
by

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Department of Political Science
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Abstract

This study examines how peasant movements led by revolutionaries impacted state formation, or more broadly the institutional configuration of power, in post-colonial Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The study asks, first, how did a movement of lower classes, specifically tenant farmers and landless labourers, win concessions from landed elites and also shape the direction and institutionalization of state power in the 1970s? Second, why did revolutionary politics in Pakistan decline and fade away, diverging from its counterparts in other parts of South Asia? Based on archival research, oral history, and participant observation, the study divides a narrative of nearly forty years of events into three critical conjunctures, comparing and contrasting the interactions of radical organizers, rural classes, the political organizations representing exploiting propertied classes, and the state. The first conjuncture concerns the late 1940s, when the Communist Party of Pakistan’s inadequate preparation and organization of peasants led to an ultimately failed movement in the northern Hashtnagar area. The second conjuncture covers the period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s in which the communists formed the Mazdoor Kisan Party. The party’s organizational work contributed to the comparative success of 1970s peasant struggles in the form of de facto land and tenancy reforms and the decline of institutions of landlord power in villages, alongside the generation of new and renewed institutions of
peasant power. Peasant organization compelled the state apparatus to intervene in favour of tenants. The third conjuncture concerns the denouement of the peasant movement in the latter 1970s and 1980s. As tenants became *de facto* proprietors of land their involvement in the movement and party organization declined, leaving them unable to mount a significant challenge to a military regime that restored some of the power of landed elites. Nevertheless, tenants largely preserved the gains they had made. Ultimately, the institutional configuration of power inside and outside of the apparatus of the state was determined by the balance of power between different classes. Moreover, strategic choices that revolutionary organizers made about confronting the state frontally as opposed to lowkey organizing increased or decreased their own organizational capacity and longevity.
Acknowledgments

I wrote this thesis because I was inspired by the struggles of peasants, workers, and organizers in South Asia over the 2000s and 2010s. I am, first and foremost, grateful to the many workers, peasants, and many others who have to remain unnamed, who shared with me their thoughts, stories, concerns and ideas across Pakistan, Nepal and India. Despite differences of language, culture, class, caste, and gender, they showed me great love and welcome. It is as a youth, and for youth struggling to smash existing oppressive and exploitative social relations, and to put something more egalitarian and just in their place, that I sought to get at the history and practice of the Mazdoor Kisan Party. I’ve certainly grown older, if nothing else, but my commitments have sharpened rather than dulling. This is because while writing the thesis, comrades in and beyond Toronto never let me get soft, and I have never stopped accumulating practical experience in student unions, labour unions, people’s journalism and community organizing. Pointing out their individual roles would take too much space, so here I thank my comrades collectively, including Steve da Silva, Kabir Joshi-Vijayan, Lana Rabkin, Marianne Madeleine Lau, Urooj Shahzadi, Arsalan Samdani, Hamna Mughal, Raji Choudhury, Samuel Nithianathan, Sara Jaffri, Harshita Singh, Priyanka Soundranayagam, Sahar Ashraf, Nooria Alam, Pragash Antonipillai, Hadia Akhtar, Shafiqullah Aziz, Martha Roberts, Aiyanas Ormond, Yuly Chan, Sadia Khan, Shozab Roza, Salima Kassam, and Tayyaba Jiwani, among others. Syed Azeem and Sara Abraham (and Sumana Abraham, too) have been friends in both Toronto and in Lahore. More than our common and divergent political and intellectual insights, I have drawn immeasurable emotional and mental sustenance from them all.

This thesis relies on a range of sources, including government records, private collections, oral history and interviews, and participant observation, none of which would have been possible without the support of dozens of people. Syed Azeem was crucial in opening up
my access to present and erstwhile members of the Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party. In Faisalabad, Abdullah Kamoka, Muhammad Salim, Chaudhry Mukhtar, Master Bashir “Sanobar” and his sons Arfan and Usman Choudhry helped me collect and copy the literature of the left and the documentary records of the Mazdoor Kisan Party. I thank Abdullah Kamoka and Haleema especially for hosting me like a son in Faisalabad. In Hashtnagar, Sher Bahadur shared his collection of Mazdoor Kisan Party Circulars and Muhktiar Ahmad Khan shared his research on Sher Ali Bacha. In Mardan, Murad Ali Bacha and his sons hosted me and gave me access to Sher Ali Bacha’s private papers, which were invaluable. Faiz ur Rahman helped in collecting and digitizing the resources from Hashtnagar and Mardan, and also hosted me in Malakand Agency.

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On the academic terrain, I must begin by thanking my committee, whose composition reflects the interdisciplinary nature of my thesis. My co-supervisors, Malavika Kasturi and Paul Kingston, brought their training in historical and anthropological approaches to bear in my study of politics. Malavika Kasturi has been a constant source of support and detailed criticism, pushing me to make my ideas at once more expansive and precise. Her detailed comments not only on my thesis but also on my professional pursuits have been of immeasurable help. Paul Kingston could go through any piece of writing, however small or large, and arrive at its analytical core, helping to make this thesis sharper and tighter. He also had to bear the administrative brunt of the process. As members of my committee, Ken Kawashima and Dickson
Eyoh provided insights, comments, and directions that forced me to reconsider my approaches and nuance my arguments. Kanta Murali served as my internal reader, and her comments and encouragement will be very important in moving forward. I have to especially thank A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, whose advice and support over the years have been vital, and who stepped in under heavy time constraints to serve with his keen and exacting eyes as external examiner. Other professors at the University of Toronto who at various times consulted and helped, and from whom I learned a lot, include Edward Schatz, Tania Li, Shivaji Mukherjee, Kanishka Goonewardena. Last, but certainly not least, I must thank Richard Sandbrook for his advice and encouragement since I entered the PhD program, and for his example as a political scientist with normative commitments.

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Without Carolyn Branton’s patience, generosity, advice and support it would have been impossible to complete the PhD. I also thank Louis Tentsos for all of his hard work and support.

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Because it took the support and contributions of so many people to write this thesis, I follow Walter Rodney in refusing to add that “all mistakes and shortcomings are entirely my responsibility.” As Rodney wrote, “That is sheer bourgeois subjectivism. Responsibility in matters of these sorts is always collective, especially with regard to the remedying of shortcomings.”

Finally, during the writing of this dissertation, I lost another two people who were in different ways and in different times very close to me: Ali Mustafa, who was killed by the bombing runs of the Syrian government in Aleppo, and Zabia Afzal. They shared with me the same impulse toward building an egalitarian society that motivated this study, and provided me with their comradeship, friendship, support, spirited disagreement, and love. The role that Zabia in particular played as my friend, comrade, and intellectual interlocutor cannot be overstated.

The world is worse off without them.
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Introduction

The history of any given party can only emerge from the complex portrayal of the totality of society and State (often with international ramifications too). Hence it may be said that to write the history of a party means nothing less than to write the general history of a country from a monographic viewpoint, in order to highlight a particular aspect of it. A party will have had greater or less significance and weight precisely to the extent to which its particular activity has been more or less decisive in determining a country’s history.¹

—Antonio Gramsci

“Maoism” on the Frontier

“Revolutionary socialism was reborn in 1968,” Tariq Ali wrote ten years later, reflecting on a decade of global revolutionary upsurge.² As Ali recognized, this upsurge was in no small part inspired by the struggle of Vietnamese communists, alongside other Third World struggles for national liberation led by communists. But perhaps the most ideologically and politically influential of these communist struggles upon radicals in the sixties and seventies was that led by the Communist Party of China, emerging from the Sino-Soviet split and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China.³ Even Cuba’s minister of industries, Che Guevara, himself a radical icon of the sixties and seventies, admitted his apparent proximity to Chinese views on political economy and revolutionary strategy.⁴ Though Che was his own thinker, like the millions who turned to communism in the sixties and seventies, he, too, thought that the revolution was just around the corner.

Over the past fifty years, many commentaries and studies have reflected upon the global spread of “Maoism” in the sixties and seventies, both its promise and its limitations, as well as

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³ I will address the meaning and significance of these terms in Chapter 3.
⁴ Helen Yaffe, Che Guevara: The Economics of Revolution (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 235.
on its more recent manifestations, particularly in South Asia. I put the term “Maoism” in quotation marks because, not until the 1980s did certain communist parties actually begin to refer to themselves explicitly as “Maoist.” In the 1960s and 1970s, the adherents of the Chinese position in the debates of the international communist movement referred to themselves as “anti-revisionists” and “Marxist-Leninists,” oriented toward “Mao Zedong Thought,” and saw themselves as returning to the revolutionary élan of Marxism and Leninism. This revolutionary purpose, they argued, had been compromised both within the Soviet Union and through the parties associated with it—the latter’s “revisionism” seemed more poised to prevent revolution and compromise with capitalism, than to guide the uprisings of students, workers, and peasants around the world in a revolutionary direction. These “anti-revisionist” Marxist-Leninist communists formed the basis of the contemporary Maoist movement, and for that reason, and consonant with the use of other scholars and commentators, I sometimes refer to them as Maoist in this study.

The “Maoism” of the 1960s influenced key radical movements across the world, which had profound impacts on the politics of their respective countries by squarely placing the issues of the lowest and deepest sections of the population on the national agenda, and such influence continues in South Asia today. In the United States, Marxism-Leninism influenced key organizations such as the Black revolutionaries of the Revolutionary Action Movement and the Black Panther Party, which US Federal Bureau of Investigation director J. Edgar Hoover

5 Notably, the Peruvian Communist Party (Sendero Luminoso) and the Revolutionary Communist Party of the United States, whose conversations with Nepalese and Indian groups through the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement led to the formation of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in 1995, and the Communist Party of India (Maoist) in 2004.
6 The debates in the international communist movement are examined in more detail in Chapter 3.
considered the greatest internal security threat to the country, as well as the not insignificant “New Communist Movement” of the seventies and eighties. Maoism sparked revolutionary organizations in Europe as well, but its intellectual influences were perhaps more lasting, on and through scholars like Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault.

In South Asia, however, Maoism has persisted as a significant political force among various groups carrying the legacy of the Marxist-Leninist movements of the 1960s. Echoing J. Edgar Hoover, erstwhile Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh also identified the Naxalite insurgency that has persisted into the present as the country’s greatest “internal security challenge,” despite the major activities of Naxalite insurgents, especially under the banner of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), involving defence of Adivasi (indigenous) lands and livelihoods against extractive multinational corporations. Meanwhile insurgency in Nepal led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), also a legacy of Marxist-Leninist groups of the 1960s, placed the problems of peasants, workers, untouchable and indigenous populations (Dalits and Janjatis), and women at the forefront of the country’s political discourse, and ultimately toppled a monarchy and led to Maoists forming a government in 2008. My study is motivated by inquiring into how these often peasant-based insurgencies have shaped institutional

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11 Naxalites are so named for Naxalbari, the site of an armed insurgency in West Bengal in India that began in 1967 and that was led by insurrectionary Marxist-Leninists, known more colloquially in India as Naxals or Naxalites.
configurations of power, particularly state forms. Here, I depart from the notion that an Indian or South Asian history of peasant struggle needs to look primarily at forms of “consciousness”\textsuperscript{14} rather than state formation because “peasant revolts in India do not seem to have the same political impact on the evolution of state forms or on legal-proprietary relations as they do in Europe or China.”\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, my study is concerned precisely with how peasant struggles in Pakistan led by communists impacted not only consciousness but also state formation and legal-proprietary relations.

I enquire into the nature of state formation and the institutional configuration of power to understand the inequities, hierarchies and structures of domination that continue to shape South Asia, and the world more broadly. For all the paeans to economic growth in India, and even in Bangladesh and Pakistan, the Indian subcontinent has a massive share of the world’s poverty,\textsuperscript{16} inequality is growing,\textsuperscript{17} and majoritarian ethnic, caste and religious chauvinist movements appear to hold governments hostage even where they do not hold governmental power.\textsuperscript{18} South Asia is perhaps not too different from the rest of the world in terms of the decomposition and recomposition of capitalism that defines the historical moment as of my writing this study. Yet, those sections of the ruling classes that are not themselves explicitly majoritarian have little to

\textsuperscript{14} A fairly ambiguous term, Ranajit Guha appears to define it as political subjectivity: “To acknowledge the peasant as the maker of his own rebellion is to attribute … a consciousness to him.” See Ranajit Guha, \textit{Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India} (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 4.

\textsuperscript{15} This is Partha Chatterjee’s defence of the Subaltern Studies school’s lack of focus on the state. See Partha Chatterjee, \textit{The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 170.


\textsuperscript{17} On dubious measures of declining inequality, see Muheed Jamaldeen, “What’s Happening on Global Inequality? Putting the ‘Elephant Graph’ to Sleep with a ‘Hockey Stick,’” \textit{From Poverty to Power} (blog), October 26, 2016, https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/whats-happening-on-global-inequality-putting-the-elephant-graph-to-sleep-with-a-hockey-stick/.

\textsuperscript{18} The fascist Bharatiya Janata Party currently rules in India, and the so-called “Islamic” fascists of Bangladesh and Pakistan constantly pressure accommodating governments there.
offer by way of alternatives than the same model of neo-liberal growth with a sprinkling of welfare programmes that seek to integrate people ever more tightly into the world market, with no promise of productive and dignified employment, while reproducing chauvinist structures of ethnic, caste/racial, and gender oppression in order to do so. All this in the context of environmental destruction so severe that it is on the verge of being irreversibly inhospitable to much of the world’s living creatures. As Antonio Gramsci put it of his own time, “The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.” My study is driven by the very same normative vision as Gramsci’s, that of a politics where the “subaltern,” that is, exploited classes of workers and peasants, constitute the ruling class and do so in a way that is also tied into caste/racial and gender liberation. For revolutionaries, central to this is the question of smashing the state, both “state power” in terms of the ruling coalition that forms the matrix within which power is transferred from one neo-liberal party to another, one more chauvinist than the other, and the “state apparatus” in terms of the coercive apparatuses of a centralized state and the more generalized “ideological state apparatuses” that reproduce subservience to capital.

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20 “Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems…. These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors, a wide portfolio of mitigation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those options…. ” See “Global Warming of 1.5 °C: Summary for Policymakers,” Special Report (Incheon, Republic of Korea: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, October 6, 2018), 20, http://report.ipcc.ch/sr15/pdf/sr15_spm_final.pdf.

21 Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 276.

sought to combat, and the strategies and tactics they pursued to challenge and seize state power, the better to avoid their mistakes and to replicate their successes.23

In doing so, my study also engages scholars of state formation in comparative politics and the political economy of development. In recent years, key questions have often concerned the origins of the “institutional capacity” that better enables some states to foster economic growth or to provide “public goods.”24 However, another approach to state formation views it as grounded in contentious politics over “who constitutes the political community that serves as the basis of the state.”25 My study operates at the interstices of these two kinds of approaches to state formation. The main focus of my study is how one “anti-revisionist” Marxist-Leninist group,26 which led perhaps Pakistan’s largest and most effective peasant movement in the North-West

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23 “Political interest can, of course, encourage wishful thinking and lead to blind spots in perceiving social reality. Yet political interest can also create a very strong urge to know, to understand the conditions under which one’s aims can be realized, what the major obstacles are, which goals must be considered utopian, what compromises will likely impose themselves, what the consequences of the routinization of passionate commitment will be, and so on.” In Dietrich Rueschemeyer, “Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?,” in Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 312.


Frontier Province (NWFP) in the 1970s, impacted state formation, which I define as encompassing both the “reconfiguration of local hierarchies and relations of rule” and also the “process by which the institutions of public administration are strengthened” (or weakened) “in their scope and penetration of society.” The Mazdoor Kisan Party (Workers’ Peasants’ Party) was arguably the “largest and most militant party with a Marxist orientation to have emerged in Pakistan” and its encounter with the tenant farmers and landless labourers of an area known as shamālī (northern) Hashtnagar, centred in the Frontier’s agricultural heartlands in the Peshawar valley, ignited in 1970 an armed kisān tahrīk (peasant movement) of tens of thousands that spread out across at least six districts and one agency in the northern parts of the Frontier, stretching north beyond the Swat valley (see Figure 1).

The tenants and labourers were combating what they called khānism, a system of social practices rooted in the economic, political and sociocultural power of khāns, the landed elites whose power was predicated upon their renting out their lands almost entirely to tenant farmers, while hiring landless labourers to do menial tasks and additional agricultural labour. The landowners of Hashtnagar, moreover, belonged to a qaum (community or nation, but more generally translated as “tribe”) that was different from the qaums of most tenants, who had migrated to the area in the latter 1800s and early 1900s to farm the lands newly canalized by colonial capital investment. In the villages that they owned, landed elites operated as “power

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27 In Urdu, the NWFP used to be called the “Frontier Province” or Šābah-i Sarhad; and more colloquially, it was simply called Sarhad, or “Frontier.” The province is now officially named Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (abbreviated KP or KPK).
29 Kurtz, Latin American State Building in Comparative Perspective, 56.
31 Namely, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Mardan, Peshawar, Hazara and Malakand Agency. These are seven out of a total of fifteen districts that, at the time, comprised the Frontier region (the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or agencies, were not part of the province). See Figure 1.
Figure 1: Districts of the North-West Frontier Province, Pakistan, and Agencies, c. 1972

centres”\textsuperscript{32} insofar as they institutionalized an apparently autonomous power over tenants and labourers as “sovereigns,”\textsuperscript{33} while also exercising power through the formal state apparatus under colonial and then post-colonial rule. In other words, this was a particular form of indirect rule, “an arrangement where the state maintains \textit{de jure} direct rule over a territory, but in reality coercion is enforced locally by intermediate political elites.”\textsuperscript{34} In this context, I argue that the peasant movement of the 1970s had lasting effects on economic and political relations as it undermined \textit{khanism}, particularly in areas like northern Hashtnagar, resulting in \textit{de facto} land and tenancy rights reform, as well as shifting the locus of power from the informal institutions of \textit{khanism} to the formal institutions of the state.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, the state apparatus was compelled to intervene on behalf of tenants in regularizing forcible land occupations. However, by the end of the 1970s, the Mazdoor Kisan Party fragmented into several factions, and by the time I conducted fieldwork in 2013 in areas of its erstwhile influence in the Frontier, its legacy took the form of increasingly irrelevant remnant groups that acted as vote bank brokers for mainstream politicians. This is a far cry from an uncompromising anti-revisionist Marxism-Leninism.

Indeed, the Mazdoor Kisan Party did not evolve into the kind of Maoist movements apparent

\textsuperscript{32} Poulantzas, \textit{Political Power and Social Classes}, 115.

\textsuperscript{33} Thomas Hansen and Finn Stepputat define \textit{de facto} sovereignty as the “ability to kill, punish, and discipline with impunity wherever it is found and practiced, rather than sovereignty grounded in formal ideologies of rule and legality.” See Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, “Sovereignty Revisited,” \textit{Annual Review of Anthropology} 35, no. 1 (2006): 296.

\textsuperscript{34} Adnan Naseemullah and Paul Staniland, “Indirect Rule and Varieties of Governance,” \textit{Governance} 29, no. 1 (2016): 17–18. The colonial state in India and elsewhere often exercised indirect rule where, rather than treating especially rural populations as citizens with rights under the direct rule of the colonial state, they were subjects who were governed by “specifically ‘native’ institutions.” See Mahmood Mamdani, \textit{Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 7. Through indirect rule, peasant communities were “reproduced within the context of a spatial and institutional autonomy,” with traditional leaders selected or reconstituted as local delegates of the state, and a “legal dualism” where a received law co-existed with a so-called “customary” law regulating local relations of production and personal and community affairs. See Mamdani, 17. The point here is that these institutions of indirect rule have also been implemented in the post-colonial political order. See also Catherine Boone, \textit{Property and Political Order in Africa: Land Rights and the Structure of Politics} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

\textsuperscript{35} An “institution” refers to a “system of norms or rules which is socially sanctioned.” See Poulantzas, \textit{Political Power and Social Classes}, 115 fn. 24. Institutions can thus be formal or informal, but in either case are often formulated and/or enforced by organizations. See also Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” \textit{Political Studies} 44, no. 5 (1996): 936–57.
now in India and Nepal, which might explain in part why the latter countries have more representation of lower classes and marginalized groups on the national agenda—and, indeed, relatively more robust forms of liberal democracy—than in Pakistan.

The argument

The trajectory of the Frontier peasant movement raises two interrelated sets of questions. First, how is it that a movement of tenants and labourers not only won concessions from the landed elites who dominate the country’s rural politics, but in doing so also shaped the direction and institutionalization of the country’s “overdeveloped” state—a state inherited from colonialism and presumably rooted in a powerful military-bureaucracy that hovers over and above society, including the propertied exploiting social classes? Second, how is it that despite its apparent successes, the Mazdoor Kisan Party fell apart?—what, in other words, explains how and why the trajectory of Pakistani Marxism-Leninism diverged from that of its counterparts in other South Asian countries?

I contend that the answers to these questions have to be rooted in understanding how rural classes and relations between them were constituted and reconstituted by relatively rapid structural changes, namely, the intensification of capitalism in the countryside, and the


38 I am referring to social class, a group of people defined by its “place in the ensemble of social practices, i.e. by its place in the ensemble of the division of labour which includes political and ideological relations. This place corresponds to the structural determination of classes, i.e., the manner in which determination by the structure (relations of production, politico-ideological domination/subordination) operates on class practices—for classes have existence only in the class struggle.” See Nicos Poulantzas, “On Social Classes,” *New Left Review*, I, no. 78 (1973): 27–28.
articulation of these changes with existing class relations, political relations, and Pakhtun sociocultural relations, namely, relations of reproduction involving gender practices and practices of kin-based ethnic differentiation among Pakhtuns (what Pakhtuns refer to as qaum, meaning community or nation, but what more generally gets translated as “tribe”). These structured relations enabled and constrained the practices by which classes acquired, expressed and exercised power. I argue that the institutional configuration of power inside and outside the formal apparatus of the state was determined by the balance of power between contending classes, and that when lower classes increased their organizational strength they disrupted and reshaped the exercise and distribution of power to their benefit, at least, in some ways. Interestingly, I show that mechanisms of rule involving the “sovereign” power of landed elites in villages could persist across civilian and military regimes, but where peasant struggle made such power untenable both types of regimes pursued new techniques of rule that increased the authority of the state apparatus. I further argue that the decisions and interventions that radical organizers made in crucial conjunctures (i.e., the “historical-concrete alignments” of structured relations with contingent political events at international and national levels) increased or decreased their own organizational capacity. The organizational capacity of radical organizers was tied to the organizational strength of lower classes, and consequently impacted not only the

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39 As Christian Lund and Catherine Boone argue, “Contestation over land and resources often involves struggles not only over land per se, but also over the legitimate authority to define and settle land issues. Politics surrounding land institutions and land issues can be viewed as part and parcel of the processes of gathering authority over persons and resources, or state formation.” See Christian Lund and Catherine Boone, “Introduction: Land Politics in Africa – Constituting Authority Over Territory, Property and Persons,” *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 83, no. 1 (2013): 2.


Contingency refers to events and processes that are not directly related to or determined by the structures and practices under consideration. That is, contingency concerns “every encounter [that] might not have taken place, although it did take place; but its possible nonexistence sheds light on the meaning of its aleatory being” Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*, ed. François Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London, New York: Verso, 2006), 193.
balance of class power but the radicals’ own longevity as a social force. This is not to deny that revolutionaries often faced severe repression and difficult conditions, not to mention antagonistic and better-resourced political agents with their own strategies and tactics. Indeed, although the revolutionaries’ interventions may have been necessary, they were far from sufficient; nevertheless, their interventions were part of shaping the very conjunctures in which they were operating.41

I make this argument by comparing across three critical conjunctures the actions and interactions of radical organizers, rural classes, the political organizations representing exploiting propertied classes, and the state. I briefly elaborate on these conjunctures here but expand on them at the end of this introduction. The first conjuncture concerns the late 1940s following Pakistan’s independence, when the Muslim League formed a government in the Frontier, in opposition to the Pakhtun nationalist Frontier Congress and its associated Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) movement. At this point, the Communist Party of Pakistan led a peasant struggle that was also rooted in northern Hashtnagar. The second conjuncture, the main focus of this study, covers the period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s in which the communists formed the Mazdoor Kisan Party, which led the struggles of tenants and labourers in the Peshawar valley. Here, too, they contended with a government led by the successor to the Frontier Congress, namely the National Awami Party (1972–1973); and thereafter the Pakistan People’s Party (1973–1977) that relied on the co-operation of the same Muslim League that had governed the province after 1947.42 In both the late 1940s and early 1970s, communists encouraged the forcible occupations of land and rent strikes, buttressed by armed struggle.

However, there were key differences between these radical social movements. The struggle of the 1940s led to a severe defeat for tenants and the reinforcing of khanism outside and inside the state apparatus, albeit with land and tenancy reform legislation that remained unimplemented. The struggle of the 1970s, however, saw comparative success in the form of de facto land and tenancy reforms and the decline of institutions of khan power in villages, alongside the generation of new and renewed institutions of peasant power. These political and economic transformations involved considerable state intervention, some of which even involved suspending “the law,” that is, by putting a moratorium on court ordered ejectments of tenants. Such state intervention I argue was a consequence of the Pakistan People’s Party’s strategy of “passive revolution,” that is, ceding some concessions to demobilize the masses. (I expand on this concept in the next section.)

The third conjuncture concerns the denouement of the peasant movement and the fragmentation of the Marxist-Leninists in the latter 1970s, leaving them unable to mount a significant challenge to a military regime that dominated Pakistan from 1977 to 1988 and that restored some of the power of khans. However, I show how the aftereffects of the peasant movement, including their continued organization at and across village levels, meant that tenants did not for the most part lose the gains they had made. Further, villagers exercised some voice in local politics after the struggles of the 1970s, even under an authoritarian military regime. Ultimately, the relative strengths and weaknesses of classes determined the shape and form of the institutionalization of power; and the decisions of communists contributed to shaping the balance of power between different groups.

In the rest of this introduction, I expand upon the conceptual parameters of my argument. I demonstrate how my study illuminates an especially understudied aspect of Pakistan’s political history, namely radical rural politics, and also extends and challenges existing understandings of
social class and its relation to the state and state formation in post-colonial South Asia. First, I discuss key political and theoretical concepts that I use throughout my study, such as hegemony, demonstrating its centrality to understanding institution building and state formation. Second, I locate my argument and conceptual framework in the existing scholarly literature on the state and state formation in the Third World and in particular in South Asia. Third, I briefly discuss the hitherto untapped archival material and ethnography informing and guiding my study and my methodological approach. Lastly, I lay out how my chapters elaborate and explain the three conjunctures outlined above. Here, I demonstrate how a comparison of these three conjunctures elucidates my argument.

Reading Gramsci in Pakistan

Many of Antonio Gramsci’s concepts underwrite my analysis of conjunctures, political agency, and institutional configurations of power, particularly the concepts of hegemony and passive revolution. However, I sometimes extend Gramsci’s ideas or diverge from particular receptions of his ideas especially in South Asia, e.g., those of the Subaltern Studies school, and so here I clarify how my study uses these concepts. I read Gramsci’s concepts through the works of Louis Althusser, Nicos Poulantzas, and although largely uncited, Mao Tse-tung. Anglo-American historiography and sociology has often viewed the conceptions of state and ideology in the so-called “structural” Marxism of Althusser and Poulantzas as leaving little scope for agency, but I read these theorists instead as “conjunctural” Marxists seeking to “show what it

45 This view of Althusser is a particular effect of the mobilization of his ideas by Anglophones, and overwrought misreadings and critiques of such mobilizations, most notably E.P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory: Or an Orrery of Errors (London: Merlin Press, 1995). See Perry Anderson, Arguments Within English Marxism (London: New
means to think theoretically from the standpoint of a task to be accomplished, rather than from the angle of the *fait accompli*.”

To think in the conjuncture, as Althusser argues, is to take “account of all the determinations, all the existing concrete *circumstances*, making an inventory, a detailed breakdown and comparison of them” in terms of the political problem posed by the conjuncture, a problem that can only be posed from the perspective of a political agent. These “determinations” are the interactions or articulations of the various structural levels (economic, political, ideological) that constitute a social formation, each structural level with its own sets of structures, constituted by particular relations, practices, and “rhythms of development.” All these structures connect with and impact each other on the basis of a mode of production, that is, the “forces and relations of production [and] also their social conditions of existence and the reproduction of these social conditions.” The point then is not merely to describe or catalogue

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48 Structures are “internally related objects or practices,” which involve patterned interdependent relations between groups of people. The landlord-tenant relation is internally (as opposed to externally) related because the existence of one (landlord or tenant) depends on the existence of the other (tenant or landlord). But their mutual relation further depends on private property in land, landownership, landlessness, and rent. All of these elements come together to form the structure of the landlord-tenant relation. See Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 63. However, the particular interactions between landlords and tenants in a given context are governed by institutions, the “formal or informal procedures, routines, norms, and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy.” See Hall and Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” 938. Such institutions can be written tenancy laws or *wajib-ul-arz*, or unwritten customs and norms, all which can themselves vary from context to context. Similar structures can thus be embodied by very many different kinds of institutions.


50 Resch, 40. “Forces of production” refers to the “technical process” by which labour and its means of production are arranged, that is, how nature is transformed into a product, or a product into another product. “Relations of production” are the “relations of appropriation between persons,” or how some groups of people take what other groups produce. See Bridget O’Laughlin, “Marxist Approaches in Anthropology,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 4, no. 1 (1975): 355. The concept of the mode of production looks at these “economic” practices, but also their social conditions of existence, or, the structures that make these kinds of forces and relations of production possible. To further complicate the matter, a particular social formation can encompass multiple “articulating” modes of
“determinations” but to understand the causal relationships between them in any given conjuncture. Thus the articulation of structures in a conjuncture determines concrete events and occurrences, importantly including people’s subjectivities. However, the articulation of structures is also uneven, contradictory, and contingent, thus leaving openings for agency as well. On this point, it is worth quoting Althusser at length:

Leaving aside the ambiguous term subject, which it would be advisable to replace by the term agent, let us say that the present space of an analysis of the political conjuncture in its very texture, comprising opposed and intermingled forces, makes sense only if it arranges or contains a certain place, a certain empty place: empty in order to be filled, empty so as to have inserted in it the action of the individual or group who will come and take a stand there, so as to rally, to constitute the forces capable of accomplishing the political task assigned by history — empty for the future…. I say empty, to mark the vacillation of theory at this point: because it is necessary for this place to be filled — in other words, for the individual or party to have the capacity to become sufficiently strong to count among the forces, and strong enough again to rally the allied forces, to become the principal force and overcome the others.

The point, for Althusser, is for a political agent to try and make sense of the contingencies emerging from the articulation of the various uneven and contradictory structures. (The political agents themselves emerge from these uneven and contradictory articulations.) The political agent then has to figure out the exceedingly difficult task of intervening in that conjuncture. This is where, as I show, Gramsci’s conceptualization of hegemony becomes useful both to analyze the specifically political structures of a social formation and to formulate the strategy and tactics of political agency.

production. As I will show, the Peshawar valley encompassed structures rooted in the landlord-tenant relation articulating with or transforming into structures of capital-wage labour relations.


Althusser, Machiavelli and Us, 20. The term “subject” is ambiguous for Althusser because his conception of history sees it as a process without telos, without a subject (whether “Idea” or “Progress” or “Mode of Production” or “Working Class”). Rather, there are agents who intervene in history, with outcomes that are not determined by any grand narrative.
Hegemony refers to an active practice of power resting substantially on the consent of the various classes, strata, and groups over or with whom political agents seek to rule. Hegemony involves two “steps,” which are not necessarily temporally differentiated. First, hegemony entails building an alliance or coalition of classes and fractions of classes to rule, which Nicos Poulantzas calls the “power bloc.” Catherine Boone refers to the process of building such a power bloc as “regime consolidation,” that is, to “forge a ruling coalition, to sustain it in the face of challenge, and to secure for its members a larger claim on society’s economic surplus.” Second, hegemony entails taking into account the “interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed—in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind.” This involves making the particular interests of the “leading group” appear consonant with the universal interests of all classes and groups, or, at the least, to make alternatives appear unavailable. Although this is accomplished through important ideological and cultural mechanisms, such mechanisms are also articulated with the political economic. As a process, hegemony can range on a gradient, from “integral hegemony” where “mass affiliation would approach unqualified commitment,” to “minimal hegemony,” when the “ideological unity of the economic, political and economic élites [exists] along with ‘aversion to any intervention of the

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53 See Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, 141. Poulantzas defines a fraction as a distinct section of a class that can operate more or less autonomously from the broader class in terms of its social practices. A fraction can be formed in two ways: First, as a consequence of its distinct role within the economic level of class, for example, “the commercial, industrial, and financial bourgeoisie.” This kind of economic distinction may be determined by historical origins, for a class may go on to become the fraction of another class, as in the “feudal nobility into a fraction of the bourgeoisie (due to capitalization of ground rent).” Second, a fraction may become distinct due to “effects peculiar to concrete political structures” of a social formation. See Poulantzas, 77–82 particularly fn. 26. My usage of fractions of the landed elite has more to do with the latter, where fractionalization of landed elites was the effect of political and economic disparities amongst them. I explain the basis of this fractionalization in the Peshawar valley in Chapter 1.

54 Boone, Merchant Capital and the Roots of State Power in Senegal, 7.

55 Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 161.

popular masses in State life'."57 The achievement of consent, however, is “protected by the armour of coercion,”58 which means dominating “antagonistic groups,” liquidating them or subjugating them “perhaps even by armed force.”59 Domination thus complements hegemony.

As political agents seeking state power, communists in the Peshawar valley operating from the 1940s to the 1970s had to contend with the politics that already existed in the conjunctures in which they operated. I demonstrate how communists understood that they had to forge a hegemonic project themselves, a task that they took as having been “assigned by history,”60 specifically, by successful revolutions in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European states, and later in China, Cuba and other countries. This hegemonic project, the “people’s democratic revolution,” involved building a “multi-class united front” based on a worker-peasant alliance, supported by patriotic and revolutionary middle-classes.61 Coming up with a strategy to take state power involved, first, taking into account the kind of hegemony and domination that existing ruling coalitions exercised, and second, how tenants and labourers were embedded in these relations.

I argue that communists did not encounter workers and peasants either as homogenous masses awaiting their leadership, nor as bearers of an autonomous “subaltern” domain of consciousness, inherently predisposed to resistance.62 Rather, tenant and labourer consciousness, while embedded in forms of social organization based in kinship relations, also depended on how

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59 Gramsci, 57.
they were differentially included in and excluded from the hegemony of landed elites in the Peshawar valley and a broader post-colonial political economy. Thus, Gramsci’s reference to the “subaltern” was not one concerning an autonomous domain in opposition to that of a vaguely defined elite, but rather, as I will demonstrate, a contingent category encompassing exploited classes whose particular interests were sometimes contradictory and sometimes complementary to those of the exploiting classes.\textsuperscript{63} In my reading, communists have to forge the “subaltern” through a range of ideological, cultural, political and economic tactics as part of a strategy to win over the fragmented elements and groups of proletarians and peasants to their hegemonic project. Gramsci, moreover, argues that building this hegemonic coalition is crucial before communists make “frontal attacks” on state power, otherwise they risk being isolated and crushed.\textsuperscript{64}

However, to counter the moves of the communists and the lower classes, the dominant classes had more than just coercion or domination at their disposal. Rather, I argue that they turned to the strategy of “passive revolution,” defined below. Dominant classes are defined by their position in economic relations, notably as propertied groups reliant on the exploitation of other classes. They also tend to have a dominant position in political relations, as exemplified by their control or influence over power centres, most notably the state apparatus. However, “dominance” in political and economic relations are not always consonant. It is precisely in the spaces of these dislocations that lower classes can realize some of their own interests.\textsuperscript{65} Indeed, insofar as hegemony entails taking into account the interests of subordinate classes, Gramsci suggests that it can take the form of “passive revolution,” when

\textsuperscript{63} This point was the basis of V.I. Lenin’s criticism of limiting Social-Democratic politics to “trade unionist” politics. Higher wages and benefits were not, and are not, in and of themselves consonant with bourgeois democracy; thus, “a tred-unionist politics by the worker class means precisely a bourgeois politics by the worker class.” See Vladimir Il’ich Lenin, “What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement,” in Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done in Context, ed. and trans. Lars T. Lih (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 759.

\textsuperscript{64} See Ali, “Reading Gramsci through Fanon.” We will return to this issue in the Conclusion of this study.

\textsuperscript{65} Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes, 113–14.
“progress” occurs as the reaction of the dominant classes to the sporadic and incoherent rebelliousness of the popular masses—a reaction consisting of “restorations” that agree to some part of the popular demands and are therefore “progressive restorations,” or “revolutions-restorations,” or even “passive revolutions.”

Gramsci’s point is not that there is no change; quite the contrary, there may even be significant “progress.” However, this progress is premised on the “restoration” of class rule in general. As Sudipta Kaviraj and others have argued, more than an outline of a general process, passive revolution can also be a strategy. The Indian National Congress (INC) pursued a programme of capitalist passive revolution, encouraging the subaltern classes and groups in anti-British struggle but decidedly not pursuing in any comprehensive manner the interests of those classes and groups, particularly with respect to land reform. Even though the INC did not “abrogate its reformistic programmes, it decided to give them a bureaucrat rather than a mobilizational form. For the INC leadership, clearly, the political task after assuming power was to demobilize its own movement, not to radicalize it further.”

Passive revolution in India entailed a rising class coalition mobilizing the lower classes in their pursuit for power, in ways that sought to maintain rather than radically alter the social structure of class relations. “Passive revolution” is thus a form of hegemony that is neither “integral” nor “minimal.” When provoked by lower class militancy and organization, I argue, political representatives of dominant classes in Pakistan used spatially differentiated strategies of passive revolution, along with targeted coercion, to respond

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68 Kaviraj, *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas*, 115. It is also entirely possible that a power bloc pursuing (what it thinks is) a strategy of passive revolution would fail and not actually demobilize anyone.
to them. The point was not necessarily to protect the property of every last member of the landed elite, for landed elites in certain areas did face a reduction in their capacity to freely realize the consequences of their rights in private property, but rather to preserve the principle of private property and to preserve the dominance of landed elites in general in the broader social formation from further lower class threats.

The argument that I make in my study, drawing on Althusser and Poulantzas, is that the kind of hegemony and domination that ruling coalitions exercise, and the extent to which their strategies of power have to accommodate or engage with challenges to their power in a given conjuncture, shape the character and forms of the institutional configuration of power. I concur with Poulantzas in understanding that state power, the power of the social class(es) and/or fractions that constitute the ruling coalition, is institutionalized and organized in “power centres,” of which the state apparatus is perhaps the most important, insofar as it is a relatively centralized ensemble of institutions and organizations. I am arguing that the institutionalization of power in the Peshawar valley accommodated not only the interests of that ruling coalition but also had to respond to the pressures of the “interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony [was] to be exercised.” Thus, if the ruling coalition in the North-West Frontier Province pursued a strategy of “passive revolution,” especially when tenants and labourers changed the grassroots practices of politics by undermining the informal institutions of state power in villages, then such actions impacted how the ruling coalition shaped the institutional order and

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70 Poulantzas, Political Power and Social Classes.

71 Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 161. This way of understanding the institutionalization of power has also been used recently to great effect to explain why some state apparatuses have greater institutional capacity (say, to engage in taxation) than others. See Vu, Paths to Development in Asia; Slater, Ordering Power; Kurtz, Latin American State Building in Comparative Perspective. Such approaches, in turn, build on earlier comparative political sociology. See Barrington Moore, Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
what they used institutions and organizations for. Looking at the question of the state in this way, “distinctions between state and society blur,”72 a point to which I will return shortly.

**Political sociology, anthropology, and history**

For most recent scholars of state formation in political science, the key question to ask concerns the origins of “institutional capacity” and what conditions enable some states to foster better economic growth, especially like the kind of relatively broad-based growth experienced in South Korea and other East Asian Tigers.73 Otherwise, they ask how some states are better able to conduct taxation and build institutions capable of providing “public goods” like better building standards or education.74 But another way of looking at state formation is as an ongoing process, where political conflicts are fights “over who constitutes the political community that serves as the basis of the state.”75 As the institutional configuration of power is “intertwined with relations of dominance and subordination in local sites,” political conflicts are not merely about legislation or policy formulation, or even policy implementation, but conflicts over “determining the very contours of regional and local power.”76 While the victory of certain communities may entail communal redistribution, as has occurred when lower castes have come to power in certain local and provincial governments in India, it does not necessarily entail the kind of structural transformations necessary to actually deliver “public goods” to everyone, for class and gender differences can also endure within communities, and indeed may even become exacerbated.77

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74 Slater, *Ordering Power*; Kurtz, *Latin American State Building in Comparative Perspective*.
My study operates at the interstices of these two kinds of approaches to state formation, insofar as I examine how class struggle, institutional configuration, and struggles over political community articulated with each other. By looking precisely at the role and influence of lower classes who, despite not being part of the ruling coalition that constitutes state power, nevertheless reconfigured the state’s parameters and its functions, my study departs from more top-down inquiries into state formation in Pakistan and elsewhere that emphasize the role of “elite forces and classes.” Many such analyses engage with Hamza Alavi’s thesis of the “overdeveloped” state, referring to Pakistan’s post-colonial inheritance of the British state apparatus anchored in the bureaucracy and military, built to dominate local classes. Upon independence, the inability of any one of the propertied exploiting classes in the social formation—metropolitan bourgeoisie, domestic bourgeoisie, and landed elites—to actually dominate each other, meant for Alavi that the relative autonomy of this overdeveloped state persisted as it mediated between their interests, and generated its own interests, which explains why it continues to dominate even the propertied classes. However, Alavi does not consider how the state functions with respect to subordinate classes, and how their agency has impacted state formation. Such an approach then views struggles among dominant classes as being principally determinant in modifying institutions. However, I suggest this is only possible if and when the lower classes are disorganized and demobilized. Moreover, Alavi’s approach

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78 In this vein, see also Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* and Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*.
80 Alavi, “The State in Post-Colonial Societies.”
emphasizes the autonomy of “overdeveloped” military-bureaucratic institutions, and so further encourages viewing the interactions between institutions (military vs. civilian regime types) as being determinant in the configuration of institutional order, without reference to the broader social structure.  

Theories that follow from this approach suggest, among other things, that political parties in Pakistan could never build proper grassroots organizations because the military regimes never let them. 

Yet, by focusing on class contradictions my study shows not only divergences between both military and civilian regimes, but important convergences. Despite using different formal institutions of local democracy, both kinds of regimes relied on the informal institutions of khanism until the peasant movement undermined them. Both military and civilian regimes undertook land reform legislation, when faced with pressure from below, but neither sought to develop the institutional capacity to implement them in any real way. Actual implementation of land and tenancy reforms happened in northern Hashtnagar and adjoining areas in particular circumstances due to the strength of lower class organization and mobilization. Moreover, my work shows how even the most left leaning of these landed elite-dominated political parties, the National Awami Party and the Pakistan People’s Party, largely avoided building grassroots party organizations where they might mobilize lower classes toward radical demands. Rather, they sought to repress and constrain the actions of the Mazdoor Kisan Party precisely because it was building such grassroots party organizations with some success. I concur, then, with calls for

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81 As Muhammad Azeem argues this actually returns one’s understanding of the state to a Weberian one. Muhammad Azeem, Law, State and Inequality in Pakistan: Explaining the Rise of the Judiciary (Singapore: Springer, 2017). For Max Weber, the state is “ aclass” (Azeem’s term) in the sense that its origins and development lie in the state’s self-generating drive toward intensifying control over a territory. For Weber, to explain what a state does, looking at the professional political leaders and bureaucracy, their values and training, is key. See Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in The Vocation Lectures, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), 32–94.


83 This corresponds to the Philip E. Jones’s point that the Pakistan People’s Party leadership evacuated its own left wing to avoid greater organized popular mobilization, once landed elites in Punjab had agreed to join the party. See
grounded studies of practices of power, rather than “overly drawn distinctions between democratic and non-democratic regime types” that characterize so much scholarship in political science.

Here, my study also accords with recent studies of political order and the state in Pakistan that examine how the institutions of the ruling classes, including the state, have shifted ideologically and through new political strategies to deal with the pressure from subordinate classes, that is to exclude them from power. I also build on recent political science studies of state formation beyond Pakistan that have stressed how contentious politics, and in particular, class conflicts, have propelled dominant classes to respond by reconfiguring institutions. These studies argue, in different contexts, that facing systemic threats from lower classes in many regions pushed dominant classes to overcome their own fragmentation and tighten ruling coalitions. These consolidated ruling coalitions institutionalized their state power by ceding their own fragmented powers to a centralized state with increased institutional capacity, for example, by letting that state tax them effectively, so long as that state that provided “substantial collective and individual benefits to the oligarchy that created them.” However, in contrast to these studies, I shift my focus away from the putative centre of the state to examine precisely the imbrication of formal and informal institutions, and how and why the institutional configuration

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86 With respect to East Asia see Slater, *Ordering Power*; Vu, *Paths to Development in Asia*. Vu notably argues that “sharp elite polarization” and “effective mass mobilization” can also lead the lower classes to form their own state, as in China and Vietnam. See Vu, 9. In the Latin American context, see Kurtz, *Latin American State Building in Comparative Perspective*.

of power could still be altered in short-term and lasting ways, despite what appear to be fragmented ruling classes and a class threat that was spatially delimited, that is, largely effective in the Frontier.

This way of analyzing how the state is imbricated with formal and informal institutions has implications for debates about the autonomy and continuity of institutions. I concur with Timothy Mitchell’s point that the “line between state and society [is] drawn internally, within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain social and political order is maintained.”

This means examining how the divisions existing in society reproduce themselves in and through redrawing the lines of the state, which helps us understand institutional autonomy. I show how the formal institutions of the state collaborated with the informal institutions of khanism, until the greater organizational power of tenants and landless labourers pushed the formal state away from the khans and even compelled it to intervene against them. Within the state apparatus, I show how state personnel were not willing agents of change, but had to be dragged reluctantly into developing the institutional capacity to intervene in village society and against the khans. The state did not have an innate tendency to expansion, as Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat for example argue, the “sovereign power of the state is an aspiration that seeks to create itself in the face of internally fragmented, unevenly distributed and unpredictable configurations of political authority that exercise more or less legitimate violence in a territory.” Such autonomy and drive to expansion, if they exist, cannot be assumed, but have to be explained. I explain them as being consequences of the kind of hegemony at play—

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both in terms of the balance of class power between dominant classes and subordinate classes, and among the dominant classes themselves.

Following on this critique of institutional autonomy, I also engage with debates about how the institutional configuration of power varies over time and space, arguing that in a class society such variation has to be explained with reference to the balance of class power. One line of reasoning explains the capacity of states in the Third World with reference to colonial legacy, or, as Atul Kohli puts it, the state institutions of the colonial past are “coins that do not readily melt,” for “continuity is in the nature of institutions.” For Kohli, it is the British who left in India a state that was well constructed at the apex but fragmented at its base (similar to Alavi’s analysis of an “overdeveloped” state at the apex, and the domination of factions of landed elites at the base). Kohli explains the persistence of indirect rule, where the state apparatus shares its sovereignty with “local” power centres, as a consequence of South Asian post-colonial “rulers” being unable to marshal “sufficient cohesive force to penetrate the countryside and in part because the legitimacy of the new rulers depended on allowing different centers of local power to survive and flourish.” I suggest an alternative explanation for Pakistan, in line with the theorists of “passive revolution” in India, that it was not in the interests of the new rulers to actually engage in the mobilization of lower classes that was necessary to subordinate “local” power centres and consequently build a cohesive centralized state apparatus. As I show, the parties of

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90 Kohli, State-Directed Development, 19.
93 Kohli, State-Directed Development, 412.
94 Kaviraj, The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas; Sarkar, “Popular Movements and National Leadership, 1945-47”; Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. On demobilizing labour in conflicts with business, see Chibber, Locked in Place. See also Frankel, India’s Political Economy.
the landed elites and military organizations in the North-West Frontier Province did not move against the local power centres of the landed elites, until and unless lower class mobilization forced them to intervene. Even then, they were more apt to restore such local power centres than to get rid of them, unless their particular fractional interests were opposed to those of the local power centres.95

Moreover, I show how the variation of lower class organization across space and time shaped the spatial variation in how state power was institutionalized.96 Where the tenants and labourers were better organized they were better able to undermine the informal institutions of landed elites. Strong lower class mobilization also entailed the creation or re-creation of their own institutions, such as peasant courts and jirgahs (councils of elders), to undertake some judicial functions, which contested both landed elite and state sovereignty.97 Thus, rather than looking at continuity as being inherent to institutions, I concur with Christian Lund and Catherine Boone in arguing that “[i]nstitutions are only as robust, solid and enduring as the power relations that underpin them, and the ongoing processes of reproduction or re-enactment that enable them to persist.”98 I emphasize in my study that the institutional configuration of power inside and outside the formal apparatus of the state was determined by the balance of power between contending classes. When lower classes increased their organizational strength they were also able to disrupt and reshape the exercise and distribution of power.

95 Comparably, in Kerala, court rulings supported by the Indian National Congress made it very difficult for the Communists to implement the land reforms they sought. See Ronald J. Herring, Land to the Tiller: The Political Economy of Agrarian Reform in South Asia (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983).
Indeed, by bringing my analysis of social class to the “margins” of the state, I also depart from ethnographic inquiries into the state in South Asia that evacuate class and structured class relations from theoretical analysis. The landed elites of the Peshawar valley embodied the instability of the apparent boundaries or what Veena Das and Deborah Poole call the “margins” of the state, for landed elites represented “both highly personalized forms of private power and the supposedly impersonal or neutral authority of the state,” as many continue to do in Pakistan. The landed elites were “sovereign,” insofar as sovereignty is the “ability to kill, punish, and discipline with impunity wherever it is found and practiced, rather than [being] grounded in formal ideologies of rule and legality.” In this conception, sovereignty comes from violence, which is prior to and outside of the law. Such frameworks importantly enable the delinking of sovereignty from the control of territory, making it possible to study the actual ways in which power is exercised in South Asia. However, by reducing sovereignty to violence and violence (particularly the violence of exclusion to determine who belongs to the political community) to sovereignty, this ontology also obscures the other generative and destructive aspects of violence, and sovereignty becomes its own self-generating end. Instead, I show how the private ownership of the means of production and the division of labour that existed in the social formation of the Peshawar valley were also “relation[s] of uninterrupted force” whose existence was prior to and outside the law. These relations spanned the “overt violence” of accumulating private property through destruction of complex forms of ownership or accumulating capital through dispossession, to the ongoing “extortion” of surplus from primary

102 Following Giorgo Agamben, in Das and Poole, “State and Its Margins: Comparative Ethnographies”; Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction.”
103 Especially in Hansen and Stepputat, “Introduction.”
producers as rent or as profit. I thus locate the “sovereignty” of landed elites in a broader ensemble of social relations. Through my examination of social class and its transformations, I show how the violence that can be generative of structured political practices is also the violence that is generative of structured economic and other kinds of practices, which condition each other.

Here, I understand class struggle as violence, a relation of forces that straddles the inside and outside of the formal institutions of the state (including the legal institutions), which suggests that the debate on the “politics of the governed” vs. the “rule of law” in South Asia, and elsewhere, is misplaced. Partha Chatterjee argues that most Third World polities are characterized by a narrow domain of civil society where citizens [relate] to the state through the mutual recognition of legally enforceable rights and a wider domain of political society where governmental agencies [deal] not with citizens but with populations to deliver specific benefits or services through a process of political negotiation.

These “populations” adopt the “moral attributes of a community” to make exceptional demands on the state outside of the rule of law, which he calls the “politics of the governed.” Indeed, I show that when the tenants of the Peshawar valley made a demand for land, and for proprietary

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106 Or, to be more precise, they are both placed within the confines of a normatively liberal approach to politics, in that it accepts capitalism and bourgeois democracy, which places limits on imagining the possible parameters of justice and emancipation. See Swagato Sarkar, “Political Society in a Capitalist World,” in _Re-Framing Democracy and Agency in India: Interrogating Political Society_, ed. Ajay Gudavarth (London and New York: Anthem Press, 2012), 31–48.

107 Chatterjee, _Lineages of Political Society_, 13–14.

or “occupancy” rights, or simply demanded a rent freeze, they were making exceptional demands that were outside of what was acceptable according to the Tenancy Act of 1950 and even the Land Reforms Regulation of 1972. In response, the state did in 1973-74 selectively suspend the implementation of those same laws, specifically, suspending all court ordered ejectments, to compel landed elites to negotiate and compromise with tenants.

However, Nandini Sundar has pointed out that “subaltern” populations have engaged with the law in multilayered ways, either asking for implementation or seeking to transform laws, reflecting different visions of citizenship. Thus, she argues that “even a desecrated law is better than no law at all in setting standards for justice.” Scholars of Pakistani rural relations have similarly argued that democratic political justice must entail upholding laws that benefit the marginalized while opposing other laws in order to change them, for exceptions to the rule of law in what Chatterjee calls “political society” ultimately serve the interests of dominant groups and reproduce the marginality of the excluded. I do show that in the 1970s, tenants in the Peshawar valley finally realized some of the protections included in the laws I named above, but only after they had managed to weaken and undermine the sovereign power of landed elites in the villages, as until then courts did little to grant tenants relief. The “rule of law” is thus not an “unqualified good,” but one whose application is always qualified by class struggle. Similarly,

109 Occupancy is a particular category in colonial and post-colonial law where tenants paid no or nominal rents, while also being protected from ejectment; as opposed to being tenants “at-will” who aside from full rent could be ejected at the end of any contractual term.
112 Sundar herself notes how “subaltern” populations she studies in India are able to extract concessions from the law or even transform laws in part due to the extra-legal pressure of the armed Maoist movement.
when governments suspend the law to negotiate deals with “populations,” what the latter get and how they get it is a function of the relation of forces, linked, again, to class struggle.

Indeed, my study suggests that the extra-legal negotiations and the legal cases that did go in favour of tenants were different institutional mechanisms through which the dominant classes were able to engage in hegemonic politics, to offer concessions to subordinate classes while maintaining propertied rule. So long as the dominant classes hold state power, I argue, the state is “always the state of the dominant class,”114 or rather, dominant classes and fractions. Chatterjee argues that what he calls the “politics of the governed” may “contain the core of a richer, more diverse, and inclusive set of norms”115 and may “succeed in inventing new terms of political justice.”116 In contrast, I argue that this kind of extra-legal negotiation should be understood in its entirety as a politics that reinscribes the “governed” into the hegemony of the governors, that is, it is the hegemonic politics of the ruling class. While this kind of informal negotiation is certainly distinct from the formal negotiation that enables workers to win higher wages within a legal regime of industrial relations, it is no more and no less emancipatory. The distinction between the informal and formal, the private and the public, the illegal and the legal, that motivates so much of the debate between Chatterjee and his critics like Sundar is precisely a “distinction drawn in bourgeois law.”117 Accordingly, I concur with Muhammad Azeem that “there seems no obligation for marginalized and subalterns to submit and limit themselves to courts for their political actions.”118 That puts a premium on the organization and mobilization of subaltern classes and groups, who can then increase their influence and capacity to engage either

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or both institutional mechanisms of the “politics of the governed” or the “rule of law,” based on their own strategy of what is necessary to extract concessions from a hostile state.

Finally, I also engage with the recent political historiography of the left and social movements in Pakistan. Complementary to the literature on the institutions of the state and politics, a line of inquiry has viewed the political left’s impact on state formation in terms of debates over national culture. Saadia Toor, for example, argues that debates over national culture, in which the left was presented as “the other,” were crucial to the state forging an Islamic and unitary Pakistani national identity (over and above the diversity of ethnic-national groups that compose the country), that the state then used to try and achieve an ideological and cultural hegemony. My study steps away from the debates over national culture at the centre and looks at culture in its articulation with class, again from the “margins” in terms of a remote and marginalized geopolitical frontier that, until the recent “War on Terror”, has been presented as peripheral to Pakistani politics, and whose people, namely the Pakhtuns, have been presented as noble savages, religious fanatics, or as a people whose political struggle for Pakhtun ethnic-nationalism disrupts the nationalist historiography of a unitary Pakistani identity. I examine more closely how those very ethnic-nationalist leaders, namely the Frontier Congress and their successors in the National Awami Party, obscured class contradictions in the name of ethno-


122 Mukulika Banerjee, by focusing on the non-violent anti-imperialist movement of the Khudai Khidmatgars (Red Shirts) against British colonization, sought to disrupt the stereotype of belligerent, religious fanatics. However, she did so in a way that, in line with the ideology and strategy of the Khudai Khidmatgars, underplayed the class contradictions within the nationalist movement, and emphasized its affinity to Indian nationalism. These are the very class contradictions I will tease out and examine in the context of post-colonial NWFP. See Mukulika Banerjee, The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition & Memory in the North West Frontier (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
national unity predicated on the leading role of landed elites. These debates further articulated with the structure of culture and kinship (*qaums*) in the Peshawar valley. In other words, my study of the Mazdoor Kisan Party complicates the narrative of the “old left” that the propertied exploiting classes of Pakistan’s minority ethnic-nationalities constitute natural allies of the property-less exploited labouring classes.\(^{123}\)

Moreover, for the most part the dominant historiography of the left decouples it from the historical reconstitution of the classes that the left purportedly represented. Most studies that invoke the left focus mostly on the Communist Party of Pakistan (which operated officially from 1948 to 1954), and foreground their literary debates through figures associated with the Progressive Writers’ Association (PWA) rather than their work amongst workers and peasants. A detailed assessment of strategy and tactics, how communists organized among these labouring populations, and how those classes responded to them, is marginal to these discussions.\(^{124}\) Accordingly, the weakness and decline of the left is explained largely through external conditions, notably state repression or co-optation. Such studies highlight the repression that began in the 1950s with the ban on the Communist Party of Pakistan, and that was largely completed in the 1970s and 1980s, when the “organized Left [was] weakened by the repressive policies of [prime minister Zulfikar Ali] Bhutto and [subsequently, general] Zia-ul Haq], [and] suffered a further setback with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the privatization and

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\(^{123}\) See, for example, Akhtar, *The Politics of Common Sense*, 119. I should clarify that I am not denying the oppression and exploitation of minority ethnic-nationalities in Pakistan, but that the experience of the Frontier peasant movement emerges from an objection to placing their leadership in the hands of their own exploiting classes, which entails no necessary improvement of conditions for the exploited classes of minority labouring classes.

\(^{124}\) These works also focus largely on Punjab and to some extent on Karachi, which is fair in terms of the concentration of communists there. However, they neglect the Frontier almost entirely. In his book Kamran Asdar Ali does note that although there was a “major peasant struggle in the Hashtnagar area in the NWFP in 1948-1949,” the Communist Party of Pakistan “had little to do with organizing it.” See Ali, *Communism in Pakistan*. As Chapter 1 shows, the Communist Party had quite a bit to do with organizing that struggle, a point I substantiate using some of the same sources Asdar Ali does.
downsizing undertaken as part of IMF conditionalities.” Without denying the importance of repression and co-optation, as well as “objective” structural conditions, my study also emphasizes the agency of the party in examining how radical organizers assessed their conjunctures, what decisions and interventions they made, and how they engaged with the labouring classes they sought to organize and lead. I show that at different moments radical organizers made grave errors, to understand in part why and how it is that radical politics could sustain and even grow in neighbouring countries like India and Nepal, despite the sponsoring of reactionary religious/ caste chauvinism and severe violence by both formal and informal institutions of ruling class power.

Methods and sources

In order to arrive at my argument about the relationship between class and institutions, and between political agency and class power, I abstract these categories out of a detailed narrative of concrete rural political practices from 1948 to 1986. I also analytically divide this concrete narrative into three conjunctures, which I treat as case studies to enable comparison across the conjunctures I have chosen and to facilitate the abstraction of causal relationships. The divisions of conjunctures are based on moments where communists made crucial organizational decisions. I examine how their political agency articulated with other conjunctural factors, that is, structured relations, especially the formation and reformation of class, and “contingent events,” to produce particular institutional configurations of power. I lay out the conjunctures in more detail in the concluding section of this Introduction.

My method is close to what Peter A. Hall calls “systematic process analysis,” in that it “draws observations from empirical cases, not only about the value of the principal causal variables, but about the processes linking these variables to the outcomes,” and, moreover, comes out with fairly “simple” and “portable” generalizations. Where my method departs from Hall’s notion of the “systematic” is that it is not deductive. I am not concerned with generating predictions based on systematizing the causal processes of different theories, and then testing them. I did, however, in the previous section compare how causal processes I observed from my concrete materials pushed back against other theories. Rather, my abstractions are inductive, that is, they are based on intensive “exploratory” research into the concrete, where “learning about one object or from one contact leads to others with whom they are linked, so that we build up a picture of the structures and causal groups of which they are part.” In other words, to write this study and present it, I abstracted concepts and categories from the narrative that I pieced together from my archival materials and ethnography. I put these abstract categories to use to provide a causal explanation of the concrete phenomena emerging from my materials.

The narrative that I develop is based on bringing into dialogue three kinds of largely primary sources that have remained virtually untapped in scholarly and even non-scholarly studies. First, I conducted over 140 semi-structured interviews among Mazdoor Kisan Party organizers, landed elites, tenants, and landless labourers, among others—including men and women—in and around several villages in Hashtnagar. I conducted many interviews in Urdu, which many people in Hashtnagar spoke, while the rest were conducted in Pashto with the aid of

126 Peter A. Hall, “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics,” in Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 394. See also Andrew Sayer’s discussion on “intensive” research as opposed to “extensive” research: Sayer, Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach, 163–64.
128 Sayer, Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach, 164.
129 On abstraction from the concrete, and reapplication of the abstract to the concrete, see Bertell Ollman, Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx’s Method (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Sayer, Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach.
research assistants; interviews with women were carried out by a female research assistant. These interviews were carried out over nearly four months of ethnographic fieldwork (participant observation), during which I spent nearly three months with Afzal Shah Khamosh, the leader of a remnant faction of the Mazdoor Kisan Party in the village of Shakur in northern Hashtnagar, and then one month with a khan in the village of Rajjar in southern Hashtnagar. Through these interviews and participant observation, I sought to “glean the meanings that the people under study [attributed] to their social and political reality,”\(^ {130}\) that is, their “everyday” experience of the state,\(^ {131}\) informal institutions, political economy, the Mazdoor Kisan Party, and the peasant movement. In my study, I relate these meanings and everyday experiences to people’s locations in structured economic, political and sociocultural relations—indeed, my conceptions of these categories were shaped by what they shared, and sometimes, what they did not share.

Second, I assembled an original and novel documentary archive of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, from erstwhile and continuing party members in Hashtnagar (Charsadda) and Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as North-West Frontier Province), Faisalabad and Lahore in Punjab, and Karachi in Sindh, as well as the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, Netherlands. This archive includes the private papers of the late Mazdoor Kisan Party leader Sher Ali Bacha in Mardan, which includes internal documents such as meeting minutes and correspondence between leaders. The Mazdoor Kisan Party published a newspaper, \textit{Sanobar} (1970-1971) and then an internal newsletter, \textit{Circular} (1972-1979), of which I have assembled almost every issue, in addition to several booklets, pamphlets and handbills. It was in the pages of the \textit{Circular} that party members quite openly and sometimes bitterly debated with


each other about the direction of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, transformations in class relations, and outlines for relating to the tenants and labourers that the party was organizing. As all but one of the four major leaders of the Mazdoor Kisan Party are deceased, my understanding of the party’s self-understanding as a collective political agent, assessing and intervening in the conjuncture, comes largely from these documents.

