

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM) IN PAKISTAN:

SPECIAL FOCUS ON PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

This historical analysis delves into the evolution of local government systems in Pakistan, with a specific focus on the province of Punjab. Beginning with the pre-independence era, the study explores the colonial legacy and the initial structures of local governance established during British rule. It traces the subsequent developments in local government systems following Pakistan's independence in 1947, including the various constitutional amendments and reforms that shaped the decentralization process. Special attention is paid to the role of military regimes and civilian governments in shaping local governance structures over time. The analysis also examines the impact of socio-political factors, such as ethnic diversity, rural-urban divide, and administrative efficiency, on the design and functioning of local government systems in Punjab. Furthermore, the study highlights key milestones and challenges encountered in the implementation of devolution reforms, particularly the 2001 Local Government Ordinance and its subsequent iterations. By providing a comprehensive historical overview, this analysis aims to shed light on the dynamics of local governance in Punjab, offering insights into its evolution, strengths, weaknesses, and implications for democratic governance in Pakistan.

Keyword: Local Government System, Decentralization, Punjab

Introduction

Decentralization is a political system in which power and authority are shared among various interest groups. It denies the central role of the system. This is also the practice of decentralization and strives for the importance of democracy at the grassroots level. International financial institutions and donor countries also want to interact with local governments (Malik, 2016). Currently, international donors also want to connect with local governments. The existence of local government is a democratic concept preferred by many countries. This encourages donors and service providers to source services from the local government to ensure the availability of services in the community (Malik, 2016).

Decentralized systems are very responsive and effective. Different organizations of the community work collaboratively through a decentralized system, which improves delivery. Central and state governments also interact with local governments to create political harmony, resulting in better outcomes. Improving service delivery means establishing quality management while adhering to cultural values (Manor 1999).

Decentralization is further subdivided into different types of policies. There are four main distribution areas such as private business, business management, financial management and distribution. Decentralization includes political or democratic decentralization. All of the above categories of decentralization have many responsibilities that need to be fulfilled. For example, administrative control is about distribution, while economic distribution is about financial results (Manor 1999).

History of Local Government in Pakistan

All India independence movement through politics. The group was encouraged to participate in politics so that they could gain independence from foreign rule (Waseem, 1994). But unfortunately, after the success of this movement, little attention was paid to local

government, which was created solely to improve the interests of these local people. If there is a limited government in the country, it controls it and is replaced by a powerful bureaucracy. Again, since most of the local members were not elected, people who sacrificed their lives and property for the sake of freedom were ignored (Waseem, 1994).

After the partition, some problems surrounded the entire political government and no one could focus on creating real social control. A strong central government was created with little emphasis on local government. In addition, the dominant role and control of the central government hinders the development of local government (Jalal, 1995).

The above discussion clearly shows how difficult the situation of the LG system in Pakistan was in the initial years after partition. Political leadership is limited to national issues and the LG system is almost ignored in this context. The current LG system was adopted by the British with some minor changes (Callard, 1957). Based on the problems and available resources, it is necessary to create an important basis in society that can effectively solve local problems. However, no effort is made in this regard, and social development is hindered, especially in rural areas (Jalal, 1995).

LGS during the reign of Ayub Khan

After the partition of Pakistan, leaders failed to pay attention to local government. In the first few years, they focus on solving bigger problems because the problems in the state and the country are more important than local government (Batoool, 2014). However, as time passed, the problems were resolved and the government began to deal with local governments (Blair, 2000).

The first efforts at local government were made during the military regime of Ayub Khan. Ayub Khan introduced the local government system, a democratic system, under the

Constitution Act, 1959 (Friedman, 1960). Khan's local rule was similar to British rule in that Khan focused on representatives playing a role in the central government. Introduced by Ayub Khan in the Municipal Administration Act, 1960, local government consists of four tiers including zoning council, ward council, tehsil council or turka and union council.

At all four levels, the union council is the true representative of the local community. Members of the council are elected by vote of the elders. In the past, the president was directly elected by the council members (Rizvi, 1976). On the other hand, there is also a majority of unelected members from higher levels who are not directly elected to the council. These members are directly elected by the members. The most important is the presence of elected members who have great influence over the entire local government (Siddiqui, 1992).

