

## **Bureaucracy and the Local Government System in Pakistan: A Case Study of General Pervez Musharraf Era**

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### **Abstract**

*Pakistan adopted the Government of Indian Act 1935 as an interim constitution after independence with some necessary amendments. In the early years, the state of Pakistan was run by two organs, the army and the bureaucracy, while the foundation of the parliamentary system was based on bureaucracy. The significant power of assemblies was transferred to some top bureaucrats and army men. The bureaucrats made policies and also run the government. The role of army was also significant because it was supplemented for the removal and change of the governments. Bureaucracy was the only strong institution at the time of independence. The bureaucracy created the political fortune of the country instead of the elected government. After 1958, the military used bureaucracy as a rent-seeking institution to intervene in politics and rule the country. The survival of bureaucracy lies in political and military nexus. This paper is an effort to explore the role of bureaucracy during General Pervez Musharraf's tenure of nine years. General Pervez Musharraf maneuvered the country's political system through the amendment in civil services and introduced the new setup of the local government system (LGS) through his ordinances and prolonged his rule.*

**Keywords:** Pakistan, judiciary, feudalism, local government, bureaucracy, dictatorship.

### **INTRODUCTION**

At the time of Pakistan's creation, the bureaucracy was the elite in the governance setup. It was the backbone and steel frame of the state. The colonial rulers designed the mechanism of bureaucracy to control the subcontinent's affairs. Pakistan inherited the British formula to maintain the check and balance among the legislature and executive by strengthening bureaucracy. The inherited pattern developed the interest in bureaucracy in state politics and controlling state affairs (Siddiqua, 2007).

Civil servants remained closely associated with power because, in the early years the founding father Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (who was Governor General) and Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan the first Prime Minister, heavily trusted the bureaucrats. Mr. Jinnah encouraged the top bureaucracy of the state departments at the centre and provincial level secretaries to directly communicate with him on vigorous interest matters (Hamid, 1993).

Quaid-i-Azam being Governor-General, had three out of four governors who were British and Indian Civil Service Officers. Two governors used to preside cabinet meetings, and one of the governors was even capable of reallocating the portfolios without the Chief Minister's approval. These provincial governors wrote a letter fortnightly to Quaid-i-Azam to give brief details of provincial cabinet meetings and matters of refugee rehabilitation. Muhammad Ali Jinnah also used to call the secretaries over the heads of ministers. After Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's

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death, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan continued to take reports from provincial secretaries as Jinnah did (Bhuiyan, 1982).

It was eventually and virtually impossible for bureaucrats to avoid dominating the country's politics after Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan's leadership. The leading role of politicians was diminished after the demise of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and bureaucratic rule began to ascend until the military got full control in 1958 (Hussain & Kokab, 2013). During this period, the military and civil bureaucracy built an alliance to undermine the influence and role of political leadership. However, this alliance fractured to some extent when Ayub Khan imposed martial law and tried to run the country as per his whims. He took action not only against the politicians who could challenge his rule but also the bureaucracy. He took action against powerful bureaucrats on charges of corruption and misuse of power. After bureaucracy, the military was the second most organized and strong institution of the state. First bureaucracy was stronger to control the military and later military became powerful to dictate the bureaucracy (Siddiq, 2007). Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also took action against hundreds of bureaucrats on charges of corruption and misuse of power. He also took several other measures to weaken the power of bureaucrats (Khan, 2005).

Military rulers also attempted to introduce local government system (LGS) in absence of a democratic setup in order to promote their agenda. Ayub Khan introduced a new local government system, known as Basic Democrat (BD) system, in order to create a constituency to prolong and legitimize his rule. He used this system as his electoral college to get himself elected as President in 1965. Zia ul Haq during his military rule (1977-1988) also introduced a new LGS in 1979 that ultimately paved the way for emergence of a new leadership that ruled the country in coming years. Zia tried to weaken the influence of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and creating his own political constituency through creating an alternative leadership by two means: introduction of LGS and holding non-party based general elections. The political leadership mainly neglected the LGS in 1990s.