Third, I examine state records from the Directorate of Libraries and Archives of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Peshawar, largely the correspondence of the Governor’s Secretariat, available from 1972 to the 1980s, and declassified files of the Special Branch of the police, mostly covering the 1940s, in addition to files relating to specific individuals. While some files have been used by scholars in reconstructing descriptive biographies, such as that of the late Mazdoor Kisan Party leader Afzal Bangash, my investigation revolves around a large, virtually untapped file on “landlord-tenant tensions” (1972-1976), fortnightly police reports from the Peshawar and Mardan districts (1972-1974), and several other files extending into the 1980s. However, data availability also limited the scope and depth of my study; for example, while there is very a detailed file on landlord-tenant tensions from 1972-1976 among other files from the 1970s, I found comparatively little from the martial law administration of 1977-1988, and virtually nothing from the military regimes of 1958-1969 and 1969-1971. Nevertheless, altogether these documents allow me not only to see “like” the state but importantly to see within it, across changes in governments and regime-types.

I carefully reconstruct a chronology of events and interactions by putting these three sets of archival materials together, filling in some gaps with secondary literature where possible. Importantly, many of the categories I use in this study were also being used by participants in the events, such as class, qaum, and khanism, and so it is worth examining how the two relate. That

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is, I use the categories my participants used and put them into dialogue with established theory as “variables.” I approach these categories from a historical materialist framework, wherein categories are not self-contained homogenous units, but rather, their form and content is constantly changing as a consequence of their interactions with other categories. The categories change from conjuncture to conjuncture in part because of what they “did” or the role that they played in previous conjunctures, and in great part due to structural transformations and contingent events. The category of “class” remains through each conjuncture as a group of people defined by its “place in the ensemble of social practices, i.e. by its place in the ensemble of the division of labour which includes political and ideological relations.” While the label by which a class is named remains the same, the parameters, the content, the options available as “class interests,” the imbrications of a particular class with other classes (i.e., class relations) and other social practices, the actual individuals who carry class, all of them can change and become something new. This is why social class can only be understood relationally and conjuncturally, but the same applies for categories like qaum, gender, institutions, so on. In this vein, it is worth defining some of the terms that I propose to use critically.

Peasants and agrarian transition

This study concerns peasants and peasant struggles, but the term and its Urdu counterpart kisān are subject to considerable definitional ambiguity. Here I lay out some definitions, followed by the usage in the Peshawar valley, and how I use these terms in this study. Teodor Shanin defined the peasantry as a “social entity with four essential and interlinked facets”:

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133 Ontologically and methodologically. I particularly draw on an “aleatory” or “conjunctural” materialism, in which the “economic” is determining in the “last instance.” See Cockshott, “On Althusser’s Philosophy of the Encounter”; Nick Hardy, “Theory from the Conjuncture: Althusser’s Aleatory Materialism and Machiavelli’s Dispositif,” Décalages 1, no. 3 (2014); Gallas, “Revisiting Conjunctural Marxism.”

134 “This place corresponds to the structural determination of classes, i.e., the manner in which determination by the structure (relations of production, politico-ideological domination/subordination) operates on class practices—for classes have existence only in the class struggle.” In Poulantzas, “On Social Classes,” 27–28.
the family farm as the basic multi-functional unit of social organisation, land husbandry and usually animal rearing as the main means of livelihood, a specific traditional culture closely linked with the way of life of small rural communities and multidirectional subjection to powerful outsiders.135

As he noted, the “peasant holds his [sic] land, which implies customary rights of use, while its legal ownership may be vested in him or alternatively in his village, in the state or in a landlord.”136 If the legal ownership is vested in a landlord, then the peasant is a tenant, who pays rent in the form of a share of the crop (nīm-kāra in Pashto, meaning half-share, or baṭā‘ī in Urdu) or in cash as a lease (ijārah). I do not subscribe to Shanin’s view of “traditional culture,” for “traditional” or “customary” norms in the villages of the Peshawar valley were deeply restructured or even created out of whole cloth by the “modern” intrusions of the tributary (especially, but not only Mughal) state and then colonial capitalism.137

But the development of capitalism had related “economic” consequences. Shanin’s definition is a fairly open definition, which (deliberately) does not distinguish between the peasant in terms of a “household farming [unit] organized for simple reproduction, notably to supply its own food (‘subsistence’)”138 and the shift in the “social character of small-scale farming” as capitalism develops. As Henry Bernstein notes,

First ‘peasants’ become petty commodity producers, who have to produce their subsistence through integration into wider social divisions of labour and markets…. Second, petty commodity producers are subject to class differentiation…. I suggest that as a result of class formation there is no single ‘class’ of ‘peasants’ or ‘family farmers’ but rather differentiated classes of small-scale capitalist farmers, relatively successful petty commodity producers and wage labour.139

136 Shanin, 76.
137 See Nichols, Settling the Frontier.
139 Bernstein, 4.
In classical Marxism these peasant classes are broken down into “rich peasants,” farmers who also invest in capital and hire waged labour; “poor peasants” who hire out their waged labour because they do not possess enough land or capital; and “middle peasants” somewhere in between, farming their land mostly through family labour.¹⁴⁰ There is also definitional ambiguity about whether or not agricultural labourers, who typically possess no land whatsoever, are part of the peasantry. I use the term “landless” to refer not to ownership but to possession of land, and this departs from a general usage which may sometimes speak of “landless peasants,” but my usage is a consequence of the categories used in the Peshawar valley.

The narrative I present about peasant struggles in the Peshawar valley is also a narrative about changes in the peasantry in the context of agrarian change. The migrants from the Mohmand Agency who farmed the newly canalized lands of Hashtnagar and Mardan at the turn of the 20th century were by and large tenants, with few landless agricultural labourers. Even in the 1950s the proportion of pure agricultural labourers was comparatively less. But this changed rapidly and dramatically in the 1960s with the intensification of capitalist relations of production (see Chapter 2), and that were further intensified in the 1970s.¹⁴¹ This augured a rapid differentiation of the peasantry, with a few becoming richer, and many more being ejected or losing their lands because they could not keep up with the competition. Thus, the proportion of landless labourers increased dramatically (see Chapters 2 and 6), and increasingly crystallized as a distinct category and class from the land-possessing peasantry. This crystallization was partly a

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¹⁴¹ These state-led agrarian reforms were designed to effect the intensification of capitalist relations in agriculture “from above.” This means that fractions of the ruling classes with modernizing ideologies sought to provoke landlords in the country to turn toward mechanized farming, intensive cultivation via new seed and fertilizer technologies, and that entailed supervising production on the lands themselves rather than relying on tenants. See Ronald J. Herring, “Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the ‘Eradication of Feudalism’ in Pakistan,” Comparative Studies in Society and History 21, no. 4 (1979): 519–57; Terence J. Byres, Capitalism from Above and Capitalism from Below: An Essay in Comparative Political Economy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996).
consequence of intra-familial struggles over possession of land, and attendant ideologies that privileged those who possess land over those who do not. However, the categories that people used in general language did not always distinguish so sharply within peasant classes or even between peasants who possessed land and those agricultural labourers who did not.

Analytically, we have seen that a peasant may be someone who either owns or rents land. But in this study I generally keep with the colloquial usage of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, where peasant (*kisān*, an Urdu term) referred primarily to tenants, those land-possessing cultivators (*zamīndār* in Pashto) who rented in land from landowners, distinct from landless labourers (*khêt mazdūr* which means field or agricultural labourer). The relationship of subordination of a tenant or agricultural labourer to a *khan* was encompassed in the term *dehqān*, so both could be referred to using the same term by the landlord. Moreover, a tenant or labourer who lived in a house owned by a *khan* was the *khan’s humsāyah*, which literally means neighbour, but is not exactly a term of endearment in Pashto. To complicate the matter further, because the land was actually leased out to a tenant, the landless agricultural labourer who lived in a homestead on that land might be considered the *humsāyah* of the tenant as well as the landlord.

However, landless labourers were part of the peasant movement. This had to do with the movement incorporating the demands of the landless labourers, as well as the ambiguity of the term *kisān*, which is an Urdu word and not a Pashto word, and which came to mean specifically a participant in the Mazdoor Kisan Party or the broader movement. As a consequence of the movement of the 1970s, the forcible occupation of lands has now become an established verb in the vocabulary of Pashto in the Peshawar valley — *kisānī*. A landless labourer could thus engage in *kisānī*, be a *kisān*, and not be a peasant or *zamīndār* or tenant in the sense of not being a

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142 This is distinct from the usage of the term *zamīndār* in the rest of South Asia, where it refers to a landlord or someone who has substantial rights in the share of produce of a land. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the appropriate term for such a person is *khan*. 

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cultivator. However, the term *kisān* has now come to refer exclusively to peasants precisely because the distinction between tenant and landless labourer, as I noted above, became relatively crystallized in social practice. When I refer to the “peasant movement” I am referring to both tenants and landless labourers. However, outside of the qualifier of “movement,” I use the term terms tenant/peasant/*kisān* largely interchangeably. When I am referring to those peasants who owned their own lands, who also typically belonged to a different *qaum* (nation, generally translated “tribe”) than those who were not owners, I specifically use the terms “small landowner” or “peasant proprietor.”

**Conjunctures and chapters**

I examine how the contest over hegemony and domination between communists and political agents representing different fractions of the exploiting propertied classes, that is, political parties and military organizations, shaped and reformed institutional configurations of power over three key conjunctural moments. The first is the conjuncture of the late 1940s upon Pakistan’s independence, covered in Chapter 1, when the Communist Party of Pakistan sought to lead peasant struggles also rooted in northern Hashtnagar in the context of a nascent country dealing with the severe economic and political crisis wrought by the partition of Pakistan from India. The communists contended with landed elites whose political loyalties were divided in contention between the Pakhtun nationalist Frontier Congress that had campaigned against Pakistan, and the Muslim League, which had campaigned for Pakistan and formed the Frontier’s provincial ministry. I show how communists encouraged tenants to engage in armed struggles without adequate organization and preparation, and although they often undermined the sovereign power of landed elites in villages, they also invited massive state repression and the decimation of the communists in the Frontier. Nevertheless, these tenant struggles provoked the first major provincial land and tenancy reform legislation in West Pakistan, which the Muslim
League government used to try and co-opt a thin layer of already privileged tenants. This was a strategy of “passive revolution” as well. However, as I will show, it was not as expansive or deep as the moment of the 1970s. Indeed, I argue that the informal institutions of landed elite rule (khanism) in the villages were restored because of the weakness of tenant organization and because the Muslim League regime was ultimately rooted in and relied upon the political and economic cooperation of the landed elites.

The second conjuncture of the late 1960s and early 1970s, is the main focus of this study, covered over Chapters 2 to 5. This conjuncture seemed to share similar features to the conjuncture of the late 1940s, with several crucial differences. The first crucial difference, as I demonstrate in Chapter 2, were agrarian reforms and green revolution technologies pursued by a military regime that intensified agrarian differentiation and increased inequality in the Peshawar valley. These shifts affected not merely economic relations but also political and sociocultural relations. In other words, these transformations in production impacted and exacerbated contradictions of social class, understood as a group of people defined by its “place in the ensemble of social practices, i.e. by its place in the ensemble of the division of labour which includes political and ideological relations.”

The second crucial difference, as I discuss in Chapter 3, was the convergence of ideological, political and organizational dislocations at international, national and local scales, encompassing debates in the international communist movement, war between India and Pakistan, and mass rebellions in urban West Pakistan that brought down the military president Ayub Khan in 1969. Importantly, the communists of the Peshawar valley turned toward the anti-revisionist Marxism-Leninism associated with the Chinese communists because it provided them a conceptual apparatus to interpret and organize the very real ideological, political, and class contradictions among the people they were trying to

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lead into revolution. The Marxist-Leninists put these ideas into action through localized organizing in the form of Kisan Committees (Peasant Committees) through the 1960s. After the urban mass rebellions of 1968–1969, tenants and labourers seem to have gravitated almost spontaneously in droves toward the Mazdoor Kisan Party. I point out how “subalternity” was the contingent outcome of the convergence of interests among rural labouring classes. Thereafter in 1970 the peasant movement began with resisting ejectments and refusals to pay rent.

Here I shift to an assessment of the political practices of the communists and then of the parties of fractions of the landed elites. Specifically, I examine how they intervened in the conjuncture that they themselves were shaping through pursuit of their respective hegemonic projects. In Chapter 4 I show how the Mazdoor Kisan Party’s leadership intervened in but also modified the social and political practices of the region’s tenants and labourers to produce new sets of practices and behaviours, including new organizations and institutions. I examine the “spontaneity” of the peasants’ affiliation to the party and demonstrate how in fact already-existing leadership among tenants, including leaders rooted in the social organization of kinship (i.e., lineage heads or maliks and elders or masharān) were often crucial levers in bringing entire kinship groups or lineages into the party. Additionally, the party intervened in organizing armed struggle and legal struggle, which, along with blocking ejectments and refusing to pay rents, undermined the indirect rule or sovereign powers of landed elites in villages. In their place, the party and the tenants set up their own institutions of dispute resolution—peasant courts. Meanwhile, landed elites relied more upon the formal apparatus of the state to enforce their interests. In effect, the peasant movement had not only effected a de facto transformation in the relations of production, whereby tenants in many areas became de facto occupancy tenants (paying no or nominal rents, while also being protected from ejectment), but had also effected a
shift in the balance of the dominant class’s locus of power from informal institutions of khanism to the formal institutions of the state.

The Mazdoor Kisan Party’s interventions occurred in the context of military governance (up to 1972) followed by democratic governance. In Chapter 5, I show how and why two different democratic provincial governments in the Frontier, representing different fractions of the ruling classes, responded differently to the Mazdoor Kisan Party-led peasant movement in shaping the form and content of the state apparatus. Specifically the first government (1972-1973) was of the Pakhtun nationalist National Awami Party, the successor to the Frontier Congress, in coalition with the Jamiat Ulema-e Islam. The second provincial government (1973-1977) of the Pakistan People’s Party relied substantially on the support of the very same provincial Muslim League that had governed in the late 1940s and early 1950s. (The Mazdoor Kisan Party, it is perhaps worth repeating, was the successor to the Communist Party of Pakistan.) I demonstrate how the National Awami Party had a constricted hegemonic project, one that did not extend beyond uniting the interests of larger and smaller landowners in the Peshawar valley. Accordingly, NAP-JUI mobilized the repressive apparatus of the state, rather than seeking to compromise with the tenants. In contrast, the PPP adopted a strategy of “passive revolution” of taking some progressive, yet limited steps to regularize forcible occupations of land. However, the PPP achieved this redistribution in land rights not by mobilizing tenants, but through the bureaucracy, increasing the state apparatus’s capacity and relative autonomy from khans while also demobilizing the peasant movement.

The third conjuncture of the late 1970s and 1980s (covered in Chapters 6 and 7) considers the denouement of a demobilized peasant movement and how that impacted, or rather, did not impact state formation. The regularization of forcible occupations of land and rent strikes intensified class differentiation among the peasantry and further sharpened differences between
those who possessed lands and those who did not. I show in Chapter 6 how these differences were understood in debates among the leaders of the Mazdoor Kisan Party and among tenants and landless labourers, the question being whether and how to redraw the parameters of the “subaltern” to exclude the “rich peasants” who had now replaced the dominance of *khans* in village life. The disagreements over these questions also shaped the Mazdoor Kisan Party’s strategic outlook and organizational forms as a national political party, the disagreements leading ultimately to its dissolution, which coincided perhaps ironically with the military coup of Zia-ul Haq in 1977 and the subsequent consolidation of the military regime. In Chapter 7, I argue that even though it was an authoritarian regime that relied upon considerable coercion, the new military regime paid considerable attention to its own fragility and its need to develop an ideological and organizational hegemony in civil society (universities, trade unions, etc.). At the local level in the villages the military regime had to contend with the new balance of class power that had resulted from the previous years, one where rich peasants were now dominant in villages, but the organized peasant movement was demobilized and disintegrating. The new regime did not seek to restore *khanism* or reverse the *de facto* land and tenancy rights that had been secured from the movement; rather, the particular institutional configuration of power (i.e., the one without direct landlord power in villages) was adapted and transformed in order to provide continuity to the regime itself and to class rule in general. The regime did so by reversing the extra-legal interventions of the prior democratic government, and created more favourable conditions for aggressive landlords trying to restore their positions, while also making minor concessions in villages to rich peasants. That being said, it was a very repressive regime, and I show how remnant factions of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, rather than playing a long game in conditions of military dictatorship, instead turned to short-term “adventurism.” They sought to collaborate with the new communist-oriented regime in Afghanistan and with Pakistani pro-
democratic organizations that used “terrorist” tactics, inviting the severe repression of the military regime in Pakistan, severely undermining the Mazdoor Kisan Party and effectively ending its salience on the national scene by 1986.
Chapter 1: Communists and kisans in early Pakistan

Introduction

The North-West Frontier Province immediately following independence on August 14, 1947, appeared to share crucial structural features with the early 1970s as I highlight shortly, although the contents and combinations of these features were very different in each conjuncture. For one, the institutions of the Pakistani state and nation had to be forged anew upon the remnants of a colonial state apparatus, in the midst of a crisis caused by the Second World War and a traumatic partition.144 These crises strained the Frontier’s political economy, especially in its northern districts in the Peshawar valley and Hazara. Moreover, the Frontier Congress, a political party that had campaigned against Pakistan and secondarily for an independent Pakhtunistan, was in power in provincial government upon independence but was immediately dismissed by governor-general Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He appointed the Frontier Muslim League, the party that had spearheaded the Pakistan movement, to lead the province in Congress’s stead, and it sought to establish its own hegemony in the province beyond its narrow and shallow base. Very importantly, soon after independence the contradiction between landlords and tenants erupted into armed confrontations in Hashtnagar, with the participation and guidance of the nascent Communist Party of Pakistan, while a significant unarmed yet broadly allied movement took off in the Hazara District further east.145


145 This chapter’s narrative also offers a corrective to a recent volume in which the author says—in a footnote—that although there was a “major peasant struggle in the Hashtnagar area in the NWFP in 1948-1949,” the Communist Party of Pakistan “had little to do with organizing it.” See Ali, *Communism in Pakistan*. As I will show, this view is not quite correct.
These political elements are also important for they were themselves almost direct predecessors of the forces arraigned against each other in the 1970s, when the separation of East Pakistan meant once again that the institutions of the Pakistani state and nation had to be forged anew. The Frontier Congress, and its allied social movement the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God, or Red Shirts), were the predecessors of the National Awami Party. Muslim League leader Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan went on to become an important ally of the Pakistan People’s Party in both the NWFP and at the centre. And the Communist Party of Pakistan was the predecessor of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, which went on to participate and lead another armed peasant struggle whose epicentre was in Hashtnagar. These elements will be the subject of later chapters; here, we return to the situation soon after independence.

Although the peasant movements of the late 1940s were largely crushed by the nascent state apparatus, they also resulted in the first major land and tenancy related legislation in any province of West Pakistan. However, the land reforms mostly targeted a thin layer of already privileged “occupancy tenants”—those with security of possession who paid nominal if any rent—concentrated in Hazara, while tenancy reforms simply reconstituted rather than fundamentally challenged the de jure indirect rule of landlords in Hashtnagar or elsewhere. As I will show in subsequent chapters, the reconstitution of indirect rule in the 1940s stands in sharp contrast to the undermining of indirect rule and more substantive intervention of the state apparatus into village politics and relations of production in the 1970s.

I argue in this chapter that the indirect rule of landed elites was bolstered rather than undermined because the Communist Party of Pakistan had not succeeded in directing the upsurge of the peasantry in northern Hashtnagar toward a network of coordinated political and military organizations. I suggest this was in part a consequence of their own strategy of encouraging violent confrontation with the limited forces at their disposal in the hopes of inspiring ever
broader spontaneous insurrections elsewhere, which never transpired. The Frontier Muslim
League was thus able to isolate and crush the militancy of the peasants, as well as the
Communist Party itself. However, I argue that the Muslim League complemented such coercion
with the limited land and tenancy reforms, a particular kind of “passive revolution” as regime
consolidation,146 rooted in the constraints and opportunities of the economic situation and the
regional variations in land tenure arrangements. I argue that in seeking to expand its base among
landlords, professionals, and tenants, the Muslim League pursued an approach that offered
concessions to occupancy tenants, while protecting the property of the vast majority of landlords.
Thus, the indirect rule of landlords was not eliminated, and perhaps could not be eliminated, both
because the peasantry was not well organized, and because the Muslim League regime relied
upon the landed elites’ political and economic co-operation.

I reconstruct these dynamics through examination of colonial and post-colonial state
archives, including a declassified police report that includes the correspondence of the early
Communist Party of Pakistan,147 other documents from the Pakistani and Indian communists, as
well as newspaper reportage from the era. In this chapter, I first turn to examining the impacts of
British colonialism on the political economic structure of the NWFP upon independence,
including a comparison of tenurial arrangements in Hashtnagar and Hazara. The second section
examines the political and economic challenges faced by the new Muslim League government,
and lays out some of the parameters of its conception of agrarian reform. The third section
examines the theory and strategy of the Communist Party of Pakistan in the early NWFP and
how it involved itself in a loose, yet armed peasant movement in the Peshawar valley, upon

146 To reiterate, regime consolidation is the use of “state power to forge a ruling coalition, to sustain it in the face of
challenge, and to secure for its members a larger claim on society’s economic surplus.” See Boone, Merchant
Capital and the Roots of State Power in Senegal, 7.
Department, 1952). One should, therefore, take the information in this police report with a grain of salt. However,
the correspondence contained herein is often corroborated by the understandings of communist writing from later
years, as well as with other writings from the era, such as internal documents of the Communist Party of India.
whose insurrectionary activity the party pinned hopes for a broader revolutionary conflagration. The response of the Frontier Muslim League government, covered in section three, involved a “passive revolution” strategy of conciliation, repression and legislation that furthered the consolidation of its own regime. Finally, in section four, the chapter covers the aftermath of government repression, arguing that Communist Party’s insurrectionist thought and activities undermined its own capacity to build its hegemony among peasants and other sectors of the Frontier population. Although communists had assessed that the ruling classes were weak and isolated from the masses, this was perhaps truer of themselves. Moreover, the Pakistani communists’ activities ironically aided the reigning Muslim League and the state apparatus in consolidating their power in the Frontier.

**Land and power upon independence**

Commissars in the Peshawar valley could be forgiven for thinking that the ruling classes were isolated from the masses and resultantly weak. The possibility of regime consolidation under the leadership of the Muslim League, which had relatively little depth in the areas constituting West Pakistan, appeared thin, especially in the NWFP, where the League had little presence until 1940. The difficulty for any post-colonial ruling coalition in the Frontier was that the exercise of politics under the British had been deeply and directly intertwined with the economic structure. The economic dislocations that accompanied the Second World War and partition translated into difficulty for stable rule and revenue collection. According to Ayesha Jalal, British observers noted in February 1948 that “there was ‘excellent revolutionary material’ in the situation [in the NWFP] and it could ‘consume the present upper class and [the] existing

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order of society entirely.”149 Before we examine this “situation” (the conjuncture), let us look at the class structure and its relation to political power as it existed upon partition to understand the “order of society.”

The upper class in the NWFP was composed of the khans, landlords who exercised both economic and political power.150 After conquering the Frontier in the middle of the nineteenth century, the British arbitrarily converted massive tracts of shāmilāt (commons) land in the Peshawar valley into the private property of the “leading men” whose political support was necessary, especially in the aftermath of the 1857 rebellions. By 1898, for example, the Peshawar district’s deputy commissioner Louis W. Dane, reported intense land concentration in tahsil Charsadda, adding that “no less than 43,763 acres in the Maira Circle [of Mardan] are held by four men, and in the unirrigated circles here holdings are naturally very large, as the produce is uncertain.”151 But irrigation soon reached these circles, as massive capital investment built the Upper Swat Canal in 1914, which followed on the Lower Swat Canal of 1885. These lands of uncertain productivity became incredibly fertile and many of their owners terribly rich.

The British courted khans and maliks (heads of Pakhtun lineages whom the British perceived as village headmen) in large part because they were relied upon to govern, mainly to collect revenue and preserve “peace and order” through their indirect rule, for the “bureaucracy did not regularly intervene in village affairs.”152 Not only did the British reorder and fix the agrarian structure for the khans’ benefit, the British would specifically target major khans with

150 To be clear, there were also mercantile capitalists, mainly more urban Hindus and Sikhs, who were also invested in industrial capitalism but rarely in NWFP itself. They also formed part of the upper class, but had all departed for India during partition.
cash grants, which became known as *jagirs*,\textsuperscript{153} and remissions on taxes. Even as late as 1926, when the British sought to wind down *jagirs*, the chief commissioner of the NWFP, Horatio Bolton, justified continuing a grant in northern Charsadda with reference to the politics of governing the Frontier:

> the whole duty of defending this part of the district falls on the Khan as we maintain no Frontier Constabulary or levies etc between Abazai on the Swat river and Dargai at the foot of the Malakand. The holder of the jagir is, therefore, liable at any time to be called upon to render the services for which the jagir was given originally, namely to assist in maintaining order and peace on the border.\textsuperscript{154}

The *jagir*’s potential to be resumed and reallocated spurred plenty of opportunism among *khans*, not least of all by arresting and repressing political opponents of the British colonizers. *Khans* who were recipients of British patronage thus became integral to the ruling coalition necessary to maintain the state.

It was the *khans* who populated the representative bodies with limited suffrage that the British introduced in NWFP. *Khans* who were recipients of imperial patronage and who had closer ties to the administration were considered the “big” *khans*. “Smaller” *khans* and middling proprietors, lacking “any strong link with the bureaucracy or any access yet to the corridors of power,” saw the Indian National Congress as their path to power.\textsuperscript{155} The Frontier Congress was led by Khan Abdul Jabbar Khan, “Dr. Khan Sahib,” in alliance with the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God, or Red Shirts) social movement, led by Jabbar Khan’s brother the “Frontier

\textsuperscript{153} In the Mughal era and continuing into the British era, *jagirs* were typically grants of land from which the revenues could be kept by the administrator of an area (a *jagirdar*). Under the British such grants were often regularized into cash grants.

\textsuperscript{154} Horatio Bolton, “Correspondence between the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, and Secretary to Government of India’s Foreign and Political Department,” 1927, DC-II 18/379, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

\textsuperscript{155} Amit Kumar Gupta, *North West Frontier Province: Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932-47* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1976), 13. See also Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns*; Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed*. It is important to take the terms “smaller” and “bigger” with a grain of salt, these are not necessarily quantitative terms referring to the size of landholdings a *khan* may have, but rather the political access a *khan* had with the British. The “smaller” *khans* were, by no means, small landholders, often even in relative terms.
Gandhi” Khan Abdul Ghaffar “Bacha” Khan. Dr. Khan Sahib and Bacha Khan were important Hashtnagar khans, but alongside other khans they also mobilized smaller landholders and tenants in the anti-colonial nationalist struggle, seeking to “harness economic exploitation as a key motivating factor in a larger nationalist protest”—their goal, however, was to channel “feelings of resentment away from the khans and tax collectors and towards the British who maintained the framework in which they flourished.”

This was, nevertheless, a problem for the big khans, who seem to have flocked to the Muslim League, more loyalist than the Congress, as independence approached.

Whether or not they received direct imperial patronage, the khans’ direct power in the villages was hardly appreciated by most of their residents, mainly their tenants. Aside from the rent they received from tenants, landlords appropriated the surplus and exercised their authority in other ways, typically codified in the wajib-ul-arz, a village-based “customary code” that undergirded the legal dualism of indirect rule. Most irritably for tenants, landlords exacted periodic unpaid corvée labour called begār. Additionally, they levied other cesses (taxes) and services, for example, the haq-i-tora,

the right of a land-owner, a landlord, a Lambardar or a proprietor of a house to realise as such anything in cash or kind from a tenant, an occupier of a house or any one else at the time of betrothal, marriage or any other religious or social ceremony in the family of the latter.

Landlords also exercised juridical functions in the villages they owned. In one such case in 1938, the entire village of Ghalla Dher in Mardan was collectively fined by the Nawab of Toru over the

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156 Banerjee, The Pathan Unarmed, 63.
157 Nichols notes that the “production of a customary code … did not recognize loose practices leading to social mobility and excluded non-shareholders from any stake in historic land devolution practices….” See Nichols, Settling the Frontier, 171. The codification of the customary was based largely on the responses of male khans, arbabs, maliks, and revenue lambardars, i.e., the male landholding elite.
158 Legal dualism means there were two sets of laws, the “subjects” in villages were governed under the customary code, whereas “citizens” were governed under the rule of law.
159 See the NWFP Abolition of Haq-i-Tora Act, 1946.
supposed infarction of a single tenant.\(^{160}\) When the tenants of the village refused to pay the fines the Nawab sought to eject them from the lands, sparking a peasant movement led by the nascent Frontier Socialist Party under the aegis of Maulana Abdur Rahim Popalzai, the revolutionary socialist Grand Mufti of NWFP.\(^{161}\) The Frontier Congress ministry of the time took the side of the Nawab in exercising considerable repression against tenants and socialists until finally relenting, demonstrating Congress’s commitment to order over social justice.\(^{162}\)

The baseline struggle between landlords and tenants was often overdetermined by, or rather, overdetermined ethnic contradictions.\(^{163}\) Pakhtuns are members of different *qaums*, a term that can be translated as “nation” but is more generally translated as “tribe,” an identification that itself was formed and reformed in collisions of Pakhtun villagers with Mughal and then British state officials and interventions.\(^{164}\) In the Peshawar valley, concentrated landownership meant that much of the cultivation had to be undertaken by migrant tenants. From the Mohmand “tribal areas” in the hills to the west of Charsadda arrived migrants in the thousands to farm along the

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\(^{160}\) A tenant had been fined 20 rupees over a dispute with another tenant and, angry about the fine, ruined some of the Nawab’s plants in an orchard. Ram Saran Naginah reports this incident to have taken place in 1934, see Ram Saran Naginah, *Tahrīk-i Ghallah Dher: Muftī-ī d’ā’zam ‘Allāmah ‘Abdurrahīm Popalza ṭākī siyāṣī zindagi kā ek bāb, khuṭfiyāh tārīkhī riportōn ke sāth* (Lahore: Al-Maḥmūd Ikaidamī, 1994), 24. Bhagat Ram Talwar says it happened in 1938, see Bhagat Ram Talwar, *The Talwars of Pathan Land and Subhas Chandra’s Great Escape* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1976), 50. Both agree that the Nawab collectively fined the entire village for the infarction, leading to their anger.


\(^{163}\) Overdetermination refers to how a contradiction is “inseparable from the total structure of the social body in which it is found, inseparable from its formal *conditions* of existence, and even from the instances it governs; it is radically affected by *them*, determining, but also determined in one and the same movement, and determined by the various *levels* and *instances* of the social formation it animates…” See Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 101. This is quite different from understanding overdetermination as when “more than one condition is sufficient to account for an outcome.” See Rueschemeyer, “Can One or a Few Cases Yield Theoretical Gains?,” 315. The point in the Althussrian framework is that sometimes, indeed, often, no one condition is sufficient to account for an outcome.

\(^{164}\) See Nichols, *Settling the Frontier*. 


Swat Canals, lands owned largely by members of the Muhammadzai tribe. It is worth quoting settlement officer F.V. Wylie in length, as he remarked upon the class tensions that were also ethnic tensions in 1926:

Excellent farmers, the Mohmands are not so satisfactory as tenants. There are faults on both sides. The Khans are grasping and in a hurry to get rich: they are also inclined to look upon a tenant as a kamin — after the old hamsayah tradition — and try to exact small degrading services from him which the Mohmands as free Pathans of full status refuse to render. The tenants by way of retaliation indulge in wholesale dishonesty at the division of the crops. The result is, in too many villages, that a distinct antagonism Mohmand versus Mohammadzai has made itself felt which is one factor at any rate retarding development on the areas newly opened up to irrigation from the Upper Swat Canal.165

Tenants also often simply left back to their homelands when they found the “cash demand too heavy,”166 making it difficult to collect crops or cash rent and to recover revenue.

But it should also be understood that canalization and the resultant migration of people from the Mohmand Agency rearticulated the boundaries and contents of ethnic contradictions by pushing them into a class contradiction. Whereas Muhammadzai khans had at some point allied with the British, the qaums of the Mohmand “tribal area” had not, and the Muhammadzai khans of Tangi were in fact appointed to defend British India from the “turbulent Mohmand tribe” as late as the 1920s.167 Indeed, in 1935, the Indian Army conducted a military operation (the Mohmand Campaign) in the Mohmand Agency against its raids. Meanwhile, even as late as 1948 after independence, groups (“armed gangs” in police parlance) from the Mohmand Agency

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167 Bolton, “Correspondence between the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, and Secretary to Government of India’s Foreign and Political Department.”
continued to carry out raids on Muhammadzai crops and animals, demonstrating, also, the actual fluidity of state borders the British had sought to establish and maintain. Through canalization and migration, a relationship between qaums belonging to different regions was also transformed into a class relationship between landlords and tenants.

It is, however, instructive to note that the way that colonial and governing officials viewed landlord-tenant conflicts further to the east in the Hazara division differed from how they viewed them in the Peshawar valley. Although the tenants in Hazara were largely from the non-Pakhtun Gujjar qaum (here qaum can be understood not as tribe but as something more expansive, ethnicity) and the landlords were Pakhtuns of sorts or belonged to other qaums, various reports describe their conflict in primarily economic terms, and not in terms of attributing behaviour to cultural or biological distinctions. Indeed, the excesses of landlordism drove all kinds of tenants across the rest of northern NWFP to engage in acts of resistance. In Ghalla Dher in Mardan mentioned above, it was local Kamalzai Pakhtun tenants who had struggled against Kamalzai Pakhtun landlords.

Certainly not all of the khans’ subordinates were in a similar situation. For one, the British had established, following their practice in many other parts of India, the special category of the occupancy tenants, those who had possessed the land for more than twelve years at the time of settlement, and who tended to pay no rent or relatively low rents. As occupancy tenants, they had the “right to pay in cash at the same rates as the proprietors; no rent above the

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168 IPS Peshawar, “I.P.S. Daily Diary Dated 21.6.1948,” June 21, 1948, SB-II 78/1423, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These raiders in particular were not Mohmands, as such, but Utman Khels.

government revenue was fixed as payable by this class of tenant.”¹⁷⁰ Perhaps more importantly, they had continuous, hereditary rights to the lands, and could not be evicted by landlords. However, these tenants could not alienate the land, or even their occupancy rights, without the permission of landlords. The rest of the tenants, “whose possession was of less than 12 years were considered non-hereditary, and, as a rule, liable to pay a rent of half produce (nimkara).”¹⁷¹ These tenants-at-will, who could be ejected by landlords whenever an agreement term ended, were the majority in NWFP.

The distribution of tenurial arrangements varied by space. In Hazara, the British had granted extensive occupancy rights in order to prevent discontent and to safeguard the stability of their revenue.¹⁷² By 1907, 32 percent of the cultivated area in Hazara District was held by occupancy tenants, and another 22 percent by tenants-at-will; in Mansehra Tahsil specifically, 26.5 percent of cultivated area was held by occupancy tenants, and 31 percent by tenants-at-will.¹⁷³ However, tenants-at-will as such were rare, for the most part they were “simply occupancy tenants who have broken up land outside their original holdings.”¹⁷⁴ Indeed, the British saw the occupancy tenants as being in a “commanding position,” paying their rents in relatively low fixed cash amounts¹⁷⁵ meant they could benefit from increases in productivity and prices. Moreover, Gujjars largely made profits from rearing and selling cattle, the land being used for subsistence: “the bulk of the land subject to occupancy rights is in their possession; their wants being few and their cattle profitable, many of them are remarkably well off.”¹⁷⁶ Despite

¹⁷¹ Hastings, 159.
¹⁷⁴ Watson, Gazetteer of the Hazara District, 1907, 60.
¹⁷⁶ Beadon, 35. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh over the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Eric Stokes has noted that the increasing prices and the “sluggishness of occupancy rents” enabled the “comparative prosperity of the occupancy
their relative privilege, they were subject to the *begār*, cesses and services, and other forms of the arbitrary despotism of landlords, the same as tenants-at-will.

Tenants-at-will, in contrast to Hazara, predominated in Peshawar District. In Charsadda Tahsil, in 1895, only five percent of cultivated area was held by occupancy tenants, and 63 percent by tenants-at-will.\textsuperscript{177} By 1926, the proportion of area cultivated by occupancy tenants remained at five percent, but 70 percent was cultivated by tenants-at-will.\textsuperscript{178} Despite not having continuous legal possession of land, some tenants-at-will were able to do well because they had greater access to productive capital, particularly in the form of bullock pairs or capacity to hire more labour, which enabled them to cultivate more lands. Communist Shaukat Ali reportedly noted in late 1948 that in Charsadda the land was quite fertile, crops were good, and that “even after batai [tenants] are left with comfortable share.”\textsuperscript{179} This probably did not describe all tenants, but it does indicate that resistance did not always begin from or remain with the poorest or worst off peasants.

Near the bottom of the hierarchy, there were the landless labourers who had no land at all and sought waged labour on the fields, and were thus quite dependent on the *khans*. The situation of landless labourers in Mansehra was described as the “worst position” in Shaukat Ali’s 1948 report.\textsuperscript{180} That said, in all of NWFP by 1951, only 7.3 percent of the total agricultural labour force was recorded as landless labourer.\textsuperscript{181}

Between the *khans* and the tenants and labourers, however, the majority of the population of the province was composed of neither. These were the peasant proprietors who owned

\textsuperscript{177} Wylie, “Assessment Report of the Charsadda Tahsil of the Peshawar District,” 27.

\textsuperscript{178} Wylie, 27.

\textsuperscript{179} In Ali, *The Communist Party of West Pakistan in Action*, 1:278.

\textsuperscript{180} In Ali, 1:278.

relatively smaller plots of land. By 1951, 60 percent of cultivators owned all of their land in the Frontier, whereas only 29 percent rented all their land (i.e., were tenants). Among the former could be those who had plenty of land and capital, the middling proprietors who led comfortable lives that enabled the men among them, and even some women, to become educated and get involved in politics and activism of different kinds. They may have allied with the *khans* in the Muslim League or Congress, or chafing against the authority of *khans* sought other kinds of politics, mainly in the Socialist Party and later the Communist Party, or associated themselves with Islamic parties like the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam or Jamaat-e-Islami.

Peasant proprietors who had little of either land or capital may have faced a precarity even worse than that of some tenants. The small landholdings of peasant proprietors continued trends that preceded partition. The Land Reforms Commission quoted estimates that circa 1955, over 70 percent of 770,738 landowners in NWFP held just 31.86 percent of land in holdings of less than 5 acres (while on the opposite end of the spectrum 0.06 percent of landowners held 12.40 percent of land in holdings that averaged 1,441.19 acres).

As “ILO expert” Sir Malcolm Darling put it in his 1954 report for the Ministry of Labour, the “landlord gives [the tenant] enough land to live on…. On the other hand, the peasant proprietor … often suffers from having an uneconomic holding.” They would have to undertake most cultivation on their own and possibly rent in more land, and some may rent out all of their own land to enterprising tenants or other peasant proprietors and pursue other avenues of living.

Yet, peasant proprietors did not come under the direct political domination of the *khans*, unlike tenants and landless labourers, and in many circumstances they shared ethnic and *qaum* ties with the *khans*, unlike the migrant tenants in canal areas. For example, in Hashtnagar, the

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majority of landowners were Muhammadzais, regardless of size of holdings, while tenants and labourers were largely migrants. Peasant proprietors could thus have both points of contention against larger landowners for their dominating politics and economics, and points of unity as landowners who employed tenants and through ties of kinship and attendant social practices of cohesion. The crises that followed independence must have affected smaller proprietors adversely, and may have made them less amenable to supporting the politics of their larger counterparts, but they do not appear to have joined in demanding the overthrow of the whole social order. However, their own discontent could be channeled into an electoral politics that could be threatening to the attempts of the Muslim League to establish its own hegemony.

Partition and crisis

The crises of the Second World War and partition did, however, strain the NWFP’s political economy, especially in its northern districts in the Peshawar valley and Hazara. Unlike the rest of the provinces that constituted Pakistan, the incumbent ministry upon independence was held by the Frontier Congress, which had opposed the formation of Pakistan and was being courted by Afghanistan to fully embrace Pakhtun secessionism. A few days after independence, Pakistan’s governor-general Muhammad Ali Jinnah dismissed the Congress ministry that had been elected in 1946, and appointed a Muslim League ministry led by Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan. Qayyum Khan had to consolidate a ruling coalition under a party that had not previously won an election, in a province that had consistently run a deficit and, as I will now show, was facing enormous economic pressures.

The NWFP’s economy did not recover from its contributions to the War, and partition simply exacerbated crises of shortages and inflation. Exports of essential foods and commodities

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during the War led to severe shortages and rises in prices. Despite this, the wartime Muslim League government (appointed by the British when the Congress ministry resigned in 1937) sought to increase land revenue. Although the end of the War in Europe led to improved conditions by 1945, the province continued to suffer from “acute food and cloth shortages” and rising prices into independence. Upon partition, the departure of largely Hindu and Sikh capitalists to India further impacted both the revenue receipts of the government and the circulation of commodities and finance, for they “exclusively controlled … trade and commerce, industries and banking.” Moreover, at least twenty thousand refugees from India had settled in the Frontier by March 1948. These were of course far fewer than those in Punjab and Sindh, but the economic crisis led to less land being cropped, resulting in increasing pressure on land.

The costs of economic crisis, revenue demand and refugee settlement seem to have been passed down to tenants the most. In order to make up for losses in revenue, the post-independence Muslim League government intensified collection of land revenue, and despite the economic crisis most notably expressed in a decline in cropped area, reported that, “[c]ollections of land revenue and water rates touched record high levels during the agricultural year 1947-48.” The Communist Party of India (CPI)’s organ People’s Age reported that landlords of both the Muslim League and Khudai Khidmatgars (i.e., Congress) “took advantage of the large influx of refugees … to begin a mass eviction drive,” as refugees were more willing to pay higher shares of rent for land and accommodations than locals. Indeed, using the threat of eviction, known in Pakistan’s legal terminology as ejectment, landlords moreover demanded greater shares of the crop from local tenants “than they were legally entitled to, and to extract begar

(forced labour) from the tenants in larger measures than ever before.” No doubt the situation was also bad for smaller peasant proprietors, who could not really pass on costs of revenue demand and production to tenants as khans could.

Qayyum Khan’s government thus faced the possibility of tenant rebellions and the ire of peasant proprietors. Tenant rebellion against khans threatened not only what continued to be the government’s primary mechanism of securing stability and order within villages and hinterlands but also, and quite importantly, the revenues of the state. Peasant proprietors, meanwhile, may be tempted to vote for and otherwise support the active, vocal and generally well-regarded opposition embodied by the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. Here, it is instructive to note that the social base of the Khudai Khidmatgar leadership, and some of their aims, were not necessarily dramatically different from leaders in the Muslim League. Although the League has widely been seen as the preserve of the bigger khans, the actual situation of the League’s membership closer to partition was more complex. Qayyum Khan himself had been a member of Congress until 1945, when he switched to the League. Other former independents like Abdur Rab Nishtar, who had supported the socialist demands in Hazara’s peasant movement of 1938-39, had also joined the League before partition. By January 1948, seven Congress MLAs switched over to the Muslim League, granting Qayyum’s ministry constitutional legitimacy, but not yet a majority in the assembly. Indeed, many smaller khans and rising professionals had turned to the League as it became clear that Pakistan was a reality, and Qayyum found himself negotiating between their interests on one hand, and the interests of big khans and their alliances with local officials on the other. The League was thus not straightforwardly the vehicle of the British or big landlords.

190 “Bullets and Arrests Can’t Crush W. Pakistan Kisans,” 5.
Moreover, sections of both the Khudai Khidmatgars and the League were concerned similarly with agrarian reform. At the national level, the new governing classes were concerned with economic productivity, particularly with industrialization and agriculture. Buoyed, as in the NWFP, by the interests of “an emerging landed class which was keen to oust the feudal landed class from its position of unquestioned dominance,” the League under Qayyum, like the Khudai Khidmatgars, recognized the need for a modern agriculture where private property remained hegemonic but where “traditional” or perceived pre-capitalist norms and practices, like begār and jagirdari, could be mitigated or eliminated. But, of course, assailing these prerogatives of the khans was risky. The challenge for Qayyum Khan was thus to consolidate a reformist ruling coalition around himself in the League, while marginalizing the Khudai Khidmatgars and preventing potential agrarian unrest. In his pursuit of these goals, he was inadvertently helped along by the activities of the communists.

Communist ideology and armed struggle on the Frontier

The Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) was formed in February 1948 at the second congress of the Communist Party of India, well after independence. In NWFP, communists faced the challenge of building the party anew, and doing so while interpreting and applying a general political line developed in Lahore, or more aptly, in Bombay. This line held that the new government of Pakistan, like that of India, was increasingly isolating itself from the masses. Communist leadership concluded that insurrectionary actions could rouse the broader masses, and that state power could be captured through a frontal assault on the state apparatus, what Gramsci criticizes as the “war of manoeuvre.” When the leader of the Frontier communists

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Muhammad Ata returned to the province from the second congress, he found tenants in the Peshawar valley and Hazara in a rebellious mood, and at least in Hashtnagar the communists encouraged them in armed struggle. Before we examine the Frontier communists’ practice, let us look more closely at the development of the general political line of the party.\footnote{For detailed discussion of these issues, see Ali, \textit{Communism in Pakistan}. Here I examine those aspects relevant for NWFP.}

Before partition the Communist Party of India (CPI), led by P.C. Joshi, saw the party’s task as providing critical support to the Congress and even the Muslim League, insofar as these organizations represented a national bourgeoisie that could play a historically progressive role in the anti-imperialist struggle for a democratic society. This was truer of the Congress than of the Muslim League, “because the Nawabs, Jagirdars and Khans are more strongly entrenched [in Pakistan] and they are able to influence the Muslim League in the Punjab, Sind, Frontier and Bengal.”\footnote{Sajjad Zaheer, \textit{“Pakistan... Dominion or Free?”}, \textit{People’s Age}, July 27, 1947, 3.} Nevertheless, the call for a Muslim nation was seen as a progressive reflection of national self-determination, and so the party sought to engage in united front politics with these organizations; for example, communists wrote the Punjab Muslim League Manifesto of 1944.\footnote{David Gilmartin, \textit{Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan} (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 196–98.} This conciliatory line did not involve a bid for the CPI to take on state power, certainly not through violence. The CPI saw itself playing a junior role, bringing the working class, peasantry and radical petty bourgeoisie into an alliance with, and under the leadership of, the national bourgeoisie.

The communists’ meliorist politics of supporting the Congress and Muslim League manifested in an agrarian policy that largely matched the demands of a reformist bourgeoisie, namely, one that sought to modernize agriculture and abolish some pre-capitalist norms. In its August 1947 “Appeal to the People of Pakistan” the CPI called for the security of tenant rights
over land and crops, and that “[s]teps should also be taken for the abolition of landlordism, the jagirdari system and all forms of parasitical feudalism.” A more radical line would soon call for an immediate abolition of landlordism, and for land to the tiller. The meliorist line did not, however, encourage or reflect passivity, as communists had taken advantage of their wartime legality to work in Kisan Committees and take on the leadership of the All-India Kisan Sabha. (In general, communists established mass organizations, like trade unions or peasant committees, that were open to members or advocates of any political stripe, but communists would vie for control of leadership.)

Despite the meliorist line, in 1946 the CPI had organized militant peasant struggle in Bengal and armed peasant struggles in the princely states of Travancore and Hyderabad, although these latter armed struggles wedded peasant demands to the nationalist demand for accession to India. The Hyderabad struggle, better known as the Telangana rebellion, was to last until 1951 and was to play a key role in the imagination of Indian communists. Meanwhile in the NWFP, by 1947, under lead organizer Muhammad Hussain Ata of Hazara, communists had taken on leading the Kisan Jirga (the Frontier branch of the Kisan Sabha) in various districts. The Kisan Jirga apparently led a “bitter struggle” for reduced rents upon the failure of the crop over the summer of 1947, and later on in the wake of partition, sought to quell communal riots, particularly in Karak, Mardan and Hazara Districts.

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201 Kisan Jirgas were first formed by the Frontier Socialist Party under late colonialism, and tended to have representation from many or all political parties.
203 “Factional Quarrels Inside Frontier League Lead to Communal Riots,” People’s Age, October 19, 1947, 5.
However, at a broader level, trying to support both the Congress and League was confusing. On the eve of partition the communists supported self-determination for Pakhtuns and expressed support for the Khudai Khidmatgars (the backbone of the Frontier Congress) while admonishing them for ignoring the “struggle of the Pathan kisans for the abolition of landlordism and the jagirdari system….”. Initially campaigning with the Khudai Khidmatgars for a boycott of the July 2, 1947 referendum on whether NWFP should join India or Pakistan, they soon called on Congress representatives to take part in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly and for the League and Congress to form a coalition ministry in the Frontier. These stances did not endear the communists to the Frontier Muslim League.

The CPI’s political line became more militant at its Second Congress in Calcutta in early 1948, where the Communist Party of Pakistan was also founded. The CPI criticized its previous “reformist theories about peaceful development towards independence and Socialism,” and now anticipated a generalized and spontaneous revolutionary upsurge along the lines of the 1946 worker and peasant struggles that the CPI had led. Communists were to encourage and guide the spontaneity of the masses, to constitute a “new class alliance” of workers, peasants and the oppressed petty bourgeoisie to fight for the “people’s democratic revolution.” The programme of this democratic front centred around “[c]onfiscation of foreign capital, nationalisation of all key and basic industries, radical improvement of workers’ standard of living, abolition without

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204 In the 1946 elections in Punjab, for example, communists were working within the Muslim League, while also supporting Congress, and also running their own candidates. See Iqbal Leghari, “The Socialist Movement in Pakistan: An Historical Survey, 1940-1974” (Dissertation, Université Laval, 1979), 28; Romesh Chandra, “Communists-Kisan Workers Help Congress Candidates Against Akalis,” People’s Age, December 9, 1945; P.C. Joshi, “Communists in the Elections,” People’s Age, May 12, 1946.


206 Ata, “Referendum and After in N.W.F.P.”


compensation of all forms of landlordism and land to the tillers.”209 Implicit in this wholesale opposition to the government and the anticipation of a revolutionary upsurge was the pursuit of “strikes, agrarian struggles, armed conflicts, general strikes, political strikes—all heading towards insurrection….”210 The focus was on rapidly bringing workers and the masses into the democratic front to topple the nascent governments of India and Pakistan.

The CPI now concluded that neither Congress nor the Muslim League were particularly progressive, for the national bourgeoisie had gone over to the side of imperialism. Moreover, as the report on Pakistan delivered by Bhowani Sen concluded,

Both the Indian Union and Pakistan … were dominated by reactionary capitalists and landlords, collaborating with imperialism. It was as wrong to think that the Indian Union was progressive as to assert that Pakistan was an advance towards the so-called Muslim freedom from Hindu domination.211

Muslim workers and peasants were free neither in Pakistan nor in India, and so the “programme and the task of the Democratic Front in Pakistan … were exactly similar to those of the Democratic Front in India.”212 Thus, when Sajjad Zaheer was appointed general-secretary of the Communist Party of Pakistan, he sought to implement the new line in Pakistan.

Importantly, communists sought to build one aspect of their democratic front through the Kisan Committee. In January 1948, the structure of the All-India Kisan Sabha had been replaced by the West Pakistan Kisan Committee. Frontier communists played the leading role in this consolidation,213 but also worked with progressive non-communists like Malik Amir Alam Awan,

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211 Previously elements of the CPI believed that India was progressive vis-à-vis Pakistan. The CPI self-criticized for making “the people believe that the march of the Indian army into Kashmir was the march of the democratic forces for the purpose of freeing the Muslim peasant from the raiders,” see Political Bureau, “Review of the Second Congress of Communist Party of India,” 3.
212 Political Bureau, 3.
213 Communist members were elected to important offices: Khushal Khan Khattak was elected president, Ziarat Gul the Frontier regional secretary, was tasked with organizing northern Hashtnagar in Charsadda and neighbouring Mardan, and Muhammad Hussain Ata was appointed a member of the working committee, tasked with organizing
who was an associate of the late revolutionary mufti Maulana Popalzai and the socialists in Mansehra in Hazara, and was elected vice-president of the Kisan Committee. Awan was also elected president of the Frontier Kisan Jirga, while communist Ziarat Gul was elected its general-secretary. At its initial meeting, the West Pakistan Kisan Committee demanded “confiscation of surplus holdings over 100 acres and equitable distribution of land among the tillers of the soil.” More broadly the Kisan Committee and Kisan Jirga urged the “abolition of capitalist and jagirdari systems in order to give an opportunity to the poor people to lead a life of peace and contentment.”

At local levels communist members leveraged their social ties to expand their organization. Ziarat Gul, a small proprietor of Mardan, would become an important founder of the Mazdoor Kisan Party twenty years later. He had joined the Congress in his youth, but was disillusioned by the Congress ministry’s use of repression against the Ghalla Dher movement of 1938, and reportedly joined the Muslim League in 1943. He joined the CPI in 1940 or 1947, had been involved in the Kisan Jirga since at least 1945. Ziarat Gul alongside his close comrade Abdul Sattar, belonged to the Safi qaum from the Mohmand tribal area, and were well-situated to use their personal contacts to organize among the very many Mohmand tenants in Mardan and the neighbouring northern Hashtnagar. The overdetermination of the class

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216 “Kisan Committee Demands Confiscation of Surplus Holdings,” 7.


218 1940 according to his son, 1947 according to his confession to the police. The earlier date also accords with my interview of the sons of Abdul Sattar, Ziarat Gul’s closest comrade.

219 Gul, “Police Statement of Ziarat Gul.”

220 The Safi qaum is distinct from the Mohmand qaum.

221 Interview with Farmaan Ali and Aimal Khan (Abdul Sattar’s sons), Sarai Kote, Mardan, November 5, 2013.
contradiction by the ethnic contradiction in this way facilitated the communists organizing among the tenantry in the Peshawar valley.

Facing the economic crisis brought on by the War and partition, tenants in both the Peshawar valley and in Hazara began making demands of landlords and the government in early 1948. Thus, when Muhammad Hussain Ata, the Communist Party of Pakistan’s Frontier secretary who was present at the Second Congress in February, returned to the province he found a peasant movement ready to take off. The *Pakistan Times*, a leftist newspaper, reported on March 1 that “[o]ver 70,000 kisans of Hazara district … have refused to pay landlords their share of ‘batai’ in their campaign to abolish landlordism. They also demand propriety [sic] rights for tenants.”\(^{222}\) In the Peshawar valley, though, the demands were for the “provincial Government to control the rate of land leases, to give 3/4\(^{th}\) share to the Kisans in the Batai [down from one-half], to stop by law all taxes and Begars etc. and make ejectment an offence.”\(^{223}\) In other words, they wanted a station more comparable to occupancy tenants. These demands were articulated at a series of public meetings. On March 1, the Kisan Jirga held a “conference of over 30,000 kisans of Peshawar district which was also attended by Muslim League, Red Shirts and Communist workers.”\(^{224}\) On March 21, a procession and meeting of “6,000 kisans of north Hashtnagar area (Tehsil Charsadda)…. was attended by Kisan leaders, Redshirts and Communists.”\(^{225}\) On March 29, the Kisan Jirga organized a meeting of “[t]en thousand kisans” at Takhtbai in Mardan district.\(^{226}\) It is difficult to assess the reliability of these figures, but they speak to real frustrations of peasants and real anxieties of the new government.

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\(^{222}\) “70,000 Hazara Kisans Refuse to Pay ‘batai’ Share to Landlords,” *Pakistan Times*, March 2, 1948, 3.


\(^{224}\) “70,000 Hazara Kisans Refuse to Pay,” 3.

\(^{225}\) “Frontier Kisans Demand Abolition of Jagirdari,” 5.

\(^{226}\) “NWFP Peasants Demand 3-4th Share of Produce,” *Pakistan Times*, March 30, 1948, 3. To put these figures, if reliable, into context, the total rural male population of Peshwar district according to the 1941 census was 303,432, and that of Mardan district 244,914.
Initially, the peasant movement’s main tactics were the withholding of rent and resisting ejectments. In Hazara, the tenants refused to pay rents or batai at all. In Charsadda, Ata reported in October 1948, the tenants demanded that the lease be fixed at Rs. 70 per jarib (about Rs. 140 per acre), rather than the prevailing market demand of Rs. 120 per jarib (Rs. 240 per acre). Landlords who accepted the former figure were given their dues, but tenants refused to pay if the demand was greater.\(^{227}\) The movement was widespread enough that the Frontier government issued a press statement warning tenants of armed suppression on April 3:

> While Government will do all it can to remove hardships which are afflicting the tenants … by legislation and reform, Government wished to make it quite clear that the tenants should not withhold the legitimate dues of the landlords and should willingly surrender the landlords’ share. Any attempt to carry out certain decisions by show of force or actual force on the part of certain parties will be sternly put down by armed force at the command of the Government.\(^{228}\)

Recall that the government was banking on increased collections of land revenue as part of its operating costs. Its warnings of armed suppression were soon realized.

It is not clear where armed clashes first began, but the first main government salvo seems to have occurred in Campbellpur (now Attock), an area outside of the organization of the Kisan Jirgas and certainly the communists. Up until that point, it seems the tenants had been nonviolent; for example, the CPI’s *People’s Age* reported that on April 8 in Takhtbai, Mardan, the local jagirdar forcibly ejected a number of tenants, and threw their belongings out of their houses. Immediately the local kisans gathered in thousands and marched in protest to the landlord’s house demanding reinstatement of the tenants. The jagirdar ran for his life.\(^{229}\)

But in late April, the tenants in tehsil Fatehjang in Campbellpur who “refused to pay any dues to the landlords during the present harvest… [as] the first rung of the ladder towards the ultimate

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\(^{228}\) “Tenants Asked Not to Withhold Landlord’s Share,” *Pakistan Times*, April 6, 1948.

\(^{229}\) “Frontier Kisans Demand Land For the Tiller,” *People’s Age*, May 2, 1948.
‘land to the tiller’ demand of the tenants” faced violence. Police and military intervened to “teach the tenants a lesson” resulting in four tenants killed and 200 arrested. Shortly after the suppression in Campbellpur, tenants in Charsadda and Mardan took up arms to fight back, likely at the urging of communists.

The tenants’ response with armed force, with the encouragement of communists if not their urging, was a new development in the region’s peasant struggles. The constant struggles of the tenants in 1920s Charsadda were not described by British officials as having involved arms, and the movements led by socialists in the 1930s in Mardan, Charsadda and Hazara had practiced nonviolent civil disobedience. But on April 30, according to People’s Age, a khan in Charsadda “called in the police and started evicting his tenants. The tenants fired back in self-defence against the police bullets and … several persons on both sides are reported to have been killed and wounded.” Thereafter, the Pakistan Times reported a May 4 “clash between Khans and Mohmand tenants” where four had been killed, and ninety-six tenants had been arrested against three of the khan’s agents. By May 13, Malik Amir Alam Awan, Frontier Kisan Jirga president, demanded an “independent, non-official enquiry” into the Tangi clash.

The clash at Tangi may have been especially significant for the communists. They probably saw these armed clashes as an important step in sparking a broader insurrectionary

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232 Ata mentioned in a letter to Sajjad Zaheer that, “We have no hand in the Kisan agitation of Campbellpore which has started on its own. 200 people have gone to jail. Some of them indeed came to party office and asked for help. They left their addresses. We are sending comrades there. Next week a meeting will be held which I shall also attend. It is clear that despite heavy pressure the Kisans did not yield. The movement is spreading to other villages also.” In Ali, The Communist Party of West Pakistan in Action, 1:332.
233 They had adapted the Gandhi-Ghaffar Khan tactics of the Congress and Khudai Khidmatgars.
234 “Bullets and Arrests Can’t Crush W. Pakistan Kisans.”
237 “Bullets and Arrests Can’t Crush W. Pakistan Kisans,” 5.
conflagration. According to a 1952 police report on Ziarat Gul, it was the communists’ “scheme” that

the Kisan should refuse to leave the plots tenanted to them and enter into an open fight with the landlords. The tenants of Tribal Territories settled in districts such as Mahmans in Charsada Sub-Division and Mardan district should migrate to the Tribal Territory and approach the tribesmen for their assistance in organising raids in settled districts. Such clashes between the landlords and tenants occurred in Charsadda Sub-Division but on timely intervention of the Government the scheme failed.239

“Scheme” might be giving too much credit to the communists, but later on communists in the Mazdoor Kisan Party confirmed that CPP secretary Sajjad Zaheer had “tried to push the [Frontier] peasant movement toward armed struggle….”240 Thus, following these armed clashes, Ata could report in a 1948 letter to Zaheer that, “The Kisan movement in Peshawar and Charsaddah has reached a peak.”241 Indeed, according to People’s Age, many “similar clashes [had] been reported” in Mardan district,242 and the Pakistan Times reported that the conflict in the NWFP was “moulding itself in an armed insurrection.”243 Later narrators claimed that the pitch of the struggle forced many landlords to leave their villages and take sanctuary in the cities, and regular police forces were insufficient to put down the uprising.244 But this push toward armed struggle, and stressing the immediacy of the land to the tiller demand tactically (rather than strategically in propaganda and agitation), as I will now show, was devastating to the CPP.

Coercion and consent in consolidating Muslim League power


242 “Bullets and Arrests Can’t Crush W. Pakistan Kisans.”


244 Muhammad Afzal Janjo‘ah, “Ek lákh kisānñoñ ne apñī zamínñoñ se bedakhál hone se inkār kardiyā: Khān Qayyūm ne kisān tāhřīk ko sakḥī se kucal diyā thā,” Dehqān, November 21, 1971.
The militancy of the peasants encouraged by the nascent Communist Party of Pakistan was certainly a problem for the new Muslim League government. However, the tenant movement did not spark defections of politicians or bureaucrats from the regime; quite the contrary, landlords appear to have rallied around the regime to combat the movement. Nor, for that matter, did tenants rise up spontaneously beyond Campbellpur, which, in any case, was in Punjab. Instead of undermining the Muslim League regime in the NWFP, the peasant movement provided an impetus to the state to lean on greater repression and coercion to consolidate its control, not only against the tenants and the communists, but also against other political opponents, most notably the Khudai Khidmatgars. Additionally, the threat of peasant revolt also pushed the reformist Qayyum Khan to pursue a “passive revolution” of a limited land reform programme as a mechanism of co-opting both upper layers of the peasantry as well as erstwhile political allies of the communists.

