economic activity and employment is found in bazaars across the country. An estimated 94% of the enterprises in retail-wholesale trade operate without government registration or formal regulation. Similarly, 90% of the sector's workforce, amounting to 4.2 million individuals, is informally employed, mostly through verbal contracts. Recent trends show that formalization and corporatization within the bazaar sector is still in its infancy, and new businesses prefer to maximize autonomy and profit by operating as unregistered entities.

#### *Bazaar Traders as a Dominant Group*

The complexity of Pakistan's capitalist transformation and the emergence of multiple actors in the service sector economy demand a clear delineation of the particular dominant group that lies at the centre of this study. A bazaar trader, or *tajir* in the Urdu language, is a qualitatively distinct actor compared to a number of others working in

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commerce and trade. Following the classification established in countries such as Iran (Keshavarzian 2007), traders engage in commercial activity in designated retail-wholesale spaces or bazaars. In Pakistan, they generate turnovers over the taxable threshold of Rs. 5 million per annum, generate high amounts of capital surplus, and frequently employ labour over and above that drawn from within the family. This differentiates them from self-employed craftsmen (*mistri*), street vendors (*thailay-walay*), and small shopkeepers (*dukaandar*), and places them in the upper most quintile of the income distribution.<sup>9</sup>

The emergence of bazaar traders as dominant economic actors since the 1980s stands accompanied by their prominence in the country's political sphere. After winning the general election in May 2013, the Chief Minister of Punjab, Shahbaz Sharif, held one of his first public meetings with representatives of various bazaar associations. During his speech, he declared that 'traders formed the backbone of this country', and that 'resolution of their genuine problems and concerns is the primary responsibility of every government'.<sup>10</sup>

The privileged status accorded to bazaar traders extends well beyond pandering rhetoric and is observable through the everyday exercise of governance. Traders and other businessmen are particularly successful in influencing political outcomes and government policy, especially in matters of local taxation (Ahmed 2010) and the socio-spatial management of towns and cities (Ezdi 2009).

In the electoral realm, the percentage of legislators elected from Punjab's urban constituencies with business as their primary occupation has increased from 5% in 1970 to nearly 75% by 2013.<sup>11</sup> Overall, businessmen are the second biggest occupational group in the provincial legislature, after agriculturalists. This is likely understated as even many rural elites have diversified into undocumented commercial ventures to supplement their incomes from agriculture (Javid 2012: 175).

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<sup>9</sup> Calculations using labour force survey data from 2014 show that there are close to 285,000 bazaar traders in Pakistan, with an estimated 165,000 in Punjab alone.

<sup>10</sup> "Shahbaz Sharif addresses business leaders in Lahore" *The Nation* (Lahore; Pakistan), 21 May 2013: 4

<sup>11</sup> Calculated using occupational data available in Jones (2003) and the Punjab Assembly members directory



In Punjab's capital city, Lahore, out of the 38 legislators elected to the National and Provincial assemblies, 30 are fulltime businessmen engaged in trading, manufacturing, and real estate. During the most recent city council elections, 184 out of 268 candidates of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN), and 167 out of 256 candidates of the main opposition party Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) were traders or other commercial entrepreneurs.<sup>12</sup> A number of these businessmen were also serving as office-bearers in various bazaar associations. This is a trend that has consolidated since local council elections in the early 1980s, when these occupational groups were first documented entering into local politics (Qadeer 1983).

To date, there are only a few existing studies that study the bazaar and its place in broader political and social dynamics over the past four decades. The most relevant of these is Andrew Wilder's (1999) study of voting trends from the 1990s, which highlights the emergence of bazaar traders as political actors. In particular, Wilder's work draws attention to the bazaar's capacity for patronage and collective action in the following words:

"Traders are now on the rise. Every alley, every bazaar is now organized in the shape of some association or the other. These traders have 'shutter power'. If a 2000 worker factory is closed by workers in a rural area, it has no effect. But say the shopkeepers of Anarkali close their shutters for two hours, it will have a much bigger effect in the city....workers have been leaving the PPP for the PML because shopkeepers, businessmen and others of the same ilk are able to provide employment and access to the *sarkaar* (state)." (Wilder 1999: 105)

Two other accounts provide fleeting references to the bazaar in larger discussions on urbanization, cultural politics, and class transformation in the country. According to Weiss (1991), the bazaar constitutes part of a new upwardly mobile bourgeoisie based mostly in the rapidly urbanizing plains of Punjab province. From a historical standpoint,

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<sup>12</sup> Occupational data for legislators and candidates gathered through fieldwork

this class fraction is stated to have its roots in the agro-merchant economy that emerged from the state-led rural modernization programs of the 1960s.

In the second major account, Mumtaz Ahmed (1990) takes up the issue of Islamist revival in Pakistan, and focuses in on the relationship between traders and Islamist activists that first emerged during the late 1970s. According to Ahmed's largely instrumental analysis, the religious right proved useful for the bazaar's economic agenda because both felt the need to protect private property (for ostensibly different reasons) from a quasi-socialist upsurge in that period. The relationship that began through the politics of protest eventually solidified along patronage lines as Islamist intellectuals and activists gained access to state power during the military regime of the 1980s.

All three studies that take up the subject provide, at best, only partial accounts of the bazaar's social and political role in contemporary Pakistan. As a result, they leave an opening for a more comprehensive assessment of the history and position of bazaar traders within a coalition of dominant classes, and the role they play in the overall development of political hegemony.

### **Understanding Politics and Power in Pakistan: Foundations and Gaps**

The impoverished condition of the social sciences in Pakistan means existing research on any topic, let alone the evolution and reproduction of an unequal political sphere, is limited in scope and scale. Those accounts of Pakistan's evolving political economy that do exist tend to focus on institutional conflicts and structural conditions.

Ayesha Jalal's (1990; 1995) work, considered pioneering in this regard, traces the persistence of autocratic politics to the legacy of British colonialism, and specifically, the organizational power of the civil-military bureaucracy in the immediate aftermath of independence. Jalal argues that Pakistan's struggles with truly representative democracy are due to the ability of the colonial-era bureaucracy and the military to supplant politicians on the pretext of order and control. During the first two decades

after attaining statehood, the military and bureaucracy were able to elbow out civilian politicians using the specter of a security threat from India, and laid out the institutional foundations of an authoritarian state.

Building on Jalal's argument, Waseem (1994; 2006) also posits that elite dominance in Pakistan is an outcome of the lack of democracy. He suggests that the authoritarian nature of the state stifles popular mobilization and representation from above, thus crystallizing an unequal social and political order. The logical corollary implicit therein is that once the country is able to institutionalize democracy, the power imbalance between dominant and marginalized groups will change over time.

This assertion largely draws its premise from India's contrasting commitment to democracy, which has seen the rise of lower-caste movements and their success in pushing forward a redistributive political agenda (Jeffrey 2000). It is, however, incorrect in so far that the period since the 1970s has seen greater participation of marginalized groups in various electoral processes, yet the parochial, elite-dominated nature of the political sphere remains highly durable.

The issue of class power and politics is dealt more directly in research that draws on the neo-Marxist tradition. Works by Aijaz Ahmad (1985; 2000) and Hamza Alavi (1972; 1982) fashion holistic accounts of the relationship between various social groups and the post-colonial state in Pakistan. Ahmad asserts that the structural weakness of the polar classes, namely the proletariat and the capitalists, under peripheral capitalism opens up the space for the 'governing caste', i.e. the civil bureaucracy and the military, to exercise political control. This is similar to Pranab Bardhan's (1998) argument of 'professionals' constituting a dominant class in India due to their control over the state and its vast resources.

Alavi goes one step further and suggests that the bureaucracy and the military act as an oligarchic formation and play a central role in sustaining capitalism and an unequal social order. In this formulation, given that state institutions were bequeathed by colonialism rather than organically emerging due to class conflict within society, they

exercise a significant degree of autonomy from societal interests. Thus the state in Pakistan is 'over-developed', and is far more responsive to the interests of global forces, such as foreign capital and imperial power, than to the weak and under-formed domestic classes.

Until recently, Alavi's work stood as the most influential structural account of class and power in Pakistan. Its first-movers advantage meant that it was rarely subjected to empirical and theoretical scrutiny. With little alternative research coming out of Pakistan, this proved doubly problematic as subsequent work replicated the same shortcomings present in the original formulation (Zaidi 2014).

For starters, Alavi's framework of an overdeveloped state implies the existence of a dormant, underdeveloped society. Upon empirical scrutiny, this claim does not hold even for the particular epoch during which Alavi first produced his analysis. As Eqbal Ahmed (1980) notes, redistributive pressures from below were managed and contained by the propertied classes, which in turn were able to use the state for material gain. Sayeed (1995) and Cheema (2000, 2003) further assert that the opening up of political space since the 1970s initiated the taming of the autonomous state at the hands of various elite social groups. The state, in turn, became far less coherent and considerably more fractured as it was cannibalized in the quest for greater rents, access, and political power. Thus the implication in Alavi's work that the military and the superior bureaucracy exercise autonomy from society and act as the sole constitutive forces in the social realm is incorrect.

A degree of correction to static institutional and neo-Marxist accounts is provided by ethnographic work on class and power in rural society by Saghir Ahmad (1977), Shahnaz Rouse (1988), Stephen Lyon (2002) and Nicolas Martin (2016). By combining thick descriptions of politics in village communities with an appreciation of how local processes both impact and are impacted by structural conditions, these accounts prove to be far more attentive to empirical reality.

Saghir Ahmad's (1977) study of a village in the district of Sargodha, for example, captures how rural society transformed after mechanization of agriculture, and how the opening up of electoral competition introduced new ways for the landed elite to reproduce their power. It also highlights how state resources and public office became important instruments in the hands of rural elites, as they disciplined local populations and perpetuated rural inequality.

In a more recent ethnographic account, Nicolas Martin (2016) shows how factional networks, and relationships of reciprocity with political parties and local state officials remain central to the perpetuation of village hierarchies. Through ties of association built on tenancy relations, patronage and debt bondage, a new agrarian-commercial elite ensures an unequal standing over landless labourers and other actors at the lower tier of rural society. In turn, social inequality between different classes is maintained either through outright coercion, or often morally legitimised through shared participation in Islamic and spiritual rituals.

Martin's account is relevant to this study for several reasons. Firstly, it questions the quality of democratic transitions in Pakistan, and the extent to which participation in politics has had a meaningful positive impact on the lives of marginalised social groups. Secondly, it accounts for (though it dismisses) cultural processes and the role of 'lived Islam' in cross-class relations. In doing so, it departs from the usual treatment of Islam as an instrument of nationalism and a disciplining tool imposed on the population by the mostly secular state elite. His final analysis is mostly pessimistic and he highlights how deficiencies in the realm of pro-poor organizational activity, as well as the weakly institutionalized nature of political parties, combine to reproduce a sub-optimal equilibrium.

Accounts dealing with similar issues for Pakistan's urban areas are few and far between. Apart from some commendable analysis of violence and ethno-nationalist politics in the biggest metropolitan centre, Karachi (Gayer 2014; Verkaaik 2004, Khan 2010), the country's cities remain significantly understudied. This, as highlighted earlier,

remains a major gap given the economic and demographic transformations of the past few decades.

A notable exception is Aasim Sajjad Akhtar's (2008) reformulation of Hamza Alavi's earlier work on the overdeveloped state. Akhtar argues that economic and demographic changes of the last four decades have propelled the rising urban propertied classes as the newest members of a ruling coalition (or 'historical bloc'), which historically consisted of the military high command and the landed elite.

Akhtar's biggest contribution is that it doesn't take the expansion of a ruling coalition as a mere reflection of Pakistan's capitalist development. Instead he highlights the importance of various political junctures, the integral part played by material relations in the modern urban economy, and the role of pragmatism and religious culture in sustaining an 'oligarchic structure of power'. In doing so, he moves away from crudely deterministic Marxist formulations.

Akhtar's account is a welcome and much-needed addition to existing studies of Pakistan's politics and society. By drawing attention to the rise of the urban propertied classes, it serves as an integral starting point for this thesis as well. It is also, to date, the only macrosocial treatment of power and authority in contemporary Pakistan.

Nonetheless, it is beset with several shortcomings that this thesis aims to rectify. From an empirical perspective, it relies on short observations of cross-class interactions from various parts of the country, without any extensive treatment of the localized practices through which power germinates and reproduces over time. It is also largely silent on the way societal power arrangements channel into the institutional structure of national, provincial, or local electoral politics.

From a theoretical perspective, its attachment to Alavi's legacy inevitably leads it to assign causal and ontological primacy to the military and the bureaucracy, i.e. the state (or 'the establishment'), in the realm of social and political action. The biggest example of this is that in his view propertied class domination in the social formation is

theorised as a project 'instituted and instrumentalised by the military'. This is problematic as it assumes the state's unending autonomy from social forces, and its ability to act coherently and strategically from above. It also runs counter to existing anthropological accounts that document the complexity and incoherence of the state 'in the trenches of everyday life' and its relations with various social groups (Fuller and Harris 2001; Sharma and Gupta 2006).

To conclude, this overview of the literature on Pakistan serves to highlight existing gaps and promising foundations that this thesis aims to fill and build upon. Studies of regime dynamics and political economy provide the overall institutional and structural context in which contemporary politics and everyday social interaction takes place. The anthropological literature on rural Pakistan offers important methodological insights into studying the role of lived culture and politics in creating durable power structures. Finally, Aasim Sajjad Akhtar's important and much-needed work opens new academic space through its study of patronage politics, capitalist transformation, and the emergence and entrenchment of new dominant groups in urbanizing Pakistan.

### **Research Design and Methods**

My interest in the politics of bazaar traders emerged some time before I began my doctoral studies. After graduating from college, I found employment at an NGO, which worked in the realm of community mobilization and local state accountability in Punjab. Part of my job was to observe and evaluate the effectiveness of such mobilization efforts by ordinary citizens in different parts of the province. Through the course of my travels, I came into contact with a range of individuals, including community-based NGO workers, political actors, public officials, and local elites. However, one thing that stood out as a near-universal characteristic, especially in urban areas, was the highly public role of the business community. On some occasions, it would be as civic leaders – sponsoring charitable endeavours or local infrastructure projects. On others, it was as part of the political process. Of all the places I visited, there were none where prominent public spaces did not exhibit the assertive presence of associations representing traders and other businessmen.

The observations were in line with some peripheral but growing discussions about both politics in Punjab, and the broader structural transformations taking place across the country. Since the mid-2000s, everyday conversations among urbanites made references to the entrenchment of urban 'values' and new sources of riches in commercial activity, while local and international journalistic accounts periodically mentioned the rise of new and prosperous consumers and businessmen in Pakistan.

Nevertheless, these observations rarely made their way into systematic academic discourse. Social scientific inquiry remains scant, outdated, and generally of poor quality in Pakistan, while international attention on the country, since 2001, has mostly focused on Islamist militancy, the War on Terror, and other geostrategic concerns. The gap between the reality I observed over my work-related travels and academic research as it existed at the time served as a strong source of motivation for this project.

### *Methods*

The focus of this thesis is on the micro-processes that help build and reproduce the power and influence of a particular social group, i.e. bazaar traders. Thus the empirical aspect involved an inductive design of recording these processes in a synchronic, real-time manner and piecing them together to arrive at a holistic picture. I went into the field with a rudimentary idea about the contours of class power and politics in Pakistan, but with little idea about how traders work, how bazaars are controlled and governed, and how they relate to the wider political and social field around them.<sup>13</sup>

After reviewing the literature on research methods (Axinn and Pearce 2006), I concluded that my questions and concerns would be most appropriately suited by an ethnographic approach, consisting of interviews and direct observations within my chosen field-sites.<sup>14</sup> Interviews allow for an appreciation and understanding of how

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<sup>13</sup> This was precipitated by the near-complete absence of any existing academic accounts on the subject that I could engage with for my purpose.

<sup>14</sup> I use the term direct observation to refer to my recording of interactions, conversations, and events in real-time. I hesitate to use the term participant observation since I was not employed within the bazaar nor was I actively intervening in its internal functioning.



different types of actors – traders, workers, politicians, and state officials – view their relations with each other, and how they situate themselves within the broader social field. They also allow for a closer understanding of actors' subjectivities and their cultural dispositions, which are harder to capture through observation or surveying.

These techniques are also useful as they help in identifying how local processes relate to wider, more structural forces. Given that a major rectifying concern motivating this thesis is the interplay between the local and the macrosocial, which has mostly been missing from existing accounts of Pakistan's political economy, I have attempted to couch the ethnographic observations within the contingent structural and institutional context in which they are operating. This includes relating the life-stories of my subjects with broader structural conditions, their political behaviour to the historical evolution of the political and economic sphere, and their cultural inclinations to the development of broader, national-level discourses and practices.

The methods detailed here also fall in line with the comparatively newer tradition and practice of political ethnography. As Auyero and Joseph (2007: 1-13) state, ethnography is uniquely equipped to look at the micro-foundations of political and social institutions and their attendant sets of practices. It is also ideally suited to explain why political actors behave the way they do and to identify the causes, processes, and outcomes that are part and parcel of political life.

Insightful work that uses application of this technique includes Auyero's (2001) own study of patronage politics and problem solving networks of the poor residing in informal settlements in Argentina; Rosanne Rutten's (2006) work on the demobilization of the working class in Philippine's; and Gianpaolo Baiocchi's (2005) study of citizen participation in the everyday politics and governance of Porto Alegre. Given that the aim of this thesis is to understand power outcomes from the ground up, the techniques deployed by these researchers proved to be quite useful in understanding the microscopic realities of how particular groups interact and shape the world around them.

### *Case Selection – Punjab, Lahore, Mustafa Market*

This thesis is nested within the dynamics of a particular province in Pakistan, Punjab. The reason being that Punjab dominates the country through its demographic weight - home to more than 50% of Pakistan's population - and through the historical embeddedness of its elite and middle classes within the institutional operation of an authoritarian state. Unlike in the three smaller provinces, where periodic political mobilization has challenged the state along ethno-linguistic lines, the Punjabi elite has been both a successful architect and supporter of an authoritarian state structure, which seeks legitimacy through a nation-building project along religious lines (Ahmed 1998). Therefore, the role of Punjab's dominant classes, and their relations with subordinate ones, has and will remain far more salient in the functioning of Pakistan's political sphere than dynamics within smaller provinces.

Within Punjab, I chose to situate my research in Lahore, the capital city of the province and Pakistan's second-largest metropolis. One of the reasons for this is that Lahore's economic growth, demographic trends, and patterns of urbanization make it a prominent case for the study of how structural transformations are connected to processes of political reproduction and change. Another reason is that the political strength of its dominant groups (such as bazaar traders) has proven to be particularly durable over the last three decades. Unlike the city of Karachi, where ethnic-based mobilization has led to claim-making from subordinate groups and triggered competition over resources, or even its own past from the 1960s, when it served as the hub of working class assertion, contemporary Lahore retains a remarkably benign landscape of contestation, with little organized pressure or mobilization 'from below'. The fact that it is the home-base of two of the three biggest political parties in Pakistan, both of whom have strong relations with the urban propertied classes, further make it an appropriate site for studying how localized processes of power and dominance feed into the structure of national politics.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Time-constraints and practical considerations also made Lahore an appropriate site for research. Accommodation and transportation were both readily available, which reduced logistical constraints that I would've encountered in another location. At a more personal level, growing up in a suburban, largely white-collar middle class enclave of Lahore meant that I had spent a considerable portion of my life in ignorance of how other social groups approach the political and social realm of the city. Thus choosing to

Finally, within Lahore, I carried out the bulk of my research within the congested confines of one section of the bazaar called Mustafa Market, located inside Punjab's largest wholesale district, the Shah Alam bazaar.<sup>16</sup> This choice was partly conditioned by the fact that I wanted to study a densely populated inner-city commercial neighbourhood, where cross-class relations operate simultaneously in conjoined places of work and residence. This would have provided me with the chance to observe various political and social dynamics across different events, such as religious festivities and local government elections.

Another reason for choosing Mustafa Market was that I had an 'in' with its traders' association, through a contact from the local news media. This allowed me to enter the site within just a few weeks of returning to Pakistan for fieldwork. However, to affirm triangulation and corroboration of what I observed and learnt in Mustafa Market, I also carried out interviews and observations in other commercial centres (primarily Hall Road, Urdu Bazaar, Mall Road, Anarkali, Hafeez Centre, and Liberty Market), located both within the inner city and in suburban neighbourhoods in Lahore. I also attempted to ascertain the presence of these processes outside of Lahore, through another research project on traders and exclusionary cultural trends in the town of Nankana Sahib, located an hour and a half away (Javed 2016). More broadly, while I make no claims to the representative nature of my research, the findings in one field-site in Pakistan can shed some light on the political and social activity of elite commercial actors operating in the undocumented economy in other contexts.

### *Fieldwork*

My entry into Mustafa Market was through a commerce beat reporter working for a local, Lahore-based newspaper, who I met due to my prior affiliation with news media in Pakistan. He frequently covered events hosted by the traders' association in Mustafa

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do research in the city was also a way of educating myself, with one eye on the hope that I could play a part in informing any progressive political interventions that took place in it.

<sup>16</sup> "Mustafa Market" is a pseudonym for one of Shahalam's constituent markets, designated to protect key identifiers of my informants. All names (except those of prominent politicians) used in this thesis have been anonymized.

Market, and was thus able to introduce me to the head of the association, Malik Khalid, in mid-November 2014. However, my initial contact with someone who was in a position of authority within the marketplace did not immediately secure access to the field-site. In fact, my early efforts to familiarize myself with and in the market were seen as suspicious by some and superfluous by others.

The initial reluctance I encountered was largely because of two reasons. The first is the undocumented nature of most economic activity in the bazaar sector, which makes businessmen wary of covert attempts by the tax bureaucracy to 'document' their actual revenue flows. After I'd gained the familiarity of some traders, one of them told me that I had initially been perceived as a researcher from the Ministry of Finance and had been using doctoral research as a false pretext.<sup>17</sup> The second reason was that while I spoke the same languages (Punjabi and Urdu), and belonged to the same city, my acculturation as a suburban, somewhat-Anglicized, white-collar individual was at odds with the material and cultural formation of inner-city commercial spaces. My being an 'outsider' was an issue along with the fact that in economic and social capital terms, I was of no use to most of my respondents, and thus they saw no immediate benefit in entertaining my research.<sup>18</sup>

However, after a few visits and a persistent campaign from my end, I managed to convince Malik Khalid and his deputy, Shahid Aslam, of the solely academic nature of my work. While this process did not immediately guarantee my access to everyone in the marketplace, their reference and occasional support in getting others to talk to me proved to be a major help.

My approach to interviewing followed the general pattern of snowball sampling. I asked my early entry-points to connect me to their friends in the market, who then connected me with their own networks and so on. However, I soon realized that I was circulating within one particular faction of the traders' association. To rectify this, I

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<sup>17</sup> They also admitted that they soon realized that I wasn't from the government, since no public servant would be bothered enough to visit more than a couple of times.

<sup>18</sup> Unlike in some cultural formations, academics are a low-status group in Pakistan, and the predominant perception is that a failure to succeed in other occupational forms pushes one towards teaching and research as a vocation.

reached out to a contact at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) who connected me to another set of traders within Mustafa Market. Luckily, my early incursions with one faction was not held against me, and in fact encouraged traders from the opposing faction to talk more freely so that they could rectify misconceptions I had been fed by their rivals. I also made sure to reach out to those traders who were not actively affiliated with either of the two factions

Over the following 10 months from my first entry in Mustafa Market in November 2010, I made on average two visits a week, to spend time with the traders, document their everyday interactions and activities, and sit through the events and proceedings organized by their traders' associations, such as religious festivities and dinner receptions. I was also able to conduct 17 detailed interviews with traders in Mustafa Market, all of them at their shops, which lasted anywhere between 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. To gain a more systematic sense of the businesses in the market, I conducted a brief survey (on a mobile device) of a sample of 50 traders in the market. I first did a listing of all shops in Mustafa Market, and then drew a random sample using the random number generator function on Microsoft Excel. However, in my first few surveys I encountered considerable resistance to questions on turnover, religious and political preferences, so I had to restrict my questions to basic descriptive characteristics.

The hardest aspect of fieldwork was approaching and recruiting marginalized actors working in Mustafa Market. Most traders were not very cooperative in terms of giving their workers time off to speak to me. My strategy then was to approach them during their lunch or tea breaks for brief 15-20 minute conversations and set up more detailed conversations on their day off, Sunday.<sup>19</sup> In total, I was able to conduct interviews with 11 shop workers and push-cart vendors over the same period. On two instances I was also able to sit through their lunch gatherings, which doubled as a focus group discussion. I did not offer monetary remuneration to the workers for their time, but I always made sure to buy them tea or lunch, depending on the time of day.

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<sup>19</sup> These conversations would take place in public spaces, like a park on Circular Road, or a tea-stall in Mustafa Market, as most workers also lived in the surrounding neighbourhood

Apart from my observations and interviews within Mustafa Market, I also made sure to gain a sense of political and social activity of traders in other bazaars of Lahore. To this end, I conducted 8 interviews with traders located in other marketplaces of the city, obtaining a mix of inner-city and suburban commercial spaces. These conversations, along with the ones in my primary field-site, allowed me to identify other, relevant actors associated with the activity of bazaar traders, such as state officials from the tax bureaucracy, police service, and municipal administration; senior members and former office-bearers of the LCCI as well as leaders of the apex organization representing traders in the country, the All Pakistan Anjuman-i-Tajran (APAT); and finally office-bearers and politicians from the main ruling and opposition parties in Lahore.<sup>20</sup>

In the final stage of fieldwork, from September to October 2015, I spent time documenting the activity of traders and other actors in the electoral constituencies surrounding Mustafa Market ahead of local elections for Lahore's city council. This allowed me to observe the parts different social groups play in the political processes in real-time. I conducted a further 6 interviews with voters, political party elites, and candidates during this period, bringing my overall total to 60.<sup>21</sup>

For 57 of these interviews, I was not given permission to use a recorder. However, I was allowed to jot down important points and quotations, which I would then convert into field-notes on the same day. While I went in with developed protocols for each set of actors I interviewed, I found that the eventual transition to free-flowing conversations

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<sup>20</sup> Between July and August 2015, I was able to directly observe associational politics within the bazaar community. Utilizing my contacts forged in the first 7 months of fieldwork, I embedded myself with the APAT as it launched a nationwide agitation movement against a withholding tax on banking transactions. The time spent traveling with the APAT leadership to bazaars in and around the city to mobilize support provided further insights into the larger universe of how traders exercise their influence on the political sphere.

<sup>21</sup> I supplemented the information from observations and interviews with analysis of local newspapers and magazines. Unfortunately, there was very little textual production by traders and traders' associations themselves, given the prevailing low levels of education and the high constraints on time among the business community. Instead, I relied on the coverage given to prominent traders and other business elites in the local press as an important source of insight into their activities.

For the historical portion of my dissertation, in which I documented the past mobilization of bazaar traders against the state and left-wing populism during the 1970s, I carried out archival research in the Diyal Singh and Punjab Public Libraries, using past editions of the English newspaper *Dawn*, and the Urdu daily *Nawa-i-Waqt*.

was far more useful in picking up details and uncovering internal processes. Such conversations were often accompanied by follow-ups on the phone or in person, and a host of informal conversations with other informants, which allowed me to fill in and triangulate details and facts that I had picked up in the field. The notes that emerged from these conversations were conceptually coded after my fieldwork period had ended.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter gave an overview of the central empirical and theoretical questions this research aims to answer, and the gaps in the literature that it seeks to address. It also provided details of the methods used for this research, and sheds light on various aspects of fieldwork carried out in the city of Lahore.

The second chapter provides an overview of the historical processes and events which have led to the current arrangement of power in Pakistan. The aim therein is to provide the institutional and structural context in which micro-processes of power currently operate, and lay out a chronological understanding of the rise of bazaar traders as a dominant group in urban Pakistan. This chapter draws on archival and interview data to offer an account of the bazaar-mosque mobilization against socialist politics during the 1970s, which is posited as a foundational juncture for the contemporary political order.

Chapter three moves on to ethnographic fieldwork in Lahore to detail the inner workings of bazaars and bazaar associations, and the participation of bazaar traders in various reciprocal relations with local state functionaries. The overarching purpose of this chapter is to account for the different ways through which the privileged economic position of traders is reproduced via associational politics within the bazaar and rent-seeking co-optation of the local state. As latter chapters will demonstrate, it is through the relations forged in this arena of patronage that position bazaar traders as potential brokers and patrons in their own right; i.e. as individuals who can facilitate access to the state and help provide a variety of coveted material goods for the urban poor.

In chapters 4 and 5 I move on to the building blocks of dominant group influence and power in urban Pakistan, by studying the production and sustenance of hierarchical relations between traders and the urban poor in the bazaar economy. In chapter 4, I demonstrate that their persistence, and the lack of any effort to recalibrate them, is conditioned by the authoritarian legacy of the state which has left no organizational resources that could fashion class-based assertion by the poor. At a micro-processual level, what drives these unequal relations are the localized ties of material patronage-based dependence between traders and the poor, in which the latter are reliant on the former for help in resolving problems of subsistence and survival in a neoliberal city with an apathetic political sphere.

However, in chapter 5, I show how the cultural organization of these relations is also of integral importance in their sustenance. Exploitation, inequality and elite authority in the bazaar are normalized and legitimized within a cultural field dominated by Islamic ideas of collective Muslim identity, benevolent civic virtue and pious patronage, and divinely ordained material hierarchies. These ideas provide the frames through which the urban poor make sense of both their material and social conditions and the authority of bazaar traders in everyday life.

The sixth, and final empirical chapter, shows how the micro-processes of power and authority detailed in the preceding three chapters feed into an elite-dominated political sphere. This is done through an analysis of contemporary party politics and electoral contestation in Lahore, focusing on the ties between traders and the ruling party in Punjab, the PML-N. I show that the organizational weakness of parties conditions their reliance on locally influential bazaar traders, who are uniquely positioned to leverage their economic resources and the authority they accumulate over subordinate groups for fulfillment of personal political ambitions and for greater control over material-distributional outcomes. A major feature of these processes is that subordinate groups working and living in and around the bazaar remain locked out of key arenas of political decision-making – such as who gets to contest local elections and what will be the priorities of elected representatives - and that their participation remains structured through channels of influence and power exercised upon them by bazaar traders. This



mediated and brokered process of electoral incorporation is ultimately key in the consensual reproduction of Pakistan's political sphere.

Finally, the concluding chapter sums up the principle arguments and findings, and highlights further avenues for research on power, politics, and class relations in contemporary Pakistan.

## **Chapter 2: The Evolution of Pakistan's Political Sphere**

This chapter provides a period-wise overview of Pakistan's political economy since the country's formation in 1947. It focuses on two inter-linked aspects - the first is institutional changes in state-society interaction, and the historical trajectory of authoritarianism and democratic participation. The second is the structural transformation brought about by various phases of capitalist development, and its impact on the evolution and political role of different social classes. While the macro-political history documented here focuses on the national stage, this chapter pays special consideration to relevant political and social dynamics in the region of interest, the province of Punjab.

The overarching concern of this chapter is to lay out the terrain on which contemporary social relations function and reproduce themselves. This is informed by the position that any ethnographic analysis of power and its persistence needs to be situated in the historically contingent context in which they operate. To answer broader questions of reproduction of power and the dominance of particular groups, which lie at the centre of this thesis, observations in the field need to be linked to patterns of structural and institutional change. These include variations in regime forms, trajectories of capitalist development, and shifts in demographic patterns. Ultimately this helps in preventing particular events, individuals, and interactions from appearing as isolated encounters.

In simpler terms, the ethnographic research on bazaar traders presented in subsequent chapters can be viewed as an in depth study that captures particular political and social processes as they unfold in present day Lahore. This chapter, on the other hand, helps give a background to these processes, and builds a chronological understanding of how the different components within them came together in a particular order.

More specifically, this chapter makes three empirical contributions to the overall research. Firstly, it helps us understand the state's historical contribution in the

development of a highly personalized, elite-dominated political sphere. More specifically, it focuses on the instrumental disbursement of patronage, and the practice of selective accommodation of particular propertied classes by various civilian and military-led regimes over the country's history. Alongside these elite bargains, it highlights the history of state coercion and its role in limiting populist mobilization and representative politics.

The account of state-society interaction presented in this chapter also questions existing scholarship that continues to ascribe limitless autonomy to Pakistan's civil-military bureaucracy. Specifically, it shows that while a largely autonomous military and bureaucratic elite did exist up till the mid 1960s, factors such as demographic and economic change, the cultural discourse of representative government, and the patronage compulsions introduced by participatory politics slowly chipped away at an aloof and cohesive state structure and embedded it deeper within the social formation. Resultantly, while the military remained quite powerful even after the 1960s, it became heavily reliant on various dominant classes for the purposes of sustaining an authoritarian system of rule. A direct result of this was that the state was increasingly utilized as a resource by urban and rural elites for sustaining their dominant position. As detailed in subsequent chapters, this has significant implications for the way marginalized groups approach politics and how social hierarchies are reproduced at the local level.

The second contribution of this chapter is to account for Pakistan's experience with capitalism from state-guided import substitution in the 1960s, to state socialism in the 1970s, to the onset of consumption-oriented neoliberalism from the late 1980s onwards. By charting out Pakistan's economic trajectory, this chapter highlights how demographic and societal changes during each phase created the conditions in which particular classes expanded, organized, and influenced the political sphere. In particular, this chapter charts the rise and fall of monopoly capitalists and the urban working class in the first three decades after independence, and their subsequent replacement by a fragmented business sphere dominated by the bazaar's small and

medium-sized entrepreneurs, and a workforce consisting of informally contracted labour.

The last contribution of this chapter is providing a historical account of bazaar traders as an expanding elite fraction and a politically dominant urban group. This is done in the context of Pakistan's evolving retail-wholesale economy, from its regulated emergence under import substitution in the early 1960s to its pervasive expansion under neoliberalism since the late 1980s. Within the discussion of each period, the politics of bazaar traders and their role in various civilian and military-led regimes is highlighted

In service of this last contribution, a section of this chapter gives a localized account of the mobilization that toppled Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's populist government in 1977. The event commonly known as the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) movement, after the 9-party umbrella group leading it, ushered in the end of Pakistan's only populist phase, and signaled a political consolidation of the urban and rural elite that continues to this day.

The PNA movement holds foundational significance for this thesis as it marks the first period of pervasive bazaar-based mobilization, which was carried out largely in opposition to Bhutto's socialist agenda. Drawing on archival research and interviews with movement participants, this section traces the political role of Lahore's various bazaar elites, and the foundation of their apex associations, back to the activity that took place between 1976 and 1977. Another facet of relevance in the PNA movement was the development of a social alliance between Islamist activists and bazaar elites under a joint call to eradicate 'godless' socialism and impose *Nizam-i-Mustafa* (Prophet's law) in Pakistan. An overview of religious-political dynamics during this period contributes towards a historical contextualization of the role played by Islamist ideas and religious ritual in the contemporary production of political power.

The periodization used in the subsequent sections follows historiographical convention for the study of Pakistan. The period from 1947-1967 covers the foundation and

entrenchment of the authoritarian state, and the rapid push towards capitalist modernity in, what was at the time of independence, a largely rural country. The period between 1967 and 1976 covers the populist phase, during which leftwing movements pushed for greater democratization, social justice, and economic redistribution. This phase witnessed the spread of mass politics, and Pakistan's first national election, which culminated in the formation of a Pakistan People's Party government, led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The brief rupture is followed by the rise of a 'counter-hegemonic' push back between 1977 and 1988, illustrated by urban and rural elite consolidation and the re-assertion of military-led authoritarianism. Finally, from 1988 to the present, the country switched between civilian and military governments, ending with a final transition to democracy in 2008. The political instability of this period is nonetheless underpinned by an emerging inter-elite consensus towards neoliberal economic policies. The effects of this consensus are seen in rapid growth of the bazaar sector, greater inequality, commodification of urban labour, and the proliferation of consumer society.

### **Capitalist Development and the Foundations of an Authoritarian State: 1947-1967**

#### *Post-colonial breakdown*

Pakistan's struggles with establishing representative political institutions began right from the time of partition in 1947. The contrast often made here is with India, where the organizationally adept and socially embedded Congress Party leadership utilized its towering role in the anticolonial struggle to resolve a variety of state-building concerns.

India obtained a working constitution in 1950, held its first general election under universal adult franchise in 1951, and resolved centre-province ethno-linguistic concerns through a sub-national boundary commission in 1954. The high-modernist developmental trajectory adopted by the Indian state was legitimized by a leadership that was, at least rhetorically, committed to redistribution and the eradication of crippling poverty (Tudor 2014).

In contrast, Pakistan's nationalist movement was led by the Muslim League, a party of Muslim middle-class professionals and elites from regions that ultimately became part of India. Their stated demand of greater autonomy for Muslim-majority provinces, and constitutional safeguards for Muslims in minority provinces encountered strong opposition by the Congress Party. In response the idea of a separate state for Muslims of the subcontinent began to gather popularity, eventually becoming a reality on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, 1947 (Jalal 1988).

Pakistan came into being as two non-contiguous territories, separated by India in the middle, and on the back of a movement that had till 5 years earlier expressed little desire for a separate state.<sup>22</sup> Elections held under British rule in 1946, which were used to determine the level of support for the idea of Pakistan in Muslim-majority provinces, were won by provincial agrarian elites who had only joined the Muslim League once it became clear their colonial patrons were leaving (Gilmartin 1988). Thus the central leadership of the party had little social basis of support in the areas that eventually formed the country. As a result, the actual process of state-building after independence was marred by early tussles between a migrant party leadership and various local elites (Jalal 1990: 45-80).

The incentives to create democratic institutions for a leadership with no social basis of support were limited. At the same time, this incentive structure came into conflict with the demand for greater autonomy and representation put forward by the local elites in an ethnically diverse country. Instead of achieving a compromise, the migrant leadership's response was to double down on centralization of fiscal and administrative authority.

The centralization of authority was legitimized by two interlinked notions. The first was the specter of a security threat from India, which mandated the need for a strong centralized state capable of higher levels of military spending. The second was raising the original communal slogan used in the nationalist movement of one country, one

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<sup>22</sup> Pakistan was formed with 5 provinces divided into two wings or 'units'. The Western Wing (present-day Pakistan) consisted of four provinces, Balochistan, Sindh, NWFP (now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), and Punjab. East Pakistan consisted of one province, that of East Bengal.

religion, one nation. Both the security threat and the notion of religion as an overarching identity were deployed to retain the state's shape as a centralized and largely unrepresentative structure.

Within the first 5 years of independence, intra-elite squabbles and the organizational weakness of political parties representing different interests had left the migrant-dominated civil bureaucracy and the well-funded military as the most powerful institutions in the country. In 1954, provincial elections were held to determine representatives for the constituent assembly tasked with drafting a new constitution. As it became clear that provincial elites, who sought a more decentralized system of government, were gearing up to take control, the Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad (a bureaucrat) dissolved the assembly and took control of executive authority. When elections loomed again 4 years later, the military under General Ayub Khan formally took over power and ended any pretense of establishing a democratic system of government.

#### *Capitalist Modernity under Ayub*

In the absence of functional participatory institutions, the civil-military bureaucracy generated social legitimacy through its proclaimed agenda of 'modernizing' Pakistan. To this end, it initiated an ambitious program of state-guided industrialization and agricultural modernization, supported by technical assistance from a group of Harvard economists, and financial assistance from the Ford Foundation and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Starting from a precariously low baseline – Pakistan at the time of independence had only 6 private-sector manufacturing units – Ayub's regime established finance and planning institutions to pursue an import-substituting industrialization strategy. The time period between 1958 and 1968 marked rapid growth of a manufacturing sector built on textiles, consumer goods, and light engineering appliances (Amjad 1982). Under the guidance of the Planning Commission, the government-run Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation (PICIC) and the Industrial Development

Bank of Pakistan (IDBP), apportioned credit for trading conglomerates based in the port city of Karachi. Encouraged by a host of generous policy maneuvers by the government, such as an overvalued exchange rate, tax holidays, and protection from external competition, Muslim merchants who had migrated from Bombay, diversified from trading towards manufacturing, thus forming the core of the country's nascent industrial bourgeoisie (Kochanek 1983).

The state's industrial policy was successful in so far as it raised the sectoral share of manufacturing in the total economy from 9% in 1958, when martial law was enacted, to 17% a decade later (State Bank 2015: 4). Nearly all growth in the manufacturing sector came from domestic demand in consumption and intermediate goods (McCartney 2011: 34). Thus a major knock-on effect of undertaking import substitution was the gradual growth in a distribution economy for consumer goods. As manufacturing enterprises produced more goods for the domestic market, a complementary bazaar sector took root in Pakistan's growing towns and cities. Over the same ten-year period, wholesale and retail trade grew from just under 11% to nearly 16% of total GDP.

Sustained growth in the manufacturing sector also saw employment in industry rise from 11% of the total labour force in 1958 to 16% ten years later. As a portion of the urban labour force, factory employees accounted for nearly 25% of the working population in towns and cities. Similarly, employment in complementary distributive services, such as transport, storage, and retail and wholesale trade, rose from 9% to 17% over the course of one decade (State Bank 2015: 891).

Overall, the set of changes listed here were visible in the higher rates of urban population growth in both the province of Punjab, and the port city of Karachi. Census data shows 7 out of Pakistan's 10 cities recorded a population increase of over 50% in the 1960s. In particular, as 40% of Pakistan's new industrial base was established in Karachi, the city's population nearly doubled due to labour migrations over a ten-year period between 1961 and 1971. Similar increases were witnessed in Punjab's textile hub, Lyallpur (now Faisalabad), and its light engineering hub of Gujranwala.



Table 1: Population of key cities, 1961-1971

City	Pop. in 1961 (000,000)	Pop. in 1972 (000,000)	%age 1961-71
Karachi	1,913	3,469	81.3
Lahore	1,296	2,148	65.7
Lyallpur	425	820	92.7
Hyderabad	435	624	43.4
Rawalpindi	340	615	80.9
Multan	358	544	52.0
Gujranwala	196	366	86.7
Peshawar	219	273	24.7
Sialkot	164	212	26.9
Sargodha	129	203	57.4

*Source: Census of Pakistan, 1972*

Along with an expansion in major cities, the diversification of Punjab's rural economy into agro-commercial enterprises also led to a proliferation of small *mandi* towns built around markets for agricultural produce. As per the 1972 census, 30% of the urban population was residing in urban settlements with fewer than 50,000 people, up from 26% a decade earlier, while 38% resided in metropolitan centres with populations greater than 250,000.

Altogether, the rapid pace of capitalist development witnessed under the Ayub regime altered the class structure of Pakistan in a considerable manner. Two decades on from independence, the country saw the emergence of an industrial bourgeoisie and an expanding urban working class associated with manufacturing and trade. In rural society, a more commercially oriented agrarian elite and middle peasantry moved up the ranks and joined the pre-existing large landlord class that had dominated politics in the colonial and immediate post-colonial era. Finally, and of greatest relevance to this thesis, the modernization agenda also led to substantial growth in a bazaar-based entrepreneurial segment engaged in the retail and wholesale of consumer goods and agricultural commodities.

### *The Architecture of Political Authoritarianism*

The interventionist economic agenda during the Ayub period was largely built on the back of an autonomous and cohesive state apparatus. It was in part made possible by the unwavering support offered to the regime's leadership by both 15,000 odd civil servants and the powerful officer corps of the military (Jalal 1995: 51). Sociologically, the upper echelons of both services consisted of officers drawn from elite migrant and Punjabi families, who shared a number of ideological and social affinities.

In the geopolitical domain, international support came with no major demands to establish participatory institutions. The continued flow of foreign aid and technical expertise, along with a global celebration of Pakistan's enlightened dictatorship meant that there were no international pressures to contend with. The 'decade of development', as the Ayub regime was heralded by a number of foreign observers, who saw it as a role model for newly independent states (Huntington 1968: 251). For the US government, its ally in South Asia served as a poster child of co-operation and American benevolence; one that could be showcased to attract support elsewhere in the polarized realm of Cold War-era international politics.

Despite a high degree of internal consolidation and international support, the regime remained consistently mindful of the potential challenges that excluded provincial elites and smaller leftist parties could pose to its authority. In order to ease out the political field, the regime relied heavily on a variety of coercive means. Immediately after stepping into power, it suppressed criticism through press restrictions, which were subsequently consolidated in 1960 into the Press and Publications Ordinance. In one particularly bold step, the government took over a major newspaper, the Pakistan Times, which was heavily staffed by leftwing intellectuals and members of the then banned Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) (McCartney 2011: 101).

All political organisations, such as political parties, student bodies, and professional associations, were banned, and elected institutions from the National Assembly down were abolished. Martial Law Regulations/Orders, such as the Electoral Bodies

Disqualification Order (EBDO) led to the disqualification of over 3,000 politicians. The East Pakistan Public Safety Ordinance 1958 and West Pakistan Public Safety Order 1960 enabled the government to prosecute anyone endangering public safety and public order, while the University Ordinances banned students and teachers from participating in political activity (McCartney 2011: 102).

Despite having established coercive control by 1960, the civil-military leadership and Ayub Khan, in particular, recognized that the long term survival of this modernizing agenda was contingent on its ability to gain some manner of social legitimacy. Given his personal disregard for democracy, which he found to be a system of government unfit for a 'warm, illiterate country', the method preferred here was the selective accommodation of particular elite and middle-class groups within the ruling dispensation.

To this end, the state instituted a local government system called the Basic Democracies Order (BDO), which opened up political participation at the lowest tier of government, the Union Councils and Committees. Citizens voted on the basis of adult franchise to elect 80,000 (later 120,000) 'basic democrats' on a non-party basis, who served as the electoral college for the Presidency, and the district, provincial, and national assemblies.

In theory, opening up of one diluted avenue of representation was a step closer towards some semblance of procedural democracy. However, the actual design of the BD system was geared for consolidating political authority in the hands of the bureaucracy. Councils and assemblies formed after BD elections had reserved seats for bureaucrats, which were nominated by the government. In most instances the number of nominated members exceeded those elected by the voters themselves.

At a secondary level, the geographic apportionment of the system was heavily skewed towards rural areas. Having barred dissident politicians from contesting elections, the purpose of this particular skew was to incorporate pro-regime agrarian elites into power at multiple levels (Sayeed 1961, 251). Once directly or indirectly elected, these

elites were largely beholden to the nominated bureaucracy for access to state resources and development funds. The logic here was to institute a patronage dependency pattern whereby elected officials provided political support to the government, but remained administratively subservient to the bureaucracy.

The state structure set up in the first four years of Ayub's regime was formalized through a new national constitution promulgated in 1962. It finally allowed for a lifting of martial law, and mandated a highly centralized presidential system of power with little legislative authority for the assemblies. In order to consolidate political support within this new constitutional arrangement, Ayub Khan set up his own version of the Muslim League called the Convention Muslim League (CoML), and had himself duly elected as the party's president. In the meantime, the gradual easing of restrictions on political association meant that a host of dissidents, who had avoided disqualification sanctions in the first four years, coalesced into their own faction, called the Council Muslim League (CML). Given the preceding curbs on party politics, both newly formed parties were weakly institutionalized and acted as little more than clubs for pro and anti-regime elites.

At a broader level, the social transformations introduced by capitalist development had their own impact on an authoritarian political sphere. Much of the formal arena of participatory politics was dominated by the landed elite, who had factionalized into pro and anti-regime elements (Javid 2013). Similarly, the civil-military bureaucracy's policy trajectory was built on a direct working relationship with the industrial bourgeoisie (Kochanek 1983: 177). Missing from this closed system were the growing urban middle classes (students, professionals, and bazaar traders), the upwardly mobile peasantry, and a rapidly expanding urban proletariat. As the next section highlights, the unequal nature of economic development under Ayub, and the exclusionary nature of formal political arenas catalysed an upsurge of populist street politics and ushered in a period of radical democratisation.

## **Resistance, Populism, and Democracy: 1968-1976**

### *The Struggle for Democracy*

The roots of regime change and the process of democratization that began in 1968 can be found in a number of institutional and structural factors. In the 11 years that Ayub Khan was president of Pakistan, the onward march of economic modernization was hailed as his regime's greatest achievement.

Underlying Pakistan's growth experience was an economic agenda purposefully built on the principle of functional inequality. Two advisors to the government, Gustav Papanek and Mahbub-ul-Haq, both stressed on the necessity of wealth concentration to sustain reinvestment in industrial enterprises. Papanek in particular proclaimed that by reducing pressures of redistribution, Pakistan's industrial elite would be incentivized to expand their businesses, thus contributing to long-term poverty reduction (Papanek 1967: 242).

The concentration of wealth and the disparities created by the regime's economic designs can be gauged from a number of statistics. In 1970, 41 family-based industrial houses controlled almost 80% of the private domestic assets of both non-financial and manufacturing companies quoted on the Karachi Stock Exchange. In West Pakistan's entire large-scale manufacturing sector, 41 houses accounted for 41.7% of industrial assets and 52.3% of private domestic assets. Of these, the 10 largest industrial houses controlled 24.8% of all assets and 31.1% of private domestic assets. Banks controlled by seven industrial families accounted for 60.3% of all bank deposits in the entire country. There were also close relations between many of the business-owning families: there were 103 cases in which one family had at least one member on the board of directors of at least one company of another family (White 1974: 82–3).

The government was explicitly responsible for this rapid concentration of wealth. Between 1958 and the breakdown of industrial policy in 1970, the larger of the two government industrial banks (the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment

Corporation) lent 45% of its loans to 13 monopoly houses. The smaller industrial bank (the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan that concentrated on smaller loans) lent 32% of its loans to 30 monopoly houses (Amjad 1982: Table 2.6).

Between 1959 and 1969, per capita income in real terms increased by nearly 50 per cent – a fact that was often widely publicized in Ayub-era official documents and public speeches (Hamid 1983). What went unstated was the fact that labour wages in real terms across all industries increased by a mere 2% in the same period (Ahmed and Amjad 1983: 82), while those in the crucial cotton and textile sector increased by a marginally better 3.9 per cent (Hamid 1974: 50).

