The Politics of Identity: Ethno-Political Identity in Local Political Structure with Emphasis on the Role of Ethnic Groups

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Abstract

Although the world is called a global village in present age, yet the political system based on ethnicity is still persisting in certain forms. From the time immemorial, humans have either inherited identity or are bound to adopt one. Language and religion based ethnic identities are the dominant issues in the history and evolution of multi-ethnic countries of former Soviet States, Eastern Europe, Africa and South Asia. This article argues that when the culture of a group residing within a particular locality is secure in a neighbouring jurisdiction, the issue at stake is not necessarily the survival of a unique culture but the political, economical and cultural needs of particular individuals. A primary concern in the political systems of multiethnic countries is the fear of domination or exploitation of some ethnic groups and assimilation by the other ethnic group. The problem is real and exists only because with the emergence of the modern secular nation states, the ethnical considerations have been removed from public policy making by these states. Pakistan is among such countries which comprise of different ethnic nationalities. The inter-ethnic political competition has been in fashion from the very

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first day of Pakistan's creation. Moreover, the ethnic leadership coupled with cultural sensitive intelligentsia play their pivotal role to enhance ethnic behaviour particularly during political process.

Introduction

Pakistan is multiethnic,[1] multicultural and multilingual society[2] like most of the developing countries in South Asia. From very first day of its inception, the aspirations of the people of Pakistan to live in peace and harmony and to have a modicum of material security have been unfulfilled.[3] Much has been written about the history, facts and legitimacy of ethnic grievances and ethnic competition in Pakistan time and again.[4] In the present paper, the focus is on the ethnic behaviour formed (instrumental[5], primordial[6]) by the people while taking part in electoral process in order to achieve certain targets set by ethno-political leaders while forming ethno-political organizations. The relationship of ethnicity and political system is even more important in the social life of humans because ethnicity is essentially a continuous, dynamic

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1   In Pakistan there were five major distinct nationalities at the time of partition of sub-continent India, mainly Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtunes, Balochis, and Bengalis with Urdu speaking immigrants from India in addition. But after the fall of Bangladesh, new identity emerged as the Saraiki speaking people of South Punjab whose identity is not recognized. See Tariq Rahman, *Language and Politics in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

2   Rahman, *Language and Politics in Pakistan*, pp.176-205.

3   Feroz Ahmed, *Ethnicity and Politics in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press 1998), pp.1-2.

4   *Ibid*., p.2.

5   Instrumentalists view ethnicity in terms of resources to be mobilized or an instrument to be employed, by particular groups in pursuit of further ends, usually of political and economic nature. Anthony D. Smith, *Champions Encyclopaedia of Anthropology* (London: Rutledge, 1994), p.707.

6   For the primordialists, "every person carries with him through his life 'attachments' derived from places of birth, kinship, relationships, religion, language and social practices that are 'natural' for him, 'spiritual' in character and provide the basis for an easy 'affinity' with other people from the same background. These 'attachments' constitute the 'givens' of human condition and are 'rooted' in the non-rational foundations of personality". P. Brass, ed., *Ethnic Groups and the State* (London: Croomhelm, 1985), p.35.

process that occurs between two or more ethnic populations. In this study the focus is on two entirely distinct socio-cultural and political groupings such as the Saraikis (Locals/in-groups) and Urdu speaking (Muhajirs/out-groups).

A.D. Smith defines political organization as a group that maintains the internal order; preserves territorial limits and allocates power and decision making over group action in a relationship with regional, national and international political power structure.[7] While Fredrick Barth views "Ethnic behaviour results from the self-identification of the members of a population whereby they distinguish themselves from members of another cultural or ethnic group with whom they have contact".[8] Historically, belonging to two different social and geographical regions, there are some biophysical as well as ideological and cultural differences between the two communities of Locals and Muhajirs, who tend to develop their identity. This process of labelling a "they" on the basis of presumed ethnic traits has often been a factor in the formation of a new "we". This is the concept which is socio-psychologically and politically differentiating between Saraikis and their supposedly opponent and reference group, Urdu-speaking Muhajirs.

Consequently, the ethnic organizations and ethnic leadership called as 'social engineers', deliberately stir up the atavistic emotions of the masses and evoke language, culture and myths of racial origin in support of their aspirations and objectives.[9] Cartwright indicated that ethnic leadership appeal and influences the community in "direct contact" for the collective or group benefits, which can be either of a material or of an intangible nature.[10] Particularly, in the event of the political structure being in the hands of a particular ethnic group, the dominant-subordinate

7   Smith, *Champion Encyclopaedia of Anthropology,* p.667.

8   Fredrick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969), p.16.

9   Martin Axmann, *Back to the Future: The Khanate of Kalat and the Genesis of Baloch Nationalism 1915-1955* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.7.