Before seeking to change the legislation, however, the government sought to strictly enforce the existing statutes against the movement. At first, the government responded to the Tangi clash by trying to conciliate between the tenants and landlords, but the communists seem to have encouraged maximalism and intransigence on the part of tenants, with the backing of some Islamic authorities. The government organized a jirga between the two sides of northern Hashtnagar where, according to Ziarat Gul, the “Kisans expressed their readiness to abide by a decision based on Shariat but the Khans refused to agree to this.” Ata’s letter to Zaheer explained this “Shariat”: the Kisan Jirga asserted that the “landlord could not get even a single grain. Maulvis gave similar ‘fatwas’ and quoted ‘hadees’ in support. The Khans, however, did not accept the ‘fatwa’.” It is important to note that at the time of the clash, the Pakistan Times

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245 “Agrarian Trouble in Frontier,” 3.
246 In Ali, The Communist Party of West Pakistan in Action, 1:331. It may seem curious that communists had mobilized maulvis to support their demands, but many maulvis were influenced by revolutionary socialism, such as Maulana Popalzai, who however had died in 1944.
reported that the maximalist demand of “no rent” was that of the “extremist section amongst the
[Mohmand] Tribesmen representing young elements,” whereas the “elders” held that landlords
were “entitled to only one-fourth share of the produce.” 247 Whether at the prodding of
communists or due to increasing radicalization as clashes intensified, the Kisan Jirga in
negotiations articulated the more extreme demand. Naturally, the landlords refused, and Qayyum
Khan’s government “declared its intention to enforce the present Tenancy Law.” 248

The government enforced the law severely, coinciding with a generalized push toward
crushing its political enemies. Already in May, the Kisan Jirga claimed that over 200 tenants had
been arrested in Charsadda for refusal to pay rent, 249 and 46 tenants had been arrested in Hazara
for refusing landlord oversight over the division of grain. 250 Over the course of June, the
government stepped up its repression, and by June 25 “[s]even hundred tenants from Charsadda
and 331 tenants from Ghazi (Haripur) [in Hazara had] been sent to jail…. ” 251  People’s Age
reported on June 27 that 4,000 people belonging to the Mohmand “tribe” had recently emigrated
back to the tribal areas, leading to “widespread indignation in the Mahamand tribe.” 252 The
report also pointed to the irony of landlord class interests trumping political differences:

The jagirdars belonging to the Red Shirt organization have joined hands with the League
landlords to crush the fighting peasants. One of the persons who is taking a lead in these
attacks is no less than Abdul Wali Khan, son of Badshah [Abdul Ghaffar] Khan. 253

By the latter part of 1948 Ata, Ziarat Gul and other communists had gone underground for fear of
arrest.

248 “Agrarian Trouble in Frontier.”
249 “Agrarian Trouble in Frontier.”
251 “Police Atrocities on NWFP Tenants at Their Climax,” Pakistan Times, June 26, 1948, 3.
The repression meted out to tenants and Kisan Jirga leaders matched, and was perhaps even exceeded by that directed against the Red Shirt leaders. In April, Qayyum Khan had called on Ghaffar Khan to “wind up the Red Shirt Party and join hands with the Government…” Ghaffar Khan refused the offer and instead formed a new all-Pakistan People’s Party. He was arrested on June 15, on charges of “collaboration with the agents of Faqir of Ipi with a view of stirring up trouble on the border,” a “definite and clearly laid out plot to create disturbances in the NWFP to synchronise with the expected and much advertised advance of the Indian Army towards the Frontier Province.” Other prominent Khudai Khidmatgars also began to be arrested and even fired upon, a campaign that coincided with the increasing arrests faced by tenants, militant Kisan leaders and communists.

The government’s repression peaked at the end of summer. On July 9 the government promulgated the Public Safety Ordinance, which allowed arrests without warrant for various potentially disturbing acts, including bringing “into hatred or contempt or excite disaffection towards the Government…” or promoting “feelings of enmity and hatred between different classes of people in the NWFP or the tribal areas.” On August 12, despite a ban on public meetings, Khudai Khidmatgars in southern Charsadda organized a meeting, and hundreds of unarmed protesters were fired upon in what became known as the Babrra massacre. By September the Khudai Khidmatgars were banned and more key leaders were arrested.

Despite the increased repression tenants in Hashtnagar appear to have remained recalcitrant, although this changed quickly. Even as late as October 1948, probably remarking on

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256 “Ghaffar Khan Arrested at Bahadur Khel,” Pakistan Times, June 16, 1948, 1. The Faqir of Ipi, Mirza Ali Khan, was a religious figure who united several qaums and led a guerrilla campaign against the British in Waziristan. His insurgency seems to have been the cause of much anxiety for the post-colonial Pakistani government as well, promoting Pakhtunistan — seen, also, as the cause of Ghaffar Khan.
257 “Public Safety Ordinance in Frontier,” Pakistan Times, July 10, 1948, 1, 12.
the *kharif* (summer) harvest, Ata could report to his peers in the CPP that, “Charsada Kisans honour Communist after better [sic] experience. Ready for fight. Refusing dues.” Soon thereafter, however, in early November, Ata was finally arrested, sending the provincial party into disarray. After Ata’s arrest Ziarat Gul was appointed the new secretary of the provincial committee, and to the central committee of West Pakistan, but by this time he had either already fled or was about to flee to Rawalpindi in Punjab, moving from place to place to evade capture until he finally turned himself in in 1953. Sajjad Zaheer reported to the Communist Party of India in April 1949 that all other Hashtnagar communists (five or six) had been arrested, and thirty to forty sympathizers were also in prison; communists elsewhere in the province came under greater scrutiny.

Indeed, in his report to the Indian communists, Zaheer described conditions in northern Hashtnagar that are worth quoting at length:

> This winter a most vicious terror was launched against this whole area. Peasants were forcibly evicted and forced to agree to pay all previous arrears and present dues…. Police entered their Zanana and insulted their women. Peasants were beaten, made to walk naked…. It became impossible for the party or Kisan Jirga to function and even though the hatred of the people against the Government was roused, it was not possible for us to put up any sustained, organised resistance. This could only be of the extreme form and for this we found to our cost we were both politically and organisationally unprepared. So that it has become difficult even to maintain contact with the peasants in North Hashtnagar…. At the moment the peasants are terror-stricken and afraid to do anything.

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259 Ali, 1:61.
260 Ali, 1:338.
263 The young lawyer Afzal Bangash’s police file implies that he moved to Peshawar from Kohat in response to increased police surveillance, see Special Branch, NWFP, “History Sheet of Mohammad Afzal Bangash” (Special Branch, Police, NWFP, n.d.), 1, SB-III 8/117, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
More than terror-stricken, it appears that both peasants and political allies became alienated from the CPP and the Kisan Jirga. Later narrators claimed that Qayyum Khan had persuaded tenants that their demands would be accepted if they ostracized leaders like Ziarat Gul and Abdus Sattar;\(^{265}\) a 1975 report of communists in the MKP suggests that such an event literally happened, “at the prodding of the government the peasants forced two party members to separate from the movement in an open meeting.”\(^{266}\) By this point even Malik Amir Alam Awan, president of the Kisan Jirga and erstwhile comrade in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and the Congress, distanced himself from the communists and formally joined the Muslim League.\(^{267}\)

Despite these setbacks, it seems the Revenue Commissioner limited rent increases and prevented ejectments, along with promising to end \textit{begār}.\(^{268}\) But as I will show, ejectments picked up after 1949 and \textit{begār} did not end. In any case, by April 1949, one year after the movement had sparked off, the severe repression of the government had brought it to a dead end, smashing the Communist Party in northern NWFP and much of the Kisan Jirga.

But aside from exercising considerable armed force against its political opponents, Qayyum Khan’s government also made overtures to tenants and reformists in terms of modifying agrarian classes in the law. The League began responding to tenant demands almost immediately after the formal launch of the movement. On March 16, 1948, the League Assembly Party instructed the “Provincial Government to amend the existing legislation so as to give occupancy tenants the right to sell land without giving notice to the landlords.”\(^{269}\) The right to alienate the land, or at least to alienate the right to occupancy, was a major demand of occupancy tenants. In May, the government promulgated an ordinance which “abolished all cesses and services which


\(^{266}\) \textit{Pakistan Mazdur Parchi, “\textit{Pakistan Mazdur Parchi ki markazi kamiti ki report,}” 1.}

\(^{267}\) In Ali, \textit{The Communist Party of West Pakistan in Action}, 1:338. This decision may have been motivated by the climate of political repression in the province, or by disagreement with communist methods, or both.

\(^{268}\) Janjo’ah, “Ek lākh kisāno ne apnī zamīno ne bedakhal hone se inkār kardiyā,” 14–15.

the tenant had hitherto been liable to pay to the landlords …. without any compensation to landlords.”

This committed the government to getting rid of practices that reformists saw as being inconsonant with a modern agriculture.

In this vein, Qayyum Khan began the process of redrafting the tenancy and jagirdari law. After violently putting down the movement in Hashtnagar, his 1949 budget speech targeted landlords:

> It is not the policy of the Government to encourage absentee landlords who do no work, nor do they make any serious efforts to improving lands entrusted to their charge. While Provincial Government believe in the private ownership of land, their policy is to encourage those tillers of the soil who are prepared to work with their own hands on the land and to live on it. It is being increasingly realized that the ownership of land is a trust on behalf of the nation and nobody can be allowed to mismanage it or to toy with the people’s food.

Landlords campaigned against any impending measures to modify tenancy laws or jagirs, and in some cases appear to have intensified ejectments to pre-empt any tenancy reforms. In March 1949, Hazara landlords held a meeting proposing to present a “collective and common demand to the authorities that they wanted the landlord-tenants issue to be decided in accordance with Shariat.”

The Nawab of Hoti called a “meeting of prominent land lords at his residence at Hoti-Mardan,” seeking a strong front to “oppose the proposed pro-occupancy tenant measure, which was expected to be sponsored by the Provincial Government…” The major landlords in northern Charsadda were also “indulging in anti-Ministry propaganda and against the Jagirdari abolition.”

Mardan landlords began to demand rents from their tenants in advance, perhaps as an excuse to begin legal ejectment proceedings.

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271 Khan, “Premier’s Budget Speech,” 630.


273 IPS Peshawar.

274 IPS Peshawar.

275 IPS Peshawar.
Indeed, it seems that landlords pursued ejectment cases against tenants with vigour in the Peshawar valley and in Hazara over the next four years. As Table 1 shows, the most numerous ejectments were in Mardan District, with 1,078 tenants ejected over 1949-52, followed by 358 ejected in Peshawar District (which included northern Hashtnagar), and 296 in Hazara District. Over the same period, there were only 114 ejected in Kohat and 80 ejected in Dera Ismail Khan. In Peshawar and Hazara the number of ejected tenants generally increases from 1949 onward, whereas in Mardan it decreases from a very high starting point. Landlords thus appeared to be shaping up as a crucial force against the Muslim League government.

Table 1: Ejectment cases in the North-West Frontier Province (1949-1952)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of tenants ejected</th>
<th>Number of ejectment cases instituted</th>
<th>Number of cases in which the order of ejectment had not been executed by November 1953</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peshawar</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohat</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bannu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Lakki</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Bannu</td>
<td>1949-52</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dera Ismail Khan</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meanwhile, although the Communist Party and Kisan Jirga were crushed, tenants continued to meet. In March 1949, tenants in Hazara, apparently not under the banner of the Kisan Jirga, met to demand the “decision of the land lord versus tenants dispute in accordance with the Shariat Law”—although for tenants Shariat was in line with “bestowing propriet[ar]y rights on the tenants [and] abolition of Jagirdari.”²⁷⁶ The subsequent adoption of the Tenancy Act in 1950 and the abolition of *jagirs* in 1952, thus need to be understood in the context of, indeed as the products of, these class conflicts between the province’s landlords and the tenants.

The Tenancy Act of 1950 propelled a limited land reform and systematized tenancy rights, but leaving landlords in power in the villages meant that most of its provisions would not be implemented. The limited land reform came about by abolishing the category of occupancy, meaning that all occupancy tenants who paid no rent would acquire ownership of the land, whereas those who did pay rent would have to pay a compensation to the landlords. Those who could not pay the compensation would relinquish their occupancy rights altogether, and the government would take possession of the land. The reforms benefited tenants in Hazara the most,

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because, as of 1953 the district had 194,759 occupancy tenants—89% of the province’s total; the closest second was Mardan with 11,727 occupancy tenants and Peshawar District had 9,963. The government claimed that 172,977 (89%) Hazara occupancy tenants had paid compensation and become owners; in Mardan the number was 9,014 (77%) and Peshawar 5,523 (55%). However, occupancy tenants cultivated only 11% of the cultivated area in the province, whereas tenants-at-will engaged 47%. The vast majority of landowners, and the greater part of the province’s cultivated area, thus remained untouched by the land reform.

The Tenancy Act of 1950 also abolished the legal dualism that had characterized British rule, with the “rule of law” for citizens in courts, and the “customary code” for subjects in villages, but with little practical effect. The Tenancy Act systematized the rights of tenants-at-will, particularly in outlining their rights around ejectments. Moreover, begār was legally abolished, as “no tenant [was] liable to pay any village cess or render any service in lieu of any such cess or rent to his landlord” as per the law. However, ejectments appear to have increased or remained high after the act, and landlords began to force tenants to “move every one or two years to a different part of their estate in order to prevent the tenant’s right from ripening into a permanent occupancy right.” Moreover, other provisions were not new. For example, the 1946 Abolition of the Haq-i-Tora Act, passed under a Congress ministry, had already made illegal the right of landlords to levy a tax at the time of marriages or other major event. However, both after 1946 and after 1950, legal reforms to rights of tenants-at-will did not mean, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, that tenants were able to exercise their legal rights or avoid begār. This is because the indirect rule of landlords was not eliminated, and perhaps could not be eliminated,

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278 Hassan, 206.
279 Christoph Beringer and Abdul Hadi, *Land Fragmentation and Size of Agricultural Holdings in the Former North-West Frontier Province of West Pakistan* (Peshawar: Board of Economic Enquiry, North-West Frontier, Peshawar University, 1962), 30.
because the Muslim League regime relied upon their political and economic cooperation. Rather, indirect rule was reconstituted, moving from legal dualism to *de jure* governance, where “coercion is enforced locally by intermediate political elites” that may well operate in opposition to the comprehensive legal framework.\(^{280}\)

The abolition of *jagirs* in 1952 similarly did little to change the agrarian structure as *khans* retained property rights to vast landholdings they had been assigned under British settlements. Indeed, the broader, revolutionary demand of land to the tiller of 1948 was bypassed, except where it came to occupancy tenants, who were now legally peasant proprietors. Accordingly, few *khans*, big or small, lost hold of the power that emanated from the material basis of unequal social structures in the countryside. Ultimately, while aspects of the land and tenancy reforms were real, they also struck a balance between the interests of tenants and those of landlords, but heavily in favour of the latter. This was, then, the Muslim League’s “passive revolution” in the Frontier.

**The decline of early Pakistani communism**

The failures of the Communist Party in the Frontier led to some introspection on the part of the leadership, but not enough to abandon their overall view of a weak state vulnerable to a decisive blow. In this context, a debate over the applicability of Mao Zedong’s theories and the Communist Party of China’s practice took place in the Indian party, albeit having limited effects in the Pakistani party, and contributing to its further decline.

Crucially, instead of abandoning the line of frontal attack and immediate insurrection, CPP general-secretary Sajjad Zaheer viewed the problem of Hashtnagar and elsewhere in terms of not hewing more closely to the line. In December 1948, the Indian party published *On the*  

\(^{280}\) Naseemullah and Staniland, “Indirect Rule and Varieties of Governance,” 17.

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Agrarian Question in India, where its critique of the national bourgeoisie was extended to the “peasant bourgeoisie,” the rich peasant. Zaheer now realized that “[h]ad our peasant movement extended itself among the ‘muzarias’ [landless tenants] and the ‘kamins’ [agricultural labourers] the situation in this part of our country would have been quite different.” In a letter to Frontier comrades (c. late 1948-early 1949) he argued that the “down-trodden section of the peasantry will be the real backbone of our Kisan movement…. Rich peasants will continue to weaken our movement.” In distinguishing between classes of peasants, Zaheer identifies a real problem with how and why a “peasant movement” is constituted, a problem that resurfaced in Mazdoor Kisan Party debates in the 1970s and that will be examined in the next few chapters. But in early post-colonial South Asia, the anti-rich peasant view was quickly repudiated through internal and external party debates, and came to be considered a distraction in light of the more fundamental problems of the movement itself.

A thoroughgoing critique of these problems was only implicit in Zaheer’s self-criticisms. It was apparent that the communists had failed in Hashtnagar because they pursued a strategy of attempting to wrest land through armed insurrection without having the requisite organizational capacity. In his 1949 report to the Communist Party of India, Zaheer admitted, “we have not succeeded in building either the party committee or village peasant committee or Kisan Defence Volunteers.” But the very strategy they had pursued neglected translating peasant anger into a network of coordinated organizations, or rather, politically integrate the forms of organization that probably existed among tenants, e.g., kinship networks. (As I will show, these were some of the mistakes they avoided twenty years later under the MKP.) Moreover, they encouraged maximalist demands, and so could not claim lesser gains as victories or tactically wind down the

283 In Ali, 1:339. It is difficult to assess exactly what justification he gave for this because two pages of his letter, that is, two pages of the CID’s report on the CPP, are missing from the version I have had access to.
movement. As Zaheer noted in his letter to NWFP comrades, “Our Kisan leaders are very popular and Kisans respect them very much but nevertheless still the Kisans think that the path of struggle suggested by us is impracticable.”

Moreover, to try and achieve the impracticable, the communists pursued disorganized armed resistance. Zaheer noted, “The Kisans feel themselves to be helpless. Instead of thinking in terms of removing their handicaps they feel that they cannot meet Government repression.” Zaheer analyzed the inability to meet government repression as a matter of feeling rather than as a matter of obvious fact in the absence of viable structures of chains of command. He did note that, “Unorganised resistance will produce no results.” But this was too little, too late. Communists could have promoted nonviolent civil disobedience to probably achieve similar results—in Hazara, for example, the movement did not turn to broad violence—while saving the armed option for a more opportune time. To be sure, the Muslim League government of Qayyum Khan did not brook any dissent lightly, violent or otherwise, but the communists’ inopportune encouragement of armed action made repressing them that much easier.

The upshot was that remaining communists could do little more in the Peshawar valley than posterering and passing off of newspapers. Even though Ata was released by April 1949 and back at his post, he operated underground without his right-hand Ziarat Gul. In June 1949, police found a communist poster in Shabqadar, a town in Charsadda, calling on peasants to be wary of legal reforms, given that the same government had “molested and machinegunned” thousands in Hashtnagar the previous year. Instead, the communists impotently demanded nationalization of land, abolition of landlordism, redistribution of land to landless tenants and labourers, removal of

\[\text{284 In Ali, 1:334–35.}\]
\[\text{285 In Ali, 1:335.}\]
\[\text{286 In Ali, 1:335.}\]
British officers, and an end to Police Raj.\textsuperscript{287} The communists did not have even a rudimentary capacity to actually mobilize around such demands.

Their spectre, however, haunted the ruling classes. A September 1949 note from the superintendent of police in Mardan to his superiors in Peshawar noted, prophetically:

> In all there are about 25 [communist] workers of whom about 10 are prominent. There is about 30% population of tenant class in this District and they have got pro-Communist inclination. There is no separate Communist Organization, but in the frame work of future events the tenants’ class is likely to emerge as a separate Organization allied to the Communists.\textsuperscript{288}

Spectres aside, it is not clear to me what the activities of the party in the Frontier actually were thereafter until 1951, when two events shook the South Asian communist movement.

First, yet again, the Indian party’s line changed dramatically. The line of frontal attack, pushed most vehemently by general-secretary B.T. Ranadive, had proven as disastrous in India as had been in Pakistan, and was condemned internally as being adventurists and left-sectarian.\textsuperscript{289} In fact, the debate within the party was pushed by Andhra and Telangana comrades who had seriously studied the theory and practice of the Communist Party of China. They argued for not antagonizing the “national bourgeoisie,” including rich peasants, but neutralizing them in the struggle against feudalism. Moreover, they advocated a protracted people’s war along the Chinese lines, involving methodical organization, rather than a line of immediate insurrectionism and a dependence on mass spontaneity. Ranadive criticized and even repudiated Mao, but when a Cominform bulletin editorial noted, almost in passing, that Indians needed to emulate the political approach of the Chinese communists, his opponents found an opening.\textsuperscript{290} Ultimately,

\textsuperscript{290} The full debate can be found in Rao, \textit{Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India}. 88
Ranadive was deposed as general-secretary in May 1950. In February 1951, four Indian communist leaders traveled to Moscow requesting that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union settle their debates. Its general-secretary, Joseph Stalin himself, counselled emulating the Communist Party of China’s political strategy of not antagonizing the national bourgeoisie and rich peasants, while counselling against imitating the Chinese military strategy given India’s geographical location.²⁹¹ Although disagreements remained, the Indian communists agreed upon a more methodical and long-term approach to revolution.

Second, although the debate in the Indian party was circulated in the Pakistani party as well, leading to some softening of its positions, it was insufficient to prevent further adventurism. Ironically, around the same time as Stalin was advising Indian communists, Zaheer was wrapping up meetings with military officers planning a coup d’etat. Although they did not agree upon any plan, the news leaked and soon leading communists were arrested in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case—including Frontier secretary Ata.²⁹² The entire infrastructure and operations of the party were discovered by police, culminating in 1952 in a secret report on The Communist Party of West Pakistan in Action,²⁹³ from which I have extracted some of the material in this chapter. The party had suffered a severe blow.

Indeed, after some communists were released from imprisonment the party, sans Zaheer,²⁹⁴ issued a Self-Criticism Report in 1952 that changed its strategic approach and set the tone for the next decade of communist engagement. The new approach decidedly did not learn

²⁹² Hasan Zaheer, The Times and Trial of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy 1951: The First Coup Attempt in Pakistan (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998). A key figure in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case was accused Ishaq Muhammad, a major in the army from near Lyallpur (now Faisalabad). Muhammad would go on to be an important leader of the Mazdoor Kisan Party.
²⁹⁴ Sajjad Zaheer was expelled to India in 1954.
from Stalin’s advice or from the Chinese experience, indeed, the party seems to have abandoned its hegemonic ambitions. The report critiqued Ranadive’s and Zaheer’s insurrectionist line, but also switched away from the working classes and peasants, emphasizing that the “middle class became most important [in the stage of national independence], and the communists must pay special attention to this class.” These middle class elements would ally with the regionalist political movements of the smaller provinces, whose leaders were landlords, but considered progressive insofar as they opposed the central government and its increasing collaboration with British and US imperialism. Because the Khudai Khidmatgars and their successors maintained an anti-imperialist stance and at least nominally called for socialism, the party went back to the pre-partition policy of intervening in such organizations to win over the supposedly progressive bourgeois elements.

The line of the Self-Criticism Report in fact reflected the situation on the ground in the NWFP, with communists supporting opposition parties and abandoning peasant activity. Beginning in 1951, Frontier communists, like the young Peshawar-based lawyer Muhammad Afzal Bangash, previously a convenor of the Kisan Jirga in Kohat, entered the Sarhad Awami League, a mainstream political organization that had separated from the Muslim League. However, as member of the All-Pakistan Peace Committee, he visited China in 1952 and was quite influenced by the practice of Chinese communism. Not coincidentally, Bangash would become a key leader in the MKP. Meanwhile, the Kisan Jirga leader Ziarat Gul decided to turn himself in to the Mardan police in 1953, having been underground, in and out of NWFP, since 1949. He undertook not to participate in communist activity and was released in return for a

296 Khan, “Muhammad Afzal Khan Bangash: A Profile (1924-86),” 34–35.
297 Khan, 42; interview with Kamil Bangash, Peshawar, June 9, 2013.
298 It is worth noting that, for example, the Deputy Director of the Pakistani Intelligence Bureau even in 1953 was a British officer named Brien Stallard.
hefty ransom—after being interrogated by officers who noted that he was a “hard nut to crack.” In effect, the gravity of communist activity in NWFP had shifted to urban professionals, concentrated in a mainstream opposition party of landlords and bourgeois elements, while agrarian activity had all but ceased.

Nevertheless, the weakened Communist Party and its front organizations were banned in July 1954, throwing active communists in disarray and headlong into a politics largely devoid of organizing among especially the rural exploited classes of tenants and landless labourers. Bangash and other communists were arrested on July 23 and released several months later in December. Whatever party unity had existed was smashed, and communists in West Pakistan no longer operated under centralized organization. In Punjab and the Frontier, party workers took to “consultative groups,” where contacts with “old comrades were limited to personal relationships and the exchange of ideas. They gave very little attention to the renewed formation of a revolutionary party.” Communists thereafter largely joined the Azad Pakistan Party—fronted by Mian Iftikharuddin, a close associate of the communists—or the Awami League, as individuals.

Nevertheless, over 1956-57, severe food crises led to worker and peasant demonstrations. Spurred by the popular movements and factionalism within the Awami

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299 Inspector Special Section, “Ziarat Gul of Zarifi Banda” (Inspector General of Police, NWFP, September 29, 1953), 101, SB-III 12/192, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The interrogation reports note that the questioning inspector “made strenuous efforts” to get Ziarat Gul to snitch, but that “Unless he is hauled up and ‘properly’ interrogated by some Officer there is no hope of getting anything more from him. I would also suggest that a special C.I.D. man may be sanctioned to keep a close watch over this cunning and rabid Communist,” see Ziarat Gul, “Supplementary Statement of Ziarat Gul Son of Gul Khan,” ed. Inspector Special Section (Inspector General of Police, NWFP, October 5, 1953), 82, SB-III 12/192, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

300 Leghari, “The Socialist Movement in Pakistan,” 84. The Sindh Provincial Committee did not submit to the discipline of the Committee in Punjab and, indeed, the Karachi unit was the only West Pakistan group that operated as a proper unit. See Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī, “Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī kī markazī kamīṭī kī report,” 2.


League, various regionalist parties, including Ghaffar Khan’s group, joined with the Azad Party to form the Pakistan National Party (PNP). A split in the Awami League led to anti-imperialists and leftists, led by the firebrand Maulana Abdul Hamid Bhashani of East Pakistan, walking out and joining with the PNP in 1957 to form the National Awami Party (NAP). This splitting and reforming was also a feature of more mainstream ruling parties, exacerbating economic crisis with political crisis. Finally, all political parties were banned in 1958 as the military regime of Ayub Khan came to power in October. Unable to establish hegemony through the civilian political regime, the ruling classes of Pakistan had to turn to dictatorship. As part of a national crackdown on NAP’s leading politicians, many communists were arrested in October, including Bangash and Ziarat Gul, who were released in March and February of 1959 respectively. Along with other oppositional political groups, the communists had yet again been thrown into even further disarray.

**Conclusion**

The early activities of the Communist Party of Pakistan in the Frontier demonstrated that there was considerable scope for radical political economic action on the part of tenants. Tenants, who were being exploited by landlords affiliated to both the Khudai Khidmatgars and the Muslim League, joined in the activities of the communist-led Kisan Jirga in Mardan, Charsadda, Hazara and elsewhere. Their activities placed pressure upon the landlords and provided leverage to reformists in the ruling class. However, the communists’ strategic orientation, following that of the Communist Party of India, involved a frontal attack on the state apparatus at a moment of

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304 See Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan.*
305 Azeem, *Law, State and Inequality in Pakistan.*
306 “Note on Ziarat Gul @ Btland Khan Son of Gul Khan of Village Zarifi Banda P.S. Katlang Mardan District Showing His Activities for the Period since 15/10/58 to Date” (Special Branch, Police, NWFP, n.d.), 228, SB-III 12/192, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; Special Branch, NWFP, “Bangash History Sheet,” 5. Throughout this period, Ziarat Gul continued to be quiet—although he was suspected of having been involved in a peasant movement against the Nawabs of Hoti in 1956, he was not picked up for it.
the ruling classes’ apparent weakness, relying on the spontaneous uprising of the masses. Their failures demonstrated that the quick turn to militancy without sufficiently broad-based organization was premature, for they did not form in actual effect a “new class alliance” of the workers, peasants and oppressed petty bourgeoisie (in the form of the preponderance of peasant proprietors). The state may or may not have been weak, but working classes certainly were not strong enough to undertake the communist programme.

Rather, the Qayyum Khan-led Muslim League government took advantage of the communists’ weakness to further build its coalition to ensure the consolidation of its regime. The Muslim League weaned away Congress members to itself, and also invited progressive professionals who otherwise were allies of the communists. It did so with the threat of violence, relying upon the coercive apparatus of the state, but also through concessions to tenants and opponents, through the state’s administrative apparatus. Yet, the story of a nascent Pakistan is not merely the story of the strengthening of the state apparatus. Despite the occupancy tenancy reforms, the rest of the tenancy reform package reconstituted the indirect rule of landlords in villages. Although the legal dualism of colonial formal law coexisting with a constructed “customary” code was abolished and there was supposed to be only a post-colonial formal law for all, it meant little in terms of reducing the “sovereignty,” that is, indirect rule, of landed elites over tenants and landless labourers. The state apparatus acquired new capacities, but it did not severely impact the institutional configuration of power that was spread between the state apparatus and the landlords in villages. In fact, the state apparatus restored the power of landlords in villages in northern Hashtnagar, from where they had apparently fled, and elsewhere, where tenants had refused to pay rents. This may have been because of the imperatives of rule—the state apparatus needed landlords to rule in villages, and the Muslim

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307 This is, for example, the focus in Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*, despite her understanding that the state apparatus could not operate without the support of landlords.
League needed landlords to shore up its political base. Thus, the reproduction of landlord rule was softened by a “passive revolution” strategy of legal tenancy reforms that favoured a thin upper layer of the tenantry.

Despite tenancy reforms in NWFP and other provinces, and despite the banning of the Communist Party of Pakistan, agrarian crises threatened further unrest and militant peasant agitation. At an all-Pakistan level, various factions of the ruling class could not arrive at a stable political arrangement, nor could they guarantee the suppression or co-option of unrest from below. A military regime took power in 1958, but as I will now show, its attempts at garnering legitimacy by implementing a more far-reaching programme of agrarian and industrial modernization reproduced the grievances of tenants and workers in new forms.
II
Chapter 2: Khanism and the green revolution in the Peshawar valley

Introduction

Afzal Shah Khamosh is the leader of perhaps the most prominent remnant faction of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, although he was not of the original crop of leaders of the 1970s. Most of my stay in northern Hashtnagar, in April and from May to July 2013, was with him. As we walked through his village of Shakur one day he wistfully explained how technology had chipped away at collective life. The labour intensive practices of harvesting, threshing, and winnowing, which used to be accomplished collectively through mutual labour exchanges (ashar), entailed a harvest time of great sociality and celebration—not unlike Eid. But with the increasing availability of labour-saving technologies like the mechanical thresher, the sociality around harvest had all but eroded. He also explained how men would congregate in village hujras every evening to discuss affairs big and small; indeed, when his father, Ikram Din Shah, was elected a representative to the Union Council, part of the Basic Democracies political system of the 1950s and 60s, he had received a single transistor radio that everyone would congregate around to listen. Now, many watched television every night in their own homes (i.e., with their wives and children).  

Khamosh’s recollections reveal the close relationship between economic, political and sociocultural practices, and how these have transformed due to the increasing encroachment of capitalism in the countryside. Indeed, this chapter will argue that post-colonial state interventions in the political economy, namely the Ayub Khan military regime’s programme of agrarian and industrial modernization, transformed class relations and further strained what I will show to be

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308 Personal communication, Shakur, May 2013.
the minimal hegemony of *khanism*—the system of landlord power in the villages of the Peshawar valley. These political economic transformations set the stage for a convergence of sometimes contradictory interests against the structure of *khanism*. Khamosh’s own role in the movement embodied many of the contradictions at play. His father was a tenant, but he was also a *nāẓir*, one of the *khans*’ agents or managers, who enforced the *khans*’ rule. This may even have helped him become a political representative. These positions enabled him to send Khamosh to school. That is, Khamosh’s family was not particularly poor or oppressed. Moreover, although like many other tenants Khamosh’s family were migrants from the Mohmand Agency, they belonged to the smaller Malagori *qaum* and not to the dominant Mohmand *qaum*. Khamosh’s family not only defected from the *khans* and joined the peasant movement, but Khamosh came to play a leading role.

Khamosh’s recollections, moreover, show that the “peasant” in the peasant movement is not self-evident or given, but rather, the category represented the convergence of different economic, political, and sociocultural positions or interests, themselves shaped through the technical conditions of production, into a functional unity against the system of landlord power. Understanding this unity requires understanding social class, or, a group of people defined by its “*place* in the ensemble of social practices, i.e. by its place in the ensemble of the division of labour which includes political and ideological relations.”

The “ensemble of social practices” that characterized the Peshawar valley was the indirect *de jure* rule in villages, the system of landlord power, that Khamosh and many others called *khanism*, entailing the direct relationship between the economic, political, and sociocultural power of *khans*. Here, the matter of *nāẓirs*

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309 “This place corresponds to the structural determination of classes, i.e., the manner in which determination by the structure (relations of production, politico-ideological domination/subordination) operates on class practices—for classes have existence only in the class struggle.” In Poulantzas, “On Social Classes,” 27–28.

310 As I will show, *khanism* shares much in common with other social formations across northern South Asia; however, it has its own specificities as well.
in particular also raises questions about how hegemony operated under khanism, or rather, what kind of hegemony was operative over subordinates whose class, ethnicity (qaum), and other practices were different from those of the khans.

This chapter relies on oral history, census data, and secondary literature to examine how the changes in class relations entailed by state-led agrarian reforms came into conflict with khanism as an ensemble of social practices.\(^{311}\) I argue that khanism was a system of “domination without hegemony,”\(^{312}\) or rather, that its hegemony was “minimal”\(^{313}\) because khans did not incorporate the masses of their subordinates into a common notion of citizenship (as opposed to particularized subjecthood).\(^{314}\) The chapter lays out some of the key ways in which class was formed and transformed to show how different rural interests came into sharper contradictions with khanism in different ways,\(^{315}\) arguing that ultimately these were not adapted into the existing arrangement of economic, political and sociocultural practices of rule.\(^{316}\) However, against teleology or the inevitability of the destruction of khanism, this chapter also shows that the relations of production did not become “fetters” for all classes and groups in the same ways, and so the coalescence of different contradictions into a peasant movement was not always even

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\(^{311}\) It is important to note Feroz Ahmed’s caveat that “any adequate analysis of changes in the agrarian structure cannot be confined to taking the ‘Green Revolution’ technology, land reforms and similar recent measures, indicative of accelerated capitalist development, as sole causal factors, but must place them in a long-term perspective of secular trends of accelerated rate of population growth and expansion of markets in agricultural produce, land and labour which were initiated during the British period.” See Feroz Ahmed, “Transformation of Agrarian Structure in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 14, no. 1 (1984): 5–47.


\(^{313}\) As Joseph Femina notes, Gramsci recognizes a situation of “minimal hegemony” when there is a political unity among ruling classes and strata, which does not “reach down to the masses and construct a truly national community,” see Femina, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, 47–48. On the contrary, “integral hegemony” is achieved when ruling classes are able to take account of the “interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised,” economically, politically, and socioculturally, thus presenting their particular interests as universal interests, see Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 161.

\(^{314}\) Citizenship here refers to membership of a political community, which defines agents’ entitlement to “land rights, political rights, and the distribution of power among actors,” as per Boone, *Property and Political Order in Africa*, 64. That said, rights may be offered equally, not only to mask or justify, but indeed, to produce other forms of inequality.

\(^{315}\) This chapter can examine class to a greater depth than the prior chapter due to the much greater availability of written and oral sources.

\(^{316}\) Which is not to say that they could not.
or coherent. As Khamosh’s example shows, neither the line between elite and subaltern, nor, for that matter, the “peasant” in peasant movement, were given or self-evident categories. This chapter lays the basis for what subsequent chapters demonstrate, that “subalternity” is best understood as a contingent convergence of agents with dynamic and contradictory interests, that is, as the outcome rather than the premise of political (class) struggle.317

To better understand the premises of political class struggle, it is important to contextualize the initiatives toward political and economic modernization undertaken by the Ayub Khan-led military government from 1958 onward. Like many Third World regimes seeking to combat “poverty, ignorance and disease,”318 the military regime pursued policies that increased political representation, albeit in a controlled manner, as well as industrialization and agricultural modernization. The latter entailed limited land reforms, mechanization, chemical fertilizers, and “modern varieties” of wheat and maize. These modern seeds, development practitioners promised, would yield a “green revolution,” increased agricultural productivity and reduced food prices that would lift people out of poverty, without having to go through the troublesome redistribution of land ownership. Whether or not the new technologies raised agricultural productivity to any significant extent is controversial among scholars,319 but they appear more likely to agree that poorer sections of the rural population made few if any gains, neither in the form of rising wages nor falling food prices. Instead, class differentiation among the peasantry increased: better off farmers and landowners performed well on one side, while the

317 Ranajit Guha notes that certain classes or groups should “ideally” belong to the subaltern; but in practice do not always. See Guha, “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India,” 8. Where and why the ideal comes from is the subject of Chapter 6.  
319 Griffin argues that the adoption of modern varieties of maize, wheat, and rice “has not led to an acceleration in the rate of growth of agricultural output as a whole,” see Keith Griffin, Alternative Strategies for Economic Development, 2nd ed. (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), 145.; whereas Lipton and Longhurst argue that “[h]istory records no increase in food production that was remotely comparable in scale, speed, spread, and duration,” see Michael Lipton and Richard Longhurst, New Seeds and Poor People (London, New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.
absolute and relative number of those without possession of land at all increased on the other.\textsuperscript{320} Pakistan, and the Peshawar valley, were no exceptions to these trends.\textsuperscript{321}

This chapter first lays out a schematic overview of the classes as they existed in Hashtnagar and the Peshawar valley more broadly in the period of political economic transformation. The second section looks closely at the production process and the relations of production (the division of labour) to fill out the economic practices of class and hegemony, and demonstrates how agrarian reforms and green revolution technologies intensified agrarian differentiation and increased inequality. The third section examines how the political practices of domination/subordination operated in villages, showing the ways in which landlords relied more on coercion than consent, producing a minimal political and economic hegemony over subordinates through nāzirs. The fourth section examines women’s roles in practices of production and social reproduction, demonstrating how khanism limited the capacity of tenants to achieve Pakhtun standards of patriarchy, exacerbating the contradictions between classes as tenants’ material conditions changed. The fifth section highlights the significant limits of this minimal hegemony insofar as khans excluded migrant tenants from making claims upon the land. The caveat is that although these social practices are analytically separated, in practice, they were deeply intertwined—in an ensemble.

The landscape of khanism


A schematic view of rural classes is useful in orienting to the following discussions of relations of production, domination, and social reproduction, and how they were interlinked—although it is important to remember that classes are the consequences of relations, or sets of practices. At the broadest level we can divide the rural economy into those who owned land, and those who did not, but these categories were not so hermetically sealed and within them there was considerable, structured variation. I first discuss landowners, and then peasants and/or tenants, before discussing some differences in the organization of classes between northern and southern Hashtnagar. Although I try to give some quantitative sense to this schema, quantitative assessments of classes are difficult to make, first, because of the unreliability of data, and second, because the kind of data collected by official agencies had and continues to have little to do with an examination of classes and class relations.\footnote{Moreover, it is difficult to find data at the sub-tahsil level. Charsadda, of which northern and southern Hashtnagar are a part, was a tahsil of Peshawar District until 1988.}

In the Frontier in the 1950s and 60s, at the top of the rural hierarchy were a very few large khans whose families dominated the land and market. Large khans owned and controlled thousands of acres of land, followed by smaller khans who owned hundreds and scores of acres.\footnote{Note that these are quantitative measures and not qualitative measures about closeness to administration and politics, as have been used hitherto.} The khans extracted rent from their tenants and paid wages to labourers, as well as offering some goods in kind. Khans also dominated the markets and trade, following the departure of Hindu and Sikh traders and capitalists. Below the smaller khans were very many small landowners, not in the same social or economic category as khans, but who tended to belong to the same qaums. In Hashtnagar, these landowners belonged to the Muhammadzai qaum.

In the Frontier, as in the rest of Pakistan, there was a considerable skew in landownership between landlords and large landowners at the top, and smaller landowners at the bottom. In
1955, the Land Reforms Commission estimated that over 70 percent of 1,096,777 landowners in NWFP held 31.9 percent of land with average holdings of 3.25 acres; while at the top 1.14 percent of landowners held 23.3 percent of land with average holdings of 145 acres (see Table 2, and its important caveat concerning unreliability of figures). Indeed, according to these figures, just 0.06 percent of landowners held 12.40 percent of land in holdings that averaged 1,441.19 acres.\textsuperscript{324} Such land concentration seems to only have gotten worse following land reforms in the course of the 1950s and 60s.

While the Federal Land Commission’s figures from 1972 are probably not directly comparable to those of 1955, they can give a general sense of the increasing differentiation among landowners (see Table 3). The number of landowners almost doubled to 1,939,487,\textsuperscript{325} but this led to less land at the bottom and even more concentration at the top. Now, over 80 percent of 1,939,487 landowners in NWFP held 33.80 percent of land in average holdings of less than 1.81 acres (as opposed to 3.25 acres); while at the top 0.21 percent of landowners held 14.58 percent of land in holdings that averaged 299 acres—more than double the 1955 figure of 145 acres.

\textbf{Table 2: Landownership distribution in the North-West Frontier Province, c. 1955}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of ownership</th>
<th>Number of owners</th>
<th>Area owned</th>
<th>Percentage of owners</th>
<th>Percentage of area owned</th>
<th>Average area per owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 acres or less</td>
<td>770,738</td>
<td>2,506,697</td>
<td>70.27</td>
<td>31.86</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 25 acres</td>
<td>237,429</td>
<td>1,984,653</td>
<td>21.65</td>
<td>25.22</td>
<td>8.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 100 acres</td>
<td>76,023</td>
<td>1,546,621</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>19.66</td>
<td>20.34*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{324} Land Reforms Commission, “Report of the Land Reforms Commission for West Pakistan,” Appendix I.

\textsuperscript{325} That is, increased by 77 percent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of ownership</th>
<th>Number of owners</th>
<th>Area owned</th>
<th>Percentage of owners</th>
<th>Percentage of area owned</th>
<th>Average area per owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 acres or less</td>
<td>1,558,047</td>
<td>2,816,220</td>
<td>80.33</td>
<td>33.80</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 25 acres</td>
<td>346,761</td>
<td>2,969,122</td>
<td>17.88</td>
<td>35.63</td>
<td>8.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 100 acres</td>
<td>30,623</td>
<td>1,332,306</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>15.99</td>
<td>43.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 acres and above</td>
<td>4,056</td>
<td>1,214,987</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>14.58</td>
<td>299.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,939,487</td>
<td>8,332,635</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These figures probably conceal the actual extent of landholdings amongst individuals—plenty of loopholes and allowances in the Land Reform Regulation of 1959, as well as provisions for transfer of land within families, allowed landlords to bypass the ceiling limit. Indeed, the figures suggest that while there were far fewer landowners with more than 25 acres, they owned on average much more land than before. The fewer number of large landowners was at least partly likely the result of the generational division of estates among children upon the death of patriarchs. Meanwhile, average landholdings near the bottom (5 to 25 acres) remained static, while land holdings at the bottom (below 5 acres) declined. What is very important to note is the

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preponderance of those who owned less than 25 acres of land, especially when compared to those who owned no land at all, for as I will show in this and the next couple of chapters, this category of rural cultivators becomes an important fulcrum in any struggle against the landlords.

Yet, quite a few of these small owners were also renting in land or working for hire on others’ lands. Feroz Ahmed estimates that in 1961, owners who also rented in and/or worked for hire numbered 90,966 or 11.4 percent of all 801,145 cultivators. The overlap between ownership and renting also points to the complexities of defining the peasantry. The term peasant, and its Urdu counterpart *kisan*, are subject to considerable definitional ambiguity. By peasant I mean a household whose members possess land (whether ownership or tenancy) and are directly involved in farming activities, as opposed to having all of their land farmed through renting out to tenants (i.e., the “pure” landlord) and/or hiring waged labour (i.e., the “pure” capitalist farmer). Therefore, a peasant is not directly defined by the size of their holdings, although it is almost impossible to farm large landholdings through family labour alone. Small landowners sometimes rented out or hired waged labour on all of their lands; but when they cultivated all themselves, or supplemented their own cultivation by renting in or renting out, they could perhaps more accurately be termed peasant proprietors.

Rich peasants in the Marxist usage refers to owners or tenants who directly cultivate lands, but who hire in as much or more labour than they perform themselves. Rich peasants also sometimes cultivate parts of their land (rented or owned) directly, while renting out or

327 Ahmed, 20.
330 The distinction between a small landowner who hires labour and a capitalist farmer is not necessarily size, but that the latter accumulates capital to reinvest in expanding accumulation, on or off the farm. Small landowners tend toward “simple reproduction” rather than expanded reproduction.
331 See Akram-Lodhi, “Agrarian Classes in Pakistan.”
subcontracting other parts of these lands. Rich peasants in Hashtnagar often were peasant proprietors, in that they owned some land, and tenants in that they rented in some land; but could also be pure tenants who nevertheless had sufficient capital accumulated from previous endeavours to allow them to rent in relatively larger amounts of land and hire waged labour to assist in cultivating it. The class interests of these rich tenants may have been similar to those of small landowners, but these particular peasant proprietor-cum-rich tenants were distinguished from small landowners in that they often did not belong to the Muhammadzai qaum, as we will see further below. Nevertheless, their male issue often attended school, and among them were those who could begin to get low positions in government jobs. Some rich tenants had even more extensive business concerns.

Below the rich peasants were middle peasants, again, owners or tenants, who overwhelmingly relied on family labour to cultivate, including mobilizing female labour, more than they hired in labour. Below them were poor peasants whose meagre possession (ownership or tenancy) of land may have had to find supplementary waged labour in or outside of agriculture—that is, they worked more for others than themselves. Feroz Ahmed estimates that in the Frontier overall in 1961, those cultivators who owned all of the land they tilled numbered 355,451 (44.4 percent), whereas those who owned none of the land they possessed, that is, were pure tenants, numbered 215,487 (26.9 percent). In between, as we have seen, were owners who also rented in and/or worked for hire, numbering 90,966 (11.4 percent). The point here is that the proportion of tenants to owners was not insignificant, despite the numerical preponderance of the latter.

Below the tenants, as possessors of land, were the landless labourers, who in 1961 numbered 139,241 or 17.4 percent of all 801,145 cultivators, and 39.3 percent of all those

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cultivators who did not own any land. Outside of the specifically agrarian classes were numerically few but economically important members of rural artisanal castes like the barbers (nāʾīs), carpenters (tarkāns) and smiths (lohārs), whose services were remunerated at harvest in kind by landowners and tenants alike. Members of these castes could, however, become tenants or landless labourers, but that would not change their caste affiliation. Indeed, endogamy tended to seal these castes off from the agrarian Pakhtun qaums, who also tended not to intermarry across qaums. That said, again, they were numerically minor when compared to the Pakhtun tenants, labourers, and small landowners.

However, looking at the Frontier overall also masks some of the particularities of the Peshawar valley and Hashtnagar’s place in it. These particularities were determined in part by geography, namely rivers that flowed through relatively even valleys, from which further irrigation was extended through the canals discussed in the previous chapter. Importantly, both landlordism and tenancy were more significant in the Peshawar valley than they were in other parts of the Frontier. While the number of landlords was considerably smaller in the “two agriculturally richest districts of Peshawar and Mardan” than in remaining districts of the Frontier in the later 1950s, the “average size of their holdings [was] three times the size of the average landlord’s holding in the remaining districts.”

Meanwhile, in 1960, the same two districts demonstrated the greatest proportion of farms cultivated by tenants-at-will outside of Dera Ismail Khan. The plurality of farms in TahsilCharsadda of Peshawar District, which contained Hashtnagar, and Tehsil Mardan of Mardan

334 Beringer and Hadi, Land Fragmentation and Size of Agricultural Holdings in the Former Nort-West Frontier Province of West Pakistan, 24.
District, were cultivated by tenants-at-will. In Tahsil Charsadda, the majority (54 percent) of farms were cultivated by tenants, accounting for 61 percent of cultivated area. An additional 20 percent of cultivated area came under owner-cum-tenants. Only 19 percent of the cultivated area came under owners. While these figures do not indicate the population of tenant households vis-à-vis owner households in these areas, they do point to the greater extent of tenancy in the Peshawar valley and Hashtnagar in particular.

Between southern and northern Hashtnagar as well there were important differences in how the classes were organized. Both the total area and population of southern Hashtnagar were and continue to be much greater than that of northern Hashtnagar, entailing greater population density. Southern Hashtnagar initially had greater access to natural irrigation, and further canalization intensified production in southern Hashtnagar before northern Hashtnagar. Accordingly, the shāmilāt or collective “waste” lands that were parcelled into the private property of individual khans were relatively larger in northern Hashtnagar than the south. This also meant that khans in northern Hashtnagar had larger and more consolidated estates than those in the south. As British revenue officers noted in 1926, in northern Hashtnagar, “[s]eventy per cent. of the total cultivated area [was] included in holdings of more than 100 acres in extent and 28,399 acres [were] actually held by nine persons” (an average of 3,155 acres each), and in southern Hashtnagar, “[t]hirty-seven per cent. of the cultivated area [was] included in holdings of 100 acres and upwards [with] the names of the more important owners appear[ing] again and again in different estates.” By 1971, four large landlords alone owned 11,250 acres of land in

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336 In District Peshawar, 41 percent of farms were cultivated by tenants, and another 22 percent were owner-cum-tenant farms; in District Mardan 39 percent were tenant farms, while another 22 percent were owner-cum-tenant farms. See Agricultural Census Organization, 2: 1:4.
339 Wylie, 58.
northern Hashtnagar between them,\textsuperscript{340} that is, 5.64 percent of a total farm area of 199,162 acres in all of Charsadda.\textsuperscript{341}

There were also many more small landowner Muhammadzais in the south, with relatively smaller landholdings, than there were in the north. However, tenancy was more salient in the northern parts of Hashtnagar than it was in the southern parts— at least, as of 1926. In northern Hashtnagar, 82 percent of cultivated area was under tenancy, whereas in the bulk of southern Hashtnagar, 75 percent was under tenancy and in another part of southern Hashtnagar, 72 percent. However, at least between 1895 and 1926, the proportion of area cultivated by tenants increased, rather than decreased, by around ten percent in southern Hashtnagar.\textsuperscript{342} While these figures do not say all that much about what was happening in the 1960s in these two distinct parts of Hashtnagar, it is worth noting that, whereas in 1960, 39 percent of the cultivated area in Tahsil Charsadda overall was under owners or owners-cum-tenants, by 1972, 58 percent of the farm area was under owners and owner-cum-tenants.\textsuperscript{343} There was, in other words, a decline in the proportion of pure tenancies over twelve years and this dynamic is what I will examine in the next section.

\textbf{Relations of production}


\textsuperscript{341} Agricultural Census Organization, \textit{1972 Pakistan Census of Agriculture: Selected Data by Sub-Divisions}, vol. 5 (Lahore: Government of Pakistan, 1972), 28. Although, as notes, the 1972 Census of Agriculture likely severely underestimated the farm area in the province, see Ahmed, “Transformation of Agrarian Structure in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan.”


\textsuperscript{343} These two sets of figures, again, are not directly comparable due to changes in agriculture census methodology, and because cultivated area is not the same as farm area. However I share these figures to give a sense of the decline in pure tenancies. See Agricultural Census Organization, \textit{1960 Pakistan Census of Agriculture: West Pakistan Report} 3, 2: 3:10; Agricultural Census Organization, \textit{1972 Pakistan Census of Agriculture: Selected Data by Sub-Divisions}, 5:28.
Hegemony as a strategy may be a political calculation about the kinds of coalitions, compromises, and generation of consent necessary for a class or group to remain in power; but hegemony, Gramsci argues, “must also be economic,” for it presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed—other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind.\textsuperscript{344}

Here, I will show that \textit{khans} made few sacrifices at the economic level, rather, \textit{khanism} was based on considerable extraction of surplus from primary producers—the tenants and the landless labourers—through \textit{khans’} control of land and markets. Aside from the poverty, the experience of tenancy was often very frustrating because it also limited self-directed accumulation. As agrarian reforms were implemented over the 1960s, the costs of the reforms were borne even more so by tenants who rapidly became landless as landowners sought to eject them in a process of “accumulation by dispossession.”\textsuperscript{345} Proletarianization proceeded apace as tenants became “free” of the means of production and “free” to sell their labour.

Relations between \textit{khans} and tenants were fundamentally rooted in the appropriation of surplus labour through both legal and illegal forms. The basic legal form for surplus appropriation was ground rent, which took two major forms, \textit{i}j\textit{ārah} or a fixed lease typically paid in cash, and \textit{baṭāʾī}, or payment of rent as a share of the produce (referred to as share-cropping in census data), where tenants were typically responsible for all inputs.\textsuperscript{346} For those share-cropping, typically half the crop would be taken by the \textit{khan},\textsuperscript{347} and cesses for the \textit{khan} and his agents, as well as shares for labourers and village artisans, would be extracted from the remainder. \textit{Khans

\textsuperscript{344} Gramsci, \textit{Selections from the Prison Notebooks}, 161.
\textsuperscript{345} David Harvey, \textit{The New Imperialism} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{346} In 1960, 60.80 percent of tenant-operated area in Tahsil Charsadda was share-cropped, while 34.24 percent was paid by cash rent—nearly twice the Peshawar District’s average of 18.08 percent. See Agricultural Census Organization, \textit{1960 Pakistan Census of Agriculture: West Pakistan Report} 3, 2: 3:150.
\textsuperscript{347} Although this was greater than the 40 percent allowed by law post-1950.
also often regulated what crops were grown, and how they would be traded. For example, even up to 1974, one Babu Mohammad Akram Khan of Mardan refused to allow the sugarcane crop to be divided between himself and his tenants. He wanted the “whole crop [to be] taken to the Mills for crushing,” whereas the tenants sought to “make ‘gur’ [jaggery] out of their [share of] cane [it] being more paying.”

Indeed, khans also appropriated surplus labour through their literal control of markets. When Hindus and Sikhs left for India, it was generally khans who were able to front the capital necessary to become traders of cash crops. Just like directing their tenants to sell to particular mills, tenants were often only allowed to sell their crops at depots owned or approved by khans. Dildaar, at the time a young tenant who later joined the MKP, told me that,

There was no market, the khan was everything. When we harvested cane, the khan took the money from the mill first…. For jaggery, he had his own depot in Tangi…. The khan would pocket all the money, he paid us just about enough for the labour…. If the prevailing price was Rs. 100, he’d buy it from us at Rs. 80…. He was the munshi [accountant], he was the arhti [wholesaler].

If tenants sought to take their produce elsewhere, and were caught, they would be ejected. Khans thus combined their legal control over land with their legal control over the market.

A relatively minor, but nevertheless important, form of legal surplus appropriation was payment to the state directly, in the form of land revenue, irrigation rates, and other taxes accruing to the possession of land. The tenants’ payment of such rates also benefited the khans, for example, the lucrative trees lining the fields benefited from irrigation paid for tenants, but were the property of the khans. “One day, my sister broke some branches off of a tree, and the nāẓir questioned her and threatened to report her to the khan,” noted Muhammad Khan, an

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349 Name changed due to his request for anonymity, I also do not identify his village. Interview, May 22, 2013.
350 Interview with Muhammad Ishaq, Arhat Kali, May 21, 2013.
elderly landless agricultural labourer.\textsuperscript{351} As I will show in the next chapter, something as simple as fallen wood could spark a “prairie fire.”

The illegal forms of appropriating surplus labour included \textit{begār} (periodic unpaid labour) and cesses like the \textit{haq-i-tora} (marriage or special occasion fees), which we discussed in Chapter 1. Men provided agricultural labour in the fields, and often served as watchmen at the \textit{khans’} homes at night,\textsuperscript{352} while women would also be called upon to provide gender-specific forms of \textit{begār}, like washing clothes or cleaning grains. As I will show, the gendered aspect of \textit{begār} was particularly frustrating. Although \textit{begār} and cesses had been outlawed in 1950 following the peasant movements of 1948-1949, ending the legal dualism of formal law and customary law, their practice continued into the 1960s.\textsuperscript{353} \textit{Begār} and cesses were important because \textit{khans} could increase these to decrease costs and increase revenues, especially when sharecropping limited their capacity to increase ground rent. However, these practices were demeaning and felt arbitrary to tenants.

Combined, the landlords’ mechanisms of legal and illegal surplus appropriation did not leave much room for taking account of the tenants’ economic interests. Several village studies from the Peshawar and Mardan Districts from the 1950s and 60s speak to the pitiful condition of tenants.\textsuperscript{354} One study showed that although tenants were highly productive, “producing greater revenue per one rupee of investment than peasant proprietors,” such productivity was premised

\textsuperscript{351} Interview, Hisara, May 23, 2013.
\textsuperscript{352} I experienced this when I stayed with a relatively small \textit{khan} in the village of Rajjar in southern Hashtnagar in October, 2013. Every evening or so a different man would arrive, having to stay up more or less all night, and remain alert with a rifle supplied by the \textit{khan}. These people worked, one of them, for example, drove a Qinqi (motorcycle rickshaw). But serving as a watchman was the price of living on the \textit{khan’s} property.
\textsuperscript{353} In fact, such practices continue to date in many areas.
on their being “made to work very hard by their landlords.” But due to high rents their share was “horribly low.”355 Indeed, many tenants told me that at harvest time they would be left with very little. Many could not afford the wheat they themselves produced and subsisted mainly on sorghum (jowār)—bread made of wheat was considered a luxury. Master Tahir, a former tenant turned schoolteacher, told us, “These clothes I have today, they weren’t like that before—they were torn and rent. These sandals, we would have to get them fixed repeatedly by the cobbler. We would get new clothes only on Eid, and even this was not in everyone’s capacity.”356 That meant, for example, that sending children to school was a luxury for most.

When tenants showed any form of resistance, khans would threaten ejectment. Tenants who refused to pay higher rents or cesses could simply be ejected at the end of their contract year. Tenants who might try to avoid begār as a “weapon of the weak”357 would still be threatened. As Dildaar told me,

Even small contraventions against the khan, he would say “Leave the land.” … One day, I did not go to perform the begār on the khan’s self-cultivated land, it might have been to plough, or apply fertilizer or water—and I tried to make an excuse, that I was ill or there was a death in our relations—but he just said, “Go on, leave the land.” Then I’d plead and beg, or give him a bribe, saying, “Khan, please give me the land back.”358

Tenants thus faced conditions of poverty and poor conditions of work, with little bargaining power insofar as they were tenants “at will” whose possession of land could end at the khans’ convenience.

However, not all tenants were in the same position economically. For example, Dildaar’s father rented in 18.5 acres irrigated and 8 acres unirrigated. His father could well afford to pay

356 Interview, Nadir Mian Kali, June 6, 2013.
358 Refusing to provide begār was not merely an economic concern, but one of refusing to recognize the authority of the khan, cf. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890 to 1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 106.
advances on the lease for greater amounts of land. The family mobilized the labour of its women on the farm, rather than hiring permanent labour, and so we might classify their household as middle peasant. As a result, Dildaar and his two brothers were able to attend school, but pointing to the difficulty of maintaining such a lifestyle, as the eldest he had to drop out in the first year of his BA and concentrate on farming.

Other tenants were also peasant proprietors who owned and rented.\textsuperscript{359} Muhammad Ishaq’s father and sons purchased 35 acres of unirrigated land when they first moved to the area in 1968, and leased in an additional 60 acres. They worked the land themselves, but also hired labourers on monthly or daily basis, that is, as permanent or casual labour. This would make them rich peasants. Ishaq, as second youngest son, was able to pursue an education alongside his youngest brother. Such rich peasants may have been exempt from \textit{begār} because they owned their homes on their own lands. Indeed, Ishaq described attending the same schools as the \textit{khans’} children and having good relations with them, before the peasant movement. (Although, he also noted that he was astonished, when his family moved to northern Hashtnagar, at how dismal conditions for tenants were.)\textsuperscript{360}

Good relations could also take the form of being an employee of the \textit{khan}, which also helped climb the class ladder. Nisar Muhammad’s father was a \textit{munshi} or accountant/secretary of a \textit{khan}, and cultivated about 15-17.5 acres but paid no rent until his father retired,\textsuperscript{361} which meant being able to accumulate money where others could not. They had two farm servants, a lot of cattle, and, in addition to receiving schooling, were able to diversify into government jobs and

\textsuperscript{359} Akbar S. Ahmed notes that “Initially landlords may have had complete suzerainty over their tenants but by the mid-twentieth century Mohmand through hard work, personal deprivation and shrewd investments had accumulated considerable independent properties in the [Mardan and Peshawar districts].” See Akbar S. Ahmed, \textit{Pukhtun Economy and Society: Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society} (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 65. While he does not describe the historical processes by which this occurred, the point is corroborated by my interviews with various elders.

\textsuperscript{360} Interview, Arhat Kali, May 21, 2013.

\textsuperscript{361} Interview, Mandani, June 22, 2013.
trade. These rich tenants and managers were not the among the most exploited or most oppressed, and many were close socially to the khans, meaning that there was a minimal hegemony at play.

One event from my fieldwork illustrates the ambiguities around rich tenants and the agents of the khan. I began to interview Afzal Shah Khamosh’s very elder cousin, Haji Shez Rehman, at Khamosh’s hujra on May 28, 2013. Rehman began to tell me how life was not bad for him and his family under the khans. This is when everyone else present, his nephews and grandnephews, interrupted him and admonished him for going off script in describing the khans’ oppression. That interview did not go long, but he explained that his father was an elder who was close to the khan, and served him “without taking any salary”—he repeated this for emphasis. “We had no conflict with the khan whatsoever.” When I met him again a few days later on June 3, 2018, outside his home he told me pointedly, “Khamosh may have taken up enmity against the khans, but they never did wrong by us.” Whether or not these defecting nāẓirs did so against their own class interests is a question we will return to in Chapters 5 and 6.

The differentiation among peasants increased over the 1960s due to land reforms and new technologies, to understand why, it is important to understand some of the technical aspects of production. Into the 1950s and 60s the productive forces involved in farming were more or less the same, qualitatively, as those before independence. The image of the plough and two bullocks was proverbial—MKP leader Afzal Bangash, in a 1972 interview, glorified the “[the peasant] who, with a pair of bullocks and a plough, raises gold from the land in the form of crops.”362 The general rule of thumb in Pakistan was that, presuming family labour, a subsistence farmer operating with one pair of bullocks could farm 10-12.5 acres of land (widely agreed upon as the subsistence minimum in Pakistan), and a farmer with another pair could farm 20-25 acres.

beyond which hiring labour on a consistent basis was necessary.\textsuperscript{363} Accordingly, livestock, and particularly bullocks, were an important indicator of differentiation amongst peasants with regard to productive capacity, and not just with regard to capacity to eat or sell meat.

But the promotion of mechanization began to change that, and provoked increasing landlessness. Tractors could be used to plough fields much more efficiently and quickly than a pair of bullocks—100 to 200 acres\textsuperscript{364}—eliminating a key limitation on managing relatively large farms. The land reforms of 1959 were not meant to level rural inequalities so much as to prompt landlords to adopt mechanization and new technologies to farm more intensively.\textsuperscript{365} Here, the increasing availability of “tractor time for hire … provided an incentive to many medium — and even small — landowners to replace tenants by a combination of hired tractor time (with driver) and wage-labourers.”\textsuperscript{366}

The impact of mechanization on tenant displacement went hand in hand with the politics of land reform and demography. Concerned about the possibility of further tenancy reforms like the ones that transformed occupancy tenants into owners, landlords began to eject tenants from their lands on a large scale in the name of taking up self-cultivation. This was not only a result of large landlords evicting tenants, but smaller landowners resuming lands for the “increasing numbers of their family members.”\textsuperscript{367} Sometimes landlessness from population pressure took the form of intra-family disputes. For example, Mukhtar Ahmad’s grandfather owned 15 acres of land which should have been inherited by five sons. His uncles did not find consensus over possession of the land and did not allow his father to take on any land. Resultantly, his father

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Alavi, “The Rural Elite and Agricultural Development in Pakistan,” 195.
\item Ahmed, “Transformation of Agrarian Structure in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan,” 39. The increased use of mechanical threshers and other implements would come in later decades, along with far greater coverage of tractor rental use.
\item Ahmed, 39.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
became a landless labourer, and his family provided labour on the khans’ lands and also tended the khan’s cattle for a salary, paid in kind.\textsuperscript{368} That said, despite a higher proportion of hiring of casual and permanent labourers in the Peshawar and Mardan Districts respectively than in Punjab, the overall extent of wage-labour in agriculture was “quite limited.”\textsuperscript{369} That meant a growing mass of people without means of production, but also without local gainful employment, spurring migration and enrolment in the army, as in the case of Mukhtar Ahmad.

