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The Role of Laghari Family in the Electoral Politics Dera Ghazi Khan

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Abstract

This analytical study offers a rigorous and critical examination of the role of Laghari family in the electoral politics of Dera Ghazi Khan. Laghari Baloch has played a highly significant and enduring role in promoting political representation since colonial rule in Dera Ghazi Khan. As Laghari family historically served in Punjab during the Tiwana government as Sir Nawab Muhammad Jamal Khan Laghari was the Minister of this government from 1937-1945. After the emergence Pakistan, different members of the family strongly contributed in all tiers of politics from 1959-2026. From 1993 Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Laghari elected as President and Mr. Laghari served till 1997 as the president of Pakistan. This research paper explores and highlights the role of Laghari family since colonial era to this modern era.

Keywords: Dera Ghazi Khan, Elections, Laghari, Politics. President.

Introduction

This paper primarily covers the political role of the Laghari family in the politics of Dera Ghazi Khan which remained remarkable from colonial era to this modern authoritarian democracy. From Tumandari system to electoral politics Laghari family remained a main player of electoral contest in every election. Laghari which is a remarkable Baloch Tribe of Dera Ghazi Khan. Who settled in Choti Zaireen initially under the leadership of Sardar

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Jalal Khan Laghari. During colonial period when Sandiman appointed Deputy Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan he abolished close border policy and introduce new administrative step to extend the British administration toward Balochistan through open border policy. He launched new politico-administration with the collaboration of British officials and local Baloch Sardars given them the title of Tumandars. Laghari Sardar also succeeded to secure Tumandari. Later Sir Nawab Muhammad Jamal Khan appointed the Members of Punjab Legislative Assembly and even he was elected MLA Punjab in 1937. He appointed Minister for Public Works and Water and Power, irrigation. The family holds with highest rank president of Pakistan, Ministers, Senators, MNAs, MPAs, Chairman District Council Dera Ghazi Khan, Nazim and Naib Nazim. Overall the family has excelled to all other politicians in the electoral politics of the country with strong hold. In this paper it has been discussed about the large scale politico-electoral contribution of this family in the Dera Ghazi Khan through brief discussion.

Review of Literature

The literature available to understand the political history of the Laghari family mainly highlights the role of the family in the context of regional history, tribal structure and colonial influences. A Year on the Border of Punjab and Frontier, Notes on Balochistan and Afghanistan describes the geographical importance of the Baloch tribes, especially the Laghari tribe, and their role in border politics from an early colonial perspective, which provides an insight into their political foundations. Similarly, the histories of Dera Ghazi Khan and Gulbahar districts present the Laghari family as an influential tribal and feudal force, closely associated with local administration and power during the British era. These books indicate that the Laghari chiefs converted their tribal status into political power. Furthermore, the Tarikh-e- Dera Ghazi Khan and the Marqa Dera Ghazi Khan chronicle the socio-political supremacy, land tenure system and local influence of the Laghari family in a historical continuity. Whereas the Tarikh Rajanpur shows the influence of the family extending to adjacent areas. In the modern political context, books

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such as Punjab Development and Politics and Urban Local Government Politics examine the role of the Laghari family in modern democratic politics, local government systems, and power structures, where the family is seen as active in modern political institutions while maintaining traditional tribal influence. Overall, this literature shows that the politics of the Laghari family is shaped by a combination of tribal leadership, land tenure, and colonial and post-colonial political systems. However, most of the books lack critical and comparative analysis, which highlights the need for further research.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research method is very suitable for studying the politics of the Laghari family, because through it, political process can be understood in depth in tribal, social and historical context. This study has mainly adopted a historical and narrative approach, under which the political evolution, leadership style and influence of the Laghari family will be examined. For this purpose, secondary sources such as historical books, research articles, official documents and newspaper records have been analyzed, while primary sources include interviews, oral history and experiences of local people. Especially important is the information obtained from interviews with political figures, local elders and political workers associated with the Laghari family. Along with this, how the Laghari family has been presented in different periods. The research has given special importance to the context, that is, the role of this family in the British era, post-independence Pakistan, and the modern democratic system. Overall, this value-based research approach helps to understand the politics of the Laghari family as a social and historical process rather than just statistics.