10   John Cartwright*, Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (London: Croomhelm, 1978), p.117.

group tussles for power sharing for societal rewards and goods manifests itself in ethnic terms. The identities formed on common language base (primordial) and taking political forms (instrumental), causing ethnic competition and conflict. The factors contributing are sense of belongingness and security; the fear of being deprived of the resources; being powerless; and the superiority of ones culture and language over the other language.[11]

Power is that instrument which enables one to impose one's will directly or indirectly over others or resist the imposition of other's will.[12] The consequences of the exercise of power would be the increase of tangible or intangible gratification of its possessor. This gratification could come from having influence, prestige, security and the possession of political offices. The exploitation of resources, development funds and other material benefits while in political offices do result in the conflict among different ethnic groups in plural society.

Locale & Methodology

The locale of this study is union council Ali Pur in District Muzafar Garh of Punjab province. Methodology used for this paper is mainly in-depth semi-structured interviews with limited use of questionnaire guideline conducted to different units of data collection, including key informants, political leaders, intelligentsia, ethno-political leaders and the common people representing both communities. The guideline was prepared by focusing on the objectives of study such as the nature, structure and extent of ethno-political identity behaviour by carefully following the informal discussion and observation. Data was collected from three different strata, including the (i) male population of the locale (common or ordinary people), (ii) popular cultural discourse and (iii) extra ordinary people. The first domain is along the axis of generation that is further divided into three sub-domains; which are a) young unmarried males, (b) mature married males and (c) old and elderly males. The second domain is along

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11   Michael Hechter, "Response to Cohen: Max Weber on Ethnicity and Ethnic Change", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 81, pp.1162-8.

12   See *Selection of the Pris-Notebooks* (N.p. International Publishers, 1971). And other related works for discussion on the subject.

the axis of written and verbal material of the ethno-political leaders and intelligentsia. The third domain is along the axis of education, experience and profession and political and ethno-political leadership. Initially I used stratified sampling and divided the population into two broad categories as Locals and Muhajirs. I interviewed 120 of the whole by equally representing both communities. Then in each stratum there were three domains of data collection. For finding the representative of all the three domains in both the strata, I used purposive and snowball sampling to get the required data. In which focus has been to find out those people who explicitly behave ethnically or participate in ethnic politics. Specifically, among these units I interviewed 14 local body successful councillors (8:6 Muhajirs: Locals), and 12 unsuccessful (6:6); and 4 ethnic leaders of both ethnic groups. The rest were the shopkeepers, *biradari* heads, lawyers, teachers and intellectuals (writers, poets), and religious leaders *(Moulvies).*

The Relationship of Ethnicity and political system

Humans must interact socio-culturally and politically to survive. In interaction they create a web of relationship, ideas, beliefs and identity that govern these relationships.[13] Political system is an important institution related with human experience. Indeed, Fredrick Barth has defined ethnicity as "social organization of cultural difference". It is naturally the cultural difference that matters as far as human history is concerned. Indeed, an understanding of ethnic processes is basic to an understanding of human history. The material progress, uneven development in socio-economic spheres, demographic changes, intended or unintended, results into identity consciousness of the privileged as well as the underprivileged ethnic groups in the multiethnic societies. In the case of multicultural society like Pakistan, the national as well as local political power structure often manifests the ethnic consciousness; sometimes this ethnic consciousness is even influenced by both political structures in reciprocal fashion.

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13   Smith, *Champion Encyclopaedia of Anthropology,* p.706.

One of the most convincing definitions of an ethnic group has been 'a community in communication with itself'.[14] In fact, without language it is almost impossible to imagine the formation of an ethnic identity. Clifford Geertz advocates language and even dialect of language as the primordial source of ethnicity and ethnic identity.[15] According to Charles Barber, "Language conflicts in certain situations are seen to lead to political tussles. One language may destroy another language. A language politically, culturally and economically powerful may dominate a state to such an extent that other minor or ethnical languages in the area suffer in consequence".[16]

How language shapes the ethnic behaviour is studied by developing following hypothesis that it is either a ethnocentrism[17] is the main cause to motivate the people to form ethnic identity in the area having cultural diversity; or people feel sense of security or belongingness to particular ethnic group while developing ethnic identity in the political power structure; or it is the acquisition of political power and authority related with local-body and national political offices, which causes the people to adopt ethnic identity.

Emergence of Ethnic Groups

In order to understand the above hypothesis, it is important to have clear understanding about the two ethnic groups and their emergence in Ali Pur. The first group comprises local inhabitants of Tehsil Ali Pur of South Punjab in Pakistan. The term 'Local' connotes euphemistically for the disfavoured terms like native or indigenous.[18] Their native language is Saraiki which is the

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14 Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution-Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States", in Clifford Geertz ed., *Old Societies and New States* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p.109.

15 *Ibid*.

16 Charles Barber, *Nation Ethnicity and Cultural Identity* (London: Rutledge, 1960), p.56.

17 This term was introduced into anthropology by Sumner to refer to the habit or tendency to judge or interpret other culture according to the criteria of one's own culture.