The inequality produced under the Ayub regime also took on a strong regional dimension. Despite accounting for nearly 54% of the total population, East Pakistanis remained locked out of political power and saw very little of the 'decade of development'. 16 West Pakistani industrial houses accounted for 27.7% of all industrial assets and over 51% of all private domestic assets based in East Pakistan (Amjad 1983: 241). While the western wing of the country had always had a higher per capita income, the difference in per capita income between East and West grew by a further 16% over the space of 10 years (Ahmed and Amjad 1983: 88).

The decision to go to war with India in 1965 had further repercussions for the health of the economy. It led to a reduction in foreign aid and technical assistance, and contributed to the disruption of domestic industrial supply chains. Compounding this slowdown were a series of bad monsoons that led to a decline in agricultural production. By 1967, the index of wholesale prices showed a 28% increase from the base year of 1964. The food sector was particularly badly hit with food inflation rising to 33%, and sugar and wheat shortages plaguing urban areas throughout the country (Jones 2003: 144).

In an effort to diffuse growing pressure, curbs on political organizing began to ease out after the 1965 presidential election. Various opposition groups saw this as a window of opportunity to push for a transition to full parliamentary democracy. In 1966, the

disqualification orders issued under EBDO expired, resulting in a number of old politicians joining other anti-Ayub activists in the Council Muslim League. The Islamist parties, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and the Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan (JUP) also reinitiated political activity in urban areas of Punjab and Sindh, while Wali Khan's faction of the National Awami Party (NAP) shored up ethnic support from Baloch and Pashtun populations in Balochistan and NWFP.

In East Pakistan, the specter of crippling inter-wing disparity and regional inequality gave rise to an upsurge of Bengali nationalist sentiment amongst professionals, intellectuals, and the middle peasantry. This was partly organized under the ethno-nationalist banner of the Awami League (AL), led by Sheikh Mujeeb, while a segment took on a more leftist orientation under the leadership of Maulana Bhashani and his faction of the NAP.

By late 1967, a number of opposition political forces were operating on the national stage. However, they remained plagued by factionalism and their overall efforts remained fragmented. It was only in September 1967, after the formation of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, that the pro-democracy struggle began to pose a serious threat.

Bhutto came from a major landowning family from Sindh, and had previously served in Ayub's handpicked cabinet as foreign minister. He had parted ways with the regime in protest over diplomatic concessions granted to India after the stalemate in the 1965 war. His public posturing as a hawkish nationalist leader, and his pro-democracy rhetoric, often delivered with great flourish, soon turned him into a popular public figure.

For the formation of the PPP, Bhutto found ideological inspiration from a number of left-wing activists and intellectuals. Analysis of the party's social composition shows that lawyers, students, journalists, and old trade union workers dominated both its membership base and its leadership. Reflecting this social basis, Bhutto's rhetoric in his countless public meetings and rallies was largely pro-democracy and socialist in nature.

In the short space of a year, the PPP became the main opposition party in West Pakistan, and had managed to rally the support of a diverse set of urban and rural social groups.

In West Pakistan, the emergence and entrenchment of an industrial and distributive sector had led to a rapid expansion in the urban working class. Despite restrictive legislations, the efforts of union organizers and left-wing activists had created an organized labour movement of close to 1 million members (Candland 2007: 113). Similarly, despite a formal ban on unions under the Universities Ordinance, an array of underground student groups had emerged with both socialist and Islamist ideological inclinations.

The eventual trigger for street protests and mass demonstrations came from a crackdown on anti-regime student demonstrations, held in early November 1968 in Rawalpindi, northern Punjab. For the next 138 days, urban areas across the country came to a standstill in the face of strong political party activity and civil society mobilization. Industrial action by labour unions in different cities continued non-stop, with at least 207 separate lockout incidents, and three major general strikes in December 1968, and January and March 1969 (Jones 2003: 141).

While there is some debate over the leadership of the anti-Ayub movement, and the contributions of different groups, there is no debate over its pervasive popularity or its leftwing nature. Islamist parties mobilized their own cadres against the 'secular and pro-America' regime, but they were often overshadowed by leftwing counterparts. Throughout the movement, the demand for greater procedural democracy was conjoined with populist rhetoric for greater redistribution and a socialized economy. Part of this was down to the public presence of left-leaning leaders such as Bhutto and Maulana Bhashani, but perhaps more important in this regard were the hundreds of radical intellectuals, trade union leaders, and activists from smaller leftwing parties.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For more on leftwing opposition to Ayub's regime, see Toor (2011) and Ali (2010)



By March 1969, months of extensive protesting and mobilization had completely eradicated the legitimacy of Ayub's authoritarian government. To make matters worse for him, it was increasingly apparent that the military and sections of the elite civil service were beginning to view Ayub as a liability. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 2.5 million workers across different industries and trades went on strike on the call of the West Pakistan Labour Council. To date, it remains the biggest episode of industrial action in the country's history, and proved to be the final nail in the regime's coffin. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, under pressure from high-ranking military officers, Ayub Khan resigned and martial law was re-imposed. His successor as President and martial law administrator was the army chief, General Yahya Khan, in what appeared to be an in-house change. To appease opposition politicians and street protestors, Yahya Khan immediately signaled his intent to hold general elections and promised to remove the legal restrictions on participation imposed by the preceding government.

After a period of about 23 years, in December 1970, Pakistan finally witnessed its first general election under universal adult franchise. Bhutto's PPP won 81 of West Pakistan's 138 seats, through the support of a voter coalition that included urban labour, middle class professionals, small and mid-sized farmers in Punjab, and large landholders from the province of Sindh (Burki and Baxter 1975). The remaining 57 seats were split between a host of smaller religious and ethno-regional parties. In the eastern wing of the country, Sheikh Mujib's ethno-nationalist Awami League won 160 out of the province's 162 seats on an agenda of maximum provincial autonomy, thus securing an absolute majority in Parliament.

The period immediately following the election saw a breakout of intra-elite conflict over form of the new government that was due to emerge from the results. Mujib's largely middle class supporters were heavily influenced by Bengali nationalism, and called for a drastic redesign of Pakistani federalism that would see very little powers in the hands of the central government. On the other hand, Bhutto had won in West Pakistan on a platform of national socialism, and was thus unwilling to make devolutionary concessions. Most of all, the military, which was still in charge during this period, was institutionally suspicious of Bengali nationalism (seeing it as a seceding

force), and was generally averse to the idea of a weakened centre. In collusion with West Pakistani politicians, including Bhutto, it retained its control of the government and issued countless delays in the formation of the elected National Assembly (Jalal 1995: 81).

Frustrated with the prospects of being locked out of power once more, Bengali nationalist activists, under Sheikh Mujib, became increasingly violent and took up the radical demand of full secession. In response to their call for independence, the Pakistan Army began an operation to neutralize militant nationalists in East Pakistan on the grounds of their (mythical) collusion with India.

By late 1971, the overflow of refugees fleeing Pakistan's military operation gave the Indian army a pretext to launch its own military offensive on the eastern border. In the face of a well-mobilized local insurgency backed by India's ground assault, the Pakistan army surrendered on 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 1971, and East Pakistan became the independent state of Bangladesh.

Back in the western wing, the secession of half the country under the leadership of the Awami League, left PPP as the single biggest party in parliament. As the country faced up to the shock of another violent partition, and a demoralized and defeated military, Bhutto took over the reins of government as president and civilian martial law administrator. The populist upsurge that began on the streets in 1968 had eventually found its way to state power nearly 4 years later.

### *PPP and Economic Populism*

The PPP under Bhutto stepped into power under the shadow of a number of challenges. The streets were still vocal with calls for redistribution and social welfare, the economy was reeling from the shock of losing half the domestic market, and most of all, there was the need to generate a democratic settlement through a new constitution in a political sphere with no experience of democracy.

In hindsight, much of what transpired under the PPP government can be explained by the authoritarian roots of the state and the party's dynamics during its rise to power. For the purpose of this thesis, there are two facets of this time period that have cast the longest shadow well into subsequent decades. The first is its economic populism, and the second was its political management of supporting and opposing forces.

In January 1972, less than a month after taking control, the government notified its intent to reduce wealth concentration by taking over 32 industrial units in ten capital and intermediate goods producing sectors. These nationalized entities were placed under the control of the government's newly formed Board of Industrial Management (BIM) (Ahmed and Amjad 1983: 101). On the surface, this first intervention appeared to be a radical step, even if its effect on the economy was relatively muted. The units taken over accounted for less than 20% of value addition in the large-scale manufacturing sector. Moreover, the management of these industries was in the hands of bureaucrats while the ownership structure remained relatively intact (Zaidi 2015: 124). Nonetheless, the move had the overall effect of signaling a political willingness to reshape the economic structures built under the previous regime.

Over the next two years, the government continued its interventions in the economy through a number of different ways. It devalued the exchange rate by nearly 120%, leading to a loss of the indirect subsidies enjoyed by big business houses for the better part of two decades. In late 1973, it decided to buy out equity of all publicly listed and private limited companies in the capital and intermediate goods sectors. A year later, it went one step further by taking over industrial units in selected consumer goods industries, such as *ghee* and vegetable oil manufacturing. By 1974, all domestically owned banks, insurance companies, petroleum marketing companies, and shipping corporations were taken over and put under government management. At the end of the government's first 3 years in power, the back of a national bourgeoisie that had emerged under Ayub was effectively broken (Kochanek 1983: 188).

Alongside its nationalization agenda, the government set up a number of public sector enterprises in heavy industries and the consumer goods sector, such as the country's

largest steel mill in Karachi, and a major sugar milling project in Larkana. It also established a chain of heavily subsidized retail stores to provide basic commodities and food rations at a lower price (Burki 1988: 76).

Its final intervention in the urban economy was at the tail end of its tenure in late 1976, through a fourth wave of nationalization. This was characterized by the takeover of 2752 flour mills, cotton ginning mills, and rice husking facilities. Simultaneously, the government also issued an ordinance that empowered a state corporation, the Trading Corporation of Pakistan, to take over all trading of lucrative commodities such as sugar, cotton, and rice (Waseem 1994: 267). As detailed in the next section, this particular step was to have serious implications for the government's political stability.

Overall, by the end of its tenure in 1977, the government directly or indirectly controlled 167 public sector enterprises, with a total employment of 561,080, or approximately 3.5% of the total labour force. The share of public sector investment in total investment had risen to 63.6% from 7.4% in 1971, and the percentage share of public sector activity in services and manufacturing doubled from 6.6% to nearly 13% over the same period (LaPorte and Ahmed 1989: 34).

In the rural domain, the government's support base was split between rural wage workers, and small and mid-sized farmers in Punjab on one hand, and large landholders in Sindh. To placate these different groups, it first initiated limited land reforms in 1972 that limited holding ceilings from 500 acres to 150 acres for irrigated land, and 1000 acres to 500 acres for unirrigated land. At the same time, however, much like the Ayub government it informally allowed large landholders to transfer land pre-emptively, in order to retain holdings within the family. Secondly, it passed a series of homestead claim and tenancy protection laws, and redistributed public land to provide some welfare gains for the lowest tiers of rural society. Thirdly, it increased the support price offered for major crops by up to 300%. This had the intended effect of raising farm incomes at the cost of higher rates of food inflation for urban consumers (Burki 1988).

On balance, the economic legacy of Bhutto's government was mixed. There were some real welfare gains made, as social protection measures expanded and industrial wages grew by nearly 20% (Ahmed and Amjad 1983: 107). Employment also picked up through increased staffing in public sector enterprises. Naturally, such measures came at the cost of efficiency gains, and thus industrial productivity fell quite rapidly between 1974 and 1977. Moreover, the nationalization of industry, and its subsequent downfall, meant that the base of Pakistani capitalism shifted away from big conglomerates towards small and medium-sized concerns. If the 1960s had been the high point of monopoly capitalism, the late 1970s onwards signaled an economic terrain controlled largely by bazaar-based businessmen and small to medium sized industrialists.

Overall, the stagnation of industrial development, combined with higher oil prices after the OPEC crisis and devastating floods in 1973 slowed down GDP growth and contributed to inflationary pressures. The government that had come in promising a new socio-economic contract found itself increasingly unable to deliver on its redistributive agenda. As detailed in the next section, the immediate failure to sustain a programmatic agenda for development led to a series of ad-hoc interventions designed largely to diffuse political pressure.

### *Socializing the State*

In the aftermath of civil war, secession, and a highly unpopular military regime, the government's immediate plan to consolidate state power involved taking targeted actions against the powerful civil and military bureaucracy. Nearly 1300 senior civil servants were dismissed in a step geared to show the government's seriousness at redressing popular grievances against the state. Similarly, 43 high-ranking army and air force officers were sent packing for their military failure in erstwhile East Pakistan (Waseem 1994: 210). For the crimes committed, these steps were neither harsh nor particularly effective in ensuring long term accountability. What they did show was the government's tactical restraint in dealing with the two powerful institutions, while still signaling its populist intent to the wider public.

The political stability generated by the government's consolidation of authority, and its progress in promulgating a new constitution, shifted its focus towards distributional concerns. The party had stepped into power with the support of a variety of formerly excluded social groups, all of whom required placation through a greater share in the outcome of economic development.

As detailed in the preceding section, the expansion of public sector economic enterprises proved to be one particular avenue for the selective accommodation of middle class supporters. However, the regime found it much harder to meet the demands of the labour movement. While there is no doubt that a significant segment of workers supported Bhutto's rise and had voted for his party in 1970, there remained a fiercely independent streak that ran through much of the labour movement. Many labour leaders had chosen to maintain their distance from the PPP's campaign, instead choosing to support smaller leftwing parties.

Given this ambivalence, the government's labour policy was driven by the desire to merge the organized working class into the party as activists rather than letting it survive as an independent political force. In its first two years, new labour policies granted several concessions, such as an increase in the share of company profits, provisions for annual bonuses, expansion of social security coverage for workers' families, and a host of other laws designed to increase workers voice in private enterprises. At the same time, however, a series of laws were notified that reduced scope of labour protest, reduced strike periods, and created alternative government sponsored worker councils to undermine independent trade union federations (Candland 2007: 159).

Labour militancy remained high in the government's initial years, with 779 industrial disputes and nearly 2 million workdays lost in 1972. A series of coercive steps followed as a response, leading to the imprisonment of several labour leaders, and crackdown on protests in urban Punjab and Karachi. Between 1972 and 1974, there were 68 incidents of the police firing live ammo on striking workers (Ali 2005). Another crucial policy in quelling the movement was the government's outreach to Middle Eastern

states and its program to export labour for the Gulf oil boom economies. Between 1972 and 1976, the government assisted in the migration of nearly 750,000 blue collar workers to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait. This had the added effect of dispersing the working class, and created internal competition for recruitment through government run labour agencies (Addleton 1984: 583). Just as in the case of middle class supporters and lower-run government employees, patronage politics remained the government's primary tool to exercise control over the labour movement. Ultimately, coercion, a series of ambivalent labour laws, and the selective accommodation of labour leaders through patronage politics contributed to rapid demobilization. By the time the government's tenure ended, it had presided over the weakening of a once strong and powerful independent labour movement

Lastly, the most influential steps taken by the government in service of its political agenda was the reorganization of the state's bureaucratic apparatus. In 1972, it abolished the colonial-era service cadre system in the elite civil service, and replaced it with a unified system of 22 grades to ensure upward mobility for junior bureaucrats. It also removed constitutional protections on employment and prosecution for civil servants and established new tribunals to deal with service related matters. The most important structural change, however, was introduction of a lateral entry and quota system, which mandated ethnicity-based quotas, and gave the government power to induct new bureaucrats or shift employees by bypassing existing recruitment mechanisms (Waseem 1994: 221).

The political compulsions of the new government led to a series of interventions that broke down the insular cohesiveness of the state apparatus. As stated in an earlier section, part of the reason why the civil-military bureaucracy had been so effective in its authoritarian role was its tightly-knit, elite character and sociological affinity. In capitalizing on the political crisis bred by authoritarianism, Bhutto's government was able to democratize the state apparatus through a series of reforms that allowed individuals from middle or lower-middle class backgrounds access to previously closed off spaces (Shafqat 1999: 1001).

As subsequent sections highlight, in the long run, this 'socialization' of the state had another crucial effect: it reduced the autonomy of the bureaucracy, rendering it prone to political capture.

At a broader level, the management of a patronage-dependent political coalition, and a highly interventionist economic agenda compelled the party's leadership to centralize more authority in the hands of the federal government. Two opposing provincial governments led by the National Awami Party (NAP) in NWFP and Balochistan were dismissed by the centre on a variety of flimsy charges, which included foreign collaboration. NAP was ultimately banned on treason charges that were validated by the Supreme Court, while remaining opposition parties were often portrayed as being anti-worker and anti-welfare.

What began as the country's first democratically elected government was, by the end of its tenure, guilty of a number of authoritarian practices. The police, federal paramilitary organizations, and even the army were used to arrest and torture dissident activists from both within and outside the party. The PPP itself became a patronage machine geared around the selective distribution of public sector employment and favors, rather than an organized force that could programmatically represent and mobilize subordinate classes (Lodhi 1983).

While its stated mission of egalitarian redistribution and democratization was left incomplete, the long-term social and political transformations of populist rule were quite significant. The expansion of the public sector to sustain an electoral coalition created new, institutionalized spaces of political patronage, which changed the class character and the cohesiveness of the state itself. New opportunities through labour migration and improved access to education created preconditions for subsequent growth in the size of the middle class. Lastly, and most significantly, the nationalization of the urban economy had fragmented the manufacturing and services sector, leaving behind a depleted labour movement and a business sector populated by small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. When the PPP stepped into power in 1972, the share in GDP of the manufacturing sector was 23.3%, and that of large-scale manufacturing was



13.1%. By 1977, these figures had dropped to 22% and 10.3% respectively (State Bank 2015: 5).

### **Elite Mobilization, Islam, and Authoritarianism: 1977-1988**

#### *The anti-Bhutto opposition*

The increasingly authoritarian actions of Bhutto's government from 1975 onwards left it with a number of adversaries in the political domain. Islamist parties, in particular, viewed PPP as a force hostile to the state's religious foundations. Its stated position of establishing a socialist economy was viewed as an atheist plot, completely unacceptable in a Muslim majority country. Despite Bhutto's deployment of religious rhetoric, his acceptance of Islamic provisions in the 1973 constitution, and the frequent use of the vague concept of Islamic socialism, he was never able to shake off the 'godless' tag (Burki 1988: 127).

At the other end of the political spectrum, the persecution and banning of the NAP's leadership, and the purge of radical activists from inside the party had given rise to leftwing opposition as well. Other members of the opposition camp were a host of conventional political forces, including merged factions of the old Ayub-era Muslim League and the Tehreek-i-Istaqlal (TI), led by a former Air Force chief, Asghar Khan.

The only thing uniting the opposition was its dislike of Bhutto, and their desire to put an end to his party's authoritarian excesses. To this end, 9 major parties coalesced under the banner of the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA), and decided to contest general elections scheduled for March 1977 on a joint ticket.<sup>24</sup>

Combined, the constituent parties under the PNA banner represented a diverse social base. The ethnic parties representing NWFP and Balochistan were led by a group of tribal elites, who commanded considerable middle class following in their provinces.

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<sup>24</sup> The PNA consisted of centre-right parties (Pakistan Muslim League, and Tehreek-i-Istaqlal), leftwing groups (National Awami Party, Mili Awami Party, National Democratic Party), and Islamists (Jamaat-i-Islami, Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan, Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam)

The leftwing parties, such as the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), had some support amongst student groups and the few remaining independent labour unions. The Muslim League factions and the Tehreek-i-Istaqlal represented a section of the old landed elite and the conservative urban middle class. Most importantly, however, were the religious parties that ran entrenched mosque and madrassah networks for the urban poor, and had become increasingly popular amongst Punjab's bazaar-based business community (Ahmed 1990).

In Bhutto's own assessment, the joint opposition front posed little electoral threat at the time. By most accounts, he was probably correct. PPP was still a hegemonic force, and there was little to suggest that it could be dislodged in a free and fair election. Despite its outreach to sections of the landed gentry, and its partial failure to implement an egalitarian economic agenda, the opposition's association with the urban and rural propertied classes still made PPP look like the party of the poor.

Moreover, most of the major forces that had mobilized for Ayub's downfall were absent in this new opposition coalition. The small and medium-sized peasantry was in Bhutto's camp, thanks to the high support prices offered under the government's agricultural policies. Some of the landed elite in Punjab had found a home in the party alongside their counterparts from Sindh, thus ensuring further control in rural areas. The independent labour movement had splintered off and been rendered ineffective, while several progressive student groups remained loyal to the PPP.

Nevertheless, by late 1976, opposition groups were fueled by a fresh wave of anger against Bhutto, most notably amongst bazaar traders and other urban elites in Punjab. Part of this anger was grounded in ideological difference – conservative segments of the intelligentsia and the business community loathed Bhutto's relative disregard for religion.<sup>25</sup> Part of it was because of the increasing authoritarian excesses of local PPP thugs, who were involved in extortion, petty violence, and their own brand of redistributive politics.

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<sup>25</sup> Bhutto would often publicly proclaim that he only drank alcohol while his opponents drank the blood of toiling workers

Most of all, however, the anger stemmed from Bhutto's fourth wave of nationalization. In the early 1970s, the bazaar had quietly celebrated the government's takeover of large industries in the capital goods and intermediate sectors. As a participant in the anti-Ayub movement, they had seen the bourgeoisie amass high levels of wealth under an import substitution regime. The health of their businesses, as well as their personal profits, were often tied to distribution licenses sanctioned by the big capitalists or the government. Therefore, when Bhutto moved in against big business, the bazaar sat on the side waiting to take up its new place in the centre of a patronage-based urban economy (Sayeed 1995).

In late 1976, when the government took over agro-processing concerns as well as sugar, cotton, and rice trading, it had actually encroached on both the supply chain as well as a major source of profit in the wholesale economy. According to one official estimate, in 1975, trading in agricultural commodities constituted nearly 35% of the total revenue base of the wholesale sector in Punjab (Govt of Pakistan 1981). As the government stepped in on the pretext of curtailing profiteering, hoarding, and black market activity, it gave local PPP loyalists discretionary authority to distribute licenses on behalf of the Trading Corporation of Pakistan. In an ironic twist, the reasons that had compelled the bazaar to throw its lot in with the PPP in 1970 were now responsible for pushing it in the opposite direction.

The fact that the most vocal segment in the PNA's support base were Islamist activists and Punjab's business community is clearly reflected in their election manifesto. Issued on 8th February 1977, it promised the following 10 points<sup>26</sup>:

- The Qur'an and Sunnah shall be made supreme in all spheres of life in Pakistan;
- All amendments in the 1973 constitution which adversely affect the fundamental rights of the people will be annulled;
- The State shall guarantee the provision of food, clothing, shelter, education and medical facilities to all its citizens;

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<sup>26</sup> "Pakistan quomi ittehad ka manshoor." *Nawa-i-Waqt* [Lahore, Pakistan], 09 Feb. 1977: 2

- Bank interest will be eliminated and alcoholic drinks will be banned within one month;
- Service conditions of the government employees will be improved and their wages will be increased;
- Except heavy and defense-related industries, all other industries will be de-nationalized;
- Zakat and ushr system (Islamic charity) will be organized to promote social welfare;
- Islamic moral code will be strictly observed in educational and cultural institutions;
- An independent but Islamically-oriented foreign policy will be pursued;
- The country's defense will be made impenetrable by strengthening the armed forces and modernizing the weapon system

The Islamists saw 1977 as their big chance at attaining state power in a country they maintained was formed as an Islamic state. Having remained locked out of power first by the mostly secular Ayub regime, and then by Bhutto, they felt that by capitalizing on public anger against the government, they could lay the groundwork for an Islamic revolution (Iqtidar 2011: 88).

Helping this struggle was the unity forged by a shared hatred of the incumbent, which allowed PNA to mobilize effectively for its election campaign. It carried out a series of big rallies and public demonstrations in Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Karachi during the month of February (al Mujahid 1977: 71). Sensing some danger at being undone by the moral discourse of Islamist parties, the PPP decided to follow the same line. It dropped the word socialism from the party manifesto and in one public proclamation, Bhutto declared that if re-elected, he would ban alcohol, gambling, and impose sharia law in the first 6 months of his new government.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "Punjab: Linchpin for Bhutto." *The Guardian* [London, England] 04 Mar. 1977: 3

In the run-up to the election, pervasive insecurity over ever-increasing opposition crowds led to a dramatic upsurge in strong-arm tactics by the government. At least 23 PNA supporters were killed over a two month period in various clashes with PPP loyalists and the police during public demonstrations.<sup>28</sup> The police and the Federal Security Force (FSF) were deployed to harass opposition candidates, while bureaucrats were asked to distribute job guarantees and development resources to buy off local elites. In at least two major incidents, opposition candidates were kidnapped before they could file their nomination papers. The unopposed victory of PPP candidates on 16 National assembly seats was used by the PNA in its speeches as proof of widespread candidate intimidation.

After two months of acrimonious campaigning, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March, 1977, voters went to the polls to elect representatives to the National Assembly for only a second time in 30 years. As results came pouring in by the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>, it became clear that the PPP had swept seats in every province, except the NWFP. In total, it won 155 out of 200 seats, with the PNA winning only 36.

Table 2: 1977 Election Results <sup>29</sup>

Province	PPP	PNA	Others	Total
Punjab	107	8		115
NWFP	8	17	1	26
Sindh	32	11		43
Balochistan	7	0		7
Islamabad	1	0		1
Tribal Areas (FATA)	0	0	8	8
Total	155	36	9	200

The wide margin of PNA's defeat led to vociferous accusations of rigging and a wholesale rejection of the election results. The outcry against electoral malpractice was not baseless. Apart from pre-poll rigging through the state machinery, poll day rigging

<sup>28</sup> "More poll clash deaths in Pakistan." *Times* [London, England] 1 Mar. 1977: 7

<sup>29</sup> "Quomi assembly ke intikhabi nataij." *Nawa-i-Waqt* [Lahore, Pakistan] 10 Mar. 1977: 1

in certain constituencies took the shape of ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, and in some cases, the kidnapping of counting officers. International observers from both *The Guardian* and *The Times* declared that the polls were marred by a host of dubious practices.<sup>3031</sup>

Stung by the margin of defeat, and what it perceived as the brazen attitude of the government towards its allegations of rigging, the PNA decided to put up a fight. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of March, 1977, the opposition alliance took to the streets demanding an end to Bhutto's government, a full re-poll on all seats, and the immediate imposition of an Islamic system of government, or *Nizam-i-Mustafa*, in the country.

### *The PNA Movement*

The PNA movement lasted for nearly 4 months, from the 11<sup>th</sup> of March to the 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1977. It ended with the ascension of Pakistan's third military regime, under the army chief General Zia-ul-Haq who remained in power for another 11 years. The events that followed the PNA's agitation, and the military's repressive conduct in office, often take precedence in conventional historiography of this period (Suhail 2011). The movement is often viewed as a mere precursor to the army taking control of the state and asserting its power once more. However, this section shows how dominant political trends emerging under the military regime, such as the political entrenchment of the bazaar in Punjab, the normalization of personalized, patronage-based local politics, and the spread of Islamist ideals, can be linked to alliances formed during and immediately after the anti-Bhutto mobilization.

From a geographic point of view, the PNA movement was firmly anchored in the province of Punjab. While the PNA's electoral alliance had gained support of parties based in all four provinces, it was in Punjab, and in particular, urban Punjab, where it managed the greatest degree of street mobilization. Between March and July, there

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<sup>30</sup> "Mr Bhutto Romps Home." *Times* [London, England] 11 Mar. 1977: 19

<sup>31</sup> "Unpalatable, but it should be swallowed." *The Guardian* (London, UK) 09 Mar. 1977:12

were upwards of 1700 anti-Bhutto demonstrations, involving hundreds of thousands of participants, in towns and cities of the province.<sup>32</sup>

The scale of the movement is surprising for a number of reasons. Punjab was PPP's stronghold during the 1970 election. Labour and student mobilization in the province during the populist rupture of the preceding decade had been instrumental in the party's rise to power. While there had been a general demobilization of the working class, Bhutto's popularity was never seriously in doubt. The scale of PNA's mobilization, however, showed that there was a significant segment of the urban population that was willing to come out on the streets against his government (Sayeed 1979: 120).

Secondly, the PNA was an unwieldy, big-tent alliance built literally months before the election. As a political unit, it did not have the same unified organizational depth as was present amongst the unions and groups that had mobilized in 1968. That it managed to do so in such large numbers despite this handicap is even more puzzling especially considering it faced a series of repressive tactics. In the week after the election, the government sanctioned a state of emergency, which suspended fundamental rights and allowed indefinite detention without trial. It also imposed section 144 of the penal code, which disallows public gatherings without government consent. Most of all, within the first two weeks of agitation, most of the PNA's top leadership was arrested, and within a month most of the middle tier also found itself in prison (Waseem 1994: 321).

Given the context, two questions remain pertinent for the analysis of this period: who exactly were the protestors, and how were they able to mobilize?

In the preceding section, it was mentioned that Bhutto's fourth wave of nationalization had directly impacted large segments of Punjab's bazaar-based business community. A government survey carried out in the preceding year showed participation in the retail-

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<sup>32</sup> *White Paper on the Conduct of the General Elections in March, 1977 (Rawalpindi, Government of Pakistan, July 1978), Annexure 63, A203-4*

wholesale sector at 28.4% of the total urban labour force (Labour Force 1975). This sizable contingent included both disaffected business owners as well as workers in their establishments, who could be comprehensively mobilized against the government.

Similarly, the well-organized religious parties within the alliance were principally based in urban areas (Nasr 1994: 106). Their proselytizing work and the mosque and madrassah networks they operated meant that they could draw in networks of support from amongst the bazaar, the urban poor, as well as segments of middle class groups such as lower-tier government officers and college teachers.

Thus, the bazaar-mosque alliance, as it has come to be known in recent years, was squarely at the heart of the PNA's anti-government thrust on the ground. As Mumtaz Ahmed (1990) highlights, there was a degree of overlap between the local leadership of religious parties and various bazaar elites in urban Punjab. In his research, he quotes several examples of how the JUP leadership in the city of Multan, as well as smaller cities like Chishtian, Shahdadpur, Kabirwala, and Sahiwal, was largely drawn from cotton yarn and agricultural commodity traders (Ahmed 1990: 210).

The presence and activity of bazaar traders and religious activists is further confirmed by interviews and archival research in Punjab's capital, Lahore. The city's bazaar community formally joined the movement in a Friday prayer strike and protest held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 1977. The time and day was chosen strategically as it allowed traders to bypass government curfew on the pretext of offering prayers. The main site for the protest was *Makki* masjid (mosque) in Anarkali bazaar, located just outside the historical walled city. The mosque itself was controlled by a religious organization affiliated with the Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan (JUP). Worshippers from the marketplace gathered around midday to pray, after which the bazaar association's leaders took over the mosque's loudspeaker system and asked those gathered to join them for a demonstration against Bhutto's tyranny. By the time the procession walked up to the



end of Mall Road, the city's main commercial district, it had attracted nearly 3000 participants.<sup>33</sup>

Between the 25<sup>th</sup> of March and 30<sup>th</sup> of June, there were 18 recorded instances of bazaar-led shutter down strikes and demonstrations in Lahore. All were held on either Fridays or Saturdays, and each attracted upwards of 500 people. These took place in addition to protests organized by other groups, such as political parties, lawyers, transporters, and student groups affiliated with the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), in which bazaar traders were involved as participants.<sup>34</sup>

The organizational platform used to mobilize marketplaces and to pool in resources for protests were market associations. As the next chapter explains, these associations are voluntary organizations formed by traders to provide club goods and information on product supply chains, as well as liaise with municipal officials. By the mid-1970s, nearly all of Lahore's major retail and wholesale marketplaces had an association of some kind on which traders interacted over a variety of issues (Lodhi 1983: 157). Nonetheless, this still left a problem of coordination at the district and provincial level. After all, strikes could only be successful if bazaar leaders shut down their markets across the city simultaneously.

This organizational problem was solved by activating the Lahore-based All Pakistan Anjuman-i-Tajiran (All Pakistan Association of Traders), an apex organization that had been formed earlier in April 1976. The founding members were all prominent leaders of Lahore's trading community. These included Khwaja Sadiq and Haji Ashraf Bhatti of Anarkali market, Haji Inam Elahi of the Mall Road traders' association, Sheikh Nadeem Riaz of Beadon road, and Haji Maqsood Ahmed Butt of Shah Alam Market. In an interview, one of the founders recounted an account of its formation and its underlying reason:

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<sup>33</sup> "Tajir biraderi ka Pakistan quomi ittehad ki himayat ka elaan." *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Lahore, Pakistan) 26 Mar. 1977:1

<sup>34</sup> Review of *Nawa-i-Waqt* and Daily Dawn copies between March and July 1977. Bazaar-led protests were classified as such when convenors were identified as market association heads. All other protests were classified separately.

“APAT was formed to unify the voice of business community. The (Lahore) Commerce Chamber, which was controlled by the government’s trade organization office, had failed to do its job in making our case. Our number one aim was to stop Bhutto from nationalizing trade in cotton yarn (Pakistan’s primary export at the time). The government’s *seena-zori* (thuggery) was out of control at the time. It had already taken away hundreds of businesses and caused many more to shut down. An uncle of mine, Sheikh Iqbal in Jaranwala (town in Faisalabad district) had lost three rice husking plants to the government. He came to this country from Ludhiana (Indian Punjab) with nothing. Built a business by being honest and working hard. What good is any of it if in the end the *sarkaar* (state) comes and takes it all from him?”<sup>35</sup>

By late 1976, under some pressure from the business community, the government limited its fourth wave of nationalization to basic agro-processing commodities and chose not to encroach on the cotton yarn trading sector. However, once the 1977 election results came out, many businessmen felt that they would serve as a fresh mandate for the government to continue with its policies of hollowing out the private sector (Kochanek 1983).<sup>36</sup> Seeing this, the APAT, along with a host of other merchant associations, stepped into action during the PNA movement. As one APAT member, a garment retailer from Lahore’s inner city, narrated his reasons for joining in:

“It was quite clear to us that Bhutto and his moral degradation of society had to be stopped. In *mochi* gate polling booth, I had seen PPP *gundas* (thugs) march out the counting officer and stuff ballots with my own eyes. The election was rigged not on 15 or 20 seats. It was rigged on 80-100 seats. How would we face Allah on the Day of Judgement if we did not step out on the streets to join those who were protesting against this tyranny? If someone is out there fighting for the right cause, should you or I stay inside hoping he will succeed on his own?”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Interview no. 15

<sup>37</sup> Interview no. 10

This particular account is in line with existing research on participation in the PNA movement, which repeatedly points to religion and moral idiom as a powerful motivating factor. In accounts employing an instrumental approach, such as those by Mumtaz Ahmed (1990) and Khalid Bin Sayeed (1979, 1986), the bazaar-mosque alliance is seen to be transactional in nature. At their simplest, these arguments suggest Islamist activists offered a platform to the bazaar for its economic agenda in exchange for financial support and assistance in shutting down cities. No doubt there is a considerable degree of truth to this. The PNA's economic vision, under-formed as it was, was largely designed to favour the business community and other urban propertied groups. It deployed moral rhetoric, but was steadfast in its defense of private property.

There is also a great deal of support that went the other way. As documented in government documents, the bazaar as well as the wider business community were key in sustaining mobilization through their monetary contributions. Famous anecdotes include Gujranwala's Haji Dastgir (commonly known as 'Haji Black' for his smuggling activities) donating the princely sum of Rs. 5 million to local PNA leaders, or the textile magnate Shahzada Alam Monnoo financing transportation costs to bus in PNA supporters for various demonstrations (Kochanek 1983: 208). These stories certainly accentuate the importance of a financial aspect in the bazaar-mosque relationship.

By and large, accounts underlining the transactional nature of mobilization by the PNA are factually accurate. However, they underplay the lived subjectivities and moral frames of a conservative urban population, which were crucial in their decision to protest and mobilize while facing considerable violence and daunting odds. In several interviews with bazaar participants, religious considerations repeatedly crop up to be a major factor alongside the economic considerations mentioned earlier. As some recent research (Suhail 2010: 8) shows, movement participants were ideologically motivated by the promise of a new political order governed by Islamic principles. The proselytizing agenda of Islamist actors, and their moral framing of a political conflict, may have been vague, but it was certainly sufficient motivation for segments of the urban population.

The heightening of religious sensitivities is a highly plausible explanation for why relatively well-off bazaar elites repeatedly walked head first into violent encounters. It helps explain why 2500 marched from Nila Gumbad mosque to Anarkali bazaar during a military-imposed curfew, which resulted in direct firing and the death of 4 participants.<sup>38</sup> It also helps us understand why individuals like Sheikh Akram, the successful owner of a sanitary ware store in the walled city, ran headfirst into police gunfire shouting “Bhutto is a dog”.<sup>39</sup>

During the course of the movement, approximately 350 people were killed and nearly 8000 arrested. By beginning of July 1977, violence, fatigue, and months of instability created the conditions for a series of potentially fruitful talks between the government and the jailed PNA leadership. The initial indication was a selective re-poll on particular seats, though some accounts suggest Bhutto was by then willing to cancel the results and hold fresh elections (Waseem 1994: 320). However, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, as deadlock over the exact terms of the agreement threatened another bout of street confrontations, the military marched in, arrested Bhutto, and took control of the state once more. While this signaled a rather abrupt end to the PNA movement, the alliances generated during its mobilization, and the discourse underscoring its politics both reverberated strongly into the next decade.

#### *Building A New Settlement: Authoritarianism, Elite Accommodation, and Islam*

The Zia regime, which lasted from 6<sup>th</sup> July 1977 to the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 1988, is considered a particularly dark chapter in Pakistan’s history. These years are marked by the rapid Islamization of state and society, and consistent repression of leftwing opposition groups, which permanently eradicated their capacity to mobilize. For our purposes, this period is also important due to the incorporation of urban and rural elites within a military-led ruling coalition, and their utilization of patronage politics to sustain some semblance of societal support.

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<sup>38</sup> “Bhutto’s men open fire.” *The Guardian* (London, UK) 07 May 1977:2

<sup>39</sup> “Delhi darwazay mein hungama-arai.” *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Lahore, Pakistan) 11 Jun. 1977:1

To illustrate some of these points, General Ayub's regime provides a fruitful contrast. Ayub came into power in 1958 with the support of the elite civil service and the officer corps. The country at the time was largely rural, and had no direct experience with participatory politics. This afforded the regime autonomy for a high-modernist agenda in its initial years, which was further extended through coercive practices against opposition politicians and the cultivation of new support through the basic democracies system.

Zia, on the other hand, stepped into power after the country had witnessed rapid urbanization, the rise of various political parties, two fiercely contested elections, and multiple episodes of mass mobilization. In other words, the sentiment and cultural discourse of participatory politics was much more widespread by 1977, than it had been in 1958. More importantly, Zia took over a state that had already been 'socialized' by the previous government. The elite character of the civil service had changed, and an array of mobilized social forces had gained access to the state as a direct source of patronage and rents.

Therefore, the context of the latest military takeover did not augur well for an autonomous exercise of power. Right from the start, the regime's long-term survival was contingent on sharing power with the groups mobilized in the anti-Bhutto movement, and on the exercise of coercive force against those seeking a return to power for the PPP. With this framework in mind, the actions of the regime make far more sense than explanations that focus on the personality of General Zia.

In the first year in power, 5 leaders of the PNA were inducted in the federal cabinet, after Zia himself had taken on the joint office of President, army chief, and chief martial law administrator. Cases being pursued against Bhutto's political opponents, such as those against leaders of the NAP, were immediately dropped. All protestors imprisoned during the PNA movement were released within the first few months. In their place, the top PPP leadership was arrested, and Martial Law Regulation (MLR) 21 sanctioned investigations into illegal asset accumulation and corruption in a bid to disqualify them

from contesting future elections. Most importantly, Bhutto was also sent to prison on the fairly dubious charges of conspiracy to murder (Waseem 1994: 354).

The persecution of PPP and other opposition activists continued under various martial law regulations, with some accounts suggesting as many as 12,000 individuals were arrested and tortured in the first two years. In a final bid to seal the party's fate, the judiciary was pressurized into delivering a guilty verdict in Bhutto's trial. On 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 1978 the Lahore High Court sentenced Bhutto to death. His appeal and review petitions in the Supreme Court went on for almost a year before they were finally turned down. On 24<sup>th</sup> of March, 1979 Bhutto's death sentence was confirmed, and on 4<sup>th</sup> of April he was executed.

Public reaction to Bhutto's execution was split along provincial lines. The province of Sindh went up in flames, as the surviving PPP leadership joined up with an array of Sindhi ethno-nationalist parties to fight the Zia regime. On the other hand, the reaction was far more muted in urban Punjab. Part of this was down to the state's repressive tactics against political workers. Part of it was also because the PPP had lost popular ground to the PNA in 1977. But perhaps one of the biggest, and often understated, reasons was the PPP's organizational decline during the 1970s, and Bhutto's heavy-handedness against an independent labour movement which left no supportive constituency for it to mobilize.

With the country in shock over Bhutto's execution, the regime attempted to formalize its relationship with various elite constituencies. On September 24 and 26, 1979, it held local government elections on non-party basis to consolidate support at the subnational level. The process through which these were carried out, as well as their results are fairly instructive. Under MLR 61, candidates with past PPP associations were disqualified on a number of charges. The few PPP candidates who managed to contest were disqualified after they'd won. In essence, the political field was left largely open for groups that had mobilized against Bhutto two years earlier.

The results of the 1979 local government elections are illuminating for the purposes of this research. In Lahore, several prominent bazaar traders were elected as city councilors, including 3 out of the 4 founding members of the APAT. The elected mayor of Lahore, Mian Shuja-ur-Rehman, was a businessman involved in the pharmaceutical industry, and whose brother, Misbah-ur-Rehman was at that time serving as the president of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI). While there is no systematic analysis of the contesting candidates, existing accounts agree that a large number of bazaar traders were elected as throughout urban Punjab (Qadeer 1983: 188). There is also a suggestion that many of these individuals had no previous involvement in politics, and had only emerged during the PNA movement.

The newfound electoral success of the bazaar was made possible by a number of factors. The demobilization of labour and professional unions had rendered these occupational groups ineffective in local politics. Labour leaders, who during the late 1960s and early 70s commanded respect in working class neighborhoods were ineffectual without their organizational platforms. Relatedly, the non-party nature of these elections meant that ideology and horizontal solidarities across urban geography were far less important than personal resources and ability to divert public services. In this context, a personalized, vertically structured form of politics began to take precedence over the class-based mobilization of the Bhutto era (Kamran 2009).

The bazaar was also well suited to capitalize on these dynamics due to its affinity with the PNA movement. Given the importance of religion in stoking up anti-Bhutto sentiment, bazaar elites had accumulated both name recognition and an entrenched association with Islamic piety during street protests. Both of these were useful with urban voters who had been disillusioned by Bhutto's brand of autocratic socialism.

At higher tiers of politics, the accommodation of urban and rural propertied classes as well as Islamist leaders continued in a variety of ways. In 1981, General Zia established a consultative council of 228 members to formulate the regime's legislative agenda. The rural members came from the landed elite, while the urban members were largely chosen from the business community (Baxter 1985: 77). From Lahore, for example,

those nominated included Haji Maqsood Butt, head of Shah Alam traders' association and the President of the APAT, and Sheikh Inam Elahi, another prominent bazaar leader from the PNA movement.

To garner societal legitimacy and support, the regime also stepped up its collusion with Islamist leaders, who had formed the backbone of the anti-Bhutto alliance. In collaboration with religious scholars and activists, the state initiated a program of Islamization of the constitution and the penal code, and introduced new religious regulations to create a more 'moral' society. These were done through the platforms of a specially created Sharia court and a newly empowered Council of Islamic Ideology.

After 7 years of delaying elections, the regime finally opened up the national electoral arena through non-party based polls for national and provincial assemblies in March 1985. The composition of the assemblies elected through these polls reflect the political and social trends from the preceding 7 years. As PPP activists chose to boycott the elections due to their non-party nature, the choice on the ground was largely between competing pro-regime elites. In rural constituencies, nearly all the candidates elected came from well-established landed elite backgrounds, who had been in politics for decades. The situation in urban areas, however, was quite different. In the towns and cities of Punjab, nearly half of the winning candidates were those who had entered politics only in the last 7 years. This is further affirmed by the fact that a full 31% of the total assembly consisted of individuals who had been elected in the local government exercise of 1979 (Gallup Pakistan 1988).

By occupation, 54 out of the 207 members of the National Assembly were businessmen, which amounted to roughly 26% of the total. If only urban constituencies are considered, then the number of businessmen elected goes up to 60% (*ibid*). This is in stark contrast to the 1970 assembly, wherein businessmen constituted only 5% of the total legislature and 13% of those elected from urban areas. Overall, this dramatically altered social composition of the legislatures reflected the emergence of traders and other business entrepreneurs as political elites.



This aspect was most pronounced for the province of Punjab. In 1985, the Zia regime pointedly chose Mian Nawaz Sharif, the scion of a prominent business family from Lahore with no prior experience in politics, as its candidate for Chief Minister. His younger brother, Shahbaz Sharif, who had served as a former president of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce, was also given a role in the government. While the provincial ruling coalition included a large contingent drawn from the rural landed class, it was increasingly apparent that certain urban propertied groups were taking control of the province's politics.

The political emergence of these groups was also reflected through the economic policies adopted during this period. Unlike Ayub, Zia's regime did not come in with a high-modernist agenda or with grand designs to establish a developmental state. The post-1977 dispensation aimed, at its most basic, to undo the structures left by populist policymaking under Bhutto.

It is thus of little surprise that one of the earliest acts upon the enactment of martial law was reversal of Bhutto's much-hated fourth wave of nationalization. On 7<sup>th</sup> September 1977, the regime passed an order privatizing the 2752 flour, cotton ginning, and rice husking mills that had been taken over a year earlier. Through the same order, the monopoly over agricultural commodity exchange given to the Trading Corporation of Pakistan was also taken back and reverted to the private sector (Burki et al. 1993). A couple of years later, the state also ensured a permanent end to any attempts at land reform, by passing a court-sanctioned order that declared private property a divine right.

On the whole, the regime's agenda for the urban economy was driven by the distribution of rents and the protection of special privileges. As the large monopoly houses had been decimated under Bhutto, the small and medium-sized business community thought it best to use their organizational platforms and newly acquired political power for rapid wealth accumulation (Cheema 2000). The cotton spinning industry, organized by the powerful All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA), was successful in setting up a protectionist regime for itself, which included tax breaks,

safeguards against competition, high import duties on foreign yarn, and several export financing schemes (Cheema 2003: 140). The retail-wholesale sector, organized by the APAT and other trader associations, was successful in removing licensing restrictions and in preventing the extension of a sales tax regimen to their sector.

The shift to a private-sector led economy contributed to relatively high GDP growth rates during this period. In the 11 years Zia was in power, growth averaged 6.6% per annum, compared to just 3% under Bhutto. However, as Asad Sayeed (1995) points out, this had little to do with any of the regime's purposeful designs. Most of the growth could be explained by increased foreign aid flows from the US, which began after Pakistan joined the Cold War jihad coalition against the Soviets in Afghanistan. A second major reason was the inflow of remittances from the Middle East under the labour export program initiated under Bhutto (Addleton 1984). By 1985, these had reached nearly 10.1% of GDP or 2.88 billion USD (Zaidi 2015: 241).

The remittance flows were important for the economy in several ways. Firstly, they gave the state access to a steady supply of foreign exchange, which was desperately needed in the absence of a competitive export sector. Secondly, the money flowing in was going directly to low and middle income, labour exporting households. It not only helped in creating domestic demand and alleviating poverty, but also acted as a source of investible capital for small enterprises. This provided the urban economy, and in particular the bazaar sector, with a steady catalyst for growth. Over the regime's span of 11 years, the share of the services sector, which includes transport, storage, and retail and wholesale trade, increased from 44% of the total economy in 1977 to 49.6% in 1988 (State Bank 2015: 8).

An important side effect of this diffused mode of capital investment was an expansion in the informal sector. With the state captured by business elites, especially in Punjab, and with a much weakened (and heavily stifled) labour movement unable to create pressure, regulations on economic activity were few and far between. Entrepreneurs in both manufacturing and in trade took advantage of this by staffing their businesses with underpaid, and verbally contracted workers. By 1988, approximately 50% of all

urban labour was informally employed, mostly in small and medium sized enterprises (Kemal and Mehmood 1993). As we'll see in the next section, this trend would only grow under the full initiation of deregulation and pro-market reforms.

To conclude, a brief overview of politics during the Zia regime helps us understand some historical roots of the contemporary political order. Specifically, it shows the alliances emerging from the PNA movement were instrumental in determining a ruling coalition led by the military once it took control in 1977. The changes to the state apparatus introduced by Bhutto, and the onset of mass politics, also meant that the new urban elite and middle classes were far more integral for a stable ruling dispensation than they had been under Ayub's military government.

In the electoral arena, this period was marked by the political consolidation of bazaar traders, fresh off the back of their role in the PNA mobilization. Through local government elections held in 1979, 1983, and 1987, and general elections in 1985, various businessmen turned politicians were able to capture state resources and accentuate their status as urban elites, especially in Punjab. The non-party nature of these elections contributed to the personalization of politics at the local level, with patronage and social connections taking a far more important role than the ideology or class solidarity of the preceding decade.

Finally, the harsh repression of left-leaning opposition forces, such as the PPP-led Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) in the province of Sindh, meant that a national political project for greater democracy and redistribution became much harder to sustain. During Zia's period, a reported 3000 anti-regime activists were killed, many of whom were party workers or labour activists (Waseem 1994: 370). As a result, by the time this 11-year period ended, the political landscape had changed dramatically. If 1972 marked the high-point of Pakistan's experience with populist and redistributive politics, the decade that followed marked its demise.