Discussion

The politics of the Laghari family during the British era was primarily shaped by the interplay of tribal chieftaincy, feudalism, and colonial strategy. The Laghari tribe in the Dera Ghazi Khan region was an influential Baloch tribe, whose chieftains adopted a policy of cooperation with the British government. As a result of this cooperation, they

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received lands, privileges, and administrative status, which further strengthened their local power. The British Raj adopted a system of "Indirect Rule", especially in the border and tribal areas, under which chieftains like Laghari were given roles in local administration, law and order, and revenue collection. In this way, the Laghari family was able to establish political influence not only within their own tribe but also in the wider region. Furthermore, the Laghari chieftains were also given honorary positions, such as magistrates or other administrative responsibilities, which transformed their status from that of a traditional tribal leader to that of a partner in the colonial system. They maintained their local supremacy and sometimes gained superiority over other tribes in exchange for loyalty to the British government. However, one aspect of this politics was that it was not entirely based on popular representation, with most power being confined to the tribal elite. Overall, the politics of the Laghari dynasty during the British period was based on conciliation, loyalty, and the preservation of local power, which later provided the basis for their modern political status.

During the British era, many chiefs and influential figures emerged in the Laghari family, but Sardar Muhammad Khan Laghari is considered to be the most important leader and politician of that era. He was the head of the Laghari tribe and also had close ties with the British government. Sardar Muhammad Khan Laghari adopted a policy of cooperation with the British Raj, as a result of which he not only gained socio-political status but was also included in administrative affairs. He was given honorary positions and was entrusted with an important role in maintaining law and order at the local level, collecting taxes and resolving tribal disputes. The main objective of his leadership was to maintain the supremacy of his tribe and strengthen relations with the British government. Through this strategy, they kept the Laghari family prominent in the mainstream political and social circles of Dera Ghazi Khan. Although the politics of this period were not completely democratic, leaders like Sardar Muhammad Khan Laghari combined tribal

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influence with the colonial system to create a political structure that provided the foundation for the politics of the Laghari family in later period-

During the British era, Sir Nawab Muhammad Jamal Khan Laghari is considered one of the most prominent political leaders of the Laghari family, who played an important role not only at the local but also at the provincial level. He was particularly associated with the Unionist Party, which was a powerful party in British Punjab and represented large landowners, tribal chiefs and the agricultural elite. Sir Nawab Muhammad Jamal Khan Laghari maintained close relations with the British government while practicing politics on the platform of the Unionist Party. The main axis of his politics was the protection of agricultural interests, rural stability and the survival of the tribal and feudal system. The policy of the Unionist Party was also based on the unity of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh landowners, with the aim of maintaining political stability in Punjab. He not only led the Laghari tribe in his area of Dera Ghazi Khan, but also played an active role in local governance in collaboration with the British administration. He was awarded honours and titles, which were a reflection of his loyalty and political importance. Overall, Sir Nawab Muhammad Jamal Khan Laghari's politics represents the British-era model in which local chieftains and feudal lords shared power with the colonial system, and this style of politics later influenced the early political structure of Pakistan. He was also a minister during the Unionist era and was continuously elected to the tribal seat. However, he was given honorary positions by the British government, such as honorary magistrate and local administrative responsibilities, through which he was part of the government system. In addition, he was also a member of the Legislative Council of Punjab, where he represented his area and the landlord class. In short, he was not a traditional but an influential landlord, tribal chieftain and legislator, who had influence in the British system while playing politics from the Unionist party platform.

From the establishment of Pakistan (1947) to the 1970s, the politics of the Laghari family reflected a continuous combination of tribal influence, feudal power, and the changing

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national political system. During this period, the Laghari family adapted to the new state politics while maintaining the socio-political status inherited from the British era. In the early years, the Laghari chiefs maintained a strong grip on the local level and developed relationships with the bureaucracy and political elite. Politics during this period revolved largely around personalities and influence, with large landowners like the Laghari family enjoying a significant advantage. In the 1950s and 1960s, as Pakistan alternated between democratic and military eras, the Laghari family changed its strategy to suit the changing political circumstances. They adopted a policy of reconciliation with different political factions and governments in order to maintain political influence in their region. While the imposition of martial law during Ayub Khan's era damaged the politics of Nawabzada Muhammad Khan Laghari, the Laghari family played an active role in local politics even under the system of Basic Democracies. During this period, their role was mostly limited to local government, development work and electoral politics, but it was effective. Although the general elections of 1970 were not very encouraging, Nawabzada Muhammad Khan and his brothers won provincial seats, although they lost the National Assembly seat to Dr. Nazir Ahmed Shaheed. The Laghari family emerged as a strong regional political force, which, while maintaining its tribal foundations, also made its place in modern electoral politics. Overall, the politics of the Laghari family during this period was a combination of tradition and innovation, where tribal leadership, the land tenure system and state politics remained intertwined, and these elements later formed the basis for their entry into national-level politics.