18 John Holtzman, "The Local in the Local: Models of Time and Space in Sambru District", *Cultural Anthropology,* Vol.45 (2004), p.68.

language of South Punjab. Although Local's identity existed from time immemorial but the current consciousness has been shaped historically after the emergence of Pakistan and immigrants community influx. Moreover, Saraiki consciousness was also exacerbated during 1960s as nationalist doctrine,[19] when the very word Saraiki was deliberately taken as language identity symbol for representing the people mainly living in Southern Punjab.[20] The other group is of the immigrants (called Muhajirs) who migrated to Alipur from India at the time of partition of the Indian sub-continent. Their language is Urdu (although a faction includes speaking Punjabi).[21]

Muhajir's identity is the outcome of socially and politically created consciousness in the wake of emergence of ethno-political party MQM (*Muhajir Qaumi Movement*). Although the Muhajirs identity consciousness existed from the beginning of their arrival, but it became visible in 1980s with establishment of MQM in Karachi and subsequently its intervention in Ali Pur later in 1990s when Muhajirs started practical local politics. There are marked basic differences between these two groups in terms of language, culture and economic status.

In the mainstream political structure, being in majority, the local group Saraikis are dominant. Saraikis leadership is elected for both in the national as well as in provincial assembly. Urdu speaking Muhajirs perceive themselves as subordinate and wants to get political power either to equate the power structure or at

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19   Christopher Shackle, "Siraiki: A Language Movement in Pakistan," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.2, No.3 (1977), p.379.

20   Rahman, *Language and Politics*, p.174.

21   The use of the term Muhajirs in relation to an ethnic identity raises several questions and needs a contextual analysis of some of the political and cultural processes that have been at work since the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Muhajir is the term, which was used by Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan at the time of partition. Seventy per cent of these refuges were Punjabi who settled mainly in Punjab and encultured into Punjabi by shunning the title Muhajir. However, the Urdu speaking refugees from United Province, Delhi, Central Province, Bihar and Hyderabad, who mainly settled in Sindh and some parts of south Punjab (Saraiki region), have continued to maintain the Muhajir label for their group identification for certain socio-political reasons that are discussed relative to this study.

least to ensure the protection of their interests such as the development funds, employment, and social security in case of ethnic conflict, business and family organization.

Structure and Nature of the Political System

Firstly, I would explain the structure and nature of political system studied in locale in which people participate into two domains of public and private; and then the formation of ethnic identities and ethnic organization.

1. Public Domain

It is noted that different ethnic groups are in direct contact with each other. Here ethnic groups are usually small units (called *Qoums*, *biradari*, as synonymous to a tribe) organized around the principle of patrilineal descent. How these small ethnic groups join to form an ethnic unit is process taken in two different domains. First in public domain: I will elaborate the organization of the political institutions,[22] their credentials of decision-making authority and recruitment process.

Political institutions of both the communities of Local and Muhajir are publicly comprised of certain small ethnic units (*biradari*). *Biradari*[23] is complex term and it operates at different levels and genealogical depths in the locale. Sometimes the term is used to refer to a very large group of people who claim descent from common male ancestors.[24] Structurally, the local term used is *Qoum* in the meaning of caste group which includes the *Mastois*, the *Lasharis,* the *Jatois*, the *Gopangs*, the *Bhuttas*, and the *Araeens* etc. *Jatois, Gopangs* and *Araeens* have been more influential in political structure of the Tehsil Ali Pur. Among the *Muhajirs* are the *Sayyids*, *Sheikhs*, the *Siddiques*, the *Sherwanis* and the *Rajputs*

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22   Here the political institution means the political organization and in the above case ethnic organization.

23   In Murdock's taxonomic system, the *biradari* is "compromised kin group". While in Punjabi culture *biradari* is conceived as collection of related household. See for detail Hamza A. Alavi, *Kinship in West Punjab Villages,* in H. A. Grould, T. N. Madan, A. C. Mayer and D.F. Pocock eds*., Contributions to Indian Sociology: New Series*, (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1972).

24   *Ibid*., p.1.

(called *Chaudharys, Ranas*). *Sayyids* assume the political institution for *Muhajirs* and other small ethnic groups follow them in collective consciousness.

As the society under study is patriarchal, and therefore, the decision making authority in political system lays with the male and which is hereditary. Among the local groups, the *Sardars*[25] who are landowners and are economically strong; they are the heads of the *Qoums*. On the other hand, among the *Muhajir*, every *biradari* has its head who is also regarded as economically strong. These heads of the *Qoum*s constitute the both local as well as Muhajir ethnic groups. So every member of the family[26] of the *Qoum* is to follow the decision of head of its *Qoum*. Common people believe that it is the political leaders and their allied entrepreneurs (*Qoum*s heads) who have the authority in the political as well administrative office. Sometime these heads also participate in local-body elections. Moreover, these forums also perform other functions for conflict resolution within the community. In case of ones conflict with other community's person, people feel sense of security while attached to their own group.