Another similarity between Ayub Khan's central government and the British was the practice of bureaucracy. The Deputy Prime Minister (DC) had a lot of power during the British and Ayub periods. The entire LG system is under his direct control (Jaffrelot, 2004). This empowering role of the district council is sometimes influenced by the local government because the district council, in exercising its powers, can stop the electorates in all local authorities from working. Local government may be successful in the administrative system, but directly elected members have no power (Jalal, 1995).

A simple democracy was created to legitimize Ayub Khan's presidency. The 1962 Constitution often addressed the voters of this region, which later helped the president act according to his views (Malik, 2016). These 80,000 key Democrats make up the Electoral College, which elects the president, state, and nation. Therefore, these Democrats have no influence on local government because only part of the local government has no enforcement authority (Noman, 1990).

The Ayyuba period also bears many similarities with the British period in terms of elections. The BD system introduced by Ayub Khan is based on the concept of "freedom" (Gauhar, 1996). The British used the bureaucracy during their rule in India, and likewise, during Ayub's time, they gave great support to the bureaucracy, which helped him in local elections. Pakistan's political system is part political, part bureaucratic, and resources are distributed in these different ways, helping Ayub Khan secure his political position. During the Ayyubid period, local politics played an important role (Burki, 1980).

One thing that improved during Ayub Khan's time was the proportion of rural areas. Early local government in England was mostly focused on towns. While rural areas are neglected, more and more resources are allocated to urban areas. However, Khan's LG system shifted its focus to rural areas and implemented many reforms in backward areas. Federal and state spending on urban areas did not change, but the distribution of funds in rural areas also improved (Musarrat and Azhar 2012).

LGS during Zia period

Right after the Ayub Khan, Bhutto assumed the charge as the prime minister of Pakistan and intended to bring about positive changes in the local government system but his term was ended with Zia's military regime. With reference to the local government system Zia's time period is very important which brought substantial changes into the system. One major aspect of the local government system in this time period was the initiation of local democracies at the bottom layer of the government system also known as basic democracies. This helped in shaping the new political elite in the country based on local wisdom of local populism (Batoool, 2014). The system comprised indirect elections where local councilors elected representatives to higher tiers of government, ultimately leading to the concentration of power in the hands of Zia's regime. This period witnessed a lack of genuine local autonomy,

as the central government retained substantial control over local affairs, undermining the principles of decentralization and democratic governance. It is important to note that in both military regimes i.e. Zia and Ayub Khan the central government was the core to deal with all such policies with the lack of involvement of the provincial governments.

Musharraf's New Local Government Plan

The local governments implemented by Zia continued until 2000. In the post Zia era, the democratic government did not implement new local government projects and had to rely on the existing local government. The LG system was restored during the reign of Musharraf (another military leader) (Malik and Rana, 2019). The "new distribution plan" proposed by Musharraf is the best example of local government in Pakistan. This military government introduced three levels of local government: city, tehsil and assembly. The LG system attempts to include all segments of society, including minorities and women, and strives to make the political community a greater political force (LGO, 2001).

The new health plan also follows old rules regarding the distinction between urban and rural. However, it is worth noting that this local government still focuses on rural areas because many developments have been implemented in rural areas as community leaders (Batool, 2014). This process of decentralization is again based on direct and indirect ownership. According to the government's position in this area, only unions operate as directly elected members. The union council directly elects Nazim, Naib Nazim and other members. All of these members are directly elected by adult votes (Manning et al., 2003).

The difference between the entitlement program is that there is a direct link between the local government and the President through various institutions such as the National Redevelopment Authority and the Community Empowerment Empowerment Foundation.

This feature distinguishes decentralization programs from previous regional governments, which interacted only with local governments and were still weak (Chema et al. 2005).

This is a big mistake in local government; Throughout the history of governance in Pakistan, no government has devolved power to local members (Batool, 2014). Leaders have always refused to transfer money and policy to councils because all development work must also be transferred to these local members throughout the process. However, Musharraf's decentralization program took this and shifted responsibility for grassroots development to the councils (Manning et al., 2003).

Another important aspect of Musharraf's local government is the end of the central role of the bureaucracy in local government. The decentralization plan abolished the post of Governor and Deputy Governor and placed them in the District Nazim (Mayor). These powerful bureaucrats were controlled by the Nazis in the region and exerted their political influence on them (Nasim, 1999).

The government always bans representatives of financial power to local governments because they always like to work at the grassroots level, which most of the time cannot be done. Local voters may be better at regional development goals; therefore, to achieve the same, the decentralization project also engaged financial groups in the state to provide aid financing to the local government (Cheema and Ali, 2005).