The period from 1970 to 1977 was a period of significant change in the politics of the Laghari family, when general elections and popular politics were promoted for the first time in Pakistan. During this period, the Laghari family moved away from traditional tribal and feudal politics and played an active role in formal party politics. In the 1970 elections, members of the Laghari family participated on the platforms of various political parties, however, the rise of the Pakistan People's Party was prominent during

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this period, which had an impact in Dera Ghazi Khan as well as in many areas of southern Punjab. Some members of the Laghari family harmonized with this new popular politics, while others maintained the traditional style of politics. The sudden death of Nawabzada Muhammad Khan in 1972 was a blow to the Laghari family, but

During this period, Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Laghari emerged as an emerging political leader. He entered national politics with modern education and political awareness and associated himself with the People's Party. Their entry into politics was a sign that the Laghari family was entering national politics through a new generation. During the reign of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972–1977), the Laghari family strengthened its presence in federal and provincial politics. During this period, the PPP government tried to limit the feudal system and promote popular politics, but large families like the Laghari maintained their influence even while living in this system. By 1977, the Laghari family had become a political force that was recognized not only locally but also nationally. Their role in the politics of this period is a transitional one, where traditional tribal influence and modern party politics seem to go hand in hand.

Similarly, the withdrawal of the Nawabzada Mahmood family from politics provided an opportunity for other members of the family to join the political arena. The major political change after 1977 was that Farooq Laghari maintained his affiliation with the People's Party and while he remained out of the political race, others appeared in politics along with him.

During the Zia-ul-Haq era (1977–1988), the politics of the Laghari family progressed under a combination of non-party system, military rule and tribal influence. During this period, those families who had strong landholdings, tribal status and social influence were more influential at the local level, and the Laghari family was also among the prominent political and social forces. In this context, Maqsood Ahmad Khan Laghari is considered one of the important political and tribal leaders of the Laghari family. He played an active role in tribal politics, resolving local disputes and maintaining political

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ties in his area during this period. During the era of General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, when the activity of political parties was limited, the importance of local leaders like Maqsood Ahmad Khan Laghari increased further, because politics was mostly based on personalities, communities and local influence. Maqsood Ahmad Khan Laghari first became the chairman of the district council and then won the non-party election and became part of the Majlis-e-Shura. Similarly, he was successful in holding the ministry of Haas in Punjab.

During the rule of General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq from 1977 to 1988, the politics of the Laghari family once again changed its strategy and adapted to the changing non-party and military system. During this period, due to the ban on political parties and non-party elections, traditional tribal and influential families gained a prominent role in politics, which further increased the importance of the Laghari family. The Laghari family participated mostly in non-party politics during this period and maintained its strong hold at the local level. Since politics based on personalities and communities flourished in Zia-ul-Haq's regime, the Laghari chiefs used their tribal influence, landholdings and social status to gain representation in the national and provincial assemblies. During this period, Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Laghari's politics also fluctuated. Although he was earlier associated with the Pakistan Peoples Party, the PPP was facing severe pressure during the Zia era, which also led to political difficulties for him. However, he maintained his political identity and later re-emerged effectively in national politics.

The period from 1988 to 1999 was a period of significant national comeback and strong presence of the Laghari family in politics. This was the period when the democratic system was restored in Pakistan and party politics became active again, which gave opportunities to major political families to enter central politics. During this period, Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Laghari emerged as the most prominent political leader of the Laghari family. He played a significant role in national politics from the platform of the Pakistan People's Party and was elected President of the country in 1993. His

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becoming President was a historical milestone for the Laghari family, which brought them to the center of national power. Farooq Laghari initially cooperated with the PPP governments, but later political differences also emerged, as a result of which he dismissed the government in 1996. This move is considered a turning point in the political history of Pakistan, which had a profound impact on federal politics. During the same period, other members of the Laghari family also participated in national and provincial politics and maintained their influence in Dera Ghazi Khan. The main axis of their politics was development projects, electoral politics and the protection of tribal influence. Overall, the period from 1988 to 1999 was a period of ascendancy for the Laghari family, in which they emerged from local chieftaincy politics as a powerful political force at the national level. Along with Farooq Laghari, his son Owais Laghari also entered politics, Maqsood Laghari, Tufail Laghari, Mansoor Laghari, Sardar Atta Muhammad Khan Laghari and then Sardar Muhammad Jafar Khan Laghari, Yousif Khan Laghari became important components of electoral politics-

Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Laghari had already moved away from the central role of national politics, as he had resigned from the presidency in 1997. After that, his politics mostly remained in the background and he was not directly active in government or party politics with the same intensity. He also founded the Millat Party, but it could not achieve significant success, so he merged it with Chaudhry Shujaat's Muslim League-Q. During the Musharraf era, Farooq Laghari's political aspect was mostly limited to the level of a former president and senior politician, while the practical political activity of the Laghari family continued through the new leadership. Other members of the Laghari family, especially Sardar Owais Ahmed Khan Laghari, increased their political activities during the Musharraf era and later achieved a strong position in national politics. Thus, the political legacy of the family continued through the new generation rather than directly through Farooq Laghari. During this period, Farooq Khan's son Jamal Khan was elected District Nazim. Then in 2005, Sardar Maqsood Khan became District Nazim.