Variables that contribute to the criteria for the recruitment of decision-making authority are *Qoums* and lineage membership and ethnic leadership. For instance, in case of local group, the head is the *sardar* (head of certain *Qoum*) to hold the local political scenario. The reason being his powerful political career because of the fact that he and his family remained the head of their *biradari* as well as head of local's political group. These *Qoums* were *Jatois* and *Gopangs* who have been elected members of national assemblies many times. On the other side, regarding Muhajir ethnic group, *Sayyids* have been elected chairman of town committee of Ali Pur many times.

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25   As among the locals, the dominant in the political structure are Baloch tribes, so the heads of these tribes are structurally called as Sardars.

26   Here the term family refers to nuclear or extended family and is distinct from the broader term *biradari* or *Qoum* because it is important to mention that conventionally family equates *biradari* or *Qoum* in Sub-continent context.

2. Private Domain

Now I intend to discuss the political institutions, decision making authority and recruitment in private domain. Private domain is household comprises of male and female membership. As the society under study is patriarchal, so the head of the household is always a male person. He is responsible for the whole affairs of the household. Either the household is based on extended family or on nuclear family; the head remains the same who resolves all conflicts and problems of the household and assigned duties to different members of the household. He is the only political figure of the household.

As already said, in the patriarchal society the male is the head of the household, so he decides for the internal and external affairs of the household. Every male has a chance to be decision making authority if he establishes his own household. It is generally the head of the household who has to contact with head of the *Qoum* in case of need. The recruitment process in the private domain is that of small nuclear as well as joint families which form the household. These include the head's male married children, head's brother's family and sometimes head's sister family. These small units can influence the decisions of the head of the household.

Muhajirs-Locals identity Difference: An Ethnie's Perception

Like most of the plural societies, there is rudimentary difference of language and culture of Locals and Muhajirs in the locale. In case of these two ethnic groups, certain ethnic traits can be passed on through the early childhood socialization process whereby child learns the role expectations in relation to parents, siblings, cousins, uncles and close friends.[27] Here the difference is what the ethnie of any community perceive himself or conceives others as different through the ethnic instruments employed by the ethnic organization. These distinctions are noted as:

1. Cultural Difference

Raymond Firth has defined culture as "if society is taken to be an organized set of individuals with a given way of life; culture is

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27   L. Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp.8-9.

that way of life (1952:15).it is often assumed that members of an ethnic group share, by definition, similar cultural values, practices, and identities. Hechter considers ethnic affiliation as natural consequence of cultural distinctiveness and ethnicity as 'indistinguishable from culture.[28] Muhajirs and Locals are different in every walk of life from dress and housing patterns to eating, marriage and funeral rituals. Their economic (occupation) activities are clearly different. As Muhajirs came from India at partition time, so they carried with them certain elements of Indian culture (local ethnie would call it Hindu culture). Culture here is taken as simply way of talking about collective identities.[29] Historically, many *Qoum*s among locals are also immigrants from Balochistan from time immemorial and claiming Baloch lineage, but they have adopted the local culture and language. Some locals of a view that though the original immigrants from India were Muhajirs, but their second generations who have born here are no more Muhajir because they have born here and they should shun their Muhajir identity and learn the language and culture of locals. Here the process of assimilation has been put a great hindrance, although majority of the members of both the communities are bi-lingual and speak Siraiki as well as Urdu language. Whereas the Muhajirs view locals as ignorant *(Muhajir ethnie says: we educate the locals, they know nothing; we told them the standard of life).*

It is worth mentioning that because of three symbols (speech, action and dress) one can easily distinguish between the Locals and Muhajirs. Muhajirs wear traditional *Shalwar Qamees* (long shirt and trouser) as against Locals who also wear *dhoti-kurta*[30] and *safa*[31] other than *shalwar qamees*. The considerable incidence of out marriage (intermarriage between two communities) can be definite indication of social integration, a reduction of ethnic variance within the community and a trend toward homogenization of the variegated population, but this could not be done in Ali Pur.

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28   See Hechter "Response to Cohen: Max Weber on Ethnicity and Ethnic Change"*,* pp.1162-68.

29   Adam Kuper, *Culture: The Anthropologists Account* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.3.

30   Loose piece of cloth tied around waist in place of trouser.

31   A little different from Turban.

It is because people want their identity intact, while the intermarriage is perceived to be one of the most concrete ways in which the ethnic purity and cultural content of ethnic groups is threatened.[32] Often when someone from either community give or take female from the other community; whole community turn these deviants in to Coventry.