## **Elite Consolidation and Neoliberal Consensus: 1988-Present**

### *A return to democracy: 1988-1999*

Zia's regime ended upon his death in a mysterious plane crash in August 1988. In a bid to prevent major unrest from spreading beyond the province of Sindh, the military high command agreed to hold fresh, party-based elections under the command of acting president Ghulam Ishaq Khan. It also lifted its ban on opposition parties and scaled back repressive measures, thus paving the way for the PPP, now under the leadership of ZA Bhutto's daughter, Benazir, to return to mainstream politics.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1988, the country went to the polls for its 4<sup>th</sup> general election in 18 years. Despite a host of subversive attempts by the military and its allied parties, the PPP's popularity in Sindh and parts of rural Punjab gave it a plurality of seats in the national legislature. This allowed it to cobble together a government with the support of some smaller parties and independently elected candidates. In Punjab, however, a majority was won by an electoral coalition of religious and centre-right parties led by Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PMLN). In the process, Nawaz retained his office as Chief Minister of the province.

The 11 years following Benazir's success in 1988 were marked by 3 more general elections, perpetual political instability, constant party defections, high-levels of rent-seeking and corruption, and continuous interference by the military. Benazir's government lasted only 18 months before being dismissed by the President (on orders of the military), upon grounds of corruption and poor governance. In fresh elections held in 1990, a number of winning candidates from the PPP were persuaded to shift parties and join Nawaz Sharif. This collection of 'electable' political personalities gave the PMLN-led coalition enough seats to form a government. Within 2 years in power, Sharif too fell out with both the military and the president, and was sent packing. Elections were held again in 1993, which saw another return of the PPP and of Benazir as Prime Minister. Her second stint lasted for three years out of the mandated five, before the government was dismissed on charges of corruption and a failure to control ethnic violence in the city of Karachi.

Pakistan's fourth general elections in 9 years were held in 1997, and saw the triumphant return of Nawaz Sharif's PMLN, with an unprecedented two-third's majority in parliament. The PPP, reeling from corruption charges against its leadership, was reduced to a mere 18 seats, all of which were won in its home province of Sindh. With the required numbers in place, an emboldened Nawaz went to work eradicating changes introduced to the 1973 constitution under Zia's regime, especially those pertaining to the powers of the President over parliament.

Despite his strong electoral position, the PMLN government muddled through one crisis to another. Severe cutbacks in foreign aid and sanctions imposed due to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program sent the economy in a downward spiral. To make matters worse, the military launched a covert war against India in Kargil, without informing the civilian government. In October 1999, as the government ordered the removal of army chief General Pervez Musharraf, the military retaliated by launching a coup, arresting the Prime Minister, and ushering in Pakistan's fourth martial law. The general who was supposed to be sacked ended up taking full executive authority of the state.

Beyond political instability and perpetually bitter civil-military relations, this period is notable for a number of reasons. Firstly, constant candidate defections and floor-crossings highlighted the weakness of Pakistan's political parties. Based on one calculation, 55 winning candidates changed parties at least once during this 11-year period (Mufti and Waseem 2012). For the PMLN, this was not surprising as the party had literally been built to ensure political access for landed elites and businessmen during General Zia-ul-Haq's regime. However, the once strong PPP also faced the same problem. This was due to the general demise of its organizational strength in the preceding decades, and the increasing dependence of its politicians on state resources to sustain their own popularity. In short, the cost of sticking with a party out of power were too high for elites that won political office on the basis of personalized relations, rather than through party identity, class affinity, or ideology.

Secondly, the period saw an average electoral turnout of 40%, characterized by low-income urban and rural voters voting disproportionately more than well-to-do segments of society. Based on survey data from the 1990s, it is apparent that this participation of marginalized segments was underpinned by the patron-client logic of politics that began during the 1980s (Wilder 1995; 1999). The delivery of benefits and services, such as road paving, sanitation works, and even government employment, were routinely promised by competing candidates in exchange for electoral support. As the ethnographic account in subsequent chapters shows, the provision of patronage plays a vital role in the reproduction of an elite-dominated political sphere in the present era as well.

Thirdly, the decade marked the irreversible decline of the PPP as a political force in urban Punjab. This is best captured by its failure to win a single urban constituency in 1993 and 1997, despite having won all of them in 1970 (Wilder 1999: 127). The party that had risen to power through the support of Punjab's working classes was now largely seen as a party for rural voters and the agrarian elite. In its place, the urban political landscape was taken over by the PMLN, which was able to draw considerable support from both privileged and low-income voting populations. This was in no small part down to its ability to deliver targeted goods and services to its clientele. By 1993, the PMLN, a party led almost exclusively by bazaar traders and industrialists, was winning a majority of votes in the slum settlements and working class neighborhoods of cities like Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, and Faisalabad.

Finally, while elite factional conflicts remained rampant, this decade was marked by an emergent consensus within the political sphere over the need to undertake neoliberal reforms. In 1988, the country initiated its first of several structural adjustment programs under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) due to a recurring balance of payment problem. Over the next decade, these programs resulted in a host of changes to the economy, including deregulation of businesses, removal of subsidies, loosening of foreign exchange controls, and privatization of 55 state-owned enterprises. All 4 governments during this decade also pursued an extensive trade liberalization agenda, with the maximum tariff rate being reduced from 225% in 1986/87, to 70% in 1994/95,

to 45% in 1998/99. The number of tariff slabs also declined from 14 to 4 over the 1990s (McCartney 2011: 135).

As a result of this opening up, the economy witnessed industrial stagnation, except in the well-protected cotton yarn, textile, and surgical goods sectors. Overall growth rates averaged just under the 4% mark, and the contribution of manufacturing to GDP actually fell from 16.8% in 1988 to 15% in 1999 (State Bank 2015: 11). The prime beneficiary of these reforms were political cronies who managed to buy up state-owned enterprises at very low prices, and the retail-wholesale sector, which now found imported goods far cheaper to sell (Zaidi 2015: 310).

The social impact of ascendant neoliberalization was seen in deepening inequality, higher prices for basic commodities due to removal of subsidies, and further growth in informalization of the economy. As the manufacturing sector stagnated and public sector enterprises were broken down and sold off, new employment was concentrated in small-scale enterprises or in the bazaar sector, both of which were largely unregulated.

Most importantly, the pro-market thrust of various governments in this period shows that the renewal of elections and party activity had a negligible impact on the priorities of the political sphere. While marginalized groups participated extensively in politics, the growth paradigm remained heavily elite-biased. The government dedicated large amounts for military expenditure, averaging almost 6% of GDP per annum, while spending on pro-poor measures (health, education, and social protection) remained around the 3.5% mark (Gera 2007a). Low levels of government spending, removal of pro-poor legislation enacted during the 1970s, and the structural transformation of the economy resulted in the poverty rate actually climbing from 28% in 1990 to 33.2% in 1998. Correspondingly, inequality as measured through the GINI coefficient also increased three points to 35.8 during this period (Gera 2007b).

To recap the analysis in this section, the decade of procedural democracy that lasted from 1988 to 1999 was characterized by a further consolidation of a patronage-based

political order controlled by the landed elite and the business community. The populist measures enacted during the 1970s were dismantled, processes of marketization and commodification were initiated, and a new ruling settlement emerged with urban and rural propertied groups firmly in control of participatory politics. As detailed in the next section, these trends were further amplified under the liberalizing regime of General Pervez Musharraf.

*Authoritarianism and the rise of consumer society: 1999 to 2007*

Pakistan's fourth military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, overthrew Nawaz Sharif's government in October 1999 as the country faced an economic meltdown. The structural adjustment policies implemented in the preceding decade, coupled with heavy economic sanctions had brought growth to its lowest in decades.

The political strategy playbook during this period of military rule borrowed from both General Ayub and General Zia's regimes. Nawaz Sharif and his younger brother Shahbaz Sharif were first sent to prison under a variety of corruption charges, and then shipped off in exile with their families to Saudi Arabia. A faction within the deposed PMLN was persuaded to break off its ties with Nawaz Sharif and join forces with the military government. This new PML faction (PMLQ) was entrusted with providing a broad base of support for the regime.

In 2001, the regime carried out non-party based local government elections to incorporate civilian politicians into the ruling arrangement. The results from the electoral exercise were wholly unsurprising. A number of urban and rural elites, who had previously been involved in local politics ended up winning a majority of the council seats. The offices of mayors and deputy mayors went to seasoned politicians, many of whom had served in national or provincial legislatures. This exercise was repeated in 2005 with identical results (Mohmand and Cheema 2007).



Election for national and provincial legislatures were held on party-basis in 2002, and reproduced past trends. The biggest restriction introduced was an education requirement of 18 years of formal education for contesting candidates. Originally intended to show the regime's seriousness at incorporating a new 'clean' batch of politicians, its only notable effect was that younger generations of the urban and rural elite found their way into elected office instead of their fathers, grandfathers, or uncles (Waseem 2006: 23).

Unlike the previous authoritarian period, this regime did not turn to Islam for social legitimacy or to coercion for maintaining order. Instead, its stated aim was to undertake rapid economic development and create a society of modern, globalized urban consumers. To achieve this end, the state undertook the most pervasive set of pro-market reforms to date. Most sectors of the economy were completely deregulated and made open to foreign investment, the average import tariff was further reduced to 25%, major government-owned banks were privatized, and a number of restrictions on capital accounts were lifted (McCartney 2011: 151).

These reforms coincided with a number of fortunate exogenous circumstances, such as the resumption of foreign aid flows (averaging around 1% of GDP per year) and a dramatic increase in remittances from the Middle East and other regions. By 2004, money being sent back by Pakistani workers abroad had risen to USD 4.5 billion (Zaidi 2015: 759).

The economy grew by an average of 6% between 2002 and 2006, suggesting a turnaround from the stagnant 1990s. Upon closer inspection, however, it is clear that this boom period was not the result of any structural transformation in the economy. The manufacturing sector experienced some growth, but most of it remained confined to the low value addition textile sector. Instead, what was driving the economy was growth in real estate investment, financial services, the stock market, and the consumption-oriented bazaar sector.

Buoyed by an improvement in macroeconomic fundamentals and excess liquidity generated by high remittances, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) slashed interest rates and encouraged a liberalized lending regime for the banking sector. Consumer credit grew from only USD 120 million in 2000 to USD 3.6 billion by 2007. 40.6% of this outlay was in the shape of personal loans, while another 30.7% was for car financing.

The outcome of cheap credit was a rise in the overall propensity to consume for middle and high-income households. This growth in demand (and in credit supply) catalyzed an expansion in the bazaar sector. In Punjab alone, the 6-year period between 2001 and 2007 saw the number of retail and wholesale establishments grow by nearly 40%.<sup>40</sup> The built fabric of both big and small cities transformed over the decade, as vehicle ownership rose dramatically, new real estate investments generated urban sprawl, and commercial spaces cropped up everywhere to cater to the ever-rising tide of consumers. During this period, the contribution of the bazaar sector to total GDP rose to 21.3% from 17% in 1999 (State Bank 2015: 17).

Economic growth under the Musharraf regime did little by the way of redistributing wealth or reducing poverty. Social sector spending remained low, while the GINI coefficient for inequality actually rose by 2 points to 38 during this period. Over the regime's 8 years in power, the average poverty rate remained around the 33% mark. Most of all, the growth in the informal economy, and in particular the bazaar sector, was further catalyzed by liberal policies of deregulation and a complicit reluctance to extend tax registration. By 2008, the share of urban employment in the informal sector had risen to 65%. In terms of percentage contribution, it was the retail-wholesale sector which gathered the highest concentration of informal activity. Only 7% of tax-eligible enterprises were registered with the sales tax authorities, while an astronomic 90% of the sector's labour force (4.2 million individuals) was working without access to social security, minimum wage protections, or employment guarantees (Akhtar 2011).

#### *Democratization and Continued Elite Dominance: 2008-present*

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<sup>40</sup> Punjab Development Statistics 2010, Govt. of Punjab

Musharraf's time in power ended after he launched an unconstitutional attempt to sack the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The move came at a time when food inflation was steadily rising, the global economy was taking a turn for the worse, and the best of the boom years had already passed. Compounding the problem was a massive rise in terrorist attacks as Islamist militants, principally based in the tribal areas around the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, targeted civilians and security personnel across the country.

Capitalizing on the situation, various opposition parties teamed up with lawyer groups and bar associations to push for a transition to democracy. Protestors took to the streets, mostly in the province of Punjab, demanding an end to military rule and a return to constitutional government. Under this mounting pressure, General Musharraf agreed to hold elections and relinquish his position as head of the army.

General elections were held in February 2008, and failed to produce a simple majority for any of the parties. Nawaz Sharif's PMLN mounted a comeback in Punjab and secured enough seats to form a government in the province for a fourth time in just over 2 decades. At the national stage, the PPP gained a plurality of seats and formed a coalition government with several smaller parties.

This latest PPP government was notable for being the first democratically elected government to complete its full 5-year term. Its time in power was marked by a general economic downturn, a return to the IMF's structural adjustment program, and the continued assault on state and society by militant groups.

In May 2013, Pakistan witnessed its first civilian-to-civilian transfer of power took place via the country's 10<sup>th</sup> general elections. These were won comprehensively by PMLN, who gained a majority in both the national and the Punjab assemblies. 13 years after being sent into exile by a military dictator, Nawaz Sharif completed his comeback by becoming Prime Minister for a fourth time.

The period in the run-up to these elections was also marked by the meteoric rise of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), a new party led by retired cricketer and philanthropist Imran Khan. Promising an end to the dominance of corrupt politicians associated with the PPP and the PMLN, the party's mobilization of middle-class supporters initially appeared to signal a brief populist break in mainstream politics. However, the mostly middle-class leadership of the party was soon supplanted under the exigencies of electoral politics, and a host of urban and rural elites who'd been discarded or ignored by the other parties made the PTI their home.

In the 2013 election, this latest entrant to the political sphere gave a surprisingly strong showing and became the second largest party in the Punjab assembly. While it did manage to capture the imagination of suburban middle class voters, the vast majority of its support and mobilization was down to its choice of elite candidates and their personalized political machines at the local level. Thus despite publicizing its inherent difference, the PTI's actual strategy regurgitated an elite-bias in the political sphere, rather than generating any significant rupture.

A peaceful transfer of power between two governments, a growing inter-party consensus on limiting the military's role in politics, and a more confident and independent judiciary are frequently cited as evidence of democracy finally taking root in Pakistan (Tudor 2014).

This entrenchment of procedural democracy aside, the latest transition continues to be marked by patterns seen over the previous 4 decades. There remains a glaring absence of pro-poor social movements and a redistributive agenda at the national level, as pro-market reforms function as the primary thrust of state policy. The arena of formal politics remains firmly characterized by urban and rural elites controlling political parties, and garnering the electoral support of marginalized groups. This last facet is most clearly exhibited by the occupational profile of the Punjab assembly elected in the 2013 exercise. Out of 294 legislators, 112 were from the landed elite, while 90 belonged to the business community. Within urban constituencies, 75% of the winning

candidates listed manufacturing or trading as their primary occupation, thus reaffirming the dominant position of upper-class groups in Punjab's urban politics.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter traced the evolution of Pakistan's political sphere from its authoritarian foundations in the first two decades, to the proliferation of mass politics from the late 1960s onwards. While the country has struggled with institutionalizing procedural democracy, the last five decades witnessed the opening up of the political sphere first through a brief populist rupture and then through frequent elections under various military and democratic governments.

The account presented above also provides the trajectory of Pakistan's urban economy starting from the emergence of the industrial bourgeoisie under Ayub Khan's regime, to its dismantling under Bhutto's nationalization, and finally the consolidation of neoliberal development in the last four decades. The biggest impact of this pathway was the rise of the bazaar sector to a position of centrality in the country's economy and the concomitant growth in informal economic activity.

What this review of political and economic change shows is that on account of the changes seen in the past five decades, the political sphere gradually came to be dominated by an urban elite consisting of bazaar traders and other members of the business community. Their mobilization against the populist government of Bhutto paved the way for accommodation into a ruling dispensation under the military, which presided over the demise of leftwing and popular forces in the country. Over time, this fragmentation and demise of the left, the practice of holding non-party based elections, and the selective disbursement of state-based patronage, saw urban political participation take place through personalized relations of reciprocity, rather than any class-based horizontal solidarity or programmatic agenda. This logic once introduced is repeatedly seen over multiple electoral cycles since the 1980s.

With the broader institutional and structural context in place, the next chapter presents ethnographic research from the primary field-site in Lahore, to cover the internal workings of traders and their associations, and show how they utilize various processes to influence governance and gain material advantages from local state officials.

### **Chapter 3: Reproducing Privileges - Bazaar Traders, the *Anjuman-i-Tajran*, and the State**

The last chapter gave an overview of Pakistan's political economy, focusing on the trajectory of democratic participation from its populist base in the late 1960s, to its elite dominated and patronage-based shape over the last three decades. It also detailed the path of capitalist development in Pakistan, from state-guided industrialization in the early decades after partition to its neoliberal form in the present. As shown earlier, one major outcome of the country's experience with neoliberalism has been pervasive growth of the bazaar sector, which consists of small and medium-sized enterprises operating largely in the informal or undocumented economy.

Building on the context given in the last chapter, this chapter draws on ethnographic fieldwork in Lahore to detail the inner workings of bazaars and bazaar associations, and the participation of bazaar traders in various patronage relations with the state. The overarching purpose of this chapter is to account for the different ways through which the privileged economic position of traders is reproduced via associational politics within the bazaar and rent-seeking co-optation of the local state. As latter chapters will demonstrate, it is through the relations forged in this arena of patronage that position bazaar traders as potential brokers and patrons in their own right; i.e. as individuals who can facilitate access to the state and help provide a variety of coveted material goods for the urban poor. This, in turn, is central in building the former's authority and influence over the latter, which ultimately feeds into an elite-dominated political sphere.

Through a study of Mustafa Market in Shah Alam bazaar, this chapter shows how bazaar businessmen govern their sites of business using the platform of the traders' association. Commonly known as the *Anjuman-i-Tajran*, the association fulfils a number of tasks that help maintain stability and autonomy in the functioning of the bazaar's largely undocumented businesses. Chief among these are carrying out informal dispute resolution outside of the purview of the highly dysfunctional formal legal system, and providing and maintaining localized public goods for the marketplace.

This chapter also demonstrates how ambitious and wealthy traders, in particular, utilize traders' associations to reproduce their dominant class position. These traders often bear a financial burden in running associations in order to gain public prominence and legitimacy within a constellation of business and non-business circles. As the second part of this chapter shows, positions of leadership within the bazaar, and the prominence that comes with them, subsequently facilitate the development of patronage relations with municipal bureaucrats, police officers, tax officials, and politicians. These relations are operationalized through a variety of informal means, such as quotidian corruption involving exchange of bribes, gifts, and favours, and fraternal socializing in and outside of marketplaces. It is through such relations that particular traders are able to extract real material advantages for themselves and their marketplace peers from the state.

To this end, the chapter draws on two common areas of patronage-based interactions between bazaar traders and state officials as illustrative cases: the selective evasion of sales, and income tax impositions, and the subversion of municipal planning regulations governing public and private land.

### **Shah Alam Bazaar and Mustafa Market**

Shah Alam bazaar, or *Shahalami* as it's called by locals, is one of Pakistan's biggest wholesale commercial districts. Located in the southern part of Lahore's historic Walled City (*androon shehr*), it consists of a number of marketplaces segregated largely by the type of goods traded. In total, the combined Shah Alam bazaar and its neighbouring Azam Cloth Market area is estimated to house 15,000 commercial establishments. While there are no official statistics detailing the number of establishments or people working in the bazaar, the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) places the figure at over 100,000 individuals.<sup>41</sup> These include a wide variety of actors, such as business owners, shop and office employees, street vendors, and day labourers.

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<sup>41</sup> Interview no. 3



Major categories of goods traded in Shah Alam include chemicals, crockery, plastic ware, readymade garments, household consumer appliances, jewellery, and electrical products. The vast majority of business done by the bazaar's enterprises is wholesale, and consists of selling goods to smaller distributors and commercial clients located in Lahore and other cities of Punjab. In comparison, retailing directly to end-users makes-up a much smaller portion of business revenues. This, as detailed ahead, is partially a result of the built environment and the location of the bazaar itself, which discourages household consumers.

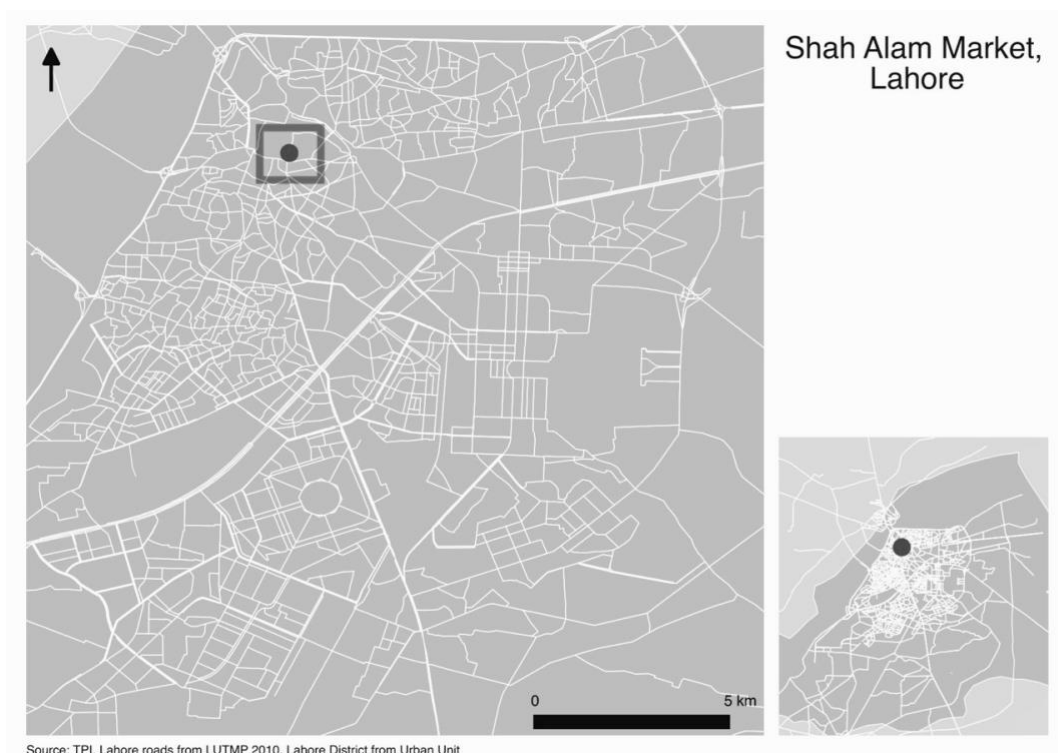


Figure 1: Location of Shah Alam bazaar in Lahore district

In some aspects, Shah Alam is unlike the bazaars and *souqs* of major Middle Eastern cities such as Istanbul, Tehran, and Cairo. Historically, these grand bazaars have shared a number of visual and social characteristics, such as covered walkways, low-hanging roofs, and a spatial centrality in the city itself (Gharipour 2012; Pourjafer et al. 2014). Businesses in these bazaars have operated for decades, and in some cases, centuries, surviving through economic transformations and political and social upheaval.

In contrast, while Lahore’s Walled City traces its history back more than a millennium (Sheikh 2004), Shah Alam bazaar is a fairly recent addition to the cityscape, established only in 1956 as a planned low-density commercial district (Mayer 1979). Part of this is down to the demographic transformation of Lahore in the aftermath of partition in 1947. Prior to Pakistan achieving statehood, approximately 40% of Lahore’s urban population was non-Muslim, consisting of Hindus and Sikhs.<sup>42</sup> More relevantly, Hindus controlled up to 80% of all commercial establishments in the city, including those located in the Shah Alam neighbourhood (Papanek 1972; Glover 2008; Hill et al. 2008). The communal breakup of the subcontinent, and the violence that ensued in its aftermath, resulted in both the destruction of a large number of commercial enterprises in Lahore’s inner-city, as well as the mass exodus of non-Muslim merchants from urban centres across the province of Punjab. In the other direction, Muslims from what was now Indian Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Kashmir ended up moving to Pakistan, taking up residence in neighbourhoods and villages vacated by the migrating non-Muslim population. Thus the social make-up of Shah Alam, and Lahore’s Walled City as a whole, underwent a significant communal and entrepreneurial transformation in the years immediately following 1947 (Talbot 2006; 2007).

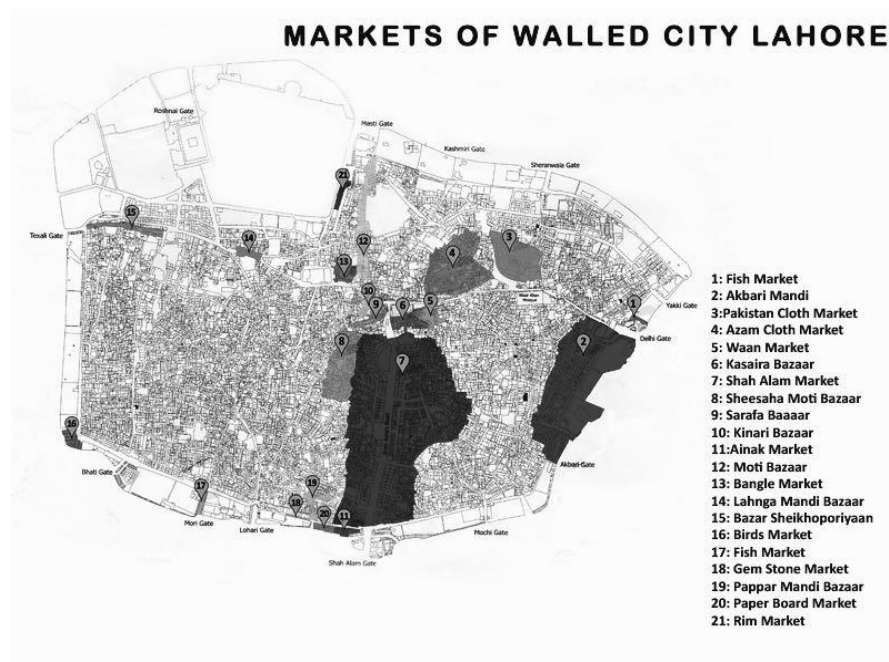


Figure 2: Markets of Walled City Lahore

<sup>42</sup> Lahore district, the administrative jurisdiction which included Lahore city and rural areas to its south and eastern parts, was 64.1% Muslim in 1941.

In a bid to resettle refugees and cater to the consumption demands of a growing urban population, the Lahore Improvement Trust (LIT), the city's colonial-era municipal planning body, developed a plan to remodel the Shah Alam neighbourhood as a modern shopping district, consisting of low-rise buildings straddling a 35-foot boulevard. A range of incentives, such as lower taxes, and proximity to the railway station and bus terminal, were designed to encourage businessmen to set-up new enterprises or relocate existing ones, while its 'contemporary' design and accessibility was expected to attract commercial and household clientele. Over the decades that followed, rampant commercialization, a growing urban population, and rapid growth in the retail-wholesale economy propelled Shah Alam to a position of considerable centrality in the commercial life of both Lahore and other cities of Punjab (Hameed and Nadeem 2008). Its location in close proximity to both the main railway station and truck stand in Badami Bagh, as well as its accessibility from the major north-south national highway (N-5), were key factors in increasing its importance as a wholesale, rather than retail market.

Today, Shah Alam bazaar is a universe away from its original design and intent. The main entrance lies on a particularly congested patch of the Circular Road, the pathway that forms the boundary of Lahore's Walled City. Auto rickshaws, motorbikes, trucks, and cars jostle for space on the bazaar's main boulevard, which has seen its accessible width reduce from 35-feet to 20 over 5 decades, largely due to illegal parking stands and physical encroachments. The entire bazaar and its adjoining streets cover an area of no more than 0.2 square kilometres (20 hectares), which on weekdays contain thousands of individuals and hundreds of motor-vehicles.

### *Mustafa Market*

The bulk of my field research was conducted in the narrow, winding confines of Shah Alam's Mustafa Market. Located on one side of bazaar's main boulevard, close to the entrance where Shah Alam gate, one of the Walled City's 13 historical gates, once stood, the market is the largest for one particular product category in both Lahore and the province of Punjab. Many of these businesses are housed in former residential

properties that had been commercialized both legally and illegally over time. As a result, the marketplace has spilled beyond its original boulevard-facing front into the narrow streets of the Walled City.

During my fieldwork period, there were 243 brick-and-mortar enterprises within its 'commonly-identified' boundaries, of which 207 sold the primary good.<sup>43</sup> All primary good businesses specialized as licensed distributors and wholesalers of particular local and multi-national manufacturers, and supplemented their business revenues by selling an array of related goods on the side. The branding of their shops, usually in the shape of a large signboard carrying the name above the store front and alongside the main counter, were sponsored by the respective manufacturer the trader was working with as its distributor.

Apart from the primary good wholesalers, there were 36 other businesses in the marketplace that were engaged in the trade of other products and services. These included 7 transporters and forwarding agents, who were instrumental in moving inventory to clients located elsewhere in the country and bringing it in from the Lahore Dry Port, Railway Station, or truck stand. As the streets of the bazaar were too narrow to accommodate large vehicles on a regular basis, the transporters' fleets were parked at the nearby truck stand or in designated parking locations on the Circular Road. Goods were then moved to and from the shops and warehouses by hand-trolleys lugged by the marketplace's labourers.

Of the relevant remaining businesses, there were 6 import agents, who provided consulting services for traders operating in Mustafa Market as well as other parts of Shah Alam bazaar. These individuals processed import orders by connecting overseas sellers, mostly based in China, with local traders. They charged a commission for their services, and also helped in obtaining Customs clearance certificates, freeing up goods held up at landing ports, and navigating other logistical and governmental

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<sup>43</sup> Mustafa market, like all others in Shah Alam bazaar, was not officially designated or demarcated as such by local municipal authorities. Instead, the boundaries were informally acknowledged by traders in the marketplace, who knew it as bounded by Shah Alam bazaar's main boulevard to the east, Circular Road to the south, Kucha (street) Sultan Mehmood to the west, and Kamangaran Bazaar to the north.

complications. While their role was historically of considerable importance, in recent years, wholesalers had grown more adept at establishing connections with manufacturers or distributors based abroad on their own. This was largely a result of Pakistan’s deepening ties with China, which meant greater ease in getting visit or business visas for trade shows, and more frequent and cheaper flights to Chinese cities other than Beijing from Lahore.<sup>44</sup>

<b>Type of Business</b>	<b>Number</b>
Primary Good	207
Transporters/Forwarding Agents	7
Import Agents	6
Grocery Stores	3
Restaurant and tea stall	2
Others	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>

Table 3: Types of Businesses in Mustafa Market<sup>45</sup>

Within the 207 primary good businesses, 43 of them could be clearly categorized as elite traders. These were the businesses that controlled large, prominent shops, occupying the most easily-accessible locations in the marketplace. In the absence of any verifiable revenue or turnover figures, control of prime store front and warehousing facilities provided the best proxy measure of a business’s financial health.<sup>46</sup> As detailed in the next section, it was these wealthy businesses that also provided the bulk of the traders occupying positions of leadership in the traders’ associations.

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<sup>44</sup> Interview no. 21

<sup>45</sup> ‘Others’ include 7 plastic ware shops, 3 household consumer appliances shops, 2 travel agents, 3 printing and photocopying shops, 1 bank branch, 2 real estate agents.

<sup>46</sup> There was no systematic way of assessing revenue/turnover given the high reluctance of traders to discuss monetary matters. However, a rough estimate based on observations over 10 months was that elite traders had sales over Rs. 3 to 5 million per month.

The remaining businesses were harder to distinguish from each other, with insignificant variation in terms of shop-floor size and location. Here the most salient differences in their personal wealth emerged over whether they owned or rented their commercial real estate, and whether they had various side-businesses in sectors such as property dealing. However, an important caveat here is that while these businesses appeared to occupy differing rungs in the hierarchy of Mustafa Market, they were still squarely in the upper echelons of the city's socio-economic distribution. This is because of several reasons: firstly, wholesale businesses are generally operated by individuals who control large turnovers, formulate relations with a wide set of clients, foreign exporters, and manufacturers, and have the capital and liquidity to move or import inventory spread over differing payment cycles.

Secondly, operating in Shah Alam bazaar itself is not cheap. According to the Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) real estate valuation list, commercial property in Shah Alam bazaar was some of the most expensive in the city, as well as in the entire province. The official rate for the purposes of computing capital value tax and stamp duty was Rs. 25,000 per square foot.<sup>47</sup> However, this in itself was a major underestimation, purposefully kept so under pressure from property owners and real estate developers.<sup>48</sup> As one of the real estate agents based in Mustafa Market told me:

"The official DC (district collector) rates are only indicators. They have been under pressure (from developers and property owners) to keep rates low so they keep it low for all localities in the city. In the last 6 months, I completed 3 property transactions right here in the market. One shop 2.5 *marla* (approximately 700 square feet), ground plus two, side-facing, went for Rs. 76 million. Another was just 0.5 *marla* (136 square feet) off the main road, also ground plus two, and that went for Rs. 30 million. .... rental rates are also the highest in this part of *Shahalami*. Rent for 100 square feet shop is around Rs. 100,000 per month. These properties don't even have to be advertised. Everyone wants to do business here."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Federal Board of Revenue, "Rate of valuation of immovable properties in Lahore, under sub-section (4) of section 68 of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001", SRO 673(1)/2016

<sup>48</sup> "MCCI terms property prices undervalued" *Express Tribune* (Lahore, Pakistan) Jul 05. 2016

<sup>49</sup> Interview no. 31

The selected descriptive statistics from my survey (n=50) in Mustafa Market provide a broad overview of the characteristics of businesses operating there as well as some of their business practices.<sup>5051</sup>

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Businesses in Mustafa Market

Summary Statistics of Firm Age		Real Estate Status (%)		Patterns of full-time employment (excluding family labour)		Type of Business (%)	
Mean	14.68	Owned	54	No. Employed	Frequency (%)	Sole/Family Proprietorship	88
Median	15	Rented	28	01-02	50	Partnership	12
Minimum	2	Pugri <sup>52</sup>	18	03-05	34		
Maximum	29			06-08	12		
				>=9	4		

Beyond the brick-and-mortar businesses, the marketplace was also home to 28 push-cart vendors, or *thailay walas*, as they're locally called. These vendors occupied public pathways in the marketplace, in the form of pavements in front of the shops or different parts of the street itself.<sup>53</sup> Their total numbers varied from time to time, contingent on their ability to bypass restrictions placed by local municipal authorities and their relations with the bazaar traders. As discussed in the next chapter, traders – especially those who occupied positions of authority within the traders' associations –

<sup>50</sup> See methods section in Chapter 1 for methodology of survey

<sup>51</sup> The numbers are slightly higher than those recorded in an official study on the wholesale sector, carried out in 2007. In that dataset, the average and median age of business was 13.47 and 10.90 respectively; 90% of wholesale firms were found structured as sole proprietorships; and the average number of fulltime employees was 3 (Ministry of Commerce 2007: 11-13). This makes intuitive sense as Shah Alam is a lucrative area for carrying out business, with high barriers to entry.

<sup>52</sup> *Pugri* is an informal, indefinite leasing arrangement commonly found in South Asia. The transaction involves a very low rental payment, but a large payment made for the lease itself (known as the *Pugri*). In turn, the lease can be sold off to a different buyer. In terms of control over property, it is largely indistinguishable from owning it outright.

<sup>53</sup> Vendors engaged in the selling of a variety of goods. Some of them sold food (biryani and chickpeas) and tea; others sold smaller units of the primary goods sold in Mustafa Market. They purchased their inventory from the bazaar traders, and targeted retail customers in the marketplace. For their part, the traders were happy as they were able to dispose of excess inventory and found it cumbersome to deal with retail clients.

were central in governing access to the marketplace for street vendors, and thus played a major role in their livelihoods.

Completing the social hierarchy of the marketplace were two categories of labourers. Full-time paid employees, who worked as sales assistants, warehouse operators, or physical help within the shops; and day labourers, who ran hand-trolleys that were used to bring inventory in and out from the marketplace. Most traders also employed some labour from within male members of the family, such as a nephew, cousin, or a son, who were tasked with overseeing other employees and helping manage financial affairs. Instances where paid employees were running the cash register or the sales ledger on their own were rare.

Given the spread of workers within the shops and in the warehouses located elsewhere in the Walled City, a precise number of their strength in Mustafa Market was hard to obtain. Estimates based on my survey place the total number of employees in the marketplace at around 800. In addition to these, there were no fewer than 50 hand-trolley operators who covered Mustafa Market and the adjacent market for plastic ware, and were largely paid on an hourly (or, in some instances, per consignment) basis.

### **Democracy and Hierarchy in the Bazaar: The *Anjuman-i-Tajran* Mustafa Market (ATMM)**

Mustafa Market traders' association was established in the late 1990s following the opening of a number of stores dealing in a specific range of products within the same neighborhood of Shah Alam bazaar.<sup>54</sup> The proliferation and subsequent agglomeration of similar businesses was linked to several factors. As with other small and medium-sized industries, manufacturing of this particular good experienced considerable growth in the late 1980s and 1990s (Weiss 1991). A number of enterprises that are now established names in the sector opened up during this time period. This period also saw

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<sup>54</sup> There is a disagreement on the exact year in which the association was formed. Some accounts in the marketplace mentioned 1998 as the first year after its first election, while others specified 1997, during which a 'caretaker' association had functioned. (Interviews no. 17, 22)



the gradual deregulation of the import regime, allowing foreign manufactured goods in the same category (mainly from China) to enter the Pakistani market.

For their part, wholesalers offered the appropriate distribution channels that could link commercial clients and retailers in distant locations with the manufacturers. Further enabling demand was rapid growth in the residential and commercial construction sector, which to remains one of the biggest markets for this particular type of good, accounting for as much as 55% of all sales.<sup>55</sup>

The agglomeration of wholesalers in Shah Alam was also down to the bazaar's location, which allowed it to service destinations outside of the city, and its prestige, which was widely recognized in the province:

“When a manufacturer wants to license out a new dealership, he has to assess a number of factors. Can this person help grow my sales? Will he be able to attract the larger customers? *Shahalami* is a ‘brand name’ and helps in achieving those targets. It’s known to be for serious businessmen and serious buyers. That’s why traders who set up business are going to be taken seriously.”<sup>56</sup>

By the late 1990s, issues of crowding in the marketplace, along with concerns regarding cleanliness and security led to the pursuit of what traders call *apni khidmat aap* (self-help) solutions through a market-wide platform. This ultimately culminated in the formation of the ATMM, conceived as a democratically governed body responsible for resolving issues faced by its constituent members.<sup>57</sup> The idea to create a formally named organization was borrowed from other neighbouring marketplaces within Shah Alam that were already organized in some associational shape. The Readymade Garments Association had been active since 1981, as had the Glass and Crockery

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<sup>55</sup> Interview no. 18

<sup>56</sup> Interview no. 19

<sup>57</sup> Unlike some business associations, ATMM carries no legal registration under any law. Pakistan’s Trades Organizations Act 2013 (No. F. 9(15)/2012-Legis.) does not recognize localized marketplace bodies. Bazaar elites were also reluctant to initiate registration as a welfare organization under the Societies Act 1860. This was because of the audit and bookkeeping requirements that came with it, which was a cost no one was willing to bear.

Merchants Association.<sup>58</sup> Shah Alam bazaar itself had a supra-market association called the “Traders’ Board” since the mid-1970s.

Office-bearers of the ATMM were chosen through a popular vote, with the electorate being proprietors of businesses located in the marketplace. Each business, regardless of size or revenue carried one vote. The duration of serving terms was agreed at 3 years, after which an election commission was constituted, which was responsible for drafting voter rolls and finalizing nominations. There had been 5 elections since the year 2000, with a year’s delay in 2009 following a dispute between contestants. Since its foundation, the competition to govern the ATMM had taken place between two competing factions, the *Takbeer* (“Resolve”) group and the *Ittehad* (“Unity”) group.<sup>59</sup> The last election (2013) prior to commencement of fieldwork was won by the former.

The association carried a large number of office-bearers and designations, created with the obvious intent to accommodate as many influential traders from within the winning faction. The main offices were Chairman, President, and General Secretary who oversaw much of the association’s work in the market and managed its external relations. However, there was also a Vice-Chairman, a Senior Vice President, 5 Vice-Presidents, a Joint Secretary, a Finance Secretary, an Information Secretary, and 5 representatives from different sub-blocks within the market. The actual number of office-bearers changed with each election, depending on the number of promises made and to whom during the election campaign.<sup>60</sup>

### *Localized Public Goods*

The ATMM held a number of responsibilities, the most frequently administered of which were localized public goods, designed to address gaps left by the failure of the

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<sup>58</sup> Interview no. 41

<sup>59</sup> These names were frequently used as titles for trader factions across many of Lahore’s bazaars. There was an *Ittehad* Group in the Hafeez Centre Electronics Market, as well as one in Urdu Bazaar, Moon Market, and Old Anarkali. Other popular names include *Khidmat* (“Service”) group, found in Hafeez Centre, Mall Road, and Hall Road markets.

<sup>60</sup> My fieldwork caught the ATMM mid-term, as the last election was held in December 2013. Newspaper reports from the local Urdu press as well as field interviews confirmed that it had been closely contested. Participating candidates from both competing panels spent upwards of Rs. 1 million collectively on the campaign.

municipal administration. The most pressing among these was marketplace cleanliness. Six days a week, from 10 am in the morning to 8 pm at night, the marketplace was the site of activity for thousands of people. The amount of waste generated was significant, as was the pressure to remove it before the start of the next working day. Maintaining cleanliness was crucial for the prestige of the marketplace and consequently the financial gains for the traders. Shah Alam's reputation as a traffic-congested, overcrowded space had worsened over the years, and bazar traders were deeply concerned about the impact that trash and general hygiene conditions would have on their clientele.<sup>61</sup>

Frustrated by the infrequency with which local government sweepers visited the bazaar, the Association had hired 3 cleaners through a local janitorial contractor, paying him a total sum of Rs. 15,000 per month. While shop employees were responsible for cleaning their own workplaces, the ATMM's cleaners were ordered to ensure that the public pathways in the marketplace stayed free of packaging material, dust, and other waste. This matter had gained greater urgency since 2010, when the provincial government subcontracted Lahore's waste collection to a privately-run organization, the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC). One office-bearer while admonishing the government's decision explained why the Association had to turn to its own resources:

"Before the LWMC was formed, we could count on our good relations (*jaan pehchan*) with the TMO (Town Municipal Officer), who made sure the cleaning staff took care of the market before visiting any other location in the bazaar. Now the decision is regulated by some computer operator sitting far away from here. The cleaners come here on their own schedule and only spend one to two hours for the entire marketplace. When we call up the TMO now he says the decision is out of his hands."<sup>62</sup>

The other public good was security, which was also of considerable importance given the amount of cash and inventory circulating through the market. Lahore's overall crime-rate tripled between 1991 and 2015, with crimes against property, such as theft,

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<sup>61</sup> Interview no. 11

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*

burglary, robbery, and extortion, posting an average of 5 percent growth per annum over this period (Cheema et al. 2017a: 3-4). Within the city, there was a greater concentration of such crimes in areas with higher commercial density. A victimization survey carried out in 2016 revealed that individuals based in commercial areas (such as bazaars) were twice as likely to experience crimes against property than those located in residential neighbourhoods (Cheema et al. 2017b: 5)

The general environment of rising crime, including an alarming uptick in extortion activity by Islamist militant groups contributed to a considerable sense of unease and insecurity in the marketplace.<sup>63</sup> In 2011, there had been a spate of night-time break-ins in the Shah Alam area, with robbers reportedly making off with millions in stolen goods. Alarmed by the prospect of facing a similar fate, office-bearers from the Association, under pressure from the traders, promised to finance the services of private security guards. In August 2012 the services of a security company were hired at the rate of Rs. 50,000 per month, who provided two patrolling personnel for a 12-hour night-time shift running from 9 pm to 9 am. These were in addition to the private guards that several wealthy traders had hired to guard their own shop premises.

### *Dispute Resolution*

If maintaining marketplace hygiene and security were primarily a response to the inadequacies of the local state, the provision of dispute resolution services was designed to meet two goals – counteract the failings of the civil judicial system and retain the bazaar’s economic autonomy by keeping unwanted third-parties, such as lawyers, judges, and the police, as far away from their business-dealings as possible.

The provision of a localized dispute resolution mechanism is precipitated by the nature of economic exchange in the bazaar. As detailed in cases studying the bazaar elsewhere (Erami and Keshavarzian 2015; Geertz 1978; Fanselow 1990), the proliferation of supply chains that span multiple countries, along with the widespread use of non-formal mechanisms of transactions such as verbal contracts, promissory notes, *hundi/hawala*,

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<sup>63</sup> See for example: “Extortionists, the fear of Taliban and the Police” *Dawn* (Islamabad, Pakistan) May 17. 2014

and other similar instruments, often make its economic system incompatible with the formal and codified procedures found within the civil judicial system.

The requirement of drafting legally tenable contracts for routine business transactions was something most bazaar traders in Lahore avoided for a number of reasons. First, they found these to be cumbersome and expensive, due to their expected frequency and the involvement of lawyers in their drafting. Secondly, and more importantly, bazaar traders were generally wary of committing monetary details on paper in any form, given that undocumented commerce formed the majority of their businesses.<sup>64</sup> While this is taken up in detail in the next section, it suffices to say that leaving a paper-trail that detailed values of transactions, from which an estimate of firm turnover could potentially be calculated, was thought of as a way of attaining unwarranted attention from official quarters.

In his careful documentation of the Tehran bazaar across pre and post-revolutionary Iran, Keshavarzian (2007) talks about the formation of cooperative hierarchies within the marketplace that made commerce possible in an environment otherwise plagued by information asymmetries. The central feature of life in the Tehran bazaar was its longevity in terms of firms, individuals and households, type of goods traded, and intra-marketplace relations. This produced a setting where informal practices were routinized and universally-acknowledged.

In Shah Alam, there was a similar, though as yet nascent, production of routinized practices across bazaar actors. The median age of a firm in Mustafa Market was just over 13 years, with the vast majority of businesses still in their first generation, and only a handful now witnessing the involvement of second-generation traders. The development of 'thick' ties and practices that germinates with occupying a shared context and holding repeated interactions over an extensive period of time was still under formation. Therefore, the emergence of conflict – both petty and substantial - in business exchange along with an absence of dyadic trust in resolving consequent

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<sup>64</sup> Interviews no. 18, 19, 22

disputes remained a real concern. Contextualized by this dynamic, the ATMM was often tasked to play the role of a mediator.<sup>65</sup>

The most recurrent disputes between traders were petty in nature, involving parking space violations in front of the shops, or encroachments of stock or inventory on a public pathway. These were often resolved with minimum intervention from ATMM office-bearers and other traders. Occasionally, however, a business dispute of a more serious nature would emerge, which carried wider legal ramifications. The most common types within this category involved debt settlement, supply contract violations, and disagreements over rental payments.

It is important to mention that a localized intervention was only possible in instances where the ATMM's office-bearers carried moral authority over all actors involved in a dispute. This meant that the most frequent types of business disputes, those between a client and a trader, were largely resolved outside the purview of the marketplace through other formal or informal means.<sup>66</sup> It was in instances where contention emerged between two marketplace actors that the ATMM would engage in a more detailed intervention. Through my fieldwork observations and interviews with ATMM office-bearers, I estimated that such cases emerged a couple of times every quarter.<sup>67</sup>

While I was able to develop piecemeal accounts of past disputes through interviews, it was on two occasions that I was physically allowed to sit through some of the dispute resolution proceedings. Both highlighted different aspects of the informal system, as well as the role of influential bazaar traders in their implementation.

The first involved a monetary dispute over debt-settlement between two traders. Haji Ashfaq had received a large order for primary goods from one of the country's most

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<sup>65</sup> The ATMM was not unique in its mediation role. Interviews with *Anjuman-i-Tajran* office-bearers and bazaar elites in other major commercial districts of the city revealed that nearly all practiced some form of informal dispute resolution in their marketplaces. (Interviews no. 47, 48, 54)

<sup>66</sup> The Lahore Chamber inaugurated a mediation centre in 2013, which was occasionally used in disputed business-to-business interactions. In most other cases, the informal resolution involved a mix of official pressure (through the filing of court and police cases, which were later-on withdrawn) and the intervention of local influentials, such as a politician.

<sup>67</sup> Interviews no. 8, 11, 17

prominent real estate developers, who was building a large housing project in south-west Lahore. The good was priced at Rs. 3700 per unit wholesale, and the initial order was for 1500 units, which was later increased to 4000 units. Haji Ashfaq's inventory only covered the initial order, and he had exhausted his credit line with the manufacturer while covering a previous order. To meet the new demand, he purchased the remaining units on credit from Sheikh Asif, who dealt in the same brand and type of product. The amount of credit was Rs. 0.93 million, which was to be paid back lump sum along with a fixed amount of interest at 10% of the principal within 3 months. However, a mixture of bad luck and intransigence meant that Haji Ashfaq was unable to make the repayment despite several extensions to the deadline, and Sheikh Asif eventually threatened legal action.

The ATMM's resolution function was invoked by both parties after an intervention by other traders. A marketplace mediation body (*panchayat*)<sup>68</sup> was duly set up, consisting of both office-bearers of the association as well wealthy traders who had led the losing panel in the last election. This, I was told, was to ensure that no one could raise complaints about bias or preferential treatment being given on the basis of factional affiliation. In the end, the resolution was a particularly remarkable one, with two office-bearers of the association agreeing to buy the original outstanding amount off Sheikh Asif, minus the interest. In turn, Haji Ashfaq was deemed responsible for paying the two office-bearers in monthly instalments.

For his part, Sheikh Asif was initially aggrieved at losing out on the interest payment, but acted generally content with the localized and autonomous resolution of the matter. As he admitted to me later on, the initial threat of court proceedings was a pressure tactic with a view to forcing a resolution:

“To be frank, no one wants to get stuck in a *kacheri* (district courts) battle. If we can resolve the matter here, in the bazaar, it's probably for the best. Outside, you have to deal with lawyers and make personal appearances. They ask for all sorts of documents

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<sup>68</sup> Traders used the term *panchayat* to help couch their actions within the larger tradition of elite-led consultative processes found in Punjab's rural areas. As many businessmen were themselves first or second-generation urban migrants, the term still carried symbolic authority (Chaudhry 1999).

for proof. The judges change cause lists without giving us any prior information. But here, we're all adults, aren't we? I think we should resolve issues without someone's interference."<sup>69</sup>

The case presented here highlights the levels of wariness with regards to the legal system as a whole. While only a handful had personally relied on the ATMM for such purposes, every single trader I spoke to in the marketplace said they would prefer a localized resolution, compared to formal procedures. These concerns were certainly not misplaced. In 2015, there were 57,000 unresolved civil suits in Lahore's district courts, with average disposal times hovering at the 3-year mark (Lahore High Court 2015). Moreover, an expedited resolution in the first instance was almost always nullified by an appellate process that involved the High Court, and quite frequently, the Supreme Court. The general decrepit condition of the judicial system meant that individuals with the resources to pursue alternative mechanisms for grievance redressal frequently did so (Siddique 2013).