Increasing landlessness was also a result, especially in the latter 1960s, of not being able to keep up with green revolution technologies; while on the flip side, those who could keep up were able to accumulate more capital. Increased ground rents, with smaller holdings, required greater capital investment that was out of reach for most cultivators. Even as late as 1972, only 83,453 households in the Frontier reported using tractors, out of the 465,926 private farms (97 percent of which were run by individual households), suggesting that tractor usage was restricted to perhaps less than 20 percent of farms. Moreover, modern varieties of seed required greater application of (particularly chemical) fertilizer and water, which also meant they required more labour input. But similar to the thin usage of tractors, only 19.7% and 36.5% of farms in Districts Peshawar and Mardan respectively reported use of chemical fertilizer in 1960.\textsuperscript{370} A 1961 farm survey found that in these districts, tenants were less likely to use fertilizer than peasant proprietors (27% against 72%).\textsuperscript{371} Kisan Committee activists noted in the 1960s that every year the average peasant would be indebted at Rs. 1,654, “the result of which is that he very quickly

\textsuperscript{368} Interview, Mandani, May 29, 2013.
\textsuperscript{369} Ahmed, “Transformation of Agrarian Structure in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan,” 34.
\textsuperscript{370} Agricultural Census Organization, \textit{1960 Pakistan Census of Agriculture: West Pakistan Report 1}, 2: 1:546–47. By 1972, the use of chemical fertilizer had become far more widespread, but this might have had more to do with changes wrought by the peasant movement and land reform directives, to be covered in the next chapter.
\textsuperscript{371} Nurul-Islam Mian, \textit{The Agricultural Economy of North-West Frontier} (Peshawar: Board of Economic Enquiry, North-West Frontier, Peshawar University, 1970), 116. Indeed, a study by the Kisan Committee in the mid-1960s found that chemical fertilizers was the single most expensive input aside from the costs of truck rental to transport crops to market and ground rent, see Sher Ali Bacha, “12.5 Aikār Yā 25 Jarīb Arāḡī Ke Āmdan Aur Kharch Kā Ek Sarsarī Jáezah,” n.d., Sher Ali Bacha Papers.
turns into an agricultural labourer.” On the other hand, richer peasants, including many tenants, able to afford the expensive inputs and to hire labour, were able to increase their farm productivity and accumulate capital for reinvestment, or investment in education.

This polarization had important consequences for the economic aspects of hegemony under khanism. Poorer tenants were increasingly afraid of ejectments, losing out on possession of land and becoming landless. Those who were or had become landless were finding it increasingly hard to find gainful employment; although modern seed varieties required greater labour input, other technologies like mechanization were labour-saving. Moreover, richer tenants were, perhaps increasingly, limited in realizing the cash value of their crops due to the lack of a “free market,” as khans asserted their own control of markets. Importantly, khans sometimes prevented tenants from building structures for processing cane or tobacco (i.e., adding value), forcing tenants to sell unprocessed crops. Aside from these factors, all tenants and labourers had longstanding frustrations with begār and cesses, which not only limited their own capacity to allocate their labour time, but were also demeaning. An already thin hegemony was fraying even more due to the “semi-feudal” fetters on the potential for upward mobility.

While the economic situation was becoming increasingly dire in the Peshawar valley, it was neither unique, nor were the economic contradictions decisive in and of themselves in sparking the peasant movement. The transformations in the Peshawar valley were broadly comparable to those in parts of the Punjab, Sindh, and many parts of India as well as other countries. Here, landlessness increased as landlords sought to resume the land for “self-cultivation,” i.e., hiring waged labour, and richer peasants found themselves doing better as well.

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372 Bacha, “12.5 Aika Ỹā 25 Jarīb Arāžī Ke Āmdan Aur Kharch Kā Ek Sarsarī Jā’ezah.” While the calculations of the Kisan Committee document are quite detailed—especially when it comes to the household expenditures of the average tenant family of four—the date and methodology of data collection are not stated. Moreover, tenants in such debt likely combined tenancy with labour on other farms, or sought other sources of income, or simply left agriculture altogether. Accordingly, not all peasants turned into pure agricultural labourers.

373 Seeing education as an investment was a point Haroon Akram-Lodhi made to me in conversation.

374 Interview with Muhammad Ishaq, Arhat Kali, May 21, 2013.
Moreover, the economic practices of *khanism* were consistent with “semi-feudalism” as described by Amit Bhaduri and others,\(^{375}\) a more general phenomenon in South Asia and elsewhere, that involved sharecropping, indebtedness, and lack of market access. The Peshawar valley was distinct from especially the southern regions of the Frontier insofar as it was an agricultural heartland where mechanization and green revolution technologies were concentrated. The economic practices of *khanism*, as we have already started to see, constituted and importantly were constituted by political and sociocultural practices. It is to these that we now turn.

**Informal and formal rule**

The economic practices of *khanism* were predicated upon its specifically political practices, that is, the particularized institutions and practices that *khans* had developed to assert their dominance, without much hegemony. As we have seen, this particularized *khan* rule worked in concert with, and not contrary to, the centralized institutions of the state during the colonial era as part of indirect rule; but even in the post-colonial era ruling classes restored and supported the autonomous power of landlords, despite passing laws to the contrary.\(^{376}\) Here, we will examine more closely how *khans* institutionalized their rule, through both the formal apparatus of the state and through an informal, private state apparatus. Understanding the institutions of *khanism* is also important to understand how they were transformed by the peasant movement.

*Khans* exercised *de facto* sovereignty, implied by their ability to punish and discipline with impunity.\(^{377}\) This was a continuation of the role that *khans* played under British colonialism,


\(^{376}\) A situation of indirect *de jure* rule, where “the state maintains *de jure* direct rule over a territory, but in reality coercion is enforced locally by intermediate political elites.” See Naseemullah and Staniland, “Indirect Rule and Varieties of Governance,” 17–18.

enforcing law and order on their behalf. Khans could hire armed retainers with them to protect their interests and enforce their will—indeed, sometimes tenants themselves were mobilized to enforce the khan’s writ.\footnote{378 Interview with Haji Azeem, Zigai, May 29, 2013.} Disputes among tenants were typically taken to their khāns for resolution, who could impose punishments including fines. In one instance, Dildaar told me, tenants disputed over the application of irrigation water, and one of the khān’s managers, a nāzir, died in the crossfire. The khān’s “terror was so overwhelming that the tenants and their brothers were ejected. One man died, five homes were uprooted.”\footnote{379 Interview with Dildaar, May 22, 2013.} Instead of peasants resolving their disputes through their own jirgas, a scalable model of an assembly of elders or respected persons, khāns reinforced their own positions as arbiters of peace and order, while fragmenting tenant and labourer solidarity. Tenants and labourers were supposed to be, like any property owner, equal juridical citizens of the state, but they were in fact subjects of landlords.

However, because many of the khans tended to live in Tangi town, they relied on an apparatus of surveillance and enforcement run by the nāzir (overseer), who managed the khan’s estates both economically and politically. Although Chakrabarty suggests that pre-capitalist domination “could do without a detailed knowledge of the dominated,”\footnote{380 Chakrabarty, Rethinking Working-Class History, 68.} the nāzirs’ played an extensive and intensive role in the lives of peasants to generate precisely such knowledge. There was at least one nāzir per village per khan, and the nāzirs played both an extensive and intensive role in the lives of peasants, with Afzal Khamosh, whose father was a nāzir, telling me it would take an entire notebook to list all of their roles and functions, the core of which were production and distribution. Nāzirs had to be approached for permission before sowing,\footnote{381 Whereupon, Muhammad Ishaq of Arhat Kali told me, they may arbitrarily ask for an offering like chickens.} they supervised the processing and division of crops, and regulated which markets the produce went to. They enforced begār, mobilizing dependents’ labour for the wants and needs of the khans, as well as
cesses and other services, hence keeping track of weddings and other life events. Moreover, *nāzirs* were the first line of the *khāns’* defence against tenant resistance and organization. They were the ones who would beat tenants and, if necessary, take tenants to the *khān* to receive the latter’s justice. The *khāns’* domination relied upon a detailed knowledge of the dominated, an “infrastructural power,” which was managed, supplied and enforced by *nāzirs*.

Although tenants often indicated their contempt for *nāzirs* to me, the latter were likely key in mediating cultural and class differences between *khans* and their subordinates, securing a partial consent of the dominated. For example, *nāzirs* may also have helped peasants approach *khāns* for favours and benefits—*khāns* did provide charity, such as *zakāt* (obligatory alms) and used clothes, to poorer labourers.\textsuperscript{382} Aside from this, while not all *nāzirs* were of the same *qaums* as the tenants, many shared *qaum* affiliations. This meant that *nāzirs* were often embedded in relations of kinship, marriage and other cultural practices with tenants and labourers. One such crucial cultural practice, with considerable political resonance, is *gham-ṣhādī*, that is, the sharing of sorrow and joy—commiserating with people upon misfortunes, particularly death, and celebrating with them at times of happiness, particularly weddings.\textsuperscript{383} During my fieldwork several people told me they partially measured the worth of a political figure by whether or not he attended *gham-ṣhādī*. Those who did not were seen as detached and careless, while those who did were often appreciated. Blocking people from attending *gham-ṣhādī* was and is also an important form of social boycott, signifying the breaking of ties, while re-engagement can signify rapprochement. *Nāzirs* were often embedded in this sociocultural political economy of grief and joy, perhaps acting as a conduit between the *khan* and the tenants.

\textsuperscript{383} Pronounced “kḥādī” in the Pakhto dialect spoken in northern districts. Amineh Ahmed suggests that *gham-ṣhādī* comprises a body of ideas and practices of life, in which happiness and sadness are understood as indissoluble, and are celebrated communally within networks of reciprocal social obligations.” See Amineh Ahmed, “Death and Celebration among Muslim Women: A Case Study from Pakistan,” *Modern Asian Studies* 39, no. 4 (2005): 931. Food is often served to guests in great quantities on such occasions, as I learned firsthand during my fieldwork.
Some nāzirs may also have been genuinely popular, for example, Adam Khan of Shakur, a close associate of Ikram Din Shah, Khamosh’s father, had also been elected to the Union Council in the Basic Democracies introduced by the military regime in 1959, and moreover was the chairman of the council. He later defected to become a key member of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, like some other nāzirs, but he was and continues to be universally spoken of as “Chairman” Adam Khan. Thus, nāzirs were not merely instruments of domination, but also of generating some consent, a minimal hegemony.

The election of Adam Khan may have reflected the broader capacity of khans to ensure their leading position in regional and national politics through the formal apparatuses of the state. Positions in government were, and remain important for the funding and prerogatives that could be used as patronage to buttress and reinforce the khans’ economic power. Saghir Ahmad, in his study of 1960s village life in Punjab, argues that “men elected as Basic Democrats were minor politicians who could not have been elected without the support of the economic dominants,” that is, landlords, who themselves were not particularly interested in the lower offices of Basic Democracies and sought higher offices.384 Both Adam Khan and Ikram Din Shah were elected to the Union Council, and both were nāzirs of Usman Ali Khan (also known as Wawa Khan, owner of 3,500 acres); although, I have no evidence that their elections were influenced by the khan. That said, as one elder Haji Nowrooz Khan from another village told us, “We’d vote for whoever the khān told us to vote for. Even if the khān put up an ox, we’d vote for the ox.”385

Other aspects of the formal state apparatus were no less integrated with khanism. Many bureaucrats were recruited from khān families. Ameer Rehman Khan, a relatively small khān (his father owned 270 acres), told us that one of his relatives had become a deputy commissioner and

385 Interview, Marghan Kali, June 5, 2013.
another an inspector general of police in colonial and post-colonial administrations.\textsuperscript{386} Latif Afridi, a notable lawyer who co-operated with peasant radicals in the 1960s, explained to me that judges were often \textit{khans} with close relationships with \textit{khans} outside the judiciary: “they exchanged gifts, they went to the same parties and get-togethers…. the \textit{khans} knew each other very well, participated in \textit{ghamī-şhādī}…. They got rulings in their favour.” Accordingly, “getting justice for peasants from these \textit{khans} was like getting water out of stone.”\textsuperscript{387} The rule of law simply did not matter, although this would soon change due to the peasant movement.

Closer to the villages, access to officials was also mediated by \textit{khāns}. The closest police station in northern Hashtnagar was in Tangi town, distant from many other villages, and police officers operated out of the \textit{hujras} or bungalows of the \textit{khāns}; but so did local revenue officials (\textit{paṭwārīs}), despite supposedly and officially being posted among villagers.\textsuperscript{388} Muhammad Ishaq described the mediation of the \textit{khāns}:

In those days, never mind meeting with the \textit{paṭwārī} or SHO [Station House Officer], we’d address even a constable as \textit{khan}. The SHO would be informed by the \textit{khan} about so-and-so doing such-and-such thing—these were sins that hadn’t been committed—but because the \textit{khan} said so [they would be investigated].\textsuperscript{389}

Ameer Nawaz Khan (his family owned 2,250 acres), conceded that this was the case, and explained that this was merely because \textit{khāns} actually had \textit{hujras} where officials could stay and rest, whereas tenants did not. While there were officers, perhaps from non-\textit{khan} middle-class backgrounds, who were sympathetic to peasants,\textsuperscript{390} their autonomy within the bureaucracy was constricted. The political frustration of tenants was summarized by Ishaq:

\textsuperscript{386} Interview, Ameerabad, June 23, 2013.
\textsuperscript{387} Interview, Peshawar, October 26, 2013.
\textsuperscript{389} Interview, Arhat Kali, May 21, 2013.
The administration belongs to them, whether they are in the assemblies or outside of them, they are the ones who make the laws, not the cultivators. They would make laws of their own choosing and have the administration enforce them.

Whether it pertained to the representative aspect of the state or its administrative aspect, seeking justice inside the courts or outside of it, for the dependents of *khāns*, the latter were the state. The “overdeveloped” autonomy of the state from dominant classes could not be identified when viewed from within *khānism*.

**Production and social reproduction**

Hitherto we have largely spoken of the tenants and peasants with little reference to gender. This is largely because women played mostly auxiliary roles in the politics of the peasant movement, in the 1940s, in the 1960s, and, as the postscript to this section notes, even up to today. Yet, women played and play an important role in the political and sociocultural economy. Material practices of organizing social and cultural life, not least of all women’s labour, also asserted the dominance of the *khan*, insofar as they regulated and oversaw control of reproduction. Thus, the particular form of patriarchy under *khanism* prevented tenant and labourer males from maintaining normative patriarchal relations. As Saadia Toor argues, the “attempt of one rising class or class faction to replace another is simultaneously about the clash between different and competing patriarchies or patriarchal arrangements.” Agrarian reforms and mechanization did impact gender relations, and this may have contributed to the exacerbation of contradictions with the *khans*.

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392 Alavi, “The State in Post-Colonial Societies.”
Haroon Akram-Lodhi has outlined how women’s labour beyond the household compound is against the normative role for women in Pakhtun society, who are supposed to observe *purdah*, that is strict segregation from non-kin males. Women avoiding labour beyond the homestead walls was, and remains, a mark of upward mobility as it signals families who do not need to rely on such female labour. Here, it is important to note against stereotypes of the exceptional nature of Islamic and Pakhtun patriarchy that such conventions are normative for women in various communities across northern South Asia, part of a sociocultural economy of honour, of which regulation of women’s mobility is a crucial component. For example, *purdah* also signifies social climbing among Muslims in West Punjab, and higher caste status and wealth among Hindus in Uttar Pradesh and in Nepal. As we will see the peasant movement enabled male tenants to assert a normative social code around women’s labour in a collective way, rather than simply doing it individually.

Women’s labour was key to the political economy in Hashtnagar, their role in agricultural production was supplemented by their more normatively primary role in reproductive or domestic labour. For middle and poor peasants in particular, production depended on the mobilization of all available unpaid family labour, women’s work was necessary. As the elderly Lala Bibi said to my research assistant, “The benefit of women’s work was that we saved on

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394 See A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, “‘You Are Not Excused from Cooking’: Peasants and the Gender Division of Labor in Pakistan,” *Feminist Economics* 2, no. 2 (1996): 87–105. In several months of fieldwork in the villages of the northwest only two women spoke to me, one by mistake, the other, Bushra, because I was hiring her as a research assistant for my research assistant, Hadia Akhtar. I hired them precisely because I could not interact with women. Pakhtun men generally don’t even mention the names of their wives, sisters, etc. to non-kin males. Even though I stayed with Afzal Shah Khamosh for nearly two months, he never told me his wife’s name, nor did I meet her even in his presence. This is quite distinct from my own conservative and purda-observing Hyderabadi (Indian) Muslim culture.


hiring labourers.” Dildaar concurred, “If I didn’t reap the wheat [by family labour] then what would be left for me? So my wife, my daughter, everyone would be in the fields….“ Aside from generally working in the fields, women’s agricultural work was also gendered, including taking care of livestock, collecting grass (for fodder) and wood, bringing crops home from the threshing floor, winnowing, helping with the harvest and threshing. Beyond the farm, “They would return home to the village an hour before the men and cook and prepare food,” Dildaar noted, in addition to cleaning, taking care of children, and other domestic tasks. Men, however, “would not work inside the home. Women worked more than men, they still do.” Women’s labour was thus crucial to production and social reproduction.

However, women had not only a double burden, but, when combined with the khan’s begār, they had a triple burden. “They would work in the home, work in the fields, and work for the khan,” Dildaar noted. Here, too, labour was gender-specific, “They would clean the wheat crop, or clean the rooms of the khan’s bungalow when he returned from Abottabad.” Sometimes going to the khans’ residences would involve very long travel, e.g., to the rural town of Tangi where most northern Hashtnagar khans resided. Here was the contradiction of honour under khanism. Khans required specifically female labour because they observed purdah, but in doing so, they violated the purdah of their tenants and labourers. “They would say [to their nāzirs], ‘Don’t call on elderly women [for winnowing], they have poor vision. They leave debris in the wheat. Bring young women,’” Ferozullah Safi, who was a small landowner of the Safi qaum, told me. His brother Shahzullah interjected, “The khans were immoral, you see, calling for young girls to be sent.” Begār was frustrating for men not only because it prevented them from allocating their own labour, but also that of women in their households, and cut through questions of purdah and honour.

399 Interview by Hadia Akhtar, Dawezo Kali, October 5, 2013.
400 Interview, Safi Bari Band, May 19, 2013.
But that was not all, the homestead itself was a problematic site as far as normative patriarchal control was concerned. Labourers and landless tenants had to live in homes on land that the khan owned. Dildaar’s home “had two rooms—but there were three brothers, four sisters, mother and father, there were cots.” Cattle, too, and when they had guests, mainly relatives, everyone had to stay in the same rooms. Labourer Mukhtar Ahmad’s family had one large room, which his parents shared with the sheep, while Ahmad himself went and slept in the khan’s hujra. Labourers and tenants did not have their own hujras or baīṭhaks (guest rooms for men) and guests would stay in the village hujra which belonged to the khans, an important question of status. Indeed, labourers and tenants were not allowed to make additions or improvements to the buildings without the express approval of the khan, which was often not granted for fear of labourers and tenants making claims for compensation upon dispossession. Labourers and tenants were not even allowed to place doors in either the compound walls or the inner homes, which was obviously an affront to maintaining elementary privacy and was inconvenient in the winters—“people would try to stuff them with grass,” Muhammad Ishaq told me. The problem was not merely that the labourers and tenants were too poor to improve their residences, which many of them were, but that the khan expressly prohibited them from doing so.

*Khans* oversaw, if only nominally, the exchange of women amongst tenants and labourers and thus asserted their authority over reproduction and order. *Khans*, through nāzirs, required tenants to alert the khan and pay a cess upon weddings.401 While marriages may often be arranged by women, men sometimes arrange marriages as mechanisms of redressing disputes or forming other alliances. However, Lindholm has noted that in Swat, *khans* levied this marriage

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401 Weddings were already an expensive undertaking, given all the food, prepared by women, that had to be served to villagers and visitors.
tax “as a surety against the khan taking the girl for himself.”402 Khans, he further noted, frequently took “poor girls as their mistresses.” Men in Hashtnagar did not discuss this with me, which does not mean that it did not happen. For example, men did not discuss with me the contemporary practice of swara, where jirgas decide to exchange women in place of blood money, after a murder.403 Such marriages happen without the consent of the women. That the practice continues, and has happened relatively recently in Hashtnagar, became clear through my research assistant Hadia Akhtar’s interviews with women, not my own investigation. It is therefore possible that khans, when they settled disputes among their dependents, may have imposed swara where people were unable to pay blood money. The power of the khans thus not only contributed to the triple burden of women in the strict sense of extracting surplus, but also regulated and oversaw control of reproduction more generally by materially organizing labourer and tenant life in such a way as to restrict dependent males’ control of women’s bodies and labour.

It is in looking backward that the impact of agrarian reform and mechanization upon gender relations becomes more evident, although, looking backward should not be confused with assuming that agents were acting to achieve these impacts. First, the ejectments and competitiveness that led to greater landlessness over the 1960s greatly increased the labour pool and reduced the relative wages of labour. This meant that it became easier for middle and rich tenants to hire waged labour. As a middle-aged Tahira noted to my research assistant, “Before, there were not as many labourers, everyone had their own land, so they didn’t do waged labour.” Accordingly, “women used to work [on the fields].”404 Following the peasant movement, as

403 Murders may come from disputes over land through tarbūrwālī, or agnatic competition among patrilineal cousins. Perhaps more generally they occur between neighbours, fighting over irrigation water, or where the boundaries of fields lie (sometimes a matter of inches).
404 Interview by Hadia Akhtar, Dawezo Kali, October 5, 2013.
mechanization became affordable even for previously middle tenants, this meant saving women’s labour time as well. As Lala Bibi put it, “Women’s labour was much harder before. Now machines do what women used to do with hands.” Mechanical threshers and winnowers, yes, but for better off households there is also the washing machine.

As more households could afford displacing women’s labour, attitudes about women’s labour also changed. I asked Dildaar if it was not considered inappropriate that women were working on farms. He said, “It wasn’t even considered inappropriate back then, because everyone in the village had their women out working with them. Nowadays, people consider it somewhat inappropriate.” Partly, he noted, this was because tenants in villages tended to belong to similar lineages and were rather closely related, often cousins. However, conceptions around appropriate gender relations was also shaped by the class relations that existed, for as the latter changed, so did this conception. Namely, the polarization of households into poorer and richer ones meant that the morality of the latter could predominate. Nearly all of the forty or so women that my research assistant Hadia Akhtar interviewed considered manual labour on farms to be inappropriate. Younger, better off women did want to work, but saw white-collar work in offices as appropriate and desirable. The poorer women, poor peasants and landless, would tell her that manual labour on farms was a majbūri (compulsion). The increased pool of male waged labour and machines meant that now only poorer women worked on the fields, which they considered inappropriate. That said, just because landless labourers and machines have displaced women’s on-farm labour does not mean that, even in richer households, women do less work. On the contrary, they continue to do more work than men, something that frustrated most of them.

405 I say forty or so because, many of her 41 interviews were more like focus groups with multiple women.
406 See also Akram-Lodhi, “‘You Are Not Excused from Cooking.’” Here, Akram-Lodhi demonstrates through survey data that women in the Peshawar valley do more work than men, and, in fact, that richer peasant women do more work overall than poorer peasants. This is because they are responsible for tasks in the homestead, like rearing cattle, as well as cooking for all the waged labourers that their families can afford to hire.
In the 1960s and 70s, poorer peasants may have viewed the changes augured by ejectments and mechanization with anger and frustration, but middle and richer peasants, where possible, turned to hiring waged labour and purchasing and/or renting machines. That these changes displaced women’s labour does not mean that they were viewed positively back then by peasants because they displaced women’s labour. However, the fact that richer male peasants could afford to hire labour, and could soon afford to buy or rent machines, appear to have helped them in achieving their preferred pattern of patriarchy: one closer to the normative Pakhtun and northern South Asian ideal of women still doing more work than men, but confined to the four walls of the homestead. But in the 1960s, this reality was still distant. Then, men and women, tenants and labourers alike, were frustrated by khanism’s particular form of patriarchal assertion.

As a postscript it is worth noting that 2013, when we did fieldwork, was the first time women were allowed by the men of northern Hashtnagar to vote in the elections. Most men waved the issue away saying women did not until then have the requisite political consciousness and understanding to vote. The fact that men from different political factions discussed allowing women to vote among themselves first, rather than mobilizing their own women to give their vote banks a head start, suggests a deliberate male unity against women’s independent political engagement. That said, anecdotally, we heard that most women voted for Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf against the instructions of the men, who were divided between the Qaumi Watan Party and the Awami National Party. Women’s voting may have reflected increasing assertion of middle and rich peasant women, whose education is also seen as a net positive for marriage proposals. Despite this, the vast majority of girls are not in school, in no small part due to widespread poverty. However, most girls who are in school do not get to study past the 10th grade (matric), not because of lack of funds, but because of a moral panic around co-education.

increasing interactions and affairs with boys, revolving around the increased ease of communication via mobile phones.

The point of this postscript is threefold. First, to note that the tenant and labourer males’ frustrations with patriarchy under *khanism* had much to do with the fact that it was not their patriarchy. As Toor notes, “[c]lass struggle is always already a gendered process, both discursively and materially…”408 Second, while many women do see their own agency in and through normative Pakhtun patriarchal norms, plenty many, often the same, are frustrated by their limits: not being able to pursue an education, despite having the means to do so; not being able to work white-collar jobs, despite having the education to do so; doing more work than men; and also, being treated like property that can be traded when men seek to settle disputes amongst themselves. Third, that patriarchy has been rearticulated in these ways despite a peasant movement led by Marxist-Leninists shows the limits of the programme that the Maoism of the 1960s pursued in the Frontier. Or rather, revolutionary socialism in the Frontier must be understood by examining its collisions and collusions with sociocultural norms and practices, even as these latter were themselves not static. In this vein, we also have to understand the nature of *qaum* and its articulation with class in the 1960s.

**Qaum, class, and citizenship**

Hegemony is not merely about economic concessions or political decision-making, or, rather, these aspects are in and of themselves not merely economic or political. They also articulate with cultural politics of identity and belonging, and here the question of citizenship becomes one of a political community that defines what claims can be made upon various rights, including rights to land. *Khanism* asserted that economic or contractual relations over land rights

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had to be premised in questions of “tribal” identity, that is, landownership was ultimately contingent on membership in the Muhammadzai qaum. Khanism thus remained a minimal hegemony because in the villages it could not, and did not, articulate an inclusive moral community of equal citizens, one where claims to land could be based on a more “equalizing” principle such as the call of the peasant movement, “whoever cultivates shall eat.” Moreover, while qaum contradiction does not necessarily explain the peasant struggle in and of itself it may help understand why the movement began in the Peshawar valley.

Anthropological understandings of Pakhtun identity largely take off from the work of Fredrik Barth in the Swat valley. Barth translates qaum as caste, largely because of the rigidity of occupational status and its relation to defining how a man identified himself. In his 1950s fieldwork, Barth noted how in Swat the definition of being Pakhtun or performing Pakhto was rooted in ownership of land, and one could lose Pakhto status for their sons by losing land. Membership in the Pakhtun caste was thus dependent upon landownership. Yet there was some ambiguity, for while landowners tended to belong to the Pakhtun qaum Yusufzai, many tenants belonged to the Pakhtun qaum of the Swatis, aside from the non-Pakhtun qaums of the Dilazak and Gujars.409 The supremacy of the Yusufzai qaum was predicated upon their migration from Afghanistan and conquest of the area in the 1500s, whereupon they subordinated Swatis, Gujars and others. Yusufzai may not consider Swatis to be Pakhtun, but it is less clear whether or not the Swatis agreed. Charles Lindholm does suggest that the genealogical memory among landless groups, particularly the Swatis and Dilazak, is quite short because they do not inherit land (as opposed to Gujars and Kohistanis who, constituting “distinct ethnic enclaves” have their own languages, customs, and genealogies).410 So while the dominant conception of Pakhto involves

410 Lindholm, Generosity and Jealousy, 96–97.
landownership here, there is some ambiguity; and, moreover, it might not be entirely accurate to generalize the Swat concept of Pakhto further south.

The contest over identity in Hashtnagar was not necessarily about being Pakhtun, as such. Hashtnagar is the historic land of the Muhammadzai qaum who, like their Yusufzai cousins to their north and east, conquered the lands in the 1500s. This history incorporates both large and small landowners through an identity of belonging and rights to the land. However, unlike Swat where most of the landless were erstwhile inhabitants of the land, conquered qaums and ethnicities, the migrants who came to cultivate newly canalized Hashtnagar in the late 1800s and 1900s were not, for the most part, conquered people. Rather, most of these people, who came from further west, had their own historic lands. Most migrants came from Mohmand Agency, which included Mohmands, Safis, Utman Khel, and Malagoris. As we noted earlier, they already existed in conflictual relations with the Muhammadzai qaum because while the latter had allied with the British, the former had never done so. Moreover, members of qaums of the Mohmand Agency conducted raids upon the crops and cattle of the Muhammadzai landowners. These horizontal relations of inter-qaum contestation became vertical relations of class contestation upon canalization and migration. That said, some migrants were also Gigianis from the Doaba region, the part of Charsadda Tahsil between Mohmand Agency and southern Hashtnagar. By 1972, MKP leader Afzal Bangash asserted that 25-30 percent of Charsadda’s peasant population belonged to the Mohmand qaum, and that even in northern Hashtnagar the “major portion” of peasants were Utman Khels. Respondents told me that Mohmands were not the majority, but were dominant in the leadership of the movement.

These migrant qaums maintained often close ties with their relations in the Mohmand Agency, as well as modes of internal organization. Their ties with relations in the agency were

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maintained through *gham-shādī*, joy and sorrow, including marriage ties. Indeed, many Mohmands continued and continue to maintain some property and, in some cases, other forms of businesses (e.g., extra-legal cross-border trade) in Mohmand Agency. These kinds of connections remain even now despite what Akbar S. Ahmed refers to as “encapsulation” of Mohmands by settled agriculture and class relations that differ from productive activities and political relations (indeed, the mode of production overall) in “tribal areas.”

The migrants also maintained internal modes of organization, particularly organizing residence in villages by lineages. Ahmed suggests that *qaums* (what he translates as tribes) can be sub-divided into clans, sub-clans, sections, and sub-sections; that is, lineages nested within lineages, determined by a particular male head from whence a new lineage can branch off. Within villages, particular lineages continued to have lineage heads, or *maliks*, considered the *mashar* or elders. *(Maliks* were subordinated to the *nāzirs*, according to Afzal Khamosh, and sometimes, *maliks* may have become *nāzirs*.) Moreover, as a crucial aspect of reproduction, marriage took place largely at the lineage (sub-section) or sub-clan level, and remained in the final instance the purview of tenant and labourer males. That is, marriages were highly endogamous, reproducing for the most part identities of belonging to lineages and sub-clans. Certainly, agriculturalists, whether tenants or labourers, did not intermarry with the numerically few artisanal caste groups, that is, barbers (*nāūs*), carpenters (*tarkāns*) and smiths (*lohārs*), whose status was seen as inferior to that of Pakhtuns. So despite their migration, sometimes long past, the migrants still maintained their identities.

Here, it is also worth noting that unlike other parts of South Asia, such as Punjab, where the distinction between possessors of land and the landless often maps to caste distinctions, in the

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412 Ahmed, *Pukhtun Economy and Society*.
413 Interview, Haji Azeem, Zigai, May 29, 2013.
414 Haji Shez Rehman, Khamosh’s elder cousin, explained that his father was a *malik* who also served the *khan*, and not for pay. He did not say that he was a *nāzir*. Interview, Shakur, May 28, 2013.
Hashtnagar area, the Pakhtun tenants who possessed land and labourers who did not possess land were typically not divided amongst each other by *qaum* or even lineage. As MKP leader Afzal Bangash noted, “One brother is an agricultural labourer, another brother is a tenant, while another relative is a lessor.”\(^{415}\) Recall, also, the example of Mukhtar Ahmad, whose grandfather owned 15 acres of land which should have been inherited by five sons.\(^{416}\) His uncles did not find consensus over possession of the land and did not allow his father to take on any land.\(^{417}\) Resultantly, his father became a landless labourer, and his family provided labour on the *khan’s* lands and also tended the *khan’s* cattle for a salary, paid in kind. *Qaum* identity thus encompassed both tenants and labourers in the case of the migrants.

These identities could get in the way of *khan* domination. The elderly Haji Azeem, himself a Safi, told me that some point his *khan* got in a dispute with another over irrigation. The two *khans* armed their tenants and got them to face off against each other, two hundred men on each side. Among their militia was a Mohmand of the Khwaezai clan named Noor Muhammad, and in Haji Azeem’s militia was also a Khwaezai Mohmand named Ejab Muhammad. They faced off against each other, and advanced toward each other, one taunting the other, “You have come here to fight me?” The other, “Yes, I have come to fight you!” Haji Azeem explained that he and everyone else was tense, but as the two men approached each other, they hugged. Let the *khans* fight each other, they decided, why should we fight amongst one another.

Meanwhile, Muhammadzais also sought, and continue to seek, to maintain their identities, including through endogamy. *Khans* in particular practice class endogamy as well—*khans* tended to marry among *khans*. The *khan’s* conception of community thus excluded almost

\(^{415}\) Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 15.
\(^{416}\) Interview with Mukhtar Ahmad, Mandani, May 29, 2013.
\(^{417}\) This kind of incident, which is not at all uncommon, should also give pause to anthropologists who identify *tarhurwallie*, or agnatic cousin rivalry, as central to Pakhtun *habitus*. The rivalry often begins at the level of brothers, before being carried on to cousins.
all tenants and labourers, however, it incorporated smaller landowners who were of the Muhammadzai qaum. As MKP leader Sher Ali Bacha wrote, “peasants are members of qabilahs [tribes] that are separate from the qabilahs of the khāns, and which the khāns consider lowly and look at with contempt.”418 Smaller Muhammadzai landowners, meanwhile, may not have too much in common with the khāns except for shared contempt for non-Muhammadzai qaum. However, such identification with khāns was by no means even, as I demonstrate below with respect to small landowners.

The main success at creating a sense of broader community in actual village life was the political and social movement of the Khudai Khidmatgars under Abdul Ghaffar “Bacha” Khan, himself Muhammadzai. The Red Shirt ideology was premised on a broad conception of Pakhtun self-determination, that involved non-violent anti-colonialism. The Khudai Khidmatgars also had a structured hierarchical organization, that worked at the grassroots in villages; indeed, much of Bacha Khan’s charismatic leadership was attributable to his own travels through villages and living like the poor.419 However, even this hard-won hegemony broke at times when it came to class conflict. When the tenants of Ghalla Dher in Mardan (who, it is worth noting, shared the same qaum as their landlord the Nawab of Toru) exercised Red Shirt tactics of non-violent civil disobedience against the Nawab, Bacha Khan came to speak to them, but they refused. Their refusal “shook the provincial Congress and the Khudai Khidmatgar leadership,”420 precisely because the latter’s hegemonic project was at stake.

The elderly brothers Ferozullah and Shahzullah Safi, who used to be MKP activists, said to me that Khudai Khidmatgars were all khāns who mistreated the poor, even if they were part of

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419 Banerjee, The Pathan Unarmed.
the movement. The brothers had no actual memory of this themselves, so this was more their conception than even a mistaken memory.\textsuperscript{421} They noted how even Bacha Khan would refer to the poor as \textit{khānah badosh}, itinerants. That is, those who had land were called Pakhtuns and those without were \textit{khānah badosh}. Hence, if migrants did not have their own land, they were not considered Pakhtun, but \textit{khānah badosh}. Despite that, “we believed that we were the real Pakhtun,” precisely because they had land in the Mohmand Agency, and moreover were strong people who fought in the Kashmir jihad. What is interesting is that Ferozullah and Shahzullah’s family owned property in Hashtnagar, they were not tenants, yet they identified with the MKP out of commitment to ideology, which we will discuss in the next chapter, and were recruited into it through Safi MKP leaders Ziarat Gul and Abdul Sattar, who we mentioned in the previous chapter. Here, let us focus on this question of small landowners.

\textit{Khans} did not exercise direct economic or political domination over small landowners, but plenty of them, Muhammadzai and migrant alike, had frustrations with them. In the years before partition \textit{khans} were able to squeeze many indebted smaller proprietors out of landownership through moneylending and mortgaging of lands.\textsuperscript{422} In some cases, squeezing out involved legal battles. The family of Musafir Khan, of the Safi \textit{qaum}, had been ejected after long legal battles from some of their land that they had made cultivable decades before and had allegedly always possessed, but whose ownership was given to landlords by the British.\textsuperscript{423} These kinds of activities bred resentment on the part of some small landowners against \textit{khans}, which tied into political frustration as well. Musafir became an early recruit to the MKP’s predecessor organization alongside Feroz and Shahzul. Meanwhile, Shamas Khan, a Muhammadzai small

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\textsuperscript{421} Interview, Safi Bari Band, May 19, 2013.
\textsuperscript{423} Interview, Mandani, April 11, 2013.
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landowner in southern Hashtnagar who became a leading figure in the MKP, also explained that his “outlook was against these khans from the outset”:

When I studied in college, seeing their entitled attitudes, it affects you, the arrogance and entitlement of the khans’ children, their actions. They would beat kisans, eject them from their homes, take their right in terms of grains from them, insult them, beat their kids…. This was the environment against these poor people. I would see all this and I couldn’t stand it, but there was nothing to be done, until when the movement arose.\textsuperscript{424}

In the next chapters we will see some of how the contest over hegemony over small landowners played out in the 1970s, many were pushed into the camp of the khans due to tenant indiscretion in the course of the movement.

Indeed, class was overdetermined by qaum; class was not reducible to qaum, and neither was qaum reducible to class. In many places like Swat, Malakand, and Hashtnagar, Sher Ali Bacha was correct to note that qaum contradictions helped the class contradictions along. However, even in Hashtnagar, plenty of poor peasants and tenants belonging to the Muhammadzai qaum joined the MKP, especially in southern Hashtnagar. Beyond Hashtnagar, in Mardan and other places, tenants sometimes belonged to the same qaum as landowners. Here, class may have overlaid more with clans, sub-clans and lineages, becoming akin to sub-castes within a broader caste category. What this means is that prior to the peasant movement the khan’s minimal hegemony was not even necessarily comprehensive as far as it came to Muhammadzais, whether they were small landowners, tenants, or labourers.

Interestingly, during my fieldwork among the erstwhile tenants of northern Hashtnagar, they were at pains to underplay the significance of qaum contradictions in their struggle against the khans. They insisted that it was a question of class all along. And, indeed, in scores of interviews with peasants not once did the problem of khans being Muhammadzai ever come up.

\textsuperscript{424} Interview, Kaptan Kali, October 5, 2013.
Evidently, qaum identity did matter to the peasants, in terms of lineages contesting with each other over land and status, and politicians running for elections stressing that they are Mohmand. But this appeared distinct from qaum chauvinism. On the contrary, when I was staying with a Muhammadzai khan, the conversation in the hujras when other smaller landowners showed up, once turned to a chauvinistic discourse of the treacherous nature of the Mohmands. While I want to avoid presentism, that is, reading past events through current events or attitudes, it does point to how some khans and small landowners could well believe the peasant struggle to be about tribal warfare, while other small landowners and tenants were convinced it was a class war. In any case, it pointed to the limits of local citizenship or political community as articulated under khanism, one that could not expand beyond certain corporate identities.

**Conclusion**

When I spoke to the khan of Ameerabad about all of the oppression and exploitation that tenants complained about, he did not deny it. Instead, he said, “We didn’t know.” It was the nāzirs, he said, who carried out all the oppression. He only came to the village occasionally in his tanga and thought everything was fine. Although this may have been true of Ameer Rehman Khan, what dozens of erstwhile tenants told us spoke to how khanism as a system was rooted in exploitation and oppression that went beyond legal parameters.

*Khanism* in the 1950s and 60s reproduced in new ways the grievances that tenants, labourers and small landowners had had even prior to independence. Crucially, there were new legal frameworks that sought to limit khan power and entitlement, but that were not implemented due to the *de facto* power of the khans and their integration into the broader ruling class of Pakistan. The Pakistani state was built largely on the *de jure* rule of landlords in rural areas,

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425 Interview with Ameer Rehman Khan, Ameerabad, June 23, 2013.
including the *khans* of the Frontier. Despite that, new land and tenancy reforms in 1959 again sought to limit landlord power, but more so to provoke their transformation into enterprising capitalist landowners rather than continuing to engage with methods of low productivity. Combined with new mechanical and biological technologies over the rest of the decade, these reforms propelled increasing rural differentiation and landlessness.

That said, this chapter has shown that the line between elite and subaltern both was and was not straightforward. Tenants were by and large miserable, but a few of their own class or social category (the tenantry) and *qaum* were involved in propping up *khanism*, demonstrating close relations with *khans*. Tenants were upset at the patriarchal relations of *khanism*, but for the men this was largely because it prevented them from practicing their own normative Pakhtun patriarchy. While *qaum* overdetermined class, and provided tenants with their own domain of organization and cultural resources, it was not exactly autonomous from *khans* or broader Pakhtun culture. Nevertheless, I have argued that *khanism* as a system was, following Joseph Femia’s interpretation of Gramsci, “minimally” hegemonic, insofar as hegemony entails taking into account the interests of subordinates and incorporating them into a political community. *Khans* rarely did this, and mostly treated their subordinates very poorly, indeed.

However, the economic, political and sociocultural grievances of tenants and labourers, exacerbated by transformations in class relations, would not necessarily have given rise to a widespread peasant movement were it not for political and ideological transformations that came together at international, national and local levels. Key here was the intervention of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, which itself emerged as part of these broader transformations, but also intervened in the moment to help spark the peasant movement. It is to the rise of the Mazdoor Kisan Party that we now turn.
Chapter 3: The rise of Frontier Maoism

Introduction

One of the first people I interviewed in northern Hashtnagar was Musafir Khan, an early Kisan Committee activist of the village Safi Bari Band, recruited when he was a 17-18 year old student in 1963-64 by the old communists Abdul Sattar and Ziarat Gul. Like them, Musafir belonged to the Safi qaum and was from a well-to-do small landowner family. He explained that the elder communists invited him and his cousin Shahzullah to Sattar’s village in Mardan to discuss historical materialism, which made sense to him given how brightly China’s red star was shining at the time.\(^{426}\) He became a communist, and with Abdul Sattar and Ziarat Gul, he continued on as an activist of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, which was the successor of the Fronter Kisan Committee after it broke away from the National Awami Party in 1968.

Musafir told me that when the MKP first came out, its revolutionary land-to-the-tiller slogan often faced ridicule:\(^{427}\)

\[\ldots\text{we would tell people that God didn’t give these lands [to the khans], the English did. We will take it from them. Our elders would say, “Get out of here, you fools. The khan is the khan. What are you going to take from him?” The maulvis would [cite the Qur’an], “wa tu’izzu man tashā’u wa tudhillu man tashā’”—if Allah wishes He will honour someone and if not He will dishonour them.\]

Musafir and his cousin Shahzullah Sañī even went to speak to Adam Khan and Ikram Din Shah, the union council members and nāźirs, although the young men did not know these elders.

Once we went to [Chairman Adam Khan’s] hujra, and Afzal Khamosh’s father was also there…. Chairman Adam Khan said, “How will this happen? How will this happen?” So Shahzul said, “Uncle, I am not familiar with you. But I can say that you must be the manager or secretary of the khan, or his nāźir, and that is why you speak like this.” But Chairman did not retort.

\(^{426}\) China had defeated India in a war in late 1962, and Chou Enlai had visited Pakistan in early 1964 to great fanfare.
\(^{427}\) Interview, Safi Bari Band, May 19, 2013.
Although Shahzul was correct in his suspicions, in a year or so it was Adam Khan who was going around to villages inviting elders to join the MKP, helping take the movement from dozens to thousands and becoming one of its most important local leaders in northern Hashtnagar. As a nāẓir and a respected union council chairman, Adam Khan was not politically naïve. Throwing in his lot with brash upstart youths and their urban revolutionary leaders to oppose the khans probably involved some assessment of changing political conditions, locally and nationally, that made the MKP an attractive vehicle for social and political mobilization.

This chapter examines how and why the Mazdoor Kisan Party emerged as a distinct Marxist-Leninist organization and movement, and why the Frontier’s tenantry oriented to it in a way that they did not to the Communist Party of Pakistan in 1948. Where the previous chapter highlighted the economic dislocations of the 1960s and intensified class antagonisms under khanism, this chapter shows how there was no straightforward translation of class antagonism into the open class conflict of the peasant movement, stressing, instead, that it emerged due to the convergence of ideological, political and organizational dislocations at international, national and local scales, encompassing debates in the international communist movement, war between India and Pakistan, and mass rebellions within Pakistan. Before going into the argument, some elaboration of the national and international context is necessary.

By the end of March 1969, it had become clear to observers of Pakistani politics that a new order was on its way, not least of all because mass rebellions in East Pakistan and in urban West Pakistan had led to the ouster of Ayub Khan. We have already seen how Ayub Khan’s military regime promoted agrarian reforms that increased inequality and the concentration of land and wealth. It pursued an analogous path in industry as well, preferring “functional inequality” in urban areas and even among industrialists, to pursue economic growth before

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Redistribution. Rapid inflation had made livelihoods difficult even for the urban middle-classes, never mind industrial workers, of whom there were many more now than in 1958. Moreover, regional disparities within West Pakistan, and very significantly between West Pakistan and East Pakistan, gave rise to a popular movement for provincial autonomy in the latter.\footnote{A nascent provincial industrial and commercial bourgeoisie felt deprived of the largesse of the regime, which had focused on turning the large migrant mercantile capitalists of Karachi into industrialists. Angus Maddison, Class Structure and Economic Growth: India and Pakistan Since the Moghuls (London, New York: Routledge, 2010); Hassan N. Gardezi, “Globalisation and Pakistan’s Dilemma of Development,” Pakistan Development Review 43, no. 4 (2004): 423–40; Naseemullah and Arnold, “The Politics of Developmental State Persistence.”} Despite all this, in 1968, the regime declared celebrations for ten years of its rule, a “decade of development,” which, ironically, prompted mass rebellion.

Disaffection with the regime took more public forms starting in 1966, largely because of the aftermath of the 1965 war with India. The regime had sought to take Kashmir, but despite the Pakistan Army’s advances, the Indian Army had all but encircled Lahore. The return to \textit{status quo ante bellum} negotiated in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in early 1966 was deeply unpopular. Even as senior a figure as foreign minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto resigned in protest, galvanizing anti-regime worker and student protests, while in East Pakistan a movement for regional autonomy took off. Patriotic anti-regime students began to look toward socialism as a corrective to many of the regime’s flaws, especially given Pakistan’s increasing ties with China and the availability of Chinese communist literature. Their protests against the “decade of development” in late 1968 prompted mass urban protest in both wings, joined in by rural protests in East Pakistan.\footnote{Layli Uddin, “Mao-Lana Bhashani: Maoism and the Unmaking of Pakistan,” Jamhoor, May 25, 2018, https://www.jamhoor.org/read/2018/5/25/mao-lana-bhashani-maoism-and-the-unmaking-of-pakistan.} In March 1969, “labor power had replaced student power in the urban confrontation with the Ayub regime” in West Pakistan.\footnote{Khalid B. Sayeed, Politics in Pakistan: The Nature and Direction of Change (New York: Praeger, 1980), 147.} Ayub Khan abdicated by the end of the month, and by the end of 1970 Pakistan had its first general elections under universal suffrage, beginning the shift from
military domination to the populist politics of the Awami League in East Pakistan and Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party in West Pakistan.

The emergence of the Mazdoor Kisan Party and its encounter with the tenantry of Hashtnagar and beyond can only be understood in this particular historical conjuncture. I draw on oral history, state and party archives, and secondary literature to argue that three factors were especially important in translating the intensification of class antagonisms under khanism into politicized peasant collective action in Hashtnagar and beyond. I first turn to ideological debates in the international communist movement (the Sino-Soviet split) and demonstrate how these provided a language through which “old left” radical groups and emerging “new left” radicals could articulate very real class and national antagonisms they experienced on the ground and in their political practice. Many authors have looked at these sixties Maoists with a somewhat condescending view; Ishtiaq Ahmed has suggested that in Pakistan, “[n]either class structure nor the ideological and political composition of the state apparatus warranted any … advantage to Maoism,” which, moreover, he asserts was a “sufficiently confusing and contradictory theoretical concoction.” On the contrary, I argue that, while it was never free of ambiguity or contradiction, “Maoism” provided a conceptual apparatus for radical intellectuals, including those who soon formed the Mazdoor Kisan Party, to interpret and organize the very real ideological, political, and class contradictions among the people they were trying to lead into revolution. That is to say, these were debates about the precise nature of appropriate hegemonic projects—which classes should lead what classes around what kind of “national-popular” collective will? (By “Maoism” I mean what was then called “anti-revisionist”

432 See, for example, Elbaum, Revolution in the Air; Wolin, The Wind from the East.
434 Ahmed, 257.
435 A comprehensive discussion of the very confusing and contradictory ways in which the Sino-Soviet split played out among Pakistani communists is available in Leghari, “The Socialist Movement in Pakistan.”. Here I focus on the Frontier, which he does not focus on at all.
436 Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 133.
Marxism-Leninism, stressing the return to the fundamental principles of revolutionary theory and practice in opposition to the compromising “revisionist” politics hitherto pursued by communist leaderships in South Asia at large and Pakistan in particular. I clarify the contents of these terms and distinctions in the first section.\footnote{I use the term Maoist as a shorthand for the orientation such groups expressed toward Mao Tse-tung Thought, for no one actually referred to themselves as “Maoist” back then. Rather they tended to call themselves anti-revisionist and/or Marxist-Leninist. I avoid the other prevalent usage of labeling groups as being pro-Soviet/Moscow or pro-China/Beijing, because it depoliticizes the stakes involved.}

In the second section, I argue that these ideological debates, on their own, would be unimportant in the Frontier if communists had not tried to put them into action through mass organization. Their localized organizing through the Kisan Committee from 1963 to 1968, and thereafter through the MKP, allowed them to develop a broad yet thin network in many villages of the Peshawar valley, particularly in northern Hashtnagar and Mardan District. That said, Kisan Committees were not very popular. The third section suggests that this broad network would have remained thin if it was not met with an almost spontaneous upsurge of tenants, as the reverberations of the mass rebellion of 1968-1969 made their way to the Peshawar valley’s villages. The MKP’s provision of legal aid and political orientation toward militant struggle was increasingly appealing to tenants, which, in turn, flipped key local leaders toward the MKP. Here, the present chapter connects to the themes of the previous chapter, suggesting that the peasant movement produced a new conception of subalternity through the encounter of particular class and qaum factors with the ideological, political and organizational work of the MKP.

**Ideology, hegemony and organization**

In 1954, the Communist Party of Pakistan had not only been banned, but crushed—following the Rawalpindi conspiracy case of 1951—and those of its members who remained active had, by 1957, found themselves in the National Awami Party. But then all political parties
were banned in 1958, and only allowed to undertake open political activities in 1962. Leftist politics in Pakistan started to make a comeback in the midst of fierce debates in the international communist movement centring between the communist parties of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and China (CPC). This debate was the ideological centre of the global spread of Maoism in the 1960s and 1970s, and it revolved around a few major points. The Soviets promoted a theory of peaceful coexistence between capitalist countries and socialist countries, and saw this as the road to socialism. Relatedly, they argued that the transition to socialism should be achieved by peaceful and parliamentary means, where possible. In Third World countries, where the agenda for transition to socialism was not immediate (since these countries first had to fight imperialism and feudalism) this meant where there was an anti-imperialist “national bourgeoisie” in power, communists should engage in peaceful activities. Where there was not, communists should ally with and, this was implied, under the leadership of the anti-imperialist national bourgeoisie to defeat imperialism, including by armed means if necessary.\(^{438}\)

The Chinese argued that these propositions were effectively doing away with the dictatorship of the proletariat, insofar as this concept entails the leadership or class domination of the proletariat and, by implication, also a necessary violence in moving from capitalism to socialism.\(^{439}\) Peaceful coexistence and peaceful participation in parliamentary politics, though they may be tactically useful or necessary, could not be elevated to the level of strategy. Importantly, in Third World countries, if the proletarian party followed (tailed) the “landlords

\(^{438}\) “In the present historical situation, favorable domestic and international conditions arise in many countries for the establishment of an independent national democracy…. The Communist Parties are working actively for a consistent completion of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, democratic revolution, for the establishment of national democracies, for a radical improvement in the living standard of the people. They support those actions of national governments leading to the consolidation of the gains achieved and undermining the imperialists' positions. At the same time they firmly oppose anti-democratic, anti-popular acts and those measures of the ruling circles which endanger national independence.” “Statement of 81 Communist and Workers Parties” (Marxists Internet Archive, 1961), https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sino-soviet-split/other/1960statement.htm.

\(^{439}\) For more on the struggle over the concept of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” in European communism see Althusser, “Some Questions Concerning the Crisis of Marxist Theory and of the International Communist Movement.” Note that Althusser himself in this talk was not wedded to violence as necessary.
and bourgeoisie in the revolution, no real or thorough victory in the national democratic revolution is possible, and even if victory of a kind is gained, it will be impossible to consolidate it.\textsuperscript{440} The proletarian party had to have its own programme, work independently of the landlords and bourgeoisie, and lead the national democratic revolution itself on the basis of a worker-peasant alliance. In other words, their debate concerned the hegemonic project that communists ought to be involved in—operating under the hegemony of the national bourgeoisie, or using whatever means were necessary to establish the hegemony of the proletariat?

While these differences were debated among South Asian communists in the 1960s, it is worth noting that these debates had their antecedents among South Asian communists in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{441} In the Communist Party of Pakistan, Eric Cyprian argued in 1948 that the urban proletariat in Punjab was not as important to focus on as the peasants, for they formed the “basis from which the most decisive blows can be struck at the ruling class.”\textsuperscript{442} He also criticized the Communist Party of India’s newspaper, \textit{People’s Age}, for supporting Abdul Ghaffar “Bacha” Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar movement because they were representatives of an oppressed nationality, the Pakhtuns. Cyprian argued that whereas “reactionary landlords” like Bacha Khan would say that “Punjabis and the leaders of the Central Government” are oppressing the people of the Frontier, the “peasant of Hasht Nagar” would say that his “main oppressor is the landlord of the Frontier, the Muslim Leaguer, the Khudai Khidmatgar.”\textsuperscript{443} The point was to organize “all the exploited sections of the people” under the leadership of the CPP. Evidently, general-


\textsuperscript{441} The debate in the Communist Party of India can be found in Rao, \textit{Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India}.

\textsuperscript{442} In Ali, \textit{The Communist Party of West Pakistan in Action}, 1:239.

\textsuperscript{443} In Ali, 1:247–48.
secretary Sajjad Zaheer was not moved by the “Maoist” line, whence he engaged in the light
coup plotting that resulted in the Rawalpindi conspiracy case and the smashing of the CPP.

In light of the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, these debates came to the fore yet again
among Pakistani communists and in the National Awami Party (NAP), and informed struggles
over its leadership.444 Recall that the NAP was an alliance of regionalists, in West Pakistan,
mainly landlords like Abdul Wali Khan of the Frontier (Bacha Khan’s son) and G.M. Syed of
Sindh, with leftist radicals, mostly middle-class professionals, many of whom had come from the
remnants of the Communist Party of Pakistan. Their alliance was rooted in a shared antipathy
toward American support for the military regime. Some communists went further and upheld the
principle, like the People’s Age editorial, that these regionalists were representatives of oppressed
nationalities within Pakistan, deserving of self-determination.445 Whatever the case, as Leghari
notes, in NAP the “real power rested with the regional feudals. The left forces were a weaker
element in the partnership and in order to stay within the NAP, the left had to toe the line of the
regional feudals,”446 i.e., large landlords. This prevented leftists from organizing an independent
proletarian party, and to lead a worker-peasant alliance.

In the context of the Frontier, the most important base of the NAP was in the Peshawar
valley, particularly in the Peshawar and Mardan Districts, precisely where khanism bore heavily
on tenants. NAP leader Abdul Wali Khan was himself a major khan of southern Hashtnagar.
Indeed, I spoke to a 60-year old and 70-year old, both Mohmands, in southern Hashtnagar, the
latter of whom claimed to be a tenant447 of Asfandyar Wali Khan, Abdul Wali Khan’s son. The
first man told us, “We were like dogs.” The second added, “There is no difference between then

445 Ghaffār “Bacha” Khan from time to time intensified his vocal support for an independent Pakhtunistan,
sometimes to the chagrin of his son Wali Khan who was trying to present himself as an all-Pakistan politician.
447 Indeed, humsāyā, meaning they lived in homes owned by the khan. Interview, Panerak Kili, October 11, 2013.
and now. If I tell you the truth my belongings would be out on the street the next day…. We were slaves, we will remain slaves. We can’t do anything else.” In fact, tenants in the area soon joined the MKP-led struggle, but ultimately lost. Thus, tenants, those who claimed to be farming Wali Khan’s lands or lands in his home area, were unhappy with his behaviour as a khan back then, and continue to be afraid and unhappy with the behaviour of his son and relations. The point is that it was with landlords such as these that communists were cooperating politically in the 1950s and 1960s.

Communists tried to walk a line between subordinating their political agenda to that of the khans and organizing the tenantry. The key communist leader in the Frontier was Muhammad Afzal Bangash, originally of Kohat, who later became one of the main leaders of the Mazdoor Kisan Party. Bangash came from a family with sufficient land, but these were not at the level of khans, and he himself was a practicing lawyer. Much of Bangash’s work as a communist activist involved reorganizing the National Awami Party as its Frontier general-secretary, while the presidency would go to Abdul Wali Khan or Arbab Sikandar Khan, that is, large landlords. Indeed, Bangash even cooperated with centrist and right wing parties (the Combined Opposition Parties) as the “provincial chief of Fatima Jinnah’s campaign against Ayub Khan” in the 1965 presidential election. However, Bangash had visited China in 1952 and was quite influenced by the practice of Chinese communism, and he was also acquainted with Eric Cyprian and his ideas. Thus, Bangash also presided over kickstarting the work of the Frontier Kisan Committee, whose work we will examine in the next section. For this, he earned the ire of the khans. When, in 1964, Bangash briefly took over as chief organizer from Abdul Wali Khan, his appointment

449 Special Branch, NWFP, “Bangash History Sheet.” Bangash also often acted as defence counsel for the frequently arrested Ghaffar “Bacha” Khan, who kept making provocative statements in support of an independent Pakhtunistan.
was “resented” by a group in NAP because it was allegedly undemocratic and importantly, “being known for his communist leanings [Bangash] was not acceptable to a large section of the people.”

Given that this group was led by Khan Bahadur Khan, a Tangi khan whose holdings would largely be in northern Hashtnagar, “the people” in question were likely large landlords. Despite these class tensions, it appears to have been foreign policy that pushed Bangash’s group toward a more systematically Maoist approach.

Many of the communists in the loosely organized “left group” that worked in the NAP ended up supporting the Tashkent Declaration of 1966, but not Bangash’s group. The deep unpopularity of the agreement stemmed from the view that Pakistan was being pushed around by both big powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, who, moreover, both favoured India over Pakistan. Within the “left group,” pro-Moscow communists supported rapprochement with India, as did pro-Beijing communists led by C.R. Aslam, who were also pro-Ayub Khan. But Bangash was at this time a staunch Pakistani nationalist, staunchly anti-Ayub, and broadly sympathetic to Chinese communism. In Punjab, the communist group around the retired major Ishaq Muhammad (popularly known as Major Ishaq, not to be confused with the tenant activist Muhammad Ishaq) had similarly argued in favour of the “Chinese line” as early as 1964, and was also staunchly Pakistani nationalist and anti-Ayub. A phrase in a 1973 document captured the sentiment, “Nationalist in appearance, socialist in essence.” Indeed, Ishaq Muhammad and Bangash were both close associates of the original Pakistani Maoist, Eric Cyprian. In the same

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453 There was a “left group” in the NAP, rather than a proper communist party. Indeed, as one commentator noted, the “’party,’ if one can call it that, has not attempted to hold national or regional meetings since 1953, nor has its leadership invested much time in coordinating the activities of its members within Pakistan.” See Marcus F. Franda, “Communism and Regional Politics in East Pakistan,” *Asian Survey* 10, no. 7 (1970): 596.
454 This latter “Maoist” group formed the NAP (Bhashani) group in 1967 before becoming the Pakistan Socialist Party after Bangladesh (and Maulana Bhashani) separated. C.R. Aslam’s group was somewhere between pro-Soviet and pro-China.
456 Ṣūrat meṃ qom parast, sīrat meṃ soshalīst, in Muḥammad, *Jadjojahad ke pānc sāl*.
vein in which Cyprian had argued for communists to turn to the peasantry in 1948, Muhammad and Bangash were convinced that organizing in the rural areas had to become primary, for that is where the majority of the population was (that said, they did not abandon organizing with the urban industrial working class). Against the grain of the Russian Revolution, the Chinese had organized their revolution with the peasantry as their main force, and now in the 1960s the experiences of Southeast Asian communist organizations, especially the Vietnamese, were also reaching new heights. Most of the West Pakistani left, however, was focused on urban intellectuals and workers. So, along with the Tufail Abbas group in Karachi, the Bangash and Ishaq groups exited the “left group” and sought to establish a robust communist organization.

Thus, in 1966, Maoists in Pakistan formed the first Mazdoor Kisan Party, although this was less a coherent party and more a slightly tighter set of clandestine groups, just as often called the Communist Party. Eric Cyprian became its secretary. This separation allowed these Maoists to clarify their hegemonic project, although there was still considerable ambiguity. They agreed with the “Chinese line” that, rather than the capitalists, the “revolution must be led by the working class, supported by the great power of the peasantry, to travel the path of people’s democratic revolution and then establish a socialist system.”

Thus, rather than focusing on the agenda of the “regional feudals,” the Frontier cadre of the new CPP decided to “intensify organizing amongst the workers and peasants for revolutionary struggle, to continue nominal involvement in NAP, and to adopt class politics.” Although the CPP was patriotic as far as it came to Pakistan, the Frontier cadre would still work in NAP to “take the Pakhtun national struggle around the problem of One Unit toward a revolutionary struggle.” They did not, however, develop an independent proletarian programme with clarity of strategy and tactics.

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457 Muḥammad, 6.
458 Pākistān Mazdūr Pārtī, “Pākistān Mazdūr Pārtī kī markazī kānīṭī kī reporṭ,” 2.
459 Pākistān Mazdūr Pārtī, 2.
Staying in NAP continued to blur the line between friend and enemy, but the Maoists’ continued work in the Kisan Committee eventually forced the issue of open separation on them.