Moreover there is found marked difference in their marriage ceremonies. Muhajirs families give more importance to daughter's wedding and spend much money in the wedding reception, while local families are very extravagant at their son's wedding. Sometimes, these traditions brings ethnic critic in reciprocally and are considered as the peculiarity of culture not be violated.

Food dishes are also different in that certain Muhajir food dishes are even non-existing among Locals. In funeral ceremonies, Locals are more extravagant than Muhajirs. Locals give alms in seven different Thursdays (*jumarat alms*) till the last alms called fortieth day (*chehlem*) for deceased blessings, while the Muhajirs will give alms on tenth, twentieth and fortieth day of deceased person. Muhajirs and Locals graveyards are also separate. Muhajirs are basically 'business minded' people and their 10 year old child will be seen either helping father on the shops or will be observed carrying independent small vendors in the streets. While Locals have less tendency towards business and they are mainly inclined towards farming. Saraiki people's behaviour is not commercial in a sense that they often exchange agriculture produce with each other. Often people take things from each other without the payment of money and sometimes even without its due returns. However, Muhajirs treat every transaction in terms of business.

As the ethnic groups are concerned with the preservation of their cultural identities,[33] they play an important role for preserving and prioritizing these cultural metaphors.

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32   Robert Merton, "Intermarriage and the Social Structure: Fact and Theory". *Psychiatry*, Vol.4 (Aug 1941), pp.361-74.

33   John R. Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (Toronto and Baffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p.116.

2. Ideological Difference

Ideological differences play a major role in the creation and separation of groups. Ideological manipulation by or on behalf of the deprived groups reaches its apex when it leads 'privileged' groups to adopt a negative self image. The psychological affect may be so strong that deprived groups find themselves in a revolutionary position. Muhajirs think themselves as deprived of the political power structure; subsequently they would definitely go for adopting separate ideology opposing the privileged one. Muhajirs ideology stands in very notion of 'get united' as against the locals endorsed by ethno-political leadership. One ideology that is rooted in both the community is 'not to rely on each other' in all affairs and dealings. If certain central elements of political ideologies are consciously taken over by an individual, and if these elements come to integrate his or her comprehension and evaluation of politics, that person may be said to have an "Ideological" conceptualization of politics. Similarly, Muhajirs are now tracing their ideology from the ideology of MQM[34] which was not the case in Ali Pur almost a decade ago if the idea existed in hidden behaviour. Currently MQM has opened its office in Ali Pur and its mainstream political leaders[35] from Karachi visited there and delivered speeches against the supposed feudal structure[36] dominated by Locals. Muhajirs view themselves as slave of the chief of locals if they do not get share in political power. At the same time, there has been new attention to the ways in which communities often construct the structure of feelings associated with locality, particularly in the context of rapidly increasing flows

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34   The Muhajir Qoumi Mahaz (Muhajir National Movement) was born in 1984. MQM demand was that that the Muhajirs should be recognized as the fifth "nationality" of Pakistan; finally, that Karachi, the first city of the country, should be named a province (Karachi Suba), which would be in fact a Muhajir province. (Rahman 1998:130), now it has become the second largest political party in Sindh province after PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party).

35   Ministers of state Safwan Ullah and Aamir Liaqat Hussain have visited and delivered speeches in the public gathering organized by Muhajir community which annoyed the locals.

36   It is worth mentioning that Muhajirs ethnic leaders always use the notion as 'save yourself (Muhajirs) from the enslavement of Locals'.

of people, goods and ideas.[37] The locals association with the Saraiki nationalism and separate Saraiki province is also considered by some Muhajirs as against the interests of Muhajirs because then the locals would be more powerful politically and would easily exploit the politico-economic opportunities.

Economic Status

Economy and economic condition can be source of ethnic identity. It is the economic conditions that give rise to privileged and deprived class. Economic conditions determine the class of ethnic group on one side, and itself is one of the main causes of the ethnic behaviour. Historically, majority Baloch tribes among the Locals are early inhabitant of the area, so they occupied majority of the cultivated land. Due to this land, they are strong economically and assumed the political power. Although there are considerable Muhajirs who have also land[38] (claimed) but that land is not to the extant to equate them to Locals. Moreover, these land holding people are the political figures of Muhajir community. This relationship between land and political power unearth the political structure of the area. Land and its association with economic opportunities is source of inspiration for ethno-political leadership. As already elaborated, Muhajirs are business minded so they wanted their representative in the local political office with consideration of local administrative taxes and issues related with the business community. Moreover, many scholars assume that a group's ability to exercise its ethnic options is importantly shaped by the overall socioeconomic position of that group. The power sharing leadership in both Local and Muhajir communities belong to the relatively high class with the land being determining means of class structure. But the ethnic behaviour is consistent in all the classes of Muhajirs as compared to the Locals where the tendency is found higher in upper class and which decreases along the

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37   Hugh Raffles, "Local theory: Nature and the Making of an Amazonian place", *Cultural Anthropology* Vol.14 (1999), pp.323-60; Also Donald Moore, 'Subaltern Struggles and the Politics of Space: Remapping Resistance in Zimbabwe's Eastern Highlands", *Cultural Anthropology,* Vol.13 (1998), pp.344-81.