The second case that I witnessed was not a business transaction dispute, but one related to the mutation of a family estate; another domain where cases remain embroiled in the judicial system for years, if not decades (Nelson 2002; 2011). A veteran trader of the marketplace had passed away recently leaving behind his business and several commercial properties within the Walled City. Having married twice, he had one son from each marriage, aged 41 and 34 respectively, who – legally speaking – were both entitled to an equal share of the inheritance.

The dispute in question was over the potential sale of a warehouse situated inside the market by the elder son, which the younger one claimed was from his portion of the inheritance and being done against his wishes. The dispute escalated into a violent exchange between the two, after a court-sanctioned stay order sealed the property. The police too became involved, after the elder son resorted to aerial firing as a threatening gesture towards his half-brother and his friends.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Interview no. 34

<sup>70</sup> Interview no. 45



Concerned by the reputational damage the dispute was inflicting on the market, along with the increased unwanted attention from the local press and the police, bazaar elites called a grand *panchayat* to settle the issue. This time, however, the intervention was not only led by ATMM office-bearers and other dominant businessmen but also involved an elected politician, a Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) from a neighbouring constituency, who had previously owned a business in Mustafa Market, and had served as the ATMM's president back in 2003. His presence was requested by one of the aggrieved parties, who felt that he would add another layer of moral authority to the proceedings. Completing the mediating party was the *khateeb* (prayer leader and cleric) of the Masjid Bagh Wali, a major Islamic education complex located on the Circular Road, who had been friendly with the deceased trader.

After much deliberation and several rounds of protracted negotiations, a settlement was reached that resulted in a formal division of fixed assets, along with the determination of a sum to be paid for subsequent inequities in asset value. The agreement was solemnized by the Islamic cleric who asked both individuals to swear on the Holy Quran as a way of ensuring the proceedings were honoured. In the days that followed the decision, the ATMM office-bearers publicized the case with other traders, over lunch and tea-time conversations, as an example of the integral role they played in keeping marketplace conditions stable and autonomous.

### **Reproducing Status, Gaining Prestige: Associational Work and Wealthy Traders**

The preceding section provides a brief overview of the range of marketplace activities undertaken by the *Anjuman-i-Tajran*, through its various office-bearers. The major takeaway is that much of the informal mechanisms of governance, whether it is dispute resolution or the provision of localized public goods, are administered by wealthy bazaar traders, who form competing factions in order to win associational office.

The role of various traders in administering associations raises a number of related concerns. It was apparent that marketplace governance does not come cheap. The cost of providing security and waste collection at around Rs 65,000 per month was

internalized by the ATMM's office-bearers, since other traders were not expected to pay any subscription or membership fees. There were monetary costs associated with administering dispute resolution services, such as in the case where the ATMM leadership decided to purchase Sheikh Asif's debt using their private resources. Expenses were incurred in organizing *panchayats* and other marketplace meetings, where food and drink were served as staples. A particularly heavy cost was also borne by the competing factions during their campaigns to win office. In the last ATMM election, it was estimated that over Rs. 1 million was spent on banners, leaflets, food and drink for traders, and a host of other related activities.

Most of all, however, any amount of time spent doing 'bazaar politics' in or outside the marketplace comes at the expense of time devoted to their actual businesses. In this equation, it is clear that only those traders who are financially secure, and have businesses that can be managed well without their full attention (such as by a capable family member), would engage in these extra-curricular activities.

This throws open the question of why would these traders take out time to pursue costly and complicated activities, especially when this time could clearly be spent in growing their businesses?

It is my contention that a comprehensive answer has to focus on both the material benefit as well as the accumulation of prestige and social capital. Participation in bazaar politics and its attendant concerns can be viewed as a repertoire of activities that help reproduce the traders' material privileges, elevate their social status in a variety of business and non-business circles, and on occasions, provide a pathway to fulfil greater ambitions, such as competing for political office.<sup>71</sup>

Holding representative office in a bazaar positions traders to deal with (and at times, take up office in) apex business organizations, such as the LCCI or the All Pakistan

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<sup>71</sup> This particular facet is considered in greater detail in Chapter 6. Suffice to say, a number of trader association office-bearers across the city have used their position as a launching pad for electoral politics. The most visible example from the Electric Market was that of the MPA, Mian Marghoob Ahmed, who participated in the mediation over a property dispute. He had served as market president in 2003, and was still considered a patron of the Association.

*Anjuman-i-Tajran* (APAT). These connections open up a constellation of business-related possibilities, such as places on Government-subsidized trade delegations to other countries, a direct voice in policymaking arenas for the protection of sectoral interests, and the discovery of business networks in other cities.

Also of considerable importance is the elevated status conferred on bazaar representatives by state functionaries and the political elite. Municipal administrators and police officers involved in urban governance prefer to deal with marketplace office-bearers, rather than dealing with a large number of businessmen. This is also true for political representatives who engage with elite bazaar traders for the purposes of being seen as attentive to the concerns of the business community. Subsequently, the relations forged through such interactions are central in opening up avenues of patronage that traders co-opt for themselves and their affiliates. Therefore, through processes of accumulating connections, prestige, and recognition from other influential quarters, a set of economic elites – i.e. bazaar traders – are able to leverage a voluntary platform – i.e. the *Anjuman-i-Tajran* - to reproduce their privileged position in the urban social hierarchy.

For their part, bazaar traders weave a narrative of self-sacrifice to explain and rationalize their costly endeavours in associational politics. During my fieldwork in Lahore, the ATMM was led by Malik Khalid. He was elected Chairman in January 2014, as head of the *Takbeer* (“Resolve”) panel. Most of the association’s business was carried out from his own office, situated at the back of his large shop “Gujjar Primary Goods”, just off the main Shah Alam bazaar boulevard.

Entering his office, the most noticeable item on display was the array of framed pictures on the rear wall. These featured him and other marketplace elites meeting a number of dignitaries from a variety of fields. Some showed him receiving awards or letters of appreciation from office-bearers of the LCCI. Others were with local politicians, police officers, and bureaucrats. Pride of place in the centre was reserved for a picture with the then Governor of Punjab, Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar. The pictures were a major signifier for both market traders and outsiders, curated

specifically to show the array of networks he both operated in and could potentially draw on.

In his own words, Malik Khalid portrayed associational work with the ATMM as a form of *khidmat* or community service. In his portrayal, the bazaar and its constituent members exist as an enclosed social formation, with shared obligations and responsibilities. The word most frequently used to describe this formation was *biraderi*, a term that literally translates to ‘fraternity’ or ‘brotherhood’, but is mostly commonly used in rural areas to denote a consanguineous kinship group (Alavi 1972b; 1973).

“Many of us are now *shehri log* (city dwellers) so *biraderi* does not exist as it used to for our fathers. Yet we exist as a community. I come here to the market every day. So do all the other *tajir*. We face the same circumstances and same challenges. We also share each other’s moments of happiness and joy. For all intents and purposes, we are a *biraderi*, except not as ‘Gujjar’ or ‘Sheikh’ or ‘Arain’. Those are important identities too, but in the market we are here as a *tajir biraderi* (traders’ fraternity). So just like an Arain would help out an Arain in his time of need, a *tajir* should help out another *tajir*. By helping manage the market and addressing its problems, I am merely fulfilling my role as part of this community.”<sup>72</sup>

Another office-bearer added religious invocation to describe the moral economy of rights and obligations within the marketplace. More specifically, he drew on the Islamic concept of *haqooq-ul-ibad* (rights of others over you) to explain and justify his participation in bazaar politics. In his formulation, helping resolve marketplace concerns was both a fraternal duty, as member of the *tajir biraderi*, and a moral-civic responsibility, as a good Muslim.<sup>73</sup>

Other traders were accustomed to the rhetoric deployed by elites involved in bazaar politics, as the notion of *khidmat* and sacrifice were frequently used in their election campaigns. Candidates from competing panels tried to differentiate themselves on the

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<sup>72</sup> Interview no. 8

<sup>73</sup> Interview no. 13

basis of their integrity and commitment to serving the interests of the market, and through a wide variety of material promises.

However, traders who did not actively participate in associational politics, or were not closely affiliated with either of the two factions, appeared ambivalent about the professed motivations. One wealthy trader, who studiously eschewed marketplace affairs, cynically pointed out the variety of gains ATMM office-bearers extracted from their position:

“In their (ATMM office-bearers) world-view, they are burdening us with their goodwill and favour (*ihsaan*). Every election, they will pick up a loudspeaker and commit to turning this marketplace into Dubai or Paris from their own pockets. Truth is they make plenty out of this. Executive Committee seats in the (Lahore) Chamber, dinner reception at Governor House. Every other day one of them is off to Guangzhou or Europe on *sarkari kharcha* (government junket). They showcase these connections to customers and clients to say ‘look we are trusted by so many people’.”<sup>74</sup>

Smaller traders carried differing opinions about the intentions and motivations that drove big traders in bazaar politics. While nearly everyone acknowledged the prestige and reputational gains that were made from it, they also pointed out that the services rendered were important. One trader was slightly more sympathetic on this issue and saw it as a justified trade-off:

“*Dekhain*, neither I nor 90% of the market has the time to run after *sarkari* (government) officers to get things fixed. When someone takes the time out, we all get something out of it. Now I know these people (office-bearers) aren’t *doodh ke dhulay* (clean or pure-intentioned). They make their cut, so to speak. But as far as I am concerned, I think it’s working. If someone is dissatisfied with the system, nothing stops them from challenging the status quo.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Interview no. 12

<sup>75</sup> Interview no. 18

On balance, the gains accrued from participating in bazaar politics were apparent. Trader association office-bearers were indeed given preferential treatment and sanctified status by politicians, public officials, and other business elites. In some cases, the gains were more blatantly material in nature and involved collusion of public functionaries. In two markets neighbouring Mustafa Market, municipal officials had outsourced the decision to allocate the *theka* (contract) for car and motorcycle parking stands to their respective *Anjumans*. Informants in those marketplaces revealed that office-bearers had awarded the contract to their own frontmen, in collusion with the municipal officials, and were raking in as much as Rs. 1 million per month from it.<sup>76</sup>

The fact that such an arrangement germinated was down to the privileged status accorded to elite traders by public officials. News stories from local media outlets frequently provide coverage of consultative meetings between those running traders' associations and local elected officials or bureaucrats. In the words of a former District Coordination Officer (DCO) Lahore<sup>77</sup>, traders constituted an 'important pillar of society', who were 'integral in the development process and ensuring the economic well-being of other citizens'.<sup>78</sup> Thus in his formulation, they were deserving of greater attention and consideration in public affairs.

These views were echoed by a senior police official as well, who saw traders' associations fulfilling an important security function. Given the geographic concentration of crime and, in recent years, Islamist militant activity in commercial centres, traders offered a viable resource in policing efforts:

"In police academy training, we tell our rankers (field-level policemen) to maintain best possible relations with the *Anjuman-i-Tajran*. The reason is that they spend a great deal of time in public space, due to the nature of their work. They sit all day in the bazaars which are central to city's social life. This means they can see or hear things that can help us in our work. Of all the different social groups that police have to deal with,

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<sup>76</sup> Interviews no. 42, 43

<sup>77</sup> DCO/Deputy Commissioner (DC) is the administrative head of the city/district, and the senior-most bureaucrat in urban governance

<sup>78</sup> Interview no. 27

factory labour used to be the most important back in the 60s, but now traders and Islamic clerics are the most important.”<sup>79</sup>

Such networks, resulting from holding elite status and positions of authority in bazaars, often extended beyond the state to include other business circles. The relationship between the Lahore Chamber, which remains a site of considerable influence and government attention, and the *Anjuman-i-Tajran* was particularly instructive in this regard.

As explained by a former President, the group governing the LCCI, known as the PIAF (Pakistan Industrialist and Traders Front)-Founders Alliance, relied heavily on the support of bazaar leaders to mobilize businessmen from the retail-wholesale sector.<sup>80</sup> Traders’ associations across different markets feted leaders from PIAF-Founders, who mostly belonged to the large-scale manufacturing sector, by throwing lavish dinners and receptions to showcase their support. In exchange for their votes in the LCCI polls, PIAF-Founders leaders would allocate Executive Committee nominations and provide preferential access to LCCI resources.

This arrangement even worked across different factions within marketplaces. Both *Takbeer* and *Ittehad* group leaders in Mustafa Market swore allegiance to PIAF-Founders and campaigned for them regardless of whether they held ATMM office or not. Mustafa Market held 112 votes in the “Associate Class” category for the LCCI annual election.<sup>81</sup> In exchange for guaranteeing these votes, two past Presidents of ATMM, one from each competing faction had gained a place on the LCCI Executive Committee in two successive terms. The fact that PIAF-Founders had remained undefeated in Chamber elections since 2001 was a testament to how well this spoils system between different tiers of businessmen actually worked.

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<sup>79</sup> Interview no. 34

<sup>80</sup> Interview no. 1

<sup>81</sup> Associate Class was the category used to denote businessmen (mostly from the retail-wholesale sector) who were not registered as Private Limited Companies, employed fewer than 15 full-time individuals, and held declared turnovers less than Rs. 500 million per year. While 112 votes do not sound like a large amount given that total Chamber membership strength was 8074, in most years 1000 votes were enough for a panel to win an Executive Committee seat, and so every vote cast was important.

During my fieldwork, ATMM office-bearers retained considerable contact with leaders of the Lahore Chamber, and were often granted a seat at the table in discussions with high-ranking government policymakers. The most visible form of patronage, however, was the allocation of spots in subsidized trade delegations. On two occasions, the Ministry of Commerce set-up meetings with manufacturers in Italy and China, with help and funding from their respective embassies. The rationale was to open up distribution possibilities for capital goods that were considered important in meeting domestic requirements.

On both occasions, the coordination role for Lahore was being carried out by the LCCI on behalf of the Ministry, and in turn they requested the senior-most ATMM office-bearers to nominate businessmen for these delegations. In total four spots were offered, of which three were taken up by the office-bearers themselves, and one was given to another wealthy trader who was a close associate and friend of the ATMM President. While it is difficult to assess the overall scale of monetary benefit attained from these trips, in my knowledge at least one of the traders involved was able to secure a new import agreement for a switches set that was experiencing rising demand in the domestic market.

The views and actions of a variety of actors detailed above highlight both the visibility and connections accorded to wealthy bazaar traders through their associational work in the *Anjuman-i-Tajran*, as well as some of the material and non-material benefits that accrue from such networking. In turn, these become central in reproducing their socially and economically privileged position. The next section zooms in on one set of networks – those forged with local state officials – to understand the development of patronage ties, which allow bazaar traders to extract real material advantages for themselves and their peers, and ultimately help them become patrons in their own right.

### **Friends with Benefits: The *Tajir biraderi* and the State**



This section builds on the visibility attained by particular bazaar traders to demonstrate how patronage relations with state officials work. The co-optation of the local state in rent-seeking patronage relations by bazaar traders in Lahore is in line with the 'class reproductive' accumulation practices of upwardly mobile capitalist groups in rural and urban South Asia (Harriss-White 2003; Jeffrey 2000; Jeffrey and Lerche 2000). I argue that such relations are central in extracting concessions and maintaining autonomy for the bazaar's undocumented business practices, and subsequently help bazaar traders cater to their friends in the marketplace and to their own, less-privileged 'clients', i.e. the urban poor. I focus on the processes that help operationalise such relationships, and show that contrary to popular belief, big ticket monetary corruption, wherein traders simply 'buy out' public officials, is only one out of several features of the interaction between the two sets of actors. In fact, given that field bureaucracies are structured with long, often undefined tenures, these relations are more likely to operate along quotidian lines, involving 'mundane' negotiations, the exchange of small gifts, and favours, and fraternal socializing in and outside of marketplaces.

To illustrate my argument, I draw on two domains of bazaar-state interaction – the collusive evasion of tax liabilities, and the subversion of urban planning and zoning regulations. Both form crucial components for commercial activity in the bazaar sector.

### *Why Should We Pay?*

The literature on bazaars makes frequent references to their commanding position in the informal or undocumented economy (Qadeer 1983; Denouex 1993; Singerman 1995; Gulzar et al 2010). Here informality is posited as a contrast to the formal sector along the lines of adherence (or lack thereof) to officially sanctioned rules and regulation. While the exact scale and scope of these regulations may differ across different legal jurisdictions, the most common benchmarks include registration of businesses with tax and corporate regulatory authorities, formal and codified labour relations, and accurate declaration of revenue and profits for tax purposes (Portes et al. 1989; Portes 1994; Williams and Shahid 2016; Williams et al. 2016).

In Pakistan, the bazaar sector deviates from all three benchmarks of the 'formal' to varying degrees (Federal Board of Revenue 2008). In terms of business registration, larger retail and wholesale enterprises are usually registered with sales tax authorities as sole proprietorships or Association of Persons (AoP), and do exist within a broad enumeration of the formal sector (Ahmed 2012: 40).<sup>82</sup> In terms of labour relations, however, 90% of the sector's employee workforce, amounting to 4.2 million individuals, is informally employed through verbal and flexible contracts (Government of Pakistan 2015). Lastly, it is in the domain of accurate accounting for tax purposes that the undocumented nature of bazaar commerce attains greatest salience. Revenues, costs, and profits are all subject to a wide variety of dubious practices, the most frequent of which include under-invoicing, utilization of non-custom duty paid or smuggled inventory, maintenance of multiple ledgers, and use of *benami* (undeclared) transactions through cash settlements via informal money transfer mechanisms (*hundi/hawala*) or non-business bank accounts.<sup>83</sup>

These practices contribute to Pakistan's status as a fiscally constrained state, with its tax-to-GDP ratio stagnant around the 10% mark for over a decade. Tax authorities collecting sales and income taxes rely on a small pool of visible and 'captured' taxpayers, which include the large-scale manufacturing sector and employees working in formal enterprises, whose tax liabilities are deducted at source (Aslam 1998). On the other hand, major contributors to the economy, such as retail-wholesale trade, exist largely outside the tax net. Despite contributing close to 18% to overall GDP, retail and wholesale trade contributes only 0.5% to total federal government revenue obtained from direct and indirect taxes (Ahmed 2012: 43).

Some of this mismatch between economic scale and tax contribution is because of the fragmented nature of retail and wholesale trade. Many entrepreneurs operate businesses that are too small to meet minimum taxation thresholds, and the cost of

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<sup>82</sup> Sales tax registration for wholesalers, dealers, and distributors is mandatory under the Sales Tax Act 1990. Larger wholesalers dealing in manufactures goods are compelled to register themselves under pressure from their manufacturers, who are subject to a 1pc tax penalty for selling to unregistered enterprises. Another reason why wholesalers often obtain registration is to meet a pre-qualification requirement for government procurement contracts.

<sup>83</sup> "Tax Issues of Retail-Wholesale Sector" *Business Recorder* (Islamabad, Pakistan) Sep 15, 2017

monitoring and documented their activities is forbiddingly high. However, there is significant slippage and evasion in large bazaars like Shah Alam where established businesses, with annual turnovers exceeding well over the minimum threshold of Rs. 5 million per annum, operate. Formally, such wholesalers (or retailers) are subject to a variety of tax regulations. These include federal taxes such as sales tax on the goods sold, and income tax as a percentage of turnovers and other personal earnings, as well as provincial levies such as property tax on commercial real estate.<sup>84</sup> However, their actual contribution to Pakistan's tax collection at all levels is miniscule. In 2012, large retailers and wholesalers paid USD 30 million in income tax – less than 0.5% of total collection – and USD 38 million in sales taxes, constituting only 1% of total sales tax revenue (Ahmed 2012: 51). According to one conservative estimate, the potential revenue lost because of evasion and inadequate documentation of the bazaar sector is approximately USD 1.5 billion per year (Ehtisham 2010).

Even a cursory assessment of the statistics demonstrates that prosperous bazaar traders engage in large-scale avoidance or evasion of their tax liability. In my interviews, many traders in Mustafa Market and other commercial centres openly acknowledged this reality at a sector-wide level, though were, understandably, resolutely silent on their own complicity in it.<sup>85</sup> In doing so, they produce a variety of narratives about taxation ranging from the failure of the state to keep up its end of the fiscal compact, Islamic injunctions, and even financial burdens. In the words of one trader, there were no obvious gains from paying income and sales taxes:

“The *Anjuman* (ATMM) is paying for garbage collection and security. Last year, the residents of my (housing) society pitched in from their own pocket to fix potholes and replace drain covers. All of this is happening while politicians sitting at the top are getting richer. It's clear where our taxes end up, so why should the *tajir biraderi* pay more?”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The minimum threshold for income tax incidence is Rs. 400,000 per annum (in 2015), after which a progressively increasing liability is calculated on the basis of designated slabs.

<sup>85</sup> A popular refrain was ‘others do it, but we don't’. But triangulating information through other interviews revealed that even those who insisted they didn't engage in such practices, were fully involved as well.

<sup>86</sup> Interview no. 36

When I brought up the issue of how more taxes can help fund improvements to services that are largely used by the less fortunate (such as public health and education), the respondent offered a religious solution to the issue:

“Islam makes no provisions for other types of taxation. It only has *sadqa* (alms) and *zakat* (charity) as direct welfare of the *ghareeb* (poor) and *maskeen* (destitute). If Pakistan was truly an Islamic republic, it would get rid of all these other taxes, and just have *zakat*, which people can offer on their own. Then you’ll see how these problems won’t even exist.”<sup>87</sup>

The tradeoff between charity or philanthropy and taxation is one that frequently comes up in research on fiscal practices in Pakistan (Cyan et al. 2016). Survey data shows businessmen feel that they pay their due to society through indirect and private contributions, leaving no need for the state to ask for more (Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy 2011: 27). Some of my informants echoed similar opinions, suggesting that their fiscal positions were already constrained by a variety of existing burdens:

“I pay sales tax on everything I buy, from groceries to household appliances. I pay income tax on my mobile phone and electricity bill. Even my child’s school fees include an advance tax deduction. On top of this, I contribute charity to the mosque, and for disaster relief. If you combine all of these, you’ll see traders are actually paying the most taxes in this country. If we pay any more we’ll go bankrupt!”<sup>88</sup>

While the narrative of existing indirect and charitable burdens was meant to show how the bazaar’s contribution was at par with other sectors, it did not match up to the reality on the ground. Using publicly available income tax returns data, I was able to match names with the National Tax Number (a unique identifier) of 27 out of the 43 elite traders in Mustafa Market. Out of those 27, only 13 had filed returns for the preceding tax year, and the maximum any one trader had paid in annual income tax was Rs. 40,000 (Federal Board of Revenue 2015). Based on the tax slabs in operation

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid*

<sup>88</sup> Interview no. 43

that fiscal year, it amounted to a gross personal income of roughly Rs. 70,000 per month or Rs. 840,000 per year. This is equivalent to the salary of a mid-level white-collar employee of a medium-sized business.

On the other hand, the consumption lifestyles of most traders posed a considerable contradiction with these figures. While they dressed modestly in monotone 'wash-n-wear' *shalwar kameez*, they often wore expensive watches ("Rado" gold brand being the most popular) and carried the latest Apple or Samsung cellphones. The upper echelons of the bazaar lived comfortably in new and exclusive suburban developments, such as Bahria Town in South Lahore, and DHA in the East. Every year, they took, on average, a couple of trips abroad, such as to the Middle East for religious pilgrimage, and sent their children to high-cost private schools, such as Beaconhouse and Lahore Grammar, which charged tuition fees of over Rs. 20,000 per month.

The consumption patterns seen across both elite and non-elite traders in Mustafa Market show that their businesses were healthy, and that their net profits received a helping hand from their attitude towards taxation. The fact that this reality is pervasive across much of the country's retail-wholesale economy, where businesses continue to function and thrive in their undocumented form, suggests some complicity of the tax authorities. Part of it is simply down to Pakistan's low levels of capacity within the tax bureaucracy, i.e. on account of its staff limitations and meagre resources. This automatically places a check on more comprehensive documentation and collection, and results in many businesses getting by without ever encountering the attention of tax officials (World Bank 2009; Piracha and Moore 2015).

But an equally, if not more, significant driver is the practice of collusion between tax officials and businessmen that results in purposeful evasion (Mughal and Akram 2009). This practice remains particularly salient in a commercial district like Shah Alam bazaar, which is both highly visible to local tax officials, and widely acknowledged to be a lucrative hub of economic activity.

Many of the subversive accounting practices mentioned earlier, such as *benami* transactions, under-invoicing, and use of non-customs duty paid inventory, were prevalent in Mustafa Market and taking place in full view of the designated field office, Lahore's Regional Tax Office-1 (RTO-1). Tax and customs inspectors from the field office were frequent visitors to the marketplace and enjoyed fairly cordial relations with wealthy traders and bazaar leaders. Many of their visits were in the shape of lunch or tea-time gatherings, usually in the shops of ATMM office-bearers. Lasting anywhere from between a quick 15-minute tea break to an hour long 'session', topics of conversations in such gatherings ranged from issues of domestic politics and the economy, to more specific things like the harsh attitude of senior officers or potential transfers and postings in the tax bureaucracy. The general attitude between the two sets of actors was largely respectful and deferential, with each referring to the other through the use of honorifics, such as Malik *sahib* or Chaudhry *sahib*.

Such socialization was not only limited to the marketplace, but often took place outside of it as well. On three occasions during my time in Mustafa Market, bazaar elites hosted *zehrana*s (receptions) for local tax and municipal administration officials in a nearby banquet hall. These gatherings involved participants from outside the marketplace, such as other traders, political leaders, and bureaucrats, and functioned as sites for networking. For their part, organizers took considerable pride in hosting what they called 'relevant personalities', and in providing the opportunity for other businessmen and public officials to interact with each other.

For bazaar traders, the material gains from strengthening social ties with tax officials were through two channels. The first was that tax inspectors would purposefully ignore the systematic under-recording of business revenues and incomes, thus providing traders with virtually a free hand in their self-assessment forms. The second channel was usually when sales tax returns or audits were due, and tax inspectors would engage in purposeful deliberations with traders over the scale of assessments and liability.

While I never obtained permission to physically sit through such meetings, interviews with traders and retired tax officials revealed that these were essentially negotiation exercises designed to satisfy the requirements of both parties.<sup>89</sup> For example, in one such meeting, the designated tax inspector met with a trader in the company of an ATMM office-bearer. The latter was there to advocate on behalf of the trader, who had recently been served an audit notice over his sales tax self-assessment form. The tax inspector mentioned that this had been the consequence of increased pressure from the Commissioner (who heads the field office) to improve sales tax collections in this particular jurisdiction. After a lengthy back and forth, the ATMM office-bearer was able to broker an agreement between the two at a mutually acceptable amount, which was more than what the trader had initially (under)reported, but still less than his actual liability.<sup>90</sup><sup>91</sup>

Such interactions were designed to arrive at positions that were mutually acceptable to two sets of actors who otherwise carried contradictory goals. In particular, tax officials knew that their career prospects within the department were tied to meeting particular collection goals. However, given the expansive nature of undocumented activity and the high cost of monitoring and assessing business practices for accuracy, they had to rely on their relations with the businessmen to ensure these were met. Tax officials also knew that a more confrontational approach might result in higher gains in the short run, but would increase their chances of being shunted out of the jurisdiction due to complaints and pressure being applied by influential businessmen and their politician friends on senior members of the tax bureaucracy.<sup>92</sup>

Thus by forging beneficial relations with bazaar elites and their extended social networks, tax officials were able to develop a layer of protection that could see them

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<sup>89</sup> Interview no.38

<sup>90</sup> Interview no.24

<sup>91</sup> As documented by Piracha and Moore (2016), similar deliberations and negotiations (led by traders' association heads) are also widely prevalent in the domain of property tax collection, which was administered by the provincial (Punjab) government's Excise and Taxation Department. While of a much smaller scale, the evasion is in some ways more blatant because the assessment of tax liability is based on a physical (and highly visible) asset – commercial real estate.

<sup>92</sup> Interview no. 37

continue working in a coveted and highly lucrative jurisdiction. In the words of a retired tax inspector:

“Positions in the Lahore office are like that hen (sic) who lays golden eggs (*sonay ki murghi*). Even the most honest inspectors will make something on the side and the less honest ones will become millionaires! And who doesn’t want to be in Lahore? For those with children, the city offers good schools, good facilities. Once you get used to life here, it becomes very difficult to adjust anywhere else.”<sup>93</sup>

Career-related gains were not the only ones that tax officials obtained out of their relationships with the bazaar traders. They were also often the recipients of gifts and favours that helped cement such relations. For example, on every *Eid-ul-Fitr*, the ATMM office-bearers would gift the local tax (property and sales/income) officials some unstitched cloth, usually made out of an expensive fabric like raw silk.<sup>94</sup> They would also send a box of sweetmeats for their families, and occasionally, some *Eidi* (monetary gift) for the children. The timing of these gifts did not coincide with any immediate need as far as the traders were concerned, nor were they given with the explicit expectation of reciprocity. However, they were instrumental in structuring fraternal ties, and helped created a sense of ‘shared fate’ as part of a conjoined social network.

### *Capturing Space*

Many of the mechanisms that allowed bazaar traders to subvert the country’s taxation regime were also at play in the more localized arena of municipal administration. Key in this regard was the relationship between the bazaar and the Town Municipal Administration (TMA), the local government body responsible for enforcing planning and zoning regulations, maintaining community water and sanitation infrastructure, and regulating commercial activity.

Traders based in the Walled City encountered particular conditions that precipitated their reciprocal relationship with TMA officers. Prior to the advent of the privately-run

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>94</sup> Interview no.11



waste management company (LWMC) in 2010, TMA cleaning staff was responsible for maintaining hygienic conditions in the marketplace. Upon receiving complaints from traders over garbage or stagnant water during the monsoon season, ATMM office-bearers would call their contacts in the TMA, usually the Town Officer (TO) or his boss, the Town Municipal Officer (TMO), to direct cleaning staff to their locality in Shah Alam bazaar.<sup>95</sup>

Since the re-allocation of waste management duties in 2010, planning and zoning regulations have become the principal concern for bazaar traders. TMAs are theoretically responsible for ensuring that built structures conformed to building regulations and by-laws, while public spaces were utilized in accordance with the town plan. In practice, however, the past three decades have seen the total subversion of all such regulations within the densely populated confines of the Walled City.

Since the 1980s, the expansion of Lahore's bazaar economy and its centrality to commerce elsewhere in the Punjab has raised the premium on space in important commercial centres, many of which are located in or close to the Walled City. As a consequence of this expansion, neighbourhoods adjacent to centres like Shah Alam bazaar have largely become an extension of the marketplace itself. The wholesale nature of business located there also creates rising demand for storage and warehousing space located in close proximity to the businesses. The combination of these multiple factors has led to the estimated conversion of nearly 60% of all residential properties to commercially utilized ones (Aga Khan Trust 2010; Ezdi 2009).

This transition in the built environment around Shah Alam and other major bazaars has happened with the complicity of local municipal officials. On paper, changes for the commercial use of a particular building need to be approved by the relevant town planning official and carry a hefty commercialization fee, which is calculated as a percentage of the prevailing property price in that particular locality. However, businessmen simply avoided these regulations by cultivating and utilizing good relations with public officials.

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<sup>95</sup> Interview no.11

In Mustafa Market, several of the market's most prosperous businessmen maintained extensive warehousing facilities that had been set-up in former houses over the last decade and a half. When I enquired about the process of setting up a warehouse, they stated that they'd simply bought out the properties and made some internal modifications, such as tearing down a wall or adding another floor on top. While some said that they had gone through proper channels, such as getting approval for the design and construction map, before initiating this change, others simply shrugged and said that it wasn't marketplace convention and they couldn't be bothered with a highly cumbersome process. One trader even joked and said some had obtained 'informal approval' through the blessings of the TMO.<sup>96</sup>

During my fieldwork, I encountered the case of an elite trader, Rao Saeed, who had recently acquired the residential building adjacent to his shop. His plan with it involved constructing another floor on top, which he would use to stock inventory, and create a doorway in the shared wall on the ground floor. This would allow him to connect storefronts and use it as one property. Both modifications required planning approval from the TMA, as well as the payment of a commercialization fee to change land-use classification. However, a legal problem was that the planned construction of the connecting doorway was unlikely to gain approval, since it tampered with a support wall and potentially undermined the structural integrity of the building.

To work around this, Rao Saeed asked his contractor to leave the doorway out of his design plan, and also avoided declaring the change in its use-status. Then he got in touch with the relevant TMA official and paid them Rs. 25,000 (USD 250) to expedite approval of the extra floor he wanted to construct. The official duly obliged and paved the way for construction to begin within the remarkably short turnaround period of three weeks.

Part of the reason why this happened fairly quickly was that the official involved in this particular exchange was known to Rao Saeed and enjoyed friendly relations with him.

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<sup>96</sup> Interview no. 19

He was a recurring guest at the *zehrana*s and had made the acquaintance of a number of other Mustafa Market traders, who relied on him for a variety of such purposes. While the frequency of interactions was less than that between tax officials and traders - partly because of occupational compulsions - the relationship was one of similar mutual benefit.

While this particular case involved the exchange of a large bribe, other instances I heard either involved smaller gifts or favours, or were simply based on goodwill. For example, in one case, the TMA official provided assistance in obtaining a motorcycle parking stand approval in one lane of the marketplace, in exchange for a large discount on a good that he required in the construction of his new house. The businessmen who had pushed for the parking stand was more than happy to oblige the official as it further cemented a beneficial relationship. And as shown in the next chapter, such relations were of further use when it came to securing and reproducing their influence over those lower down in the bazaar's social hierarchy.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an introduction of the primary field-site, Mustafa Market in Shah Alam bazaar, and gave an overview of how bazaar traders govern the marketplace using the platform of the traders' association. It then demonstrated some of the internal and relational practices that help reproduce the economic and social privileges of bazaar traders in contemporary Lahore. Building on the macro-historical trajectory of the preceding chapter, the research from Mustafa Market shows how traders utilize the voluntary platform of the *Anjuman-i-Tajran* to both resolve collectively encountered problems and gain recognition and prestige in a variety of business and non-business circles. These relations are subsequently leveraged for material and social gain, which involve operationalizing ties of mutual benefit with other business elites, politicians, and local state officials.

With the bazaar-state nexus in place, the next chapter moves on to the domain of class power, work, and exploitation within the marketplace, and studies the integral role of

patronage in the reproduction of hierarchical relations between bazaar traders and the urban poor.

## **Chapter 4: Exploitation, Patronage, and Domination - Bazaar Traders and the Urban Poor**

Building on the bazaar-state nexus described in the previous chapter, this chapter moves on to a primary building block of Pakistan's hegemonic political sphere – the durable hierarchical relationships between particular propertied groups and marginalized classes. Drawing on the case of bazaar traders and the urban poor who work in the bazaar economy, this and the next chapter shed light on how, through a variety of material and cultural processes, the former accumulate and reproduce authority and influence over the latter. Ultimately, these durable hierarchical relations are leveraged with political parties and reflected in the production of a highly unequal political sphere.

Using fieldwork in Mustafa Market, I first demonstrate the exploitative nature of work in the bazaar economy. Most employment in the sector is informal in nature, and involves physically hazardous work with irregular and long working hours, for remuneration that is considerably below the officially designated minimum wage. However, there is a high degree of compliance with these inequitable working arrangements, and efforts to recalibrate the balance of power between workers and businessmen in the bazaar are non-existent. Extant analysis suggests this phenomenon to be an outcome of both the conditions of poverty for the urban poor, which makes subsistence their primary objective (Mumtaz and Saleem 2010), as well as the state's authoritarian legacy, which has left behind no organizational resources within the political sphere that could help articulate an assertive identity 'from below' (Candland 2007; Munir et al. 2015). In this chapter, I build on historical-institutional and structural explanations by expanding on how the specific organization of everyday material processes further fortifies these relations of domination.

Following Auyero's (2001) work in Argentina, I show the importance of patronage from resourceful individuals - in this case, bazaar traders - in resolving survival problems posed by neoliberal urbanization and the apathy of the political process. The most frequent recipient of dependence-inducing patronage are permanent shop workers, who work under largely exploitative conditions in exchange for wages as well as help in

tackling problems of basic subsistence, like access to housing, healthcare, and financial assistance during emergencies or unforeseen shocks. However, there are other actors who also fall within the patronage remit of bazaar traders. These include low-income dwellers of commercial neighbourhoods, such as self-employed push-cart vendors and hawkers, who while ostensibly independent in their means of earning a living, are dependent on bazaar traders for a variety of work-related help, for ensuring access to public space, and for protection from predatory state officials.<sup>97</sup>

Finally, in the last section, I use the research presented in this and the preceding chapter to engage with and critique Partha Chatterjee's (2004; 2008) divided formulation of civil and political society. In line with recent work on South Asia (Martin 2014; Schindler 2014; Whitehead 2015), I argue that the activities of bazaar traders and their associations do not necessarily correspond to a bourgeoisie rights-bearing sphere of civil society that is separate from the informal domain of patron-client relations, or what Chatterjee calls 'political society'. As demonstrated earlier, traders are adept at using informal relations with the state to enhance their undocumented business privileges and co-opt real material advantages. Simultaneously, they use their privileged position to provide patronage for the dependent urban poor, fortifying exploitative relations in the process. In the final reckoning, these processes, embedded as they are within Chatterjee's 'political society', benefit propertied groups far more than the urban poor, and cannot be thought of as emancipatory or autonomous in any meaningful way.

### **Neoliberal Capitalism and Informal Labour in Pakistan**

Before delving into the case of Mustafa Market, it is useful to go over the broader circumstances that condition workplace relations in the bazaar economy. This requires a brief overview of three inter-related trends: the structural transformation of the economy from agriculture to services; the push and pull factors that catalyse urban migration; and finally, abdication of the state in providing pro-poor services.

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<sup>97</sup> I consider patron-client relations in the bazaar as a dynamic mode of interaction, conditioned by contemporary structural conditions, rather than, as posited by some (Lieven 2011), the outcome of static primordial solidarities found in 'traditional' societies.

Since the 1980s, Pakistan's pursuit of a liberalized economic policy has been responsible for shifting investment from manufacturing to the undocumented services sector. Within the services sector, real estate and retail and wholesale trade have proven to be particularly lucrative, with the latter now contributing up to 18% of total GDP (State Bank 2015). This stands accompanied by a concurrent slowdown in growth of formal employment, largely associated with the manufacturing sector, in favour of greater employment in the undocumented or informal economy.<sup>98</sup> Resultantly, 73% of all labour in urban areas, approximately 11.4 million individuals, are associated with informal work, with 4.2 million working in the bazaar sector (Government of Pakistan 2015).<sup>99</sup>

The expansion of services like retail and wholesale trade has also been closely interlinked with the growth of urbanization in the country. Major urban centres, like Lahore, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Multan, and Rawalpindi in Punjab province, and Karachi and Hyderabad in Sindh, have seen their collective populations rise by an average of 70% between 1998 and 2017 (Population Census Organization 2017). Given the lower fertility rates in urban centres, much of this increase can be traced to in-migration, both from smaller towns and cities and from rural areas. Lahore, in particular, has seen the most extensive growth out of all urban centres, with its population rising to 11 million from 6 million in the space of two decades. Labour Force Survey (LFS) indicates that 15% of Punjab's total migrants migrate to Lahore. The highest percentage of migrants among those who move to Lahore come from Kasur (13.3%), Okara (8.5%), Faisalabad (8.4%), Narrowal (6.3%), Sheikhupura (6.2%), and Gujranwala (4.3%) (Government of Pakistan 2015). While detailed figures from the last census are still unreleased, previous estimates show approximately 16% of the city's entire population consists of migrants who moved under 10 years ago (Siddiqi 2004).

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<sup>98</sup> As Mike Davis (2006) points out, apart from China, Taiwan, and South Korea, formal employment in the manufacturing sector has not been a major driver of urban growth in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Instead, surplus labour in declining-productivity rural areas and rise of consumption economies have proven to be bigger factors in the expansion of cities.

<sup>99</sup> Of these 4.2 million, 38.6% fall in the self-employed category (vendors, small shopkeepers, hawkers), 48% are employees in retail and wholesale businesses, and the remaining are 'contributing family workers'.

Further driving this movement towards cities is the gradual proletarianization in Pakistan's rural areas. Landlessness stands at 67% of the rural population, large parts of which are now reliant on wage labour to make ends meet (Anwar et al. 2004). The introduction of mechanized farming practices, the decline in share-cropping, and the subversion of tenancy contracts have all hastened dislocation trends. The worst impacted in this regard are the *kammis* and *musalis*, the artisan and service castes who have, under a variety of legal-political processes, historically remained locked out of access to land (Mohmand and Gazdar 2007). As shown in the anthropological literature, these groups have long been reliant on the socialized organization of the village economy for their subsistence (Alavi 1971; Ahmad 1972). However, this organization itself is changing due to technological and demographic pressures.<sup>100</sup> Key among these changes is intergenerational fragmentation of agricultural farms, which has progressively left previously prosperous families with unsustainable farm sizes. Approximately 86% of all farms in Pakistan are smaller than 5 acres, implying that the incidence of landlessness due to fragmentation is expected to rise even further in the coming decades (Gazdar 2003). While skilled rural workers, like carpenters, masons, and blacksmiths, have been able to adapt by catering to the local economy or by finding jobs located in the Middle East and beyond, unskilled workers have little option but to find service sector work in urban areas (Farooq et al. 2003).

Further facilitating these migratory trends has been the extensive development of road and communication infrastructure, which has taken place alongside the proliferation of the transport industry (Shami 2012a). Extant research shows that contrary to the general apathy towards provision of other basic services, road infrastructure has remained a high priority for successive governments. This is because roads are integral for the mobility of car owning, upper-income rural households, who tend to split their time between cities and their estates (Cheema and Mohmand 2007). A positive by-product of these investments has been the opening up of an exit option for poor households who languish at the lowest tier of rural society (Shami 2012b).

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<sup>100</sup> Contributing to this phenomenon is the gradual withdrawal of government support from the agricultural sector, under structural adjustment programs. While support prices are offered in wheat and sugar, the rest of the agricultural sector has been liberalized, leading to reduced farm incomes and anaemic growth (Khan 1994; 2000; 2003).



Labour Force Survey data highlights the importance attached to improving economic conditions in the decision-making process of rural migrants. Nearly 30% cite search for better wages and another 35% cite access to improved basic services, such as healthcare, as strong motivations (Government of Pakistan 2015). The income differentials between rural and urban work in low-skilled occupations confirm this particular trend. Agricultural wage workers make on average \$1 a day, while service and shop/market workers in the urban economy (which includes the labour found in bazaars) report an average income of \$2 to \$4 a day, depending on their skillset (Government of Pakistan 2016). Access to more regular employment means that incidence of poverty in urban areas is lower, at around 14% while in rural areas, where work is seasonal and contingent on crop-type and harvest, it is at a much higher 56% (UNDP 2016).

However, income and poverty differentials mask the hardship poor migrants face in largely unforgiving urban conditions. Pakistan's cities have a higher cost of living compared to rural areas, especially on expenses like housing and food. They also offer fewer safety nets for poor migrants, who could otherwise draw on extensive rural social networks in the case of emergencies. The low-skill nature of work they find provides little in the way of training or upgradation, and its informal nature means the chances of securing mobility through steady employment is often low. While periodic spurts of economic growth have led to a reduction in urban poverty, Pakistan still remains both a highly unequal and a severely immobile society. In terms of life chances, there's a 42pc probability that the son of an illiterate father will never be enrolled in school himself. Similarly, an astronomically high 72pc chance that the son of a father who works in an elementary/basic occupation will find himself employed in the same category (Javed and Irfan 2014).

The structural conditions encountered by poor, unskilled migrants receive little to no mitigation from the political process. Investments in the provision of basic public goods like health, sanitation, and clean drinking water have not kept up with rising demand, and low-income neighbourhoods in cities suffer from a severe crisis of liveability. In

recent years, unchecked environmental degradation has resulted in Lahore's drinking water supply in inner-city low-income neighbourhoods to worsen considerably, with Arsenic levels found to be 3 times over the safety benchmarks established by the World Health Organization (Bibi et al. 2015). Similarly, the government-run health sector continues to suffer from chronic underfunding, leading to overcrowding of demand and severe staff shortages (Nishtar 2010). Much like in India and other parts of the developing world, middle and upper-income groups in urban Pakistan have turned to the private sector in services such as health and education for their basic needs. Their withdrawal to well-serviced suburban enclaves has concomitantly reduced the pressure on the state to improve public services in rural and urban low-income areas.

Nowhere is the apathy of the state more visible than in the urban housing sector. Pakistan faces a housing shortage of approximately 10 million units, concentrated largely in the low-income category. The market as it functions today is heavily skewed with only 1% of total housing stock accessible to the bottom 68% of the income distribution (Siddiqui 2014) Driving these trends are both non-existent public sector investment in affordable housing and the proliferation of private real estate developers who convert arable peri-urban land into housing schemes designed to attract high and middle-income investors (Zaman 2012). Public sector developers that do exist, such as the Lahore Development Authority (LDA), now partner with private contractors to create lucrative suburban projects that are valued more for their exchange rather than use-value (Haque 2015).

As across much of the Global South (Davis 2006), the dysfunctionality of the formal housing sector along with growing urbanization through migration has created considerable pressures on land in cities like Lahore. Part of this pressure ultimately is catered to through the proliferation of informal settlements. Emerging through encroachments on public land with the complicity of municipal officials, informal settlements now house up to 35% of the population in Lahore, spread over 346 localities, known as *katchi abadis*. 147 of these have been 'regularized' by the municipal administration under the Punjab government's *Katchi Abadi* Ordinance of 2002, granting them security of tenure and some basic improvements in municipal

services, while the rest still operate outside of any formal recognition (Shami and Majid 2014). The differences in tenure security and the average quality of public service provision between regularized and non-regularized settlements has also led to the former becoming largely unaffordable or inaccessible to new migrants.

This brief overview of neoliberal urbanization in Pakistan served to provide a look at the conditions confronting the urban poor in a city like Lahore. The key takeaways here are that structural transformations in the rural economy precipitate the search for livelihoods in cities, while the apathy of the state and the political process produce a variety of challenges that have to be negotiated independently by the urban poor.

### **Work and Exploitation in Mustafa Market**

The congested confines of Mustafa Market in Shah Alam bazaar make for a squalid work environment. The density of commercial activity means a constant stream of vehicular traffic – cars, trucks, pick-ups, motorcycles, and rickshaws - emitting diesel fumes that accumulate and linger from early in the morning to late at night. Apart from the smell, noise, and the thick blanket of particulate matter, there is the weather to contend with – substantially cold during December and January, and unforgivingly hot between April and September.<sup>101</sup>

Toiling in these conditions were a range of marginalized groups servicing the bazaar economy. The biggest segment were shop employees, commonly known as ‘salesmen’ or ‘*chotay*’.<sup>102</sup> These were largely unskilled workers, employed through verbal contracts that offered regular weekly wages. Their primary tasks included help with customer interaction, shifting and managing inventory, cleaning the shops, providing physical labour, and carrying out a range of ancillary domestic services for their employers, the bazaar traders. Given issues of access and the general diffusion of labour in warehouses and shops, an accurate count of the total number of employees was hard to carry out.

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<sup>101</sup> Temperatures in the Lahori summer average around 40 degrees Celsius between April and June, with highs reaching as much as 50 degrees. The mercury falls during July and August once the monsoon season starts, but is replaced by dense humidity, which at times makes physical activity even more challenging.

<sup>102</sup> *Chotay*, which roughly translates to junior, is the colloquial term for young employees in the service sector economy.

However, based on my short survey with business owners, I estimated that there were 800 individuals who were engaged in fulltime employment with traders in Mustafa Market.<sup>103</sup>

Working hours in the marketplace were long, and often spilled well over 12 hours each day. Shop employees started their day on average two hours before the marketplace usually opened for business and had to stay back till it closed for the day and their employers deemed they had no other work for them.

During the course of my fieldwork I documented the daily routine of Lateef, a respondent who worked at Haji Rauf's shop, one of the larger businesses in Mustafa Market. Lateef was 24 years old, and originally came from a village an hour and a half away in Ferozewala tehsil, Sheikhpura district. He had moved to Lahore three years earlier, and initially obtained employment as a waiter at a *dhaba* (restaurant-cum-tea stall) in the Old Anarkali neighbourhood. This first job paid Rs. 5000 per month and came through an acquaintance from his own village, who further connected him to a labour contractor based in the Anarkali area.<sup>104</sup> Lateef had to pay Rs. 1000 up-front to the contractor for finding him the job, and then another Rs. 500 after he'd worked there for one month.<sup>105</sup>

After 8 months into that job, he was let go as the owner passed away and his son decided to move out of the restaurant business. Thus followed a 3-month period of unemployment where he moved between his village and Lahore, staying with acquaintances, till one introduced him to Haji Rauf's nephew who also worked as his business manager. Lateef was initially hired as a warehouse assistant on the first floor of the building, primarily tasked with physical management of inventory, and given a

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<sup>103</sup> Also working in the same space were 28 push-cart vendors and over 50 hand-trolley operators who, together with the shop workers, collectively occupied the lower rungs of the bazaar's social hierarchy. Vendors fell in the self-employed category, as they were mobile and carried independent means of making a living on account of owning their push-carts. Hand-trolley operators, while ostensibly self-employed as they too owned their own trolleys, were dependent on the traders for their sustenance, which involved receiving consignment-based payments for moving large stocks of inventory to and from warehouses or vehicles.

<sup>104</sup> See Akhtar (2011) for more on the role of labour contractors in patronage chains and dependent relations in the urban economy.