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From 2010 to 2018, the Laghari family's electoral politics once again emerged as a strong national and provincial level activity, in which the new generation in particular played a prominent role. During this period, Sardar Owais Ahmed Khan Laghari emerged as the most central political figure, who achieved continuous successes in the National Assembly and also held important ministries in federal governments. During this period, the Laghari family combined electoral politics with more organized, party-based and developmental politics. Owais Laghari was associated with different political parties at different times, but his core politics revolved around public service, infrastructure development and energy sector reforms in the constituencies of Dera Ghazi Khan and South Punjab. The Laghari family's political influence continued after the 2013 elections and especially in the 2018 general elections. During this time, they maintained their electoral position while remaining within changing political alliances and party systems.

In the 2018 general elections, the Laghari family once again maintained its strong presence in the politics of southern Punjab, especially Dera Ghazi Khan. The family's electoral politics during this period were mostly associated with party politics and shifting political alliances. Sardar Muhammad Khan Laghari emerged as the central political figure in this election. He became the PTI's Member of Assembly from a key National Assembly constituency. In this constituency, he defeated PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif. He also won a provincial seat, which was later won by by-election man Owais Laghari. Sardar Jafar Khan Laghari also managed to win his seat. The success of the Laghari family in the 2018 elections made it clear that they are still an effective force in modern electoral politics, along with tribal foundations. Although the era saw the change of political parties and political upheaval at the national level, the Laghari family maintained its electoral position through its traditional influence, community network, and organizational strategy.

In the 2024 general elections, the Laghari family once again maintained its presence in the electoral politics of southern Punjab, especially Dera Ghazi Khan, however, this time

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the political environment was more competitive and divided on party lines than before. In this election, Sardar Owais Ahmed Khan Laghari stood out as the central political figure of the Laghari family. He was re-elected from the National Assembly constituency and is also playing an important political role at the federal level. The axis of his politics is also subject to the tribal style. His son Ammar Laghari also became a member of the National Assembly, while Osama Fayyaz Laghari, Ali Ahmed Khan Laghari, Mahmood Qadir Khan Laghari have also won elections and currently the Laghari family is the central group in the electoral politics of Dera Ghazi Khan. Owais Laghari is also the General Secretary of the Muslim League Punjab and is a federal minister.

There are several historical, social and political reasons for the political success of the Laghari family that sustain their influence over different periods.

The first and foremost reason is their tribal and chieftaincy status, which provided them with a strong social base in areas like Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur. The tribal structure gives importance to the word of the chief, which strengthened their political leadership.

The second major reason is feudal economic power. The ownership of vast agricultural lands gave them economic self-sufficiency and influence at the local level, which plays a very important role in electoral politics. The third reason is the political continuity gained from the British era, in which the Laghari family strengthened its administrative and political status by cooperating with the colonial administration, and this structure has persisted even later. The fourth reason is the understanding and flexible strategy with political parties. The Laghari family has been in harmony with changing governments and parties over different periods, which has enabled their political survival. The fifth reason is the family political continuity and leadership succession, where one generation after another took over politics, especially leaders like Sardar Owais Ahmed Khan Laghari, who maintained the family in modern politics. The sixth reason is local development politics, in which public support was sought through roads, infrastructure, and public projects.

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Conclusion

This research article provides an analytical study of the Laghari family's success in electoral politics, which summarizes the family's background and victories in various elections with the argument that the political power of the Laghari clan began with the Tamandari system during the British era, which then became a symbol of success in electoral politics, as exemplified by the first parliamentary elections in India in 1937. Then, in the elections of 1970 and 1977, the Laghari clan also achieved significant success. The Laghari family gained most of its power in electoral politics on the basis of tribal influence, personal status, and local support. The family has a strong vote bank, especially in Rajanpur and its surrounding areas, which has led to consistent successes in national and provincial elections. The Laghari family has won seats in the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly for decades. The tribal system and chieftaincy influence played a fundamental role in their success. The political popularity of the prominent leader of the family, Farooq Laghari, also increased their electoral power, especially in the 1990s. Their affiliation with various political parties (especially the Pakistan People's Party and later other alliances) gave them a place in national politics. The politics of development projects and personal relationships at the local level sustained their electoral success. In short, the Laghari family's electoral success has depended more on tribal influence, local support, and strong personal political networks than on party politics. Overall, the secret of the Laghari family's success lies in the combination of tribalism, economic power, political strategy, and modern and traditional politics, which has made them an effective force in regional politics for a long time.

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