General Pervez Musharraf came into power in a military coup in 1999 and tried to consolidate his power through various means. He attacked on the independence of judiciary and purged the judges who could pose threat either to his rule or unconstitutional measures taken by his government (Naazer, Kundi, & Farooq, 2018). He used the so-called accountability process to oust from political process the opposition leaders unwilling to accept his dictatorial rule or to change their loyalties forcing them to join the Kings party, i.e. Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q) that provided political support to military rule (Naazer, Mahmood, & Ashfaq, 2017).

Musharraf also introduced a new LGS in order to create his political constituency, and promote an alternative leadership. He also strove to control the bureaucracy through his hand-picked people promoted through the new LGS. This paper analyzes how General Musharraf used a new LGS to weaken the influence and powers of everpowerful bureaucracy.

### **BUREAUCRACY, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM DURING MUSHARRAF ERA**

Bureaucracy was the second partner in a military-bureaucracy oligarchy. This partnership was enough to keep military on the centre of power. General Pervez Musharraf initiated it by introducing administrative modifications to decentralize the power to the grassroots level. The

actualization of that proposal in local government's formula weaken the provincial administrations as there was a tug of war between them. This local government system became a tool for the federal government, to undermine the federal structure even further (Khan, 2005).

To ensure successful and practical decentralization, the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) formed the Higher Government Reform Committee in 2001. The mission of that committee was to formulate recommendations for the transition of power from the federal level to the provincial level. However, the ground reality showed that devolution required the transfer of powers and duties of the provinces to local governments, and therefore, limited devolution of power was seen from the federal level to provincial and local governments.

### **Formation of the National Reconstruction Bureau**

General Pervez Musharraf manipulated the bureaucracy in his nine years rule. Military involvement in civil bureaucracy was at its peak. After the proclamation of emergency and resuming of power, General Pervez Musharraf established a monitoring team consisting of the army officers to supervise the civil administration at every level, sub-division to the district, district to the provincial level, and provincial to the federal level (Musharraf, 2006). General Pervez Musharraf appointed 3500 retired and serving personnel as monitoring team members to reduce corruption, monitor the government, and increase the accountability of politicians and civil servants (International Crises Group, 2003). Appointing a junior military officer to supervise the senior-level civil servants was the most humiliating exercise of General Pervez Musharraf's regime (Ali, 2020). General Pervez Musharraf appointed military officials on key positions of civil bureaucracy like the chairman of the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC), was responsible for recruiting the federal civil servants. Army officers were appointed mostly as heads of significant civil organizations which required technical expertise. The chief executive of Alternative Energy Development Board, Chairman of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, and Chairman of Pakistan Steel Mill, all were army men ("Corruption scandals of Musharraf," 2013). The recruitments, postings, promotion, early, mid-career, and senior-level training of civil bureaucracy was the place in the hands of military personnel (Musharraf, 2006).

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB), was an essential tool for General Pervez Musharraf to operate the political system in the country and he was successful in letting down and harassing the politicians. Musharraf used the weaknesses of the political opponents for his benefits through NAB. NAB was created under the ordinance of National Accountability in 1999 by replacing the Ehtesab Bureau. General Pervez Musharraf took power in the civil sector by appointing the in-service and military officers in crucial civil positions. They headed the state-owned corporations, even the universities. General Pervez Musharraf appointed the late Lt. General Gulzar Kayani to chairman FPSC, which is responsible for recruiting high-level civil servants in the state.

### **Local Government System of Pervez Musharraf**

The local Government System (LGS) was, for the third time, introduced in Pakistan by military dictators in Pakistan. Previously it was done by General Ayub Khan and General Zia ul Haq. This time it was done by General Pervez Musharraf to hold the public institution from the grassroots level and curtail the powers and authorities of the civil servants at the district and provincial level. LGS tool has been utilized in the past by military dictators to manipulate the political system and

prolong their rule. LGS was the only solution for General Pervez Musharraf to replace the bureaucracy and the administrative structure of the districts. The purpose of Devolution Plan 2001 was to systematically devolve the financial, administrative, and political power at the districts, tehsil, and union council level (Abbasi & Mussarrat, 2015).