<sup>105</sup> Interview no. 25

salary of Rs. 6000 per month. After a year's work in the warehouse, Haji Rauf 'promoted' him to the main shop as a sales assistant, and increased his salary to Rs. 7000, paid in weekly instalments. According to the trader, the decision was down to Lateef's diligence and honesty in warehouse work, and his "presentable" appearance.<sup>106</sup> Presentable here meant a reference to both Lateef's ability to communicate effectively - he was educated till the 5<sup>th</sup> grade - and his clean personal hygiene habits, which Haji sahib deemed crucial for the reputation of his business.

Upon finding new employment, Lateef relocated to Misri Shah, a neighbourhood populated by steel merchants and their foundries beyond the north-eastern boundary of the Walled City. Haji Rauf had helped him in his abode hunt by putting in a good word with a metal scrap trader, who rented out space for workers in one of his warehouses. Lateef shared his room and a washroom with 4 others, most of whom, like him, worked in the surrounding commercial districts. For these lodgings, he paid Rs. 1500 per month, which constituted around 20% of his salary.

An average working day for Lateef began at 8 am, when he would undertake the 30-minute walk from his lodging to Shah Alam bazaar. Upon arriving, his first responsibility was ensuring the pavement outside the store was clean, with no refuse lying around. After that he would have breakfast – tea and two slices of bread or a *paratha* – and wait for Haji Rauf's nephew, who carried one set of keys to the store shutter and the warehouse located on the first floor. Once he arrived, usually around 9 am, Lateef would bring him breakfast and tea from one of the restaurants located in Mustafa Market, and then start work on cleaning the store from the inside. After that, he would go up to the warehouse, where he and another shop employee would make sure that last night's inventory shipment was stacked in order, any re-packaging was done, and there were no loose boxes or empty cartons.

Haji Rauf himself would arrive at 10 am, have Lateef fetch him his (second) breakfast, and then begin his work engagements for the day. During the hours after opening, Lateef's role would involve moving boxes to and from the warehouse, assisting with

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<sup>106</sup> Interview no. 23

customers, and making short trips to the forwarding agents depot. The general pace of work picked up around 11 am, around which many of the regular retail clients would either visit or phone in their orders. At least once a day, Lateef would be asked to accompany a goods transporter during a sale elsewhere in the city and provide physical labour in the process. This was done to save both labour costs, since transporters charged extra for loading and unloading inventory, and exhibit a gesture of personalized consideration for the clients on Haji Rauf's behalf.

Through his working hours, Lateef was allowed half an hour for lunch and *zuhr* prayers, usually after he'd served Haji Rauf (and his guests if any were visiting the shop), and another 15 minutes for tea after *asr* prayers. Wholesale businesses in Shah Alam would start winding up after 7 pm, and shutters were usually down across the bazaar by 8 pm. Since heavy axel traffic was only allowed entry on the Circular Road after 9 pm, at least two days a week larger inventory shipments meant Lateef had to stay back and assist the other two shop employees with the unloading and storing process.

An average workday for shop employees like Lateef lasted anywhere between 12 to 14 hours depending on the extent of their responsibilities. The only day off was Sunday, when Shah Alam, and all other wholesale centres of Lahore remained closed. Money permitting, workers who had migrated from close by would often catch a late bus to their hometowns or villages on Saturday night, and attempt to return in time for work by early Monday morning. Those who came from districts further away, spent their Sundays with others in their area of residence in and around the Walled City, playing cricket in Minto park or Mochi *bagh*, meeting relatives, or doing odd-jobs in the neighbourhood for some extra pay.

Employment with bazaar traders also entailed work that went over and above responsibilities related to the actual business. Given the informal and personalized way that bazaar businesses were organized, along with their legal status as sole proprietorships, employees were considered to be in the service of the employer rather than the business itself. This meant that they were often given personal tasks to complete on most working days, and occasionally, on Sundays as well. For example,

Akram, who worked at the shop of the head of the traders' association, Malik Khalid, was also responsible for managing the logistics for all ATMM related work. This meant serving tea and snacks for the participants, arranging seating, and generally catering to any other needs of the guests.<sup>107</sup>

On particular occasions traders would draw on the services of workers employed in the shops of their friends and associates in the marketplace. Wealthy traders who hosted the *zehrana*s (receptions) for locally influential personalities would often use shop workers from their own and from other businesses to help with the arrangements. The same labour pool was used for events that took place within the marketplace, such as public meetings during the annual LCCI elections, where ATMM office-bearers would task workers with putting up banners, distributing pamphlets, and serving food to other traders, or during religious events, such as public Quran *khwaan*is (recitals) or a Mehfil-i-Milad.

Traders themselves viewed shop workers as a form of domestic labour, partly because of the personalized nature of their businesses and partly because of the skillset they offered.<sup>108</sup> One trader, who had his employee frequently visit his residence on Sundays to do household work explained this phenomenon:

“Work in the bazaar is just tied to customers. Sometimes, when business is good, there’s a lot of work. Other days, there’s not much. But I still have to pay my worker a fixed wage. So on days when there’s less work, I ask him to help out with other things, like household chores. If he was literate and knew *hisaab* (mathematics), I would ask him to help me with the ledger and make my life easier. In any case, when I call him on Sundays, I give him an extra Rs. 100 or 200 for his trouble.”<sup>109</sup>

Conversations with the workers revealed that being ‘tipped’ for extra work was an exception, not the norm. As one worker, who had recently been called in to help with

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<sup>107</sup> Interview no. 28

<sup>108</sup> 83% of all service and sales workers in urban areas reported receiving no formal education or technical training at any level (Government of Pakistan 2015).

<sup>109</sup> Interview no. 29

the *aqeeqa* (Islamic baptism) of a trader's grandson, mentioned, the fact that they were fed lunch or dinner was often considered sufficient remuneration for any extra hours they put in. Sometimes, when the occasion was of a religious nature, other guests would tip them a small amount as a form of *sadqa*. Traders however rarely did so as they felt the work was expected and already compensated for under their informal employment relationship.<sup>110</sup>

The harsh nature of employment in the bazaar, characterized by long and irregular working hours as well as frequent physical labour, was made worse by the wage structure on offer. In July 2012, elite traders from both the *Takbeer* and *Ittehad* factions of the ATMM initiated an informal consensus within the marketplace to fix maximum monthly wage-rate for unskilled labour at Rs. 8000. At the time of the decision, this amount was Rs. 2000 below the minimum wage for unskilled labour in civil trades as determined by the provincial government's schedule of wage rates.<sup>111</sup> By the end of my fieldwork in Mustafa Market, the gap between the official minimum wage designation and the average salary of shop workers had widened to Rs. 5000.<sup>112113</sup>

The refusal to pay a reasonable wage to employees was not unique to Mustafa Market and was a pervasive feature of bazaars across the city. Interviews with traders based in other commercial centres revealed that associational agreements to fix wage rates below the official figure were a commonplace phenomenon.<sup>114</sup> This was made possible by a host of legal and bureaucratic lacunas surrounding employment in small enterprises. In theory, labour in the bazaar was regulated under the obscure Punjab Shops and Establishment Ordinance 1969, which laid out provisions concerning working hours, payment of wages, and remedies in case of employment disputes.<sup>115</sup> However,

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<sup>110</sup> Interview no. 30

<sup>111</sup> Finance Department, Government of the Punjab: "Schedule of Wage Rates 2012", No. RO (Tech) FD 2-2/2010, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2012

<sup>112</sup> Finance Department, Government of the Punjab: "Schedule of Wage Rates 2015", No. RO (Tech) FD 2-2/2014, 10<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015

<sup>113</sup> This facet of the bazaar economy reflects itself in national labour force survey figures, which reveal that 71% of workers in the retail-wholesale sector make less than Rs. 10,000 per month (Government of Pakistan 2015).

<sup>114</sup> Interviews no. 40, 47, 48

<sup>115</sup> Predictably, the legislation had come out as a concession during the height of Pakistan's labour movement in the late 1960s, when workers were mobilized for a more democratic and redistributive politics.



there was no effort by the provincial government to implement any part of the legislation. There were no inspectors appointed to monitor the documentation of employees or their working conditions, and no public official designated for the purposes of resolving wage and benefit disputes.

As a result, all provisions related to worker rights in the bazaar sector were flouted with little hesitation. As Khalid Pervaiz, an elite trader based in Urdu Bazaar, admitted, businessmen were more than happy to take advantage of an ineffective state apparatus and would make all efforts to ensure it stayed this way<sup>116</sup>:

“When the government itself is not serious about implementing these (labour) laws, how can you expect businessmen to do it out of their own accord? Every business owner – whether they run a factory that employs 1000 people or a small *khokha* (refreshment stand) – wants better margins. The easy way to do it is to save on labour costs, and that’s something they have sadly become accustomed to. Let’s say the government magically decides to implement shop labour laws today. I can bet you that there would be a shutter-down strike immediately and the decision will be reversed.”<sup>117</sup>

The exploitation of workers in bazaars also manifested in more dangerous forms. Given that many employees worked long hours in warehouse work, and that too with little training or safety precautions, the risk of physical injury was considerable. Several of my respondents in Mustafa Market reported of back and knee injuries, for which they had received little medical attention. As there were no formally guaranteed sick days or medical benefits, workers faced the added pressure of recovering quickly under threat of losing their employment. One respondent mentioned that some traders would also

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<sup>116</sup> Khalid Pervaiz was the long-time head of the traders’ association in Urdu bazaar, Lahore’s largest market for paper and books, and a former office-bearer of the All Pakistan Anjuman-i-Tajran (APAT). In a past life, he had been a left-leaning student leader and given this past involvement with progressive politics, he was one of only a handful of elite traders in the city who still supported the (nominally) left-leaning Pakistan People’s Party (PPP).

<sup>117</sup> Interview no. 39

start deducting wages if their workers took unannounced days off, regardless of how valid or pressing the reason might be.<sup>118</sup>

Government statistics regarding health and safety confirm the risks posed by particular types of work in bazaars. In 2015, 17% of all declared occupational injuries in urban areas were borne by service and sales workers (Ahmed et al. 2017). This was the second highest proportion from any one type of occupational group, after craft and related trade workers, and was even higher than the number reported by workers in the manufacturing sector.

### **Ties that bind: Assistance and Patronage in the Bazaar**

Despite the patent hardships associated with life in the bazaar, there was very little pressure for a recalibration from below. Shop workers were ostensibly compliant with the exploitative conditions and the often arbitrary and domestic nature of work given to them by bazaar traders. There was no concerted effort to improve the rigged wage structure, or any attempt to engage in claim-making towards the state itself. While every single shop worker I spoke to complained about poverty, *mehngai* (inflation), and the general precariousness of life in Lahore, these assertions were more often than not grounded in abstract conditions, and deemed a function of prevailing *halaat* (milieu), divine fate, and societal moral decay, rather than in the concrete outcomes induced by neoliberalism in bazaar work and their employment relations. Overall, my conversations with the workers revealed that there was an apparent reconciliation with their personal conditions and an acceptance of the authority of their employers, which ranged from pragmatic to ideational.<sup>119</sup>

The experience of acquiescence to material fate and elite authority is neither unique to the informal workers in Mustafa Market, nor to the bazaar sector itself. It is widely pervasive across a country where struggles and claim-making movements ‘from below’

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<sup>118</sup> Interview no. 26

<sup>119</sup> I take this issue up in detail in the next chapter.

have withered away since the 1980s.<sup>120</sup> This very phenomenon also lies at the heart of the thesis, which seeks to understand the stable reproduction of hierarchical class relations that ultimately reflect themselves in a hegemonic political sphere.

Existing explanations for Pakistan's case offer a variety of contingent historical-institutional and structural explanations for this phenomenon. The most common of which is that the 'scarcity of resistance' can be explained by the state's authoritarian legacy and an absence of political and organizational resources that could engender a more redistributive politics (Candland 2007; Waseem 2006; Akhtar 2010).<sup>121</sup> Since the coercion and dismantling of the Left by the Zia regime, and the consolidation of elite groups within party politics, there are no contemporary efforts that seek to articulate a combative class identity through a broader counter-hegemonic agenda.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, unlike in India, where a strong tradition of organized resistance and assertion from subaltern groups has made its way into the informal sector as well (Agarwala 2006, 2013; Anjaria 2011), a barren ideational and organizational sphere in Pakistan provides little for the same purpose.<sup>123</sup>

Beyond political structures, an explanation premised in prevailing macroeconomic conditions can also point to the sheer precariousness of life for informal sector workers as a reason for the pliant reproduction of power relations (Akhtar 2011). If struggles for subsistence and basic implements of social reproduction dominate day-to-day lives in a neoliberal city, work relations that help resolve these struggles will be both coveted and accepted as is. Workers like Lateef came to Lahore in search of stable work so that they could save and send back money to their families. In his particular case, after

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<sup>120</sup> The extent of this withering cannot be understated. From all the active farmer and worker organizations in the 1960s, only those in the public-sector (employee unions) still retain some impact. They too act defensively, working to protect employment contracts in the face of encroaching privatization. Only other notable case – the exception that proves the rule – is the Okara tenants' movement, which is struggling for land ownership rights on military-run farms (Akhtar 2006).

<sup>121</sup> I borrow the phrase 'scarcity of resistance' from Tugal (2009).

<sup>122</sup> The macro-historical political economy processes that have led to the current configuration were detailed in Chapter 2

<sup>123</sup> The only contemporary effort to engage in claim-making on behalf of informal sector workers has come from donor-funded non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like HomeNET, which seek to improve working conditions for female home-based workers. However, their impact is acutely limited by their lack of organizational reach and penetration in the sector. For more on the conditions of informal sector workers in Pakistan see Shaikh (2016)

expenditure on housing, food, transport, and other basic necessities, he remitted Rs. 500 every week to the village for his wife, two children, and an elderly mother. Given the seasonality of agricultural work, and the lack of other working-age males in the household, his family's subsistence was largely dependent on Lateef's employment.

A similar calculus held true for all workers in the bazaar economy. The low skillset requirement of such employment also meant that finding a replacement was not particularly difficult. What made it even easier was the relative abundance of labour in a popular migration destination like Lahore. One worker explained this phenomenon by literally demonstrating the importance of his job with a bazaar trader as a matter of survival:

“What happens if I refuse work on the salary I am offered? *Seedhi baat* (it's straightforward), someone else will be more than willing to do it, as there's no shortage of people. Some other worker will get his brother or cousin hired immediately. And what happens to me? If I don't have this job, my family might survive for a month, two months, maybe at most three months. But what happens after that?”<sup>124</sup>

While accepting the merit in both historical and structural explanations, it is the contention of this thesis that they, often deterministically, privilege the macrosocial over the 'actually existing'. For a deeper understanding of compliance and acquiescence, there is a greater need to look at the localized, everyday dynamics of cross-class relations and see how they are organized and reproduced. The remainder of this chapter and the next bring to light the importance of material and cultural factors that help organize and bind particular social arrangements of domination between bazaar traders and the urban poor.<sup>125</sup> In particular, I focus on the role of patronage provision as an integral material pillar of this relationship, and in the next chapter, I cover the legitimization of material inequalities and the patron's (i.e. bazaar traders')

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<sup>124</sup> Interview no. 49

<sup>125</sup> It bears stressing that although patron-client relations possess cultural legitimacy in the minds of its participants, and operate as aids of last resort, they do constitute a durable arrangement of domination, where the patron exercises disproportionate power over the client (Bodeman 1988). As Auyero (1999) states: “solutions, services, and protection provided by brokers (inseparably material and symbolic exchanges, in which a thing is given, a favor granted, and something is communicated) are inclined to legitimate a de facto state of affairs that is an unequal balance of power (i.e., a domination network).”

authority through Islamic-inspired ideas about collective Muslim identity, benevolent piety, and civic virtue.<sup>126</sup>

Finally, before proceeding further, it is worth outlining the circumstances of patronage provision in Pakistan, which enshrines the particular role played by bazaar traders. Studies of rural politics highlight the role of landed classes as crucial brokers in a patronage chain that involves the state on one end and the rural poor on the other. Political parties are largely absent on the ground, and exist only in so far that they utilize the factions built by the landed elite for the purposes of electoral contestation (Mufti 2010; Mufti and Waseem 2012; Martin 2015). In urban Pakistan, the channels of patronage politics are divided among several types of actors. In the country's largest city, Karachi, the ethno-nationalist political party, Muttahida Quomi Movement (MQM), operates a well-organized clientelist machine of party workers and welfare affiliates that provide patronage and problem-solving services to low and middle-income voters from the Urdu-speaking community (Verkaaik 2004; Khan 2010; Gayer 2014). In this manner, its dynamics are similar to the machine politics of the Peronist party in Argentina (Auyero 2001), or the BJP-RSS combine in different parts of India (Thachil 2014).

This situation changes in the ethnically homogenous cities of Punjab, where the major political parties, the PML-N and the PTI, are much weaker in organizational terms and do not have the ideological platforms, structures, or the reach to build strong and independent brokerage networks (Siddiqui 2017: 54-60). Instead, similar to the case in rural areas, the urban poor are ultimately reliant on patronage of actors from various propertied groups for their needs, with bazaar traders being one of the most important ones.<sup>127</sup> As will be shown in the final empirical chapter, such patrons then leverage their influence over the poor with weakly-organized political parties, for greater access to public resources or to further advance their own political ambitions.

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<sup>126</sup> While I am interested in the social and political implication of these relations, they can also be thought of as constituting a 'regime of production', whereby selective patronage and its ideological legitimation through Islamic articulations are mechanisms to ensure the enduring appropriation of work from workers to generate capital surplus (Burawoy 1979, 1985)

<sup>127</sup> Another group active in urban patronage chains are real estate developers and contractors, as demonstrated by Akhtar (2011), though they are more localized and thus less influential in local politics than bazaar traders.

### *Solving Problems in Mustafa Market*

The following discussion is contextualized by Auyero's (2000; 2001) larger point about the necessity of patron-client ties in resolving a variety of problems posed by unforgiving conditions, like the ones highlighted at the start of this chapter. My fieldwork in Lahore revealed that bazaar traders, especially those in the upper-echelons of the marketplace, were positioned in such a way that they acted as the only source of patronage for the urban poor.<sup>128</sup>

As detailed in Lateef's case, his search for a basic necessity, i.e. housing in Lahore, was helped by his new employer, Haji Rauf, who used his contacts in the wider business community to help find him an affordable place to live. During my fieldwork, I came across several such instances where traders had helped resolve issues of housing access, through a variety of interventions. In many cases, traders allowed workers to live in their commercial properties, such as their warehouses, within the same neighbourhood of the Walled City. The arrangement worked for both parties in multiple ways: for workers, it solved a basic problem and helped them bypass the highly dysfunctional rental market in low-income or informal settlements. For traders, it reduced their labour cost since they had to pay a lower salary after deducting rent, and also gave them an informal arrangement to monitor and safeguard properties during the evenings without the need to hire private security.

Another case of patronage provision in housing access was that of the Rana brothers, who ran one of the most prosperous businesses in the marketplace. The elder brother, Rana Mukhtar, had served as an ATMM office-bearer in the mid-2000s, and was well-connected with the city leadership of the ruling party, the PML-N. Through these connections, he was able to secure the official regularization of a *katchi abadi* in the Angoori Bagh neighbourhood that had originally been developed by one of his relatives.<sup>129</sup> Once the regularization was complete, he and his brother had invested

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<sup>128</sup> The processes of how this positioning is achieved was covered in detail in the last chapter.

<sup>129</sup> While the brothers were vague in their description of how the original settlement had taken place, it became apparent that the relative in question had bused in villagers from their native village and taken

money in building and upgrading some of the residential properties, which they now controlled as a tidy secondary source of income.<sup>130</sup>

While most of these properties were rented out to long-term tenants, some were now functioning as worker hostels. 5 out of 7 workers employed by the Rana brothers were paying tenants in Angoori Bagh, as were two of the push-cart vendors who operated in the marketplace. Over time, this housing net had also widened to include relatives of the workers, such as in the case of two cousins of an employee at Rana Mukhtar's business, who had recently moved to Lahore in search of work.

Apart from the domain of housing, patronage relations were central in resolving a number of other issues. A frequently occurring one was providing financial assistance for workers coping with sudden expenditures brought about by emergencies or unforeseen events. The most common of these related to medical expenses for themselves or their families. Given the dysfunctionality of a grossly underfunded public health system, workers often relied on private medical treatment for basic procedures like lab tests, scans, and outpatient consultations. In cases where health conditions worsened, even the most rudimentary hospitalization in the private sector required upfront payment, usually of several thousand rupees. Given the meagre remuneration for work in the informal economy, the amount could often only be arranged through informal borrowing or loans from within their social networks. As co-workers and relatives were unlikely to help out for amounts greater than a few hundred rupees due to their own precarious conditions, bazaar traders were often the only source for such assistance.

Workers who took loans larger than a couple of thousand were expected to pay them back through deductions from their salaries. In all my interviews with both traders and the workers, I heard of no case where employees had reneged or run away without paying. Part of this was down to the fact that substantial amounts, which could precipitate reneging, were rarely given. Another deterrent was that the ATMM had

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control of a large municipal amenity plot through force. Then, as with many other such settlements, complicity of the local administration ensured that it became a permanent fixture.

<sup>130</sup> Interview no. 35

encouraged traders to take several copies of their workers' Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) – provided they had one - at the time of hiring.<sup>131</sup> The CNIC listed the permanent address of the holder, which was usually back in their native villages, theoretically making it easy for the police to track them down.

Those who took loans for medical or other emergency expenses felt the pinch of the repayment deductions from their salaries. But as one worker, Rehmat, who had taken a loan of Rs. 15,000 from a trader after torrential monsoon rains had knocked down the roof of his house last year, explained, this was also the only option they had:

“Ideally, this should be the job of the government. If someone faces an emergency, they should have access to some funds. However, there is no such option. Banks will not give an *anparh* (illiterate) like me a loan so I have to rely on the generosity of Khwaja sahib (the employer). It will take me more than a year to pay this back, but at least I don't have to pay *sood* (interest) on it.”<sup>132</sup>

Rehmat's assessment of a lack of publicly funded options for emergency relief was in part down to the decrepit condition of most existing social protection schemes. On paper, federal and provincial governments operated both a *zakat* social protection scheme, accessible only to Muslim citizens, and the Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal (PBM) to provide assistance for all vulnerable citizens regardless of faith. These were separate from the more successful and effective Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), which provided a fixed unconditional cash transfer to women in the country's poorest households (Gazdar 2011). Collectively, spending on these schemes amounted to only 0.3% of GDP (Nasim 2014). In practice, only the PBM was available for the purposes described above. However, accessing those funds required submitting a lengthy application, filing in references, and having it attested from a public notary. All of these were cumbersome and in some cases, impossible to undertake for informal sector workers (World Bank 2007; Kabeer et al. 2010).

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<sup>131</sup> This was originally intended for background checks and keep track of employees as a deterrent against petty theft or robbery.

<sup>132</sup> Interview no. 44



Beyond financial assistance, workers also relied on bazaar traders (and the bazaar elite, in particular) for help in accessing some public officials, such as a government doctor. The case of Ashraf, who worked at the shop of a mid-sized trader, was instructive in this regard. He migrated from Kasur district four years ago, but as with many other workers, had left his family behind in his native village. In mid-June 2015, his 4-year-old son contracted a particularly bad infection of dysentery, which if left unattended, posed a serious threat to his life.<sup>133</sup> Further complicating the situation was the fact that Ashraf's younger brother, who was head of the household in his absence, was away from Kasur for work, and thus not around to handle the situation.

Given the relatively remote location of Ashraf's village, accessing a doctor was proving to be a challenge. Under the provincial government's public health system, doctors on rotation are due to visit and spend at least 5 hours each day in designated Basic Health Units (BHUs), which are designed to be the first point of service provision for remote rural populations. In practice, however, politically-motivated absenteeism is high and BHUs remain under-resourced both in terms of personnel and medicine (Callen et al. 2016). In Ashraf's case, the duty doctor had not visited the BHU in over a week, leaving the case of dysentery untreated.

As the health of his child deteriorated, Ashraf was left with no option but to rush back to his village. He requested his employer for financial assistance to buy medicine and a bus ticket to Kasur, which was duly granted. However, his presence alone would not have helped since the child's frail condition meant that accessing a doctor and administering medicine were both urgently required. To help him in this regard, Ashraf's employer sent him to Shahid Aslam, the elite trader who also served as the vice-chairman of the ATMM to see if he could provide any further help.

Upon hearing Ashraf's story and seeing his state of panic, the ATMM office-bearer called up a contact of his in the local property tax bureaucracy, who he knew had a brother posted as a Medical Officer in the Rural Health Centre at Kot Radhakishan, a

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<sup>133</sup> Pakistan's under-5 child mortality rate is particularly high, at 81 deaths per 1,000 live births. In regional comparison, India's is 48, while Bangladesh is at 38 deaths per 1,000 live births. (UNICEF website: <https://data.unicef.org/country/pak>)

town in Kasur district. Through this particular connection, he was able to connect with the doctor and lay out the details of the emergency to him. The doctor upon hearing that Shahid Aslam was a friendly acquaintance of his elder brother, agreed to carry out a field visit to Ashraf's village within the same day.<sup>134</sup>

The combination of emergency financial assistance from his employer and the access to a doctor facilitated by an elite trader helped Ashraf tackle a potentially fatal medical emergency. As stated earlier, such networks and ties of patronage prove to be particularly salient in a context where the provision of public services is highly irregular and often discriminates on the basis of class and geographic region (Naveed 2014). Upon his return from the village, Ashraf himself stated that the treatment would not have been possible without the phone-call to the doctor, and the money that enabled him to buy medicine and travel back to Kasur on short-notice.<sup>135</sup>

Bazaar workers like Ashraf were not the only recipients of patronage from traders. A range of other marginalized segments operating in the same space also relied on the networks and resources of bazaar elites for their survival. While in Ashraf's case this had manifested through access to a coveted government doctor, in other instances, marginalized actors relied on traders for the exact opposite – protection from predatory state officials. The most common interaction of this nature was the one between bazaar elites and push-cart vendors.

As enumerated in a number of country contexts, push-cart vendors and hawkers form a large segment of the urban poor in the Global South.<sup>136</sup> Their proliferation is partly based in the structural transformation of rural society detailed earlier and in the fact that they provide key goods and services within the urban economy.<sup>137</sup> In the case of Shah Alam bazaar, many push-cart vendors catered to the needs of smaller retail customers, who were given less consideration by wholesale businesses. Other vendors

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<sup>134</sup> Fieldnotes 12/06/2015

<sup>135</sup> Interview no. 41

<sup>136</sup> For an overview see: Cross and Morales (2007); India (Schindler 2014b, Anjaria 2016); Tanzania (Tripp 1994); Kenya (Brown and Lyons 2010); Mexico (Cross 1998)

<sup>137</sup> The persistence of livelihoods within the urban informal sector is also a testament to how early models of labour absorption were incorrect, as they assumed gradual formalization of 'casual labour' (Marx 1906; Harris and Todaro 1970).

provided goods and services that were of use to the businessmen and their employees, such as tea and juice-stalls and food carts selling *biryani*, chickpeas, and *chaat*.

The nature of business conducted by the vendors made them dependent on bazaar traders through a number of ways. Those who sold items of consumer use relied on traders for their inventory. These vendors would purchase unsold or outdated stock from established businesses at discounted prices, and then traded it for their own subsistence. The regularity with which inventory was purchased and sold meant that vendors formed close ties with particular businessmen. The latter were mostly glad to sell off their excess stock even at a lower price, as it freed up storage space on the shop-shelves or in warehouses, and ensured some monetary return.

The other source of dependence for vendors was secure access to space where they could place their push-carts. In most marketplaces, this usually happened in the public pathways and along the side of the roads, right in front of the brick-and-mortar structures of established businesses. All such locations were public spaces, under the control of the municipal government. However, unlike in Delhi and Mumbai (Schindler 2014b; Anjaria 2016), the authorities in Lahore had developed no legal procedures concerning street-trading that could mediate the use of such space in Shah Alam bazaar or any other large commercial neighbourhood. Therefore, in the absence of formal regulations, most vendors simply gravitated towards locations with high-volumes of foot traffic.

The business of vendors and hawkers in public spaces was often contingent on an agreement with bazaar traders. The form of this agreement varied from bazaar to bazaar. In the enclosed structure of Hafeez Centre market, the traders' association auctioned off particular spots on public pathways to investors, who further rented them out to vendors. In open-air bazaars, such as Mustafa Market, vendors would pay a small amount of 'rent' to bazaar traders who consequently allowed them use of the pathways in front of their shops. In the cases where traders were not amenable to such an arrangement, the vendors had no option but to move to the roadside along the main boulevard or next to the parking lots. Out of the 28 vendors who conducted

regular business within the confines of Mustafa Market, 15 were paying informal rent for the use of public space. The amount of rent varied between Rs. 3,000 to 5,000, depending on the agreement with the trader.

As one push-cart vendor explained, the money they paid to the traders was not just for access to the spaces they used but also to add a layer of protection from municipal officials. Every couple of months, officials from the TMA and the local police station would tour the marketplace and attempt to remove vendors who were occupying parking spaces or reducing access to the road for vehicles. On these occasions, vendors would either relocate for a short period, or ask one of the influential bazaar traders to intervene on their behalf. In almost all instances, the end result would be the reinstatement of vendors to their usual spots either immediately or at most, within a couple of days. This was an arrangement that had become fairly routinized, and was taken for granted by all actors involved.<sup>138</sup>

However, there were also occasions when the threat to vendors' work and safety became much more severe, and thus required a more substantial intervention on behalf of their patrons within the bazaar community. One such instance was during a major anti-encroachment operation that had taken place in 2014, just prior to my initiation of fieldwork in Mustafa Market.<sup>139</sup> The head of Lahore's municipal government, the District Coordination Officer (DCO), was tasked by the Chief Minister of Punjab to improve traffic management and vehicular access within the Walled City, so as to make it more amenable for customers and tourists.<sup>140</sup> Given the connections of Walled City bazaar traders to the ruling party's leadership, the physical encroachments made by illegal extensions to store-fronts on the main boulevard and side-streets of Shah Alam were ignored, and instead, the municipal officials decided to target vendors and hawkers.

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<sup>138</sup> Interview no. 42

<sup>139</sup> "Public Property: Permanent squad planned to remove encroachments", *Express Tribune* (Lahore, Pakistan), Feb 4, 2014.

<sup>140</sup> Parts of the Walled City have been undergoing conservation and restoration through the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA). Most of their efforts have been concentrated in the Delhi Gate and Royal Trail area. Shah Alam, Mochi Gate, and Rung Mahal have all received little attention, largely because the scale of the effort required is substantial, and the business community is not keen on any form of displacement or interruption to their activities.

The unannounced operation was led by the administrator of the Town Municipal Administration (TMA), along with the Town Municipal Officer (TMO), and a large contingent of policemen from three police stations. They arrived just after 10 am, when the marketplace was relatively less busy, and started rounding up hawkers and push-cart vendors. Those who attempted to resist were severely beaten by the police, while their goods and their carts were dumped in a large truck and taken to the TMA's impounding yard located 3 kilometres away. This process continued for three weeks across different bazaars in the city, and resulted in considerable dislocation and coercion against one of the poorest segments of the urban population.

Vendors in Mustafa Market who suffered heavy losses in the anti-encroachment operation immediately pleaded to the ATMM office-bearers and other bazaar elites for help. Over the next few days, the bazaar elites operationalized their contacts, primarily with the TMO and his subordinate Town Officers (TOs), and requested them to provide access to the impounding yard. Given that the anti-encroachment operation was being directly monitored by the higher bureaucracy, the TMO allowed only a few vendors to visit the yard each day to collect their push-carts and stands. Within a two-week period, however, a majority of Mustafa Market vendors were able to retrieve their carts, though they still suffered a heavy loss on account of the confiscated inventory. They also had to pay a bribe of Rs. 1000 each to the municipal officials who ran the impounding yard.<sup>141</sup>

In the instances of patronage relations detailed here, bazaar traders were able to draw on the economic and social clout that they had developed through their various activities in the marketplace. The bazaar-state ties mentioned in the previous chapter, which formed through associational activity in the marketplace, quotidian socializing in *zehranas*, and the exchange of gifts and favours, primarily served to retain autonomy of commerce and co-opt other economic and social advantages enjoyed by bazaar businesses. However, the same ties prove to be instrumental in the functioning of patronage relations with marginalized actors. In the cases mentioned here, the reason

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<sup>141</sup> Interview no. 42, 43

why the vice-chairman of the ATMM was able to connect Ashraf with a doctor was because of his embedded, fraternal relationship with the local property tax inspector. Similarly, the close ties that bazaar elites enjoyed with local municipal and police officials, were useful in providing protection to vendors and hawkers, who remained a frequent target of state predation.

### **Between Civil and Uncivil Society: Bazaar Traders and the Urban Poor**

The informal relations between bazaar traders, state officials, and the urban poor traced in this thesis engage directly with Partha Chatterjee's (2004; 2008) work on the politics of dominant and subaltern groups in post-colonial India. In particular, this engagement relates to two inter-connected parts of Chatterjee's postulation. Firstly, Chatterjee conceptualizes the politics of the propertied classes as being part of 'civil society', the domain of bourgeoisie claim making that attempts normative congruence with ideas of formal citizenship rights and rule of law. Secondly, and in contrast to propertied groups, subaltern classes – such as the urban and rural poor – are seen strategically engaging the state through a repertoire of informal practices and negotiations in 'political society'. These count as their collective efforts to obtain the rights and resources otherwise denied to them. Given the apathy of mainstream politics, and the onward march of neoliberal capitalism, such informal practices and bargains are posited as the only way that the marginalized can secure their own survival.

The research presented here questions the characterisation of the bourgeoisie as lying within the normative domain of formal citizenship and rule of law. As shown in the last chapter, bazaar traders are a constituent part of Pakistan's constellation of propertied classes. They are perched at the top-end of the income distribution and control considerable capital surpluses. They also run voluntary organizations structured as formal entities designed to resolve intra-group problems and further their interests in the social and political domain. While these actions theoretically correspond to Chatterjee's notion of civil society, it is the complementary informal practices of tax evasion, state capture, and rent-seeking, detailed in the last chapter that are integral

for the reproduction of their economic privileges and social status. Hence following Nicolas Martin's work (2015) on the landed elite, I counter that Chatterjee's notion does not adequately describe the politics of bazaar traders, who frequently engage in an 'uncivil' politics that seeks to undermine, rather than uphold, the rule of law.

Flowing from this premise, the distinction between Chatterjee's civil and political societies becomes less rigid than previously asserted. Bazaar traders, as part of the middle and upper classes, operate in the informal domain to maximize their privileges, just like the bazaar poor do to ensure their survival. More importantly, the politics of the two are intertwined and cannot be separated into discrete spheres of action. Without direct access to the state or political parties, the urban poor are reliant on the informal relations of the traders for access to coveted public officials, such as a doctor in Ashraf's case, or for protection and the right to claim public space, such as in the case of push-cart vendors.

Finally, there is a need to interrogate the notion of whether the larger realm of political society carries any emancipatory potential for the urban poor, which would otherwise be denied by adherence to formal structures. Conversely, should we be asking whether it acts as another domain in which inequitable power relations are reproduced? It cannot be stated with confidence whether the state's adherence to rule of law would universally work to the disadvantages of the urban poor. In fact, on balance, the research on patronage in this chapter lends support for the opposite perspective. In the case of push-cart vendors, Chatterjee's assertion holds in so far that state officials act as predatory actors when trying to remove vendors and hawkers from public spaces. If municipal zoning laws were followed, this large section of the urban poor who rely on informal access to public space for their livelihoods would face a major struggle for survival. Thus the subversion of formal regulations through the assistance of bazaar traders, both on an everyday basis and in instances such as the large anti-encroachment operation, benefits the poor.

In other instances, the exact opposite is true. For example, rampant sales, income, and property tax evasion by traders reduces the state's already marginal fiscal space for

spending on a variety of public goods and welfare programmes that would benefit marginalized groups (Nasim 2014). Similarly, the subversion of legal provisions, such as the Shops and Establishments Ordinance, which regulate labour relations in the marketplace, enables an environment that perpetuates exploitative working conditions for bazaar employees.

Finally, the informal ties of patronage between dominant and subaltern groups that lie within political society are also one of the factors that prevent the emergence of a more equitable politics. While the assistance received in solving problems posed by poverty is considered the positive outcome of patronage, the negative impact lies in the ties of material dependency created in the process that contribute to the durability and reproduction of exploitative cross-class relations.

## **Conclusion**

Through fieldwork in Mustafa Market, this chapter demonstrated the nature of work and employment for the urban poor in the bazaar economy. Marked by pervasive informality, working hours are long and irregular, the work itself is often physically intensive, while the remuneration offered is well-below official minimum wage benchmarks. There are also significant health and safety concerns, given adverse environmental conditions and the demanding nature of work involved.

Subsequently, this chapter proceeded to show how these exploitative relations are reproduced and made durable through particular material processes. Specifically, the disbursement of patronage to bazaar workers and other marginalized groups is key in this regard. Patronage from bazaar traders (and in particular, the bazaar elite) is an integral solution of how informal workers address the problems posed by harsh urban conditions. In the absence of well-organized political parties or affiliate social service providers, resourceful individuals, like traders, are often the only source of accessing the state, obtaining key goods, like housing and healthcare, and of financial assistance during emergencies and unforeseen shocks. Through the case of vendors and hawkers, I also showed how bazaar traders offer both protection from predatory state officials



and access to public space for the purpose of subsistence. All of these patronage roles are made possible not just by their status as economic elites who possess financial resources, but also through their connections to the state, forged through the processes outlined in the previous chapter.

With this building block in place, I move on to the next building block in the succeeding chapter, which lies in the realm of cultural production and dissemination. Specifically, the aim will be to demonstrate how traders engage in the articulation of compliant understandings of existing inequalities on the basis of Islamic ideals of piety, social class and status hierarchies, and elite benevolence. These understandings, once normalized by subordinate groups, are ultimately key in the legitimization of traders' authority, and the stable reproduction of hierarchies within the urban setting.

## **Chapter 5: Legitimizing Authority - Piety and Islamic Virtue in the Bazaar**

The last chapter gave an overview of the material processes through which a particular dominant group, bazaar traders, maintain a position of domination vis-à-vis the urban poor working in the bazaar economy. It was shown that apart from work-related remuneration, patronage and assistance in resolving key issues of survival were also central in creating and sustaining ties of dependence. This aspect of their relationship gains greater salience in a context such as Lahore where the state is apathetic to the plight of the poor, and political parties are weakly organized and unable to structure long-term incorporative relationships with marginalized groups on their own.

Much of the existing literature on patron-client relations of the kind described in the preceding chapter views dyadic, cross-class material exchange as the central pillar in sustaining hierarchical political arrangements (Fox 1994; Roniger 2004; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2004; Stokes et al. 2012). However, sociological accounts have to consider a number of factors beyond self-interested, utilitarian transactions that can explain their persistence. For example, extant work on Pakistan's rural areas (Rouse 1983; Alavi 1989; Lyon 2004) highlight the complementary role of caste assertion and coercion in structuring durable relations of domination between the landed class and landless farm workers, artisans, and other categories of the rural poor. While patronage in the shape of work, food, or other material assistance is undoubtedly a part of these relations, the spectre of naked coercion is also heavily apparent. Debt-bondage and corvee labour remain widely prevalent, and non-compliance with the edicts of the landed elite can result in physical violence, eviction from homestead, or the prospect of facing falsified police cases (Martin 2014, 2016).

In contrast, my research from Mustafa Market showed that while workplace exploitation is significant, overt coercion is less apparent in cross-class relations. Much of it takes place through employment processes like wage fixing or withholding, and very rarely does it take the form of disciplining physical or verbal violence enacted by bazaar traders on workers. This leaves the question of understanding what continues to drive compliance for exploitative social relations on part of the urban poor? In other

words, what can account for the ideational component of such relations over and above the material dependencies of employment and patronage?<sup>142</sup>

This chapter shows that inequality and elite authority in the bazaar are normalized and legitimized within a cultural field dominated largely by Islamic ideas of collective Muslim identity, benevolent civic virtue and pious patronage, and divinely ordained material hierarchies. These ideas provide the frames through which the urban poor make sense of both their material and social conditions and the authority of bazaar traders in everyday life. The salience of such ideas is grounded in Pakistan's historical context, in which Islam has remained a key instrument of state and nation-building deployed by successive military and civilian regimes.

However, contrary to accounts that posit a static culture of ahistorical Islamism (Ahmad 1983), or focus solely on the instrumental imposition of Islamic ideology by self-serving state elites on society at large (Richter 1979; Ziring 1984; Daeschel 1997), this chapter argues that the process has an integral localized component as well. In bounded spaces of cross-class interaction, everyday conversations, shared experiences, and material practices help develop and normalize particular ideational forms. However, the ability to develop and shape the content of these ideational forms is differentially distributed across groups, based on their material resources and relationships. In the case under consideration, it is bazaar traders who remain deeply embedded with religious actors and play a central role in administering local mosques, madrassahs, and religious charities. This provides them with an amplified voice in shaping the moral and ideological contours of marketplaces, i.e. the primary site of exploitation and domination, and the space in which prolonged interactions between dominant and subordinate groups take place.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Building on Weber's (1978) theory of domination, the theory of compliance (Etzioni 1961) also helps ground the discussion in this chapter. Therein, three main forms of power for generating compliance are stipulated, which are coercion, material enticement, and normative or ideological persuasion.

<sup>143</sup> The analysis of Islamic ideals in the bazaar here draws on Thompson's (1991: 43) point that "To define control in terms of cultural hegemony is not to give up attempts at analysis, but to prepare for analysis at the points at which it should be made: into the images of power and authority, the popular mentalities of subordination"

As a theoretical contribution, this chapter engages with two strands of literature on the reproduction of power and hierarchical relations. Firstly, it adds to a growing body of work on South Asia that looks at patronage-based domination beyond material exchange and incorporates the role of symbolic frames and moral idioms in its construction (Piliavsky 2014).<sup>144</sup> The challenge to economic accounts, which are ontologically rooted in a rational-choice framework, is on the basis of how the actors involved view such relations beyond purely instrumental terms. The workings of patronage ties take place in prolonged interactions across extended periods of time, and for a wide variety of reasons, instead of just dictating the electoral decision-making of poor voters. Therefore, the affective ties, frames, and idioms shaping these experiences are ultimately more helpful in explaining the reproduction of consent for domination beyond purely material causes.

Secondly, this and the next chapter also engage with recent studies on the role of political parties and associated actors in the construction of political hegemony. Moving past sociological or reflective accounts of party politics, these studies demonstrate that parties actively engage in processes of ‘political articulation’, whereby certain identities of groups or individuals are made more salient than others through material and ideological invocations. Such processes help parties ‘suture’ together coherent blocks out of otherwise disparate and at times conflictual constituencies, through their constitutive function in the social domain (De Leon 2011; De Leon et al. 2015; Desai 2016; Tugal 2009).

My research from Lahore attempts to approach the issue from another perspective, mainly how do practices of hegemonic articulation and reproduction operate in an environment where parties (mainstream or otherwise) are weakly-organized and lack programmatic ideological contact with society at large? In other words, how do the urban poor develop the frames for understanding their social conditions in a way that is ultimately pliant and in-line with the interests of dominant groups? It is my contention here that the domain of civil society – bazaar traders, their voluntary organizations, and the myriad actors engaged in religious activity (and their interactions within) - is key in

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<sup>144</sup> In some ways this is a continuation of much older research tradition that involved ‘thick’ descriptions of moral-cultural contours within patronage relations, for example Scott (1976) and Eisenstadt (1984).

this regard, and offers a partial substitute to the articulatory functions provided by mass-parties in other contexts.

### **Narratives of Inequality and Authority**

How do the workers, hawkers, and vendors in Mustafa Market understand their own material conditions and that of the dominant groups around them? How do they configure explanations for poverty and wealth and what tools do they use for this purpose? This section highlights the centrality of Islamic moral ideas within the perceptions and frames of understanding for marginalized groups in the bazaar.

#### *Mehngai and Halaat*

My conversations with shop workers and push-cart vendors revealed a high degree of cognizance and concern with their material circumstances.<sup>145</sup> Monetary constraints were a frequent topic of discussion, and considerable stress was encountered over the challenge of meeting their and their dependents' day-to-day needs. Out of all material aspects, inflation (*mehngai*) was the one that garnered the greatest amount of discursive attention. This was largely because the consumption basket for the poor consisted of goods that experienced high amounts of price fluctuations. For example, expenditure on food, whose pricing is linked to seasonal variation in crop production, averages 47% of total household spending for those in the bottom two quintiles of the income distribution, compared to just 28% for the top two quintiles (Government of Pakistan 2016). The situation was exacerbated for those who lived away from their families in shared, and often squalid accommodations, with other workers. The lack of access to adequate cooking facilities, and the long hours spent at work, meant that they were dependent on purchasing meals from *dhabas* or food vendors located in the bazaar.

At times, their constrained financial situation meant that they often relied on the generosity of their employers to share their food during working hours. On other

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<sup>145</sup> This bears mentioning so as to avoid any notion that bazaar workers and vendors were somehow content in their impoverished conditions.

occasions, workers waited in line for a free meal at the *langar* (community kitchen) located in the shrine of Data Darbar, a short distance away from Shah Alam bazaar. These strategies of reducing their personal expenses were dictated by the fact that their families often relied solely on them for their own sustenance. As one worker explained:

“I have to send a set minimum amount of money home every week. There is no way out of this because my family has fixed expenses. They have to buy medicine, food, milk for the children, and many other things. The needs don’t change with prices. I can get away with eating less, but the children can’t. If they are sick, I can’t just stop buying medicine because it is expensive. It’s a constant *jang* (battle) to meet all of these needs.”<sup>146</sup>

Other workers pointed out the debilitating cost of residing in the city itself. Here one of the biggest concerns was meeting rental payments, which were often subject to arbitrary increases. One worker complained that his landlord had raised the rent 20% within 6 months of him moving in because the electricity bill had risen and the blame for this fell on the tenants.<sup>147</sup> Another mentioned that he had to endure the hardship of sleeping in Minto park for several weeks because he did not have the money to meet a landlord’s requirement of giving two months’ rent in advance.

Apart from the immediate concern with inflation and expenses, the material constraints imposed by poverty were articulated in a number of other ways. In general, there was a considerable degree of pessimism about the future among my respondents, many of whom thought that there was little chance of an improvement in their circumstances. This was in contrast to the bazaar traders in Mustafa Market, who naturally felt that the victory of the pro-business party, PML-N, in the 2013 polls had signalled an upturn in their fortunes after several years of sluggish economic growth.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Interview no. 20

<sup>147</sup> A far more likely reason was the installation of a bonding machine on the ground floor of the building.

<sup>148</sup> The positive impact of the PML-N government on the economy was particularly salient for bazaar traders who benefitted from a coincidental reduction in oil prices leading to lower transport costs and an artificially strengthened rupee against the dollar that made imports cheaper.

Some workers articulated their challenges over a longer time horizon, referring to both the past and the future. For example, one worker talked about it in inter-generational terms, lamenting his own struggles and the likely lack of opportunities he would provide to his children:

“If I had money, I would leave behind a better future for my children. You (referring to me) are lucky that your parents could provide for you. Thanks to them you are *parha likha* and *qaabil* and can get a job if you wanted. I am lucky if I’m able to ensure two meals a day for my children and enrol them in a school here in Lahore. But I know I won’t leave behind anything for them. I can’t give them a business to manage or a job. They will struggle just like I have struggled unless a *mojza* (miracle) happens.”<sup>149</sup>

Given the prolonged nature of their experience with poverty, much of these descriptions involving financial insecurity and discomfort were stated in a matter-of-fact manner. As one respondent explained, workers were pre-occupied with managing their meagre resources and solving the problems they encountered, and had little time to linger on the precariousness of their existence.<sup>150</sup> The slow grind of everyday life struggles had also engendered a considerable amount of cynicism, which was visible in their perceptions about the future.

#### *“Ye Bik Gai Hay Gormint”: Corruption, Moral Failure, and Divine Fate*

Who and what processes did the bazaar poor hold responsible for their material struggles? In the case of complaints about a predatory landlord in an informal housing settlement, it was often actor-specific. The explanation hinged on greed on part of the landlord, and his desire to extract more from a helpless and dependent population. The same specificity was true in other instances, such as that of push-cart vendors, who clearly identified low-level police officers and town municipal authorities as responsible for their precarious conditions. In their view, the frequent attempts at displacement as well as extortion in the shape of petty bribes were a major obstacle that prevented them from making an honest living.

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<sup>149</sup> Interview no. 26

<sup>150</sup> Interview no. 41

In other conversations, especially those that centred around budgetary constraints and *mehngai*, the frames of understanding were broader in nature. A common theme running through much of them was that of corruption by public office holders and the complicity of a self-serving elite. For example, workers' explanations for the frequent fluctuations in food prices referred to unwillingness of government officers to enforce reasonable rates for basic commodities or to provide subsidized food for the poor. Those workers who were still embedded in the rural economy through their families also singled out the role of landlords and mill-owners in pressurising the government to set a high support price for wheat, which led to higher food prices in urban areas.