Without checks and balances the plan will fail. Keeping the same objective in mind, Musharraf's central government also established municipal committees to ensure checks and balances on the performance of the municipal government (Cheema et al., 2005). The government has also established Community Councils to promote community participation and Community Police Councils to promote enforcement of community laws (Hasnain, 2008)

Current Local Government in Pakistan

The world is moving towards development in a progressive way. It also provides an opportunity to share information about government and government (Andrew et al., 2017). With the increasing level of urbanization in the world, the central government pays more money to the local government because the local government is interested in the development of the city (Bryan et al., 2019). On the other hand, there has been interest in local governments, but there are also many shortcomings, especially in developed and underdeveloped regions, where the local government capacity of the workplace is small and there is a deficit. - Developing Country. These gaps have financial and performance implications (Andrews et al., 2017).

In general, local bureaucracy supports local government. Bureaucrats only help when they are committed to improving society (Duflo et al., 2018). This can only be done by checking and balancing them. Bureaucracies also help improve service delivery, improve governance and increase resources. These resources are like the backbone of local government (Khan et al., 2016).

Similarly, Pakistan also faced the same situation in its local government history. Bureaucracy was once important in local government and also played a role in managing it. The above-mentioned history of local government shows that Pakistan has experienced different political systems and implemented new forms of local government at different times (Khan et al., 20116). The new decentralization plan proposed by Musharraf lasted until the end of the first decade of the 21st century, after which all four provinces announced local government bills to begin decentralization after the 18th Amendment. The states implemented the new decentralization policy but followed the decentralization introduced by Musharraf. Musharraf's urban policy has the following elements (Khan et al., 2019).

- District Assembly
- Tehsil/Municipal Assembly
- Union Assembly

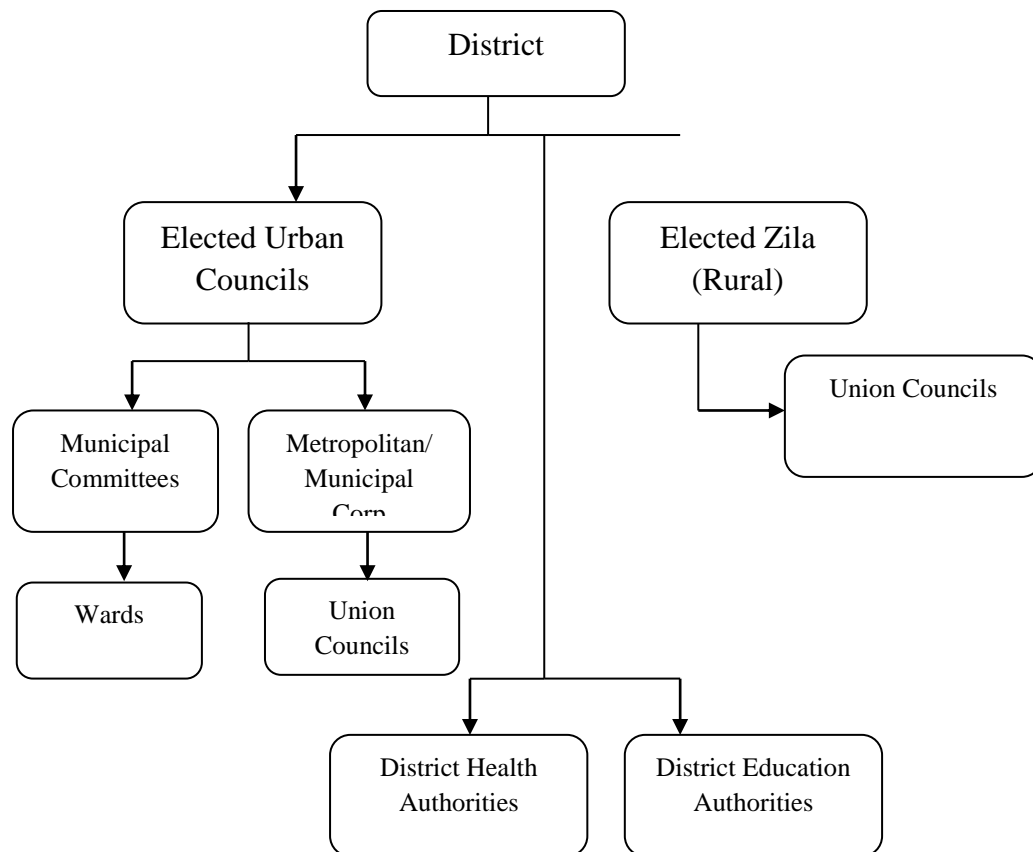
Punjab Local Government System

Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan. The federal government in Pakistan gives importance to the state as it still has the largest majority in the National Assembly. Following the end of the decentralization program, in 2013, the PML (N) government took the next important step in local government by implementing the Punjab Local Government Act (PLGA) (Khan et al., 2019).