By March 1968, the renewed vigour of the Kisan Committee had increasingly threatened the landlords in NAP, who decided to throw out the Maoists. At a provincial council meeting of NAP, the now-Frontier general-secretary Ajmal Khattak (a “pro-Moscow” communist) moved to expel members of the Kisan Committee from NAP. Wali Khan and Khattak alleged that the Kisan Committee was actually a separate political party that continued to operate within NAP, and that its operation was inimical to the interests and functioning of NAP. On their way out, the provincial secretary of the Kisan Committee, Sher Ali Bacha—also a member of the clandestine CPP—elaborated on the class tension behind the split. Khan Abdul Wali Khan’s class interests, he argued,

compel him to violate the decisions of NAP by taking part in the meetings and conferences of the Association [of the Protection of Landlord Rights]. On the other side, because the Kisan Committee is a representative group of small owners, tenants and other working classes, he looks at it with a bad view.460

That said, on May 1, 1968, the erstwhile members of the Kisan Committee did constitute a new, separate, and open political party, named the Mazdoor Kisan Party.461 Meanwhile, Ishaq Muhammad’s group in Punjab walked out of a Punjab NAP meeting to form the NAP (Mazdoor Kisan). The Frontier MKP, the Punjab NAP (MK) and the Sindh NAP (MK) under Tufail Abbas formally joined together to form the West Pakistan National Awami Party (Mazdoor Kisan).

Yet, the formation of the NAP(MK) was not straightforward, pointing to the fluidity of the political situation and the political actors involved. Indeed, the Tufail Abbas group was also

461 The clandestine communist organization thereafter formally took the name “Communist Party of Pakistan.” The expulsion from the NAP was anticipated. Zafar Ullah Khan refers to police files and notes that earlier in March, “underground Communist Party” members, including Ishaq Muhammad, met at Afzal Bangash’s home, appraised their work in NAP, and decided to withdraw from NAP and set up class organizations to “intensify class struggle and generate class hatred.” See Khan, “Muhammad Afzal Khan Bangash,” 86.
playing an integral role in the formation of the Pakistan People’s Party at the end of 1967, especially through its influence in the massive Karachi-based National Students Federation. Ultimately, the NAP(MK) in Punjab was not able to wrest the leadership of industrial workers in Punjab from the NAP(Bhashani) being led by C.R. Aslam, who, by not coming out against the regime during a 1967 railway workers strike or during the 1968-1969 upsurge, actually lost its following amongst the workers and lost many of its cadres to the PPP. Following the upsurge of 1968-1969, the Tufail Abbas group left the NAP(MK) and continued to work with one foot in and one foot outside of the PPP. Despite having some presence in Karachi, the NAP(MK) was predominantly based in the Frontier and rural Punjab. By 1970, NAP(MK) took on the name of the West Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party, in a still very fluid political situation. However, as the MKP sought to develop its hegemony in practice, its theoretical development became, at once, more sophisticated, and more fraught, in the absence of any easy answers to the many more questions that were raised by their relative success. For now, however, we return to the Peshawar valley in 1963.

The Kisan Committee and communist regroupment (1963-1968)

When political activity was once again allowed in 1962, the communists in the Frontier NAP took the opportunity to regroup and to re-establish their mass work among the peasantry of the Peshawar valley, particularly northern Hashtnagar and Mardan. From 1963 to 1968, the

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464 Leghari, “The Socialist Movement in Pakistan,” 161–64. Soon the Tufail Abbas group became known as the Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz (Pakistan Workers’ Front). The group maintained its influence in the Pakistan International Airlines union, but lost its influence in the NSF, as well as the cadre who had gone into the PPP, most notably Mairaj Mohammad Khan. In the polemics between the Communist Party of China and the Workers’ Party of Albania in the 1970s, the Pakistan Mazdoor Mahaz moved toward the latter’s positions.
Kisan Committee worked slowly and cautiously to build units in various villages, and to attract young, educated youth to the inner communist group.

The West Pakistan Kisan Committee was re-formed by communists in April 1963 as a mass organization of the National Awami Party. The Kisan Committee (KC)’s purpose was to address the “immediate demands and basic rights of peasants, tenants, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, and owner-cultivators.”\textsuperscript{465} However, it was organized by communists oriented toward the example of East Asian communist movements; indeed, its convenor was Ishaq Muhammad. In the Frontier, the old communist activist Ziarat Gul, after nearly ten years of enforced inactivity, finally stepped back into active politics as the interim convenor of the KC in the Mardan District.\textsuperscript{466} From later party reports it appears that the communists in NWFP had begun to operate as a functional party unit, particularly by reorganizing and operating through the Kisan Committee. The Kisan Committee began its work in the Peshawar valley, precisely at the sites of the previous communist struggles in the 1940s.\textsuperscript{467} Future MKP leader Sher Ali Bacha’s notes indicate the formation of several KCs in villages throughout Mardan, and as these were being formed Ziarat Gul and his old comrade Abdul Sattar were also reaching out to old and new contacts in northern Hashtnagar. Indeed, northern Hashtnagar was actually adjacent to their own villages in Mardan.\textsuperscript{468} It is worth recalling that Ziarat Gul and Sattar Lala were migrants from the Mohmand Agency (although they themselves were Safi), as were many peasant proprietors and most tenants in Hashtnagar and parts of Mardan. They would often make

\textsuperscript{466} Special Branch, NWFP, “Special Branch File on Ziarat Gul,” n.d., 213, SB-III 12/192, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In January 1964, the young lawyer and communist Sher Ali Bacha took over convenorship of the Mardan KC, while Ziarat Gul was appointed its treasurer and his old comrade Abdul Sattar was appointed propaganda secretary, see Sher Ali Bacha, “Minutes of Mardan Kisan Committee Meeting,” January 6, 1964, 1, Sher Ali Bacha Papers.
\textsuperscript{467} The Kisan Committee was also re-established in the Hazara Division.
\textsuperscript{468} In fact, northern Hashtnagar lies at the intersection of Charsadda, Malakand Agency and Mardan, which makes it also a very strategic point.
social visits to various villages, particularly for functions of *gham-ṣhādī* (mainly deaths and weddings), and used these visits to engage with young, educated men.

It is at such an occasion that they met Musafir Khan, the young student who joined the Kisan Committee and eventually the clandestine Communist Party of Pakistan. Despite being relatively well-off, as we have seen, peasant proprietors and richer peasants had their own contradictions with the *khans*. Musafir’s family had been ejected from some of their land that they had made cultivable decades before and had always possessed, but whose ownership was given to landlords by the British. Musafir was taken by Marxist ideology, studied it further and over the months and years invited more of his cousins, friends and classmates to join in revolutionary work in what became, by 1966, the reformed Communist Party of Pakistan. Indeed, working openly through the Kisan Committee, promising and interesting youth were educated in Marxism-Leninism in secret.\(^{469}\) When judged fit, they would be recruited. For example, Aslam Khan Gigiani told me that he had joined the Kisan Committee in the late 1960s, but was recruited to the Communist Party in 1971-1972.\(^{470}\)

Although at its core were communists young and old, the Kisan Committee focused on economistic, rather than political economic issues, largely avoiding direct anti-state or anti-landlord politicization. In the aftermath of stringent martial law, communists felt it important not to invite too much repression on their work—although police surveillance was a constant. Items for discussing at an organizing meeting of the Frontier Kisan Committee in 1964, illustrate the sometimes dry nature of their policy demands on the government: cracking down on ammonium sulphate black-marketing, addressing difficulties in cultivators selling to mills and markets, investment in fruit processing, ensuring Warsak Canal’s water supply, and ensuring foreign

\(^{469}\) Interview with Ferozullah and Shahzullah Safi, Safi Bari Band, May 19, 2013.
\(^{470}\) Interview, Dag Bangla, June 4, 2016.
exchange for sugar mills.\textsuperscript{471} To be fair, local meetings, such as that of the Mardan Kisan Committee, also spoke about items more relevant to poorer tenants like illegal ejectments and improving relations between tenants and landlords through reconciliation committees.\textsuperscript{472} Despite the minimal and reformist kinds of demands, or perhaps because of them, the Kisan Committee had few poor tenants and landless labourers in its midst. As an internal party report later admitted, “The Kisan Committee had the imprint of owners and other well-off peasants.”\textsuperscript{473} However, the report argued that “because even at this time there was a functioning [communist] party unit working in NWFP” there was no danger of the KC becoming an organization that represented (“tailed”) rural middle-classes while ignoring the interests of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. Although its early young recruits were from better-off peasant proprietor families, which is why they were able to afford an education to begin with, their communist education was hoped to insulate the party from the reformist tendencies of the Kisan Committee’s own policy demands and its relatively better-off membership.

Even though the contradictions in rural areas were sharp, and were becoming sharper as a result of the Green Revolution, Musafir told me that the Kisan Committee workers in northern Hashtnagar faced challenges in motivating elders to join or to take them seriously. Perhaps the memory of the 1948 movement was still fresh in some minds, and for others the danger of challenging \textit{khans} or aligning with groups seen as anti-state may have invited caution. Indeed, according to both Musafir and Aslam Khan Gigiani, many initial KC meetings took place in secret, often meeting at night or even in the scorching afternoons to avoid police detection or the scrutiny of the \textit{nāzirs}. KC members initially recruited, therefore, in ones and twos; and very slowly, a few KCs were formed in some NWFP villages. In 1964, there were nine village

\textsuperscript{471} Special Branch, NWFP, “1960s Bangash Police File,” 123.
\textsuperscript{472} Bacha, “Minutes of Mardan Kisan Committee Meeting,” 2.
\textsuperscript{473} \textit{Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī}, “Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī kī markazī kamīṭī kī report,” 5. Chapter 6 examines how this imprint arguably never left the organization.
committees in Mardan, and four in northern Hashtnagar.\footnote{The Mardan figure comes from Sher Ali Bacha’s notes—he was the district convenor. The figure for northern Hashtnagar comes from an interview with Nazeef in Baram Khan on June 4, 2013. He was not involved at the time but joined the MKP in 1970 and was close to Bacha. According to him the committees were in Yaar Jan Kali, Safi Bari Band (home of Musafir and Shahzullah), Ameerabad, and Harichand. His notes are mostly corroborated by Master Amber, one of the first KC members in northern Hashtnagar.} According to Master Amber, one of the first Kisan Committee members in northern Hashtnagar, there were perhaps twenty or thirty Kisan Committee members altogether in the area.\footnote{Interview, Bangash Kali, June 3, 2013.} But even though the KC work was slow and its demands minimalist, later on the internal party report argued that the work enabled reactivation of old peasant activists, gave them familiarity with the issues of peasants and tenants, and gave them crucial experience in connecting with and working amongst the masses.\footnote{Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī, “Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī kī markazī kamīṭī kī report,” 5–6.}

After Bangash and Ishaq formed their own Communist Party in 1966, factionalism within NAP increased. Kicked out of the main West Pakistan Kisan Committee conference supposed to take place in July 1967 by the C.R. Aslam group, they convened their own West Pakistan Kisan Committee two weeks later. The Frontier KC thereafter decided to organize with renewed vigour, its main new demand reflecting the growing militancy of students and workers was a call for land reforms, that properties larger than 100 acres and government land in the millions of acres ought to be redistributed to tenants, landless cultivators, and those with uneconomical holdings.\footnote{Sher Ali Bacha, “Statement of the NWFP Kisan Committee,” August 31, 1967, Sher Ali Bacha Papers.} Thereafter, the Kisan Committee was expelled from the Frontier NAP, and events in the rest of Pakistan started to make room for the MKP.

“Mazdūr kisān zindah bād” (1968-1970)

The emergence, or rather, eruption, of the peasant movement under the MKP in northern Hashtnagar appeared spontaneous, even, and especially, to those who participated in it. “It grew
all of a sudden, like fire—it spread like fire,” Master Amber told me. Yet, as Gramsci says, even in the “‘most spontaneous’ movement it is simply the case that the elements of ‘conscious leadership’ cannot be checked, have left no reliable document.” Here, I suggest that the MKP became the vehicle that channeled this “fire” because of the coming together of different elements, crucially, the already-existing “organic” leaders among the tenants and the “conscious” leaders of the political party.

I suggest that the 1968-1969 national upheavals gave peasants a sense of possibility, encouraging them to be more belligerent when landowners ramped up ejectments in the wake of green revolution technologies. More people began to join the Mazdoor Kisan Party, which, through its longstanding Kisan Committee work, a network of resources and experience it inherited from NAP, and the oratory and advocacy of its leader Afzal Bangash, was more and more well known. At some point, crucial “organic” leaders in northern Hashtnagar realized that the historical moment was changing, and brought their followings to the MKP—key here was Chairman Adam Khan. They could not turn to NAP, which was the party of khans, nor to the PPP, for its main representatives in the area were also khans. Leaders like Adam Khan and other MKP organizers won over the maliks, or lineage heads in villages, who turned their kin groups almost overnight to join the MKP and subscribe to its programme of resistance. After their first success in northern Hashtnagar, through delegations of relatives, radicals, and the radicalized, the MKP spread like a prairie fire. That said, the process took more than a single spark.

When the MKP first came out in northern Hashtnagar in 1968, it appears to have found a receptive audience for its newly maximalist rhetoric somewhat haltingly. MKP cadres switched

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478 Interview, Bangash Kali, June 3, 2013.
479 Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 196.
480 The “organic” intellectual, as Hoare and Nowell Smith define the term, is the “thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class. These organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong.” See Gramsci, 1.
from the reformist discourse of the Kisan Committees to a direct anti-landlord orientation and, as an internal report later stated, reached out “directly to the working masses and presenting revolutionary politics to them, recognizing revolutionary elements and classes amongst them. We got to the bottom of their problems and demands, and discovered and identified those areas that required revolutionary sparks.”481 Indeed, no longer were the rural cadre speaking of limited policy demands around agricultural implements as in the Kisan Committee, but rather, they spoke of resisting all ejectments, legal or not, and land to-the-tiller to be achieved by any means necessary. They returned, in other words, to some of the rhetoric of 1948. But as we noted Musafir saying earlier, their appeals did not make much headway among elders and maulvis, who declared them kāfirs. Meanwhile, people like the nāzirs Chairman Adam Khan and Ikram Din Shah turned them away, probably because they had much to lose politically and economically. Indeed, Aslam Khan Gigiani told me how, as an MKP cadre, he helped organize a meeting at the crossroads village of Mandani in northern Hashtnagar a couple years before 1970, to be addressed by party leader Afzal Bangash: “There were about eighteen people in attendance. No one came out as a result of fear.”482

And yet, increasingly among those who faced litigation and threat of ejectment, there were listeners. As Musafir noted,

There were some people who would get up and [easily] leave the land as soon as they were told and went elsewhere, but there were others who [were stubborn and] refused to leave…. They would listen to what we had to say.

Others who were doing rather poorly would also orient to them, as brothers Ferozullah and Shahzullah told me:

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482 Interview, Dag Bangla, June 4, 2013.
A lot of people accepted what we had to say. People were in a lot of difficulty at that time. They didn’t have enough clothes. Once, this man’s clothes were being washed. He came out and said I don’t have clothes to wear, just sit down and wait for a bit.

Cadre called on men to unite to fight the *khans*, who were “paper tigers.” MKP workers would speak to men individually, gather them in villages, or even go talk to people in the fields. If these men accepted to join the MKP, the cadre would try and form committees, and counsel men to intervene in petty disputes and prevent tenants from going to the *khans* to have their disputes resolved. The MKP thus tried to incorporate an increasing trickle of resistant peasants into broader organization.

The MKP backed up its rhetoric with advocacy and legal aid. Important to note here, organizationally, is how the MKP inherited both localized presence and broader networks from its work in NAP. The village of Ameerabad, just north of the canal that divides northern Hashtnagar from southern Hashtnagar, was one of the first places where a Kisan Committee was founded. In 1968, the village had seven tenant families and its remaining 106 families had been ejected from lands in the recent period. They were also being ejected from their homes. As Afzal Bangash explained a few years later at an MKP convention, “Court suits were filed against them. We made some efforts in their behalf—broke the law a little bit, the officers helped a little bit—and succeeded in preventing these ejectments.” The MKP’s access to many lawyers and its connections with sympathetic government officers were the shield that allowed them to speak boldly as urban protests became more pronounced.

What made 1968 different from 1948 was, first, the relative pressure on the lands—there was a lot more of it in 1968 than there was in 1948—but second, the national anti-Ayub mass upsurge from November 1968 to March 1969 that led to Ayub Khan’s resignation. These

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483 Interview, Master Amber, Bangash Kali, June 3, 2013; Nazeef, Baram Khan, June 4, 2013.
484 Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 15.
processes made for a rural (and urban) population more receptive to radical ideas. If, in 1948, the communists had vastly overestimated the insurrectionary potential of the moment, in 1968, many communists may have underestimated it. This was not necessarily true of the MKP, what they lacked was the organizational capacity and numbers to engage in insurrection. This changed during the course of the national movement, in which the MKP also took part. In December 1968 and January 1969, Afzal Bangash toured rural areas where MKP workers had organized meetings.\footnote{Special Branch, NWFP, “Bangash History Sheet,” 15. It is worth noting that he left for this rural tour after addressing an MKP rally of nearly 900 people (by police estimates) in Peshawar. In comparison, when he had delivered a speech in Peshwar earlier in the summer, about 300 people came out. Four years prior, in 1964, when NAP would organize meetings in Peshawar, 150-250 people would come out. See Special Branch, NWFP, 15; Special Branch, NWFP, “1960s Bangash Police File,” 169, 172.} If previously eighteen people had turned out at Mandani, now 200 people turned out not too far at Ghalla Dher in Mardan. In these meetings, he reportedly, “[r]ebuted Govt: claims of development and demanded fresh Land Reforms. Asked the tenants and workers to assemble on a common platform. Raised the slogans of ‘Inqilab Zindabad’\footnote{Special Branch, NWFP, “Bangash History Sheet,” 16.}—that is, “long live the revolution.” Over the course of 1969 and into the first few months of 1970, Bangash attended several meetings in rural areas, and in urban areas as well, among industrial workers and ever more radicalizing students. The police summarized his activities: “he instigated tenants against landlords, labourers against capitalists and poor against riches.”\footnote{Special Branch, NWFP, 16.}

The instigation appears to have caught on, and one incident in northern Hashtnagar appears to have concentrated the frustrations of tenants into a spontaneous outburst of mass confrontation. What appears to have shifted the tide was some fallen wood.\footnote{The following is based on interviews with Muhammad Ishaq at Arhat Kali, May 21, 2013; Dildaar, May 22, 2013; Haji Dost Muhammad at Salar Muhammad Shah Ali Kali, June 14, 2013.} Wahab Sadeen Lohar belonged to the caste of smiths (\textit{lohār}), but he was in possession of some land near the village of Shakur. Sometime in 1969, after a storm, some trees fell down. We can recall that trees planted on tenant lands were, and still are, considered the \textit{khan}’s property. So when the \textit{nāzirs}
came to collect the wood, Wahab Sadeen confronted them and refused to let it go. The khan pursued legal action, and when the nāzirs returned with the police to enforce the law, people began banging on dhols to alert everyone in surrounding areas. According to Muhammad Ishaq, “People came out to support him. A spontaneous movement emerged, and people came out in the field to take it up.” As Haji Dost Muhammad put it, kisānī began with the tree on Wahab Sadeen’s land.⁴⁸⁹ Although it was spontaneous, the incident appears to have contributed to the stature of the MKP—Dildaar, for example, was invited to join the MKP by Wahab Sadeen.⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, even though Wahab Sadeen belonged to a different qaum than Pakhtuns overall—here, understandable as caste in the sense of an occupationally bounded group (the lohārs or smiths)—he not only possessed land but was sufficiently integrated into village community that the rest of the Pakhtun tenants came to his defence. Although qaum endogamy was persistent, and still is, it does not appear to have gotten in the way of a class solidarity, at least, not in that moment.

Leading personalities among tenants soon joined the MKP. As the leading peasant personality of Shakur and beyond, Chairman Adam Khan must have felt compelled to come out on the side of the people against the khans, and, he did, alongside other men of important stature. It appears that after the Wahab Sadeen episode, Adam Khan joined the MKP and began organizing in it. Master Amber pointed out how important Adam Khan was, for he was a popular leader who brought a truly large number of people into the MKP with him. Indeed, Haji Azeem of Zigai told me that he joined the MKP because everyone in his family—all 70 of them—joined when Adam Khan came to their village and invited their maliks to do so. This also points to how

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⁴⁸⁹ In Urdu kisānī means cultivation. But due to the peasant movement, in the Pakhto of the Peshawar valley kisani means participating in the peasant movement, and specifically, engaging in forcible occupation.

⁴⁹⁰ It is not clear to me if Wahab Sadeen was already a member of the MKP when this incident happened, or not. I also do not know if Dildaar was invited to join the MKP before or after this incident. Dildaar joined on July 21 or 22, 1969, a date he remembers because of the moon landing.
the internal qaum organization of the peasantry helped it join the MKP in large numbers. Another important person was Muhammad Shah Ali of Faizu Kali, a Khwaezai Mohmand.491 His father was the contractor for the area’s water mills (pancakkīs) from the government, while he leased a whopping 135 acres of land from two khans in two different villages, raised horses, and owned and operated tangas (the cars of the era). He was thus more an entrepreneur than a peasant, with a reputation for being a carsī—addicted to hashish. Nevertheless, he committed fully to the MKP in 1969. Under the guidance of Abdul Sattar, he became one of its sālārs, a commander of its armed wing. Adam Khan and Muhammad Shah Ali were perhaps the two most popular “organic” leaders of northern Hashtnagar.

Together, they represent a point I raised earlier, namely, that the domain of the subaltern is not so easily distinguishable from that of the elites. Adam Khan’s popularity does not seem to have been the consequence of his employment for the khan, on the contrary, his employment for the khan and election into the Basic Democracy system appear to have been a consequence of his popularity. His and Muhammad Shah Ali’s entry into a collective “subaltern” was determined by resistance initiated by a lohār, someone who is not even Pakhtun, and, indeed, the ideological parameters of this subalternity were shaped by young organic intellectuals like Musafir and Shahzullah. The collective subalternity of these agents was the contingent outcome, not so much the premise, of political class struggle at several locations and scales.

While the Wahab Sadeen episode may have initiated kisānī, the arrival of the Hashtnagar peasant movement as a moment of organized mass rebellion was conditioned by struggles at multiple locations and scales. Significant here was Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, the Red Maulana of East Pakistan. NAP(Bhashani) called for a Kisan Conference in Toba Tek Singh, Punjab, to be held on March 23, 1970. The conference was scheduled nearly a year after Ayub

Khan’s resignation, a year of mass rebellion throughout East and West Pakistan. The conference was a massive convergence of the left in West Pakistan, including the PPP, MKP, and even Jamiat Ulema-e Islam, spurred on by the campaign for elections promised by a new military regime. There were at least 100,000 people in attendance, and many more had lined the routes taken by trains to reach Toba Tek Singh. The Kisan Conference led to an upsurge of leftist organizing in the countryside, an effect that carried over to northern Hashtnagar, thanks to Bhashani’s attendance and speech. As the MKP bulletin Circular later recalled,

[T]he conference adopted the path of revolution instead of elections. Maulana Šaḥib grasped the correct mass line, sending his curses upon elections, and set 19 April as the day of worker and peasant struggle. Indeed, 19 April 1970 was the day when the great peasant struggle of Hashtnagar erupted.

Back in the Frontier, the MKP took advantage of Bhashani’s call to organize open resistance against the khans. According to Musafir,

Bhashani gave a call for a strike, and all the people here listened…. My father said, well this is all right.... He said that our children were speaking correctly, now these people have all come together and come out. If people come together, what can these khans do against them?

Afzal Bangash arrived in northern Hashtnagar to mobilize; as police reports alleged, the plan was that the “possession of the properties which [tenants] were holding … should not be delivered to the land-lords at any cost.” Muhammad Ishaq described how he went to various villages, avoiding vigilant nāzirs to convince elders to join the movement to resist ejectments after the spring harvest. “Plant the [red] flag and come to the fore—we will be responsible,” he assured them.

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492 MKP workers argued that Bhashani should avoid the electoral circus and focus on leading the “long march” of workers, peasants and other subaltern groups—“in Pakistan’s current semi-colonial, semi-feudal structure, it is as difficult for the representatives of the working people to win elections as it is for a lion to fight a crocodile in deep waters.” See Lā’ilpūr Mazdūr Kisān Pārṭī, Dukhiyāroŋ kā dardī: Maulānā Ḥamīd Khān Bhashānī (Lā’ilpūr: Lā’ilpūr Mazdūr Kisān Pārṭī, 1970), 21.
494 Special Branch, NWFP, “Bangash History Sheet,” 16.
On April 13, in the village of Khanjeri, elders from various villages of northern Hashtnagar met to discuss the demands of their movement. They organized into 26 Kisan Committees and then scheduled the strike and a rally in the village of Mandani for April 19. Entire villages planted red flags on their homes, declaring their defiance to the landlords, and stayed out of the fields, refusing to do any work close to harvest season. In Mandani, “landless peasants and agricultural labourers of Sarhad province assembled in a huge rally and took a vow that they would peacefully resolve their internal contradictions and form a united front against the Khans,” and moreover that tenants would treat landless labourers as brothers. (The vow was taken on the Holy Qur’an.) Importantly, the strike was observed not only in northern Hashtnagar but, building on the organizing work that had followed the Kisan Committee, also in many other places, with rallies in Malakand Agency, Mardan and Dir as well. Village after village began to join in the movement. Muhammad Khan Kaka reported to a national meeting of the West Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party in May, when a landowner purchased some land and gave it to new tenants in northern Hashtnagar, an MKP Kisan Committee formed its own court and made a revolutionary ruling according to which anyone who violates the Kisan Committee’s rulings and obtains another tenant’s land will be fined a bull and six maunds of rice. In this way an atmosphere of mutual trust and self confidence is forming amongst the peasants.

In what appeared like just a moment, a mass organization of 20-30 had transformed into a mass party of thousands. The moment of the Hashtnagar peasant movement had arrived.

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498 Pākistān Mazdūr Kisān Pāṛṭī, 1.
499 Kallu, Minutes of West Pakistan Mazdoor Kisan Party, 14–15.
500 Kallu, 15.
Conclusion

In the middle of 1970, when Adam Khan arrived with his pistol at the scene of a major battle (described in the next chapter), the young MKP activists Musafir and Shahzullah saw him there and chided him in response to his incredulity at their previous meeting. “Uncle! How are you? Weren’t you saying that this could not happen?”

He responded in jest, “You people are big ḥarāmīs [bastards].”

In between their meetings, a popular rebellion in urban West Pakistan and both urban and rural East Pakistan had deposed the president while demanding socialism. The mass movements of 1968-1969 put into question the politics and economics of the Pakistani social formation, and made what had seemed impossible appear realistic. Yet this chapter has also shown that the shift in the tenants’ moods was in some part cultivated by MKP workers as they connected the anti-Ayub movement in the cities to the rural areas in which they were organizing. Crucial in swinging a rural mass to the party was the entry of local political and social leaders, who helped tap into the kin-based qaum organization of villagers. In doing so, they produced and solidified, at least for a bit, the line between the elite and the subaltern.

The MKP was able to make headway in northern Hashtnagar because of its ideological, political, and organizational break from the NAP. Frontier Maoists broke away from a theory of national democracy where anti-imperialist bourgeois elements would lead a revolution, to a theory of people’s democracy, where the working class and peasants would lead. Politically, this entailed on one level being able to defend Pakistan as a political project, rather than praising India for its national democratic alliance with the Soviet Union, and on another level, breaking with a politics of collaborating under the leadership of khans and other regionalist landlords against the centre. Instead, communists could seek to capture both the regions and the centre,

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501 Interview with Musafir Khan, Safi Bari Band, May 19, 2013.
indeed, they had to capture the rural areas to capture the urban centres. Organizationally, communists positioned against the “revisionist” politics of class collaboration broke to form their own Communist Party of Pakistan, which suffered more splits because of disagreements on the politics of a “united front” with the progressive bourgeoisie and popular forces contained in the Pakistan People’s Party. The mass form of the Communist Party led now by Bangash and Ishaq Muhammad was the Mazdoor Kisan Party, whose inheritance of a broad network of Kisan Committees and connections with lawyers, government officers and other professionals facilitated the resonance of its maximalist slogans among the tenants and labourers of the Peshawar valley. What it took, in other words, was the convergence of many different kinds of political and class struggles at different geographical and temporal scales. This set the stage for the coordinated organizing of the tenants and labourers into a network under the aegis of the Mazdoor Kisan Party that could challenge the power of the landed elites, both outside of and inside the state apparatus.
Chapter 4: Dual power? Mazdoor kisan raj vs. the state apparatus

Introduction

The Mazdoor Kisan Party emerged out of a communist orientation to the people’s democratic republic, that is, a new state of mazdūr kisān rāj (worker-peasant rule). Villagers in northern Hashtnagar and some of its surrounding areas got a taste of a nascent peasant-based authority as a consequence of the advances made by their movement. Khans were driven out of villages and their indirect de jure governance evaporated, they lost their illegal economic rights and often realized their legal ones only at the mercy of the movement. That meant that the de facto property relations (relations of production) transformed, even if the law did not. This nascent peasant-based authority was accompanied by the propagation of new forms of identity by force of the movement itself and the MKP, with greater or lesser success. Khans, in turn, became more dependent on the formal apparatus of the state in the to advance their interests in the villages, where once their own organized power was sufficient. This suggested the possibilities of an emergent “dual power” situation, as Lenin explained with regard to Russia, one of a government of the bourgeoisie co-existing with a government, “weak and incipient,” of the proletariat and peasantry,502 a contested reconfiguration of the institutionalization of class power(s).

This chapter uses oral history, state and party archives to trace how the MKP-led peasant movement spread unevenly across Hashtnagar and beyond from 1970 to 1973, and how it transformed the institutional configuration of class power and the relations of production. Indeed, the chapter argues that the relations of production were reconfigured as a consequence of the changes in the balance of class power. More specifically, I expand on how the “conscious”

leadership of the Mazdoor Kisan Party relied upon but also modified the “organic” social and political practices of the region’s tenants and labourers to produce new sets of practices and behaviours, that is, new organizations and institutions. However, the very unevenness of the party itself, and the people and places it was engaging with, meant that the development of these institutions was also uneven—a constant race to impart more systematic organization over looser forms.

The chapter first turns to looking at how the peasant movement spread in and out of northern Hashtnagar, arguing that it spread through different kinds of word of mouth in a way that outpaced party organization, and where qaum dynamics played an important role. The second section examines how the movement steadily took on the character of a low-intensity conflict; the stereotypical belligerence of Pakhtuns combined with military training and organization provided by the MKP. The armed struggle was crucial in shifting the balance of power outside of the apparatus of the state. This change in the balance of power crept into the apparatus of the state, as section three shows, through the movement’s legal strategy, which sought to give a more solid footing to forcible occupations where possible by challenging ejectments in court. In section four we see how the armed and legal struggle converged to reconfigure the property relations, indeed, achieve de facto land and tenancy reform; however, the relations of social reproduction, while impacted, were not too dramatically transformed—patriarchy was rearticulated. Section five looks at how the peasant movement transformed state power, that is, by producing a situation where a decentralized and nascent peasant-based authority co-existed with and contested a state apparatus that became all the more salient as khans turned toward it to safeguard their interests. But precisely this hostility of and to the apparatus of the state, controlled by khans, was what put the gains of the movement in a tenuous situation.
Class and qaum in mobilization and organization

Following on the successful April 19 1970 strike and rally, tenants began resisting ejectments in northern Hashtnagar. The most decisive early event was a confrontation over June 16 and 17 in the Bahram Dheri area. Here, a khan named Fakhr-e-Alam sought to collect an increased rate of wheat from tenants. Fakhr-e-Alam appears to have brought several hundred police officers and hired guns with him, but the MKP organized a militia (laškar) of tenants from all over northern Hashtnagar under the leadership of Muhammad Shah Ali. The people were afraid because they had never seen such a large force of police, but as Muhammad Shah Ali egged them on, they realized that the police had never seen such a large force of tenants, either. The khans’ forces fled, and, a Mazdoor Kisan Party document declared, “June 18, 1970 was a day to remember. On that day, we saw the lightning of people’s democracy [‘awāmī jamhūrīyat]. People’s rule [‘awāmī rāj] was established in northern Hashtnagar.”

The rebellion spread rapidly. In the space of a month, the MKP’s weekly newspaper Sanobar could report that,

In northern Hashtnagar, peasants are being forcibly ejected. Their crops have been set ablaze. Numerable false cases have been established against them. Scores of peasants are languishing in jails. Their homes have been looted. Their livestock have been killed. They have repeatedly been subject to murderous attacks.

But it also went far beyond northern Hashtnagar. Nearly every issue of the paper I have access to from 1970 indicates new branches of the MKP being formed in Charsadda, Mardan, Nowshera, Malakand, Dir, and further beyond as well.

503 Interview with Haji Dost Muhammad at Salar Muhammad Shah Ali Kali, June 14, 2013.
505 “Shamālī Hasht Nagar maḵ ḍa’ah 144 kā nifāẓ: zālīm ṭabqon kī pārṭī ko jalsah-yi ’ām kī ijāzat,” Sanobar, July 24, 1970, 2. Sanobar was largely in Urdu but also had articles in Pashto. It was published in Peshawar. It got shut down in May 1971, as part of a general crackdown on the MKP when its prominent leadership was also arrested.
Often when I asked people how the movement spread, they would say, “just like that,” comparing it to fire. Whatever it was, it was so elemental that explaining it seemed difficult. According to a later internal party report, it was, at least in part, “qabāʾīlī [tribal] ‘asabiyyah [that] produced a quantitative change in the movement, as entire qabilahs began to join the Mazdoor Kisan Party in their hundreds.”

‘Asabiyyah as a concept was given analytical purchase by Ibn Khaldun, as a feeling of solidarity that exists among kin groups, a “function of the coherence of the group” that is itself maintained by the “presence of a dominant element with a mandate to coerce.” The qaum, as we have seen, was composed of clans, sub-clans, and lineage groups, at its lowest level a lineage or kin group often corresponded to the population of a village. The elder (malik or mashar) of a lineage could call a meeting of the males in the kin group, to discuss affiliating the lineage with the movement. Although the internal party report itself does not spell out the mechanisms involved, we have seen, for example, how MKP cadre like Muhammad Ishaq went from village to village encouraging elders to conduct jirgas among their kin to join the movement and fight ejectments. Afzal Shah Khamosh explained to me that until the elders were won there may be individual recruits in villages who would operate quietly, but once the whole village was won over then the MKP would conduct its activities openly.

Other aspects of how qaums were organized and how they interacted with each other played a role as well. For example, the qaum discrimination we discussed in Chapter 2 was also, according to MKP leader Sher Ali Bacha’s analysis, crucial in propelling many qaums to affiliate to the peasant movement. It was, he argued, a “vigorous struggle to preserve their existence and

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506 Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī, “Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī kī markazī kamlī kī report,” 7. Here, the term qabilah is more ambiguous in whether or not it is referring to the broader qaum identity or more particular village-based khel (lineage) identity, or the meso-level qabilah (clan) identity. Probably, all of this operated in conjunction.
507 Following Ibn Khaldun in Aziz Al-Azmeh, Ibn Khaldun: A Reinterpretation (Abingdon: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1982), 31–32. As we have seen in the previous chapters, lineage groups in villages were modular branches of qaums, clans, sub-clans, etc. Lineage groups had maliks and elders who, however, appear to have secured unity through jirga or discussion. But once unity was reached all members of the kin group were expected to comply, on pain of punishment. In some ways this is like democratic centralism.
508 Interview, Shakur, May 26, 2013.
honour.” In this vein, even within the dominant qaums, such as the Muhammadzai, those who joined the movement may well have been motivated by the contempt they faced for having lost their land or not having enough. But if qaum practices helped facilitate conflict, they could help suppress conflict as well. For example, about a month prior to the confrontation of Bahram Dheri, Wawa Khan (for whom Chairman Adam Khan had worked) hired guns from the Utman Khel qaum to attack a tenant at Gandheri village. The MKP sent a delegation under Abdul Sattar to the Utman Khel elders to sit a jirga, as a result of which the Utman Khel elders vowed to support the peasant struggle and prevent any more raids. The different practices around qaum thus facilitated the spread of the peasant movement.

Aside from, or rather, in addition to ‘aṣabiyyah, spoken and written word carried news of the peasant movement through friends, relatives, additional delegations, and party networks. Northern Hashtnagar was located squarely between southern Hashtnagar, Mohmand Agency, Malakand Agency, and Mardan, and there were many migrant and other networks throughout these areas. When tenants faced conflicts over ejectments or other issues, they would reach out to MKP members in other areas and invite support. But this was not limited to migrant networks, even “local” lineages like the Muhammadzai joined. According to Jahanzeb Mazdoor Yaar, a resident of southern Hashtnagar, his father Murtaza Khan had a problem with a khan and discussed it with a friend who was visiting from the village of Muftiabad. Muftiabad is very close to the canal that divides the north from the south, and its tenants were mostly migrants. Murtaza Khan’s friend counselled him to go meet Afzal Bangash and the rest of the local MKP leadership, who came and helped him with his issues and instructed him in forming local MKP

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510 Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī, “Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī kī markazī kamīṭī kī reporṭ,” 1–2. They probably went to meet them in the Mohmand Agency.
branches. This, Murtaza Khan did by going village to village. The MKP also had written propaganda, including many Urdu pamphlets and a few Pashto ones, and its weekly *Sanobar* that I have already mentioned, all of which helped in spreading the ideology and the word.

More broadly, the brand of the MKP became a generalized symbol of resistance, often without the requisite organizational support or direction. When a village decided to join the MKP, its cadres would set up a branch with office bearers, who would be linked up with higher levels of organization, reporting to the provincial centre. The red flag with a white star in its centre, the flag of the party, became a more general symbol of *kisānī*, which means peasant activity in Urdu, but in the Pakhto of the Peshawar valley has become synonymous with forcible occupation. Even tenants who were not part of the MKP could plant a red flag on their homes, like a meme to troll landlords. As MKP leader Afzal Bangash noted, this led to people getting hurt when they did not form proper branches and coordinate with the central office before going to battle. In this way the MKP became “more a movement than a party in the Sarhad province.” The problem with this spread, as we will see, was that tenants would take on spontaneous action against certain landowners (mainly, smaller landowners) without strategic considerations concerning incorporating them into a hegemonic project, and thereby engage in excesses that could malign the party’s name. Moreover, a shortage of trained cadre meant that the movement constantly outpaced, indeed, set the pace for the party. But, as we shall now see, being part of the MKP could be very useful on the military front.

**Armed struggle**

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511 Interview, Azim Khan Pul, October 31, 2013. The Azim Khan Pul branch was formed in July 1970, as an issue of the MKP newspaper *Sanobar* reports.
512 Village branch under committee, committee under centre (*markaz*), *markaz* under district, and district under province.
513 Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 15.
514 Bangash, 15.
It started like terrorism, they shot at khans, there was firing, they occupied lands, they didn’t pay ijārah or baṭāʿī. And so it began…. They refused to allow us or our nāzirs onto the land, they killed them or harassed them. I had 80-100 armed men for my security. There were skirmishes three to four times a day…. The whole area was red—covered with red flags.

Such were the words of Ameer Nawaz Khan, a northern Hashtnagar landlord whose family owned over 2,000 acres in 1970. In the course of two years, the peasant movement had taken on the scale and character of low-intensity conflict as numerous armed confrontations took place between tenants and khans and police and paramilitary forces. At the height of the movement over 1972-73, a report for the Governor noted, “65 platoons of the F.C. [Frontier Constabulary] were deployed on patrol duties.” The escalation of the armed conflict, on the peasant side, came from established practices of violence being given greater organizational form by the MKP. Confrontations were often about forcing compromise through jirgas mediated by deputy or assistant commissioners, more so than actually winning an armed conflict, and losing an armed conflict could be very costly. Overall, the armed struggle enabled a significant shift in the balance of class power in the villages.

The stereotype of belligerent Pakhtuns should be checked, but the relatively greater concentration of arms among Pakhtuns helped. Many stereotypes of belligerent Pakhtuns have to do with British colonial anthropology of martial races, noble savages, and religious fanatics, that could not make sense of Pakhtun resistance on their own terms. However, normative Pakhtun norms of Pakhtunwali do involve notions of conflict, especially among cousins (tarbūrwalī,

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515 Interview, Dakai, November 1, 2013.
517 A commissioner was in charge of a division, a deputy commissioner in charge of a district, and an assistant commissioner in charge of a tahsil.
again, usually related to land), and revenge (*badal*).\textsuperscript{519} MKP leader Sher Ali Bacha referred to these in explaining tenant militancy, arguing that in the Frontier,

> every person, be he a peasant or a *khan*, is armed, and the people here have a war-like disposition. They love arms and … peasants have not taken to fear despite oppressions, false cases, imprisonments and murders by the *khans* and bureaucracy. In this way, their passion for revenge has been even more inflamed and they became engaged in systematic struggle.\textsuperscript{520}

Yet, as this study has demonstrated, the same Mohmand Pakhtuns who fought against the British in 1935 and who fielded guerrillas to fight in Kashmir in 1947-1948, could describe themselves as “slaves” of the *khans* and do little about violence the *khans* exercised over them. Moreover, to say that “every person” was armed is an exaggeration. Many tenants and labourers could not afford arms and guns, and would approach battles with sticks (*lāṭīs*) dyed red. However, relative to other tenant populations in Punjab and Sindh, the Pakhtun tenants almost certainly had more guns and more access to guns—access that also included the guns of their cousins in the Mohmand and Malakand Agencies. Certainly, tenants fought and even killed each other over land and water issues,\textsuperscript{521} and *khans* mobilized their tenants to fight in conflicts with other *khans*, also over land and water.\textsuperscript{522} That kind of violence was a consequence of the structures of social and political interaction, both in the tribal areas of the Mohmand Agency and in the settled areas of Hashtnagar, but the question was what forms were mobilized under what conditions; or rather, what made tenants lose their fear of exercising violence against *khans*.

> We have already seen that tenants and landless labourers oriented toward the movement as a consequence of national upheaveals, and that at least some tenants and labourers described their own fear when their *lašk̡ar* first confronted the *khans’* forces at the battle of Bahram Dheri.

\textsuperscript{519} Ahmed, *Pukhtun Economy and Society*. This, I suspect, does not make it too different from many forms of localized violence across northern South Asia.\textsuperscript{520} Bacha, *Kisān Tahrīk Šīr Šubah-Yi Sarḥad Maīn Kyūn? Aīk Tajziyah*, 11–12.\textsuperscript{521} Interview, Dildaar, May 22, 2013.\textsuperscript{522} Interview, Haji Azeem, Zigai, May 29, 2013.
Laškari conflict was common in the “tribal areas,” and involved a large group of men spontaneously facing off another group of men—the call to battle would be given through drums and residents of surrounding areas would join in.\textsuperscript{523} The numbers could range from hundreds to thousands, and this sight in itself, if it got off the ground, could help alleviate fears of those looking to participate in the laškar—and strike fear into the opposing side. The successes of laškari battles in winning or forcing compromise thus had an important demonstration effect.

However, a better organized force could easily surround laškars and this could have adverse consequences for the peasant struggle, which the MKP took into account to try and improve the armament, tactics, and organization of the peasants’ armed forces. For example, during the July 3, 1971 battle of Nasafai, a village very close to the crossroads town of Mandani, the MKP laškar entered into a direct conflict with police and paramilitaries, leading to at least 11 tenants dying and inviting considerable state repression.\textsuperscript{524} After several more battles, the land in question was placed under police attachment—meaning, neither khan nor tenants could farm it—for several years before a compromise was reached. July 3 was thereafter, and still is, commemorated as *yaum-i shuhadā*’ (Day of Martyrs), and most tenants of Nasafai still pay relatively higher rents than tenants in surrounding areas. Thereafter, the MKP sought to systematically arm tenants and spread some basic political tactics. Bangash and other leaders


\textsuperscript{524} “On July 3, 1971 a police force of 1500, armed with machine guns and automatic rifles, fought an almost 24 hour-long battle with peasants possessing crude rifles and scanty ammunition. Eleven peasant men, two women and one child were killed and more than a dozen peasants were wounded. Only one policeman was wounded. Eighty-seven peasants were rested and sentenced to one year’s imprisonment with hard labour. The police succeeded in ejecting the remaining peasants and their families.” See Pakistan Forum, “P.F. Investigative Report: Sarhad Peasants Under Attack,” 20. Additional details from interviews. This battle took place when key leaders like Bangash, Adam Khan, and Sher Ali Bacha were in jail. Abdul Sattar led the battle and was later criticized for his mistakes—he himself absconded to Mohmand Agency to avoid arrest. See Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī, “Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī kī markazī kamīṭī kī report.” Many tenants claimed that Bangash accused Abdul Sattar of starting the shooting on the police, but I cannot find such accusations in party documents—more pointedly, many tenants claimed that khans’ agents fired on the police to start the conflict. In any case, although this battle was not the proximate cause, it started a debate on strategy and tactics that led to Abdus Sattar and Ziarat Gul leaving the MKP in early 1972. (Ziarat Gul at this point was more of a figurehead than active participant, in any case.) This particular split is outside of the scope of this study.
“urged the [MKP] workers to avoid wasteful expenditure on marriages and charities and instead purchase arms.” Moreover, they stressed that tenants should not “resist the Police but re-occupy the land at the opportune moment and harm the Khawaneens.” In the village of Ghalla Dher in Mardan district, for example, the Nawabzada of Toru hired a police platoon from November 1971 to April 1972 to enforce his possession of the village. But the erstwhile tenants “took forcible possession of the land as soon as the force was withdrawn,” forcing the new tenants to leave “at gun point.” (The Nawabzada asked the police for a refund.)

Moreover, the MKP leveraged its connections to provide more advanced military training for tenants, especially its sālārs (commanders), and to organize a more regular armed force. The retired major Ishaq Muhammad, who himself had participated in the Kashmir war in 1948 alongside Pakhtun “tribal” units, was crucial here. Wali Khan, the National Awami Party leader, even alleged, “I know that certain army officers were particularly deputed here for the purpose of organizing armed insurrections…” He was probably not wrong, but these were likely leftist officers connected to Ishaq Muhammad. The sālārs, in turn, appear to have provided training to ever newer recruits. The MKP try to organize these recruits into the Naujawān Tanzīm (Youth Organization), a clandestine paramilitary group with its own internal organization under sālārs Muhammad Shah Ali and Ahmed Ali. It was only clandestine in the sense that its internal organizational structure was not open, unlike the MKP’s village branches. Otherwise, every

529 Interviews.
530 As one police report put it, “they are training the Kissans as to how to lay piquet and how to decamp when the opponents were about to over-power them.” See Amirzaman Khan Kundi, “Information Report: Landlords & Tenants,” August 18, 1972, 56, GS 30/249, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
household in every village was required to enlist one youth into the Naujawan Tanzim which, as Gul Muhammad of Maho Deri in southern Hashtnagar put it, both elders and youth were quite enthusiastic about.\footnote{Interview, Gul Muhammad, Maho Deri, October 8, 2013.} While the Tanzim appears to have been envisioned as the seed of a more permanent and mobile revolutionary armed force, as opposed to the spontaneous and static lashkars, the latter remained the predominant mode of engagement.\footnote{Pakistani Mazdur Party, “Pakistani Mazdur Party kī markazī kamīṭī kī report,” 14–15.} This was in part because trained cadre kept being outpaced by the spread of the movement. Nevertheless, the symbolic effect of the Tanzim was significant, as small bands of fighters did carry out strikes against khans and their forces.\footnote{The effect of the Tanzim on gender relations is unclear. There were, as a rule, no women involved in the fighting. There are stories of one woman, Zarshin, from a khan family who defected and took part in the fighting. This may well have been true, but by and large women from the peasant families were restricted to delivering food or armaments to the lines, at best. The MKP did very little work among women, a point we will return to below.} The overall effect of the combination of lashkari battles and spontaneous outbreaks, as well as more systematically planned lashkars, and the advanced training and organizational techniques of the MKP’s paramilitary wing, was that khans in many parts of Hashtnagar, Malakand and Mardan found it very difficult to enforce their possession. In northern Hashtnagar, especially, khans and their agents found it almost impossible to even enter the area, period—tenants would start firing on almost any automobile because it almost certainly belonged to a khan.\footnote{According to Dildaar.} In other words, khanism in northern Hashtnagar had collapsed. This shift in the balance of class power outside of the state apparatus was a crucial enabling condition for the de facto land and tenancy reforms, and the institutions of peasant-based authority, that accompanied the armed struggle. But that was not all, for the struggle inside some of the institutions of the state was also very important.

**Legal struggle**
Although the MKP’s armed struggle was rather illegal, the party’s leadership also saw the law, particularly the nuances of tenancy law, as an arena for struggle. The MKP did not believe, and the course of the struggles showed that, the “rule of law” was not, as E.P. Thompson argued, an “unqualified human good.” Rather, its realization was qualified by class struggle. That is, aside from getting arrested peasants released from jail, if tenants could win court cases around possession of land they could avoid fighting and solidify their legal rights to possession. This was possible because, for all of its flaws, the Tenancy Act of 1950 that had been passed due to a previous round of struggle had certain protections and loopholes that tenants could exploit. The problem was that until now, most of them had no way to escape the domination of the *khans* even if they had access to the legal resources, which was also unlikely. Thus, it might appear, as Nandini Sundar argues, that “even a desecrated law is better than no law at all in setting standards for justice,” but as we will see in the next couple of sections and especially in Chapter 6, the same legal parameters also enabled richer tenants to set limits on the struggle that benefited themselves while excluding classes below them. Here, let us focus on how MKP activists and tenants did, in certain cases, bend the law toward themselves.

The illegal armed struggle created the conditions under which the “rule of law” actually began to matter, at least for tenants. The Tenancy Act of 1950 contained several provisions advantageous to tenants, for example, the abolition of *begār* and cesses, which as we have seen were not implemented or enforced, until the peasants enforced them themselves. As for cases over possession of land, even senior bureaucrats had to note that landlords exercised a large measure of influence over the officials who doctored revenue documents and … [were] better poised to have cases decided in their favour due to their ability to engage superior counsel and also their influence over the law courts.  

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But now, the MKP leadership encouraged tenants to refuse to leave the lands and to appeal ejectments on various grounds. Tenants and labourers became increasingly litigious as their disposable income and access to lawyers increased, often MKP leaders like Bangash or Sher Ali Bacha themselves, working *pro bono*. As Bacha himself noted, “free legal and judicial aid has … strengthened the movement.”

Whereas most tenants had simply stopped paying rents, in a few cases in northern Hashtnagar, tenants did continue to pay rents, not to *khāns* but to revenue courts. The logic of the law was a bit convoluted, never mind the actual process of engaging with courts, which demonstrates the difficulty those without legal training or without recourse to trained lawyers would have and continue to have.

Importantly, one of the main demands of the peasant movement was for *khans* to issue receipts for leases; if they did not, the MKP told tenants not to pay rent directly to the landlords. *Khans* were uncomfortable issuing receipts for two reasons. First, it established the rate of the rent for the previous year, but in the absence of a mutually-agreed upon contract or court decree, the law prohibited charging a higher rate than that of the previous year. Tenants could thus refuse to increase rents, which, in the course of the movement, many tenants did. If a landlord wanted to increase rents, they would have to litigate. Second, issuing receipts would create a paper trail establishing a tenants’ possession of certain pieces of land, which might be used to argue for tenancy protections. Since revenue records were often determined at the *khans’ hujras* with the connivance of the *patwaris*, witnesses could claim tenants had never possessed the land to begin with. Instead of granting receipts, or freezing rent increases, *khans* chose to pursue ejectments.

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539 I should note that the following is my interpretation of the Tenancy Act of 1950. I could not find a lawyer who could explain things to me in simple terms, and the most prominent lawyer who spoke to me about this, Latif Afridi, was largely uninterested in explaining the niceties to me and was more interested in discussing the broader political issues.
540 Also, in case of land reform legislation that could drop at any time (and did drop in 1972), tenants could prove their possession of lands.
The law gave landlords the right to eject tenants at the end of a contract or, in the absence of a contract, at the end of the ḥarīʿ or spring harvest (that is, between May 1 and June 15). But the landlord needed a decree from the court, and if tenants refused to leave, then either or both sides had to litigate. Tenants could, for example, make claims for a variety of reasons and, if valid, could avoid ejectment until landlords paid compensation. In the course of litigation, tenants could generally continue to cultivate, and then could avoid ejectment until landlords paid compensation for their labour hitherto. If, as cases dragged on, landlords refused to receive or grant receipts for cash rent (at the rate of the previous year), the law allowed tenants to deposit rents with a revenue officer for later settlement. Hence, dragging cases through the courts established effective rent control. In many cases such rent control persists to this day, or at least, as of the time of my fieldwork in 2013.  

Even for the law to work in favour of the tenant, possession was crucial (nine-tenths of the law, as the saying goes), and that was impossible to do without the use of mass mobilization and then force. Despite that, ultimately the law was in favour of the property rights of the landlords, and several ejectment orders were decreed. That is where force came into play again, or, as Muhammad Ishaq told me,

In those days, the courts would make their decree [in favour of the landlords], but the kisans would [point] their finger at them and challenge them, “Are you going to come take possession of those fields or not? We’ll see then. We’ll make the real decree there.” No one accepted the rulings of the courts.

541 The logic of such persistent rent control was evident even in the 1970s, especially in Mansehra Tahsil of the Hazara District. There, due to previous struggles, “[t]he cash rent payable by tenants … fixed during Settlement of 1901, [was] still in vogue” in certain areas. As a result, those areas were “fertile grounds of landlords tenant litigation. Most of the ejectment suits are instituted because the landlords are not willing to accept nominal rates whereas the tenants are not willing to pay a penny more. Again, under Tenancy law, rent cannot be raised without mutual consent. Hence the landlord-tenant stalemate….…” See Member, Board of Revenue, “Summary of the Case Relating to Landlord/Tenants Problems in Upper Tanawal Area of Hazara District,” February 2, 1973, 115, GS 26/206, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

542 Interview, Arhat Kali, May 21, 2013.
Although tenants played the law, at the end of the day they produced their own land rights through the armour of coercion.543

That said, both peasants and landlords well understood that they were engaged in far more than a legal struggle. Rather, theirs was a political economic struggle between transforming or preserving the relations of production more generally. Ameer Nawaz Khan, the Dakai landlord, cut to the chase when he told me:

The real struggle was not over the rent, but the land itself. [The peasants] said to us, “Who gave this [land] to you?” … Landlords wanted to raise rates, tenants wanted lesser rates, less than the actual rental value of the land. The peasants only demanded receipts when there was talk of raising the rent…. Only one percent of tenants demanded receipts, the 99 percent did not want to pay rent at all.544

Indeed, the overall shift in the relations of dominance, outside and inside the formal apparatuses of the state, corresponded to altering the relations of production, for the appropriation of surplus labour could no longer take place straightforwardly through the coercive mechanisms of khanism.

Spatial variations in new relations of production

The changes in the balance of class power through armed and legal struggle had important implications on the questions of relations of production and social reproduction, these implications were recognizable to participants fairly soon. However, these impacts were regionally differentiated, and leaders of the MKP quickly recognized the patterns and their specific causes themselves.545 Generally, where the ratio of tenants to landowners was greater, the peasant movement was also more successful. But in areas where the ratio was tilted toward

543 To turn Gramsci’s phrase.
544 Interview, Dukki, November 1, 2013.
landowners, the crucial swing factor would be the small landowners and whether or not tenants could win them over to an anti-landlord programme.

The movement’s greatest success was in northern Hashtnagar, as well as in the adjoining regions of Malakand Agency. As we saw in Chapter 2, Hashtnagar’s landlords owned vast tracts of land with comparatively little fragmentation, and there were far fewer smaller landowners here than there were in southern Hashtnagar. Consequently, the landowner fightback against occupations was less cohesive, and the khans’ could not hold on to the residences built on the lands they owned (they could quite literally be surrounded by tenants), and returned to Tangi, which also hosted a police station, or other “ancestral” residences. At one point I sat among three landowners of northern Hashtnagar (a khan, a Syed, and a small landowner), who all agreed that the Tangi khans had gotten so caught up in their own internecine conflicts that, rather than uniting against tenants, they were pleased when one khan’s tenants rose up against him. The Tangi khans, they asserted, had not realized that the tenants were united against all khans, who were also slow to respond to the movement, perhaps because they felt they had land to spare. So, on one hand there were relatively fewer landowners to fight relatively more tenants, and the landowners were not horizontally united.

What this meant was that, as a police official noted in August 1972, the “Kissans of Shimali [northern] Hashtnagar … have not paid the due share of the produce for the last 3 years to the Land Owners.” To the landowners’ chagrin and the tenants’ benefit, the 1972/73 to 1973/4 period saw average inflation of 25 percent per annum—that meant the produce of tenants’ prices went up, while their main cost of ground rent either went to zero, or in those cases

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546 Bacha. While Hashtnagar tenants stopped paying rents from spring 1970, Malakand tenants stopped from spring 1971.
548 Charsadda, October 3, 2013.
where deposits were still being made, remained static in nominal terms and dropped precipitously in real terms. Tenants could now afford to pay back debts and buy nice things. Bread made of wheat was no longer a luxury, or, as Lala Bibi put it, “What we used to eat, now we give to animals.” Those who were already rich, as we will see in Chapter 6, got much richer. Such success, however, was not universal, as we saw with the example of the loss at the village of Nasafai in 1971.

In contrast to northern Hashtnagar (and Malakand) the tenants in southern Hashtnagar were, on the whole, less successful. Indeed, during our 2013 fieldwork in villages like Panerak Kili and Khan Mahi Badraga, where tenants did fight in the 1970s but eventually lost, even some forty years later present-day tenants appeared afraid to speak to us about kisānī. In southern Hashtnagar, there were many more khans and many more small landowners, both absolutely but also relatively when compared to the north. Against the strategic orientation of the MKP, tenants had also stopped paying rent to small landowners, thereby antagonizing them. In Afzal Shah Khamosh’s words, the small landowners became the “armed wing” of the khans. Their political organization was also tighter, as we will explore in the next chapter, with large khans sponsoring organizations of small landowners. Rather than running away, as the northern Hashtnagar khans did, the khans of southern Hashtnagar were in much closer proximity to their lands, tended not to run away, and the greater numbers of landowners helped them to fight back. In some places, khans did compromise with tenants, but not on the very poor terms set in the north.

Some villages did achieve greater success, in some cases because the khans did lose battles, but in other cases because the landlords were amiable to compromise. In Muftiabad, the erstwhile tenant Haji Abdul Mateen told us that tenants were mainly upset over begār and being

551 Interview by Hadia Akhtar, Dawezo Kali, October 5, 2013.
552 Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War.”
553 Bacha, “Ijārah yā baṭāī ki bandish.”
duped into signing over particular rights to the landlords on stamp paper.\textsuperscript{554} They refused to pay rents directly and deposited them with the revenue officers, effecting rent control. Overall, the landlords were amiable and not prone to violence,\textsuperscript{555} and the struggle was carried out through legal channels. Neither of Muftiabad’s landlords had male heirs, and eventually much of the land was sold over to the tenants at greatly discounted rates. In other cases, landlords reached compromises with their tenants before fighting even began, protecting their own interests. Haji Mohammad Tahir Khan of Gulabad, also in southern Hashtnagar, told us that his grandfather and granduncle (owners of 500 acres) consulted with their tenants as MKP-led battles consumed surrounding villages, telling them that, “You are like our own children…. We won’t join with other \textit{khāns}, and you don’t join with the other tenants.”\textsuperscript{556} Their paternalism perhaps saved them from greater trouble, for they had “no losses or forcible occupations, and there were no land reforms.” These cases do suggest that even where tenants did not forcibly take over the land, they could find themselves with more respect and bargaining power than before.

The extent of remaining \textit{khan} power also appears to have determined the extent to which they continued to dominate tenants in other ways. In northern Hashtnagar, Malakand, and parts of Mardan and particular villages in southern Hashtnagar, \textit{begār} and cesses were wiped out. In other villages, as I saw and heard for myself in southern Hashtnagar, these practices either were not wiped out at all or crept back in in different ways as \textit{khans} were able to reassert their power. Similarly, in the northern areas the tenants were now able to enjoy a freed market, no longer having to contend with the \textit{khans’} monopsonies of purchasing produce. Although market

\textsuperscript{554} Interview, Haji Abdul Mateen, Muftiabad, October 8, 2013. Interestingly, Haji Abdul Mateen claimed that the Muftis who owned the village were refugees from the Emirate of Bukhara — they fled as the Red Army entered — and were awarded much \textit{shāmilāt} land for services rendered to the British.

\textsuperscript{555} Although a \textit{Pakistan Forum} report claims that in January 1972, a Mufti Nisar shot and wounded a peasant, and also “unleashed his bull-terrier dogs who tore the peasant to pieces.” See \textit{Pakistan Forum}, “P.F. Investigative Report: Sarhad Peasants Under Attack,” 20–21. Haji Abdul Mateen said the brothers were named Mufti Muhammad Abbas and Mufti Hashim. I did not cross-check these stories.

\textsuperscript{556} Interview, Gulabad, October 30, 2013.
competition has also opened up in southern Hashtnagar, my cursory investigations into the markets showed that mercantile capitalists in northern Hashtnagar tended to come from rich peasant backgrounds, whereas in the southern part they tended to be linked to, or were, *khans*.

Although the variation between northern and southern Hashtnagar has its roots in geography and land settlement patterns, the MKP leaders understood the problem of the small landowners to fundamentally be a political problem of insufficient success in achieving hegemony over them, as we will examine in the next chapter. In general, where peasants were more successful in forcibly occupying lands and reducing or stopping payments of rent, many *khans* no longer exercised control of the land—the primary source of their surplus appropriation. Additionally, many of the ancillary mechanisms of appropriating surplus labour also collapsed as *nāzirs* and their network of surveillance no longer functioned as they had previously to enforce *begār* or cesses. Tenants became the *de facto* proprietors of the land that they cultivated—they controlled the land and its produce. Wherever the peasant movement succeeded it had effected something of a land or tenancy reform from below. However, the preceding assessment of variations in the new relations of production has not looked closely at the peasant movement itself, and how these changes led to transformations among tenants and their relations with landless labourers, which in fact became more strained. We will examine this question more closely in Chapter 6, although we will introduce it in the next section, which focuses more closely on how the institutionalization of class power was reconfigured as a result of the peasant movement.

### Reordering informal and formal rule

The collapse of *khanism* engendered the reconfiguration of the institutionalization of class power in much of northern Hashtnagar and adjoining areas of Malakand Agency. The MKP sought to construct peasant-based institutions of authority and association, both to undermine
khanism and to operate in its stead. But what the party did not do, or rather, was unable to sustain, was the institutionalization of an alternative, specifically political, power. Indeed, the movement outpaced the party’s designs, and brought new institutional and organizational practices under strain. Moreover, if on one side, peasant-based institutions emerged in and across villages, on the other, and perhaps ironically, as khans and small landowners turned to the formal apparatuses of the state to support them, the state apparatus also began to become more salient in the villagers’ lives.

The most important institution of peasant-based authority was the revival of the jirga, a modular and scalable practice of electing representatives or elders to make decisions and resolve disputes, and more particularly its revival in the form of “peasant courts.” Earlier, we have seen that tenants and labourers went to khans to have their disputes resolved, and would conduct jirgas among themselves only in secret. But when the tenants of northern Hashtnagar first came together to strike and rally on April 19, the MKP leaders made them swear on the Qur’an that they would “peacefully resolve their internal contradictions and form a united front against the Khans.”