There were also frequent invocations of a more universal Muslim identity and conspiracies operating at an international scale, which accounted for Pakistan's generally impoverished state. For example, one worker pointed out that India had 'switched off' water to the eastern rivers, Jhelum and Chenab, to punish the Muslims of Pakistan, leading to bad harvests. Another talked about a range of alliances working against the Muslim *ummah* (community) that included the *yahood-o-nasara* (Jews and Christians) and was epitomised by American presence in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and their frequent incursions through drone strikes in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

The same set of explanations were invoked to explain the onset of Islamist militancy across large parts of Pakistan since 2007. In 2010, the shrine complex of Data Darbar, located a short distance from Mustafa Market, was bombed by the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) killing 35 people on the spot.<sup>151</sup> While it was not the first incident of its nature in the city of Lahore, the target was such that it resonated deeply with the shrine-visiting workers in Mustafa Market. In our conversations, it was repeatedly mentioned as an assault by a host of conspirators against the protector of the poor, i.e. Data sahib himself. In February 2015, during my fieldwork, a police station in the inner

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<sup>151</sup> "Thirty Five killed at Data Darbar blast", *Express Tribune*, (Lahore, Pakistan), Jul 2, 2010; A further 15 died due to injuries sustained in the attack. Data Darbar is the commonly used name for the shrine of Ali Hajvery, an 11<sup>th</sup> century Persian Muslim saint who was instrumental in the spread of Islam in the Indian subcontinent. He is considered as the patron saint of Lahore, and his shrine remains a revered place of worship for many in the city. For more see Philippon (2012)



city Qila Gujjar Singh neighbourhood of Lahore was attacked, killing 8 people.<sup>152</sup> In the view of one worker, it was another effort to spread anarchy and poverty in a Muslim country:

“Who dies in these blasts? They bombed *Data ki nagri* (Data Darbar shrine), they bomb mosques and madrassahs. They even bomb Eid prayers. It is quite clear they are targeting Muslims. Every time things seem to be improving, another explosion happens. They don’t want us to live and work in peace.”<sup>153</sup>

The identification of corrupt public officials and self-serving leaders was often tied to international events in a way that posited the weakness of the former in the face of the latter. An underlying premise was that average Muslims were paying for their sins and complicity of their rulers, who either did not have the fortitude to stand up to what they deemed anti-Islam conspirators or had taken money in exchange for their acquiescence.<sup>154</sup>

These narratives are neither unique to the urban poor in Mustafa Market, nor are they particular to the case of Pakistan. Accounts from Turkey (Tugal 2009) and Egypt (Ismail 1998; 2006) are similar in the sense that regular Muslim citizens frequently situate their disparate material and political circumstances within a broader framework of religio-nationalistic anxieties and international events. As documented in these cases, such frames of understanding germinate in part from the constitutive work and discourses of nationalist or Islamist actors who seek to fashion particular types of political communities, often in opposition to others.

In Mustafa Market, what made these narratives distinctive was the individualized nature of both the problem and the solutions embedded in them. The greed of a predatory landlord and a corrupt public functionary, or the alleged complicity of the state elite in acquiescing to the United States, were a result of their individual distance from virtuous Islamic practice. Hence, in their view, many of these material problems

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<sup>152</sup> “Eight killed in Lahore blast near Police Lines”, *Express Tribune*, (Lahore, Pakistan), Feb 17, 2015

<sup>153</sup> Interview no. 28

<sup>154</sup> See Iqtidar (2016) for more on conspiracy theories as political imaginary in Pakistan

would be resolved by a return to *sirat-e-mustaqeem* (the righteous path). This sentiment was also captured in the complaint of one push-cart vendor against local state officials:

*“Ik sachā musalman ghareeb ki rozi par kabhi laāt maaray ga (Would a true Muslim ever stop a poor person from making a living)? I am not committing a robbery or a murder. Like thousands of others in the bazaar, I am just trying to work. And yet they come here every other day and harass us on some pretext (bahaana) or another. None of this would happen if they were really following Prophet’s sunnat (way of life). In fact, they would do the exact opposite by helping us and providing better facilities for our carts.”*<sup>155</sup>

Some workers would follow up a discussion about the attitudes and faith of others with their own failings as Muslims. A common theme running through such narratives was that their conditions were a result of both broader societal moral decline, and their own inability to follow the Prophet’s example in their day to day lives. In one group conversation at a tea-stall in Mustafa Market, a worker was narrating a story he’d heard about a TMA bureaucrat taking a bribe from a road contractor for a repair project in the nearby locality of Shadbagh. This was cited as an example of the kind of moral failings that were pervasive in powerful quarters. However, another worker interjected by saying that the narration of an alleged story itself was a manifestation of personal moral failure:

*“Gheebat (backbiting) is as forbidden in Islam as rishwat (bribery). Why are we concerned with what others are allegedly doing? If each of us practices his faith as laid out by Allah and the pious who’ve come before us, you will see all such dunyavi (worldly) problems vanish.”*<sup>156</sup> There are problems all around because all of us – rich or poor - have strayed.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Interview no. 42

<sup>156</sup> The exact term used was *babay*, which was meant to denote pious individuals who had achieved the status of Sufi saints and achieved close proximity to God.

<sup>157</sup> Fieldnotes July 2015

Finally, another constant refrain in such discussions was the aspect of *aazmaish* (test) for the poor. As narrated by my respondents, this notion viewed poverty and hardship as a test for which compensation would be achieved in *akhirat* (afterlife). Since a core aspect of Islamic belief was that wealth and status flowed from Allah, who was the ultimate *denay wala* (giver), a true believer could only offer prayer and supplication for help and in the meanwhile work towards fulfilling their divinely-ordained responsibilities.<sup>158</sup> In the words of one worker, for example, dealing with hardship required prayer and *sabr* (patience):

“In difficult moments, we turn to others for help. We feel like someone else will be a *sahara* (support), like our family, or *biraderi* or someone in the neighbourhood. While all of this is important, it should not come at the expense of asking the real giver (Allah). Those who have it (wealth and status), have it because of the One above. They should spend their time saying *shukr* (gratitude) and expending their wealth in His way. Those who don’t have it, don’t have it because He deems it so. In return, they should practice patience, and only ask Him for help. *Usko dunya mein nahi toh akhirat mein toh zaroor mile ga* (If not in the present, he will be rewarded in the afterlife).”<sup>159</sup>

### *Pious Patrons*

Whereas state officials served as frequent targets of unadulterated ire and derision in the material imaginaries of marginalized groups, views about the dominant actors they experienced the greatest amount of interaction with, bazaar traders, were far more complex. My initial suspicion was that workers and vendors were less forthcoming with any of their work-related complaints, including those regarding traders, simply because of fear of being caught out. My position and access in Mustafa Market was identified as a favour granted by the traders in general, and in particular, the senior ATMM office-bearers, who kept a reasonably close watch on my activities. Thus it was naturally expected that I was beholden to them and would pass on any untoward opinions that I

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<sup>158</sup> The vast majority of workers and other marginalized actors in the bazaar ascribed to the Barelvi sect, which provided space for intermediation by pious individuals (*pirs/saints*) between God and the believer. Therefore, praying at the shrine was seen as the best way to seek divine help. For more on the theological diversity of Islam in South Asia see Robinson (2000)

<sup>159</sup> Interview no. 51

encountered in my conversations elsewhere. In one of my first conversations with a shop worker, the false rumour that I was a nephew of one of the office-bearers was also mentioned, which I quickly dispelled.<sup>160</sup>

However, the general restraint on a range of topics had dissipated after a few months of interacting and conducting interviews with workers, including several at their places of residence.<sup>161</sup> As they began to respond more freely to a range of my questions, it was noticeable that their perceptions of bazaar traders were caught between contradictory currents. On one hand, working hours and wages were topics of sporadic complaint, with some workers voicing their general frustration at conditions of employment. On the other hand, there was an acceptance of the authority of traders, that ranged from pragmatic to sincere. In particular, the general valence of terms used to describe the personality and nature of traders in Mustafa Market were qualitatively different, with *ba-asar* (influential), *nek* (pious), and *manan-walay* (believer) being some of the most frequently used ones.<sup>162</sup>

When asked for further elaboration of the generally pious perception of traders, it was explained with reference to their actions. A few workers gave examples of the material assistance traders gave to religious causes, or the patronage and official access they had received from them as an indicator of their proximity to faith and their overall societal influence. In their view, traders who helped out those in need were accurately following examples from Islamic history regarding the appropriate way to spend material and social resources that Allah had granted them. This attitude towards the poor was often contrasted with stories of or encounters with other dominant actors who were far less generous. One worker who had moved to Lahore almost a decade ago mentioned that his previous employer, who ran a small power loom mill in Kot Lakhpat industrial area, would only allow two bathroom breaks in a 12-hour shift, and

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<sup>160</sup> I learnt the simplest way to do this was to highlight how our *biraderis* were different. The office-bearer in question was a Gujjar, originally from Sialkot, while I was a Janjua, and my paternal side of the family had moved to Lahore from Jhang.

<sup>161</sup> Shop workers and vendors only gradually became comfortable talking to me. After a while, though, most were quite forthcoming, and some even suggested that I write about our conversations and highlight the problems workers faced in their neighbourhoods.

<sup>162</sup> In contrast, public officials were referred to as *badmaash* (villainous) and *khao* (corrupt), among other, stronger expletives.

would frequently lock the doors of the building to discourage employees from getting out during working hours. In comparison, he mentioned that while he was finding it hard to make ends meet at his current wage, he was grateful that his current employer practiced no such coercive methods.<sup>163</sup>

Similarly, workers who had migrated from rural areas favourably compared the attitude of bazaar traders with agrarian landlords who, despite being more influential and entrenched in structures of power, were far less charitable when it came to their tenants and workers. During a group conversation, one worker narrated a story he'd heard of the son of a landlord from a neighbouring village who would get drunk during the day and set his hunting dogs to chase children of farm workers as a form of entertainment. As everyone voiced their disgust with the story, another worker, who had been employed in Mustafa Market for 7 years, chimed in with a contrasting story. He pointed out that a trader, who had since shut down his business, once physically assaulted a worker on charges of theft but was immediately admonished for doing so by his neighbouring traders.

Accounts regarding the moral authority of bazaar traders also pointed out how they used their wealth, influence, and social stature for the wider community, and not just for their employees. One respondent gave the example of how ATMM's head, Malik Khalid, had intervened when the anti-encroachment operation took away the source of livelihood for push-cart vendors and hawkers. Similarly, I was told there were a number of traders who had helped out other low-income residents of the Shah Alam neighbourhood in accessing basic utilities, like electricity, or helping get through to unresponsive public officials.

Many of these accounts frequently moved beyond material patronage and mentioned the religious activities of bazaar traders, such as their charitable giving to religious causes, visits to Data Darbar and other shrines, and their frequent trips on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. The fact that many of the traders referred to themselves as *Hajjis*

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<sup>163</sup> Akhtar (2008: 222) also points out the frequent positing of a framework of *ihsaan* (favour) by subordinate groups in their dealings with employers and patrons in the urban economy.

(honorific tacked on to the name upon completing the Hajj) also helped in raising their profile and stature among a population who effusively desired it but knew they would never be able to afford a trip to Saudi Arabia.

However, not all workers in the bazaar thought of bazaar traders' piety in such unequivocal terms. Those who understood intimate aspects of their business practices acknowledged their patronage role but also mentioned that under-invoicing and usage of smuggled inventory were dubious activities, which honest businessmen should not be undertaking.<sup>164</sup> One worker also pointed out that regardless of the protection they provided, there was no moral basis for charging informal rent from hawkers and vendors for the use of public space in front of their shops.

Nevertheless, these appeared to be minority opinions. When I raised the issue of how bazaar traders were often accused of evading taxes, which could be used for the benefit of the poor, most workers shrugged it off as a non-issue. In their view, public officials would only use that money to enrich their own pockets, and nothing would filter down to the poor. At least this way, they argued, traders have more to spend on *zakat* and other morally virtuous expenditures. One respondent even joked that if there was a way to evade his 'mobile tax' (GST on cellular credit), he would be the first to do it.

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The purpose of briefly laying out these narratives was to identify what marginalized actors in the bazaar thought of their material and social conditions. The conversations were often characterized by a multiple array of emotions and subjectivities, but three themes crop up repeatedly across a range of respondents. These include personal identification as part of a wider Muslim community, which encompassed groups from all sorts of social and occupational backgrounds; the individualized reversion to 'true faith' as a solution to a wide variety of ills, from material corruption to Western imperialism; and finally, a recurring belief in the divinely-ordained nature of material

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<sup>164</sup> As workers were generally kept away from the financial aspect of the business, this did not seem to be an issue most of them were even aware of.

inequities and hardship, which could only truly be mitigated or resolved through religious self-purification and patience. Grounded in these frames of understanding is a fraught view of bazaar traders as pious patrons who utilize divinely-granted wealth for morally upright purposes. It is this legitimization of their authority along the lines of Islamic virtue that lies at the core of the hierarchical relationship between traders and the urban poor in the bazaar.

However, it is important to mention that these legitimizing frames and perceptions do not exist as essential or ahistorical attributes of the bazaar's marginalized groups. On the contrary, they have developed and crystallized from within a wide variety of influences within the religio-political field both inside and outside the bazaar. The subsequent two sections in this chapter attempt to trace the genealogies of these frames of understanding from two angles: firstly, the macrosocial, drawing on the historically contingent context of Islam's role in Pakistan's public sphere and the differing parts played in its development by the state and Islamist political and civil society; and secondly, localized everyday process within Mustafa Market, focusing on the central role bazaar traders, their discourses, and their relations with Islamic actors play in shaping the religious sphere experienced within the marketplace.

### **The Genesis of Islamist Ideals in Pakistan**

The following section considers the macro-historical genesis of contemporary Islamic-inspired ideas about politics and society in Pakistan. The underlying premise here is that the religiously ordained interpretations of material conditions detailed in the preceding section have emerged over time, in part through the deliberate activity of the state, and its collusion with Islamist political and civil society. Specifically, the practice of a non-confrontational Muslim subjectivity (as opposed to an assertive class-based one) among the urban poor, and subsequent legitimization of dominant group authority along the same lines, should neither be thought of as a traditional attribute of former rural dwellers (Piscatori 1983), nor or an essential feature of an overwhelmingly Muslim society (Ahmad 1986). Instead, it has to be placed within the historically

contingent development of a national cultural sphere where such ideas have gained currency since the late 1970s.

I briefly go through the trajectory of this development by dividing it into three phases. The first phase, as touched upon in chapter 2, is the emergence of an Islamist-bazaar front against left-wing populism in the late 1970s, which helped popularize a religious response to 'godless socialism' among urban groups in Punjab. The second phase is the Zia regime which appears as the high watermark of Islamist political society as it helped develop new national discourses, legal stipulations, and institutional cultures centred around religious assertion. Finally, the third and current phase is the decline of Islamist political society, and a re-orientation of the religious field towards civil society, which aims to achieve societal purification through everyday interventions and social movements, rather than gaining control of the state through electoral contestation.

#### *Competing Hegemonies Once Upon a Time: Islamism against Socialism*

As stated in Chapter 2, the Islamist-led Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) movement against the populist government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977 marks a key turning point in the evolution of Pakistan's political sphere. The combination of an anti-socialist, pro-business agenda with the discourse of *Nizam-i-Mustafa* helped create an antithesis that was particularly entrenched in towns and cities across the province of Punjab. At the heart of the movement were associations of bazaar traders, who financed and led public mobilization, and religious parties, who had gained salience through mosque and madrassah networks.

Existing historiography of the PNA movement has not placed sufficient attention to its discourses and strategies of mobilization, and instead tended to view it as an extension of the military's power grab that succeeded it. However, the framing of the movement, its resonance with participants and the general public, and its lasting impact on the years that followed cannot be understated. In particular, it is important to remember that this was the first time Pakistan's political sphere had seen an explicitly Islamist



response to redistributive populism.<sup>165</sup> Through the movement's manifesto, the public speeches of its top leaders, and diffused propagation in marketplaces and mosques across urban centres, the idea of a unified Muslim community, the *ummah*, was firmly positioned as a counter-hegemonic alternative to the class-based rhetoric of the preceding decade.

The contradictions of Bhutto's authoritarian populism, which alienated sections of his party's base in the working and middle classes, also contributed to the success of the Islamist mobilization. Taking advantage of this, the ideological and sectarian tensions within the anti-Bhutto movement were papered over by a thin consensus that took an amorphous Islamic juridical structure as its ultimate goal. Going by the material produced by the movement, the slogan and ideational-material vision of *Nizam-i-Mustafa* was neither well defined, nor was its proposed political agenda sufficiently imagined (Ahmad 1998; Suhail 2011). This is likely the reason why Islamists were unable to consolidate their hold over the state in subsequent periods. Nevertheless, in that moment of heated oppositional politics, their rhetoric dovetailed well with the conservative ideas and material grievances of dominant urban groups to create a political coalition capable of capturing the imagination of segments of the population.

### *Purifying the State*

If the PNA movement marked the upsurge of Islamism within the body politic, General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime ensured its entrenchment. The period between 1977 and 1988 can be considered as the high watermark for Islamist political society, characterized by the close participation of Islamist political party leaders in the military

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<sup>165</sup> It bears mentioning that Islamist parties, like the Jamiat-e-Ulema Pakistan (JUP) and the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), had long opposed left-wing politics in more localized arenas. For example, the JI's student wing, the Islami Jamiat Taliba (IJT) had competed against left-wing unions like the National Student Federation (NSF) for control of varsity campuses across the country (Nasr 2001: 93-96). At an intellectual level, the JI's founder, the globally influential Islamist Abul Ala Maudoodi, was a major proponent of the cause of pan-Islamism against secular nationalism and socialism for years (Nasr 1996; Irfan 2009; Iqtidar 2009). However, these had amounted to little in the shape of actual political gain (till 1977). In Pakistan's first national election in 1970, the JI won only 4 out of the 151 seats it contested for the National Assembly. In total Islamist parties won 18 out of 300 seats.

regime and the development of an overall agenda of Islamizing state and society.<sup>166</sup> Soon after the overthrow of Bhutto's government in July 1977, Zia proclaimed that since "Pakistan was formed in the name of Islam, it will continue to survive only if it sticks to Islam" (quoted in Richter 1978: 421). To this end the regime embarked on a comprehensive programme of reforming legal structures and official discourses to bring them in line with religious edicts.<sup>167</sup>

The overarching purpose of undertaking moral reforms was to roll-back the impact and reach of left-wing populism in the political sphere. Zia laid this out explicitly in an interview, where he stated: "Mr. Bhutto eroded the moral fibre of the society by pitching the students against the teachers, sons against the fathers, landlords against the tenants, and factory workers against the mill owners. [The] reformation of society [needs] moral rejuvenation which is required first and that will have to be done on the basis of Islam. Islam from that point of view is the fundamental factor. It comes before wheat and rice and everything else. I can grow more wheat; I can import wheat but I cannot import the correct moral values." (quoted in Haqqani (2005: 135)).

Islamist parties and other PNA constituents were incorporated as eager partners in this agenda through positions in the federal cabinet. The Jamaat-i-Islami obtained 4 out of the 7 ministerial slots allocated to PNA leaders in the regime's first cabinet, including the important cultural department of Information and Broadcasting (Moten 2003).<sup>168</sup> It also provided intellectual input in the revitalization and strengthening of Islamic institutions like the Council of Islamic Ideology, the development of new ones, like the Federal Shariat Court, and the introduction of the Hudood and other Islamic laws in the

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<sup>166</sup> The turn to Islam as a legitimizing identity for the state was also bolstered by geo-strategic concerns, which included both American support for the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and the Iranian revolution in 1979, which pushed hard-line Sunni groups to mobilize against perceived Shia encroachment on the state (ICG 2005a; Bushra 2012).

<sup>167</sup> While the state of Pakistan does not officially recognize sect, its Islamizing agenda from the 1980s was largely grounded in Sunni Hanafi law. This triggered widespread discontentment among the Shia population, and exacerbated sectarian tensions in the country. For more on the role of Zia era Islamization in instigating sectarian violence see (Zaman 1998; Nasr 2000)

<sup>168</sup> The Jamaat's cordial relationship with the Pakistan army goes much further back than the Zia regime, all the way to 1971, when it provided armed cadres for the suppression of Bengali secessionism in Bangladesh/erstwhile East Pakistan (Nasr 1994: 169).

legal code.<sup>169</sup> This expansive role as part of the formal state apparatus was partly fortified by the fraternal connections between the military dictator and the head of the Jamaat-i-Islami, Mian Tufail Ahmed (Iqtidar 2011b: 541-543 ). Both belonged to the same Punjabi kinship group (*Arain*) and treated each other as close confidantes.

The JI's ingress in corridors of power also enabled the dissemination of works and ideas of its deceased founder, the pan-Islamist intellectual Maulana Maudoodi (Nasr 1994: 195). Whereas previously his preaching on Muslim identity, anti-Westernism, the role of the state, and personal faith were limited to the party's own pamphlets and magazines, it was in the period between 1977 and 1988 that they found space in national newspapers, public broadcasts by the state-owned television channel, and radio programmes (Bushra 2012: 296). His broader ideas about Pakistan as a 'fortress of Islam' and its population's role in safeguarding faith against foreign infidels and domestic conspirators (such as socialists and liberals) gained considerable traction in urban centres, and even served as inputs for the revision of education curricula.

The expansive effort to legitimize an undemocratic regime through religious invocations was instrumental in popularizing Islamist views about politics and society throughout the country, especially in the province of Punjab.<sup>170</sup> In combination with the regime's repressive measures against left-wing forces, the end result of these efforts was an ideational field where populist and redistributive strains were marginalized, while Islamist ones gained unprecedented space. Consequently, by the end of the Zia regime, ushered in by the death of the dictator in a plane crash, the country's political-cultural field had shifted from contestation between competing hegemonies to one in which only one set of ideals were ascendant.

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<sup>169</sup> The Hudood Ordinances were a packaged amendment to the penal code, which introduced moral religious crimes such as fornication and adultery, and stipulated Islamic punishments for them, such as whipping, amputation, and stoning to death. Other Islamic laws introduced by the regime included harsher punishments for blasphemy, the criminalization of the heterodox sect of Ahmadis, and compulsory *zakat* payments on all savings accounts. For more on the Islamization of the legal system, see Amin (1989); Kennedy (1996).

<sup>170</sup> This salience in Punjab was a result of both the strength of the PNA movement and the Islamist parties in general, and the lack of ethnic-based opposition to the regime. In contrast, Bhutto's home-province of Sindh, saw the rise of significant opposition to the regime along ethnic lines.

## *Purifying Society*

The legal and political changes of the 1980s acted as a precursor to more diffused forms of social ideational change, which unfolded in the succeeding period. While Islamism was enshrined in the juridical apparatus through purposeful interventions by the military and the Islamists, the contemporary popularity of Islamic ideals among both dominant and marginalized groups cannot be traced back to the state alone. In fact, post 1988, the fortunes of Islamist political society have fluctuated between stagnation and decline, encapsulated by their increasing irrelevance in mainstream electoral politics. Barring the 2002 elections, held under another supportive military dictator and widely-considered to be less credible (Nasr 2004; Akhtar et al. 2006), Islamist parties have generally struggled to break voters from mainstream parties such as the weakened PPP and various factions of the PML (Ullah 2013).<sup>171</sup>

In line with changes witnessed in other Muslim countries, the post-Zia phase in Pakistan can be described in terms of Bayat's concept of 'post-Islamism' (Bayat 2005; 2007), which has seen a reorientation of the religious field away from the institutional capture of the state and towards a refashioning of society itself. This, (what Iqtidar (2011b: 547) calls the Gramscian turn in Islamism), emerges from a 'socialized' view of power within Islamic circles, which now see the state reflective of and enmeshed within social relations, rather than existing as an independent and autonomous actor.

In Pakistan, the process of re-orientation has seen the rise of Islamist civil society, which include revivalist and self-purification movements as well as religious charities that seek to transform Islam's role within the lived experience of (predominantly) urban communities. These efforts are championed by large (and in some cases, trans-national) proselytizing organizations, such as the Deobandi sect's Tableeghi Jamaat, or

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<sup>171</sup> While a full discussion on the relative decline of Islamist political society is beyond the scope of this thesis, Iqtidar (2011b: 543) points towards their incorporation within the military regime, and its adverse impact on their organizational resources to be one major reason. Other reasons also include their inability to attract elite, patronage-dispensing candidates that became instrumental in winning elections following the severing of more populist party-voter linkages in the 1980s. The ability of non-Islamist mainstream parties to remain electorally dominant through patronage politics with the elite is explored in detail in the next chapter.

the Barelvi sect's equivalent Dawat-e-Islami.<sup>172</sup> Complementary movements that seek to popularize religious purification in middle-class women, such as Al-Huda, have also emerged and become considerably popular in recent years (Babar 2008; Ahmed 2013).<sup>173</sup>

While sectarian and doctrinal differences create distinctions within a field of myriad movements, the most popular share a strong disavowal of mainstream political engagement. As Arsalan Khan's (2016) research on the Tableeghi Jamaat demonstrates, the organization's internal ethos sees political action as inherently corrupting, while deeper understanding of religious texts, adoption of rituals, and shared participation in *dawat* (Islamic proselytizing) are consecrated as the only correct paths to creating a virtuous and just society. The popularity of revivalist movements, and the civil society orientation of popular religious actors in general, has also triggered shifts in the behaviour of Islamist political parties, who now aim for a deeper engagement with communities through charitable interventions, social networking, and provision of services in low-income neighbourhoods.

Some class-based aspects of the civil society turn in Pakistan's religious field are worth highlighting in order to appreciate its key impact. The success of larger organizations like Tableeghi Jamaat and the Dawat-i-Islami in attracting dedicated followings has helped spawn a host of smaller community-based movements that operate within highly localized settings. For both, the control of mosques, madrassahs, and religious charities is central in engaging with their core target market, the male Muslim population. While followers from propertied classes, such as businessmen and white-collar professionals, are more coveted targets because of their availability, influence, and financial resources, the proliferation of smaller mosques, madrassahs, and affiliated charities in public spaces like bazaars, have also helped increase direct and indirect contact with marginalized groups as well (Bano 2012). Between 1988 and 2002, the number of registered Deobandi (Wafaq-ul-Madaris) and Barelvi (Tanzeem-ul-

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<sup>172</sup> These two organizations are rivals within the religious field, and their doctrinal affiliations (Deobandi vs Barelvi) map on to the reformist split within Sunni Islam in the subcontinent that emerged and hardened over the last two centuries (Philippon 2011).

<sup>173</sup> For more on Islamic revivalism and piety movements among Muslim women see Mahmood (2005).

Madaris) madrassahs increased by 244 percent, from 2,496 to 8,585 (IPS 2002). While there is no corresponding data for growth in mosques and unregistered madrassahs, it can be reasonably assumed to be of a similar scale, if not higher. Therefore, the pervasiveness of key physical sites of interaction between preachers and religious ideologues and different class segments are instrumental in popularizing ideas about religious self-purification and piety.<sup>174</sup>

Further enabling this cross-class appeal has been the spread and adoption of new information technologies, such as cell-phones and cable television, which reduce the barriers to accessing religious discourse. Dawat-e-Islami, for example, operates its own television channel (“Madni TV”), which features celebrity preachers pontificating on subjects ranging from highly specific aspects of Barelvi theology to more prosaic and everyday concerns such as the religiously appropriate way of eating food, wearing clothes, and doing business (Gugler 2011).<sup>175</sup>

Therefore, whereas state-sanctioned Islamization of the 1980s was instrumental in reshaping cultural discourse towards religious ideals, Islamist civil society from the 1990s onwards was key in ensuring that barriers like literacy and access to information were overcome in its societal appeal.<sup>176</sup> Collectively, these efforts have helped develop a context where collective Muslim identity and a religio-cultural view of the world act as the predominant frames for understanding social reality. Although the periodic assertion of ethnic identity in the smaller provinces of Sindh and Balochistan demonstrate an incomplete hegemony of these frames outside of Punjab, the overall trend remains categorically established.

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<sup>174</sup> The role of mosque and madrassah networks in perpetuating Islamist radicalism and militancy is also the subject of considerable academic and policy concern. Extant research shows that while a direct relationship towards militancy is true in only a minority of cases (ICG 2002; Fair 2007), many religious sites are strong enablers of exclusionary and illiberal tendencies that lead to, among other things, victimization of minority groups (Javed 2016).

<sup>175</sup> Televangelism in general has taken off in Pakistan since the liberalization of the media sphere in the early 2000s and the proliferation of privately-owned and run television channels. For more on the content and internal contestations within Islamic discourse on popular media in Pakistan see: Biberman et al. (2016)

<sup>176</sup> It is pertinent to mention that well beyond the 1980s, the state remained supportive of religious societal endeavours because they helped in its geo-strategic agenda with regards to the Kashmir and Afghanistan insurgency, and its broader anti-India positioning. However, existing state-centric accounts often incorrectly see this support as proof of the state acting as the sole force behind the proliferation and popularity of Islamist civil society.

Building on the macrosocial genealogical context established in this section, the remaining part of this chapter focuses on how bazaar traders in Mustafa Market interact with and shape the religio-cultural field in the marketplace. In turn, two major outcomes of this involvement is their cultivation of a public image of personal piety and virtuosity, and the consequent normalization of their dominant status vis-à-vis marginalized actors in the bazaar.

### **Divine Privilege: Traders and Islam in Mustafa Market**

A hundred meters before the turning for Shah Alam bazaar on the perpetually congested Circular Road is a shopping plaza that towers 4 floors above all other buildings in its surrounding. Adorning its left wall is a 200 square foot hoarding featuring a headshot of former MPA, APAT President, and leader of the Shah Alam traders' board, Haji Maqsood Ahmed Butt. Underneath the picture is some text: "*Haji Maqsood Butt, 1944-2010*", a few Quranic verses, and a large inscription that reads "*Khadim-e-Data-Darbar; Khadim-e-Darbar Pir Syed Mitha Sharif (Servant of the Data Darbar Shrine; Servant of the Shrine of Pir Mitha Sharif)*". The board was put up by his three sons shortly after his death in November 2010, and the location chosen specifically to ensure that it was missed by no one entering Shah Alam bazaar.

Over the course of his lifetime, Haji Maqsood wore several caps and held various public offices, including one as advisor to the Punjab Chief Minister, but his sons chose to commemorate him for his work in the religious sphere. This, it turns out, was a request from the deceased in the last few months of his life. As one of his sons, who was now the Lahore president of the APAT, mentioned:

"Haji sahib was always a religious person, but became even more so in the last few years. During this phase, he had some *ilhaam* (sixth sense) that he would get ill and his time in this life was about to end. Knowing this he stressed upon all of us (his sons) that all of his successes in life - the thriving businesses, societal respect, political legitimacy - were because he remained faithful to Allah, the Prophet, and the pious who

propagated Islam's message. Without his contribution to religious causes, such as the upkeep of the shrines, nothing else would've been possible. It made sense for him to be remembered for what was most important, *din* (faith) over *dunya* (the material)."<sup>177</sup>

The amalgamation of religious acts with business (and politics) in Haji Maqsood's life provides a useful example of a widely-pervasive phenomenon. Throughout Mustafa Market, the rest of Shah Alam bazaar, or any other marketplace in Lahore, a close-knit relationship between Islamist civil society (religious actors and their movements), and bazaar traders unfolds on a daily basis. The following section turns to this relationship and draws on fieldwork in Mustafa Market to show how bazaar traders intervene in the religious field, formulate and reproduce their pious public image, and, consequently, help shape the cultural experience and frames of the urban poor in the marketplace. To this end, I focus on two sets of processes through which this phenomenon plays out. The first are acts of everyday piety, and bazaar traders' relations with mosques and religious charities. And the second are shared religious experiences, which emerge through everyday conversations between traders and the bazaar's poor, and their collective participation in religious ceremonies.

### *Piety and Civic Virtue*

Islam is everywhere in Mustafa Market. It is present in the shape of not one, but two mosques located within its narrow confines, one of each sect, Deobandi and Barelvi. It is visible in the shape of ubiquitous religious imagery adorning the walls of its constituent shops and offices, such as tiles with the names of Allah and the Prophet, pictures of Gumbad-i-Khizra (the green dome of the Prophet's mosque and burial site in Medina) and the Kaaba, and calligraphic inscriptions of popular Quranic verses and Prophetic sayings. Outside the walled confines of their businesses, the streets and alleyways are dotted with banners, fliers, and posters proclaiming support for some international Islamic cause (Iraq, Gaza, and Kashmir being the most popular), preaching some religious injunction, or warning against some slippage of faith. It is also visible through the flowing beards sported by a majority of traders, through their "Haji"

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<sup>177</sup> Interview no. 14



honorifics and prayer skullcap covered heads, and through the “*MashAllah* (God has willed)”, “*SubhanAllah* (Praise be to Allah)” “*Alhamdulillah* (Grateful to Allah)” peppering their conversations.

The overt religiosity of traders in Mustafa Market is in line with the documented ethos of Muslim businessmen in other parts of the world. The Anatolian small and medium-sized entrepreneurs of Turkey ascribe to an assertive form of public religiosity and operate as a core electorate for the Islamists, both in the contemporary Justice and Development Party (AKP), as well as in its previous, more fundamentalist iterations (Demiralp 2009; Gumuscu 2010; Ozcan and Turunc 2011). Similarly, conservative *bazaaris* were a key participant with the clergy in the mobilization against the Shah’s regime in Iran in the late 1970s, and continued to act as a source of strength for a theocratic order beyond the revolution (Ashraf 1983, 1988; Parsa 1995).<sup>178</sup> Even beyond Muslim countries, shopkeepers and merchants are recorded as conservative and puritanical in their habits, and reactionary in their politics, both in history and in the present (Crossick and Haupt 1995).

To date, there exists only a small body of research on the ubiquitous role of religiosity in the bazaars of Pakistan. A recent anthropological study of merchants in Karachi shows that the evolution and assertion of religious subjectivities takes place among tensions between personal aspiration, Islamic moral values of asceticism and sacrifice - which are widely prevalent in a Muslim population - and the profit-maximizing impulses of capitalism (Baig 2014). Ultimately, the navigation and balancing of these tensions is through public acts such as charitable giving and ritualistic worship, especially from the Sufi tradition.

Other accounts posit a range of instrumental and historical explanations for the phenomenon. As shown earlier in Chapter 2, Mumtaz Ahmad (1983) focuses on a transactional relationship between religious actors and conservative businessmen, with the latter providing financial support for the former’s causes, in exchange for status legitimization and the material advantages accrued from customers on the basis of

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<sup>178</sup> However, Smith (2004) warns against an exclusive focus on the bazaar’s relationship with the clergy, as internal differentiation meant that it also mobilized with a range of other actors during the revolution.

perceptions of piety and honesty within the marketplace. My own research with religious groups in a small town of Punjab adds a contemporary dimension to Ahmed's analysis by factoring in the role of heightened Muslim anxieties in a post-9/11 world alongside the instrumental status gains that condition public assertion of Islamic belief in the marketplace (Javed 2016). Lastly, and although it remains unstudied in Pakistan's case, some studies point towards the aspect of spatial and sociological proximity, with marketplaces and mosques conventionally located in the same physical and social setting, which engenders greater contact and exchange of influence between the two (Pourjafer et al. 2014). Work on the Tehran bazaar further adds to the spatial dimension by pointing to a shared socio-economic class connection between Islamic clerics, neighbourhood preachers, and middle-class merchants, all of whom are drawn from the same social strata and often share kinship and familial ties (Abrahimian 1982).

A combination of the factors documented elsewhere apply to the case of heightened and highly public religiosity prevalent in Mustafa Market. All traders I observed and spoke to repeatedly stressed the importance and centrality of Islamic belief in their personal identity as well as their occupational choice. A frequent refrain herein was the consecration of trading and mercantile activity as a virtuous occupation, as dictated by the edicts and *sunnat* (tradition) of the Prophet. Traders in Mustafa Market and other bazaars served frequent reminders that the Prophet himself had found work operating trading caravans on behalf of his uncle, and so by undertaking this particular occupation they were bringing themselves closer to the only lifestyle worth emulating in Islamic belief. In support of this view, traders frequently narrated sayings ascribed to the Prophet, which stressed the inherent virtuosity of honest trade as an occupation, with the most popular one stating that 'honest traders would stand just behind the Prophet, his family, and his closest companions on the day of judgement.' This and other related *hadith* were displayed as framed inscriptions on the walls of several shops in Mustafa Market.

Traders' practice of Islam placed importance on specific types of religious activities, which became central in shaping their status as pious elites. Apart from the usual practice of saying at least three of the daily five prayers collectively in the marketplace

mosque, the importance devoted to pilgrimage and religious charitable acts was also a vital component. Similar to the narration of Haji Maqsood Butt's son detailed earlier, many traders linked personal prosperity with their willingness to publicly spend on religious endeavours. One trader, for example, narrated his life story about how his business was faltering till he decided to go for Hajj. Sitting in front of the Kaaba in Mecca, he prayed for an improvement in his fortunes, which he soon encountered upon his return to Lahore. Within three months of the pilgrimage, he had secured a lucrative procurement contract, which was viewed and openly acknowledged as a direct response to his prayers.<sup>179</sup>

Alongside this exalted status accorded to Hajj (and Umrah), charitable donations to religious organizations constituted a key tenet of traders' activities in the cultural sphere of the marketplace. The scale of charitable giving varied depending on the financial health and clout of the businesses. Nearly all small and mid-sized traders gave small but regular amounts – mostly between Rs. 5,000 and 10,000 per month - to religious causes of their choice, and also encouraged their customers to do so through *chanda* (donation) boxes placed in prominent locations in their shops. The most popular charities in Mustafa Market were those affiliated with Barelvi evangelical organizations, such as the Mehfil-i-Mustafa Foundation, Minhaj-ul-Quran, Dawat-i-Islami, or Markazi Jamaat Ahle Sunnat, who used the money primarily to maintain their mosques, madrassahs, and proselytizing networks, and, to a lesser extent, provide food, medicine, and other essential goods in impoverished areas of Pakistan. The few traders in the marketplace who ascribed to Deobandi or Salafi practices chose to support charitable organizations from their own sects, such as the Jamaat-i-Islami's Al-Khidmat Foundation or the Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation.

This practice of donating money to religious organizations seen in Mustafa Market is in line with trends across the country. While survey data for other provinces is hard to come by, the Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy's (PCP) research for Punjab shows that 38% of all monetary charitable contribution – an estimated Rs. 21 billion per annum – is

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<sup>179</sup> Interview no. 23

channelled to 'Islamic organizations and mosque and madrassah construction committees' (Pakistan Centre of Philanthropy 2012: 22).

Compared to the smaller traders, the involvement of Mustafa Market's elite traders in charitable enterprise was grander in scale and operated through a variety of channels. The ATMM head, Malik Khalid, was on the Lahore city management committee of an Islamic charity with a presence throughout the province of Punjab, and had an important voice in determining where and for what purposes the money was spent. Another elite trader, Khwaja Athar, who headed the *Ittehad* faction of the ATMM in the market was a key sponsor of a mosque-based charity based just outside Shah Alam bazaar that financed marriage and dowry expenses for women from destitute households in Lahore's Walled City. Every couple of months, he would raise funds from his relatives, friends, and other traders in the marketplace and then host a ceremony in his shop where he would hand over a donation cheque to the mosque administrator. Pictures and press clippings of previous such ceremonies were displayed on one wall of the shop, showing that the practice had been going on for at least the past 3 years.

Elite traders were also major patrons of mosques and were involved in their administration and management, both in the bazaar and in its neighbouring areas. The mosque committee of the Ghaus-e-Azam Masjid, one of the two main mosques in Mustafa Market, had among its members three elite traders, including the Vice-Chairman of the ATMM, Shahid Aslam. Similar to the workings of mosque committees documented elsewhere in Lahore (Naveeda Khan 2003: 176-177), these traders were responsible for overseeing the finances and administrative matters of the mosque, and subsequently carried considerable influence in determining the substantive and theological content of mosque sermons and other associated religious activity. Given that the *khateeb* (prayer leader) at Ghaus-e-Azam Masjid was reliant on the goodwill of the market's traders for both his salary and his mosque's material needs, it made him more amenable to certain types of ideological messages.<sup>180</sup> For example, the important

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<sup>180</sup> Interview no. 52; The *khateeb* openly admitted to '*mushavirat*' (consultation) as the primary way of how he chose the content of his sermons. This involved discussing broad themes with the traders on the mosque committee every few weeks, and then weaving them with passages from the Quran or narrations from the Prophet's life. In his view, this process was necessary because traders (and not

Friday prayer sermons, which were usually broadcast from the mosque's loudspeaker and consumed by all present in the marketplace, never broached the issue of the rights of employees and poor workers guaranteed by Islamic tradition, or any other potential source of class-based conflictual messaging. Instead, it frequently stressed on the importance of self-purification and individual charitable giving - *zakat* and *sadqa* - as the appropriate way of securing future material and spiritual prosperity. Similarly, another common theme of sermonizing that papered over socio-economic distinctions, one popularized by Islamist political and civil society over the preceding 3 decades, was the global challenges facing the collective Muslim *ummah*, which arose from personal weaknesses and diversions from faith and could be witnessed at the root of matters as diverse as urban poverty and the war in Afghanistan.

On several occasions during my fieldwork, the *khateeb* overtly reciprocated the benevolence of his patrons in the marketplace by highlighting and publicizing their religious achievements and contributions. Hajj and Umrah returnees were greeted by post-prayer loudspeaker announcements heralding their success in meeting a key tenet of faith. Similarly, in April 2015 after several ATMM's office-bearers donated a new drinking water fountain and financed the refurbishment of the public ablution section in the mosque, the *khateeb* put up a gratitude banner on the mosque entrance and provided them with space in the refurbished section to put up a plaque listing names of all the donors.

Only a handful of traders acted discretely with regards to their interventions in the religious domain, either in terms of charitable giving or their ritualistic practices. In contrast, the majority purposefully sought to publicize their exercises. One trader rationalized this status-seeking behaviour as a form of demonstrative encouragement and positive competition:

“Islamic tradition does not categorically instruct only one way of giving charity. There are plenty of examples from the Prophet's time when the *sahaba* (companions) gave their wealth publicly to help grow and strengthen Islam. The Prophet encouraged them

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workers or other subordinate groups) constituted his primary audience and he had to ensure the sermons were relevant and agreeable to them.

in this regard, so that they could serve as role models for others. If today, someone here wants to build a mosque or help the poor, he should do it publicly so that it serves as an example for others in the market. In fact, it encourages an *ikhlaaqi* (moral) competition within the *tajir biraderi*, which is better than competing over who has the latest model of mobile phone or who owns a bigger car that we normally see these days!”<sup>181</sup>

The highly routinized and publicized relationships between bazaar traders and religious civil society described here constitute an integral source of how ideas about public piety and Islamic civic virtue are fashioned and embedded within the urban cultural sphere. Crucial factors here are the spatial and material dynamics of the marketplace itself. As discussed ahead, shop workers and other marginalized groups worked long hours in the bazaar, held shared religious experiences with traders, and were both observers and recipients of patronage and charitable giving. Thus their own frames of understanding of material conditions and the authority of bazaar traders were shaped in this particular environment.

### *Shared Religious Experience*

Underscoring the broader processes of status reproduction was the aspect of shared religious experiences among traders and the urban poor. The salience of these cross-class interactions stands in contrast to other accounts of religious practice across different social classes in Pakistan. In particular, contemporary accounts that study Islamic revivalism in the country have focused on the divergence between ‘elite’ Islam and ‘subaltern’ Islam in both urban and rural areas. Ammara Maqsood’s (2014, 2017) work on Lahore’s upwardly mobile middle class details the importance of literacy in Arabic and Urdu as well as the use of technological aides in contemporary Quran classes, which leads to propertied class homogeneity within them. Crucially, the pervading ambition in such classes is a reversion to ‘true Islam’, which is free from the impurities and heterodoxies that have emerged in South Asian religious practice over the centuries. A frequent target of such cleansing movements is the centrality accorded

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<sup>181</sup> Interview no. 33

by many poor Muslims to shrines and their *pirs* (spiritual leaders and caretakers), who are viewed as divine interlocutors and helpers. Prosperous adherents of Islamic orthodoxy, such as those studied by Maqsood (2017: 125), categorize these practices as *bidat* (impurity) or even *shirk* (apostasy) that have to be resisted and reformed, thus fortifying strong symbolic boundaries between themselves and subordinate classes.

The divergence between elite and subaltern Islam has also been noted by Nicolas Martin (2016: 145-167) in his study of rural Punjab. In exploring the idea of whether shrines are responsible for creating ideological dominance of powerful landlords, Martin posits that while a broader belief in Islamic ideas does suppress subordinate class political assertion, the particularistic claims of cultural leadership made by landed elites are frequently contested by the rural poor, who draw on and prioritise different ideals and practices from within the Islamic tradition. While landlords place extra emphasis on exoteric ritualistic purity, scriptural adherence, and a hierarchical vision of spirituality, the landless engage in esoteric practices of devotion that help them make sense of their material world and question the landed elite's claims on spiritual superiority. In part, it is because of this contestation in the realm of religious belief that the class authority of the rural elite is reproduced more so through coercion than consent.

It would be incorrect to state that religious priorities and beliefs did not differ across different classes within Mustafa Market. Traders placed extra emphasis on routinized rituals and doctrinal adherence by praying five times a day and followed key codes of personal appearance, such as wearing their *shalwars* (trousers) above the ankle, carrying skullcaps or turbans, and sporting manicured (and at times, hennaed) beards without moustaches. In contrast, workers were less regular with their daily praying habits due to time constraints and did not have the material resources to maintain what were commonly deemed to be Islamic standards of personal hygiene and appearance.

Similarly, traders were interested in contemporary expositions on Islamic business ethics and practices, especially those covering finance and usury. The issue of whether

Islamic banks were any better than regular banks in moral terms, and whether formalized banking itself should even be engaged with was a subject of frequent debate among traders and between traders and Islamic clerics. Due to obvious reasons, the urban poor had no interaction with formal financial institutions, and were thus far removed from any such theological concerns.

Alongside these differences, however, were several structural similarities that engendered shared cultural experiences within the marketplace. As already mentioned, a majority of traders, like their workers and other marginalized actors in the bazaar, adhered to Sufi Barelvi conceptions about Islam, which prioritised devotional worship, urged emulation of the Prophet's lifestyle, and consecrated shrines as integral sites of religious virtue.<sup>182</sup> This communal adherence is fairly unique among propertied groups within urban Pakistan, given how white-collar professionals and even segments of the manufacturing elite have gravitated towards orthodox Deobandi and Salafi interpretations in recent decades (Khan 2016).

Therefore, unlike the symbolic divide instituted by middle class orthodoxy, fortification of ideological boundaries between classes - through differences in religious practice - was less apparent in the marketplace. Time constraints placed by their businesses meant that attending exclusive Quran classes or taking up serious analysis of religious texts was not a viable option for traders. Even though most were literate, only a small percentage had attended college or university, and most did not feel the need for personal scholastic engagement. A few traders that I interviewed mentioned that they studied the Quran in their free time and a couple said they even taught it to those shop workers who had some schooling. However, the pervasiveness of this practice appeared highly limited due to illiteracy and perpetual time constraints. Instead what was far more common was traders imbibing and narrating quotations and anecdotes in everyday conversations, including those with workers, which were picked up from TV

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<sup>182</sup> This was particularly true for older businessmen, who themselves were first or second generation urban migrants. A few younger traders, including those who joined their fathers and uncles in business, were somewhat more amenable to puritanical and orthodox interpretations, which they encountered in schools and universities. However, they constituted a much smaller segment of the bazaar and Barelvi beliefs were still firmly entrenched with the majority of traders.



and mosque sermons, and summaries of Quranic exegesis found in Islamic self-purification books like *Faizan-e-Sunnat*.<sup>183</sup>

These everyday conversations, grounded as they were in a shared belief system, proved to be an integral source of how Islamic ideas were popularized in the bazaar. Over the course of my time in Mustafa Market, I observed traders acting as interlocutors for workers, informing them about current events and providing their own causal interpretations. A popular time for this was during lunch or tea-breaks, which usually featured the day's news turned on as a backdrop through a television or a radio. Usual subjects were drawn from domestic and international politics, such as economic conditions, the fate of the current government, or the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS). Traders' interpretation and analysis often included a peppering of religious anecdotes and sayings of the Prophet - especially those concerning divine fate and individual moral decay - thus linking ideas popularized by Islamist civil society to contemporary material realities.

For example, in May 2015, TV news channels in Pakistan ran regular segments on the disastrous impact of drought in the Tharparkar district of Sindh province. The imagery broadcast was particularly disturbing as it showed young children suffering from starvation, with many reported to have died due to dysfunctional medical facilities. In one shop, the event became the source of considerable discussion between a trader and two of his friends in the market who had joined him for lunch. Also present in this gathering were three warehouse workers, one of whom asked the trader to explain how this had happened. All three businessmen immediately cited corruption by the *be-hiss* (apathetic) Sindh government politicians and officials as a fundamental reason.

While everyone was in broad agreement over this, one trader also added a moral dimension to the explanation. In his view, this was because he had heard from a reliable source in the mosque that Muslims in Tharparkar were marrying Hindus, who constituted a significant portion of the district's population, and converting to Hinduism

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<sup>183</sup> The *Faizan-e-Sunnat* is a two volume, 2200-page book by Barelvi scholar and Dawat-i-Islami founder, Muhammad Ilyas Qadri. It contains detailed instructions on how to live a life that approximates that of the Prophet and how to earn favour from Allah on the basis of everyday good deeds.

themselves. Thus this drought should be seen as a form of divine retribution. To bolster his point, he also narrated a popular Islamic fable of how throughout human history Allah had used natural disasters as a form of punishment for populations that had strayed far from faith. One worker remarked that surely there would've been quite a few people there who were still pious in their practices, and yet they too were being punished. To this, the trader who had sermonized earlier responded with the pervasive adage about present-day material suffering as a great example of *hikmat*, or grand fate designed by Allah, which humans cannot understand. The other traders murmured their agreement, and asked everyone present to keep praying and offering *durood* (blessings for the Prophet) so they remain safe from any such punishment.

Apart from charitable endeavours and everyday discourses, processes of ideological diffusion and authority legitimization also took place through shared participation in religious ceremonies. The most frequent were the Mehfil-i-Milaad, celebrations held to commemorate the Prophet's life and tradition. Traders, and in particular, bazaar elites associated with the ATMM, were the principal sponsors of these events, contributing thousands of rupees from their own pockets. All of the ones I attended followed the same basic format<sup>184</sup>: carpets were rolled out to cover the main market road, and a stage set-up on one end. Popular *naat-khwans* - individuals who sing hymns or *naats* in praise of the Prophet - were hired to recite *naats* and verses from the Holy Quran. The main event itself was usually a *dars* (sermon) or a *bayaan* (narration) by a senior cleric from an established Barelvi madrassah, such as the Jamia Nizamia Rizvia, located a short distance away from the Shah Alam neighborhood.

Workers, push-cart vendors, and other marginalized groups in the bazaar were avid attendees of such events. To them, the Milaad constituted both a religious obligation as well as a form of public entertainment. The spatial arrangement gave the entire marketplace a festive feel, while the *naats* offered a musical value, given how they were composed along the tunes of popular Bollywood (Indian cinema) music. Also of

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<sup>184</sup> There were 5 held during my fieldwork year out of which I was able to attend 3. The most extravagant one was on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015 (12 Rabi-ul-Awal, commonly known as Eid Milad-un-Nabi or the Prophet's day of birth), and it received significant coverage on a local, Lahore-based television channel as well as in the press.

considerable appeal was the provision of a free dinner, usually chicken curry, sweet rice, and bread made in *degs* (large steel drums).