The difference between 2013 PLGA is again the rural and urban division, because PLGA planned to divide the local government into rural and urban areas. According to PLGA 2013, municipal government is based on municipal councils, municipal corporations, and municipal corporations (Bryan et al., 2019). The population of the municipal council in the city is between 30,000 and 500,000. There are more than half a million people in the area under

local government jurisdiction. There is a metropolitan area (Lahore) with a population of more than 11 million under the jurisdiction of PLGA in 2013 (Bryan et al., 2019).

Structure of Local Government under PLGA 2013

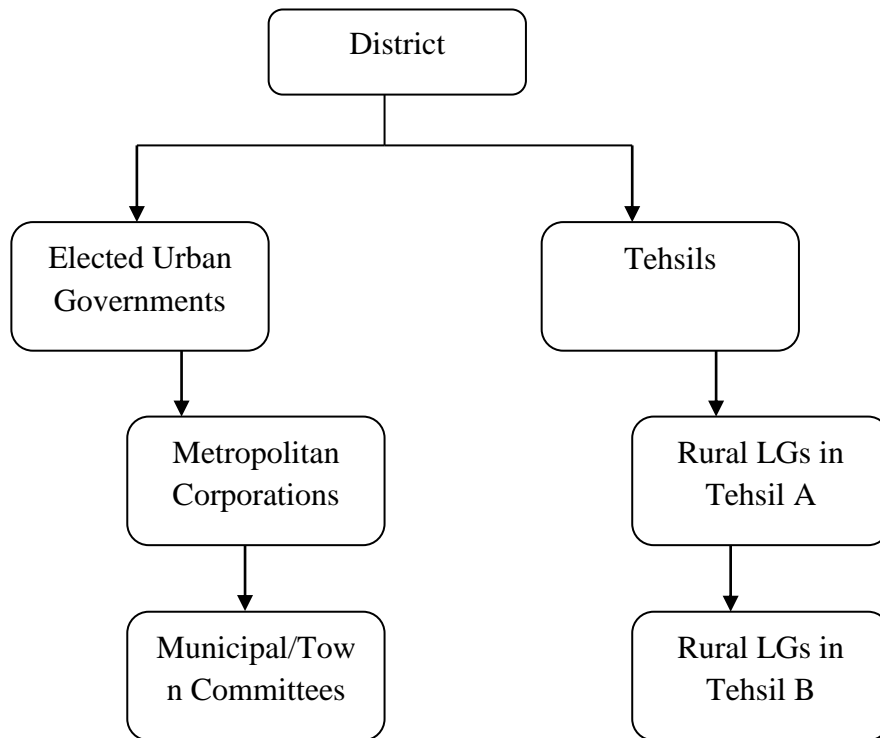


Source: Adapted from (Bryan et al, 2019)

For the same reason, there is a hierarchical system in local governments in rural areas. The district council is the highest level of local government along with the business organization. It abolished the tehsil committee, which was the centralized local government system. According to PLGA 2013, approximately 135 Zila councils have been established in rural areas and 194 local government areas (Sweeting, 2017).

Structure of Local Governments under PLGA 2019

Source: Adapted from (Bryan et al, 2019)



Conclusion

The evolution of Pakistan's local government system, spanning the regimes of Ayub Khan, Zia-ul-Haq, Pervez Musharraf, and beyond, reflects a complex interplay between centralization, authoritarianism, and attempts at decentralization. Each era witnessed varying degrees of power devolution, often intertwined with political agendas and military rule. Despite sporadic efforts to enhance local governance and empower communities, challenges such as corruption, lack of genuine autonomy, and insufficient capacity-building persist. In Punjab, the latest endeavors under the PTI government have aimed at revitalizing local

governance through initiatives like the Local Government Act 2019, emphasizing grassroots democracy and service delivery, marking a potential shift towards more inclusive and participatory governance.

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