38   At the time of partition of India, land was allotted to immigrant families in Pakistan, so that is the main source of their economic status.

decreasing order of class structure and almost diminishes with the lower class. But the ethnic groups are motivated by socioeconomic as well as political interests. Moreover, ethnic loyalties reflect, and are maintained by the underlying socioeconomic interests of group members.[39] Although both communities' higher class's economic interests are more or less relevant to their ethnic behaviour but the whole community is inclined instrumentally in case when interests are in conflict inter-ethnically.

Political Organizations and their Relationship to Ethnicity and Identity

The task of the research was to find out the structure and nature of political organizations and their function in forming the ethnic identity of the people. The structure that I have elaborated previously is associated with the formation of ethnic identity. Historical institutionalism, a general approach to politics that gives theoretical importance to political institutions stresses that socio-political outcome never occurs in an institutional vacuum; it allows room for agency, the voluntarist and contingent dimensions of actions of political actors as shaped by the institutional context.[40]

Political Organizations and Real Causes of Ethnicity and Identity

As already elaborated, there are certain causes that transform people's normal behaviour towards ethnic self identification. These causes of ethnic identity formation in concerned locale are chiefly as follows:

Firstly, ethnocentrism that may be defined as "learned beliefs and values that lead an individual or group of individuals to be biased for or against the interest of particular group". Both the communities in the locale view their language and culture as supreme to one another. Ethnie become biased in daily conversation. Muhajirs report themselves as more cultured historically. Although locals ethnic identity with Siraiki language

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39 Orlando Patterson, *Ethnic Chauvinism* (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), p.101.

40 Andre Lecours, *Regionalism, Cultural Diversity and The State in Spain, in Multi-lingual & Multi-cultural Development*, Vol.22, (2001), No.3, pp.210-26.

which is usually soft spoken and considered sweet in speaking sound , yet taken as un-civilized in the eyes of Urdu speaking Muhajirs. Among the Muhajir community the Sayyids assume the higher status. Here the contradiction lies in case when Urdu speaking Sayyids are given more respect than Siraiki speaking Sayyids. Same is the case when Local Baloch tribes speaking Siraiki language have higher status because they assume the mainstream political office.

In spite of the fact that both communities come into direct contact with each other in daily dealings, from the social issues to the business matters; they try to avoid speaking each others language. Paradoxically, it is observed that though most of the members of both the communities are bilingual, yet they criticize each other language vocabulary using certain stigmatized phrases such as Muhajirs call locals as *khate Teet jat* (bitterly un-civilized).[41] Intermarriages are the phenomenon that causes changes in ethnocentric behaviour, but in case of Local-Muhajir conflict, this phenomenon does almost not exist. If there are some cases, other people of the community in general and members of the *Qoum* in particular criticize and turn the perpetrators in to Coventry. In case of business matters Locals don't rely on the Muhajirs. Locals' common perception about Muhajirs is "the Muhajir's son is never truthful".[42] Muhajirs are basically business minded people and are dominant in the business of the locality and maintaining the monopoly among their own community.

Secondly, leadership for any type of organization is very important for the success of the motives of organizations generally. It is because the leader must be able to transmit his wishes downwards in order to implement his decisions to his people. But here in case of Local-Muhajir issues, there is no genuine leadership in ethnic sense. Rather the people who have certain political vested interests have been using ethnic cards and have become political leaders. These leaders are only associated with the political office which in turn constitutes authority and that is the ultimate objective

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41   Discussed in detail in section "Ethnic identity and ethnic conflict".

42   Local ethnic group use this notion in Urdu language (*Muhajir ka baccha kabhi na saccha*).

behind identity formation. Political leadership manipulates certain ethnic issues in their favour and sensitizes the community to side with them during electoral process. It comes from the study that majority of the people belonging to both communities are well aware of the negative manipulative tactics of their political leaders blaming these leaders as getting personal benefits and making properties out of politics, yet paradoxically, people tend to support these leaders when in electoral process. In case of leadership, another category is of political brokers that are either the heads of the *Qoum*s or of certain other small ethnic leaders. These are basically the intermediaries between the general populace and group leaders. So promises are made and executed through these small leaders whose only business is politics. Community members think their leaders as corrupt, disloyal to community and self-centred, yet they continue to support them because they don't have other choice.