Musharraf's dictatorship was a move to merge the empowerment of municipal institution including the centralization of political influence. By the adoption of a quasi-presidential constitution, General Musharraf's Legal Framework Order (2002), although enacted in the 17th Constitutional Amendment, enshrined the position of military throughout the centre by trying to strengthen the President's authorities vis-à-vis an elected Prime Minister (Talbot, 2004). The initial attempt to centralize political power by the military was followed by a series of interventions targeting parties and politicians. Those measures included dubious accountability and disqualification of politicians, the adoption of an educational requirement for electoral candidates, and the establishment of a pro-military political group, the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q), which subsequently retained political influence in the centre and in Punjab (Naazer, Mahmood, & Ashfaq, 2017). Likewise, the main media sources claimed that contestants with opposition party affiliations, successful in Southern Punjab and rural Sindh, were pressurized to leave their party affiliations. Opposition parties often interpreted specific measures to establish a competitive class of cooperative politicians and to undermine the political party structure at the provincial level (Naazer, Mahmood, & Ashfaq, 2017).

### **Administrative Reforms**

A remarkable change was brought in bureaucracy through the devolution plan in 2001 by adopting the LGS. Devolution Plan 2001, was the production of the NRB headed by retired General Tanvir Hussain Naqvi (Pattanaik, 2004). The government designed NRB to reshape or reconstruct the state institutions. The NRB identified the actual reason for corruption and negligence in governance and bureaucracy and proposed full reformation of the Civil Services Administration (Ahmad & Akbar, 2019). The Devolution Plan 2001, designed to hit the existed system led by commissioner, to weaken the bureaucracy, and to limit their role in several significant matters like:

1. Revenue Collection
2. Civil Justice system at District level
3. Responsibility of civil officers e.g. development and construction of District

On 14<sup>th</sup> August 2001, the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office was abolished and replaced with District Coordination Officer (DCO) who was less powerful than the DC. Before General Pervez Musharraf's bureaucracy reforms, DC reported non-elected provincial Bureaucracy but after the Devolution Plan 2001, the DCO reported district elected representative, i.e. district Nazim (District Nazim).

General Pervez Musharraf curtailed the Power of provincial bureaucracy by re-assigning a large proportion of their functions to the locally elected government. In 2002, General Pervez Musharraf introduced the police reforms under the Police Order 2002 and replaced the Colonial Police Act 1861 (Babakhel, 2018). Later, he validated the Police Order 2002, by amending the constitution of 1973 with the 17<sup>th</sup> amendment. In Musharraf's opinion, he liberated the police and the power of a district police officer was curtailed through the police ordinance 2002. The district police officer

(DPO) and DCO both were subordinate to Mayor (District Nazim) (Naqvi, 2003). A newly established local government gave rise to frequent disputes between the civil servants and district Nazim due to confusion regarding their powers (Reddy, 2004).

This Devolution Plan 2001, impacted the civilian's bureaucracy negatively because elected Nazim had enormous powers. In most districts, the landlords were the elected heads of the districts who already had personal revenue collection and administrative structures. They had fully controlled district police and bureaucratic matters. The police department required a fair authority to function. The department of police is a law enforcement agency so it must be kept independent from the pressure of political interference (Wilder, 2009). By the Devolution Plan 2001, the bureaucracy and police turned to a personal servant of the Mayor (Elected district Nazim).

Due to financial authority, the district Nazim had a monopoly over their respective district's income because of revenue collection officers. According to the reforms, the DCO had no authority to collect the revenue like DCO did previously. These reforms not only weaken the civil bureaucracy but also demoralized it and dragged military into local administration and politics (Cyan, 2007). The prime objective of military behind these reforms was to legitimize the power usurpation but it resulted in confusion between haughty bureaucracy and elected local government. These reforms empowered the locally elected administration in appointing and dismissal of district bureaucrats.

The NRB was designed for devolving the powers from central to root level under the Devolution Plan 2001. The purpose of power devolution was to improve governance and stabilize the democratic government. But the elected local government was unable to maintain the district affairs and failed in the management creating immense conflict with the bureaucracy. The Devolution Plan 2001 bound the DCO to seek permission from the Mayor (District Nazim) before putting forward any matter to the provincial government. Another check on civil bureaucracy was "the annual confidential report" after the amendment in the local government system and the bureaucracy. District Nazim was supposed to write these career-based reports. For a good report, DCO needed to perform according to the wishes of Mayor and Chief Secretary of the province.