Many of the ideas and norms popularized by Islamists were repeated through the *dars* and *bayaans* at the Milaad. Continual stress was placed on the importance of reviving a pan-Islamic collective identity, engaging in self-purification, and understanding the irrelevance of material disparity in the face of religious worship. A frequent refrain along these lines was that “*ameer aur ghareeb dono aaqa ke darbar mein barabar hain* (The poor and the rich are same in the eyes of the Prophet)”. The intention behind such statements was to highlight the fact that wealth and prosperity did not automatically guarantee a higher status in Islam, which could only be attained through worship. However, an inadvertent impact of this discourse was that it flattened out the aspect of real material inequities, and elevated the importance of religious belief and ritual instead.

Simultaneously, these events were similar to the charitable endeavours described earlier in legitimizing the authority of bazaar traders along religious lines. Those traders who organized Milaads put up their own pictures on the banners that publicized them, making sure that everyone in the marketplace could see their integral role in the event. During the event itself, the *naatkhwans* and the clerics made a special note of naming and thanking all those who had invited (and paid) them, proclaiming that they had earned Allah’s blessings by spending their money on such virtuous activity.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began by posing the question of how to understand processes of domination between bazaar traders and the urban poor beyond wage relations and material patronage. Through fieldwork in Mustafa Market it was demonstrated that their persistent reproduction takes place in an ideational space where Islamic ideas about collective Muslim identity, benevolent civic virtue and pious patronage, and cultural understanding of material inequities and hierarchies dominate. The genealogy of reproductive ideas emanates in part from Pakistan’s experience with Islamism,

wherein Islamist political society has shaped the juridical structure of the state, while, since the 1980s, Islamist civil society has popularized religious movements across a wide cross-section of society.

However, there remains a strong localized component to the spread and popularity of religious ideals. In a setting like Mustafa Market, these ideas are further reproduced and entrenched through the relations exercised between religious actors, in mosques and charities, and the main dominant group, bazaar traders. The latter ultimately become prime beneficiaries of these ideas as their interventions in the religious sphere, that take the shape of charitable acts and sponsoring of religious events, helps cultivate an image as pious elites in the understanding of marginalized groups. Such images are further reinforced through the shared theological understandings and experiences of different groups within the marketplace. Therefore, the presence of Islam in the bazaar acts as legitimizing identity for the authority of bazaar elites, and provides the moral frames and idioms that the urban poor use to understand their material troubles as well as the patronage relations used to resolve them.

In service of the larger argument, the research presented in this chapter helps us understand the ideological component of contemporary power relations between a set of dominant and subordinate actors. Key here is that the ideological articulation and legitimization of such relations is not taking place through the functioning of mass, well-organized political parties engaging in constitutive societal work. Instead, it is taking place largely within the realm of civil society, through ties between ostensibly apolitical religious organizations and elites based in the marketplace.

This and the previous chapter have provided us with the building blocks that feed into Pakistan's highly inequitable political sphere. The exercise of dependence-creating patronage by bazaar traders through material diversions to the urban poor, and the legitimization of these hierarchies through Islamic ideals come together in the reproduction of local pockets of power and authority. The last empirical chapter turns to the final act - the relations between bazaar traders, political parties, and the electoral process, in a bid to understand how elite dominance is enshrined in the

political sphere, and how class dominance in the marketplace ultimately translates into pliant electoral incorporation of the urban poor.

## **Chapter 6 – Transacting Alliances, Structuring Consent: Bazaar Traders and Party Politics in Lahore**

The introductory paragraph of this thesis referred to the persisting dominance of propertied classes through electoral politics as a headline feature of Pakistan's highly unequal political sphere. Subsequent chapters have since zoomed in on the myriad practices and relations of one such dominant group, bazaar traders, to understand how power and authority between dominant and subordinate groups is built and reproduced within the localized setting of a marketplace. To demonstrate how these building blocks reflect themselves in the enduring articulation of a hegemonic political sphere, this chapter returns attention to the realm of party politics, and focuses on the relations between political parties and bazaar traders, which play a key role in maintaining elite dominance and attaining the political consent of the urban poor.

My approach throughout this thesis echoes Gramsci's postulation that "the counting of votes is the final ceremony of a long process" (1971: 192). Under conditions of democratic government, this final ceremony allows dominant classes to secure and further their hegemony 'in the last instance' through the coercive and juridical apparatus of the state itself (Thomas 2009: 137). For Gramsci (and neo-Gramscians who've followed), both the construction and protection of hegemony takes place on the backs of political parties who, having played a key role in the long process of articulating identities and coalitions through ideological and political struggles, ultimately act as the primary vehicle for control of the state as well.

As discussed in the thesis so far, the first part of Gramscian analysis of political parties is less applicable to Pakistan, where mainstream parties remain organizationally weak and ideologically shallow, while the state apparatus has historically remained under the authoritarian grip of the military and civil bureaucracy. Instead, it was shown that in present-day Lahore, constitutive material and ideological processes take place in the domain of civil society, through the interplay of bazaar traders, religious actors and their organizations, and marginalized groups.

Nevertheless, given Pakistan's experiences with procedural democratisation across different phases, including the latest one from 2008 onwards, parties continue to play their second role, i.e. as vehicles for securing and furthering the dominance of particular social groups through the electoral process. In the first section of this chapter, I provide a brief overview of the historically authoritarian context in which contemporary parties have emerged and survived, and the weaknesses that characterize their present form. These include undemocratic, centralized, and personalized leadership, an absence of local organizational infrastructure, and a consequent reliance on elites from dominant classes for the purposes of garnering support and winning elections.

In the second section, I turn to the political field in Lahore to explore relations between the long-time ruling party in Punjab, the PML-N, and the dominant group at the centre of this thesis, bazaar traders. I show how, by virtue of their economic resources and the building blocks of power detailed earlier, bazaar traders are seen by parties as uniquely positioned among all urban elites for an advantageous role in political activity. In a similar vein as the politics of the rural elite in Pakistan (Javid 2011), the contemporary relationship between party leaders and bazaar traders operates as a transactional bargain, with parties providing traders with an amplified voice in economic policy-making, protection and patronage in matters of local governance, and, for those who seek it, a platform to further their personal status ambitions. In exchange for their patronage, party leaders gain local influence at the community level, potential candidates for elected office, and financial assistance for political expenses.

The transactional nature of the bazaar-party arrangement produces two key implications for Pakistan's political sphere. Firstly, it acts as both an outcome as well as a driver for the continued capture of political parties, who remain beholden to elite sectional interests. The lack of party autonomy from groups such as traders means that even when party leaders attempt to recalibrate the distributional outcomes of public policy, they encounter strong (and often successful) internal as well as external resistance from marketplaces. In service of this point, I draw on an important recent case from 2015 where the ruling party's leadership, under pressure from multilateral

donors, attempted to restrict the undocumented bazaar economy by introducing a withholding tax on banking transactions. However, it was forced to back down from its original aim after encountering stiff public resistance and internal pressures, which included street protests by traders' associations and backchannel negotiations led by party leaders and apex organizations representing commercial interests. A second implication of the bazaar-party relationship, one visible at various points in the last three decades, is that it pushes urban political competition towards a spoils contest between competing elites and their factions both within and across political parties. The factional nature of contestation reduces space for party loyalty and identity, with ambitious traders sporadically switching allegiances due to personal rivalries or unmet material expectations, thus further weakening parties in the process of consolidating their own advantages.

Finally, to demonstrate the integral impact of the bazaar's role in structuring electoral contestation and consent, the third and last section of this chapter studies the 2015 local government elections in Lahore. Drawing on fieldwork in the constituency that contains Mustafa Market and its surrounding low-income neighbourhood, I detail the way wealthy traders participate in elections, further their own political ambitions, and ultimately, use their influence with poor voters to mobilize consent 'from below'. These processes collectively work as the 'final act' in the reproduction of Pakistan's hegemonic political sphere.

### **Fragile Democracy and Weak Parties**

Since Pakistan's first general election in 1970, national electoral politics has been dominated by two parties, Nawaz Sharif's faction of the right-of-centre Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) and the left-leaning Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP).<sup>185</sup> These parties

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<sup>185</sup> Barring military regimes in 1977-1988 and 1999-2007, the federal government has till the time of writing remained under control of either of the two parties (a total of 27 years). The PPP formed a government under populist Zulfikar Bhutto in 1971 which lasted till the 1977 coup. The party won a further two (albeit curtailed) terms, 1988-1990 and 1993-1996, with his daughter, Benazir Bhutto, as Prime Minister. Following Benazir's assassination in 2007, the PPP led a coalition government from 2008 to 2013, with Benazir's husband, Asif Ali Zardari as President of Pakistan and party leader. Since its emergence in the late 1980s, the PML-N has won three national elections. It was the biggest party in the ruling Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) alliance between 1990-1993, with Nawaz Sharif as the PM. He



have allied with and operated alongside a host of smaller ethno-nationalist and Islamist parties.<sup>186</sup> In 2011, the two biggest parties were joined by a third contender - the centrist, anti-corruption party, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) as it broke through its humble origins to become a potent electoral force with national ambitions. Its performance in the 2013 general elections exemplified this breakthrough, as it garnered the second-highest number of votes nationally and formed a coalition government in the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Crucially, it also displaced the PPP as the main opposition to PML-N in the most populous province of Punjab.

For almost the entirety of this period, the development of the party system in Pakistan has taken place under the long shadow of the military and its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. Under periods of military rule, party leaders have been imprisoned, banned, or sent into exile.<sup>187</sup> Parties themselves have been broken up through the bribing and coercion of politicians (usually from the powerful landed classes), and new ones propped up to support the authoritarian regimes. To provide an illustrative example, Nawaz Sharif (and his faction of the PML), was originally propped up and supported as a 'clean businessman' counter-weight to the populist PPP in the province of Punjab, by General Zia-ul-Haq's regime in 1983 (Rizvi 1984, 2000; Noman 1988). Similarly, after General Musharraf deposed Nawaz Sharif in a coup in 1999, his regime (1999-2007) created a new ruling party by buying off and coercing key PML-N candidates and leaders, to form the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) ahead of the 2002 elections.<sup>188</sup> Following these elections, the regime further consolidated itself by forcing 16 elected MNAs from the PPP to cross party lines through threats of anti-

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regained the PM-ship on two more occasions, as his party won subsequent terms in office between 1997-1999, and 2013-2018.

<sup>186</sup> Main regional/ethno-nationalist parties include the Muttahida Quomi Movement (MQM), which represents Urdu speakers in the city of Karachi; the Awami National Party (ANP), which represents Pashto speakers in KP, the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), which represents Pashto speakers in northern Balochistan, various factions of the Balochistan National Party (BNP) and the National Party (NP), which represent Baloch speakers in central and southern Balochistan. Main Islamist parties include the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) and the Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), who while professing national ambitions, gain limited electoral success in small pockets across the country.

<sup>187</sup> Benazir Bhutto was imprisoned in solitary confinement under General Zia-ul-Haq's regime, while Nawaz Sharif was sent in exile by General Musharraf in an agreement with the Saudi Arabian government.

<sup>188</sup> Following resumption of democracy in 2008, the PML-Q lost most of its strong 'electable' candidates, who either chose to return to the PML-N or moved on to the PTI. In the 2013 elections, it was reduced to the status of a small party with only 2 National Assembly seats.

graft proceedings and bribing them with material incentives (Zaidi 2003; Waseem 2006).<sup>189</sup>

Even during periods of civilian rule, such as from 1988 to 1999, the military has exercised considerable control over party elites through a combination of backdoor lobbying, material incentives, and coercion. In 1990, the PML-N's first victory on the national stage was partly down to the financing and horse-trading of strong candidates by the military's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) (Waseem 1994).<sup>190</sup> While this expansive interference has reduced under the most recent phase of democratisation (since 2008), reports and allegations of military officials influencing and manipulating political elites continue to surface periodically (Fair 2015: 131-140).

In a historical backdrop of democratic fragility and military dominance, Pakistan's parties have emerged and survived as weak organizations. This weakness manifests itself across several key dimensions:

#### *Personalized Leadership and Absence of Internal Democracy*

All three major parties are marked by highly personalized and centralized internal systems of governance, where top leaders exhibit unhindered influence on party affairs. For the PML-N and PPP, this entails dynastic control by a particular family, the Sharifs and Bhuttos (and now the Zardaris through marriage) respectively. Major internal decision-making is carried out by members of these families or their closest associates, while bodies tasked with managing party affairs at the national and provincial level are constituted through the personal preferences of leaders. This, along with the fact that there are only nominal elections ("selections" in local parlance) for party positions, means there are limited institutional pathways for progression for party loyalists, and that their careers (and their definition of loyalty) are largely shaped by a proximity to the leadership (Siddiqui 2017: 90).

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<sup>189</sup> See Mufti (2011: 107-130) for a detailed assessment of how the military influences party strategy and carries out candidate recruitment in Pakistan.

<sup>190</sup> See chapter 2 for a full historical overview of authoritarianism and democracy in Pakistan.

In the first year after its emergence on the national stage in 2011, the PTI attempted to differentiate itself from extant political culture by aspiring for a more democratic form of party organization. For this purpose, it initiated a process of internal elections for its district, provincial, and national offices. However, as the exercise progressed towards the voting stage, impulsive in-fighting and elite factionalism forced party leader, the cricketer-turned-politician, Imran Khan, to cancel the elections and leverage his moral authority with the party and its supporters to appoint office-bearers of his own choosing (Tariq et al. 2016). Since then, the party has continued to follow a highly centralized and personalized blue-print of internal governance, not dissimilar to the other two main parties.

#### *Weakness of Local Organization*

The centralized, personalized, and ad-hoc nature of governance within parties is also reflected in their lack of organization. As highlighted in a previous chapter, party leaders rarely invest in any permanent infrastructure at the local level, and instead choose to operate through personalized contacts and locally influential brokers. The lack of clear pathways through which lower-tier party members could rise up the ranks reinforces a lack of interest on their part in institutionalizing structures at the local level.

The absence of party infrastructure is particularly pervasive across rural areas, wherein the landed classes participate in village-based factional contestation within their own geographic domains (Mohmand 2011). In urban areas, the face of local organization for all three main parties is almost always a centrally or provincially appointed party leader who contests at the National or Provincial Assembly constituency level and runs affairs through their own personal networks.<sup>191</sup> During election time, the personal space of the leader, such as a residence or a business office, doubles as the party office, and if he or she wins the election, eventually becomes the representative office (Mufti 2011: 62). While party leaders usually profess an open-door policy, the sheer size of urban

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<sup>191</sup> A National Assembly constituency is a large geographic area, which contains on average 350,000 voters, while a Provincial Assembly constituency is roughly half that size.

constituencies along with the party's lack of organizational strength and permanent infrastructure means less than 10% of the electorate experiences contact with a party representative outside of election time (Cheema et al. 2017). As previously mentioned, one key outcome of this lack of organization is that barring the Karachi-specific, ethno-nationalist party, MQM, no other party has a well-functioning and institutionalized machine for attracting and mobilizing poor urban voters through ideological incorporation and patronage provision.

### *Elite Persistence within Parties*

The candidate recruitment strategies of parties reflect the personalized nature of their internal governance as well as their lack of organizational structures. As Mufti (2011: 159-177) documents, the decision to select candidates for elected office in the National and Provincial legislatures lies with the party's top leadership. In the absence of robust internal processes of career growth, a primary criterion for selection is an individual candidate's 'electability' in his or her home constituency. This leads to a preference for locally dominant elites who are able to maintain islands of authority and their own political networks.<sup>192</sup> In exchange for their support in winning elections, these influential candidates are provided access to public officials, constituency development funds, and material incentives for self-enrichment (Wilder 1999). This patronage transaction means parties remain beholden to the interests and whims of dominant classes, and that powerful candidates are likely to switch allegiances when a party loses popularity in order to retain their access to patronage.<sup>193</sup> For example, as documented by Siddiqui (2017: 94-95) between 1988 and 2008, a remarkably high 65% of all candidates who had contested more than one election, and were ever associated with PML-N, had also been affiliated with at least one other party. Overall, for all parties competing in the politically critical province of Punjab, as many as 42% of all candidates

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<sup>192</sup> The preference for electable elites is particularly salient in rural areas, and leads to parties perpetuating localized dynasties. Nearly two-thirds of elected legislators from Punjab between 1990 and 2007 had followed or were followed by a family member into electoral politics (Cheema et al. 2014).

<sup>193</sup> This loss of popularity could be due to a failure to govern, or, as the case has been in Pakistan through the 1990s, falling afoul of the powerful military. The latter creates a perception of the party's weakness and vulnerability among candidates and voters alike.

who finished in the top three in any National Assembly constituency in 2013 had contested either the 2008 or the 2002 election from a different party.

While the prevalence of ‘freelancing’ elites is a dominant feature of party politics, it does not mean that parties and party leaders do not have any loyal followings or ideational appeal with voters. The PPP (and the Bhutto family), for example, retains near-hegemonic popularity in large parts of rural Sindh, where its politics takes on a populist and Sindhi ethno-nationalist overtone. As the party enjoys sufficient leeway and autonomy in a number of safe seats, it can afford to reward loyalists by recruiting them as election candidates. Although to a lesser extent than the PPP in Sindh, Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N, have also carved out an independent appeal with a sizable cross-section of voters in urban Punjab through an emphasis on infrastructure development and private-sector led economic growth.<sup>194</sup> Therefore, the city of Lahore, capital of Punjab and considered to be the party’s home base, offers a space where party loyalists are safely rewarded with leadership positions and election candidacies without encountering adverse results.

However, the weaknesses at the local level highlighted earlier means that even with the existence of loyalists and direct ideational appeal of a party and its top leadership, mobilizing voters and supporters requires organizational and financial resources which mainstream parties rarely possess.<sup>195</sup> Inevitably, this means that when electoral candidacies and other leadership positions are distributed among loyalists, only those qualify who already exercise a degree of authority in their areas, operate networks with other locally influential elites, and carry the financial heft to finance party activity and contest elections (Asif and Chaudhry 2016). As one PML-N leader in Lahore told me in jest, the party operates on a ‘self-finance’ model and those who can’t finance the

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<sup>194</sup> The PPP has governed Sindh for 22 out of the last 45 years, while, in the 30 years since its formation, PML-N has been the ruling party in Punjab for 17. In 14 of those 17 years, a Sharif (Nawaz or his younger brother, Shahbaz) has been Chief Minister Punjab.

<sup>195</sup> Neither the PML-N nor the PPP have any internal system to collect finances or dues from party members (Mufti 2011: 177). The costs of running the party are borne mostly by the top leadership, while costs at the constituency level are borne by constituency-level leaders and candidates who raise funds from other elites. The PTI has attempted to tap into a more organized mode of financing by arranging fund-raising exercises with the Pakistani diaspora. However, it is still largely reliant on rich candidates, their networks, and the personal wealth of top leaders for election and mobilization expenses.

party's work or their own elections have to 'sit at home'.<sup>196</sup> Therefore, regardless of whether the party is choosing a strong electable candidate in a competitive constituency, or rewarding a loyalist with a party office and a candidacy in a safer constituency, its key personnel are all likely to be wealthy and locally influential.

### **Bazaar Traders and Party Politics in Lahore**

Writing on Lahore's urbanization and population growth during the early 1980s, Mohammad Qadeer (1983: 188) made particular note of the increasing importance of commercial actors in social and political activity in the city. His metric was the success of traders, merchants, and contractors in non-party based local government elections held in the early years of the Zia regime, which propelled a number of new entrants into elected office. As detailed in chapter 2, the changing class nature of the political sphere in Lahore around that time was down to several factors, such as the rise and success of the PNA movement, the repression of left-wing organizations, like labour and professional unions, and the consequent ascendancy of individuals who had the resources to engage in personalized, patronage-based politics.

Following the resumption of party-based politics from 1988 onwards, the pattern of businessmen – primarily bazaar traders - playing a role either as leaders/candidates or coveted brokers in urban political contestation has continued unabated. For example, in the 2013 elections, of the 38 legislators elected on a National or Provincial Assembly seat in the city of Lahore, 17 – all affiliated with the ruling party, the PML-N - were businessmen with a background in bazaar-based trading.<sup>197</sup>

Building on the backdrop of organizationally weak, elite-dependent parties detailed in the previous section, the following section attempts to unpack the role and salience of bazaar traders within the domain of party politics in contemporary Lahore. Drawing on

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<sup>196</sup> Interview no. 16; The term 'self-finance' is usually used to describe academically mediocre students from wealthy households who agree to pay higher fees in order to gain admission to public sector universities in Pakistan.

<sup>197</sup> In total, 30 out of the 38 MNA and MPAs were businessmen. 17 traders, 7 were associated with the manufacturing sector and another 6 had business interests in real estate development. Of the remaining 8, 3 were lawyers, 1 was a development consultant/retired civil servant, and 4 were agriculturalists. (Occupational data gathered during fieldwork)

fieldwork in both Mustafa Market and the wider field of politics in Lahore, I show how traders engage in mutually beneficial relationships with leaders belonging to the ruling party, the PML-N. Within this relationship, parties provide traders with an amplified voice in economic policy-making, protection and patronage in matters of local governance, and, for those who seek it, a platform to further their personal status ambitions. In exchange for their patronage, bazaar traders leverage their local influence at the community level in service of party elites, function as potential candidates for elected office, and donate financial assistance for political expenses.

### *A Party of Traders, A Party for Traders*

Major accounts of party politics in Pakistan have highlighted the position of bazaar traders and industrialists among the PML-N's core set of voters and supporters (Waseem 1994, 2006; Wilder 1999; Zaidi 2004; Mufti 2011). However, despite the frequency with which this assertion makes its way into journalistic and academic discourse, it has not been unpacked beyond an amorphous idea of material class interests and support for the party's pro-business orientation.

My fieldwork in Mustafa Market showed that the broader assertion of centrality made by earlier works still remains entirely correct. In my brief survey of 50 traders in the marketplace, 38 responded that they had voted for the PML-N in the previous (2013) election, and all of them intended on doing so again next time around. Another 5 said they had voted for the main opposition party, PTI, in 2013 but were disappointed with their agitation-heavy politics and were most likely going to revert back to the PML-N in the next election.<sup>198</sup> This support for the party was also visible in public spaces in Mustafa Market and the Shah Alam bazaar in general, where posters with supportive messages and congratulatory salutations carrying the pictures of Nawaz Sharif, his brother and Chief Minister Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif, and his nephew (Shehbaz's son) Hamza Shehbaz, occupied prominent positions.

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<sup>198</sup> Important to mention here that just prior to the bulk of my fieldwork starting in 2015, the PTI had engaged in a 5-month long sit-in and protest in the federal capital over alleged rigging in the 2013 elections. As the sit-in and protests turned violent on several occasions, it led to some of their voters in Mustafa Market rescinding support.

Bazaar traders' support for the PML-N, and the personal appeal of Nawaz Sharif in their worldview, was presented with both an ideational and a material component. The former was elaborated through a preference for the character and public persona of Nawaz Sharif, especially in comparison to leaders of other parties. In the words of one trader, Nawaz Sharif was both *naram dil* (soft-hearted) and *khandaani* (one who valued traditions). He also added that even though Nawaz was one of the richest men in Pakistan, his general demeanour towards the public seemed to be empathetic. Another trader echoed this view, and contrasted it with former President and leader of the PPP, Asif Ali Zardari, who was widely perceived to be corrupt and immoral:

“The PPP says it speaks for the common man, but in reality they only govern for themselves. All they cared about these last 5 years (2008-2013) was making money and getting other *waderas* (Sindhi landlords) to make money. What happens to *awami hamdardi* (empathy with the masses) when PPP *waderas* are oppressing poor farmers? They treat the poor in Sindh who vote for them like stray animals. I've seen videos where their *mazahras* (tenants) are made to bow down and touch their feet. Now look at Mian *sahib* (Nawaz Sharif) on the other hand. At least he treats the people with dignity and respect. He came to our neighbourhood in Shahalami for a rally a couple of years ago, and spent time listening to people and their problems. It felt very genuine.”<sup>199</sup>

In line with the broader cultural orientation of the marketplace, some traders also referred to Nawaz Sharif's pious demeanour, and his family's patronage association with religious institutions, especially the Data Darbar shrine. On a few occasions, traders mentioned that the Sharif family had long supported the shrine, and that each year during the *urs* they personally changed the *chaadar* (protective cloth covering) on Data sahib's grave with their own hands. One trader also mentioned that unlike other political leaders, Nawaz Sharif always took the time out to visit Mecca and Medina on pilgrimage during the holy month of Ramadan.

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<sup>199</sup> Interview no. 29



Within material factors, each and every trader I interviewed placed a considerable degree of stress on the greater good achieved by supporting PML-N. In terms of general prosperity, a frequently occurring theme was the party's track record of delivering 'development', which they saw was far superior than what any other party had done at the centre or in other provinces. As examples, several traders pointed to the party's success in undertaking large infrastructure schemes, like the Metro Bus corridor of Lahore, which was Pakistan's first mass-transit project when it was built in March 2013. Others mentioned the slew of power projects under construction at the time to tackle Pakistan's crippling energy shortages, or the Lahore to Islamabad motorway, which Sharif had championed and inaugurated during his last term in power between 1997 and 1999.

Traders who had families in rural areas of Punjab and frequently travelled outside of Lahore referred to a *sarkon ka jaal* (metalled road network) that Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif was continuously building.<sup>200</sup> For them, even if infrastructure contractors were giving bribes to PMLN representatives for these contracts, as was frequently alleged by PTI leaders, the important thing was that something was being built and people were benefitting from it.

But ultimately, all the couching of PMLN's politics and performance in larger, greater-good abstractions would often conclude with the simple assessment that their policies were generally good for business (*karobar ke liye achay hain*). As detailed in chapter 2, steps such as capital account liberalization, signing of new free-trade agreements with large exporters like China, and reducing tariff-based and non-tariff barriers for imports have been part and parcel of Pakistan's experience with neoliberalization since the 1980s. After stepping into power in May 2013, the PML-N government further accelerated these trends most notably through an artificially over-valued rupee, which made imports cheaper on average by 15%. While the move led to a widening current account deficit and a fast depleting stock of dollar reserves held by the central bank, it

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<sup>200</sup> One trader joked that the drastic improvement in intra-province roads meant that it now took his in-laws only 3 hours to get to Lahore, whereas earlier it had taken them 6.

served as a major source of prosperity for the bazaar economy.<sup>201</sup> Aided by low inflation due to a fall in international oil prices, improved economic growth, and a liberal import regime, Pakistan's private consumption as a percentage of GDP rose to 83% in 2017, compared to 79% in 2013. This rise was reflected in sector-wise GDP growth data as it showed the retail-wholesale (bazaar) sector posting a growth rate of 6.8% by FY2017, its highest in a decade (Government of Pakistan 2017: 42).

For all traders in Mustafa Market – even those who voted for PTI or were indifferent towards politics in general – this policy direction remained a highly salient point given that it linked the party to their own personal prosperity. As one trader who had voted for the PTI put it, the PML-N – regardless of their corruption in government - knew the importance of thriving businesses because they themselves were businessmen:

“Unfortunately, other parties don't understand what is needed for *tarraqi* (development). More than anything, what is required is to let us businessmen do our job; provide us with facilities, make electricity available, take the FBR off our back. In due time, we will ensure everyone is gainfully employed. Only the PML-N understands this because their leaders are business-minded. Since the 90s, *baray* Mian sahib (Nawaz Sharif) has always been pro-business compared to PPP and his governments have similarly been good for business. Probably it's for *zaati mafaad* (personal gain), because he himself comes from a business family. But he listens to the business community and I think that is the approach other parties should also follow.”<sup>202</sup>

### *Coveting the Bazaar*

While much of Pakistan's history has seen political, bureaucratic, and military elites pay extra consideration to the country's large industrialists and business houses (Kochanek 1983, 1997; Armytage 2015, 2016), what sets the PML-N further apart is its insistence on paying attention to businessmen in the trading economy. This is done through both

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<sup>201</sup> Over the 2013 to 2017 period, imports rose by 12% to reach USD 47 billion, the highest ever mark in Pakistan's history. In the goods and apparatus category, which covered commodities traded in Mustafa Market, countrywide imports rose from USD 556 million in FY2013 to USD 1,650 billion by FY2017, reflecting the general prosperity of the sector (State Bank of Pakistan 2017).

<sup>202</sup> Interview no. 17

the variety of policy interventions mentioned above, and a large number of formal and informal organizational processes. As the trader quoted above rightly pointed out, the party's core leadership consists of businessmen-cum-politicians from urban Punjab who have remained loyal with Nawaz Sharif over the last three decades. Due to their occupational affiliations, these politicians carry an organic connection with the business community and retain considerable contact with it in the economic centres of the province (Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, and Sialkot). This translates into consultative meetings, giving businessmen preferential access to government departments, and frequently attending public events organized by commerce chambers and traders' associations.

Just as macroeconomic trends revealed the sectoral priorities of the PML-N leadership, their activity in the localized setting of Lahore revealed a high density of ties with members of the business community in general, and the *tajir biraderi* in particular. The party's Lahore president, Pervaiz Malik, himself a businessman elected as an MNA from an inner-city constituency, was also the focal person for interactions with apex organizations representing business interests, such as the All Pakistan Anjuman-i-Tajran (APAT) and the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI). In his own words, he was under 'strict instructions' from the Chief Minister to ensure that the city's business elites found a constant, open-line of communication for facilitation purposes. To this end, he employed a dedicated personal secretary who handled his communication and engagements with the business community, which mostly involved attending dinner receptions and *zehrana*s hosted by wealthy traders, and helping them out in instances where other, personal patronage networks were less effective, such as fast-tracking visa-processing letters from the Ministry of Commerce, obtaining customs clearance certificates, or resolving sales tax tussles with the FBR's higher bureaucracy.<sup>203</sup>

While the PML-N's city leadership maintained close relationships with apex organizations of the business community, relations with bazaar associations and the

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<sup>203</sup> Interview no. 53; On average, Malik said he attended more than 30 events a month that involved members of the business community. Analysis of event coverage in a local Lahore-based newspaper confirmed that the number was not an exaggeration. Eventually, due to his performance in keeping businessmen placated, he was made part of the federal cabinet as Minister of Commerce in a reshuffle in August 2017.

smaller trading community were operationalized through the party's traders' wing. Established in the late 1990s, the PML-N Lahore traders' wing was a party body approved by the central executive committee, and overseen directly by Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza. Office-bearers of the traders' wing were wealthy bazaar traders picked primarily on the basis of their good relations with the Sharifs and other party leaders, as well as the level of support they enjoyed among PML-N loyalists in the trading community. During the course of my fieldwork, the traders' wing head was Nasir Saeed, a dynamic trader who held concurrent offices as advisor to the Chief Minister, Vice-President of the LCCI, and President of the Chamberlain Road (Camera Market) Traders' Association.<sup>204</sup>

As larger policy issues involving senior government officials were taken up through the party's city president and other top leaders, the traders' wing was left with helping out with smaller issues, which usually involved marketplace interactions with the local municipal bureaucracy. In this regard, the traders' wing maintained close contacts with heads of traders' associations and different factions within marketplaces. In Mustafa Market, for example, several elite traders belonging to both factions, the reigning *Takbeer* group and the opposing *Ittehad* group, were close to Nasir Saeed, and frequently invited him to marketplace events and dinner receptions. While a few traders I spoke to expressed a degree of frustration at the favouritism the party's traders' wing showered on some, all generally agreed that the PML-N deserved to be commended for showing some level of organized consideration.<sup>205</sup>

Alongside the relations cultivated by the party's city leadership and its traders' wing, which collectively constituted the formal channels of patronizing bazaar traders, its elected representatives (MNAs and MPAs) maintained their own informal ties with traders both within and outside of their constituencies. In the case of Mustafa Market, leaders of the *Ittehad* group faction maintained a strong relationship with one of its

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<sup>204</sup> Upon Nasir Saeed's untimely death in December 2016, the Chief Minister appointed Irfan Sheikh, a wealthy trader who operated a chain of high-end department stores, as President traders' wing. At the time of his appointment, he also served as the President of the Pakistan Industrialist and Traders Front (PIAF).

<sup>205</sup> According to these traders, the favouritism manifested in friends or relatives of traders' wing office-bearers obtaining an immediate response to their requests and preferential access to official quarters, while others had to wait for weeks for a call-back.

former members and ex-president of the ATMM, Mian Marghoob Ahmed, who was now an MPA in a neighbouring constituency. The MPA was fairly influential within the party apparatus in Lahore and had good contacts in the federal capital as well, having previously served as an MNA between 2008 and 2013. As mentioned in chapter 3, he was a regular attendee of ATMM events, such as the *zehrana*s and Mehfil-i-Milaads, and was frequently called upon to serve as a mediator and guarantor in disputes that arose between Mustafa Market traders.

Other traders of the market maintained their own private relations with politicians, often drawing on them for a variety of patronage purposes. Rana Mukhtar and his brother Rana Ahmed, two elite traders in the marketplace, were close friends with another Lahore PML-N MPA, Malik Waheed, who, as mentioned earlier, had helped out with the regularization of an informal housing settlement in Angoori Bagh that their cousin was managing. Similarly, the ATMM's vice-chair, Shahid Aslam enjoyed good relations with the MPA representing Shah Alam bazaar, Khawaja Salman Rafique; while ATMM head, Malik Khalid, was close with the former Governor of Punjab, Chaudhry Sarwar, and had been his informal advisor on business affairs during the time the latter had served in office.

### *Reciprocity and Influence*

The discussion above makes apparent the embedded and patronage-based nature of PML-N's relationship with the bazaar through a variety of formal and informal channels in Lahore. Underscoring this relationship were the organic connections between the party and the traders' community, given the number of party elites that came from business backgrounds, and occasionally, from the very same marketplaces. Thus their patronage in the policy arena or in local everyday practices can be seen as an expression of shared class interest. However, there were a range of other factors at play, which were responsible for the consecration of bazaar traders within the realm of party politics. These included politicians' reliance on traders' role as influencers at the neighbourhood/community level, and as donors for electoral and party expenses.

These factors, grounded in the organizational weakness of parties as they were, became apparent from my conversations with party leaders and candidates of the PML-N in Lahore. The party's additional general-secretary in Lahore, and former MPA candidate, Syed Tauseef Shah pointed to the *izzat* (respect) traders held in their marketplaces and surrounding neighbourhoods, and how their opinions were generally respected by workers and residents. More importantly, he prefaced this (inadvertently) with the admission that the party was reliant on them due to its organizational shortcomings:

“The aim of the party is representation of the people, regardless of their social status. However, a provincial assembly constituency has almost 200,000 people. A national assembly has double that amount. It is impossible for a candidate to be personally in touch with everyone, hear them out, or tell them the party's stance on issues. For this task, it helps to know a smaller number of people, who have a voice in the community and who are respected as the *baray* (elders) in their neighborhoods. Because traders work in a public setting, people know them, interact with them, and often respect them. They visit their shops, do business with them, come to them to seek a resolution for their problems. Hence if we facilitate traders, we are helping them facilitate other people as well.”<sup>206</sup>

The PML-N's Lahore president echoed a similar view, while referring to heightened electoral competition with the emergence of opposition party, PTI, since 2011. He felt that it was in the best interests of the party to keep as many resourceful and well-connected groups on their side, because it perpetuates an image of strength, which also helps the voting behaviour of those around them.<sup>207</sup>

Both party leaders and individual candidates also mentioned how the party had to rely on traders and other wealthy brokers for administrative and electoral expenses. Candidates, in particular, were very frank on the transactional aspect of such relations. MPA and former ATMM head, Mian Marghoob, who had contested two elections in the

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<sup>206</sup> Interview no. 16

<sup>207</sup> Interview no. 53

past decade, stated that without the support and backing of influential elites, it would be very difficult to even compete:

“It now costs more than Rs. 10 million for a single provincial assembly campaign. If my business is doing well, *Alhamdulillah*, I can afford to spend maybe half of that amount from my own pocket. For the rest, I will have to seek out my friends and family. In the last election, some of my brothers in the *tajir biraderi* helped finance and organize corner meetings and rallies. Once they’ve helped me, it’s only fair for them to expect some consideration in return. Even though I’m not in their constituency, they will expect me to pick up their calls and help out with any issue they are facing. If I start ignoring them, they will find someone else to back. And my own career in politics won’t last much longer after that!”

A closer look at how the relations mentioned here play out in real time will be taken up through the study of the 2015 local government election in a subsequent section. However, for our purposes, it is important to note that political party elites were highly cognizant of the localized influence and authority held by bazaar traders, accumulated through the processes detailed in the preceding three chapters. What is also important is the general level of reliance on local elites that individual candidates and party office-bearers admit to, and which play a crucial role in shaping their politics in and out of office. This, as detailed ahead, has major implications for the autonomy of party decision-makers and how governance and policy decisions reflect a consistent bias towards dominant groups.

#### *Buckling Under Pressure: The Bazaar versus the State*

While fraternal relations and ties of material reciprocity constituted the primary source of bazaar traders’ influence in the political sphere, periodic instances of conflict with the government witnessed a recourse to mass mobilization and protest. Starting from the PNA movement in 1977 all the way to the present, utilization of ‘shutter power’ by traders has proven to be a highly effective mechanism of influencing particular aspects

of public policy, in both economic and non-economic affairs.<sup>208</sup> At a wider level, the bazaar's ability to mobilize on scale remains a major feature of the broader realm of contentious politics in Pakistan. Between 2005 and 2010, bazaar traders were the second-most mobilized occupational group, after government employees, accounting for 15% of all protests and strikes (Butt 2016). These included demonstrations against taxation efforts, state service delivery failures (electricity outages, gas shortages, and law & order issues), and even cultural causes such as pan-Islamist solidarity protests and mobilization in defense of Pakistan's anti-blasphemy laws (Blom 2008).

For mobilization purposes, traders draw upon the *Anjuman-i-Tajrans* within bazaars and the associational networks formed through apex organizations to build momentum across marketplaces. Among other causes, this has allowed the sector to stave off sporadic efforts by various governments to document and tax their privileged (and undocumented) practices of accumulation over the last three decades. Major examples include a 2-week long strike in June 1998, when a previous PMLN government attempted to extend the full General Sales Tax (GST) rate of 17% onto the retail sector through a clause in the annual federal budget legislation. Using a variety of channels, bazaar elites acted through embedded ties with elected representatives in the legislature, operationalized backdoor contacts within the ruling party, and carried out general strikes to pressurize, weaken, and ultimately overturn the government's resolve.<sup>209</sup>

Two years later, in 2000, the military government of General Musharraf launched a tax expansion drive through a "Documentation of Economy Ordinance", aimed at assessing the revenue of wholesale and retail enterprises in major urban commercial centers.<sup>210</sup> To this end, the regime deployed soldiers and junior government officers to sit behind the counter at shops within selected marketplaces in Lahore in an attempt to gain an accurate estimate of turnovers. This effort too proved to be wholly unsuccessful in the

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<sup>208</sup> Although the term 'shutter power' has only been noted by Wilder (1999: 105) in the academic literature, it is one used widely by bazaar leaders in their day to day discourse. It refers to the purposeful rolling down of steel shutters that cover shop-faces during the course of a marketplace strike.

<sup>209</sup> "GST rollout hits major snags." *The Nation* (Lahore, Pakistan) 21 Sept. 1998:11

<sup>210</sup> The Survey for Documentation of National Economy Ordinance, 2000; ORDINANCE No. XV of 2000; Passed: 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2000



face of repeated waves of bazaar strikes in urban Punjab and Karachi, including one that lasted for 11 successive days.<sup>211</sup> The power of bazaar traders to influence policy decisions in conflictual settings emerges even more clearly from this last example, as it took place under an insulated authoritarian regime, and at a time when formal channels of participatory politics were still closed.

Similarly, during my fieldwork in Lahore, the bazaar's protection of its rent-seeking advantages with the state came to the fore once more. In 2013, the PML-N government entered into a USD 6.6 billion stabilization lending agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stave off a balance of payment crisis.<sup>212</sup> As part of the structural adjustment prescriptions, the government was asked to broaden and deepen the tax base beyond its narrow reliance on indirect levies, corporate firms, and salaried employees in the formal sector.<sup>213</sup> This was primarily to address shrinking fiscal space for pro-poor development expenditure, which came in at less than 5% of GDP in 2013 (Government of Pakistan 2017: 63).

The government's much-delayed response to IMF's tax reform exhortations came through the FY2016 federal budget, which included a 0.6% withholding tax on banking transactions over Rs. 50,000 per day made by non-filers of income tax returns.<sup>214</sup> Devised by senior FBR bureaucrats and the finance minister (a close relative of Nawaz Sharif), Ishaq Dar, the idea was that a tax of this nature would drive up the number of tax filers and thus increase documentation of the economy.

While the tax impacted a wide cross-section of society, its impact was the greatest on bazaar traders, who were accustomed to carrying out their business dealings through cash transfers using *benami* and undeclared personal bank accounts. As news of the new measure's passage by parliament filtered through to bazaars across the country,

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<sup>211</sup> "Strikes weaken documentation drive" *Dawn* (Lahore, Pakistan) 20 Oct. 2000: 14

<sup>212</sup> IMF Country Report No. 13/287: "ARTICLE IV CONSULTATION AND REQUEST FOR AN EXTENDED ARRANGEMENT UNDER THE EXTENDED FUND FACILITY" (September 2013)

<sup>213</sup> At the time of starting its latest IMF programme, Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio was a paltry 9.5%, one of the lowest in the regions. The state's current (non-development) expenditures were 16.4% of GDP, and its fiscal deficit had swelled to 8.2% (Government of Pakistan 2017: 64).

<sup>214</sup> "Senate committee approves tax on bank transactions." *Dawn* (Karachi, Pakistan) 10 Jun. 2015

traders immediately broke out in protest against the government. On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2015, Lahore and Karachi witnessed business closures for 2 hours as traders and their workers, including those in Mustafa Market, took out localized rallies and demonstrations within the confines of their marketplaces. Behind the scenes, national apex organizations such as various branches of the APAT and the Quomi Tajir Ittehad (QTI) initiated contact with elected representatives of the ruling party, and with bazaar elites in different marketplaces across the country. The consultations led to an agreement on putting pressure on the government through general strikes on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 2015.

The strike calls were well-heeded, as commercial activity across the country came to a complete halt.<sup>215</sup> Bazaar elites in Lahore and Karachi were also successful in gaining the support of goods and passenger transporters, who were instrumental in enforcing a wheel-jam in all major cities.

Seeing the traders exhibit their 'shutter power', the threat of future strikes and loss of support from a key demographic instigated considerable panic among the ruling party, especially in its home province of Punjab. A host of top leaders, including Punjab's Chief Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, urged the federal government to find a mutually agreeable solution immediately.

By mid-August, the pressure from a series of successful strikes and demonstrations, the urging of its own provincial government in Punjab, and the growing anger of its elected representatives in Parliament proved to be too much for the federal government. Despite the IMF's strong insistence on retaining the withholding tax in its original shape, the Finance Minister caved into the demands of the traders and reduced the withholding tax rate by half (from 0.6% to 0.3%), and altered the daily non-taxable limit to Rs. 50,000 from each account instead of all accounts. To further placate them for not doing away with the tax altogether, the government decided to withdraw its plans of

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<sup>215</sup> "Traders observe strike against new tax." *Dawn* (Lahore, Pakistan) 02 Aug. 2015; "Traders observe nationwide strike." *Dawn* (Lahore, Pakistan) 05 Aug. 2015

implementing sales tax registration on to retailers who had turnovers higher than Rs. 5 million per annum.

The success of traders in halting the government's policy shift was made possible by two major factors. Firstly, it was helped by a strong consensus among the trading community in all four provinces on a strategy for mobilization, which included strikes, rallies, and public demonstrations. Secondly, traders were helped by a lack of autonomy in the ruling party, whose leaders and members were largely sympathetic to their concerns. The most telling aspect of this is that apart from the Finance Minister, the two other leaders tasked with bazaar sector consultations were PML-N Lahore President and business community liaison, Pervaiz Malik, and an MNA from Faisalabad, Mian Abdul Mannan, who had served as the President of APAT between 2010 and 2013.

### *Chasing Patronage*

The discussion so far has focused on ties between bazaar traders and the dominant party in Punjab, the PML-N. The relationship between the two exhibits a transactional arrangement with party leaders protecting the sector's interests and providing a platform for political and personal status ambitions, while traders reciprocate with electoral support and financial assistance. While there are tangential factors related to the personal and cultural appeal of PML-N's leadership conditioning the relationship, the root of this support remains wedded to a transactional arrangement. A major test of this is that when parties or individual politicians fail to keep up with their end of the bargain, ambitious traders realign their loyalties towards other parties or factions.<sup>216</sup>

In the past three decades, there have been several major cases of bazaar elites recalibrating their political preferences in order to retain access to their privileges. The highest frequency of such floor-crossing took place between 1999 and 2007, when a PML-N government was replaced by the military regime of General Musharraf. Despite

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<sup>216</sup> This is worth stressing given how the PML-N's relationship with traders might appear to be one of party hegemony, with its organizational incorporation of a particular class. However frequent splits and cross-overs reveal that the root is transactional and contingent rather than ideological.

traders being considered strong supporters of the PML-N, the post-coup political scenario saw considerable attrition of bazaar elites from the deposed party towards the newly-created PML-Q, which had been propped up in support of the regime. In non-party local government polls held in 2001, the leaders of both the APAT and the Lahore-based QTI, allied with the PML-Q in exchange for patronage, government access, and electoral tickets.<sup>217</sup> This allowed several bazaar elites to gain seats on the city council, and gave the PML-Q key votes that allowed it to install its own pro-regime mayor.

Following QTI's lead, in 2002, APAT leader and Shah Alam bazaar representative Haji Maqsood Ahmed Butt also joined the PML-Q, despite having served as a PML-N MPA for over 12 years. For switching his allegiances, he was immediately given an advisory position (with the status of a provincial minister) in the Punjab cabinet, and his eldest son, Shahid Maqsood, was given a ticket to contest the 2005 local government elections. However, this switch proved to be temporary. Once the General Musharraf regime weakened and eventually gave way for the resumption of democracy in 2008, Haji Maqsood Butt re-joined the PML-N soon after the party returned to political primacy in Punjab.

While the trend of switching party allegiances peaked under the military government and its immediate aftermath, it has not yet disappeared from the realm of bazaar-party relations. Since PTI's rise as the main opposition party from 2011 onwards, bazaar traders who experience unmet material expectations and unfulfilled ambitions with the PML-N have once again found another route to mining local influence and traction in the political sphere. This was particularly apparent through the political involvements of the current General-Secretary of the APAT, Naeem Mir. Since gaining prominence in bazaar circles, Mir had become close with the Chief Minister's son, Hamza Shehbaz, and another ruling party MPA, Hafiz Mian Nauman, with whom he ran a motorcycle tyre distribution business. Due to his proximity to the two leaders, he enjoyed considerable government access and was frequently feted by the party on business related consultations. However, the relationship turned sour after Mir's demand for an election ticket ahead of the 2013 elections was turned down by the party leadership. He

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<sup>217</sup> "QTI claims support of 63 UC Nazims, naibs." *Dawn* (Lahore, Pakistan) July 06. 2001

switched his allegiances to the PTI, who were more than happy with his decision and gave him a seat on the party's Central Executive Committee (CEC) as a trade and commerce representative.<sup>218</sup> However, this too proved to be temporary, as by late 2014, efforts by Lahore-based PML-N leaders to win back Mir's allegiances started bearing fruit. In August 2015, after the bazaar-government tussle over the withholding tax played itself out, Mir resigned from his seat on the PTI's CEC and accepted an invitation by the PML-N leadership to become part of the government's newly constituted Tax Reform Committee.

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As detailed above, the transactional relationships forged between bazaar traders and contemporary political parties in Lahore play an integral part in reproducing Pakistan's elite-dominated political sphere. These relationships are contextualized by both a legacy of authoritarianism, which has undercut party development at various points in the last four decades, as well as by the internal organizational weaknesses of political parties, which cyclically perpetuates their reliance on local elites. In turn, this reliance when combined with the strong mobilization capacity within the bazaar community contributes to why efforts to recalibrate the state's distributional biases are usually unsuccessful.

In the final empirical section of this thesis, I return to the reality of structuring consent, which provides the political sphere its hegemonic character. As shown previously in chapters 4 and 5, the construction and legitimization of bazaar traders' authority with the urban poor takes place through a variety of material, dependence-inducing ties and a host of performative and discursive interventions in the cultural sphere. This research sees these ties and interventions as building blocks towards both cementing bazaar traders' position in the urban social hierarchy and ultimately helping in the structuring of political activity and consent within the domain of electoral politics. To demonstrate this further, I turn to the activities of party elites, bazaar traders, and the urban poor in

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<sup>218</sup> Interview no. 7

Mustafa Market and its surrounding neighbourhoods during the 2015 local government elections in Lahore.

### **The 2015 Local Government Elections**

On 26<sup>th</sup> of August, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) notified the schedule for the first phase of local government elections in Punjab, due to be held on 31<sup>st</sup> of October, 2015.<sup>219</sup> These would be the first local elections in the province in 10 years, and the first to be held under a new local government act introduced by the PML-N government in mid-2013. Prior to this, the last such exercise had been on non-party basis under General Musharraf's regime in 2005, which had used an extensive devolution agenda to cultivate a modicum of social support at the grassroots level (ICG 2005b; Khan et al. 2007). Once the PML-N returned to power in 2008, it immediately curtailed the powers of local government representatives elected under the previous regime, and replaced them with bureaucrat administrators in urban and rural areas.

This latest election schedule was the long awaited outcome of considerable political and legal pressure on the PML-N government in Punjab. The party had been reluctant to devolve power to elected representatives at the local level, due to its leaders' strong preference for running administrative affairs through provincially appointed bureaucrats. However, a series of successful petitions in the Supreme Court forced the government to concede on its position, and paved the way for an extensive electoral exercise (DRI 2016: 3-4).<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Election Commission of Pakistan – Notification no. F.4 (1)/2015-LGE(P). For the sake of administrative convenience, the ECP decided to hold elections in three phases across Punjab's 36 districts. Lahore and 10 other districts fell under phase 1.