Jirgas however are ad hoc institutions that need not have centralization or permanence. But in many cases the jirgas took the form of “peasant courts” under the authority of MKP leaders that implemented decisions based on party policy. On November 16, 1972, for example, it was Syed Nazeef Khan Kaka, president of Malakand’s MKP, who presided over an appeal case between two tenants where one had rented land from the khan on lease, and then sublet it to another tenant for sharecropping. Ironically, the plaintiff is the one who was punished, because he

\[\text{did not cultivate on the land himself nor is he its owner but rather he took the land as sub-contractor and became a third party between the owner and tenant, and plays the role of one who exploits as an agent on the strength of his capital, therefore his contract is ended. Because this goes against our party’s policy, which says in clear terms that peasants will}\]

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be delivered from the curse of sub-contracting and all mediating links of exploitation between the owner and tenant will be broken….  

The defendant was also fined for violating previous decisions of jirgas. In many villages, thus, it was the party’s authority that reigned and/or elders formed their own jirgas, sloughing off their subjection to khāns. Importantly, here, state authority was not operative—such that even a plaintiff would rather bring his case to the MKP than test his luck in state courts.

What is also important is how the MKP came to adjudicate land rights, and what this meant for its own coalition and the difficulties of maintaining a near spontaneous movement. For most tenants, and in the discourse of the MKP, “revolution” meant land to the tiller. The slogan did not account for the differences in possession of land and capital, never mind accounting for those who possessed no land at all. Moreover, as we have seen, tenants, especially richer tenants, had been leading the movement, contributing prominent organizers and funds; but in November 1972, many began to negotiate deals with khan in secret, anxious about having to repay three years of unpaid rents if the movement ultimately failed. This left a more numerous poor peasantry vulnerable and challenged peasant unity. Moreover, even the deals that were struck did not result in khan issuing receipts or withdrawing cases. Thereafter the MKP “issued the line that rents should not be paid secretly and individually, but that compromises should be reached through the party.”

Although the MKP sought to establish its own authority, these kinds of incidents showed how certain tenants, particularly the richer tenants, could and would go past its authority; indeed, they would violate solidarity with other, poorer tenants and labourers in favour of their own interests.

Perhaps most problematic for the MKP’s project of building mazdūr-kisan unity was the contradiction between tenants and landless labourers. While we will examine this issue in detail

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559 Bacha, “Ijārah yā baṭāī ki bandish.”
in Chapter 6, here it is worth seeing how its adjudication demonstrated the authority of the party. In Ameerabad, only seven families out of 113 possessed land in 1968, while the remainder had been ejected from lands and were now being ejected “even from their homes.” The MKP succeeded in preventing the ejectments, but tenants paid labourers low wages, and the khâns sought to take advantage of this contradiction to separate the two groups. If labourers did not join mobilizations against ejectments, tenants would not be secure in their possession. The MKP thus negotiated, first, a wage increase, and later, minor redistribution of lands from tenants to labourers. Henceforth, if there were a conflict

the peasants and workers would collectively deal with the landlords. The peasants also agreed in no uncertain terms that if the revolution succeeds, the land will again be redistributed and this time it will be an equal distribution.

These three episodes illustrate how the MKP sought to assert its authority in allocating land rights, negotiating between tenants, landless labourers and even khâns. This suggested the possibilities of an emergent “dual power” situation. In the understanding of the party leadership, these alternative “institutions of people’s democracy” were a sufficient enough threat that state repression in Malakand was specifically a consequence of the bureaucracy wanting to “crush this parallel system at its initial stage.” The party however appears to have had difficulty establishing permanent or even semi-permanent mechanisms of administration outside of the party itself—that is, nothing like the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies in Russia or the janatana sarkârs (people’s governments) of the current Maoist movement in India.

Although in 1970 the party formed 26 Kisan Committees across northern Hashtnagar, these latter just dissolved into the MKP. There was no distinction between the particularity of tenant

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560 Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 15.
561 Bangash, 16.
562 Lenin, “The Dual Power.”
564 On the latter, see Sundar, “Mimetic Sovereignties, Precarious Citizenship.”
demands and generality of political activity. In terms of the latter, in August 1970 after the battle of Bahram Dehri, the party organized a “representative assembly” (*numāʿindah ijlās*) of elders that negotiated with the *khans* and state administration, pressed that the demands be generalized to all of northern Hashtnagar, and called on neighbouring tenants to join the struggle. But that is both the first and last time the question of a representative assembly showed up. There was, therefore, not a full “dual power” situation in terms of contesting the state, but the village- and regional-level power of *khans* was beginning to be replaced by peasant-based *jirgas*, courts, and the MKP itself co-ordinating between villages.

Meanwhile, *khans* themselves had to lean on the formal apparatuses of the state, making these ever more salient in the lives of tenants and landless labourers. We have seen how the armed struggle took the level of a low-intensity conflict, with 65 platoons of the Frontier Constabulary operating at its height. The police intervened forcefully on behalf of the *khans*. In June 1973, government officials noted, “Civil Armed Forces particularly the Police was used invariably in all ejectment cases while under the law, it could [only] be used in exceptional circumstances with due permission of the District Magistrate.”

In one case, the Nawabzada of Toru Muhammad Azim Khan even hired a Mardan police platoon to protect his village lands, which as we saw were nevertheless were taken back by peasants when the platoon left. Up until 1973, *khans* engaging in forcible actions or violence against peasants was not a problem for the police and provincial administration. Based on the police records in the archives, the MKP was largely justified in its complaint in 1972 that

*khans* have been given a free hand, that whenever they want they can become belligerent toward peasants, forcibly eject them from lands, and set fire to their homes, and

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567 Governor’s Secretariat, NWFP, “Nawabzada of Toru.”
ruthlessly kill peasants. Despite all this no proceedings are initiated against *khans*, nor are they arrested, nor are any cases filed against them.568

Indeed, accompanying the mobilization of violence by the state apparatus was the increasing activity of the judicial apparatus, the revenue and civil courts, as well as the criminal courts, increasingly putting tenants into encounters with state institutions. Certainly, the revenue courts by later 1972 were overburdened with all the increase in litigation.569 Here, senior officials were already quite well aware of how *khans* were happy to collude with officials at various levels to violate the tenets of the law. For example, no less a personality than the Chief Minister of NWFP—accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar and the Inspector General of Police—looked into a confrontation between tenants and Mufti Nisar, a *khan* of northern Hashtnagar, in June 1973 and found that “some of the revenue officials had connived at tampering with the official record to help the landlord against the tenants.” Thus, the court order had “unfortunately been misrepresented and, later on, tampered with.”570 (Interestingly, the police absolved themselves of responsibility in this matter, claiming they were simply following a court order.) As this judicial apparatus of the state became far more salient, tenants also were increasingly “interpellated” as legal subjects.571

That said, the increasing salience of the judicial apparatus in the everyday lives of tenants was as much a consequence of their own movement’s legal strategy of challenging ejectments inside (and outside) of the courts, as it was of *khans* turning to the state apparatus. The point is that the latter’s capacity to rig the system for their own benefit was recognized thoroughly even

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by officials in the state, never mind the constant collusion between police and *khans* when it came to ejectments. The *khans’* reliance on the formal apparatus of the state was the necessary consequence of the collapse of their own authority in the villages, brought about by the armed struggle, and a perhaps ironic corollary of the peasant movement and MKP establishing their own forms of authority. Ultimately, what this points to is the shift in the balance of the dominant class’s locus of power from the informal institutions of *khanism* to the formal institutions of the state; that is, a shift in the institutionalization of class power overall.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that the relations of production and institutional configuration of class power in northern Hashtnagar and some adjoining areas was a consequence of the change in the balance of power between *khans* and tenants. This balance of power changed because the MKP was able to tap into and modify the social and political practices of the region’s tenants and labourers, including making use of *qaum* organization to spread the movement, building on martial practices to defend lands and attack *khans*, while also engaging in legal struggles to try and win more solid footings for the tenants’ possession of lands. Ultimately, the struggle shifted not only the relations of production, but the collapse of *khanism* in many villages, and its overall weakening, also established new relations of political practice at the village level. Notably, allocation of the enjoyment of land rights among tenants, labourers and *khans* operated through peasant-based authority and the MKP. Basically, *khans* could no longer enjoy their erstwhile so-called “customary” (that is, illegally enforced) rights, and even their legal rights were subordinated to peasant occupation. That is, the struggle birthed new and nascent rules of the game, or institutions, that were nevertheless still in flux.

Accordingly, it is important to note that there was nothing fixed about these shifts in the relations of production and dominance. The state apparatus was still firmly on the side of the
*khans*, and while this was not sufficient to stop the peasant movement into 1972, the tenants’ stronger position eventually could have weakened and the peasants’ gains could have faced retreat. What was required for these newer relations to take hold was the intervention of that very state apparatus, which meant in turn that certain aspects of state functioning gained greater salience and themselves acquired greater fixity. Yet, the state apparatus itself was pushed to intervene and engage in these ways by the dominant classes’ strategic approach to questions of hegemony and dominance as strategies of rule. In other words, the salience of *khans*’ political and social power had to be rearticulated. It is to this question of hegemony and dominance that we will now turn.
Chapter 5: Passive revolution, state building and the intensification of capitalism

Introduction

After 1973, while the new relations of production established in northern Hashtnagar took hold, the nascent authority of the MKP quickly began to wane even as the peasant-based practices of jirga continued. These divergent trajectories can be explained with reference to a sharp change in the character of state intervention in 1973. Hitherto we have discussed how the state responded to the peasant movement with repression at the behest of the khans and landowners in general. However, in 1973 a new government adopted a new tack, one geared toward achieving consent rather than intensifying coercion. Fundamentally, I argue that the new orientation of the state was based in the change of balance of forces caused by peasant organizing. However, this was buttressed by contradictions within the ruling classes. This chapter examines how and why different provincial governments in the Frontier, representing different fractions of the ruling classes, responded differently to the MKP-led peasant movement in shaping the form and content of the state apparatus. I also examine the consequences of these changes in the state for the longevity of the peasant movement. Before doing so, some national and then provincial context is necessary.

The Mazdoor Kisan Party-led peasant movement took off in northern Hashtnagar starting in April 1970, and had reached surrounding regions within a year. Meanwhile, the student and worker mass movements of 1968-1969 continued in urban and even rural areas, but were overshadowed by crises among the political elites. After the resignation of field marshal and president Ayub Khan at the national level in March 1969, Pakistan’s government was taken up by another military regime under general Yahya Khan, explicitly under martial law as opposed to the civilian law of the previous regime. The new regime supervised the country’s first national
elections with universal suffrage held in December 1970. Here, the Awami League won the majority of seats—but all of them in East Pakistan (Bengal); while the Pakistan People’s Party won the majority of seats in West Pakistan. This set off a crisis among the military and civilian parties seeking a power-sharing arrangement, for few West Pakistani elites were in favour of historically dominated East Pakistani elites ruling. By March 1971 the political crisis led to military intervention, sparking a war for the liberation of Bangladesh, in which the Pakistani military played a genocidal role. By December 1971, the war was lost, Bangladesh was independent, and the military finally transferred power to PPP leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in what was now a truncated Pakistan.

Bhutto’s government at the centre now had to construct the unity of the Pakistani social formation anew, contending with any regionalist tendencies emboldened by the separation of Bangladesh, as well as the ongoing mass movements of workers, students, peasants, and other sectors. Responding to the latter, for example, Bhutto introduced the Land Reforms Regulation of March 1972, which set ceilings on landholdings and introduced important tenancy protections into law. Bhutto could not, however, claim to represent all of the constituent provinces of even the truncated Pakistan, for the PPP had performed poorly electorally in the NWFP and Balochistan. In the Frontier, the PPP won three out of 40 provincial assembly seats, and only one out of 18 national assembly seats (see Table 4). The PPP soon ceded power in these provinces to a coalition government of the National Awami Party (NAP) and the Jamiat Ulema-e Islam (JUI), who effectively began their administrations in April 1972. It is worth noting that although NAP had garnered the greatest number of seats in the Frontier provincial assembly, its base was restricted almost entirely to the Peshawar valley, that is, the Peshawar and Mardan districts (see Table 5)—precisely the areas most affected by the peasant movement.
### Table 4: North-West Frontier Province Election Results, 1970

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Provincial Assembly Seats</th>
<th>National Assembly Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Awami Party (NAP)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League (Qayyum) (QML)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamiat Ulema-e Islam (JUI)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan People’s Party (PPP)</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convention Muslim League (PMLC)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaat-e Islami (JI)</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 5: District-wise distribution of provincial assembly seats, North-West Frontier Province, 1970

<table>
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<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>NAP</th>
<th>QML</th>
<th>JUI</th>
<th>PPP</th>
<th>PMLC</th>
<th>JI</th>
<th>Indep.</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Peshawar</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Swat</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWFP</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Bashir.

Note: Some straddling seats (e.g., Mardan-cum-Hazara) have been put under the primary district (e.g., Mardan).

Meanwhile, the PPP was also negotiating with NAP and JUI to agree on a new constitution for Pakistan at the centre. However, they constantly struggled over the extent of
actual autonomy being granted by the centre to the provincial governments in NWFP and Balochistan. In February 1973, the central government discovered weapons in the Iraqi Embassy allegedly headed for Baloch insurgents. The PPP government responded by dismissing the NAP-JUI government in Balochistan the night of February 14, 1973, and imposed governor’s rule.\(^{572}\) In solidarity, the NAP-JUI alliance in NWFP resigned its ministry in protest in the morning. It is worth noting that at the time NAP and JUI did not seem to think either the dismissal or resignation to be permanent, for they continued to engage in negotiations with the PPP over the final shape of the Pakistani constitution, and ultimately voted unanimously for it in the national assembly in April.\(^{573}\) In other words, the resignation of NAP-JUI was a contingent event, but one that enabled the PPP to govern the NWFP and implement far-reaching changes.

This chapter relies largely on state and party archives to examine how the different governments of NAP-JUI and PPP responded to the MKP-led peasant movement and shaped the form of the state. I argue that their particular orientations to the peasant movement, and the consequent ways in which they sought to shape and use the state apparatus, can be understood in light of the hegemonic political projects they sought to establish. Section one argues that NAP had a constricted hegemonic project, one that did not extend beyond uniting the interests of larger and smaller landowners in the Peshawar valley. Accordingly, NAP-JUI mobilized the repressive apparatus of the state, rather than seeking to compromise with the tenants. In contrast, as section two lays out, the PPP had come to power in the name of workers and peasants, and its hegemonic project, although still rooted in landed elites keen on the sanctity of private property, did make legal concessions in the form of land and tenancy reforms and workers’ rights.\(^{574}\)

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572 The central government’s intervention sparked an armed insurgency in Balochistan that lasted until 1977.
574 The legal land and tenancy reforms, however, were highly ambiguous in the sense that in practice they were not realized by most tenants. Rather, the legislation led perhaps to even greater ejectments and consolidation of landlord control over lands in much of Pakistan, especially Punjab. See Herring, “Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the ‘Eradication of Feudalism’ in Pakistan”; Herring, *Land to the Tiller*; Hussain, “Land Reform in Pakistan: A Reconsideration”; Ahmed, “Transformation of Agrarian Structure in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan.”
However, its interventions in the Peshawar valley went above and beyond the legal land and tenancy reforms. I argue that the PPP was compelled to adopt a more intensive strategy of “passive revolution” in the Peshawar valley as a response to the increased organizational strength of the tenantry. The PPP forced *khans* to make significant concessions in land rights to the tenants, in this way the PPP sought the active and passive consent of sections of the tenantry. However, the PPP achieved this redistribution in land rights not by mobilizing tenants, but through the bureaucracy, increasing the state apparatus’s capacity and relative autonomy from *khans* while also demobilizing the peasant movement. This involved undermining, indeed, repressing, the MKP. Section three examines the consequences of the PPP’s interventions, arguing that in redistributing rights in land while restoring the sanctity of private property rights, it established a liberal hegemony over tenants—a passive revolution. Section four turns to the denouement of PPP’s rule in the province, arguing that by alienating the Peshawar valley’s landowners and demobilizing the tenants it ironically helped set the stage for its own demise in the form of yet another military coup.

**NAP-JUI: Domination over hegemony**

When NAP formed a coalition government with the Jamiat Ulema-e Islam (JUI) in the province between 1972 and 1973, its sought to mobilize the repressive apparatus of the state against the peasant movement and the MKP, in conjunction with the paramilitary efforts of the *khāns* themselves, to try and restore the rule of private property in land and to re-assert the authority of *khāns* and landowners. Its hegemonic project thus restricted itself to landowners and did not seriously address the concerns of the peasantry or seek to negotiate seriously with the MKP. This approach to dealing with the movement was largely a continuation of the repression exercised by the military regime under Yahya Khan (1969-1971). These moves only seem to
have inflamed the peasant movement, and NAP-JUI failed to achieve any of its goals before effectively abdicating the government over to the PPP.

The NAP-JUI coalition government that came to power in the province in May of 1972 appeared reluctant to make the compromises, however limited and discursive, that were necessary to articulate the political economic interests of landowners with those of tenants and agricultural labourers. In a 1972 interview, NAP leader Abdul Wali Khan criticized the PPP (and MKP) approach to socialism,

[The PPP is] advocating land to the peasants, shop to the shopkeeper, factory to the labourer and house to whoever occupies it. This is the kind of socialism that I have not been able to find in Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin or whoever be the spokesman. In socialism all means of production go to the state, not to the individual. I can’t take the kind of socialism Mr. Bhutto is preaching.\footnote{575 Khan and Ahmed, “Interview with Wali Khan,” 18.}

Unfortunately for NAP, the peasants and workers of northern NWFP were taking it pretty well, and they were getting it most directly from the MKP. Here, Wali Khan did not acknowledge the grievances of tenants that led to the movement, instead asserting that the “two leaders of the Mazdoor-Kisan Party, Afzal Bangash and the ex-Major Ishaque were both paid government agents…. All this law and order situation is the creation of the party in power.”\footnote{576 Khan and Ahmed, 12.} The irony is that the discourse of “law and order” had been used against NAP and its predecessors, the Khudai Khidmatgar movement, several times; moreover, Wali Khan knew both Bangash and Ishaq Muhammad intimately, having been in NAP together. Yet, the tenant movement was seen as something simply instigated by the MKP and the PPP.\footnote{577 There was some truth to Wali Khan’s statement, to be noted in the next section.}

The NAP-JUI government did make two attempts at setting up a conciliation committee, in June and in August of 1972, but these appeared to be half-hearted attempts. According to the additional inspector general of police, the first attempt failed because of “none cooperation [\textit{sic}]

\footnote{575} Khan and Ahmed, “Interview with Wali Khan,” 18.  
\footnote{576} Khan and Ahmed, 12.  
\footnote{577} There was some truth to Wali Khan’s statement, to be noted in the next section.
on the part of the M.K.P.” particularly their “hostile attitude and offering ridiculous terms,”

but the MKP identified the failure of both attempts in the government approaching selected
peasants separately from the MKP, instead of recognizing the authority of the MKP’s leaders or
their nominated representatives. Particularly in the second meeting, the MKP submitted
concrete demands in writing about restoring ejected tenants to lands wherever possible,
implementing rent controls, and preventing further ejectments. The government, however, seems
to have rejected recognizing the authority of the MKP in contributing to the determination of
rights over land and citizenship in any new arrangement.

There was perhaps a cultural element to the aloofness that NAP seems to have exhibited
toward the tenants as we have seen in Chapters 2 and 3, a question of who constituted the citizen
who could make claims upon land rights. Indeed, tenants who claimed to be farming Wali Khan’s
lands or lands in his home area, told me they were unhappy with his behaviour as a khan back
then, and continue to be afraid and unhappy with the behaviour of his son and relations. Indeed,
the class dimension of culture was not lost on the tenants, nor on a Punjabi observer who wrote
in the MKP’s bulletin Circular that “[Wali Khan and his comrades] do not consider tenants,
aricultural labourers, and rural artisans to be Pakhtun (Pathan) at all.”

Rather than articulating a Pakhtun identity that incorporated the working classes, the NAP made generalized appeals to
Pakhtun nationalism and Punjabi oppression.

Instead of considering tenant demands seriously, the NAP-JUI government sought to use
the repressive state apparatus to articulate the interests of the khāns with those of the numerically

of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
579 Sher Ali Bacha, “Sarḥad hakīmat kī kisāṅon men phūt dālne kī har koshīsh nākām hoī,” Circular, no. 30
(1972): 2; Afzal Bangash, “Muftī Mahmūd aur Walī Khān suno! Tum aur tumhāre āqā bīhī jāgīrdārī aur sarmāyah
580 “Dekhne hum bīhī gā‘e....,” Circular, no. 22 (1972): 5–7. It is worth noting that the MKP newspaper Sanobar was
banned in 1971, and the NAP-JUI government continued to disallow its publication. This meant that the MKP got its
word out through a bulletin called Circular which, technically, was for members only.
preponderant smaller landowners, primarily by continuing the low-intensity conflict approach of its military predecessors. NAP-JUI’s hegemonic project was relatively easier for it to pursue because many tenants were, admittedly, targeting the smaller landowners as soft targets—contrary to MKP policy. Moreover, because they often shared ties of kinship there was no easy way to draw a categorical line between the large landowners and the smaller ones, the status of khan being one that involves recognition from other landowners. Although small landowners may have chafed at the authority the khāns exercised inside and outside of the villages, they often organized together in groups such as Anjuman-i Malekanan-i Arazi (Land Owners’ Association), sending deputations to the governor, protesting the “lawlessness,” and demanding bans on the MKP. Responding to such protests from landowners in June 1972, the additional inspector general of police assured his superiors that the “Government is doing its best to meet the situation by effecting the arrest of miscreants, seizing unlicensed arms and intensifying patrolling by Police and F.C. in the affected areas.” The MKP also alleged that the NAP’s youth wing, the Pakhtun Zalmi (Pakhtun Youth), was acting as a paramilitary force to assist in ejectments. In continuing the ejectments through use of armed force, the government united the interests of larger and smaller landowners, but also exacerbated the conflict.

Indeed, the NAP-JUI government went after the MKP leaders, but instead of dampening the movement this only seems to have given it more air. Through the summer of 1972 the government put bans on the free movement of MKP leaders, especially Afzal Bangash, then turned to issuing arrest warrants, jailing some while driving others underground.

26, despite its top leadership being underground, the MKP organized a massive rally in Peshawar, attended, by government estimates, by 9,000-10,000 people—although several respondents who attended the rally told me there were closer to 100,000 people there. The province’s tenants were not in a conciliatory mood, seeing the NAP-JUI government as being uninterested in their welfare and in seeking a political solution to social and economic problems.

To complement its militarised and repressive approach, the NAP-JUI government also sought to amend existing laws in favour of landowners. The governor called for a meeting of ministers at the end of 1972 to “discuss problems created by MKP and also tenancy reforms i.e. proposed amendment in NWFP Tenancy Act, 1950.” The law minister thus collected other ministers and a panel of lawyers, almost all of whom were prominent khāns, to go through the Tenancy Act. All the amendments they proposed were favourable to landowners. For example, they “decided that 40 per cent limit [on rent payable by division of produce] may be removed” from Section 8-A. The meeting also discussed particular changes in the name of smaller landowners, particularly “women and orphans,” a discourse that reflected the protestors’ not untrue assertions that the tenants targeted even “small piece[s] of land owned by widows, orphans and minors…..” However, these amendments seeking to articulate the interests of larger and smaller landowners never arrived in the provincial assembly for consideration, for the NAP-JUI government in the Frontier resigned on February 15, 1973 before they could be pursued.

**PPP: Making the state intervene**

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586 Law Department, “Minutes of the Meeting Held on 4.1.1973 at 10 A.M.,” 3.
587 Law Department, 9.
If NAP was unwilling to pursue a hegemonic political project that incorporated tenants and labourers, the PPP was the opposite. However, even by 1973 the class alliance that the PPP was seeking to construct in the province specifically and in the country more generally was rooted in landed elites, who were keen on restoring the sanctity of private property in land that the MKP-led movement had undermined. Lacking a party apparatus in the province, the PPP-led government relocated authority in allocating and recognizing land rights away from the MKP, never mind the *khāns*, and toward the administrative apparatus of the state itself. To accomplish this, the PPP-led government ensured that the relative autonomy of the state apparatus from *khans* increased, as did the state’s infrastructural power.589

The PPP’s hegemonic project for the Frontier shaped up while it was in opposition, but this involved destabilizing the NAP-JUI government by encouraging the peasant movement. At some point in 1972, Bhutto appears to have contacted MKP leaders to reach “an understanding that his government in the centre will not support the NAP-JUI government in NWFP against the MKP and that the latter could initiate peasant resistance to the landlords in the NWFP.”590

Indeed, Major Ishaq confirmed that the MKP leadership met Bhutto once, but on Bhutto’s request… [I]f MKP are being let off sometimes by the PPP government, then MKP could not stop that. And if PPP took advantage of MKP’s rift with NAP, again how could MKP stop that.591

Where NAP-JUI governments refused to recognize the MKP’s leadership over the tenants, the PPP did the opposite. Meanwhile, the PPP’s main leader in the province, Hayat Khan Sherpao, a major Hashtnagar landlord, frequently made statements like, “PPP had come into power with the support of Kissans, Mazdoors and other down-trodden classes of society and would, therefore,

never abandon its benefactors,” condemning the NAP-JUI government “for the blood of the Kissans being spilled throughout the Province.”\textsuperscript{592} The PPP thus sought to discursively and politically incorporate the representatives and represented of the MKP into its own hegemonic project, one which sought to use the latter as a battering ram against NAP.

However, the power blocs that the PPP was seeking to construct in the province specifically and in the country more generally were both hostile to the revolutionary agenda of the MKP, for they were also rooted in the landed elites. Although the PPP had won the most seats in West Pakistan by riding a wave of class-based anger and the grassroots organizing of radical activists, Bhutto soon turned against the left in the party and against his own working class base in instances such as the repression of workers in Karachi in June 1972.\textsuperscript{593} In this regard, the PPP chief minister of Sindh complained to the governor and chief minister of NWFP that, “Mr. Afzal Bangash, Mazdoor Kissan Leader was in Karachi and it was suspected that he might be involved in brewing up trouble.”\textsuperscript{594} There was a stringent class struggle within the PPP between radicals rooted in labour and the peasantry, and landed elites and capitalists; as a consequence, the PPP was by no means fundamentally oriented to the MKP’s agenda, any more than NAP was. Yet, when it came time for the PPP to lead the government in the NWFP in 1973, it had to respond to the MKP’s agenda by following through on its pro-peasant stance, while also demonstrating that it could better serve a “law and order” agenda than the previous government. As we have seen, the PPP had little ground presence in the province to begin with, reflected in its three elected members in the provincial assembly out of 40. (Curiously, the one PPP member of the national assembly elected from the province, Abdul Khaliq Khan of Mardan, split from the PPP in 1972

\textsuperscript{593} Jones, \textit{The Pakistan People's Party}; Ali, “The Strength of the Street Meets the Strength of the State.”
\textsuperscript{594} Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, “Minutes of the Governor’s Conference Held at Rawalpindi on 11-6-1972,” June 15, 1972, 2, GS 10/86, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This complaint is all the more remarkable for this was the first item of discussion at the first such conference of governors and chief ministers of a democratic Pakistan.
due to its increasing drift toward the landed elites and capitalists within the party, and joined the MKP in 1973.)\textsuperscript{595} Accordingly, the PPP’s provincial group had to form a coalition with the Qayyum Muslim League and a group of independents led by Aslam Khattak. The latter two groups’ bases of support were outside of the Peshawar valley (Table 5). Qayyum Khan, it should be recalled, had shown himself to be amenable to limited land reforms during his tenure as chief minister. Khattak, who was appointed governor, pursued the PPP’s two aims by leaning heavily on the administrative apparatus of the state, and restored a measure of “order” in the province by dramatically violating the “law.”

Khattak replaced the authority of the MKP by expanding the state’s capabilities, that is, the “resources at the disposal of the state for exercising control over society.”\textsuperscript{596} One of Khattak’s first moves upon becoming governor was to place a moratorium on legal ejectments, which paralyzed the \textit{khāns} who were trying to restore their possession of lands through the state apparatus, and earned the trust of many peasants. Khattak had been appointed governor immediately after the resignation of the NAP-JUI in February, and soon thereafter placed a ban on the enforcement of ejectment decrees, which was ratified by the new chief minister and cabinet in June: “it was decided that no ejectments from land will take place till further orders.”\textsuperscript{597} The decision effectively suspended the authority of the courts; Khattak himself was worried, “I do hope that this does not expose us to the mischief of contempt of Court also?”\textsuperscript{598} But more than that, the moratorium appeared to produce a vacuum of authority over land rights. The state apparatus de-authorized itself, but it also reduced the bargaining power of both the \textit{khāns}, who could no longer rely on police and paramilitaries to enforce possession, and the


\textsuperscript{596} Soifer, “State Infrastructural Power,” 236.

\textsuperscript{597} Minallah, “Ejectments from Land,” 77.

MKP, for tenants no longer needed the party’s contingent authority or the unity with the landless to secure their possession. In this way the government expanded the state’s legitimacy among tenants, a key capability of infrastructural power.599

Khattak’s second move was to re-insert the state apparatus extra-legally into this vacuum of authority. Khattak expanded the state’s institutional capabilities by striking conciliation committees under the authority of district administration officials to bring together contending parties. The governor’s instructions, directed specifically at the deputy commissioners of Peshawar and Mardan districts and the political agent of Malakand Agency, were to set up conciliation committees with an equal number of representatives from both the sides — though persons to be nominated on the Committees should preferably be those who have a reputation for being moderates. Major disputes should be referred to this Committee, and they should be encouraged to come to quick, suitable solutions, so that these disputes do not erupt into major law and order problems.600

The directives also called for ad-hoc committees to deal with “smaller, localized problems … before these can snowball into major affairs.”601 Two senior officials were appointed to oversee the process in Peshawar and Mardan districts respectively. The deputy commissioner of Peshawar set up conciliation committees at the sub-district (tahsil) levels in Charsadda and Peshawar, and the deputy commissioner of Mardan set up six such committees at the police station level. Even though it was a temporary measure, the state apparatus was being expanded to systematize a more intimate knowledge of village-level dynamics and to develop a refined repertoire of dealing with agrarian disputes.

601 Salim, 72.
The conciliation committees posed a very direct threat to the fragments of the MKP’s peasant sovereignty, increasing infrastructural power in a way that varied subnationally, that is, it was targeted at some areas and not others. The MKP fully recognized this, noting bitterly that this charity is only being distributed in areas where the rural masses are organized under the banner of the Mazdoor Kisan Party. In the rest of the Frontier Province ejectments continue, begār also continues, violence also continues. It is obvious that this is being carried out according to a plan to separate the Mazdoor Kisan Party from the masses and to crush it.⁶⁰²

When officials went looking for “moderates” among the tenants, the latter tried to “evade the issue.”⁶⁰³ They may have been evasive because tenants were increasingly being threatened by the MKP with fines and punishments for violating party policies, such as speaking at meetings without authorization of superiors.⁶⁰⁴ The deputy commissioner of Mardan also understood the logic at play:

I am … not very hopeful that … the Mazdoor Kissan Party will be able to finalize its nominations. Such a conciliation on a noticable [sic] scale would be against the Political interests of the Mazdoor Kissan Party. I feel that they are not genuinely interested in affecting a compromise between the landlords and tenants and thereby committing political suicide.⁶⁰⁵

Even by April 1974, the governor had to report to Prime Minister Bhutto that in Mardan, conciliation committees “could not be formed owing to the non-cooperation of the landlords-tenants in nominating their representatives to work on these committees.”⁶⁰⁶ However, officials had better luck in Charsadda, and found success despite the MKP’s intransigence.

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⁶⁰⁵ Khan, “Conciliation Comittees to Solve Landlords and Tenants Disputes,” 97.
Indeed, the moratorium on ejectments as well as the conciliations were quite successful in making the state apparatus the authority that negotiated allocation of land rights. Thus, infrastructural power also increased as measured by its weight, that is, the state’s “radiating institutions … and their impact on society.”  

607 In March 1974, Khattak briefed Prime Minister Bhutto, noting that, “Out of nearly 1800 cases in Mardan and Peshawar Districts more than 1700 have since been resolved.”  

608 The figures may have been overstressed to impress Bhutto, but several MKP documents concede that there was definitely a decline in peasant militancy. Most of these cases had been resolved in Charsadda, perhaps because, being the heart of the movement in northern Hashtnagar, it also involved the greatest anxiety for tenants seeking to regularize their status on the lands.  

609 The MKP representatives who served in Charsadda’s conciliation committees, including Adam Khan, the former nāżīr and union council chairman who became a leading figure in the MKP, were relatively enthusiastic about co-operation with the government.  

610 Meanwhile in Mardan, despite the lack of conciliation committees, revenue courts had worked to bring the number of pending cases down to 68 by April 1974, a far cry from over 700 that had existed in August 1973. Perhaps this is because most tenants here had not stopped paying rents to begin with, having just resisted ejectments.  

611 In either case, peasants had, ultimately, turned to the authority of the state in the thousands, and the MKP could not hold them back.

Here, it is worth noting that the state apparatus was not merely the instrument of those who controlled it, for the class struggle that existed in society also expressed itself inside the state apparatus. State personnel were not always simply happy to have more power, in fact, they

610 Interview with Muhammad Ishaq, Arhat Kali, May 21, 2013.
seemed at times to resist taking on more power. When, in April 1973 the new governor issued directions to begin conciliation committees, officials dragged their feet. In July, following the moratorium on ejectments, he became agitated as disputes persisted. For example,

Governor has been pleased to record the following observations about these problems: “What is happening with regard to the reconciliation committees that I had asked to be formed some time ago. We are proceeding at a snail’s pace. This will not do! Who is sitting on this?”

When conciliation committees were eventually set up, the appointed personnel in Mardan and Peshawar expressed their concerns, as we have seen, through pessimism. The strongest report, however, came from the commissioner of the Malakand Division, who questioned in very strong terms the legality of the moratorium on ejectments and the wisdom of conciliation committees because of the landlords’ response. He pointed to the “discontentment and resentment amongst a large majority of landlords” contrasted to the “tenant class [feeling] greatly encouraged as they are convinced in their mind that the Government will always be on their side in whatever they do whether rightly or wrongly.”

The instructions received on the subject — ejectments from land — obviously militate against the established law of the country. The decree-holders insist on the execution of the Court decrees but over and over again they are told that the action has to be kept in abeyance in view of the directive from the Government. This, naturally, does not satisfy them…. Their anxiety in this respect is understandable.

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612 In so doing they used the “weapons of the weak,” including “foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, … sabotage, and so forth.” Scott, Weapons of the Weak, 29.
615 Commissioner, Malakand Division, 108.
As for conciliation, the commissioner insisted on its usefulness in initial stages, but not after courts make decisions in favour of one or another party. Landlords would thus be left with no choice but to take the law into their own hands. The commissioner was protesting very directly on behalf of the landlords and their legal rights; indeed, on behalf of the law itself whose sanctity was being violated by the government decisions. His protest spoke much more loudly than the foot-dragging pessimism of officials in Mardan or Peshawar.

Against these local reports, the governor demonstrated impatience and kept insisting that all parties were looking for an amicable settlement, whether or not they were. For example, to the secretary in-charge in Charsadda, he scolded, “I am not interested in lengthy reports describing the details of his activities. I know for certain both sides wish an amicable settlement…. I would like to see results.” Attempting to shift the structure and purpose of the state had to overcome inertia and even resistance from bureaucrats and officials. Thus, the relative autonomy of the state apparatus from the khans—stopping the court orders in khan favour, re-ordering state officials to set up conciliation committees, moving them to intervene at the village level—and the corollary expansion of the infrastructural power of the state, were instrumental to the interests that controlled the state apparatus. This is not the same as saying that the state apparatus was merely an instrument for their control. Within it there was resistance to the programme being pursued by the PPP-led government. However, on the whole, the increase in the relative autonomy and capabilities of the state apparatus was tied in with the particular hegemonic political project in play. In the following section we turn to the effects of state intervention, both upon the tenantry’s experience of the state and upon the state apparatus itself.

PPP: Passive revolution

The “amicable settlements” the governor pushed through the moratorium on ejectments and conciliation committees involved achieving hegemony over tenants by coercing landlords to “make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind.” This was already being conducted through the MKP, as we have seen, but the PPP-led government ratcheted up the operations and took the authority away from the party. In so doing, the government not only recognized the tenants who benefited from its initiatives as owners of private property or the privileged tenants of owners of private property, it did so in a way that fragmented the collectivity of the peasant movement and treated tenants as individuals. However, these individuals now confronted the khāns, who were once their sovereigns, as juridical and legal equals under the sovereignty of the state apparatus. The PPP achieved hegemony over the peasantry by seeking to restore liberal private property rights. This was its project of a “progressive restoration,” that is, passive revolution.

It is worth noting that the combined effect on land rights of negotiations that were carried out by the MKP outside of the state apparatus and subsequently through the conciliation committees, namely the taking hold of a kind of land and tenancy reform, was often more penetrating than what legal land reforms of 1972 could have accomplished. This is also an indicator of increased infrastructural power. Rather than telling tenants to come to the officials, the conciliation committees sent state officials to the tenants. Revenue officials were forced to write information about occupants and cultivators in the girdāwarī (revenue record) based on their observations in the fields, rather than filling them in with the connivance of the khāns at their hujras, better enabling tenants to make claims upon their legal rights. As we have seen, many tenants, especially in northern Hashtnagar, had not paid rents for three or four years, while others had asserted their somewhat legal rights not to increase rents without mutual agreement—

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617 Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 161.
khāns had lost a lot of money they could not recoup. In the attempts at conciliation and through the revenue courts, many khāns refused to collect rents from revenue courts and thus validate tenant claims. Others, however, were compelled to accept nominal rates that were far below market rates, to be raised by mutual agreement. Others yet were compelled to sell their lands as the best way out of the situation. So much so that the Hotis [of Mardan], the largest landowners in the Province, engaged in the unprecedented practice of selling their land to tenants on promissory notes — the loan being repayable over a long period of time.

Often, these lands were sold at severely discounted rates relative to market rates. Following many of these kinds of settlements over 1973-1974, disputes over land did not all stop, but they did taper down to a far more manageable level, and the movement in Hashtnagar came to a rolling lull.

The change in the orientation of the state apparatus was palpable, and its basis was the change in the balance of forces caused by peasant organizing. It is worth citing at length the view of the province’s home secretary in 1974:

In the past … the land owners [exercised] a large measure of influence over the officials who doctored revenue documents and also [were] better poised to have cases decided in their favour due to their ability to engage superior counsel and also their influence over the law courts. Once the tenants organized themselves there was a swing in the pendulum which resulted in the administration being extra cautious in handling an issue which involved the tenants, to an extent where the bias was tilted in favour of this class.

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620 Some khans are still caught in this loop.
621 Or, through violence. For example, a khan who wants to raise rates may now forcibly eject tenants from the lands, who may fight back, leading to a jirga and settlement of new rates and rights over usage of lands. Otherwise tenants would be hard-pressed to pay higher rents. This kind of cyclical violence had become almost an institution (informal/formal rules of the game) unto itself in parts of northern Hashtnagar, at least up to the time of my fieldwork.
623 Such practices continued as of my fieldwork in 2013.
624 In other areas, such as Dir, however, the governor continued to express anxiety: “We must settle these cases as early as possible. These are assuming the shape of a Cancer.” See Mohammad Aslam Khan Khattak, “Governor’s Remarks on Application of Dr. Mohammad Yaqub Khan, MPA, et Al.,” March 16, 1974, 179, GS 26/206, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These conflicts are important to the next section.
State personnel also became more autonomous in a way that was not quite despotic nor infrastructural; lower-level state officials became more autonomous from *khāns* and also more open to the influence of the peasantry. Landlord Ameer Nawaz Khan said to me, and tenants confirmed, that from the 1970s on, many tenants, now flush with more money, bribed the *paṭwārīs* to get their names listed in *girdawaris*—*paṭwārīs* would record tenants as being the cultivators of land that was actually listed as self-cultivated, or the amount of lease rate listed in the records may be reduced. He quickly admitted that,

> We can’t blame the *paṭwārī* for giving support to the *kisāns*. Everyone has a stomach. The *kisans* fed the *paṭwārīs*, but the *khāns* also fed the *paṭwārīs*—it wasn’t a one-sided matter. Ultimately, whoever controls the stick controls the buffalo.

Other state officials also became less attached to the *khāns’* *hujras* and therefore more impartial, insofar as impartiality was predicated upon cash transactions. This aspect of greater “autonomy” of the state did not entail a sense of bureaucratic rationality, at least not one that contradicted rent-seeking. *Ad hoc* conciliation committees did not stick beyond 1976-77, but since then, *paṭwārīs* may well have become the most important mediators of claims upon land rights because of their control over revenue records—control that is commodified, for sale to the highest bidder—which form the basis of court cases or interventions by district officials.

That aside, the very process of the conciliation committees and revenue courts mediating between contending land rights constituted tenants as the formal and juridical equals of their erstwhile sovereigns. The *khān* who used to resolve disputes between tenants, to whom the police came to determine who to arrest or punish, was now a supplicant to the state to have his rights in land recognized, even if meant alienating or receiving a mitigated rent from it. Formally, he was equivalent to the tenant on the other side of the table, and each settlement legalized the

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tenants’ rights, thus reinforcing juridical equality and the legal subjectivity that was being hammered through litigation. Ironically, this was only possible because the state had suspended the legal rights of the *khāns* to full possession of the land via ejectments; in order to constitute tenants as juridical equals, the *khān* first had to be brought down to the tenant’s erstwhile position.

However, this juridical equality was premised on the confirmation of patriarchal, individual rights in liberal private property. To be sure, these corresponded to the dominant Pakhtun conception of divided land rights vested in male-led households. But where the MKP-led movement embedded tenants into relations with each other, with landless labourers, and with the MKP itself, the PPP-led committees sought to separate tenants out from these overlapping claims. Conciliation committees were directed to resolve individual cases, one at a time if need be. These reforms were also limited to those male tenants who already possessed lands or had recently been under threat of ejectment. The MKP could not intervene to ensure that, for example, landless labourers who had participated in the struggle were allocated lands, legally or extra-legally—although they were in many instances allocated homesteads. The prospect of asserting alternative (e.g., collective) forms of ownership was not even in its programme, never mind a policy on land rights for women. Many women also suggested in interviews that the families of those MKP members who had died in the many battles had not received anything. Herring assessed Bhutto’s legal land reforms as intended to facilitate capitalist production in agriculture, the *de facto* land and tenancy reforms in the NWFP did the same.

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629 Women are not mentioned in its programme, see Pakistan Mazdur Kissan Party, *Dastūr*. Moreover, there was not a single analysis concerning Pakistan’s women in its bulletin, to the chagrin of women members. See Shamīm Akhtar, “Tanqīdī kaṭṭ banām-i sāḥiyyān,” *Circular*, no. 87 (December 1977): 11–12.

The PPP’s achievement of hegemony over the peasantry at the landowners’ cost, was signalled not only by the increasingly punitive attitude of MKP leaders toward peasants’ lack of enthusiasm, but by the fact that a small but significant portion of the MKP broke off to explicitly support the PPP. The PPP had sought to demobilize the MKP, not merely by forcing through a new allocation of land rights, but also by politically supporting the latter’s reformist elements. Important here was Adam Khan, the former nāẓir and union council chairman. Adam Khan supported the PPP in by-elections held in 1973, making an alliance that was explicitly against the instructions of the MKP leadership under Afzal Bangash and Sher Ali Bacha. He was thus expelled from the MKP and formed his own faction in February-March 1974. Thereafter, he spoke for many tenants when he called for an end to illegal tactics (including the guerrilla training) and the pursuit of legal participation instead; the government itself recognized Adam Khan as being affiliated with the PPP and worth cultivating.631 However, Afzal Bangash’s MKP remained the larger and dominant organization, and the majority of tenants did not explicitly support the PPP, but, as we will see in Chapter 6, they remained loyal to Bangash’s MKP as long as it did not involve struggle. The MKP leadership saw this as a reflection of the tendency of richer tenants to want to abandon revolutionary struggle, but it was also a sign that the class alliance they had built was being teased apart by the PPP’s interventions.

PPP: Consolidating and losing power

The Pakistan People’s Party’s hegemonic project in the Frontier had successfully undermined the Peshawar valley’s landlords in socioeconomic and political terms, while also undermining the Mazdoor Kisan Party. The PPP sought to further consolidate its rule in the

province, and it did so by undermining the governor and installing Hayat Khan Sherpao as a senior minister, achieving agrarian stability, and repressing the MKP. However, its consolidation was interrupted, but not so much from the MKP’s resistance, as from the resistance of the landlords of the Peshawar valley. Landlords fought back, both through forming their own vigilante party to combat the MKP and the peasant movement, especially in Malakand Agency, and through the political and armed struggles of NAP. The PPP’s lack of a specific hegemonic plan for the alienated landowners of the Peshawar valley helped compromise its attempted consolidation over the latter half of the 1970s. Although the PPP had won the passive consent of many of the tenants from the Peshawar valley, their deflated leadership in the form of the MKP did little to exhibit solidarity with the PPP as it had at the beginning of the decade.

Even as the peasant movement in Charsadda and Mardan had started to cool down by the first quarter of 1974, landlords retaliated by pressing their case through arms in Malakand Agency. Nisar Muhammad Khan, a landlord residing in Gulabad in southern Hashtnagar, exemplified alienation from the PPP. He told me that he had been one of the founding members of the PPP in the province, but was steadily alienated from the party leadership due to its support for the peasant movement. Having earlier played a crucial role in forming the Anjuman-i Malekanan-i Arazi (Land Owners’ Assocation), he now formed the Ittehad (Unity) Party, a multi-party group of landowners united to fight the MKP. “We descended to the field [to fight the peasants] because the government was helpless [to stop them]. The [PPP] government started [the fight, through provocative calls for land reform and occupation], but was then helpless to stop it.”

In the last week of March 1974, gun battles between landlords and tenants broke out

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632 Interview with Nisar Muhammad Khan, Utmanzai, October 30, 2013.
in four separate areas in the Malakand district, which the MKP alleged had been planned and initiated by the Ittehad Party.

The PPP took advantage of the publicity received by the Malakand battles, and the fact of the Ittehad Party itself, to project a political crisis and to consolidate its direct rule in the province, rather than ruling by way of governor Mohammad Aslam Khattak’s proxy. Sherpao, in particular, used the conflicts to articulate his own hegemonic vision for the province. He claimed at an early April rally that governor Khattak, who Bhutto himself had appointed barely a year prior, had collaborated with landlords to establish the Ittehad Party “whose foundation was laid in the Governor House.”

We have seen earlier how Sherpao articulated a discourse quite similar to that of the MKP, and he continued now, claiming that khans were making poor people fight each other, that there was in the province “no justice for the peasants, they are being murdered, their homes are set on fire, even mosques are being destroyed.” However, distinct from the MKP’s politics, and those of the Ittehad Party, he positioned himself as the hero who did not want to ignite class war, who did not want brother to fight brother, Pakhtun to fight Pakhtun. In other words, he stressed the legal land reforms and a peaceful resolution to the conflict; it is worth noting how his discourse dovetailed with that of Adam Khan, who according to police and government records began criticizing the MKP leadership’s illegal (and violent) tactics and encouraged legal participation.

By the end of May, Khattak resigned his position,

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635 “Mālik o mazāre’ kā tanāz’ah ḥāl karne ke liye wazīr-i ā’ẓam ‘anqarīb fāriqē‘in ke numā’indon kā ijlās ālāb kārē ge,” Mashriq, April 23, 1974. In “Information Department Clipping,” April 23, 1974, 268–69, GS 26/206, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Given the reams of paper on Khattak’s own role and his several and constant injunctions to his subordinates to settle the problems, Sherpao’s allegations against his person must be taken skeptically.
636 “Mālik o mazāre’ kā tanāz’ah ḥāl karne ke liye wazīr-i ā’ẓam ‘anqarīb fāriqē‘in ke numā’indon kā ijlās ālāb kārē ge,” In “Information Department Clipping,” 268.
replaced by a figurehead Major-General Syed Ghasaw. Sherpao became a “senior minister” in chief minister Inayatullah Gandapur’s cabinet, effectively acting as chief minister himself.

The new PPP-led government pursued a process of reconciliation immediately, which appeared to achieve some success in securing agrarian stability. The government brought Ittehad Party leaders like Nisar Muhammad Khan to negotiate with both MKP factions, that of Adam Khan and that of Bangash. The federal government assessed by the fall of the year that the “situation so far as the land-owners and the tenants are concerned, has shown a definite improvement.”638 The Ittehad Party had lost “part of its initial stance of militancy”; while the MKP had split and “[h]ere too the initial militant stance has softened.”639 In the provincial government’s assessment, both the tenants and the land-owners groups have lost their initial followings due to disenchantment with their leaders and the measures adopted by the administration to effect conciliation between the parties…. [Conciliation] committees have been functioning satisfactorily. There have been no major incidents during the ‘Kharif Harvest’ which is creditable in view of the fact that this was the period when we faced our major problems on this issue.640

However, both Nisar Muhammad Khan and Shamas Khan, a Bangash MKP representative also from southern Hashtnagar, told me that the meetings were useless. As the latter put it, “we used to advocate in favour of peasants, the khans advocated in favour of khans, so not even one decision was made.”641 Perhaps the meetings were more useful in Malakand, but it also appears that to the extent that conciliation operated satisfactorily, these attempts at achieving consensus between the contending parties were backed up by targeted repression.

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639 Governor’s Secretariat, NWFP, 4.
640 Governor’s Secretariat, NWFP, 4–5.
641 Interview, Kaptan Kili, October 5, 2013.
The PPP-led government targeted repression at the MKP, apparently in a bid to undermine the latter’s leadership, the radicals’ base having been undermined through conciliation; and then the government made tentative moves to win back the landed elites. In April 1974, the home secretary threatened “firm action … against those persons who resort to the use of force and also against the leaders of the extremist elements within both groups.” Over 1974-1976, the MKP complained that the state was targeting its leaders and members. The state collaborated with khans outside of the Peshawar valley to prevent MKP leaders from organizing the party by blocking their entry or banning meetings in Upper Dir, Swat and Malakand. Several MKP leaders and tenants were killed in “encounters” with police forces or through assassinations, while others were arrested and harassed. In September 1976, the MKP reported a massive crackdown on leaders and members of the MKP and its associated agricultural labourers’ organization in northern Hashtnagar. The MKP’s leadership thus appeared to be targeted for repression, and this may have helped in reducing the incidence of conflicts between tenants and khans, in addition to the work of the conciliation committees. Meanwhile, khans appear to have been left off the hook, while ejectments restarted. Despite having instigated violent confrontations, Nisar Muhammad Khan admitted to me that the administration never attempted to arrest him. By early 1976, the administration claimed it was beginning to execute outstanding ejectment decrees, which had accumulated substantially over the prior three years.

643 Pākistān Mazdūr Pāṛṭī, “Pākistān Mazdūr Pāṛṭī kī markazī kamīṭī kī report.”
646 Government of N.W.F.P., “Summary For the Special Meeting on NWFP: Law and Order (Provincial).”
Yet, by now reaching out to landowners may have been too little, too late for the PPP’s attempt to consolidate its position in the province.

The limitations of the PPP’s strategy of passive revolution in the Frontier soon became clear, for they had demobilized the peasantry and alienated landowners, who sought to militate against the PPP politically and to destabilize its governance. Here, the broader politics of the province and the country came into play again, as NAP engaged in a politics of resistance. After NAP resigned in 1973, its leadership came in for severe repression by the Bhutto government at the centre. In the Frontier, governor Mohammad Aslam Khattak had arrested several hundred NAP workers and shut down pro-NAP media. The NAP general-secretary Ajmal Khattak, among other NAP politicians, fled to a sympathetic government in Afghanistan and “were alleged to be sponsoring bomb blasts and other acts of sabotage in Pakistan.” Explosions in the Frontier had become a nearly daily occurrence, and on February 8, 1975, Hayat Khan Sherpao was killed in an explosion at a student function at Peshawar University. Although NAP was thereafter banned and its senior leadership, including Abdul Wali Khan, arrested on charges of murder and treason, the party reorganized as the National Democratic Party (NDP). Together with other opposition parties, it became one of the vehicles for landlords and smaller landowners, alienated by the PPP’s support for the peasantry through conciliation and land reforms, to express their frustrations. The NDP joined eight other political parties in the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) to oppose the PPP in the March 1977 elections. The PPP won by great margins, but the opposition claimed massive electoral fraud, and their protests destabilized urban Pakistan. All of this culminated in a military coup in July 1977.

Throughout 1977, the urban streets were dominated by the opposition, bringing entire cities to a standstill. The opposition was rooted, not unlike the 1960s protests, in urban middle-

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class students and traders, but the working class was missing. Indeed, the urban working class did not come out to support the PPP. The MKP, despite organizing mammoth rallies of thousands in rural areas, as we will see in the next chapter, did nothing to contest the urban protests in Peshawar. The reason for this may be that, although the PPP had the passive support of many the country’s workers and tenants, in the form of elections and attendance at rallies, it had demobilized and dispersed the leftist cadre through repression and betrayal throughout the 1970s. These latter then did little to mobilize the active support of these constituencies in the streets. The MKP, after facing repression at the hands of the PPP government in the Frontier, but also in Punjab and in Karachi, did not mobilize tenants in the Frontier, nor their counterparts in Punjab nor the workers in urban areas amongst whom the MKP was influential. As I will show in the next chapter, even if the MKP wanted to mobilize tenants at this juncture, it perhaps could not do so in the way it had been able to in the earlier part of the 1970s, precisely due to all the deals reached in the middle of the decade that sapped peasant militancy. This lack of support for the PPP is in sharp contrast to the 1968-1970 period, when the MKP was part of a united front with the PPP against the old powers of the military regime.

**Conclusion**

In assessing the divergent strategies of fractions of the dominant classes toward the MKP and the peasant movement broadly, we can return to the question of why and how the transformations in economic and political relations thrown up by the movement took hold. The

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649 This study has largely sidestepped discussing the organization among the industrial proletariat in Charsadda, as well as in Peshawar and in Swat. Communists and radicals of various stripes were active in organizing workers. However, the mills in Charsadda were located in Charsadda town in southern Hashtnagar and were dominated by the Communist Party cadre who were at times cooperating with NAP/NDP. (Interview with Faqir Hussain Lala, Charsadda, October 10, 2013.) This may have limited the coordination between Hashtnagar tenants and Charsadda workers. Cadre affiliated with the Mazdoor Kisan Party were more active among workers in Swat, where they started the Sarhad Mazdoor Rabita Committee. (Pākistān Mazdūr Pārtī kī markazī kamīṭī kī report.”) Its work spread to Charsadda and other industrial areas in the North-West Frontier Province and became more salient during the Zia-ul Haq military regime, as we will see in Chapter 6.
economic transformations involved significant land and tenancy reforms, ones that were not legislated, while the political transformations involved the collapse of khanism. This chapter has demonstrated that the land and tenancy reforms were given state sanction through, first, a moratorium on legal ejectments, and second, conciliation committees that worked to make khans acquiesce to deals with their tenants, largely in northern Hashtnagar. These deals resulted in static rents or outright land purchases at severely discounted rates. Lacking any backing by the state apparatus, the khans in northern Hashtnagar were also unable to restore their autonomous power in the face of peasant assertion. Indeed, tenants moved from being subjects of khans to juridical and legal subjects under the state apparatus. That said, the state still abstained from establishing direct authority in villages, leaving peasants to settle their own disputes through jirgas if they so chose.

More broadly, the strength of the class struggle in particular circumstances, stronger in northern Hashtnagar and weaker in southern Hashtnagar, was crucial in determining the extent and nature of the consequences of state intervention. This suggests, I argue, that no fraction of the ruling classes would be interested in intervening in the villages to such an extent if the balance of class power had not compelled it to do so. That being said, as this chapter has demonstrated, the state intervention, and the kind of state capacity and autonomy that this entailed, was also a consequence of the hegemonic project pursued by a particular fraction of the dominant classes. When NAP was in power before the PPP, it pursued a strategy of domination and sought to mobilize the repressive apparatus of the state against the peasant movement, securing its hegemony among the landowners of the Peshawar valley. The state apparatus worked very closely with the khans. In contrast, the PPP pursued a strategy of passive revolution in the province to undermine the social base of its political opponents in both the NAP and the MKP, by winning over and demobilizing tenants. But this was also a qualitatively distinct form
of passive revolution than what it had pursued in other parts of the country. In Karachi and in southern Punjab, where workers and peasants respectively had initially supported the PPP and engaged in militant struggles against factory bosses and landed elites, the PPP responded with violence to put down their struggles on behalf of capitalists and landlords. In the Peshawar valley, in contrast, the state apparatus became relatively autonomous from the khans. That does not mean that the state apparatus uniformly and unequivocally did what the PPP wanted, for the social struggle reproduced itself within the state apparatus in the form of foot-dragging and protest. Nevertheless, the transformation in the content and shape of the state was an outcome of the class struggle that took different forms outside and inside the state apparatus.

Finally, this chapter has suggested that the strategy of passive revolution pursued by the PPP ultimately undermined its own attempts at consolidating power in the Frontier. The PPP did not keep its peasant constituency mobilized, but sought to demobilize them by decapitating its radical leadership in the MKP. The PPP’s move to the right was protested by significant sections of its own radical leadership, such as its sole MNA from the province, Abdul Khaliq Khan, defecting to the MKP. Meanwhile, the PPP meted severe repression to the NAP as well, but did not fully embrace authoritarianism that abolished political opposition. Its suppression of the legal apparatus that supported khans meant that its conservative leadership, such as Nisar Muhammad Khan, also defected to form his own sociopolitical apparatus in the Ittehad Party. Indeed, he was elected MNA and served as a minister in the subsequent military regime. In other words, the PPP’s moves had hemmed it in from both the left and the right, losing much of what little party organization it had in the province, it could not mobilize its supporters to neutralize the Peshawar valley’s landowners when they came out against its rule in urban areas. A new military regime under general Zia-ul Haq built its power in the province on the basis of these landowners, but, as

650 Interview with Imtiaz Alam, Lahore, February 22, 2013; Pākistān Mazdūr Pārṭī; Ali, “The Strength of the Street Meets the Strength of the State.”
we will see in Chapter 7, they could not simply impose their will in the Peshawar valley without confronting the consequences and continuing work, however attenuated, of the peasants and their organization. Now, we will turn to the factors internal to the peasant movement that, when colliding with the interventions of the PPP regime, weakened the unity of tenants and labourers, and also contributed to the fragmentation of the MKP itself.
III
Chapter 6: The rich peasant question - disaggregating subalternity and dissolving the MKP

Introduction

Afzal Bangash died in 1986, ironically enough, after liquidating his faction of the MKP into the Awami National Party, the successor to the National Awami Party/National Democratic Party.\(^{651}\) Although the Hashtnagar movement had long since cooled down and many MKP members had suffered the repression of the military regime, Bangash’s figure inspired great reverence in Hashtnagar. So much so that even though his sons buried him in his home district of Kohat, south of Peshawar, his followers came down after forty days to exhume his body and rebury it in northern Hashtnagar. 25 years later, in 2011, his sons decided to exhume the body once again to rebury it in Kohat. Bangash’s son, Kamil Bangash, told me that the decision to rebury his father was both a personal and political decision, because Bangash’s followers had started to engage in the opportunistic exploitation of his grave and the negation of his politics.\(^{652}\) The remnant MKP faction of local leader sālār Muhammad Shah Ali’s sons had started to collect funds at the grave, “as if it were the shrine of some pīr or faqīr”—indeed, people had even started to come and offer prayers there, as they might at the shrines of saint-like pīrs who intercede with the divine. Moreover, Muhammad Shah Ali (d. 2000) was buried next to Bangash’s grave for association, and later, the former’s son (d. 2007). After a failed attempt in 2006, Bangash’s sons were able to take the body away to Kohat in 2011.\(^{653}\) The purpose, Kamil

\(^{651}\) Ironically still, he did so at the prodding of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, for, through his exile in Afghanistan he had become closer to the Soviet Union. Interview with Kamil Bangash (Afzal Bangash’s son), June 9, 2013.

\(^{652}\) Interview, June 9, 2013. Kamil was also a communist, educated in medicine in Moscow (he dropped out), his family living in Ottawa, Canada. He had not been centrally involved in the MKP until his father’s death, when he suddenly became his successor.

\(^{653}\) In 2006, 2-3,000 people gathered with guns threatening Kamil and his associates and stopped the process. In 2011, the Bangashes took their own armed MKP comrades from Malakand.
told me, was to prevent both the exploitation of Bangash’s grave for personal politics and its sacralization.

But if their purpose was to avoid Afzal Bangash’s beatification, the exhumation had precisely the opposite effect, and only confirmed what many in Hashtnagar had come to believe. One old MKP activist in the village of Shakur, who had gone with Sher Ali Bacha’s faction in the 1970s and was imprisoned by the martial law administration, told me that his brother was there during the exhumation along with several hundreds, if not thousands, bearing witness.654 Remarkably, they saw that Afzal Bangash’s body and the shroud in which he had been wrapped had remained unspoiled and intact despite a quarter century of death spent underground. As they told it, Bangash’s face could be seen, and although there was some damage to his nose, his hair and beard had grown. Moreover, there was a sweet scent coming from the soil. With tears in his eyes, the MKP activist told me, “Bangash was an angel. He didn’t take a thing from the people.”655

This MKP activist had not, and still did not, support Bangash’s ideological and political positions in the factional disputes. Yet, his implication was clear: Only holy people have their bodies preserved as such, for, as many Islamic traditions contend, the bodies of martyrs do not decompose. The story had become a kind of common knowledge in much of Hashtnagar—several others brought it up with me, and even Kamil Bangash confirmed the broad outlines, though he quibbled on the details. “We exhumed the body whole. I don’t know what the scientific reasons are for it.” Seeming somewhat perturbed, he said, “I don’t believe in these things. But I saw it myself.” Ironically, by exhuming the body, he and his brothers had only

654 Interview, May 29, 2013. He chose to remain anonymous.
655 Indeed, at other times people referred to Bangash as like a messiah or like a devtā (deity).
consolidated the legend of Afzal Bangash, the legend of his grave an addition to the other legends of the graves of holy people that dot the landscape of northern Hashtnagar.656

But Afzal Bangash’s legend appears to have been in the making even during his lifetime. A 1974 MKP circular to Frontier members reminds them,

We also say to our comrades, that if they are only involved in the party due to the name of Afzal Bangash, then they should know that he, too, is a human being, and one day he will die.657

The circular was put out in a context where the MKP leadership explicitly understood that the peasant movement in northern Hashtnagar had come to a lull as a consequence of the PPP-led state interventions that we examined in Chapter 5. As many tenants got their lands, they appeared to adhere more to the charismatic personage of Bangash than to his political instructions or those of the MKP; a situation that, as we will see, has persisted long after his death.

This chapter examines how and why MKP leaders and intellectuals engaged in serious debates to understand and address the downturns in the movement, leading to the disintegration of the party and its strand of Pakistani Maoism, both in the Frontier and in Pakistan at large. Understanding the party’s disintegration sets the stage for the next chapter, where we will see how remnant factions of the party faced difficulties in connecting with the people of northern Hashtnagar, which made the party and peasants alike less effective in influencing the processes of state formation to their benefit in the 1980s than they had been in the 1970s.

656 One story goes that as the British tried to build a small canal distributary along the side of a road they could not dig past a certain point. There was a grave there, the locals realized, and understood that the person buried there must be holy. The canal had to be continued under the road and on the other side. I saw myself the small brick structure that had been built over the grave, itself decorated with flowers and a sheet. Yet another grave, further removed from roads and one among other graves, was very long. Some explanations said that the person buried there was very tall, while others said that many martyrs were buried under it. In any case, my research assistant Gul Rehman told me, people came to these graves to pray for the deceased and for intercession. Gul Rehman himself belonged to the Deobandi school of thought that does believe in ṭasawwuf but not intercession, and he explained that he did not pray to the deceased for intercession but understood that they were holy men to be respected. He read the fāteha (the opening chapter of the Qur’an) and we left.