Thirdly, the relationship of intelligentsia and the politics is very old. Intelligentsia is those people who within the community are very intelligent and are interested in culture, art and learning. They have done much for the promotion of different cultures for a period of time. In certain political conditions, they come to horizon and take significant role for the mobilization of community.[43] They are usually learned and capable enough to differentiate between different cultures and languages and in turn this differentiation gives strength to the claim of separate identity, i.e., ethnic identity. As is already elaborated, that although Muhajir identity is associated with the mainstream MQM (now articulated *Mutahidda Qoumi Movement*) in the locale very recently during 1990s, but the identity is rooted from the very beginning of settlement of refuges that were really different in culture and language from the local people. For the unity of the community certain Muhajir intelligentsia used the notion of community coherence (Be like Muhajirs and live like Muhajirs). Similarly, Local intelligentsia claim Saraiki identity and do raise the questions that when Muhajirs are united, then why not the locals. Accordingly, here unity is sought in counter provocation method by discouraging the

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43   Tariq Rahman, *Language and Politics*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press) pp.10-11.

dis-unity as is alleged by local's ethno-leadership. One ethnic[44] claimed that "why the second generation of the Muhajir people call themselves as Muhajirs, when they are born here in Ali Pur and are no more Muhajir now. They should shun their identity as Muhajirs; they have learnt Saraiki language and are now locals …"

Fourthly, contemporary theorists of power, particularly in their empirical inquiries into local communities have conducted a protected debate concerning the nature of power structures in these settings. Foucault (1926-1984) pointed out that power is "something which circulates and is employed and exercised through net-like organization and individuals are always in position of simultaneously understanding and exercising this power".[45] Therefore these ethnic organizations have motives to get control over political office in order to get political authority. Urmila Phadanis views ethnicity as a device as much as a focus for group mobilization by its leadership through the select use of ethnic symbols for socio-cultural and politico-economic purposes.[46] Moreover, in the societies like the one under study, there is popular conception that ordinary people bestow respect to those members of society who have power, especially political power and authority. It is noticeable that here the domains of power are the administrative, judiciary, police and political institutions with which the distribution of goods, funds, counteracts and other gratifications are controlled. Wherever there is power, there is resistance.[47] It is generally believed in Ali Pur that whichever ethnic group will get the local political office, it would be in a position to exploit development funds at individual level and also for its community members. Muhajirs are reported to have

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44   A local group lawyer, who has also participated in the provincial assembly election and have to face the Muhajirs opposition in general elections 2002.

45   Michael Foucault, "Subject and Power" in *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Vintage Publishers, 1994), p.347.

46   Urmila Phadanis, *Ethnicity and Nation-building in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), p.16.

47   Foucault, *"Subject and Power in the Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Science"*, p.347.

controlled the local administration for three decades,[48] and are bound to support two local groups in the mainstream political structure[49] because of the local's demographic majority as is already mentioned above. But recently, Muhajirs have started taking part in provincial elections which locals suspect to be an influence of the MQM. When one group gets power, it imposes its decisions on the other group by exercising authority. Power is associated with sense of social and physical security, belongingness and good standards of life there at Ali Pur. There is no absolute sense of rule of law and whoever wins in the election and assumes the political office thinks that now it is his turn to exercise power and authority. For this reason every body wants to side with his own community ethnic group.

Last but not least is the Sense of security and belongingness. It is rather a cognitive phenomenon when an ethnie feels sense of security or belongingness while responding to ethnicity. As Jeffery Weeks has noted, "Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others".[50] As the very word Muhajir is giving meaning lexically as the immigrant, so there is always sense of being alien somewhere. Muhajirs are the minority in that area so the desire for community coherence. That coherence is sought by using certain instrumental social facts by the ethnic members. For example if Muhajir has some odd circumstance in life, he will definitely approach to his community generally and to his *Qoum* particularly. In case of intercommunity conflict, his community will support him in any way, while subsequently, the matter is decided within the community in case of intra-community disputes. Moreover,

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48   In the local body administration the Muhajirs has been occupying the chairmanship of the town committee of Ali Pur.

49   Here the mainstream political structure means the offices of the national and provincial assemblies which are under direct control of majority local groups. Although recently Muhajirs started competing with the locals for provincial assembly seats but were unsuccessful during 2002 and 2008 general elections.

50   Jaffery Weeks, "The Value of Difference" in Jonathan Rutherford ed., *Identity, Community, Cultural Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p.88.

ethnocentrism also plays role to shape people's feeling of belongingness and security within the community. Both the communities feel proud of their language, culture, and traditions and aspire to protect these from assimilation; although some local ethnic leaders hold the view that there is tendency of xenocentrism[51] among locals due to Muhajir's ethnocentric attitude. Locals have started socialization of their new born children in Urdu language because of the notion that *'tameez'* (civic sense) is only learnt through Urdu as against the Saraiki language.

Ethnic Identity and Ethnic Conflict

As it is already given that ethnicity is associated with the political power sought by ethnic leadership, which deliberately exploits ethnic identities. There are certain instruments that these ethnic leaders employ to inculcate the ideology of separate identity. These tactics are contingently causing ethnic conflicts which enhance ethnic behaviour.

