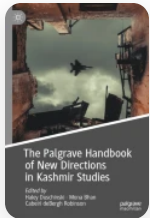


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“Democracy”: Making Sense of Grassroots Politics in Kashmir

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Abstract

Given the key role of elections in liberal democratic systems, electoral exercises in conflict regions necessarily involve questions of legitimacy and fairness. This chapter analyzes electoral processes in the State of Jammu and Kashmir in India. Using the recent District Development Council (DDC) elections for reference, this chapter analyzes the historical trajectory of electoral politics in the erstwhile state. It argues that electoral politics after 2019, although operating in a different context, offer many resemblances to those prior to 2019 since J&K politics has primarily been guided by the central government. It highlights

that the recent political changes in the state have considerably depoliticized the public sphere and, like historically, prevented people from a credible leadership. The entry of new political parties adds diversity to party politics; however, when understood along with the delimitation exercise, it indicates that the changes would not favor all the parties equally.

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