<sup>220</sup> The party attempted to stall the polls through a number of ways. It first made changes to the local government act to hold polls on non-party basis, which had been declared a violation of the Constitution by the Supreme Court. It then undertook an extensively contentious delimitation process on its own, rather than allowing the ECP to do it. This too was reversed in the Court, and the ECP had to redraw local council boundaries. Ultimately, while the PML-N could not prevent elections from happening, it made sure that the law under which these new local governments were to be constituted was weak and beholden to the provincial tier of government. For more on the shortcomings of the 2013 Punjab Local Government Act, see DRI 2016: 23-25

Under the new local government act, the city of Lahore was designated as a unitary metropolitan corporation divided into 274 Union Councils. Each Union Council (UC) was a dual-member constituency featuring direct elections for a joint-ticket chairperson and vice-chairperson. The elected chairpersons were subsequently designated as the electoral college for the Mayor and 9 Deputy Mayors of Lahore. At the lowest tier, each Union Council was further divided into 6 single-member wards, with each ward directly electing one councillor. Thus, voters were required to cast two votes on polling day – one for the joint chairperson/vice-chairperson of their UC and one for their local ward’s councillor.

### *Contest Between Bazaar Elites*

Mustafa Market and its surrounding neighbourhoods lie between two UCs: No. 34 – Shah Alam Market (13,672 voters) and No. 35 – Rang Mahal (11,609 voters).<sup>221</sup> Collectively, these two UCs are two of the most densely populated in Lahore, with approximately 45,000 people residing in a miniscule area of 0.55 square kilometres. At the time of writing, both UCs fell under the NA-119 constituency, represented in the National Assembly by PML-N leader and son of Punjab’s Chief Minister, Hamza Shehbaz. The corresponding Punjab Assembly constituency was PP-142, held by PML-N’s Khawaja Salman Rafique, whose elder brother, Saad Rafique, was an MNA from a suburban Lahore constituency and served as Federal Minister for Railways.

Given that local government elections had been due for nearly 5 years and schedules were announced and redacted twice before the final one was issued in August, local elites were already in contact with party leaders for chairperson and vice-chairperson tickets. From within Mustafa Market, Vice-Chair of the ATMM, Shahid Aslam, had expressed an interest in contesting as Vice-Chairperson from UC-35. As a wealthy and long-time PML-N supporter, Aslam enjoyed cordial relations with Khawaja Salman, the local MPA, which he hoped would help him get the ticket.

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<sup>221</sup> Under the previous delimitation carried out in 2001, the area of these two and one more current UC (No. 32, Mochi Gate) was part of just one UC, the old No.28 – Rang Mahal, which had a population of 41,000 people with 21,469 voters.

The final decision to award tickets rested with the PML-N and PTI's constituency boards. This meant that the leadership of the two parties in the UCs corresponding National and Provincial Assembly constituencies would award tickets to individuals based on their own preferences. For the ward councillors' slots in each UC, the prospective Chair and Vice-Chair candidates were allowed some discretion to pick candidates of their own liking, subject to approval by the constituency board. While in public, leaders from both parties repeatedly stressed the importance of party work and loyalty in their ticket-awarding process, privately all of them admitted that local popularity and influence was the most important criteria.<sup>222</sup>

Given the party's ruling position in the provincial and federal government and its popularity in Lahore, tickets to contest from PML-N's platform were highly coveted. For the four main candidacies up for grabs in UC-34 and UC-35, as many as 22 candidates filed their application with the NA-119 constituency board. The fact that a non-refundable fee of Rs. 15,000 had to be donated to the party with each application, and any chance of actually getting a ticket relied on ties to the party leadership, meant that the process was skewed in favour of those with material resources and social capital. It was thus unsurprising that most of those who expressed an interest in contesting had a profile similar to ATMM's Shahid Aslam.

By the start of September, lobbying for party tickets had gained frenetic pace. The ECP's deadline for filing nominations had been set for 11<sup>th</sup> of September, and each candidate aspiring to contest from a party platform was required to have a signed letter of approval from the party leadership attached to his or her nomination form. Within Mustafa Market, Shahid Aslam's chances of getting a nod ended when his patron, Khawaja Salman, informed him that he had to accommodate another aspiring candidate – a wealthy trader from the crockery market - for the seat of UC-35 Vice-Chairperson. While no one else in Mustafa Market aspired to contest from the Shah Alam neighbourhood, two of its elite traders had better luck than their colleague and were able to gain PML-N candidacies in their UCs of residence. Rana Mukhtar, a former ATMM office-bearer and the elder of the two Rana brothers, was able to secure a Vice-

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<sup>222</sup> Interviews no. 56; 57



Chairperson ticket for UC-153 in Angoori Bagh, through his close relationship with MPA Malik Waheed.<sup>223</sup> Similarly, Jasim Islam, another influential trader whose younger brother handled his business dealings in the market, obtained a PML-N ticket for Chairperson in the upscale locality of UC-216 Muslim Town in southern Lahore.

The candidates ultimately finalized by the two main parties for UC-34 and UC-35 confirmed the trends highlighted earlier in this chapter. For UC-34, the PML-N constituency board went with a joint ticket of Arif Naseem Kashmiri and Haji Saleem Raza. Kashmiri was a wealthy businessman, one of the few who still resided within the Shah Alam neighbourhood, and earned a living through trading and property development. He had previously been elected as a UC chairperson (*nazim* as they were called under the old law) in 2005 from the old UC-28 constituency. However, his party affiliations had changed in the interim period. Previously, Kashmiri had been affiliated with the PPP, serving as its district president and even as its candidate for MPA from PP-142. However, given the party's decline in Lahore, he had switched over to the PML-N in late 2013 to ensure his political career did not fall into irrelevance.<sup>224</sup> His running mate, Haji Saleem Raza, was also a wealthy businessman and had previously been affiliated with the Musharraf-supporting PML-Q. His wealth and local influence meant that his efforts in campaigning against the PML-N in previous years were ignored by the party leadership.

The PTI's decision-making in UC-34 was largely similar to that of the PML-N. Its candidate for chairperson, Haji Imtiaz Ahmed, was also a trader who dealt in industrial chemicals and had been a supporter of the party for much of the past decade. He had earlier served as an independent councillor in 2001 and 2005. His running mate was another businessman, Chaudhry Fayyaz, who was a fresh entrant to electoral politics, but had previously supported the PPP.

In UC-35, the PML-N's chairperson ticket went to Haji Hanif, the President of the Shah Alam Readymade Garments Importers Association. His career in politics was similar to

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<sup>223</sup> The fact that Rana Mukhtar's cousin operated an informal housing settlement in the neighbourhood and was well-connected with the local population went heavily in his favour.

<sup>224</sup> "PPP's Kashmir crosses over to 'N'" *Dawn* (Lahore, Pakistan) Dec 13, 2013

that of many other ambitious bazaar traders across the province. In 1988, he won his first term as head of his local traders' association, which was followed by a seat on the LCCI Executive Committee in 1990. His rise within business circles caught the eye of PML-N leader Shehbaz Sharif who asked him to contest a city council election in 1991 and then again in 1998 from his party's platform. Once the Sharifs were deposed and forced into exile by General Musharraf, Haji Hanif was handed several leadership positions with the PML-N in Lahore, eventually becoming its city president. He led the party's candidates in the 2005 non-party local government polls, after which Shehbaz Sharif promised him a deputy mayor slot for his son, Idrees Hanif, who had also been elected to the city council. However, the party reneged on its commitment and chose to back another candidate. This promptly led Hanif to jump ship with his faction of businessmen in the party to the PML-Q, who were more than happy to gain extra votes and accommodate his son as a deputy mayor.<sup>225</sup> In 2012, with the PML-N back in power and the PML-Q languishing in oblivion, Haji Hanif renewed contact with Shehbaz Sharif, who welcomed him back to the party in a public ceremony.<sup>226</sup> Three years later, he was back contesting a local government election from the PML-N platform, alongside his running mate, Jameel Sharif, the crockery trader who had edged out ATMM's Shahid Aslam for the party ticket.

Hanif's opposing candidate in UC-35 was PTI's Shahid Bilal, the Vice-President of the Circular Road Traders' Association, who had previously been affiliated with the Islamist party, the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI). In his public proclamations, Bilal insisted that his ideological commitment to Islamism had not changed, but the Islamist party's decline had left him no choice but to combat the PML-N's corruption through another party's platform. His running-mate was also a local businessman, named Amir Younas, a new entrant to the electoral arena and one hand-picked by his patron on the party's constituency board.

The occupational and social characteristics of the candidates in these two UCs around Mustafa Market were in line with those in other UCs of the city. From an adjacent

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<sup>225</sup> Interview no. 46

<sup>226</sup> "Hanif joins PML-N" *Dawn* (Lahore, Pakistan) May 24, 2012

constituency, UC-32 Azam Cloth Market, the PML-N's candidate was a cloth trader who had served two terms as the President of the Azam Cloth Market Association. In another neighbouring constituency, UC-169 Nisbat Road, the ruling party's Vice-Chairperson candidate was also the regional head of the All Pakistan Paper Merchants' Association. In total, 184 out of 268 candidates of the PML-N, and 167 out of 256 candidates of the PTI were traders or other types of businessmen.<sup>227</sup> While complete data was hard to get hold of, at least 15% of these candidates were currently serving or had previously served as office-bearers in local traders' or other business associations.

### *Canvassing for Support*

The finalization of candidacies by mid-September shifted the mood in the Shah Alam area towards one of electoral festivity. The contest itself was viewed by most as skewed, since the PTI was not expected to put up much of a fight with their comparatively weaker candidates. Nonetheless, the PML-N candidates did not take their stronger position for granted, and undertook extensive campaigning work. For them, this election was a major opportunity to garner even greater influence, further their political careers, and restore local patronage networks through public office.

The campaign strategies deployed by the candidates relied heavily on other locally influential individuals. The parties did not contribute towards election-related expenses, and the constituency leadership had said it would help out in only those events where they themselves would make an appearance. The costs of actual grassroots level work, which included corner meetings, door-to-door visits, dinner receptions, and polling day mobilization were left with the candidates themselves. This meant that they had to reach out to their contacts in the marketplaces for various types of logistical and financial support.

In one of his first campaign efforts after receiving the ticket, Haji Hanif paid a visit to Mustafa Market to meet with ATMM's Shahid Aslam. Hanif recognized that Aslam was unhappy since his request for the Vice-Chairperson's ticket had been denied by the

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<sup>227</sup> Occupational data for candidates gathered through fieldwork

party leadership. Hanif also knew that even though Aslam had moved to an upscale suburban locality a few years ago, he was still registered to vote in UC-35, his workers lived in the warehouse above his shop and voted in this constituency, and that he was considered a respectable figure in the community due to his patronage and charitable endeavours in the *Mohallah Jorray Mori* residential neighbourhood behind Mustafa Market (which fell under ward 5 of UC-35). Therefore, his support would go some way in ensuring PML-N's success in the constituency.

For his part, Aslam did not hold a grudge against the candidate, but told him that his active support and assistance (which Hanif wanted) was contingent on him delivering for the locality. In consultation with his friends within the *Takbeer* faction of the marketplace, Aslam put forward a list of demands, which included a new transformer for one lane in the market, which was experiencing a high-degree of voltage fluctuation, new 'tuff-tiles' soling on the main alleyways to resolve the issue of perennial pot-holes and stagnant water during the monsoon season, and more manpower from the waste management company (LWMC) so that the ATMM would not have to bear the cost of hiring private cleaners. Even though two of these three things (the transformer and instructions to LWMC) were outside the formal remit of a Union Council chairperson, Hanif promised that once elected he would do his best to pressurize the relevant departments into delivering on these commitments. In exchange for his assurances, Aslam and some members of his faction within the ATMM agreed to finance arrangements for a corner meeting and a Mehfil-i-Milaad in ward 5.

Hanif's pattern of reaching out with bazaar traders and other locally influential voters with patronage offers in his constituency was similar to what other PML-N candidates were doing in different areas as well. The PML-N candidate from UC-34, Arif Kashmiri, was successful in gaining the endorsement of several traders' associations, which was publicly visible through posters and banners in parts of Shah Alam, after he promised that his first priority would be a large parking plaza on Circular Road. However, candidates representing the PTI experienced less luck with connections outside their personal networks, and instead were left banking on the personal appeal of the party's leader, Imran Khan. The party's messaging was built on the charisma of former

cricketer-turned-politician Khan and his anti-corruption platform, which had galvanised a section of voters against the PML-N in the 2013 general election.<sup>228</sup> However, this time around the contest was much more localized and did not have the added advantage of heightened media attention or constant engagement by the national leadership, which could resonate directly with voters. The candidates also experienced the added challenge of funding their campaign without the coffers of the rich PTI city leadership, which had already spent a considerable amount on their own elections, or the support of the PML-N leaning local business community.<sup>229</sup>



Figure 3: Main campaign billboard in Shah Alam bazaar

*(This was adjacent to Mustafa Market, and sponsors and supporters of Haji Hanif had their pictures put up on it. The prayer Haji Hanif is making reads “Oh Allah, Keep my Pakistan safe, Amen”)*

<sup>228</sup> The party attained 16.5% of the total vote, the second-highest number of seats in Punjab assembly, and the third-highest number of seats in the National Assembly.

<sup>229</sup> Interview No. 58; The PTI’s Lahore president, a wealthy real estate developer named Aleem Khan, had recently financed and fought an expensive, closely contested National Assembly by-election in a neighbouring constituency.



Figure 4: Election Poster in UC-34

*(Sponsored by a local trader)*

Overall, the campaigns were costly enterprises for the candidates and their supporters in the bazaar. While no candidate gave a firm answer to the question of how much it was costing them, one could estimate that it was comfortably in excess of Rs. 1.5 million. Every public corner of Shah Alam was covered in flexi banners and posters, and there were election-related events throughout the month of October. Sound systems and seating were required for all of them, while some also featured dinner and other refreshments. Overall, the costly enterprise of an election further reinforced the fact that only local elites with deep pockets (and who had friends with deep pockets) could become successful candidates.

#### *Incorporating the Urban Poor*

The discussion so far has focused on how bazaar traders intervene in the field of local political activity by joining political parties and becoming candidates, or by supporting and financing particular campaigns in exchange for material favours and increased access to official resources. The following part sheds light on another crucial aspect of their involvement in the political domain – their role in shaping the electoral participation of marginalized groups working and residing in and around the bazaar.

As with other Walled City UCs, both UC-34 and UC-35 consist largely of low-income voters.<sup>230</sup> However, this was not always the case. Till the early 1990s, the Walled City had a diverse socio-economic profile, with middle-class, lower middle-class, and low-income households residing within the same neighbourhoods and often on the same streets. Except for the wealthiest, who lived in large *havelis*, all other households resided in structures of similar sizes and experienced a considerable amount of cross-class interaction. However, rapid growth in Lahore's trading economy perpetuated rampant commercialization and warehousing, along with increased population pressures on what were already decrepit public services (Ezdi 2009). This pushed business-owning and white-collar middle class families to swap dense inner-city living with more comfortable abodes in new gated and planned communities that had mushroomed in suburban parts of the city. Since the 1990s, this process has continued unabated: whoever could afford to move out of the Walled City has done so, leaving behind only shops, reconverted warehouses, and residences of low-income and lower-middle income households.

Despite the contemporary socio-economic character of the neighbourhoods around the Shah Alam bazaar area, the discussion so far has shown that marginalized actors were largely missing from integral aspects of political activity. None were given Chair or Vice-Chair candidacies by the political parties, which ended up with wealthy businessmen who worked in the area and (often) resided elsewhere. Even the 12 tickets for ward councillors, which many wealthy bazaar traders scoffed at, ended up with smaller shopkeepers and businessmen who were friends and supporters of the candidates or the party's leaders in the constituency. Similarly, integral discussions in the run up to the election on what candidates would deliver in the UC were happening behind closed doors with local elites. Their priorities, such as a new electricity transformer or a parking plaza, dominated the conversation, while the material needs of those who both

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<sup>230</sup> While household income data by UC is not available in Pakistan, household surveys like the Lahore Urban Transport Master Plan (LUTMP) categorize Data Ganj Bakhsh Town (of which the Walled City is a part of) as a low-income region of Lahore, with 76% of all households earning below Rs. 30,000 per month. The city-wide average across all towns is 68% (JICA 2012: 2-81)

worked and resided in the neighbourhood, such as clean drinking water and a more efficient sanitation system, were given belated attention.

By and large, the only avenue that saw active participation of marginalized groups were public events held in the month leading to polling day. These included night-time corner meetings, various rallies, and other election-related gatherings designed to make voters more familiar with the candidates. The events themselves were exercises organized and mediated by locally influential individuals – mostly bazaar traders - who took them as a chance to publicize their proximity to the political sphere and their authority in the neighbourhood.

Three weeks ahead of polling day, a group of traders from Mustafa Market sponsored a corner meeting in the confines of the marketplace, as per their earlier agreement with the PML-N candidate. The meeting was held late on a Friday evening, in one lane of the market where shops had closed earlier for this purpose. Shahid Aslam, the ATMM office-bearer in charge of the event, had called in a catering company which had set up a *shamiana* (enclosed tent) with seating for about 100 people, attached bright floodlights to the balconies of nearby houses, and made arrangements for a *deg* chicken biryani dinner for attendees.

Traders who supported the PML-N and enjoyed a good relationship with Haji Hanif occupied the front rows of seating. Those who had contributed by getting posters and banners printed and placed in the tent had their pictures prominently visible on them, just underneath those of the candidate and the top leadership of the party. The rest of the seating was occupied by smaller shopkeepers, shop-workers, push-cart vendors, hand-trolley operators, and other low-income residents (including a large number of women and children) who worked and lived around Mustafa Market. Some of those employed at Shahid Aslam's shop were also busy helping out with the arrangements, and had been asked to throw flower petals on the candidates and other prominent guests when they arrived.





Figure 5: Scene from a corner meeting

Unlike the business-like nature of closed-door interactions between candidates and their friends and backers in the bazaar, neighbourhood public events such as the one arranged by Mustafa Market traders carried a much more populist flavour. On this instance, there was no room for a big stage or special arrangements for the candidates and his sponsors. The seating arrangement was uniform, with candidates addressing the crowd by simply standing up and facing them from one end of the enclosed tent. The sound system set up by the catering company belted out political anthems from the 2013 election campaign, most of which extolled the virtues of voting for Nawaz Sharif.

After a crowd of about 60 had gathered by 9 pm, the event was formally inaugurated by the customary recitation of the Quran and a *naat* by a local *naat khwaan*. The microphone was then taken over by the PML-N's candidate for councillor in Ward-5 who was responsible for managing Haji Hanif's campaign in this particular neighbourhood. He started off by thanking the list of sponsors and organizers from Mustafa Market who had made this possible.

The event itself consisted primarily of speeches by the candidates and the main organizers. Shahid Aslam was also one of those invited to speak to the crowd, and his

speech made references to the importance of delivering for the locality, and resolving the issues that those who worked and lived in the constituency faced on a daily basis. He also added that he personally will monitor and ensure that the candidates match the voters' expectations and fulfil their promises. Haji Hanif's speech detailed his past achievements as an elected councillor, and highlighted the general thrust of development work being carried out under the PML-N government. As he was a highly religious person (and made sure that he came across as one as well), he also made frequent references to the importance of honestly and diligently serving the community in Islam. His cause was further helped by the fact that an influential administrator of a local Islamic charity was also present on the stage, and had spoken in support of his candidacy.

After every speech, PML-N supporters ensured that the crowd remained charged and engaged by putting on party anthems on the sound system and leading periodic chants of *Nawaz Sharif zindabad! Haji Hanif zindabad!* Speeches and their related proceedings lasted for around 2 hours, after which dinner boxes carrying chicken biryani were distributed among the crowd. Haji Hanif and his running-mate, Jameel Sharif, stuck around and made a prominent and personalized show of distributing the first few boxes among the underprivileged attendees themselves.

Those attending this and the dozen or so other corner meetings that took place in the two union councils throughout the month expressed a variety of reasons for doing so. Given the PML-N's image as a party of delivering development, lower-middle income voters (small shopkeepers, blue-collar workers in formal enterprises) posited faith in the party and thought it was in the best interest of their locality to continue supporting it. These residents spent less time discussing the candidates or the constituency leadership, and gave Nawaz Sharif's personal appeal as a reason for attending. In the same vein, while events held by PTI candidates were not on the same scale, they were still successful in attracting younger, more-educated voters, who were similarly attracted by Imran Khan's anti-corruption message, rather than the candidates themselves.

On the other hand, most shop-workers, vendors, and other poor residents of the neighbourhood talked more about the image of local candidates, their links to local elites, and the importance of consultations in their decision-making process, rather than the ideational appeal of national political figures. One shop-worker, who was employed in the nearby optical goods market, cynically mentioned that he was least interested in tiresome arguments about Imran Khan versus Nawaz Sharif. In his view, all leaders were either corrupt or incompetent, and interested solely in lining their own pockets. He also expressed similar sentiments about the local MPA, whom he said came only once every 5 years to ask for their votes. However, he found Haji Hanif to be a good candidate because he worked in the locality, and was a pious man who gave generously for religious and charitable causes. He said his decision to vote for and support the PML-N was down to discussions with others in the market, led by his employer who had a direct relationship with the candidate:

“Haji *sahib idher ke hee hain* (he is a local). I’ve been working and living in the market for 10 years, and I’ve generally heard positive things about him. I don’t know what he intends to do after winning, but everyone I have spoken to have said he is a good, pious candidate. Mushtaq *sahib* (the employer) is on friendly terms with him, and has told me that he will personally ensure that Haji Hanif will fix the issues we are facing here. The road needs to be re-carpeted and drainage pipes along the shops also needs to be replaced. Haji *sahib* has given his word to Mushtaq *sahib* and others in the market that he will work on these issues.”<sup>231</sup>

In Mustafa Market, other workers and vendors echoed similar opinions about their participation. One vendor explained that while much of politics was amoral and ‘dirty business’, local government polls were better as they provided a platform for people who were connected to the constituency and its residents to play their part. Another pointed out that Shahid Aslam’s active endorsement of and relationship with the PML-N candidate meant that Mustafa Market and its surrounding area was more likely to receive development funds and other forms of patronage, once the local government

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<sup>231</sup> Interview no. 59

was constituted. He too mentioned that his support for the PML-N was based on the decision of his employer and other workers in the marketplace.

The trend of the urban poor voting in consultation with others in the neighbourhood around Mustafa Market is in line with studies in other parts of the city. A 2017 study of political attitudes in 3 inner-city Lahore constituencies revealed that more than 50% of lower-income voters, i.e. those who made less than Rs. 30,000 per month, arrive at their political preferences through collective decision-making, either with their families or in their neighbourhoods (Cheema et al. 2017). My fieldwork revealed that in mix-use districts like Shah Alam, local consultations meant that bazaar traders, who many poor voters spent time with and were connected to through patronage ties, were an integral part of the decision-making process as well. Given the fact that they exercised pre-existing authority in those localized arenas, due to workplace hierarchies and their cultural legitimization discussed in the previous chapter, their discursive cues with regards to other local elites, political priorities (such as what services local governments should spend on) and publicized endorsement of candidates also resonated in a variety of ways. This remained a consistent theme in my conversations on politics with subordinate groups in and around the bazaars.

Finally, another important and direct way in which traders shaped the political participation of workers who lived around the marketplace was through their registration as voters. Given that bazaar workers and street vendors constituted a sizable population, they appeared as a potential source of votes for candidates, and one that could be won over by co-opting the right elites. The shifting of voter registration from their permanent or previous place of residence had to take place through a revision in the 'temporary address' section of their Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs). As mentioned by a few workers who had been employed in Mustafa Market for more than 3 years, their employers had given them the fee required for CNIC revision to make sure that the temporary addresses were changed - often to the address of the shop's warehouse - ahead of the 2013 general election. Similarly, another worker mentioned that after the previous schedule for the 2015 local government polls had been redacted, local party elites had lobbied the database

authority to send a mobile CNIC issuing van to the Shah Alam area.<sup>232</sup> Once it was there, they asked the traders in their networks to make sure that newly-hired workers got their addresses (and thus voter registration) revised there and then.

### *Polling Day and Results*

As the campaigning period ended a day before the polling date, attention shifted to strategies of mobilizing voters and managing election day camps. Like much else in the election, these were expensive exercises and required a considerable degree of logistical support. Each Walled City Union Council had on average 10 polling stations, 5 each for males and females.<sup>233</sup> All of these polling stations required polling agents from the party/candidate, who would provide voters with the registration slips that would direct them to the appropriate booth inside the polling station. Each camp had to be manned by polling agents from early in the morning when voting opened at 7:30 am, till late in the evening when results were notified by the ECP's designated presiding officer. This meant that each candidate had to have a support staff of 30 individuals (both male and females) plus door-to-door mobilizers who could work in shifts to make sure that voters were able to cast their votes.

Candidates in both UCs relied on their supporters, their own employees, or those employed by their friends and supporters for their polling camps and for the purpose of door-to-door mobilization in the morning. What worked in their favour (unlike candidates in other parts of the city), was the densely populated nature of the Walled City, which meant that transportation was seldom required to move voters from their places of work or residence to the polling station.

Haji Hanif's polling camps were either manned by his friends from within the readymade garments market in Shah Alam or PML-N supporters who worked with the local MPA. To make sure he was able to mobilize all his voters, he had also assigned

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<sup>232</sup> The redaction of the previous schedule proved to be useful for this exercise. Under Pakistan's election laws, voter registration cannot be changed to a new constituency once the schedule for a general or local government election is announced.

<sup>233</sup> In total, there were 3269 polling stations, containing 9136 polling booths in the city of Lahore.

two designated drivers with rented Toyota Hilux pick-ups to transport acquaintances and trader friends who now lived and worked elsewhere in the city, but still had their votes registered in the Shah Alam neighbourhood.

Polling activity picked up pace around 10 am, when shops began to open up in the bazaar. Most Mustafa Market traders were registered at the polling station for UC-35 Ward-5 in Public Model High School, a short walk away from the main Shah Alam bazaar boulevard.<sup>234</sup> As it was a Saturday, marketplace activity was generally curtailed, which gave workers and traders more time to participate in the political activity around them. Every now and then, a PML-N or a PTI supporter would visit the marketplace asking if the traders and their workers had already voted. For their part, traders ensured that their employees were given enough time off during the day to cast their votes.

As polling day progressed, it was clear that turnout was generally higher within the Walled City compared to other parts of Lahore. The presence of a large number of voters within close proximity to their polling stations was certainly a major factor, as was the fact that this as a commercial area and traders were playing a key role in encouraging their employees and other workers in the bazaars to go out and vote as well. However, a higher turnout was not viewed as good news by some in the PML-N camp, as it signalled that the election was competitive. Late in the day, some of the polling agents I spoke to who were manning Arif Kashmiri and Haji Hanif's camps in different wards admitted that they had expected turnout to be lower and found this to be a perplexing trend.

However, their fears were misplaced. Both candidates, their designated running mates, and their ward councillor panels made a clean sweep for the PML-N and won by comfortable margins. Kashmiri polled in over 3000 votes, nearly 1000 more than the PTI candidate. Haji Hanif too won by a lead of a 1000 over his competitor. The turnout

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<sup>234</sup> Only those traders who were engaged in political activity in their places of residence did not have their votes registered in Mustafa Market neighbourhood. Some of them, however, chose to visit the market after casting their votes, to show support for their friends who were contesting and because, more generally, electoral activity in the Walled City was considered much more festive than in the upscale suburban locations where they now resided.

was high, at around 60%, but had ended up working in their favour. Among those from Mustafa Market, Rana Mukhtar, who was contesting on a PML-N vice-chair ticket in Angoori Bagh also won, as did Jasim Islam who secured a close victory for the chairperson slot in Muslim Town.

Overall, the results provided a clear example of the PML-N's elite-led dominance in Lahore, as it picked up 229 of the city's 274 UCs. Independent candidates (many of whom were actually supported by different PML-N factions) picked up another 29 UCs, while PTI won a mere 12 UCs. The PPP, which had once dominated Lahore through its populist politics, ended up winning only 1 UC.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I turned to the realm of party politics and elections to look at how they help in reproducing the power and privileges of a particular dominant group in Pakistan. Through a study of bazaar traders and their transactional relationship with mainstream political parties, I showed how sectional economic and status privileges are protected and perpetuated through the political realm. It was also shown that due to the embedded nature of this relationship, in rare instances when political elites attempt to curtail the privileges of the bazaar, they are forced to back down due to internal and external pressures. Contextualizing and cyclically conditioning this dynamic is the inadequacy of mainstream parties, which operate as poorly organized and highly personalized institutions. Thus for purposes of attaining power and retaining office, this renders them reliant on the resources that bazaar traders possess as both economic elites and as local authority figures in their places of work and residence.

Finally, this chapter connects the building blocks detailed in preceding chapters with the way the political field is structured to generate electoral consent for the dominance of elites in Pakistan. It was shown that in contemporary Lahore, marginalized groups are kept locked out of most forms of political activity and are largely missing in the realm of interest representation. Candidacies and support are gained through back-door negotiations between traders, other types of businessmen, and party elites, while

favours and material promises for the privileged function as the currency of these deals. Ultimately, the localized authority of traders, and the building blocks of hegemonic compliance seen in cross-class relations in the marketplace ensure that subordinate groups fall in line with dominant group interests as far as political preferences and voting behaviour are concerned. Collectively, this provides us with the 'final act' in the reproduction of Pakistan's hegemonic political sphere.



## **Chapter 7 - Conclusion**

The concluding chapter starts by providing a summation of the processes through which the power and authority of bazaar traders is built and, consequently, underpins the reproduction of Pakistan's elite-dominated political sphere. The second section then moves on to a number of normative and academic concerns about democracy, Islamism, and political hegemony, which emerge from a study of bazaar politics in contemporary Pakistan. Finally, the last section highlights as yet understudied areas of potential research which can contribute towards a better understanding of political and social inequality in Pakistan.

### **Bazaar Traders and the Political Sphere**

This thesis began as an exploration of the persistent domination of propertied classes in Pakistan's political sphere, which has flourished amidst a range of structural and institutional transformations over the past four decades. This domination has been accompanied by a 'scarcity of resistance' since the 1970s and its replacement by electoral (and social) consent on behalf of subordinate groups for contemporary arrangements of power, thus lending them a hegemonic character. Hence, the broader questions of how dominant groups produce and sustain their position of power, and what makes the consent of subordinate groups possible, existed at the heart of this thesis.

From among the constellation of dominant groups in Pakistan, this study focused on the case of bazaar traders in Pakistan's second-largest city, Lahore. This choice was motivated by a number of factors, such as the lack of attention paid to urban political dynamics outside of the city of Karachi, the political salience of propertied classes – including traders – from the province of Punjab through much of Pakistan's recent history, and the complete absence of any sociological or political economy accounts of economic elites associated with the country's large and predominantly undocumented sectors of commerce and trade.

Of particular motivation for this research has been a contention that extant explanations for Pakistan's lasting regime of elite power have been only partially adequate, given either their state-centred pre-occupations in which an authoritarian military and civil bureaucracy plays an endlessly constitutive role in societal processes, or their reliance on deterministic Marxist typologies, which see the political sphere as the mere reflection of a specific post-colonial mode of production.

While recognizing the contextualizing merit of such explanations, this thesis has attempted to move past them by positing the importance of micro-processes of power and authority that feed into the political sphere. The approach chosen here draws on a Gramscian understanding of power which sees political-social activity as a distinct realm of action, certainly connected to but not wholly determined by structural conditions. Hence, under this framework, macrosocial arrangements of power in Pakistan are underpinned by the distinct material and cultural organization of everyday relations, conditioned by the historically-contingent context (as detailed in chapter 2), but constituted by the active agency of particular actors.

The demonstration of these processes took place over the course of four empirical chapters. In chapter 3, I initiated my ethnographic analysis of the mechanisms through which the dominant group at the heart of this study, bazaar traders, produce and retain their material and status privileges. It was shown that central to these practices is the use of bazaar-based voluntary associations, the *Anjuman-i-Tajran*, which are designed to govern marketplaces and raise the public profile of bazaar traders in a variety of social spheres. This allows them to forge ties of mutual benefit with politicians, other business elites, and most importantly, local state officials. The relationship between the bazaar and the everyday state takes on a patronage-based character, and revolves around quotidian practices of fraternal socializing and the exchange of gifts and favours, which helps traders access key public resources and retain autonomy for their undocumented business practices. Thus their materially privileged position is, in part, down to their ability to co-opt and redirect the state – for example, tax officials and municipal authorities - as it exists and functions 'in the trenches'.

The empirical demonstration of this phenomenon speaks directly to extant understandings of the Pakistani state, which often ascribe it with endless autonomy from social forces. Instead, my account follows Fuller and Harris (2001), in asserting that the state is best understood through an ethnographic lens, which helps us understand its power (or lack thereof) vis-à-vis other actors far better than through reified and homogenizing institutional descriptions.

In chapters 4 and 5 I moved on to what I call the 'building blocks' of dominant group influence and power in urban Pakistan, by studying what sustains hierarchical relationship between traders and the urban poor in the bazaar economy. In chapter 4, I showed that persistence in exploitative relations, and the lack of any effort to recalibrate them, is contextualized by the authoritarian legacy of the state which has left no organizational resources that could fashion class-based assertion by the poor. What also continues to drive these unequal relations are the localized ties of material dependence between traders and the poor, in which the latter are reliant on the former for help in resolving problems of subsistence and survival in a neoliberal city with an apathetic political sphere.

However, as subsequently shown in chapter 5, the cultural organization of these relations is also of integral importance in their sustenance. Exploitation, inequality and elite authority in the bazaar are normalized and legitimized within a cultural field dominated by Islamic ideas of collective Muslim identity, benevolent civic virtue and pious patronage, and divinely ordained material hierarchies. These ideas provide the frames through which the urban poor make sense of both their material and social conditions and the authority of bazaar traders in everyday life. It was argued that the salience of such ideas is built upon Pakistan's historical context, in which Islam has remained a key instrument of state and nation-building deployed by successive military and civilian regimes. However, their potency is traceable to their repeated dissemination within localized realms of activity in the contemporary era. Within the marketplace, it was demonstrated that such ideas are popularized with the help of bazaar traders, who remain deeply embedded with religious actors and play a central role in administering local mosques, madrassahs, and religious charities. This provides

them with an amplified voice in shaping the moral and ideological contours of marketplaces, i.e. the primary site of exploitation and domination, and the space in which prolonged cross-class interactions take place.

From a theoretical perspective, the research presented in chapters 4 and 5 also highlighted the importance of activity in the realm of elite-controlled civil society – in this case, between traders, religious organizations, and the urban poor – in developing hegemonic cross-class relations. This becomes particularly key in a context such as Pakistan where political parties are too weak and ideologically shallow to develop stable cross-class coalitions through both direct patronage relations with the poor, and cultural interventions that could normalize and legitimize the dominance of particular classes.

Finally, in chapter 6 I moved on to how the processes detailed in the preceding three chapters feed into an elite-dominated political sphere. This was done through an analysis of contemporary party politics and electoral contestation in Lahore, focusing on the ties between traders and the ruling party in Punjab, the PML-N. I showed that the organizational weakness of parties conditions their reliance on locally influential bazaar traders, who are uniquely positioned to leverage their economic resources and the authority they accumulate over subordinate groups (built through processes of moral civic leadership described in chapter 4 and 5) for fulfillment of personal political ambitions and for greater control over material-distributional outcomes. A major feature of these processes is that subordinate groups working and living in and around the bazaar remain locked out of key arenas of political decision-making – such as who gets to contest local elections and what will be the priorities of elected representatives - and that their participation remains structured through channels of influence and power exercised upon them by bazaar traders. This mediated and brokered process of electoral incorporation is ultimately key in the consensual reproduction of Pakistan's political sphere.

## **Pakistan's Passive Revolutionary Route**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, 2018, 53 million Pakistanis cast their votes in the country's 11<sup>th</sup> general election since 1970, and its third in just over a decade. Polls were held simultaneously to elect 272 legislators to the lower house of parliament, the National Assembly, and 593 legislators to 4 unicameral provincial assemblies. The results signified an apparent shift in the country's electoral landscape, as the centre-right Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (Pakistan Movement for Justice), led by anti-corruption crusader, and former cricketer and philanthropist, Imran Khan, emerged as the largest party in the National Assembly for the first time in its 22 year-long history.

Accounts of PTI's win that view it as some sort of a rupture in the political sphere trace its success to the telegenic celebrity status of Imran Khan, and the success of his religio-populist slogan to create a *Naya* (New) Pakistan, which positioned his party as a pious Islamic-oriented bulwark against the corruption and poor governance of rival parties and their entrenched elites.

However, this reading glosses over the fact that the bulk of the PTI's electoral success could be put down to the fashioning of a traditional electoral machine that relies on elite candidates and the conventional ties of patronage with subaltern groups to incorporate the latter as clients in the political sphere. The PTI's leadership and its candidate pool was drawn almost exclusively from the traditional political class, which, in turn, remains a subset of the rural and urban propertied classes. Of the 248 candidates fielded by PTI for National Assembly seats, 160 (or approximately 65%) had contested previous elections on the ticket of another party. The trend of relying on entrenched elites was reflected in the composition of the new ruling party's first federal cabinet: of its 21 members, 7 had served as Ministers or Advisers during General Pervez Musharraf's military regime just over a decade ago. A further 2 had served in the cabinet of the PPP-led government between 2008-2013, and one had served in the PMLN's cabinet till the previous year.

The PTI's first few months in power saw it enter negotiations with the IMF for what will be the country's 7<sup>th</sup> bail-out in just over 2 decades. As a pre-condition for the bailout it

had to slash development spending, remove subsidies, and initiate further plans for the deregulation of the economy. These early steps in policymaking, as well as the underlying class composition of the new ruling party, indicate a continuity rather than a rupture in the political sphere, as documented by this thesis

A useful way of making sense of not just this latest episode in Pakistan's political history, but the period since the 1980s more broadly, is through the Gramscian concept of "passive revolution" (Gramsci 1971: 106). While subsequently interpreted in a fairly diverse number of ways, this thesis draws on (and modifies) its deployment by Riley and Desai (2007) in their comparison of the Indian and Italian trajectories to modernity. Pakistan's case nests well within their framework in so far that since the ouster of Bhutto's populist regime in 1977, the country has accelerated its transition towards (neoliberal) capitalism under the leadership of a political elite drawn from and responsive to the dominant classes. As detailed in Chapter 2, during this transition, two key aspects of a passive revolution – the retention of an unequal class and state structure, and the incorporation of subaltern groups within the ambit of participatory politics - have been maintained.

As this thesis has shown through the case of a large wholesale bazaar, the hegemonic nature of politics (and the passive revolution itself) is encapsulated in the way subaltern groups lend acquiescence through their electoral participation, which in turn is informed by a particular configuration of cross-class material and cultural ties. However, where Pakistan's case differs from India, in particular, is the autonomous role of the state through the military and bureaucracy. Given the military's predominance in the political realm, and the continued weakness of political parties, Pakistan's experience demonstrates a mixture of autocratic and passive revolutionary trajectories. At times, this alternation manifests itself in factional conflicts within the state, principally between civilian and military elites. However, despite these conflicts, unity is retained under a broader trajectory and commitment towards a particular type of capitalist project.

## **An Unresponsive Democracy**

The enduring influence of the military in the political sphere has meant that, for the past three decades, the principal desire of Pakistan's handful of beleaguered progressives has been a recalibration of the civil-military imbalance in favour of the former, and the institutionalization of procedural democracy in the country. The underlying theory driving this normative code is that the functioning of free and fair avenues of participation would be a major step towards a more radical and egalitarian politics.

Since Pakistan's most recent experience with democracy (2008-onwards), the inadequacies of relying on a simple adoption of political procedure have been made abundantly clear. While the primary problem of an authoritarian state continues to cast a long shadow on society, the weakness of Pakistan's existing civilian political dispensation also deserves some recognition. As shown in this thesis, the spectre of persistent dominance by propertied classes is one that has flourished regardless of regime type and form. Dominant groups have found multiple ways – such as through the capture of political parties and the electoral process - to exercise control over the distributional direction of public policy and resources, and contributed to the durability of political and social inequality.

This is not to suggest that things have stayed the same throughout the last four decades. Structural and demographic transformations have to some extent weakened the power of one particularly reactionary dominant group, the landed elite in Punjab. However, instead of being accompanied by the rise of subordinate class assertion in the (hypothetically) less restrictive arena of urban politics, the country has witnessed the rise of new urban elites who have proven to be fairly adept at stymieing popular pressures. Thus the larger hope that procedural democracy in combination with demographic transformations would produce a more egalitarian form of politics has proven to be misplaced so far.

The research presented in chapter 5 of this thesis also shed light on the role of religious ideals in normalizing relations of dominance. The long-standing salience of these ideals, along with their assertive protection by religious groups and the state, has left the cultural field with few resources that could feed into the development of an egalitarian counter-hegemonic politics. Instead, progressives who desire a substantive form of democracy now face the challenge of fashioning a political alternative within a barren, resource-less arena, and one that will have to emerge in a cultural field where the hegemony of one set of ideas has been in place for more than three decades.

### *The potential for Islamist Hegemony*

The salience of religious ideals in the marketplace also puts forward the age-old question of whether Pakistan will eventually witness Islamists establishing complete hegemony over state and society through the political process. As this thesis highlighted, the incorporation of Islamist political society by the military regime in the 1980s actually reduced the former's autonomy and weakened its ability to mobilize different societal segments behind its ideological programme. Part of the reason is because the material interests of dominant groups, who have been crucial for success in Pakistan's patronage-dominated political sphere, remain well-served by authoritarian governments as well as mainstream parties through a variety of transactional arrangements. Thus even the highly-religious and conservative demographic of bazaar traders operate according to their material class interests and prefer to side with the military or with parties like the PML-N and the PTI.

The lack of success for Islamist political parties in electoral politics has become a source of comfort for some, who see the transactional relations between dominant classes, the military, and mainstream parties providing a strong barrier to any potential Islamist upsurge. However, this thesis demonstrated that mainstream parties are weakly organized and incapable of structuring and mobilizing strong cross-class coalitions on their own. The fact that they continue to (tenuously) govern a hegemonic political sphere has less to do with their own ability and more to do with the activities of elite groups and the legacy of authoritarianism, which has left no alternatives, in the realm



of social and political activity. While this tenuous, crisis-prone arrangement has repeatedly given way to the praetorian core of the state, there lies a small (but definite) potential that it could be dislodged by a radical Islamist upsurge.

In August 2017, the city of Lahore witnessed a by-election for an inner city National Assembly seat that had fallen vacant because of the disqualification of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during an anti-corruption investigation by the Supreme Court. In the ensuing contest, the ruling party candidate – Nawaz Sharif’s wife, Kulsoom Nawaz – emerged victorious over her rival from the PTI, Yasmeen Rashid. By nearly all standards, the election was typical of electoral contests in the city of Lahore, with different political leaders and their factions playing a key role in mobilizing voters for either candidate. However, it was marked by one potentially disturbing development for progressives in Pakistan – the rise of two new Islamist parties from within the realm of Islamist civil society.

The Tehreek Labbaik Ya Rasoolallah (TLYR), a Barelvi revivalist organization that had previously mobilized in defense of the blasphemy laws and against the Ahmadiyya heterodox sect, entered mainstream politics through its own candidate and won nearly 7% of the popular vote. In the same contest, the jihadist-cum-charitable organization, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), long patronised by Pakistan’s military and most notorious for orchestrating the Mumbai attacks in 2008, also decided to enter electoral politics, and secured nearly 4% of the vote. The rise of these two organizations from their previous perch in Islamist civil society instigates the question of whether Islamists can utilize their groundwork through charities and revivalist movements to mobilize subordinate groups in a counter-hegemonic assault against the elite-led dominance of mainstream political parties. The question becomes even more salient when one considers that the ideals of Islamism propagated by these organizations are already popular within the political domain since the 1980s.

Whether Islamists are able to fashion an exclusionary (and potentially violent) alternative ‘from below’ in the coming years remains to be seen. What is certain however is that progressives cannot rely on the weak mainstream parties and a

complicit military to act as a bulwark or to produce a more egalitarian and inclusionary social order. They will ultimately have to put in the hard work of engaging with subordinate groups through their own platforms.

### **Avenues for Further Research**

The research on bazaar traders in Lahore presented in this thesis remains a partial contribution towards a more holistic understanding of Pakistan's extant political reality. Bazaar traders were chosen as the subject of this study because of their pervasive presence in urban centres, their frequent co-optation of the state, their position in mainstream political parties, and their authority over a significant section of the urban poor (i.e. those who work in the informal bazaar economy). However, as this thesis was the first detailed attempt to study their political and social practices, it is limited by its localized focus in one bazaar (Mustafa Market in Lahore) and by its nesting within political dynamics relevant to just the province of Punjab.

This leaves open space for a much wider assessment of traders and their politics in other parts of the country, which could look at the cultural dynamics of their power and whether Islamic ideals remain as salient in environments where ethnic assertion has provided a basis for periodic counter-hegemonic mobilization.

More broadly, there is also considerable space to study other groups that have emerged amidst Pakistan's structural and demographic transformation, in order to assess the role they play in shaping the political sphere. Most relevantly, these include the new middle classes based in the white-collar service sector economy, which now populate rapidly expanding urban centres and help drive the consumerist trends that form the bread and butter for the bazaar. While there has been some excellent recent work on the social and cultural practices of these new middle classes (Maqsood 2014; 2017), especially in relation to boundary-formation and Islamic practices, more work is needed to understand how they relate to and interact with other dominant and subordinate groups in the urban setting.

## Appendix: List of Interviewees

No	Designation	Institution	Name	Date
1	Ex-President LCCI	LCCI	Shahid Sheikh	Sep-14
2	EC Member LCCI/Trader	LCCI	Khurram Lodhi	Sep-14
3	Ex-President LCCI	LCCI	Sohail Lashari	Sep-14
4	Commerce beat reporter	City 042	Shahzad Khan	Oct-14
5	General Secretary	National Traders Alliance	Zaheer Babar	Oct-14
6	Trader	Liberty Market	Safdar Butt	Nov-14
7	General Secretary	APAT	Naeem Mir	Nov-14
8	Chairman	Mustafa Market	Malik Khalid	Nov-14
9	President Traders Wing	PMLN Lahore	Nasir Saeed	Nov-14
10	Former Member	APAT	Malik Javed	Nov-14
11	Vice-Chairman	Mustafa Market	Shahid Aslam	Nov-14
12	Trader	Mustafa Market	Rao Saeed	Nov-14
13	General Secretary	Mustafa Market	Malik Munir	Nov-14
14	Lahore President	APAT	Mujahid Butt	Dec-14
15	Former President	APAT	Ashraf Bhatti	Dec-14
16	MPA Candidate/Party Office-bearer	PMLN Lahore	Syed Tauseef Shah	Jan-15
17	Trader/Ittehad Group Leader	Mustafa Market	Kh. Athar	Jan-15
18	Trader	Mustafa Market	Haji Ansar	Feb-15
19	Trader	Mustafa Market	Aslam Butt	Feb-15
20	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Rasheed	Feb-15
21	Import Agent	Mustafa Market	Sheikh Javed	Feb-15
22	Takbeer Group Trader	Mustafa Market	Salman Butt	Feb-15
23	Trader	Mustafa Market	Haji Rauf	Feb-15
24	Trader	Mustafa Market	Hassan Akhtar	Feb-15
25	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Lateef	Mar-15
26	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Allah Ditta	Mar-15
27	Former DCO Lahore	District Administration	N/A	Mar-15
28	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Akram	Mar-15
29	Trader	Mustafa Market	Abdul Jabbar	Apr-15
30	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Ghulam Ali	Apr-15
31	Real Estate Agent	Mustafa Market	Ch. Altaf	Apr-15
32	Former Superintendent City Divison, Lahore	Police	Umar Riaz	Apr-15
33	Trader	Mustafa Market	Haji Ashfaq	Apr-15
34	Trader	Mustafa Market	Sheikh Asif	Apr-15
35	Trader	Mustafa Market	Rana Zahid	May-15
36	Trader	Mustafa Market	Ikram Gujjar	May-15
37	Tax Inspector	Federal Board of Revenue	Agha Jabbar	May-15

38	Retired FBR Commissioner	Federal Board of Revenue	Akhtar sb	May-15
39	Chairman Urdu Bazaar	Urdu Bazaar Lahore	Khalid Pervaiz	Jun-15
40	Chairman Hafeez Center	Hafeez Center Lahore	Sheikh Fayyaz	Jun-15
41	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Ashraf	Jun-15
42	Push-cart vendor	Mustafa Market	Ghulam Mohd	Jun-15
43	Push-cart vendor	Mustafa Market	Razzaq	Jul-15
44	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Rehmat	Jul-15
45	Vice-President	APAT	Mehboob Sirki	Jul-15
46	Readymade Garments Association Head/UC Chair	Garment Market Lahore	Haji Hanif	Aug-15
47	Trader	Hall Road	Haji Razzaq	Aug-15
48	Trader	Anarkali	Sheikh Basit	Aug-15
49	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Fazal	Sep-15
50	Trader	Mustafa Market	Afzal Qureshi	Sep-15
51	Shop Worker	Mustafa Market	Iqbal	Sep-15
52	Khateeb, Ghaus-e-Azam Masjid	Mustafa Market	Rafaqat Qadri	Sep-15
53	President PMLN Lahore	PMLN Lahore	Pervaiz Malik	Sep-15
54	President Khidmat Group	Hall Road	Babar Mehmood	Oct-15
55	MPA	PMLN Lahore	Mian Marghoob	Oct-15
56	MPA/General Secretary	PMLN Lahore	Khawaja Imran	Oct-15
57	MNA-Candidate NA-119	PTI	Mohammad Madni	Oct-15
58	UC-Chair candidate	PTI	Imtiaz Baby	Oct-15
59	Shop Worker	Optical Market	Mohammad Ali	Oct-15
60	Resident	Mohallah Joray Morri	Tanveer	Nov-15

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