In Chapter 3 I argued that the MKP emerged as a distinct organization and trend in the 1960s due to the convergence of ideological, political and organizational dislocations at international, national and local scales. Here, I will show how in the latter 1970s such dislocations at various scales led instead to its dispersal. To better understand this, it is worth noting that, although strongest in the Frontier, the MKP was also spiritedly involved in peasant movements in southern Punjab and workers’ movements in various industrial centres, including near Lahore and in Karachi. By the late 1970s, it was a party with areas of depth, something of a national profile,\footnote{658} and aspirations to be truly nation-wide, but the mass movements with which it was most prominently associated had simmered down.

The international situation was also changing. A republican \textit{coup d’état} against the monarchy in Afghanistan in 1973 had given a higher profile in Pakistan to one of its participants, the communist People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), and to the Soviet Union toward which the new republican regime and the PDPA were oriented. Meanwhile, the Communist Party of China’s rapprochement with the United States began to reduce its sheen—following especially the death of Mao Tse-tung in 1976. The mass movements that had started in 1966 in various parts of the world, especially those oriented to the Chinese positions in international communist debates, appeared to have petered out. For the leaders of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, the international communist movement no longer provided straightforward guides on how to proceed in revolution. The MKP’s leaders thus debated with each other in trying to develop the theoretical and political tools necessary to deal with the demobilization of the peasantry, the sharpening of class contradictions within the peasant movement between tenants and labourers, and the rapidly changing national situation.

\footnote{658} So much so that, as we saw in Chapter 5, the first item of discussion at the first conference of governors and chief ministers in June 1972 of a democratic Pakistan involved Afzal Bangash and concerns that he was “brewing up trouble” among Karachi workers. See Pirzada, “Minutes of the Governor’s Conference Held at Rawalpindi on 11-6-1972,” 2.
This chapter juxtaposes oral history and party literature to return to the questions of subalternity raised in Chapters 2 and 3. I argue that the land and tenancy reforms effected by the peasant movement intensified capitalism “from below,” and that this not only enabled the upward mobility of several peasants but in fact exacerbated class differentiation within the peasantry and the distance between rich peasants and landless labourers. As rich peasants became dominant in their villages in place of the khans, the political line between elites and subalterns necessary for the MKP’s hegemonic project became more difficult to place. In the first section of this chapter, I look at contemporary and past tenant-labourer relations in order to elucidate the social and political economic tensions between tenants and landless labourers that already existed at the beginning of the peasant movement. The second section demonstrates how these social and political economic tensions were exacerbated as the tenants got their lands in the 1970s, and moreover, demonstrates how the demobilization of the tenantry also produced tensions between them and the MKP leadership. The third section examines how all of these contradictions intensified ideological and political questions among villagers and party leaders and intellectuals about whether and how to redraw the parameters of the subaltern. The party debated which class—tenants or labourers—should lead the worker-peasant alliance, and whether landless labourers should be encouraged to form their own organizations in order to conduct their struggles autonomously from the peasants. Section four shows how the disagreements over these questions also layered on to questions about the MKP’s strategic outlook and organizational forms as a national political party, the disagreements leading ultimately to its dissolution. As we see in the next chapter, this dissolution resulted in MKP

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659 Byres, *Capitalism from Above and Capitalism from Below*. Capitalism “from below” is premised on farmers who remain possession of relatively small landholdings, but who adopt new technologies and hire waged labour. This stands in opposition to the capitalism “from above” that both the Ayub Khan and Bhutto regimes had pursued to try and transform landed elites into “modern” capitalist farmers. See Herring, “Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the ‘Eradication of Feudalism’ in Pakistan.”
factions unable and unwilling to organize among peasants or labourers in such a way as to impact state formation under a military regime, or even to preserve the MKP itself as a revolutionary organization.

**When kisans became khans**

A common saying that I came across in Charsadda was that “the kisans have become the khans.” At first glance I was skeptical of this notion, but as my research continued I came to understand this as shorthand for how rural classes had changed as a result of the peasant movement itself. Indeed, in 1974, Sher Ali Bacha wrote that due to the peasant movement, “One khan was finished, but a hundred small khans took birth and lost interest in the peasant movement.” This became particularly apparent to me when one day in 2013 I returned to Afzal Khamosh’s home, the leader of an MKP faction I was staying with. Khamosh had about 9 acres of irrigated lands and 3.5 unirrigated. But I chanced upon his conversation with an erstwhile tenant who told me that he now owned or operated over 100 acres of land. That not only placed this erstwhile tenant’s landholdings in the top 1% of farms in Pakistan but made him comparable as a landowner or operator to many khans in the area.

While this one tenant who became akin to a “khan” might have represented an extreme, class differentiation and agrarian stagnation following the 1970s has meant that access to capital and non-farm employment are crucial to take into consideration alongside access to land in understanding rural relations of production. Many tenants who did not possess anywhere as much land as 100 acres nevertheless had access to the capital necessary to invest substantially in farm implements, like tractors and tractor attachments, or in capital- and labour-intensive crops,

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661 I stayed with Khamosh in April 2013, and then again from later May to early July.
662 Interview, Shakur, May 25, 2013.
as well as in other avenues of social mobility, such as private education, business, remittances, and local politics. For example, one of Khamosh’s associates had between himself and his brother 15 acres of land, and rented another 2 acres from a khan (at a very nominal rate of Rs. 1,200 per acre per year).\footnote{Interview, Khanjeri, November 2, 2013. The market rate for rent could go from Rs. 20,000 to 40,000.} They owned a tractor plough, a trolley, and a thresher, and rented tractors when they needed them. They grew lucrative labour- and capital-intensive crops like tomatoes and tobacco. At least two of their sons were also working abroad in Saudi Arabia. These were certainly rich peasants, if not capitalist farmers, but their sons were also migrant proletarians—albeit relatively privileged compared to the Pakistani labourers who would make nowhere near as much money as the former could expect to make in Saudi Arabia.\footnote{This relative privilege is by no means straightforward. Many migrant workers have taken out loans in order to finance their work visa and travel, and often face many more unexpected costs around residency permits and renewals once in Saudi Arabia. Paying off those loans can take a lot of time. Ultimately what matters in determining how much one can earn in the Gulf is how much non-loan capital the worker possesses before going. } Khamosh himself had variously been engaged in marketing tobacco and real estate dealings, and was getting one of his children educated in private educational institutions so that they could find private or government employment.\footnote{Indeed, I facilitated Khamosh’s son getting a job in Saudi Arabia.} His family was thus more reliant on income from business and professional salaried positions than they were from any kind of farming. Indeed, Khamosh insisted that the land problem had been resolved for “85% of the people,” and that MKP politics now had to address other issues. This implied that class differentiation was now dependent on much more than one’s position in the agricultural sector, and that the non-farm sector had to be factored in in determining class position. In effect, the peasant movement had achieved an intensification of capitalism “from below,”\footnote{See Byres, Capitalism from Above and Capitalism from Below.} one premised on farmers who retain possession of relatively small landholdings, but who adopt new technologies and hire waged labour. This stood
in opposition to the capitalism “from above” that both the Ayub Khan and Bhutto regimes had pursued to try and transform landed elites into “modern” capitalist farmers.668

The upward mobility of many peasants that has resulted from this “capitalism from below” has had consequences for political inclusion and exclusion, as richer peasants now cooperated closely with the parties of their erstwhile enemies. In this sense, while no one identifies rich peasants with khanism as a system, many people told me that khanism had taken new forms. Indeed, factions of the MKP now acted as brokers of vote banks for the very parties of the khans that these tenants had once fought, and on occasion, continued to fight. For much of my stay, Khamosh’s primary engagement in politics was as a broker who aggregated the various interests of generally richer and middle peasants to support the electoral candidacy of Khalid Khan Mohmand for the provincial assembly. Khalid Khan was a member of the Qaumi Watan Party, led by the assassinated Hayat Khan Sherpao’s brother Aftab Khan Sherpao.669 Meanwhile, other factions of the MKP aligned with the Awami National Party (ANP), the successor to the National Awami Party. Their main object of transaction was the promise of a number of public jobs to be allocated to these MKP-brokers, for further distribution to their vote banks, as well as ancillary public goods termed “development” (people used the English term) or “kār” (work) like electricity or gas connection. All MKP factions, separately or together, protest ejectments and may even engage in armed battles over land; although, according to one ANP politician who after serving as provincial assembly representative had failed to win a national assembly seat, it was also possible to pay some of them not to do so.670 Indeed, many observers of peasant politics alleged that aside from Afzal Khamosh, every erstwhile peasant leader could be seen at one khan

669 As an earlier footnote noted, the latter Sherpao split from the PPP and formed the PPP-Sherpao, which became the Qaumi Watan Party, with a particular Pakhtun nationalist and social democratic outlook reinforced by refugees from the erstwhile pro-Soviet Communist Party of Pakistan.
670 Interview, November 1, 2013. He chose to remain anonymous.
or another’s hujra, even supporting some of them in their disputes over land. But even
Khamosh co-operated with khans belonging to the Qaumi Watan Party, with whom Khamosh’s
MKP had entered into electoral alliance. It was thus difficult to identify the proverbial kisan as a
political class category that had taken shape in the course of the peasant movement of the 1970s.
If anything, the hegemonic project of the khans had expanded, for, as MKP activist Shamas Khan
told me, the khans who once used to approach peasants with zabardasti (force) now approached
them with narmi (softness) to maintain their hold on power.

Indeed, on a political level, richer tenants and peasants tended to neglect the great
development of inequality in access to land and capital that had already emerged during the
1960s with respect to the emergence of landless labour, and that had only become exacerbated
since then. Microdata from the Household Integrated Economic Survey conducted by the
Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, as well as participatory rural appraisals that I conducted in three
northern Hashtnagar villages (and three southern Hashtnagar villages), suggested that, depending
on the village, anywhere from half to an overwhelming majority of households did not possess
land. Tenants and peasants who were secure in their possessions suggested the land problem was
largely over, and it is entirely possible that the vast majority of erstwhile tenants in northern
Hashtnagar now had relatively secure possession of land. But most of the rural poor, that is,
land-poor peasants and landless labourers with whom I spoke had little access to Khamosh or
other political brokers, and would have loved to possess or own land. Khamosh did look after the
concerns of a few, for example, ensuring they were not evicted from homesteads and

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671 For example, Master Tahir, Nadir Mian Kali, June 6, 2013. Note that Tahir, an erstwhile Bangash MKP member,
was not aligned with Khamosh but was rather a disgruntled member of the ANP.
672 Interview, Kaptan Kali, October 5, 2013.
673 They also did not realize what was coming for them when the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf won the 2013 provincial
elections. In 2014, the PTI introduced an amendment to the Tenancy Act that made tenancy explicitly non-
inheritable. The bill was duly protested by the Qaumi Watan Party in the assembly as an ally of the Khamosh MKP,
but passed nevertheless. This has made it easier for landlords to engage in legal ejectments upon the death of a
tenant. Land conflicts appear to be becoming hot in northern Hashtnagar again.
encouraging peasants with more land to give some to labourer families, but he and the leaders of other MKP factions showed little orientation toward organizing them. This rather generalized neglect toward organizing the rural poor was initially surprising to me; as we will see, it certainly did not reflect the politics of the MKP in the 1970s.

But the divergence between *kisans* and *khet mazdūrs* (farm labourers) was quite apparent from very early on in the peasant movement, and contradictions between the two groups were very real. Recall that these contradictions need not have corresponded to caste-like distinctions among lineages, for landlessness could afflict one brother while another had land.674 Mukhtar Ahmad’s family became landless because his father’s brothers deprived him of his inheritance. Thereafter his family reared cattle for a *khan*, and he told me that people did not and still do not respect labourers, “like there are senior and juniors in government, [labourers] are considered juniors.”675 Hidayatullah, an imam from a landless family, agreed, noting that peasants viewed labourers with contempt (“ḥaqārat”), despite what he said were the efforts of Bangash and the MKP.676 Indeed, in a speech he made in Mandani in early 1972, MKP president Ishaq Muhammad noted that, “I heard today that when the peasants fasted in memory of the martyrs of Mandani,677 farm labourers were not allowed to fast. I want to warn you that if you do not stop [your own] oppression, you will never be able to eradicate oppression.”678

The material dimension of this oppression revolved around rights over labour and farm produce. As Inzar Gul, an elder whose family used to be landless explained, “If we were with the *khan*, he would exploit us, and when the *kisans* came, they exploited us, too.”679 For one, *khans* and peasants alike paid labourers low daily wages. Depending on where they stayed—in

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674 Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 15.
675 Interview, Shakur, May 29 2013.
676 Interview, Nasafai, June 5 2013.
677 Likely referring to the battle of Nasafai in July 1971, discussed in Chapter 4.
679 Interview, Chel, June 11 2013.
homesteads on the *khan*’s “self-cultivated” lands, or on the land that peasants rented from *khans*—either could eject them from the homestead. Both took the manure of the cattle being reared by labourers, such that “we did not have the right to make cow dung cakes” to use as fuel. Inzar Gul’s mother would make these cakes inside their single-roomed home for fear of being caught. He also said that peasants took *begār* from labourers, although he more forcefully pointed to *khans* as the main recipients of such unpaid labour. Interestingly, Inzar Gul nevertheless said that the *kisans* treated them well, because they needed each other—the peasants needed the labour, and labourers needed wood for fuel and grass for feed. Yet, a couple of tenants did not consider their own treatment of labourers as being particularly exemplary. “I say that the labourer was a double slave. He was the slave of the *khan*, and our slave,” Dildaar told me, explaining that he would make labourers on his land do all the work with him, such as irrigating the fields, and pay him little and sometimes nothing, despite taking his manure—that is, tenants did take *begār*. Master Tahir, also a tenant, agreed that they looked at labourers with contempt, and pointed to “these fields around us, the fields that were with us—I would not even give the labourer the field’s grass. You know, grass?” The grass was crucial feed for the cattle that labourers often reared. An Urdu-Hindi idiom, literally “not putting grass” for someone, means not giving them any attention at all. Here, tenants often figuratively and literally did “not put grass” to labourers. For many observers, *kisans* may have become *khans* after they got their lands, but for landless labourers they had been acting in *khan*-like ways even before that.

Nevertheless, facing oppression from *khans*, and often having been tenants until recently themselves, labourers took part in the peasant movement, joining *kisans* in rallies and battles. As Haji Abdul Mateen, an erstwhile labour organizer, but himself a tenant, said to me, “When we

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681 Interview, Nadir Mian Kali, June 6 2013.
had a [MKP] rally, the labourers were at the forefront." In areas of movement success, the *khans’* *begār* was finished. Yet those very successes may have increased disparities between *kisan* and labourer. As early as October 1970, Sher Ali Bacha noted that in an unnamed village with 30 tenants and 65 landless labourers, the latter complained that the *khan* had stopped providing *zakāt, bakhshish,* and used clothes to them due to the quarrel between tenants and landlords. They were worried that, while tenants would get the lands they occupied, the labourers would end up with nothing. Mukhtar Ahmad added that insofar as many labourers looked after the cattle of the *khans,* many of the latter took the cattle away and left the labourers without that wage-earning opportunity. As we will see, tenants who became wealthier were not necessarily inclined to sharing the fruits of their movement with landless labourers.

The effects of landlessness have been lasting, as it is very difficult to afford to buy land. When I asked Mohammad Khan, an elderly landless man, who lived in 2013 upon the land of a family of well-to-do tenants, “You have no land, right?” He seemed shocked that I would ask, breaking out of Pashto to express his amazement in Urdu, “Wha—Where is my land? I have nothing!” Similarly, Ajmeer Khan, an elderly landless man, a child at the time of the movement, whose main work now was as a watchman for the orchards of well-to-do peasants: “We didn’t get any land, just the home. If I had land, why would I be here?” Jan Bibi, whose husband had died some years back for lack of funds for medical care, said that neither her family of labourers nor any of her relatives got any land or even a home from the movement, “No one said anything, no one got anything.” The resentment was sometimes apparent, sometimes subtle. I asked some of the landless labourers if they were upset. Mohammad Khan was clearly

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682 Interview, Muftiabad, October 8 2013.
684 Interview, Hissara, May 23 2013.
685 Interview, Majeed Kali, June 8 2013.
686 Interview by Hadia Akhtar, Chel, October 3 2013.
disappointed, but he had a fatalistic approach. He said that he did not get angry, that he just accepted the situation: “We say that the land is ours, but the lands say that you will ultimately come to us. When we are alive it is ours, but when we die, we become the land’s. That is what we believe.” Meanwhile, although Mukhtar Ahmad’s family had gotten no land, he nevertheless praised Afzal Bangash: “All credit goes to the Bangash family. These people, he woke them up. He gave these people awareness and motivated them to do this work. People awakened and stood up.” I asked him if he wasn’t upset that Bangash had not done justice to the labourers. “No, no!” he protested. “Our people did not [do justice] to him. People left him. A few people remained at the end, but most people left him.”

It is to such political questions that we now turn. The peasant movement was not necessarily unequivocally good for landless labourers. Bettering their situations required specific interventions within the political practice of the peasant movement itself. Yet, the increasing political assertion of landless labourers came together with the increased political assertion of tenants, and especially richer peasants. As Mukhtar Ahmad noted, and as we will now see, rather than co-operating with Bangash and the political directives of the MKP, the richer peasants in many ways moved further away from them.

The politics of tenant-landless relations

In Chapter 4, we saw how the MKP leadership established its own hegemony by negotiating between tenants and landless labourers, encouraging the former to make material and ideological concessions. But this also banked on the increasing political assertion of landless labourers, which accompanied the increasing assertion of tenants. This meant the political and political economic contradictions between the two groups increased as the decade proceeded, rather than decreasing, placing increasing stresses upon the MKP’s ability to encourage compromises amongst them. This ability was further compromised after the PPP-led government
interventions, when tenants saw less need to co-operate with landless labourers, or, for that matter, with the MKP.

At the initial large rally of 1970 in Mandani, MKP president Ishaq Muhammad asked peasants to increase daily wages, to not eject labourers’ from homesteads, and to not take their manure.\textsuperscript{687} By and large, this seems to have held across much of Hashtnagar, as when I asked Mukhtar Ahmad about his home, he noted, “It’s the khan’s.” When I asked if he paid rent, he said somewhat sheepishly, “No, just ainvai. Just like these people [the kisans].”\textsuperscript{688} That is, just as the kisans pay no rent or nominal rents, many landless now got to possess the homesteads, the manure, and in many cases negotiate better wages. Moreover, as many labourers noted, they were now free to sell their labour to whomever they wished, they were not bound to the khan or the kisan. In this sense, their proletarianization (being “free from … any means of production of their own” and the “free seller of labour-power”\textsuperscript{689}) had been achieved.

Earlier, we also noted that the MKP intervened when the khans sought to take advantage of the differences between tenants and labourers. Afzal Bangash noted how, in Ameerabad in 1968, seven tenant families remained after 106 had been ejected from lands, and were also being ejected from their homes. The MKP intervened legally and extra-legally (presumably through violence or the threat of violence) to prevent the ejectments, but landlords “called the agricultural labourers and told them that it was a conflict between them and the tenants and that they (the agricultural labourers) would get nothing out of it.”\textsuperscript{690} Breaking the numerous landless labourers from the relatively fewer tenants would make it far easier for landlords to defeat tenant possession of the lands, and so the MKP negotiated better wages and conditions for the landless

\textsuperscript{687} Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 16.
\textsuperscript{688} Ainvai is a Punjabi term without a precise meaning, in this context, it means “just like that” or “without particular reason.”
\textsuperscript{690} Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 16.
labourers. It is important to note that as a consequence of these kinds of interventions, or as a cause of these kinds of interventions, the political subordination of the labourer also began to be undermined. As one tenant put it to me, “You could no longer take begār from the labourer. He became my bāp [lit. father, read superior]. At meetings, the labourer would raise complaints about the behaviour of kisans. People would say, why do you mistreat them?” As early as 1972, labourers began organizing themselves into separate organizations or agitating to do so. At some point, for example, labourers in Muftiabad, just south of the canal that divides Hashtnagar, approached Haji Abdul Mateen, a tenant who at that time had matriculate education, to represent them and articulate their concerns. Abdul Mateen explained to me that there were 82 labourers in the area, who were “smart, and made me their leader so that they wouldn’t be left behind on their own.” He agreed to represent them because he was “young” and thought that they might get repressed. But when Bangash came to learn of it, he seems to have accosted him, “Why did you take on the leadership by your own decision?” I said that they were scared.” Bangash was not merely concerned about party discipline, as we will see, he was also, on some level, politically opposed to separate organizations of labourers.

Yet, the labourers went beyond better wages and better treatment, and wanted land. Bangash blamed it on their being “incited by the landlords.” But the MKP ultimately negotiated certain mechanisms of land redistribution, for example, that a tenant who possessed 8 to 12 jirabs (4 to 6 acres) would give one jirab (one-half acre) to a labourer. Some labourers did get their land, for example, Miskeen Khan told me that he got one jirab out of the peasant movement. This was clearly a boon, for where before his family had to move around a lot, now they had their own place and stability. Tenants thus began to make concessions toward labourers, borne of

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691 Interview with Anonymous, Hashimabad, May 22 2013.
692 Interview, Muftiabad, October 8, 2013.
693 Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 16.
694 Interview, Lahore Kali, June 3 2013.
the unity required to hold back the khans and their ejectments. However, they were often very reluctant in making these concessions.

Indeed, the political assertion of the landless was not always straightforward. The decision to redistribute land from tenants to labourers, undertaken through a committee chaired by Adam Khan, led to open discussion and even “bitter arguments.” In one meeting of 1,000-1,500 (presumably in 1971 or 1972) there was complete silence when the party leadership invited farm workers to speak on the matter of land redistribution:

there was complete silence. Despite our repeated requests the workers wouldn’t speak. Finally we had to say that it was indeed shameful that despite four years’ liberation movement the tenants had created such an atmosphere in that village that the workers were afraid to talk… One by one then the workers began to complain.

Bangash did not explain where the intimidation was coming from or how it operated, but it perhaps indicates the variations in the organization of landless labourers itself—here, perhaps, they were not as well organized as they were elsewhere. In other cases, the weakness of landless organization was also a consequence of tenant subterfuge. As MKP leaders brought labourers into the village, centre (3-6 villages) and district committees of the party, the “peasants held the meetings at such timings when [the workers] were working in the fields.” Thus, organizing landless labourers may have been important to counter the strength of tenants, but it was not smooth going.

Thereafter, when the PPP-backed government took over the province in 1973 and immediately implemented a ban on ejectments, tenants now secure in their possession no longer had an incentive to concede to labourers. The material concessions that undergirded their united front began to fray. Ishaq Muhammad noted at a party conference in 1973 that farm labourers

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695 Adam Khan was and still is known as “Chairman Adam Khan” because he used to be chairman of a union council in the Basic Democracies system, so appointing him to chair such a committee reinforced his moniker.

696 Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 17.
had written a petition in broken English to “Party Elders,” complaining that *kisans*, particularly well-to-do *kisans*, were no longer heeding the party’s line: “Although they agree with the rights of farm labourers, they keep delaying implementation in the same way that courts keep adjourning for later dates.”

Forty years later, as I conducted fieldwork, that date had still not arrived. As erstwhile tenant Dildaar told me, “There was some injustice. The *khet mazdūrs* were supposed to get [land] …. But what the labourer was supposed to get as per the manifesto, this did not happen much. I, for one, say with pride that I have given 3-4 jirabs to labourers.” Afzal Khamosh also said that, “all that should have happened did not happen,” and he explained this as being the result of internecine fighting and conflict between the Bangash and Adam Khan factions after 1974.

But many landless labourers, if they spoke of internecine struggles, held that this refusal to concede land was its cause and not its consequence. Qader Khan, a landless labourer who had actively participated as a local leader in the MKP, explained that the *kisans* were biased against the labourers, and left them on their own. Although they were told to give one or two jirabs of land to labourers, and to treat them as brothers, the *kisans* ignored this, and thereafter the paths of the *kisans* and *mazdūrs* separated.

Inzar Gul, who, along with his brother Badam Gul, had at some point managed to buy two jirabs of land, and thereafter send several sons to Saudi Arabia to achieve some upward mobility, including buying a motorcycle, were nevertheless disappointed in *kisans*. They pointed out that the *kisans* were completely unwilling to implement the slogan of one or two jirabs to the landless. After all, *kisans* wanted to strengthen their own positions, and it would not be possible to cut from their land to give it to the labourers. In any case, Inzar Gul said, people often make nominal claims [of solidarity], but when they achieve

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698 Interview with Anonymous, Hashimabad, May 22 2013.
699 Interview, Chel, June 11 2013.
their goals they forget and leave others behind. This was an explanation concerning little more than naturally divergent material interests.

Land redistribution was not the only area in which the MKP had difficulty subordinating tenants to its political line. The MKP had consistently upheld the boycott of elections, something that became a matter of debate in the party, as we will see. In 1974, the relatively small Adam Khan faction was expelled when its members co-operated with the PPP in a by-election, but this problem came up in an even bigger way in 1977. For the March 1977 elections the MKP leadership still held to a line of boycott, and from January to March the party organized mammoth rallies in the Frontier calling on peasants to boycott elections and to instead to fight directly for *mazdūr kisān rāj*. According to police figures: in January, a rally of 2,400-2,500 in Swat; in February, two rallies of 6,000-6,500 and 4,000-4,500 in different parts of Charsadda; rallies of 3,000-3,500 in Peshawar and Mardan each; and again in March, a rally of 3,000-4,000 in Charsadda and of 3,000 in Mardan. The numbers at these rallies could rival those of any mainstream party. All these peasants “would raise their hands again and again at Mazdoor Kisan Party rallies swearing on the Qur’ān to not vote. But in reality in great numbers they voted for the People’s Party.” Indeed, after the elections, Bangash went around rebuking peasants for having voted for the PPP contrary to party instructions. Ishaq Muhammad alleged that rich peasants, in particular, were behind the orchestration of these votes.

How the MKP leaders understood and debated the reluctance of rich peasants to follow their orders, we will examine in the next section. Here, it may be important to note that the tenants adhering to the charismatic personage of Bangash and the organizational legacy of the

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701 Special Branch, NWFP, 51, 57.
702 Special Branch, NWFP, 55, 58.
703 Special Branch, NWFP, 61, 62.
MKP, while still voting for the PPP, demonstrates the multilayered nature of their political affiliation. Many peasants told me that without the MKP they would have nothing, and be nothing. Perhaps back in the 1970s the tenants well understood that the direct defence of their economic interests lay with their affiliation with the MKP and its organizational apparatus; yet, the PPP had shown that it was friendly to the tenants, and had directed the state apparatus to intervene significantly in their favour. Moreover, since the MKP offered no real way of controlling the apparatus of the state itself, voting for the PPP was better than letting the Pakistan National Alliance, representative of the landowners of the Peshawar valley, win. But as the departure of Adam Khan showed, it was not merely that peasants had multilayered affiliations, or that they somehow did not understand what the MKP was saying; in many cases, peasants probably just disagreed with the party’s line on redistributing land to landless labourers, or its line to avoid electoral politics.

For this reason, perhaps, Mukhtar Ahmed could say that, “Our people did not [do justice] to [Bangash]. People left him. A few people remained at the end, but most people left him.” This, then, was a narrative of some sort of betrayal. People had participated in the movement and expected to get some land, but only those who were already occupying land by 1970 became its de facto proprietors. Those who had become landless, largely in the prior decade, but who nevertheless worked on those lands and also suffered the oppression of the khaus, were largely excluded. Although many kisans achieved upward mobility, and some among them became comparable to khans, they had not only betrayed, or left behind, their landless counterparts, but they had also left behind the very messianic figure who had delivered that land to them. The figure of Bangash was thus not sufficient to hold together the coalition of the peasants and the landless labourers, and the shift in the relations of production, from having to pay rent to landlords to becoming de facto occupancy tenants, had also shifted the political coordinates of
subalternity. The question for the MKP, as we will now see, was how to explain and what to do with the shift in these political coordinates.

**Modes of production and political strategy**

The MKP’s leaders and intellectuals were deeply embedded among the tenants and labourers of the Frontier, and elsewhere. They were in some ways surprised by their own success in mobilizing peasants in the early 1970s, given the relatively few cadre they had. As the decade proceeded and the peasants demobilized, they began to debate the proper composition of the hegemonic bloc that the MKP ought to build, and particularly in the Frontier. Here, a “proletarian” tendency led by Sher Ali Bacha sought to focus on the leading role of agricultural and industrial workers, especially against rich peasants, while the “peasant” tendency represented by Afzal Bangash emphasized the continuing relevance of organizing rich peasants. This was, in other words, a debate over where to draw the line between elite and subaltern. They couched the debate in examining whether and how capitalism had developed in Pakistan.

In this way their debates lined up with the various “modes of production” debates taking place, especially in India, but also in other parts of the world. Indeed, the contradiction between peasants and landless labourers was hardly unique to northern Hashtnagar or Pakistan. Consequently, the key referents in the MKP’s debates were rarely Europe, but rather Russia, China, India, and to a lesser extent other Third World Marxist movements. In other words, the debate largely bypassed the Western Marxist debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism in “the West”, and focused on the specificities of “the Rest” in order to try and arrive at a postcolonial communist praxis.

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706 At least, until academics Aijaz Ahmad and Feroz Ahmed got involved.
However, the references to international debates were a crucial aspect of a failed attempt at developing communist theory and strategy specific to Pakistan, and tactics specific to the Peshawar valley and Malakand. When the contradictions between peasants and labourers began to emerge, Afzal Bangash in 1972 stressed specificity over generalized theory, arguing that, “[t]his was such a problem which is not mentioned in any books.” Sher Ali Bacha relied on Indian communist literature to argue for separate organizations of labourers, but Bangash opposed this, warning against “phrase-mongering” and bringing “references out of context.” “[T]he fact is that the revolutionary theory is a generalization of practice,” he noted, and in practice labourers and tenants in the Frontier were fighting together against khans. Forming a separate organization of labourers would only sharpen their contradiction with tenants and “landlords would exploit the situation.” But as we have seen, labourers began organizing anyway, and soon the debate between Bacha and Bangash’s supporters took on larger proportions that ended up splitting the party. Here, I summarize the two main lines.

Bacha and his supporters were unequivocally in favour of separate organizations of labourers, which he motivated in an extensive article published in 1974. He argued that because capitalist relations were present and were developing further in rural areas, the contradiction between agricultural labourers against (rich) tenants and landlords would eventually become the fundamental contradiction. Capitalism was developing from above, as landlords and merchants invested in industry and cash crops; and from below, as limited land reforms as well as the rent freeze enabled richer tenants to accumulate capital, which these “kulaks” invested in machinery and land. To substantiate his argument, Bacha provided comprehensive estimates of the proportions of various rural classes, including landholdings, in the various tahsils and districts in

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708 Bangash, “Class Struggle, Not a Tribal War,” 16.
709 Bangash, 16.
711 Bacha, 3, 5.
and around the Peshawar and Swat valleys, as well as estimates of the numbers of tractors, threshers, etc. present in these areas. His analysis, drawing on Lenin’s *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899),\(^{712}\) was both theoretically and empirically grounded.

Bacha argued that under this growing capitalism, rich peasants, having secured possession, saw no need for the movement and turned instead to mainstream politicians and electoralism. In Hashtnagar and surrounding areas it had become apparent that *kisans* used intimidation tactics against labourers. If they continued in the same organization then it would be the interests of rich peasants, who had more capital and influence, that would be pursued over those of labourers.\(^{713}\) To prioritize peasants over labourers was to prioritize the “capitalist road and to abandon the socialist road, whose axis is the proletariat,”\(^{714}\) for agrarian labourers were part of the latter. While citing Lenin and Mao’s emphasis on separate organizations of labourers, he drew more extensively on the Indian experience:

> India’s peasant activists and leaders were often Brahmins or belonged to upper castes, and therefore did not give emphasis to a separate organization of landless labourers. The Kisan Sabhas were captured only by tenants and rich peasants, and these became Kulak Sabhas that were dominated by Congress’s influence, and the revolutionary activists’ influence was extinguished.\(^{715}\)

Those who wanted to establish separate organizations of the rural poor, whose problems also involved caste exclusion, were precisely those who had led the Naxalbari and Srikakulam movements, which Bacha cited positively.

Bacha’s point was not that the socialist revolution was at hand, or that the anti-feudal struggle in all of Pakistan had been completed, but rather, that the anti-feudal struggle was to be conducted under the leadership of the proletariat, including agrarian labour. He argued that the

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\(^{712}\) Although he does not cite the book directly, his personal notes show that he drew extensive notes from it.

\(^{713}\) Bacha, “Inqilāb Keliye Mazdūr Ṭabqe Kī Qiyādat Zarūfī Shart He,” 6.

\(^{714}\) Bacha, 7.

\(^{715}\) Bacha, 9.
anti-feudal people’s democratic revolution and the socialist revolution are not compartmentalized, but are two aspects of a singular totality. Therefore, where landlords were dominant, the MKP ought to emphasize the anti-feudal struggle, but where the landlords had weakened, the struggle would emphasize the interests of landless labourers. This did not augur socialism now, for that was a long ways off, but sought to prepare for it.

Published arguments against Bacha’s position were slow to come, and by the time they arrived over 1977-1978 the MKP had, as we will see in the next section, arrived at and proceeded beyond splitting. The responses came from Aijaz Ahmad (in 1977), now better known as an academic literary critic, who maintained a distance from all developing MKP factions, and from the academic Feroz Ahmed and activist Tala Muhammad (in 1978), who were associated with Bangash. Together, they argued that capitalism had simply not developed, either in industry or in agriculture, to the point that warranted making agricultural labourers the leading class for socialism. As Feroz Ahmed argued, even if there were increased tractorization and ejectments in one or two tahsils, that did not indicate a qualitative change in the overall mode of production. Often, tenants had legally become labourers, but had not been freed from feudal relations: “they often use their own means of production and rather than cash wages they are remunerated in kind. In some cases they are even subjected to *begār*. What kind of capitalism is

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716 Bacha, 9.


Accordingly, Pakistan had neither the proletariat nor the capitalism necessary for a socialist revolution.

Tala Muhammad responded to Bacha’s organizational arguments, asserting that the “Trotskyite” line of capitalist development in Pakistan could only confuse *kisans*, who would fight both *khans* and labourers, while also confusing labourers, who would mistake a manufactured enemy, *kisans*, for the real enemy, the *khans*. The spontaneous self-organization of labourers was specific to northern Hashtnagar, and did not originate due to rich peasant oppression, but rather, due to the *jama’dārī* system, whereby individually roving labourers decided to sell their labour-power as a group, electing one of them to be the one who roved for all of them. These *jama’dars* became political organizers. On the contrary, agricultural labourers in Russia only came to their own after the Bolshevik revolution; while in West Punjab and India, unlike Hashtnagar, where the differences between *kisans* and *mazdūrs* mapped onto differences of caste, labourers had not come to play an important role in the proletarian revolution. But rich and middle tenants in Hashtnagar had played an important role. Making generalizations about contradictions between rural classes and separate organizations was therefore unwarranted. While trade unions of labourers, seeking to secure their interests, were fine, it would be a mistake to confuse the revolutionary leadership of the proletarian party, which is composed of individuals steeped in proletarian ideology, with the physical leadership of workers. Muhammad argued that in Pakistan, it made sense to focus on the peasantry as a revolutionary element.

These debates not only percolated down to *kisans* but emerged from the real contradictions that pitted the landless against the tenants. As Haji Nowrooz Khan, himself a tenant and supporter of Afzal Bangash in northern Hashtnagar, put it,

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Sher Ali Bacha was a quarrelsome person, who tried to split the labourers and peasants…. He would give the example of how in small canals, during the rains, frogs climb on top of each other. One is sinking in the water in the mud, the second is on top, and the third [is on top of the second]. Labourers are the ones at the bottom, who find it difficult to breathe. Kisans are on top, and khans on top [of them]. The kisans have gotten rid of the burden on top of themselves, and now it’s time to get rid of the kisans. This matter reached the very top leadership and so he got expelled.

Lest we lose sight of it, there was this important organizational question at stake. Indeed, Ishaq Muhammad in his latter contributions tried to split the middle between Bacha’s and Bangash’s positions. He condemned the “opportunists” (presumably Bacha’s crew) who were against the anti-feudal strategy of uniting all classes under a people’s democratic revolution, activists who hated the word kisan and saw the rich peasant as their enemy, who took the support of “undesirable elements” in the name of “red terror” to fight rich peasants and their “white terror.”\footnote{Mushāhid, “Ai’jāz Aḥmad Ke Maẓāmān Kā Taṣāqīṭī Jāʾizah (I),” 6.} On the other hand, he also condemned the opportunists (evidently Bangash’s crew) who had taken the side of the rich peasants, who reduced political work to court cases and staging rallies, and who were scared of ideological struggle and the name of socialism. These people wanted to preserve the leadership of rich peasants who had emerged over 1970-71, and labeled the organizing of landless labourers and poor peasants as being anarchism. In their stead, Muhammad supported the position of encouraging the independent organization of landless labourers and poor peasants as a necessary component of people’s democratic revolution.

The debate here was not detached from the concerns of tenants and labourers as articulated in previous sections, and influenced party policy. It was the struggle over party policy that split the party. First, in 1974 the party arrived at a compromise position. The MKP would not form separate organizations of labourers, but would keep them in the same committees and units
as peasants. In new areas, if workers did not want to join the MKP directly, then they could be organized separately, albeit under the leadership of the MKP. Those spontaneous organizations that had, contrary to existing policy, already been formed would not be discouraged, because they considered themselves to be under the MKP. Overall, party members were directed to keep the rural poor united, to minimize contradictions between peasants and workers, and not let contradictions intensify to the extent that peasants and workers came to fight each other.

Yet, this decision was temporary, and in 1976, after considerable, yet mostly unwritten, debate, the party settled on a new policy, specifically for Hashtnagar and Malakand:

There is a contradiction between the rich peasants and agricultural labourer and poor peasants. This contradiction can be resolved by organizing agricultural labourers separately. Unite them with poor peasants and urban labourers so that, even while fighting against khans shoulder to shoulder with rich and other peasants, through their separate organization they remain united against the rich peasants’ oppression, become capable of controlling rich peasants, and so that the opportunities wrested from khans are received by agricultural labourers and poor peasants rather than rich peasants.

This separate organization of labourers, like all mass organizations, would be part of a united front, given firm leadership by a proletarian party. The document also called for a “people’s force,” or rather, a people’s army. In this way, the new policy articulated the need to build a proletarian party, a united front, and a people’s army, or the three “magic weapons” of revolution identified by Mao. It also reiterated how the distance between people’s democratic revolution and socialism would be very great, but its seeds had to be laid down now.

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724 “Sarḥad Kissān Tahrīk Aur Hamārī Pāṛī,” 12. This policy is embedded in a very long article that, as party policy, is unsigned. However, it was written by Bacha. The article rehashes some of Bacha’s previous arguments but also provides greater clarification and adds more arguments. Moreover, it considers both sides of the debate that had been going on in the MKP.
Even before the new policy was adopted, the party was taking the matter of landless labourers seriously, and thereafter sought to direct their demands against *khans*. According to police reports, in December 1975 Bangash exhorted tenants to treat labourers well. In a couple of relatively small meetings (80-100 people) in northern Hashtnagar he “regretted that certain tenants were perpetrating oppression upon the farm labourers. He cautioned the audience that the farm labourers may also rise against them (tenants).”726 The president of farm labourers “regretted that Mazdoor Kissan Party did not fulfil its promises with the farm labourers,” promising cooperation with the party if labourers were given “certain relaxations by the tenants.”727 After the new policy was adopted, Bacha began organizing labourers in earnest to take militant action. On July 29 1976, police allege he addressed farm labourers, encouraging them to occupy the “self-cultivation” lands of *khans*. He also directed farm labourers to “purchase a rifle per family by 31st August, 1976 without fail,” even if it meant selling their “cows, sheeps and chickens.”728 The very next day 11 farm labourers took into possession 55 jaribs of the self-cultivation land of one “Muslim Khan son of Mazullah Khan of Tangi.”729 Thus, while Bangash sought to mollify contradictions between *kisans* and labourers, Bacha sought to intensify the latter’s contradiction against *khans* under the new policy. This did not last very long.

These two contending lines could not remain united under the same party structure, for ultimately they were debates about what the leadership of a hegemonic political project would look like. Even if the tenants had become less pliant after the PPP’s interventions, they still were loyal to the personage of Bangash and to the name of the MKP, however hollow that loyalty was. For Bangash, the party could ill afford to alienate those rich peasants, like Muhammad Shah Ali,

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727 Special Branch, NWFP, 26.
728 Special Branch, NWFP, 33.
729 Special Branch, NWFP, 34.
who remained influential and committed members of the party. For Bacha, such compromise with rich peasants and their interests was reneging on the necessity for an ultimate proletarian revolution, and the leadership of the proletariat in bringing about even an anti-feudal people’s democratic revolution. This was a debate about what class coalition, and set of class interests, would undergird the formation of a new revolutionary state. However, as we will now see, the MKP fell apart before even approaching that possibility, for Bangash expelled Bacha from the party.

As a postscript, it is worth noting that even years later, in 1986, Bangash wrote in a letter to Bacha that, “although [in the intervening period] you had accepted that feudalism has not ended, but you still have not accepted the error of your thesis that the contradiction between kisans and agricultural labourers is primary.” Even after the two had, apparently, personally reconciled, their theoretical difference persisted.

**Things fall apart**

The MKP’s last central committee meeting took place over the first seven days of August 1977. It was not only the last central committee meeting of the MKP but also of its clandestine communist core, renamed in 1975 as the Mazdoor Party. Although the increasingly acrimonious theoretical and policy debate over rural class contradictions informed the proceedings, there were also broader debates that the party was engaged in. By and large these reflected a frustration that, despite their experience, the party had failed to make any dent on national politics during the upheavals of 1977, with the protests of the Pakistan National Alliance or the elections. Its leaders therefore also debated relations between the centre and provinces, restructuring the Mazdoor Party and consequently the Mazdoor Kisan Party entirely in line with a more rigorous practice of Marxism-Leninism, and participating in elections. They did not, however, find an operational unity on how to proceed.
Here, Bacha presented his theses to the Mazdoor Party’s central committee, which were crucially concerned about what it meant to build a united front of classes and groups that went beyond the peasantry of the northern Frontier. First was the question of why Bacha argued that the MKP should perhaps be renamed the Kisan Committee. The Mazdoor Kisan Party had already become widely known in the Frontier as simply “Kisan Party,” but this put off labourers and especially the numerous small landowners who themselves had been victims of many of these kisans. As his close associate Aslam Khan Gigiani, now associated with Bangash’s sons, put it:

Sher Ali Bacha used to say the the MKP is not a party, it is a trade union. Bangash said, no, it is a party. [Bacha held that] only the kulak kisan supports it…. [The MKP] kept [people] limited to the politics of land. And it did not do work among other classes, factory workers, small owners, middle classes. It only supported kisans, but kisans are not a revolutionary class. When their interests are fulfilled they do not go even one step further.\textsuperscript{730}

Indeed, altogether the MKP had come to be known as a somewhat adventurist peasant party without a broader programme.

The concern over the lack of a broader programme than land was one that many tenants in northern Hashtnagar came to share, at least in retrospect, despite the MKP’s efforts to articulate such a programme in the 1970s. Three other erstwhile activists now affiliated with three different remnant factions of the localized MKP groups said to me separately that the biggest problem of the old MKP had been its limiting the movement to land. They specifically noted how limited its slogan was: the call, “śe ghwaray?”—what do you want?—and response, “żamakah, żamakah!”—land, land!\textsuperscript{731} Their point was not that the party only worked among kisans, but that it did not raise the consciousness of the tenants beyond matters of land. This was,

\textsuperscript{730} Interview, Dag Bangla, June 4 2013.
\textsuperscript{731} Interviews, northern Hashtnagar, May and June 2013.
of course, simply not true, for the party leaders tried very hard to do so. But aside from the severe lack of sufficient cadre educated in Marxism-Leninism, and the lack of sufficient written resources in Pashto, which, in any case, most peasants could not read, it was as if many of these tenants had little or no idea that the MKP was doing work in factories under the Mazdoor Rabita Committee (as we will see in the next chapter), or that its leaders had tried to present them with broader horizons. Whatever they were doing was not resonating with the peasantry, and Bacha appears to have grasped this in the 1970s, arguing that it was a consequence of peasants understanding that their own interests had already been met and required no further struggle. For this reason he sought to slough off the MKP from its tight association with peasants alone. Nevertheless, both Bangash and Ishaq Muhammad were strongly opposed to collapsing the MKP into a Kisan Committee, for they felt the MKP now had wide recognition.

Beyond the particular question of the organizational forms for class interests in the Frontier and elsewhere were more general questions about national political orientation. Perhaps the other key question that led to Sher Ali Bacha’s expulsion, and certainly to the split, was the question of elections which, as we have seen, the MKP hitherto had boycotted. Bacha and Imtiaz Alam, a senior leader in the Punjab MKP, were particularly in favour of elections. After all, Alam explained to me, the MKP was an open organization and they were engaging in every other kind of legal activity. He also estimated that, had they participated in the March 1977 elections, they could have won 5-6 national assembly seats, and 12-13 seats in provincial assemblies. (Whether or not they could have was less important than their feeling so.) As we have seen, the MKP already had one MNA from Mardan, who had defected from the PPP. This could have been

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732 There is truth to this. Even to this day, peasants in various parts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa remember the MKP and its leaders.

the MKP’s way of emerging on to the national scene, and addressing its problems of appearing relevant to a broader population. However, Ishaq Muhammad and Bangash also strongly opposed electoral participation.

The question of “oppressed nationalities,” the discrimination against minority ethno-national groups and regions, also created tensions in the party, although, probably not ones that led to the split as such. The party had a very limited, practically no stature, in the rural areas of Sindh or in Balochistan at all, whose middle-classes especially considered their ethno-national groups as oppressed vis-à-vis the Punjabi centre. Coming out of the August 1977 meeting the party admitted that,

concerning democracy, we have sometimes only emphasized the destruction of feudal remnants, and have given very little attention to establishing a balance between the authority of the provinces and the centre, and the necessity of taking along with us the feelings of the rising bourgeoisie and lower middle-classes.734

The PPP government was undertaking military operations in Balochistan, but the MKP had not seriously condemned the operations or supported the liberation movement. Although the MKP had reached out to other communist groups, such as the Sindh Awami Tahrik (Sindh People’s Movement, also a Maoist organization),735 they could not arrive at resolutions on mergers.736 The limitations of the MKP in building broader fronts with the radicals of other nationalities were attributed to the Punjabi chauvinism of Major Ishaq Muhammad, while Bacha and Bangash, being Pakhtuns, were naturally sympathetic to the matter.

The 1977 meeting concentrated these debates. But, by this time, even Bangash was reconsidering participation in elections. Perhaps the experience of the northern Hashtnagar

735 This organization came to play a significant role against the military dictatorship, mobilizing rural Sindh in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy in 1983.
peasantry pledging allegiance to him yet voting for the PPP made him think that they would vote for a candidate put up by the MKP.\textsuperscript{737} Thus, Bangash, Bacha, and Alam opposed Ishaq on elections and the question of oppressed nationalities, while Bacha and Alam opposed Bangash and Ishaq on the question of collapsing the MKP into the Kisan Committee and building new trade unions under the leadership of the Mazdoor Party. But, as secretary of the clandestine Mazdoor Party, Bangash had expelled Bacha from both the Mazdoor Party and the Mazdoor Kisan Party. Ishaq opposed this move and sought to keep everyone together. But by the fall of 1977 it was too little, too late, and in the last months of 1977 and first months of 1978 both the Mazdoor Party and the MKP had fragmented into four groups, though Bacha and Alam appear to have co-ordinated their efforts. According to Bangash’s son, Kamil Bangash, the MKP had 77,000 cardholders in 1977-78.\textsuperscript{738} Precisely as the military regime grew more authoritarian, precisely when it ought to have formed greater and larger alliances with groups like the Sindh Awami Tahrik and other scattered leftist groups, Pakistan’s largest leftist party had itself fallen apart.

**Conclusion**

The disintegration of the MKP on the all-Pakistan level aside, the contradiction between tenants and labourers did persist in many parts of Hashtnagar. Ameer Rehman Khan, the landlord of Ameerabad, told me that he exploited this contradiction in order to get most of his lands back from *kisānī* through the 1980s and 1990s,\textsuperscript{739} although 20 acres of his lands were still in *kisānī*.


\textsuperscript{738} Interview, Peshawar, June 9, 2013.

\textsuperscript{739} Interview, Ameerabad, June 23, 2013.
Crucial to his victory was also convincing the landless labourers of the village that if they joined him, instead of supporting the *kisans*, he would give them the land on a sharecropping arrangement, free of the *kisan*. “The *khan* oppressed the man with 20 acres, [but then] he oppressed the labourer.” He joked, or perhaps half-joked, that he was now going to form a “Mazdoor Party” to defend the interests of the labourers. This was the very alliance of *khan* and *mazdūr* that Bacha and Bangash had in very different ways warned against.

But in much of northern Hashtnagar, the consequences of the peasant movement are similar to the kind of outcomes described by observers of limited land reforms in West Bengal in India.\(^740\) Here, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M))-led governments that redistributed lands to a tenant base, but largely neglected the agricultural labourers. On the contrary, in Kerala the CPI(M)-led governments enacted, relatively, more comprehensive land reforms that incorporated agricultural labourers, thus increasing the welfare impact of the reforms. Because agricultural labourers had their own, autonomous class organizations in Kerala, they could militate for their own interests and force their way into the agenda of land reforms; they could not do the same in West Bengal. The ultimate experience of these land reforms seems to have borne out Bacha’s positions.

But Anil Varughese goes further and argues with reference to Kerala that the organizations of agricultural labour have entailed the institutionalization of the “interests of the poorer sections into the state arena to a much better extent than Bengal. The state in Kerala has involved itself in a wide range of social and legislative interventions to protect the working poor.”\(^741\) In other words, the nature of the lower class coalition — whether or not, and in what


ways, it incorporates not merely tenants but also poorer tenants and labourers — also determines the form and content of the state.

In northern Hashtnagar, I suggest that the exclusion of landless labourers by tenants may have made their coalition weaker when they sought to fight against the martial law administration that came to power in 1977. As I will argue, that military regime had, in a way distinct from that of the previous PPP-led regime, institutionalized the interests of the tenants by not encouraging a return to the de jure governance of khanism, by ensuring that district officials intervened between landowners and tenants if conflicts did arise, and through broader attention to agrarian policies. That such an arrangement left out landless labourers may not have mattered too much to tenants, who, as we have seen in this chapter, treated and often continue to treat labourers in a discriminatory way.

So at last we can return to the beatification of Bangash. His sacralization by the people, the addition of his body and grave to those of the holy people whose graves dot the countryside, is an indication of his charismatic personage becoming the focal point to memorialize the selfless activity of the MKP’s leaders. Perhaps the peasants, those who got their lands and stepped back from active participation in further intensification of the movement, those who withdrew their active consent from the MKP and remained embedded in it through passive relations of good neighbourliness, perhaps they realized that they had betrayed the trust and activity of their landless counterparts—their own kin, friends, neighbours. Perhaps, they transformed their political failure into the higher bar of a religious failure, a different kind of narrative that also, ultimately, let them off the hook. After all, who can live up to the example of a saint?
Chapter 7: Minimal hegemony and the armour of coercion

Introduction

The Zia-ul Haq regime came to power in 1977, in part, with the the support of landowners of the Peshawar valley afflicted by the peasant movement. The National Democratic Party (NDP, successor to NAP)’s alliance with Islamist parties that ousted Bhutto, however, was more one of convenience than fundamental ideological or political orientation. Accordingly, scholarly attention has focused more on the regime’s relationship with the Islamists, specifically the Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, from which parties the new regime initially took civilian ministers. Beyond that, the Zia-ul Haq regime soon also reached out to pīrs in Punjab and Sindh, those from the former province especially changed their allegiance from the PPP to the new regime.\footnote{It is not clear to me what role pīrs played in the Frontier, though they do not appear to have been as politically decisive in the province in the way that the Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam were.) Nasr has argued that the regime’s Islamization drive was part of its own particular hegemonic project, one that sought the support of upwardly mobile businessmen and entrepreneurs oriented toward a discourse of Islam and, perhaps ironically, also sought to limit the power of Islamist parties, while extending the state apparatus’s reach further into society.} Nasr has argued that the regime’s Islamization drive was part of its own particular hegemonic project, one that sought the support of upwardly mobile businessmen and entrepreneurs oriented toward a discourse of Islam and, perhaps ironically, also sought to limit the power of Islamist parties, while extending the state apparatus’s reach further into society.\footnote{This chapter examines aspects of how the weakening of the peasant movement discussed in Chapter 6 influenced the ways in which the new military regime reached into the Frontier, and specifically into Hashtnagar.}

I argue that whatever the Zia regime’s orientation to Islam, its orientation to local politics in Hashtnagar was driven less by religiosity or even the veneer of religiosity, and more by similar

considerations as the previous regimes, namely, negotiating between its own strategic plans in the province, the interests of its base among landowners, and the interests of the tenants and labourers who in many ways continued to oppose landowners. Here, as we have seen, the organizational strength of these lower classes was weakened by, first, the upward mobility of many tenants and the exacerbation of class differentiation among peasants and landless labourers, and second, the collapse of the MKP into different factions. Despite that, tenants and labourers would often still unite to fight individual ejectments and continued to remain organized in the MKP’s fragments, and so although they were not as strong as they were in the 1970s, they were certainly not as weak as they were in the 1960s. Indeed, as I will show in this chapter, even the remnant factions of the MKP had considerable membership, but the strategies and tactics they employed to combat the new military regime further isolated them from villagers and enabled the military regime to crush the party. The new military regime, meanwhile, used similar methods and practices of rule as previous, democratic/civilian regimes, combining its coercion with minimal forms of the generation of consent. In other words, the imperatives of establishing hegemony, however minimal, were important even for an authoritarian regime that relied upon considerable coercion. Consequently, the new regime did not seek to restore khanism or the old relations of production; rather, the particular institutional configuration of power (i.e., the one without direct landlord power in villages) was adapted and transformed in order to provide continuity to the regime itself and to class rule in general. That is, the military regime sought to prevent any further transformation, keeping a tight lid on lower class expectations and activity. Before elaborating, it is worth establishing the national and international context.

One of the first moves the military regime made was to bring an end to the armed insurgency in Balochistan, granting amnesty to insurgents to stop the fighting. The regime also released Abdul Wali Khan and other NAP/NDP leaders from prison, and, indeed, ended the
prosecution of NAP/NDP figures with respect to the assassination of Hayat Khan Sherpao and other alleged crimes. (Recall that the Bhutto regime had banned NAP for this reason in 1975.) During the two years after assuming control of the state apparatus, the military regime kept political actors on their feet with promises of elections and allowing for limited freedoms. After the coup in 1977, as we have seen, every major MKP leader except for Ishaq Muhammad sought to participate in elections that they expected would take place sooner or later, but did not happen till 1985.744 In other words, at least initially, the military regime appeared to political agents to be amenable to restoring a democratic set up, one which they felt, with justification, Bhutto’s erstwhile government had undermined.

But in April 1978, the Afghan communists in the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power by way of a coup in the Saur Revolution, and in January 1979, the Shah of Iran departed to make way for the Iranian Revolution, bringing revolutionary upheaval to Pakistan’s western borders. By the end of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in reaction to US, Gulf and Pakistani stoking of the Afghan jihad. The preceding Afghan government had intermittently supported the anti-Pakistan activities of radical NAP elements like Ajmal Khattak, and had provided a base for training before the 1975 rapprochement between the two countries; but now, the PDPA regime had all the more reason to provide support to anti-military regime elements in Pakistan. The rise of the PDPA and the intervention of the Soviet Union acted as a draw to many Pakistani communists, including those who had previously opposed the Soviet Union’s “revisionism.” Now, they saw Afghanistan as a potential rear base and source of support in their own struggles for democracy.

744 Nashr o ashā’at kamītī, Circular, “Kacrah (Lumpen) Dānishvar,” Circular, no. 96 (1979): 8–15, 22. By the time elections did take place, Afzal Bangash was still in exile, and Sher Ali Bacha and Imtiaz Alam were still imprisoned. Ishaq Muhammad had died in 1982, a consequence of a stroke he suffered while imprisoned.
For in the meantime, it had become clear that the Pakistani military regime had no intention of holding elections, an intention sealed by the “judicial assassination” of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in April 1979. Soon thereafter, first information reports (FIRs, or charges) were lodged against MKP leaders Afzal Bangash\(^{745}\) and Sher Ali Bacha.\(^{746}\) While the latter went underground, Bangash fled Pakistan, and by the end of the year, Pakistani intelligence had located him in the Afghan capital, Kabul.\(^{747}\) Here, as we will see, both Bangash and Bacha sought the PDPA’s cooperation. Bangash in particular began to co-operate with the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s son, Murtaza Bhutto, who formed Al-Zulfiqar Organization to carry out armed struggle against the military regime.\(^{748}\) These events formed some of the highly charged context of the beginning of the 1980s.

The sources for this chapter also provide some context, for the chapter is based largely on state archives and oral history. The paucity of especially party sources is the result of a few factors. First, the MKP split into several factions in late 1977 and early 1978. Thereafter the *Circular* was largely in the hands of the Punjab MKP under Ishaq Muhammad, with little news of Hashtnagar or the Frontier. Meanwhile, Afzal Bangash adopted academic Feroz Ahmed’s Urdu magazine, *Pakistan Forum*, as his organ. Sher Ali Bacha had no such organ. Second, in 1979, all open oppositional activity and literature was banned, so then even *Circular* and *Pakistan Forum* are unavailable as sources. Lastly, the state archives that do exist concerning Hashtnagar were not as numerous or detailed as the ones from the PPP era, suggesting that there


\(^{747}\) Special Branch, NWFP, “1970s/80s Bangash Police File,” 174–76. However, Bangash was asked to leave Kabul because he was critical of the PDPA, and went to London. Meanwhile, Bacha was finally arrested in 1981, and imprisoned until 1985 or 1986. According to Imtiaz Alam, who was caught with Bacha, most of the prisoners were leftists or PPP workers. Interview, Lahore, February 22, 2013.

was not much to report to the governor as far as conflicts between *khans* and tenants were concerned—perhaps they were dealt with at more local levels; or that many records were not kept, although, as we will see, the records that were available are sometimes exceptionally detailed; or, more simply, that they have not yet been processed to be made available in the archives (another section of the archives has thousands of files stacked in haphazard manner, collecting dust, not yet past their thirty-year embargo, or simply awaiting proper filing).

Based on this relatively limited data, this chapter argues that the Zia-ul Haq-led military regime did not restore class rule in northern Hashtnagar, that is, in the form of *khanism*, so much as it prevented further political assertion of lower classes and thereby produced the conditions for new forms of upper class assertion. I suggest that the Zia regime did not want to do more, and perhaps could not do more, because of the changed balance of power in the villages where tenants had more bargaining power after the peasant movement than they had before it. The chapter first examines how the Zia-ul Haq-led military regime’s officials paid considerable and explicit attention to the regime’s fragility and its need to engage not merely through coercion but also through ideological and organizational hegemony in civil society. The second section examines how this caution extended to its dealings with the question of the peasant movement and relations of production in northern Hashtnagar and beyond. Nevertheless, I show how the Zia regime created more favourable conditions for landlords aggressive in trying to restore their positions. Third, the chapter examines how the Zia regime dealt with the local politics in villages, brooking few challenges to its political and economic agenda, but sensitive to the excesses of local officials and the ire they might earn from villagers. Lastly, section four turns to the repressive aspects of the Zia regime, arguing that it used violence with a level of discrimination against its specifically political opponents, and that such repression was not all too different from what the PPP had used before it. In sum, while the Zia-ul Haq-led military
regime represented a significant rupture from the PPP-led regime that had preceded it, many of its mechanisms and practices of rule were not so dissimilar.

**Problems of military hegemony**

Perhaps the most fundamental continuity of the Zia-ul Haq military regime with all previous regimes was simply the way in which information about society was processed and communicated within the institutions of the state apparatus. “Law and order” continued to be the guiding ideology of the police, which would send summaries of the “law and order situation” to the governor—now Lieutenant General Fazle Haq. Events and activities were categorized by political party and by sector, e.g., students, agrarian, labour, etc., on a daily, weekly, bi-weekly basis, depending on the level of administration and moment. This kind of reportage and attitude appears to have been a colonial innovation, and the military regime of the 1980s continued its use from the previous regime. In any case, summarized reports such as these, or full reports on a particular meeting or a situation, continued to form the basis of the governor’s instructions to his subordinates. The most significant formal difference was the Basmala749 now stamped at the top of documents.

More generally, the military regime was concerned with allowing acceptable levels of dissent and lower class organization, precisely to avoid broader disturbances. As I have suggested, the imperatives of establishing hegemony, however minimal, were important even for an authoritarian regime that relied upon considerable coercion. This was the particularity of its military hegemony. Shamas Khan remained as the MKP’s senior-most leader in southern Hashtnagar and, at least until 1981, was not yet in jail or under threat of arrest.750 The military

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749 That is, the Arabic phrase “bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmānī r-raḥīm” — In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful.

750 Recall that there was a warrant for Bangash’s arrest, who was in exile. Sālār Muhammad Shah Ali of northern Hashtnagar was also underground due to charges.
regime would, as we will see below, invite him to depute for the MKP in conciliation meetings. Shamas Khan argued to me that the logic of military rule was not fundamentally different from that of democratic rule:

Even under martial law they were trying to dampen the movement [through conciliation], they’re not crazy people who will just shoot everyone. They tried to bring out some other avenues… sometimes with hardness, sometimes with softness…. [Military leaders] are also political leaders. Their whole programme proceeds accordingly. The programme [of ruling classes] is one, but … some of these come to power through guns, some through votes…. [Military personnel] are not crazy, they’re competent people.  

Indeed, the regime was concerned with all sectors where it saw leftists as troublesome and sought to ease rather than exacerbate tension. In 1980 the martial law administration had to contend with a wave of labour unrest, up until which point, an assessment report noted, the “labour class in this province” had “behaved fairly well.”

Strikes and threats of further violence were in some cases met with arrests. On 25 May 1980, the “industrial areas of Charsadda, Kohat, Mardan and Amangarh raised a number of demands and decided to work with their shirts off. They also hoisted black flags on the mills gates.” The major labour unions in this case were affiliated with the Mazdoor Rabita Committee, a labour front that had been initiated by the leadership of the MKP in 1974. Until that point the logic of the peasant movement had dominated the MKP leadership, but after 1974 many of its leading elements began to turn to the slowly growing industry in the province. In 1980, these unions had issued a charter of demands, considered mostly “political” even though the demands were not particularly concerned with opposing the regime directly but were policy proposals, for example

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751 Interview, Kaptan Kali, October 5, 2013.
753 Khan, 334.
754 Khan, 336.
that the “[r]estrictions imposed on trade union activities should be removed and right of strike should be revived.”

Discussion of the matter among senior bureaucrats revealed how careful the regime could be to distinguish between mechanisms of consent and mechanisms of coercion. It is telling that the provincial administration noted that two “demands which related to the Provincial Government … have already been met and resolved to the satisfaction of the workers.” The assessment report attempted to spell out the causes of labour unrest, and concluded that it is impossible under any system of Government to completely curb or eliminate trade-union activity in industrial establishments…. Therefore, peaceful demonstration such as working without shirts or hoisting black flags should not be taken too seriously. We believe that it helps in letting off the steam. The lid should not be held too tight to the point of suffocation of trade union activity.