The range of tactics that a group may effectively employ in carrying out its strategy, is necessarily determined by its socio-economic status and political positions in relation to the other groups. Some of these tactics observed in Ali Pur are creation of enemy image and the use of negative stereotypes by ethnic group against each other.

It is observed that the stronger the self group preference, the greater is the enemy image. Such images figure prominently in the ideology of the deprived groups seeking relative as well as absolute upward mobility. As Muhajirs are in minority group so they think themselves as deprived by the locals because their reference group i.e. Locals assume the mainstream political offices (representation both in national and provincial assemblies). This tactic is not objectively demonstrated but is conceived by the ethnie subjectively and while sitting within the fold of self community. These tactics are used secretly to make their community united against other group. This enemy image creates a threat perception among the groups regarding their status. When

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51 A term coined by anthropologists by which an individual thinks his language and culture inferior to other cultures.

the two cohabiting communities view each other with enemy image; this situation produces conflicts and that is in fashion in every walk of life.

Stereotypes are an aspect of the cognitive component of prejudice and are unsubstantiated and usually sloganized beliefs about a person or a group. As the negative stereotypes and imagery are regarded as very insulting remarks against one's dignity and prestige, so these are effective tactics in the hands of ethnic groups to belittle the opponent group[52] and often puts resistance to these unwanted meanings and images associated with them.[53] Locals use very provocative remarks about the 'reliability' of Muhajirs (e.g. *Muhajir's son is never truthful*). Another stereotype that Locals use against Muhajirs is basically regarding the grammatical triviality of the Urdu language as Nagel notes that ethnic minorities are subject to both formal and informal kinds of labelling[54] as is indicated about the Muhajirs. The grammatical triviality of language is used to justify stereotypes. Locals also use to call Muhajirs as "Ghinsoon" (pawn eaters). Muhajirs also use stereotypes against Locals on the similar fashion. Muhajir think and call Locals as ignorant fools *(ujar and bait de baleen)* meaning as the ignorant evils of the riverbank. Muhajirs call locals as uncivilized people. Muhajirs would also say about Locals as *(khatte teet Jat)* that Locals are the sourest villager. The use of stereotypes against each other is very often intense and results in ethnic hatred and serious conflicts between the two communities**.**

Conclusion

Although fluid, identity is not infinitely elastic. It is shaped by the initial cultural resources which an individual acquires by birth. New identities can be acquired by learning new languages, cultures, intermarriages, and through migration process. From the political structure of Pakistan, the main problem one can face is the definition of

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52   Nazli Kirby, "Race, Ethnic Options and Ethnic Binds: Identity Negotiations of Second Generation Chinese and Korean Americans"*, Sociological Perspective* Vol.43, No.1 (2000), p.77.

53   See John Solomos, *Racism and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Michael Omi and Winant Howard, *Racial formation in the United States* (New York: Rutledge, 1994).

54   Joane Negel, "American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Politics and Resurgence of Identity", *American Sociological Review* Vol.60, No.6 (December 1995), pp.947-65.

ethnic groups with ethnicity being vague concept.[55] It is crystal clear that Pakistan is multicultural, multi-lingual and multinational country and facing the issues related with ethnic distinctiveness of her populace. With the language as main marker of ethnic identity, there should be no problem in categorizing the Urdu speaking people of Pakistan as an ethnic group along with other regional lingual identities of Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi, Pashto, Saraiki, and other small languages. The society under study was plural in nature and is mainly divided into two broad communities of Local and Muhajirs, speaking Saraiki and Urdu languages respectively. These segments of society themselves are comprised of smaller segments (*biradari*, *Qoum*s, and tribe). The structure of the local political system in that society is based on the *biradari* (*Qoum*s) within the fold of same language group. Identity is primordially conceived by an individual within the fold of *Qoum* in private domain, while an individual think himself as different from others on the basis of language (primordial) distinctness by feeling of cultural coherence (instrumentally, socially constructed) in the public domain. The political structure gives rise to ethnic politics and hence the ethnic groups. Ethnic politics resolves around the power, authority and prestige. Here certain political objectives play role in the emergence of ethnic consciousness. This consciousness results in political struggle of the communities. Therefore, the Muhajirs think themselves deprived in political process as the Locals (being in majority) are dominating in mainstream political structure. So the struggle of Muhajirs to gain control in local politics revolves around ethnic identity and community coherence. Ethnocentrism is viewed as the dominating underlying reality (Lévi-Strauss) in every form. Relatively, the dominant group evokes natural tendency to discriminate against other group, to prefer members of self group as in employment, business association, neighbourhood, and in marriage alliances. Separate language, culture, ideas and economic interests become the salient features of an ethnic group. To enhance this consciousness, ethnic leaders use some tactics and manipulative devices that sometime result into ethnic conflicts.

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55 Urmila Phadanis, *Ethnicity and Nation-building in South Asia* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1990), p.16.