The subsequent discussion of various senior level bureaucrats (who included military officers), especially the secretary for labour, insisted on keeping the labour directorate away from imposing punitive measures. The directorate’s “basic role” was to “pacify labour and persuade both the labour and the management to come to terms with each other.” If there was violence, the “Conciliator has to withdraw temporarily to enable the Law and order Agencies to restore peace and sanity. Once the peace has been restored, the Conciliator resumes his normal role of mediation.” The military administration was careful to distinguish between persuasion and punishment, and sought to use the former where possible.

The regime also explicitly sought to cultivate what it called “Rightist” political forces, presumably especially those associated with the Jamaat-e-Islami, in the realm of civil society,

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755 Khan, 341.
756 Khan, 336.
757 Khan, 340.
758 “Minutes of the Meeting Held in the Office of Chief Secretary on Monday the 30th June, 1980 at 11 a.m. to Discuss the Labour Situation in the Province,” June 30, 1980, 344, GS 26/216, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
759 “Minutes of the Meeting Held in the Office of Chief Secretary on Monday the 30th June, 1980 at 11 a.m. to Discuss the Labour Situation in the Province,” 345.
and by early 1981 was more confident although still wary. “The patronage of Rightist factions of labour by the Govt seems to have made an impact. However, a larger cross-section of the labour still remains under the influence of Leftist parties.” The Mazdoor Rabita Committee’s gradual losing of ground and a regime-sponsored federation’s success in “mustering greater support among the labour … augurs well, to break the Leftist hold over labour. If we continue to handle the labour affairs firmly and tactfully, it is not expected to pose any serious problems in NWFP.” Patronage of right-wing political parties and factions in student politics was also quite important. The labour and student situations shed light on the military regime’s approach to the agrarian situation as well.

Here, we can return to Shamas Khan who noted that at some point he was invited by the governor to discuss conciliation, for, as we note in the next section, the regime had resumed ejectments.

I said, governor sahib, I have not come here to drink tea … and to be sent back with no decisions made or demands accepted concerning these workers and peasants getting ejected, being imprisoned, cases in the courts…. I said these things boldly, even though he was a martial law governor, and was a dangerous man, and somewhat rude….

Although Shamas Khan told me he was incarcerated in 1981 as part of a military operation in northern Hashtnagar against the Bangash MKP’s co-operation with Al-Zulfiqar Organization (AZO), which we will discuss shortly, it had little to do with his brash words in front of Fazle

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761 “Law and Order Situation - NWFP,”
762 At times, the regime was also at pains to rein this right-wing in. The regime banned a conference planned in April 1984 on the “Finality of the Prophethood,” a wedge issued used by Sunni chauvinists to single out Ahmadies/Qadianis who are alleged to believe in a prophet after Muhammad (pbuh). The regime issued instructions for the “protection of Qadiani lives and property,” as well as strict watches on Islamist groups and preventing the movement of clerics. See “Memo from Secretary, Home and Tribal Affairs,” April 21, 1984, 223, GS 33/288, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Interestingly, this is more protection than nominally liberal regimes undertake nowadays.
Haq. More generally, his point about the regime sometimes using hardness, and sometimes softness, to dampen conflict was germane and borne out by evidence in the archives.

At the local level, deputy and assistant commissioners intervened in land conflicts as they had before and during the peasant movement, to seek a settlement between different interests. As one incident shows, this was happening even in the aftermath of the severe crackdown on the Al-Zulfiqar Organization, while many members of the Bangash MKP were still in jail, as I discuss in the next section. In November 1981, Hakim Mazud Din, a small landowner (9-9.5 acres) petitioned governor Fazle Haq concerning harassment from peasants. He claimed that he was being deterred from free use of his property “by use or by show of criminal force” and that the “Civil Armed Forces like the Frontier Constabulary and the Regular Police” had allowed it. He named twelve local leaders of the MKP at the “head of about 200 strong followers” as having attacked his house, claiming that male and female family members alike were beaten, that felled timber and fresh cut wheat was looted, and that standing sugarcane crops were destroyed. Mazud Din demanded compensation of Rs. 75,000/- and prosecution of the named tenants.

The assistant commissioner (AC) responded with the note that Mazud Din had petitioned him, and that he had earlier summoned both the parties to settle the issue between them. I had made a settlement between them and [after cultivating the disputed land] the applicant did not approach me to complain that he has been harassed again by the Kisan class.  

In stronger terms, the deputy superintendent of police (DSP)’s report, which the AC forwarded, indicated that the “applicant has harped in a very exaggerated form just to attract the attention of the superiors and to show him-self a victimized person at the hands of M.K.P’s which is, in fact

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erroneous”\textsuperscript{765} and moreover, that the allegations of looting or police misconduct were “quite baseless and groundless.”\textsuperscript{766} The DSP noted the history of contention over the land, that in 1980 the applicant was “hesitant to cultivate his land” and so the AC “called the owner of land, the elders of Adam Khan group and Bangush [sic] group” to arrive at a settlement.\textsuperscript{767} When Mazud Din began to cultivate the land and harvest crop, he actually did so with the assistance of the Bangash group and made an agreement that they would be leased the land after the harvest. Mazud Din later reneged, which harmed good relations. This episode is revealing about how the martial law administration worked. Certainly the police and AC supported the landowner’s right to cultivate his land, but they were not sympathetic to his breaking the agreement with the MKP. This, at a moment when, as we will see shortly, the MKP and its Bangash faction was, by the very same administration, the subject of intensive investigation.

The point of listing these incidents and discussions among the officials of the martial law administration led by Zia-ul Haq is to note the continuity in mechanisms and methods of rule. This is not to underplay the discontinuities, namely, martial law and the complete ban on oppositional activities or strikes. But the military regime’s officials were concerned not merely with coercion but also with winning civil society or, at the least, neutralizing “leftist” protest. Indeed, even as it exercised considerable violence against the Bangash MKP on specifically political grounds, as we will now see, the regime also had the nuance to parry other kinds of allegations against the Bangash MKP. The military regime may not have had the kind of hegemony the Bhutto regime did, but it was conscious of this fact, and was seeking a tempered

\textsuperscript{766} Khan, 55.
\textsuperscript{767} Khan, 54.
and minimal hegemony of its own, one that was protected by the armour of significant coercion.\textsuperscript{768}

**Political repression**

The martial law administration’s attitude toward potential political opponents, at least in northern Hashtnagar, was not always very different from that of the previous PPP-led regime, either. Certainly, open political activity had been banned. But the PPP had also, at times, banned its political opponents, harassed their leaders and party workers, and imprisoned many, not least of all in the form of its repression of the National Awami Party and its military operation in Balochistan. What it needed to carry out such repression was an opportunity. The martial law administration made not dissimilar moves. Indeed, when it did crack down on the MKP, it appears to have discriminated between the anti-regime Bangash MKP, and the more cautious and localized MKP of Adam Khan.

Before we proceed, it is worth noting that Adam Khan had actually died in a car accident in December 1977. Leadership of this smaller faction of the MKP went to Afzal Shah Khamosh, who had been one of the movement’s poets. In his telling, he was literally on a bus in Harichand going to join the airforce in 1971, but saw a MKP \textit{lashkar} going to battle and decided to join the movement instead.\textsuperscript{769} After Afzal Bangash and Ishaq Muhammad split in 1978 and their split was consolidated in 1979, Khamosh went to the latter and asked to join his MKP. Thereafter, Khamosh could claim to be part of a national party, and Ishaq Muhammad could lay claim to the Hashtnagar movement. Although Ishaq Muhammad was imprisoned by the regime, and we have seen that Bangash and Sher Ali Bacha were in exile or underground, we will see that Khamosh appears not to have faced that kind of direct political repression.

\textsuperscript{768} Gramsci, \textit{Selections from the Prison Notebooks}, 263.

\textsuperscript{769} Interview, Shakur, May 26, 2013.
Indeed, when the martial law administration cracked down on the Bangash MKP, they appear to have spared Khamosh’s faction. But first, it is important to note why the martial law administration felt it necessary to move against the Bangash MKP. We have noted that Bangash, in exile in Kabul, had begun co-operation with the PDPA, and then in London with Murtaza Bhutto’s Al-Zulfiqar Organization (AZO). The military regime was aware of these alliances and had even intercepted messages from Bangash to his lieutenants in the Mohmand Agency preparing to smuggle arms and ammunition into Pakistan. Despite this, the martial law administration made no move against the Bangash MKP, because, as the home secretary noted in June 1980, the MKP had not “come to the forefront though having spoken against the Government for giving shelter to the Afghan Refugees. They can be expected to oppose Government at appropriate time.” It appears that the martial law administration was awaiting this “appropriate time”; indeed, Afzal Khamosh claimed that the governor Fazle Haq would say quite openly in gatherings that the Zulfikar Organization is my enemy number two, my enemy number one is the Mazdoor Kisan Party. He said this in open gatherings. This is because his in-laws were from Charsadda and they had fought with the kisans.

Whatever the case, the martial law administration got its opportunity following the AZO’s spectacular hijacking of a Pakistan International Airlines flight on March 2, 1981. The hijackers routed a plane from Karachi to Damascus (it was headed to Peshawar) and demanded the release of political prisoners, many of whom were released after hijackers shot and killed an army officer. There is no evidence of MKP involvement in the hijacking, and indeed, by this time

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772 Interview, Shakur, May 26, 2013. Note that Fazle Haq’s precise relationship to landlordism in Charsadda is unclear to me; in 1978, the Urdu Pakistan Forum claimed that Fazle Haq himself was a “major khan of Charsadda tahsil,” see “Chārsaddah Maiñ Kisānōn Kī Bedakhī,” Pākistān Fōram 1, no. 4 (February 1978): 30.
Bangash had grown apart from AZO’s leader Murtaza Bhutto. But the hijacking’s aftermath only produced more political prisoners, as massive raids soon began in Hashtnagar and beyond. Indeed, a 13-page “up-to-date list of members of Al-Zulfiqar Organization” tabulated on April 10, 1981, names over 200 persons, with a prefatory note saying that most of these “are affiliated to the Mazdoor Kissan Party and they belong to Shomali [northern] Hashtnagar.”

The list includes leaders like Afzal Bangash and sālār Mohammad Shah Ali, as well as Sher Ali Bacha who had formed his own MKP group. A separate list spells out those “suspects interrogated” between March and the end of August 1981. Of the 81 persons on this list, who are from across Pakistan, ten were associated with the MKP, while most were PPP workers.

As MKP leader Shamas Khan from southern Hashtnagar put it, “During the Zia-ul Haq martial law, the army came to face us in the way that it faces the Taliban now. At that time the army fought us.” Indeed, a “law and order” report from January 1982 points to government action against “MKP disgruntled elements in Malakand, Hashtnagar and Prang Ghar [Mohmand Agency]” as having a “salutary effect [that] has been appreciated by the law-abiding populace of the area.” The details of this action are unclear—perhaps it refers to the arrests and raids carried out against MKP members in the preceding year—but it points to the self-satisfaction of

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776 Indeed, Bacha was captured, alongside Imtiaz Alam, in the Mohmand Agency on their return from Afghanistan in July 1981. See Special Branch, NWFP, “Interrogation Report of Sher Ali Bacha Son of Said Akbar Shah, Caste Syed of Hoti, Mardan.”
777 “List of Suspects Interrogated by the J.I.T. Upto 29.8.1981,” August 29, 1981, GS 6/49, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. If no ties to AZO were established the workers were released on bail, whereas non-workers were “declared white” and let go, and those workers against whom no evidence could be marshalled were detained under Martial Law Order number 12 (MLO 12). The regime seems to have been clear on the difference between those potentially or actually cooperating with the Afghan regime and those not, but persons of interest were arrested and detained regardless of whether their involvement with the AZO could be established. For example, MKP worker Sherin Khan of Shergarh in Mardan was to be detained even though “[n]othing substantial was revealed” concerning his involvement with the AZO.
778 Interview, Kaptan Kali, October 5, 2013.
779 “Law and Order Situation - NWFP.”
the regime’s officials in that repression. Interestingly, the martial law administration waited for an opening, AZO’s hijacking, to move against the MKP. This is not dissimilar from the PPP using Hayat Khan Sherpao’s assassination to crack down on NAP. It, moreover, points to Bangash’s strategic error in allying with AZO in the first place, and relying on a frontal attack against the regime rather than patient counter-hegemonic work.

Moreover, the records suggest that the crackdown was not indiscriminate. Conspicuously missing from either list mentioned above are the names of leading members of Afzal Khamosh (Adam Khan)’s MKP, whether Khamosh himself, or leaders like Muhammad Ishaq (not to be confused with Ishaq Muhammad), Sher Ali Baba, or Saifullah Rahman. This does not mean that they were not harassed in this regard, for many respondents from all factions of the MKP recall unpredictable raids on their homes, having to bury communist or otherwise revolutionary literature that may make them liable for arrest and detention. Khamosh did tell me that he was taken to jail in 1982. He said that when the police came they found him with a broken leg, so they lifted up his entire cot and put it into the mobile to take him to prison. Later, I learned from other interviewees and a close associate of Khamosh that the latter had broken his leg while allegedly engaged in unauthorized logging of the lucrative timber lining government canals, which is also why he was arrested. In other words, he was not a specifically political prisoner. Indeed, as we will see shortly, the Khamosh MKP even engaged with the martial law administration on local matters in a way that appears to have allowed him to build his profile.

780 Notwithstanding this repression, Bangash had already parted ways with Al-Zulfiqar Organization in the middle of 1981, and left Afghanistan for London, UK.
781 Indeed, the list of those interrogated points to MKP worker Aslam of Shodag as being detained because “[c]ommunist literature was recovered from his house in a Police raid.” See “List of Suspects Interrogated by the J.I.T. Upto 29.8.1981,” 4.
782 In a separate interview, a member of Bacha’s MKP, who was on both of the lists above and spent some time in jail, all but accused the Khamosh MKP of being informants to the martial law administration. He stopped himself, however, and quickly changed the subject. I should admit that I was too embarrassed to bring these discrepancies up with my host Khamosh directly.
It seems like the martial law administration’s military operation against the Bangash MKP helped to further fragment and weaken it, but it also appears that Bangash’s remote-controlled agenda resonated less and less with the people of Hashtnagar. This became clearer with the next major round of political repression, if one can call it that, during the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD)’s major set of actions in August 1983. The MRD was formed in February 1981 as a broad coalition of parties, including Bangash’s MKP and its erstwhile rivals of the NDP, seeking the restitution of the 1973 constitution, which was premised on a multi-party democracy with protection of liberal rights. In 1983, the MRD sought to launch a campaign of courting arrests over a long period of time, starting on August 14, and make the regime relent to its demands of restoring political parties. The regime was well aware of the civil disobedience movement, whose main operations were to be in Karachi and Lahore. In Peshawar, martial law officials noted, the “programme is to hold a large protest meeting at Chowk Yadgar to be attended by not less than 40,000 workers.” That meeting did not materialize.

The movement was especially powerful in rural Sindh, but flopped in the Frontier. In Sindh, the PPP and Maoist Sindhi Awami Tahrik pushed the movement to insurrectionary proportions, involving thousands of unplanned arrests, killings, and injuries. Indeed, far more were arrested by the regime directly than courted arrest. But in the NWFP far more courted arrest than were detained. A secret memo listing MRD arrestees in NWFP noted that of a total

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783 The MRD was led by the PPP, and included the NDP, JUI, and other regional parties. Ishaq Muhammad’s faction of the MKP rooted in Punjab vowed to extend cooperation, but Khamosh did not participate in the MRD.
530 arrested, 378 had courted arrest; but 501 of those detainees had been released by February 1984.\textsuperscript{786}

Moreover, these arrests were virtually detached from any kind of organization of the masses or movement. Majboor, an MKP worker active at the time, told me that he was once assigned to organize an MRD demonstration in Peshawar, which he did by blocking off the narrow exit and entrances to the very busy thoroughfare that runs through the Qissa Khawani area. In effect it became an involuntary demonstration.\textsuperscript{787} The preventative detentions and arrests by the regime were certainly repressive, and the detainees were likely treated miserably, but the repression should not necessarily be seen as a sign of the MKP and other leftist (or bourgeois) organizations being effective in the NWFP. Quite the contrary, it appears that their workers were easy to pick off precisely because they were no longer able to influence major portions of the population of the region.

In sum, then, the martial law administration did exercise repression, and sometimes considerable repression, against those it perceived as political threats. Its repression may have contributed to the fragmentation of the Bangash MKP, whose strategies and tactics, in any case, did not appear to resonate with most of the people of Hashtnagar. However, the regime also appears to have been discriminate in its repression, apparently sparing the Adam Khan/Afzal Khamosh MKP, for the latter had not participated in AZO or anti-regime activities. In these ways, the martial law administration was not so dissimilar from the PPP regime that had preceded it, which also exercised considerable repression against its political opponents.

\textbf{Struggling over land and production}


\textsuperscript{787} Interview, Dado Kali, June 6, 2013. Incidentally, Majboor was #138 on the list of alleged AZO members referenced above.
The crucial trend of the martial law administration’s rule was a new way of restoring some of the power of landlords, by getting rid of the Bhutto era moratorium on ejectments, but not completely undermining the new relations of production in the countryside, namely the peasants’ possession of lands and the attendant voice gained by the upper layers of the peasantry. The martial law administration may have been attuned to the possibility of unrest from the working classes and leftists, but it was also a regime that came to power, in the Frontier, with the explicit support of the NAP/NDP, and a broader social base of landowners in the Peshawar valley. Indeed, as we have seen, governor Fazle Haq himself was variously accused of being a Charsadda khan or related to them. But this base did not translate into a straightforward reversal of the gains of the peasant movement as far as control and possession of land and relations between khan and tenants were concerned—the state apparatus, for example, did not sanction begār. This was likely in part because, especially in northern Hashtnagar, the assertion of tenants had changed the balance of power, and the regime did not seek to create greater unrest than it had to in order to prevent further occupations. Moreover, the martial law administration did have some ideological fealty to the “rule of law,” which translated into implementing all legal ejectments that had hitherto been held in abeyance. However, it is worth understanding how the legal policy and the implementation of the law was also a consequence of the changes in the balance of power. The military regime did not appear to provide any further help to khan in recovering lands, but its legal defence of private property produced the conditions under which some aggressive khan could begin to restore their possessions of lands.

Where ejectments were concerned, tenants soon felt the difference with the new regime. Recall that in 1973, the PPP-led government had issued a moratorium on all legal ejectments. Although by 1976 the government had declared its intentions to restart ejectments, it does not

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788 The NDP’s political support did not last very long, due to the regime’s unwillingness to hold elections.
seem to have followed through with all that much conviction.789 Both tenants and landlords told me that the military regime had a very different attitude. The first major ejectments appear to have taken place on December 30, 1977, in Maho Dheri in southern Hashtnagar, where the tenants had taken over the lands beginning in 1970.790 According to the Urdu Pakistan Forum report, police and paramilitaries blocked off roads to prevent peasant reinforcements from northern Hashtnagar and Mardan, and in the village itself the police and paramilitaries were reinforced by two army platoons and a helicopter. 175 acres of occupied land were vacated under legal decrees, and an additional 25 acres without any court order. After Maho Dheri, the decisions of courts regarding ejectments appear to have been implemented with force.

Indeed, as tenants resisted the ejectments, they once again began to be arrested in large numbers. Rehman Sayd, who belonged to the Adam Khan faction of the MKP, told me that tenants were very much worried because there was a lot more repression during the military regime than the respite they had had since 1973, and many people were sent to jail for fighting ejectments.791 Many told me that the different MKP factions, who in the 1970s actually fought each other, would often set aside their differences to try and resist ejectments. But, Rehman Sayd said, the MKP on the whole was practically “paralyzed” during the regime. This is not to say that compromises or deals were not possible, or that the cases of many tenants did not continue crawling their ways through the courts. In many cases, it appears tenants were able to stop ejectments and arrive at compromises with the intervention of the district administration, which, again, depended on how strong a force tenants could assemble. This force need not have been armed, for unarmed demonstrations and protests were also important. However, from the perspective of the state, the strategy of domination that had played out from 1970 to 1973

790 “Chârsaddah Maiñ Kīsānon Kī Bedakhīlt.”
791 Interview, Ghazan Kali, June 28, 2013.
appeared to have returned, for the “law and order” around ejectments was, by default, in favour of the landlords.

But while the regime was more willing to enforce ejectments, it did not appear to facilitate the reversal of the decisions of conciliation committees or the legal land reforms of 1972. It did suspend implementation of the legal land reforms that Bhutto had introduced in 1977, and the Federal Shariat Court—newly established—began to mull on whether or not compulsory redistributive land reforms were permissible in Islam, without reaching any decisions for the duration of the Zia regime itself (which ended in 1988).\footnote{792} However, the Zia regime was not necessarily opposed to the intensification of capitalism in agriculture that Bhutto, like the Ayub Khan military-led regime before, had sought to intensify. This entailed discouraging some of the specifically “feudal” practices, such as corvée labour, although here, too, it is important to note that the military regime’s officials sought to avoid greater tenant struggle. Indeed, when agrarian disputes emerged even in non-settled areas like Bajaur Agency (which had been carved out of Malakand Agency), the commissioner of Peshawar directed in 1983 that,

The Political Agent must ensure that he acts justly and fairly towards the Khan [of Khar] as well as to his tenants. The Khan should be made to understand that he cannot revert to old times and demand service from women and Begar in addition to share of produce.\footnote{793}

That said, a year earlier “a large number of tenants had refused to give to the Khan [of Khar] his share of produce upon which ejectments were passed in their regard. This had a salutary effect.”\footnote{794} That is, the legally agreed-upon rights of tenants were by and large respected, at least

\footnote{794} “Minutes of the Political Agents’ Meeting Held on 1st August 1983 at Nathiagali,” 10.
when certain state agents got involved, but when the courts sanctioned ejectments they were carried out.

Here, it may also be worth noting that not all tenants and labourers I spoke to remember the martial law era as one of repression and difficulty. One labourer noted it was a good time due to the control on inflation, which made the cost of living more bearable for him. Others also made scattered references to being able to achieve greater prosperity under the military regime. Partly, this may have been a consequence of the Zia regime maintaining and even increasing wheat and fertilizer subsidies, although it did reduce other agricultural subsidies. Moreover, the increasing accessibility of mechanization, by way of renting tractors and other machines, made it possible to increase productivity and lower costs for better-off farmers. In other words, the question of agrarian stability was not merely about land but also involved broader agrarian policies.

The crucial trend of the era then was a new way of restoring some of the power of landlords, by getting rid of the Bhutto era moratorium on ejectments, but not completely undermining the new relations of production in the countryside. Indeed, Nisar Mohammad Khan, the southern Hashtnagar landlord who had played an instrumental role in forming the Ittehad Party, said to me when I inquired about the military regime’s attitude to landlords, “I’m telling you, no government helped the landlords. Otherwise, why are [these tenants] still controlling the lands?” He was in a position to know, having been elected to the national assembly under the military-supervised elections of 1985, he was even appointed the minister of railways.

However, although the martial law administration may not have officially and explicitly helped landlords regain their lands, it did help produce conditions that facilitated the regaining of

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795 Interview with Miskeen, Lahore Kali, June 3, 2013.
797 Interview, Utmanzai, October 30, 2013.
lands. Ameer Nawaz Khan, a northern Hashtnagar landlord, appreciated that ejectments were easier and that the administration now followed the “rule of law.” Moreover, as we have noted, the martial law administration carried out military operations against the Bangash MKP, weakening an already fragmented organization with a leader in exile. Ameer Nawaz Khan and another landlord, Ameer Rehman Khan (no relation, that I know of), revealed in their interviews that through considerable struggle through the 1980s and 1990s they had regained much of the lands they had lost to the peasant movement. This involved bribing landless labourers to not support tenants, as well as bribing *patwaris*, and even then often the landlords had to pay tenants to leave for the latter would not always vacate willingly. But it must have helped that the tenants had lost the kind of bargaining power they had in the 1970s, and no longer had an administration that sought the kind of hegemony over them that the PPP-led regimes at the centre and in the province had sought. Instead, there was a strict martial law administration that valued the sanctity of private property and the *khans*’ right of possessing their lands. That said, as the episode in Bajaur regarding *begār* suggests, the military regime’s reluctance to restore the economic relations of *khanism* also extended to the local politics of informal rule. To be clear, where *khans* had never lost their informal *de jure* rule, or had recovered it relatively quickly, the regime was not interested in destroying it. But in northern Hashtnagar and parts of Malakand where it had been undermined, the martial law administration also appeared to tread with some care where local mechanisms of rule were concerned.

**State and local power**

Although the military regime exercise considerable repression, it also had to contend with local dynamics and the balance of class power—something it did by attending to the voice of

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798 Interview, Dakai, November 1, 2013.
799 Interview, Ameerabad, June 23, 2013.
better-off peasants in villages and respecting their own institutions of dispute resolution. That is to say, peasants in northern Hashtnagar had more power in the 1980s than they did in and before the 1960s. By 1980 in much of northern Hashtnagar, the *khans’* direct domination in the villages was mostly over. In the villages, peasants now often held their own *jirgas* when disputes arose, and the period of the 1980s also allowed other kinds of leaders and political operators to arise as the MKP’s leadership wore thin. Indeed, at least during my fieldwork in 2013, some of the peasant leaders who had emerged in the course of the movement, or otherwise well-to-do and politically connected villagers, became the intermediaries for interacting with the apparatus of the state, especially police and courts. This relationship is now often mediated by cash or promises of vote banking for elections. One such intermediary—a successful tobacco trader and former PPP member—even let it slip that, “This is our business [*dhandā*],” but quickly changed the subject when I further questioned him on it. Most people agreed that Afzal Shah Khamosh, although a broker of votes for the mainstream Qaumi Watan Party, rather uniquely for such a leader avoided courts and police stations—he even avoided conducting *jirgas*, also notorious now for the involvement of cash. But in the 1980s, Khamosh may have been able to build up his profile as the Bangash MKP floundered by interacting with the state apparatus, albeit in an oppositional register. What is more interesting is that the state apparatus was also attentive and responsive. That is to say, despite it being an authoritarian regime, its officers were not allowed to act arbitrarily if the local population was able to demonstrate its strong displeasure.

Indeed, according to records and interviews, such demonstrations happened a few times. In March 1979, a memo from the secretary to the governor relayed surveillance of a MKP

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800 Interview with Anwar Khan Safi, Mandani, June 17, 2013. The PPP in the Frontier eventually split from the main body after Hayat Khan Sherpao’s brother, Aftab Khan Sherpao, had disagreements with Benazir Bhutto. By 2013, the PPP-Sherpao had become the Qaumi Watan Party, with substantial influence of former members of the Communist Party of Pakistan (not the Maoist one) in shaping its particular Pakhtun nationalist and social democratic message.
meeting in Lund Khwar, Mardan. The meeting “criticised the ejectment of tenants [sic] and highhandedness of the land lords.”

That was par for the course, but a speaker went on to condemn a

Police Officer of Police Post Lund Khawar for demanding Rs. 300/- only for recording his report. He further said that they had complained against the Patwari Circle but he too has not been transferred so far. He also demanded the transfer of Mir Dawar, ASI of P.P. Lund Khawar.

The governor’s marginal comments are revealing. He ignored the questions of ejectments and Bhutto’s release, but where the police officers were concerned he wrote, “DIG [deputy inspector general of police] to look into this”; and where the patwari was concerned, “SMBR [special member, board of revenue] may take a look into this.” Whether or not anything resulted from the instructions is unclear, but what is clear is that the governor was intent on his subordinates investigating the complaints. The meeting ends with “Afzal Shah” asking MKP workers “why they cannot fight against the land lords who are lesser in number.”

This was possibly Afzal Shah Khamosh — meaning the meeting may have been held under the auspices of the Adam Khan group.

In any case, members of the Khamosh MKP told me that they were often successful at reining in certain local officials. One erstwhile member of Khamosh’s faction, Rehman Sayd, illustrated this vide opium cultivation. In August 1979, a meeting of the council of advisers to the martial law administrator of NWFP discussed the problem of poppy cultivation, and looked

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802 Hashmi.
803 Hashmi.
804 Hashmi.
805 Khamosh told me that he did, during the military regime, call for transfers and reassignments of unsuitable local state officers. It would be very difficult to confirm if this particular meeting was his, given the time that has passed.
806 Interview, Ghazan Kali, June 28, 2013.
into ways of curbing particularly illegal cultivation.\textsuperscript{807} Rehman Sayd said that his brother, the late Umar Sayd, was a licensed opium cultivator who sold his produce to the government. For some reason, labourers hired by Umar Sayd were harassed by a thanedār (police officer), prevented from harvesting the crop, and then detained, allegedly because the police were interested in getting bribes from Umar Sayd. Afzal Khamosh and Umar Sayd went to beat the thanedār and had the labourers released.\textsuperscript{808} They also organized a large demonstration, with elders, women and children. According to Rehman Sayd, the assistant commissioner and deputy superintendent of police came to a huge gathering in a school in Shakur and asked forgiveness. Khamosh later confirmed this narrative to me,\textsuperscript{809} saying that he remembered protesting vigorously against cops impeding an opium harvest. He also described other stories, for example, a police officer extorted clothing and food from a shopkeeper named Wahab Din, who complained to Khamosh.\textsuperscript{810} Khamosh gathered villagers and demanded an explanation from the officer, who alleged Wahab Din was a drug dealer. Thereafter Khamosh and the villagers beat the cop and took him to Tangi to complain to his superiors, who eventually came to Shakur with the police officer and apologized to the shopkeeper. These narratives illustrate how, even under a restrictive martial law administration that was seen by many activists as an era of heightened repression when the MKP was “paralyzed,” people could nevertheless challenge aspects of that regime quite vigorously.

However, Khamosh pointed out that their capacity to challenge the martial law administration had to do with the level at which they were challenging the regime, that is, the

\textsuperscript{807} “Correspondence of Meeting of the Council of Advisers to MLA Zone ‘B,’” August 23, 1979, GS 35/305, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

\textsuperscript{808} I should note that Rehman Sayd had at some point broken with Afzal Khamosh, and did not support him and throughout the interview made broadside attacks on the latter’s character. Accordingly, it would not be in his interest to present Khamosh as a hero, but he nevertheless pointed out the latter’s role in this incident.

\textsuperscript{809} Conversation, October 25, 2013.

\textsuperscript{810} Interview, Shakur, May 26, 2013. In a car ride, Muhammad Ishaq told me about how he and Khamosh trapped a police officer on a street and beat him on both sides. It might have been a different police officer.
localized politics of personnel appointments, backed by the popular mobilization of villagers. Beyond that, fighting ejectments was difficult, and contesting anything above local police was not possible: “How could we challenge the state? Meaning, security forces.”

Khamosh was referring specifically to the military regime’s 1982 plan to take over and expand a dairy farm on 500 acres in northern Hashtnagar, which involved displacement of tenants living on the land.

Hazrat Shah, who would have been about 10-11 years old at the time, told me that the 500 acres encompassed three villages and nine mosques, of which his family possessed 40 acres. They had possessed the land for 120 years, had been allotted the land during the Ayub Khan land reforms, and fought the case up to the Supreme Court, but lost and had to face ejectment. 500-600 police came to empty out people’s homes and forcibly eject them, and although there was no real organized resistance, but his father was arrested. He claimed that no faction of the MKP stood up to resist. Khamosh confirmed that,

> We could not stop the ejectments. The people could not fight. It was a fight against the state, not against Mian Jamal Shah. What we call ejectments are [generally] done by landlords. When the land was given to the state, that was the difference between a fight against a landlord and against the state. How could we challenge the state?

Although the ejectments went through, the governor took interest in whatever opposition did exist, and sought to respond to it. Indeed, Khamosh pointed out that, “We conducted a great

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811 Interview, Shakur, May 26, 2013.
812 In fact, speaking of continuity and rupture with the previous regime, in 1972, Bhutto wanted his governors to “give full attention to raising big cattle ranches,” see Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, “Prime Minister’s Memo to Governors,” December 1, 1973, 75, GS 1/8, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As part of its general activities, the NWFP Land Commission had resumed the Mian Jamal Shah stud farm, investigated it, and decided that Shah continue to run it himself “in the national interest.” That said, half of the farm was to be distributed to tenants. See Secretary, Land Commission, NWFP, “Summary for the Perusal of Chairman, Members of the NWFP, Land Commission,” November 26, 1973, 79, GS 1/8, Directorate of Archives and Libraries, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. But later, according to Khamosh, Shah decided to give up all control of the land as a donation to the government. The military regime sought to expand the dairy farm, which meant getting rid of the tenants who lived on the land.
813 Interview, Ghazbeko Kali, May 24, 2013.
814 Interview, Shakur, May 26, 2013.
movement at that time…. The fight was about, where should these people go?” According to state archives, in February 1983, Khamosh addressed a meeting of 100-120 where participants condemned the Government for establishing Dairy Farm by demolishing 5/6 thousand houses in the area…. They further said that the Government should either give them permission for leaving the country or shoot them. They held, that Govt should have established factories instead of Dairy Farms for the up-lift of poor. They demanded of the Government to provide land for their rehabilitation.  

The governor noted to the secretary of agriculture, “Please submit a report on this by 2 March direct to me.” The governor seems to have taken a personal interest in this protest, which appeared to be one of many others. Khamosh told me that “despite Fazle Haq’s stubbornness the settlement was that around Mandani near the cattle farm itself the [displaced] people would get lands for residence.” By Hazrat Shah’s account, this was not much:

We just got one kanal [1/8th of an acre] to make a house… All three villages relocated there in a colony, called Farsh Colony. It wasn’t fit for living [because it is on a riverbank], but people were desperate, where else were they supposed to go?

He claimed that his family was not compensated for the land they lost. So, although the military regime was concerned with people’s sentiments and claims, its concern was not so much that it got in the way of its own developmental plans. (I visited the farm in 2013, where they continue to produce milk and experiment with new breeds of cow.)

It appears that by 1983, the MKPs had become, at best, pressure groups that got some relief for their constituents, while occasionally fighting landlords against ejectments. Interestingly, like the previous regime, the military governor (martial law administrator) paid attention to the protests and claims being made from peasants and other actors. In some

816 Khan.
817 Interview, Shakur, May 26, 2013.
818 Interview, Ghazbeko Kali, May 24, 2013.
instances, the administration took the concerns of the MKP groups seriously enough, especially when it came to the misconduct of police or revenue officials. But, where Bhutto may have stopped a government scheme if it got in the way of tenants who might support him, the military regime was less inclined and at least in one case literally bulldozed its plans through. That said, the peasants of northern Hashtnagar had more power in the 1980s than they had had in the 1960s or prior, for they held their own jirgas, dealt directly with the apparatus of the state rather than through khans, and, despite its authoritarian character, the state could often be responsive to peasant demands.

**Conclusion**

The military regime of Zia-ul Haq was certainly repressive and brutal, it restricted severely the scope and possibility of open political activity, threw thousands of its opponents into jail, and worked hard to purge civil society (unions, universities, etc.) of leftist and liberal forces. Yet, as this chapter has shown, the apparatuses of the state and their practices of rule demonstrated considerable continuities with the previous regime of Bhutto, including many of the practices of repression. Moreover, authoritarian rule did not mean that rule was simply arbitrary, or, rather, any more or less arbitrary than regimes that came before. Rather, the military regime had to contend with local dynamics and balances of class power. It was wary of allowing for conditions that might reignite the kinds of mass movements that had overthrown Ayub Khan.

In northern Hashtnagar and in the Frontier, the martial law administration sought to establish its own minimal hegemony, that is, a hegemonic project that was based primarily on the interests of the landowners who had helped it come to power. However, although this hegemonic project did not include the demands of tenants and labourers, the new governors were not naive enough to suppose that they could simply repress the lower classes as they wished. Peasants may not have had the organizational capacity that they had in the 1970s, but they were nevertheless
stronger and more attuned to tactics of resistance than they had been in the 1960s. The regime did restart ejectments and placed the full power of the state apparatus behind the implementation of such court orders, but it also did not seek to reverse the legalized gains that tenants had made over the course of the 1970s, nor to overtly support khans in restoring their power. It paid close attention to promoting right-wing forces in civil society, allowing workers to let off steam, and mediating between khans and tenants. Moreover, the regime waited for an opportunity to weaken the Mazdoor Kisan Party’s strongest faction, led from exile by Afzal Bangash, which the latter handed to it on a platter through collusion with the PDPA regime and Al-Zulfiqar Organization. Thereafter, the regime appears to have had greater freedom of action, such as in implementing a dairy farm, but it still took into account local concerns over officials and policies.

The repression that the Bangash MKP suffered at the hands of the martial law administration was an indication not merely of the regime’s strength, but also of the MKP’s weakness. As Azeem notes, “The demise of the politics of resistance was not because of Bhutto or Zia or the military only, but because of the inability of the working class or its representative Left to project its politics.”\(^{819}\) Indeed, by the beginning of the military regime in 1978 the MKP had splintered into several factions; most pressingly for the Frontier, Bangash and Bacha parted ways. In exile Bangash became ever more disconnected from his base, while Bacha was imprisoned in 1981 until 1985-86. Moreover, both factions sought aid from the PDPA and Soviets in Afghanistan, rather than putting their focus on slow and systematic base-building within Pakistan, particularly including ideological education for cadre. Instead, the Bangash faction especially appeared to have allied with the Al-Zulfiqar Organization’s strategy of “frontal attack” on the Zia-ul Haq regime, which invited considerable repression rather than the measured tolerance that the regime had hitherto practiced. Thereafter, Bangash pursued the politics of the

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\(^{819}\) Azeem, *Law, State and Inequality in Pakistan*, 151.
Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, including its mostly ineffective tactics of offering activists for arrests. In sum, it was the weakness of the MKP, which preceded the military regime and only became exacerbated under it, that accounted for its inability to impact state formation. Moreover, the weakness of the MKP was both consequence (as we saw in Chapter 6) and cause of the broader weakness of the peasantry in the 1980s.

From 1985, Afzal Bangash retreated increasingly into trying to mobilize his image from afar to engage in the high politics of Pakistan. He resorted to issuing statements in exile from London as a spokesperson for the Sindhi Baloch Pushtoon Front, whose main target was Punjabi dominance in Pakistan. Finally, in 1986 with the opening up of the political atmosphere in Pakistan, Bangash returned to the country. However, aware of his own impending death and encouraged by the Soviet Union, he merged his faction of the MKP with the National Awami Party/National Democratic Party of Khan Abdul Wali Khan—the very person and party that the MKP had fought in the 1970s. Together with other left groups, they formed the Awami National Party. It is here that I mark the first end of the Mazdoor Kisan Party in the North-West Frontier Province.821

820 Interview with Kamil Bangash, Peshawar, June 9, 2013.
821 In fact, after Afzal Bangash died, Kamil Bangash withdrew his faction of the MKP from the Awami National Party. However, the dynamics of the MKP were from now on determined by local representatives like sālār Muhammad Shah Ali, as we noted in Chapter 6, rather than by Marxist-Leninist ideology of any kind. The other main faction of the MKP was organized, as we have seen, under Afzal Shah Khamosh.
Conclusion

Restating the argument

I set out in this study to answer two questions. First, how did a movement of lower classes, specifically tenant farmers and landless labourers, win concessions from landed elites and also shape the direction and institutionalization of state power? Second, why did the trajectory of revolutionary politics in Pakistan, as represented by the Mazdoor Kisan Party, diverge from that of its “anti-revisionist” Marxist-Leninist counterparts in India or Nepal? Through my study, I have contended that the answers to these questions have to be rooted in an understanding that both the institutional configuration of power and the party, however different they are, emerge from and are penetrated by class struggle. I argued that the institutional configuration of power inside and outside of the apparatus of the state was determined by the balance of power between different classes. I further argued that the decisions and interventions that revolutionary organizers made in crucial conjunctures increased or decreased their own organizational capacity. This organizational capacity was both cause and consequence of the organizational strength of lower classes, and impacted not only the balance of class power but the radicals’ own longevity as a social force. I arrived at these broad contentions by comparing relations between classes and the institutional configuration of power across three conjunctures, those of the early 1940s-50s, the 1960s-70s, and the 1980s.

In this concluding chapter, I demonstrate the logic of my broad argument by posing more specific comparative questions about these conjunctures and how my study has answered them. Rather than revisiting the broader theoretical implications I identified in the Introduction to this study, I examine more specific implications of my arguments. I also offer some preliminary

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822 See the sections titled “Political sociology, anthropology, and history” and “Reading Gramsci in Pakistan.”
comparisons to Indian cases to signal the “portability” of my generalizations,\textsuperscript{823} and importantly, to identify grounds for deeper future cross-national comparative research. In the first section, I break down the balance of class forces into two factors: first, the nature of the political unity and organizational strength of lower classes; and second, the specific nature of fragmentation and inter-fractional conflict of dominant classes. I argue that the latter is favourable to lower classes where the former is strong. I compare the conclusions I draw from the Frontier peasant movement of the 1970s to the Telangana peasant rebellion of 1946-1952, which was led by the Communist Party of India, to highlight how a similar combination of processes shaped and shifted state formation and political economy in similar ways. In the second section, I break down the decisions and interventions of revolutionaries into the broad strategic concepts of “war of manoeuvre” and “war of position.”\textsuperscript{824} The former refers to frontal attacks on or confrontations with the state, while the latter refers to the complex process of building hegemony through slow organization. I argue that revolutionaries in the Peshawar valley adopted a “war of manoeuvre” strategy at inopportune moments, inviting greater repression than they may otherwise have faced. I draw comparisons to how “anti-revisionist” Marxist-Leninists in India, the Naxalites, responded to state repression in the 1970s by turning from a “war of manoeuvre” toward a “war of position.”

\textbf{Class struggle, “passive revolution” and state formation}

To answer my first question, I argued that the institutional configuration of power inside and outside of the apparatus of the state was determined by the balance of power between different classes. I further demonstrated that this balance of power could be regionally differentiated and have effects that were also regionally differentiated. This balance of power

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{823} Following Hall, “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics,” 395.  
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{824} Following Gramsci.
was shaped by, first, the structured relations that enabled and constrained class practices; second, by events that were contingent to (that is, not directly related to or determined by) the way these structured relations influenced practices in the social formation of the Peshawar valley; and third, by the decisions and interventions of political agents operating in the conjuncture in which these structures and contingent events came together. Following Althusser, my analysis took account of the “determinations” and “existing concrete circumstances” of these conjunctures, the better to examine and specify the parameters of political agency. Following Gramsci, I examined political agency through the concepts of hegemony and domination, that is, how a political agent representing particular class interests seeks to achieve the consent of certain classes and groups, while exercising coercion against other classes and groups.

Specifically, I identified two crucial political factors in describing the changes in the balance of power, or, in other words, why the tenants and labourers were able to shape institutions to their benefit in the 1970s, relative to the 1940s or 1980s. First, their own political unity and organizational strength were greater in the 1970s than in the 1940s or 1980s. In the 1970s the communists of the Mazdoor Kisan Party had learned their lessons from the failures of the 1940s and sought to organize peasants in different kinds of political and military committees as the movement progressed. However, it is important to note the substantive structural differences that the categories of “peasant” and “peasant movement” hide: In the 1970s there was far greater agrarian class differentiation within the peasantry and there were far more landless labourers than there were in the 1940s. Their unity in the 1970s was less due to a straightforward uniformity of class interests and more due to the contingent convergence of rapidly differentiating class interests. These class interests were determined by the intensification of capitalist relations of production articulating with sociocultural relations of ethnicity and gender.

825 Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, 18, emphasis in the original.
826 Which did not necessarily exist in the 1940s in any case.
By the 1980s, the peasant movement fragmented precisely due to these different class interests, as the contradiction between different peasant classes and landless labourers was exacerbated by the victories of the 1970s. Vertically, the movement became fragmented along these class lines; while horizontally, the movement fragmented under the leadership of at least three different MKP factions\(^827\) who could not devise a strategy to organize their differences under a political unity. Despite this fragmentation, these lower classes were still more organized and activated in the 1980s than they had been before the 1970s, and that presented obstacles to the extent to which dominant classes could reverse the peasant victories.

Second, the specific nature of inter-fractional fragmentation of the dominant classes and its articulation with the greater or lesser strength of lower classes shifted in each conjuncture. In the 1940s, the Muslim League government needed to win over the landowners of the Peshawar valley to stabilize its rule and could not risk exacerbating peasant mobilization that might destabilize its nascent polity building. The Muslim League pursued a lighter “passive revolution” strategy (relative to the one of the 1970s) by making legal overtures to tenants, redistributing land rights to a thin layer of the tenantry, while overall restoring the informal institutional power of the landed elites. But in the 1970s the National Awami Party and Pakistan People’s Party both inherited the “problem” of an organized and mobilized peasantry from a previous military government. Indeed, the Mazdoor Kisan Party took advantage of the disunity between the political orientations of the NAP and the PPP\(^828\). The NAP was inexperienced in governance, and it sought to win over landowners and repress the peasantry. But the peasant movement was too strong on the whole to simply be crushed, and the threat of repression might even have contributed to the overall unity of the peasant movement. The PPP instead pursued a “passive

\(^827\) The first was Afzal Bangash’s, the second was Sher Ali Bacha’s, the third was Afzal Shah Khamosh’s. In fact, there was also a fourth group, led by Abdul Sattar and Ziarat Gul, but it was quite small.

\(^828\) To recall, the NAP sought greater provincial autonomy while the PPP sought greater powers for the central government.
revolution” strategy to undermine the landowners of the Peshawar valley\textsuperscript{829} as well as to undermine the MKP, by winning over and indeed demobilizing the peasant movement. NAP and PPP consequently mobilized the state apparatus and shaped its parameters in different ways. In the 1980s, the military regime of Zia-ul Haq came to power in part with the support of these landowners and took advantage of the fragmentation of the MKP to further repress it by intensive use of the state apparatus. However, unlike the Muslim League government of the 1940s, the Zia-ul Haq military regime did not restore the informal institutional power of the landed elites. Interestingly, I show that mechanisms of rule involving the informal institutional power of landed elites in villages could persist across civilian and military regimes (namely, the Muslim League civilian regime, the Ayub Khan military regime, the Yahya Khan military regime, and the attempts under the NAP civilian regime), but where peasant struggle made such power untenable both types of regimes (namely, the PPP civilian regime and the Zia-ul Haq military regime) pursued new techniques of rule that increased the authority of the state apparatus.

The Telangana Rebellion of the late 1940s and early 1950s offers an instructive contrast to the Hashtnagar peasant movement of the 1940s and comparison to the Hashtnagar peasant movement of the 1970s.\textsuperscript{830} Telangana was a region in the princely state of Hyderabad, ruled by the Nizam, Osman Ali Khan. The Nizam was reluctant to join the Indian Union and would have preferred to maintain the independent identity of Hyderabad State. The Nizam’s rule was based on the support of large landowners or revenue collectors (\textit{jāgīrdārs}), both Muslims and Hindus. These landed elites exercised “sovereignty” in their villages, and treated tenants and labourers poorly, including by extracting forced labour (called \textit{vetti} in Telugu). The Communist Party of

\textsuperscript{829} Landowners outside of the Peshawar, Swat, and Hazara valleys were relatively more insulated from the peasant movement.

India had organized hundreds and thousands of peasants and landless labourers in armed uprisings against landlords in the Telangana region starting in 1946. As landed elites fled the villages, communists established the authority of thousands of peasant-led village councils. More broadly, the Communist Party of India acted as the most effective grassroots opposition to the rulership of the Hyderabadi state under the Nizam, whereas the Hyderabad section of the Indian National Congress was divided and relatively feeble. The Indian state, under the direction of the Indian National Congress, invaded and annexed Hyderabad under the pretext of a “police action” in the latter part of 1948. Even as the Indian Army engaged in massacres of Muslims as reprisals for the abuses of forces allied to the Nizam, it also very pointedly engaged in counter-insurgency operations against the communists, who meanwhile turned their struggle against the Indian state and Congress.\footnote{Roosa, “Passive Revolution Meets Peasant Revolution”; Sherman, “The Integration of the Princely State of Hyderabad and the Making of the Postcolonial State in India, 1948–56.”} Counter-insurgency lasted until 1951 and the Indian state thereafter exercised military administration over Telangana for sixteen months. Thus, the writ of a new state was established over the independent organization of peasants led by communists through coercion.

However, before and after the Indian annexation the communist-led movement had been severely weakened not only by state repression but also by divisions internal to the peasant movement that they led. The communist-led movement was premised on a cross-class coalition of agricultural labourers, tenants, smallholding peasants, and artisans. Among the peasants were also better-off landowners who joined and led communist squads because of the anti-Nizam orientation of the struggle but did not necessarily share the ideology.\footnote{Roosa, “Passive Revolution Meets Peasant Revolution,” 76–78.} In other words, like the Hashtnagar peasant movement, the political unity of these classes was contingent on the convergence of interests in a particular political struggle. These better-off peasants, who belonged to the Kapu-Reddy peasant caste, not only dominated the leadership of the armed
movement but also the village committees (*panchāyats*) that were assigned to redistribute lands during the struggle. Perhaps unsurprisingly, while the cultivable lands were “distributed among the Kapu-Reddy *ryots* and tenants, the common pastures and waste lands became the lot of the landless *dalits* and other lower castes.”833 These better-off Congress supporters often quit the armed struggle after the annexation, thus undermining the communist network, and moreover often informed on communists to the Indian Army.834 Similarly, in the Hashtnagar peasant movement, those who were renting lands became *de facto* owners, while the landless labourers for the most part got the homesteads they were living in but little or no land. Moreover, once the tenants had their land rights regularized by the state, when they no longer needed the MKP for their political protection, their enthusiasm for the peasant movement waned.

That being said, the process of peasant demobilization in Telangana also involved the specific nature of the fragmentation of the dominant classes. In this case, the Nizam was opposed to the idea of joining India, never mind the Congress. Here, unlike the Muslim League in the 1950s Pakistan, the Congress did not need or want the landed elites of Hyderabad state to continue to govern. Like the Pakistan People’s Party in the Peshawar valley in the 1970s combating the National Awami Party, the Congress bypassed the landed elites and moved toward the peasantry. That is, in the 1950s the Congress adopted a regionally specific “passive revolution” strategy for Hyderabad. The civilian administration that followed military administration in Telangana had to develop “new styles of governance … precisely because postcolonial India did not possess the institutional framework necessary to fight communists using the oppressive powers of the colonial police, military and bureaucracy.”835 Hence, they

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began to build or repair infrastructure from roads and wells to dispensaries and schools. They passed a Tenancy Act, which was designed to improve the rights of tenants by capping landholdings, opening the market to cultivators, and protecting tenants from ejection. 

They travelled through rural areas, and tried to settle any outstanding disputes.

The provision of “public goods” and the transformation of social relations by way of tenancy and land reforms confirmed and continued the undermining of the large landowners or revenue collectors (jāgīrdārs) who had previously ruled over villagers and who formed the base for the Nizam’s regime. The extension of the new state institutions also undermined the independent existence of lower-class organizations of administration that could thrive once the authority of local elites had collapsed. Thus, the Congress-led reforms were also a mechanism of undermining the Communist Party of India and separating it from its base. Indeed, the subsequent tenancy act benefited the better-off Kapu-Reddy cultivators who had split from the communists, while the dalits who comprised the majority “remained landless even after the struggle.”

With large landowners undermined, the richer peasants became significant bases for Congress support and state formation, not dissimilarly from how richer peasants became a stronger electoral support base for the Pakistan People’s Party in the Peshawar valley.

The Telangana Rebellion took place in a very different time and space than the Hashtnagar peasant movement of the 1970s. The precise sequence of events was also quite different. However, I have suggested that there were structural similarities in the processes at play. Namely, the increased strength of the lower classes, peasants and landless labourers, undergirded the shaping of the institutional configuration of power to their benefit. The informal institutions of landed elite power were undermined, and state institutions developed the capacity to intervene to provide public goods and to regularize certain land and tenancy rights reforms.

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836 Sherman, 510–11.
However, the depth of these interventions was limited by the contradictions within the cross-
class coalition that defined the peasant movements; and, moreover, was enabled by the
contradictions among dominant classes. The point, to reiterate, is that the institutional
configuration of power inside and outside of the apparatus of the state was determined by the
balance of power between different classes.

**Strategy and organizational longevity**

The answer to my second question concerning the demise of the MKP is nested in my
approach to the balance of class power. I argued that the decisions and interventions that
revolutionary organizers made in crucial conjunctures increased or decreased their own
organizational capacity. This organizational capacity was both cause and consequence of the
organizational strength of lower classes, and impacted not only the balance of class power but
the radicals’ own longevity as a social force. To be sure, they were subject to structural
constraints and the contingencies of unintended consequences, not to mention the subjective
difficulty of focusing on organization in the midst of a mass movement. Analysis of good and
bad decisions is usually easier in hindsight. Here, rather than going into too many of the
specificities of errors, I use two categories from Gramsci’s oeuvre that help in analyzing
communist activity. Gramsci distinguishes between the “war of manoeuvre,” a frontal attack on
the state, and a “war of position.”838 The latter is a complex process of building proletarian
hegemony, an insurgent class coalition, outside of the state apparatus and government, in the
“trenches” of civil society. The party has to build organizations and associations of “subaltern”
classes and groups, building its mass base in different sections and sectors of society, and
coordinating them into a new political culture. Such a war of position is what “creates the

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possibility for manoeuvre and movement.” I have argued elsewhere that this entails a strategy of a revolutionary party building a sufficient hegemony among various groups across different spaces “before” it attempts to comprehensively confront its ruling class opponents.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the radical organizers of the Peshawar valley had abandoned frontal confrontation with the state as a strategic orientation, but then brought it back in the 1980s precisely when they were at a weak point organizationally. In the 1940s, the Communist Party of Pakistan appears to have believed that their encouragement of armed insurrection was the highest form of struggle, one that would inspire spontaneous attraction of subaltern classes in other parts of Pakistan to insurrection as well. There appear to have been ample opportunities for the party to encourage compromise and to build peasant committees for the long-run, but the party chose to encourage confrontation instead. In approaching “war of manoeuvre” as strategy, the party self-admittedly paid little attention to building peasant committees and armed organization. Indeed, the party paid little attention to building the party organization itself in the Frontier. The insurrectionary orientation invited considerable repression which smashed the little party organization that existed, and alienated tenants from the communist organizers. While, on the surface, the activities of the MKP in the 1970s look similar to those of their predecessors, it is important to note that they had learned from the experiences of the 1940s. For the MKP the revolution would be a longer process that would involve some spontaneity but also considerable organization. The MKP avoided direct confrontation with the state apparatus, and engaged instead in guerrilla or *lašhkari* attacks on *khans*. Meanwhile, they sought to place the MKP on a firmer footing by organizing peasant

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839 Gramsci, 232.
840 I put “before” in quotation marks because this is a conceptual and not temporal argument. A revolutionary party often has to build its coercive capacities in concert with its political, ideological, and organizational practices that build hegemony. See Ali, “Reading Gramsci through Fanon.”
841 This was in some ways a preview of the repression of the Communist Party of Pakistan throughout West Pakistan in the aftermath of its leadership’s talks about participating in a *coup d’état* led by “progressive” officers.
committees and armed organizations at village and regional levels, while integrating them into a legal strategy. Moreover, it is important to recognize the emphasis the MKP put on the independent organization of the working class and peasantry under its leadership, as opposed to the “united fronts” the revolutionaries had been part of in the 1950s and 1960s that subordinated lower class interests to the mainstream politics of the “pro-democratic” (anti-military) landed elites and bourgeoisie. To be sure, the spontaneity of the movement often spread beyond the organizational capacity of the MKP leadership, and the mass membership of the MKP far exceeded the number of ideologically trained communist cadre in the MKP. However, for the most part the MKP treated the “war of manoeuvre” tactically rather than strategically.

This orientation changed again in the 1980s, especially under Afzal Bangash’s faction of the MKP, which was the largest in the Frontier. The Bangash MKP appeared to have pursued a strategy of frontal confrontation against the Zia-ul Haq military regime, regardless of the size of its base. In order to do so, it is hard to disagree with Raja Anwar’s assessment that, “Instead of trying to reunite his party, [Bangash] was fonder of setting up meaningless ‘united fronts’ with like-minded elements.” However, it is important to note that these “like-minded” elements often involved mainstream (landed elite/bourgeois) political parties. In other words, the MKP also abandoned its steadfast approach of maintaining and promoting the independent organization of the working class and peasantry. After alienating the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan, Bangash allied with the Al-Zulfıqar Organization that sought to use “terrorist” tactics in confronting the military regime. This provided the regime with the pretext to conduct military operations against MKP organizers in northern Hashtnagar. Then, Bangash allied with

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842 At some point, there was even a children’s organization. See Sher Ali Bacha, “Inqilābī bacce,” Circular, no. 59 (January 1975): 1–2.
843 Anwar, The Terrorist Prince, 65. However, by 1984, after the death of Major Ishaq Muhammad in 1982, Bangash was discussing the prospect of reunification with the remnants of the MKP in Punjab. See correspondence in Rā’o Suleimān Khān, Merā Junūn (Multān, 2013). He was also in touch with Sher Ali Bacha. These initiatives amounted to little.
mainstream parties that the MKP had earlier fought against to set up the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy. Remaining MKP activists offered themselves up for arrests in 1983, but to little fanfare. Then he entered into the Sindhi Baloch Pashtoon Front, which meant little on the ground. Lastly, upon returning to Pakistan, Bangash liquidated his faction of the MKP into the Awami National Party at Moscow’s behest. Meanwhile, Sher Ali Bacha also frequented Afghanistan to solicit the support of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. He was arrested on his way back in July 1981, and remained jailed for several years, taking out a key Marxist intellectual from active politics.

One can contrast Bangash’s and Bacha’s approach to that of Afzal Shah Khamosh’s faction of the MKP, which remained aloof from the Afghan and Soviet communists, refused to confront the state apparatus directly, and was able to grow its influence in northern Hashtnagar relative to the Bangash faction over the 1980s. It is true that Khamosh’s MKP was less ideologically oriented than Bangash’s, and largely remained confined to organizing the upper layers of the tenantry. However, ultimately the Bangash and Bacha factions also all turned to such a rich peasant orientation in the final analysis, one that led them to liquidate their factions into mainstream (landed elite/bourgeois) political parties. It is also worth contrasting their behaviour in the 1980s with their own activities through the Kisan Committee in the 1960s. They conducted slow, painstaking work within the confines of and at the limits of the legal, while using whatever political space was available to them to build underground communist organization. It was precisely this base work, often rather thin, that nevertheless enabled them to organize and absorb the peasant upsurge of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The question here is

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844 We have seen how sālār Muhammad Shah Ali and sons turned Bangash’s grave into a shrine associated with their political brand. Meanwhile, Bacha and many of his faction’s members ultimately joined the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, which is also a mainstream Pakhtun nationalist party.

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not one of remaining within the ambit of legal activities, but of avoiding direct political confrontations with the state.

The key contrast to the behaviour of all of the MKP factions in the 1980s in the Frontier is the behaviour and choices of the “anti-revisionist” Marxist-Leninists of India in the 1970s. The Naxalites, as they are better known, were also characterized by their factional splits and infighting.\textsuperscript{845} The MKP emerged in the same historical moment as the Naxalite movement: Where the MKP was formed in 1968 and the Hashtnagar peasant movement erupted in 1970, the eponymous Naxalbari movement in West Bengal erupted in 1967 and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was formed in 1969. MKP leaders observed the latter closely, criticizing them for their “adventurism”—that is, engaging in armed confrontations, indeed, often “annihilating” landlords, without building sufficient mass support.\textsuperscript{846} Thousands of Naxalites were killed between 1969 and 1975, and many more were imprisoned, especially during the “Emergency” imposed by Indian prime minister and Congress leader Indira Gandhi from 1975 to 1977, which suspended many constitutional freedoms and liberties.\textsuperscript{847} Yet, the Naxalite movement grew to new heights through the 1980s while the MKP disintegrated. A crucial difference is that, while the MKP confronted a democratic set up from 1970 to 1978, the Naxalites faced their greatest repression during these years. On the flip side, the Naxalites faced more favourable overall conditions after the Congress was defeated in the elections of 1977. However, their conduct during the Emergency and during periods of intense localized repression is instructive.

\textsuperscript{846} Pakistān Mazdūr Pāṛṭī, “Pakistān Mazdūr Pāṛṭī kī markazī kāmīṭī kī report.”
In sum, Naxalites also learned from the mistakes of the “war of manoeuvre” as strategy and turned toward a “war of position” precisely when and after they faced the greatest repression. Without abandoning the development of their coercive capacities, Naxalites turned toward greater “mass mobilization,” that is, organizing lower classes on their particular material issues, which involved economic, cultural, social and political problems. The example of Naxalites in the Telangana region is illustrative. In the early 1970s Naxalites in certain villages in Telangana turned from trying to occupy lands toward “beedi-leaf picking, wages of agricultural labourers and farm-servants, rural administrative corruption, etc.” These issues often overlaid caste contradictions and struggles against untouchability. When faced with localized repression, the Naxalites adopted tactics of “expansion [as] the main form of resistance, followed by consolidation in the areas of expansion.” That is, they would move from one area to a new one, instead of confronting the state’s violence directly. In terms of political and ideological orientation, it is worth noting that Naxalites often turned away from rich peasants, whom they recognized as having become more dominant within villages, although not necessarily part of the ruling class, and toward organizing low caste landless labour. This was also distinct from the Bangash MKP’s insistence on the rich peasants being the fulcrum of the people’s democratic revolution, and then ultimate liquidation into mainstream parties. During the Emergency years, when no open political activity was allowed, the Naxalite movement’s organizers once again moved away from their main areas of operation and joined in with already existing struggles

848 Oetken, “Counterinsurgency Against Naxalites in India,” 136.
850 Balagopal and Reddy, 1898.
against vetti (corvée labour) that were being waged in the name of “Indira Gandhi’s notorious twenty-point programme.” Naxalites influenced these existing struggles from the inside and when the Emergency was lifted these joined the Naxalite umbrella. The point here is that Naxalites realized that direct confrontation with the state was not always a good idea, and they focused considerably on developing organizations and associations of lower classes within the confines of, and at the limits of, what the law and political situation allowed them. They also continued to build their coercive capacities, and used violence tactically when necessary. Overall, Naxalites used whatever political space was available to them to build their underground communist organization and the mass organizations around it.

The “war of position” that the Naxalites waged stands in stark contrast to what the MKP factions did after 1979. The latter shifted away from developing the organizations and associations of the lower classes, and instead sought to make alliances with the Afghan or Soviet communists, or with other mainstream or high-profile political actors, to confront the Zia-ul Haq military regime directly. They paid far less attention to the painstaking work of expanding their networks and contacts on the ground, especially to expand outside of northern Hashtnagar. As a consequence, when the martial law administration ended in 1986 and a democratic set up was restored in 1988, both the spatial spread and the depth of the influence of the MKP had greatly declined rather than increased. A broader left movement that had become quite reliant on the patronage of the Soviet Union rather than the mass organization of lower classes then found itself in utter disarray when the USSR came apart in the early 1990s. The point for any left movement in Pakistan today is to learn from the successes and errors of the MKP and movements in other countries, the better to organize and represent the interests of the lower classes in Pakistani society. For that, they need to be mindful of maintaining and multiplying the independence of

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organizations of the lower classes, while distinguishing carefully between “war of manoeuvre” and “war of position.”
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