### **Causes of Rift between Local Government and District Bureaucracy**

Following are the root causes of conflict between local government and district bureaucracy according to Naqvi (2003):

- DC was the revenue collector but after Devolution Plan 2001, it fell under the authority of elected Mayor (District Nazim)
- The most controversial was the ACR of DCO that Nazim had the authority to write. The ACR needed the DCO to perform under the command of Nazim and the Chief Secretary. Nazim also had the authority to post or dismiss the DCO.
- DCO was the sole authority of the district but needed to work under the command of the Mayor. As a subordinate of the Mayor, DCO required to seek permission on any matter and policy before forwarding it to the provincial government.
- The law and order were the subjects or matter which remained no more under the DCO. Instead, the law & order maintenance was the responsibility of the Mayor and DPO was accountable to the Mayor (Khan, 2005).
- Mayor was given the honour and privilege to hoist National Flag on Independence Day. Earlier, it was a privilege of the DC. Even Nazim in different districts occupied the DC houses.

- After the abolishment of the DC office, the office of Divisional Commissioner was also nullified while the authority and functions were transferred to the elected District Nazim.

In short, these reforms were introduced to change the bureaucratic powers and system. When local government formed the district, bureaucrats had a view to remain in power like the previous military regimes. But, General Pervez Musharraf did not implement the previous system. They also complained about the behaviour of the military to disrespect them. General Musharraf devolved the powers to a broader level. He also abolished some posts and preferred the alliance with district departments like the Income Tax department and Police department.

### **The Role of Electronic Media in Bureaucratic Upliftment**

Media played an exciting role in this scenario, by building pressure on General Pervez Musharraf and continuously reporting about the abolished positions and conflicts between civil services and elected district government (Ahmad, 2017). The control over the districts remained a bone of contention between the government and bureaucracy in the political history of Pakistan. The Devolution of Powers Plan, authorized the elected district government, and bureaucracy was under constant accountability and scrutiny which became the reason of disgrace for the latter. Some civil servants accepted these changes but most of them took it as a challenge and conspired to fail this new system (Malik, 2009). On the other hand, in many districts elected district Nazims also recorded their grievances about the civil servants. They complained about the behaviour and non-cooperation of civil servants especially the attitude of the police department.

In 2002, the country's main training institution, Pakistan Administrative Staff College, for senior-level civil servants, was renamed as the National School of Public Policy (NSPP), headed by a retired Lieutenant General. Retired Major general was appointed as director-general of Civil Services Academy (SCA) in 2006. CSA was training the fresh recruits of Pakistan's Premier Civil Services. The retired and serving military personnel were appointed, despite having no experience in civil administration. They were allowed for recruiting civil servants and decide the promotion, transfer, and dismissal. Various universities also administrated and run by serving and retired army officers (Kalhan, 2013).

### **Reluctance of Civil Bureaucracy to Consider the Devolution**

For the first time in the history of Pakistan, that the bureaucrats would have to execute their responsibilities under the elected representatives of a local government. Against the natural order and practice of their profession, the bureaucratic system could not accept the devolution of powers and authority hence, created specific hurdles and complexities for the elected representatives including those in the local governments. The system of local authorities in Pakistan would not have been legally protected but had delegated certain powers to provincial governments. While the bureaucracy was reluctant to consider the devolution strategy instead of allowing the elected officials practical independence at the local level, they were entangled with the laws and regulations. The lack of collaboration and trust was typical in many districts, and the local bureaucracy played its part as a regional entity in resistance to the local governments instead of being their subordinates.

During the rule of General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008), he introduced several changes and erected a variety of reforms. These reforms disturbed the balance of institutions between the

civilian authorities and the military administration. The hard truth is that the former president Musharraf's administration had followed the scheme of naming serving and retired military officers to run civil institutions. Almost all leading civil service during his rule was controlled by military personnel. Military officers led the organizations. The statement, *"If you want to keep the army out, you're going to have to bring it in."*

Second, local government elections were conducted on a non-party basis, with no provincial and federal intervention permitted which generated an environment of mistrust among local, provincial and federal administrations. It also faced significant political tensions when local councils were established. The elected municipal government was responsible for delivering much of the previously managed services by the administration of the province. Therefore, the political influence of provincial members was limited. The 1973 Constitution does not provide interference of the central government in local governments, the third tier of government. The 17th Constitutional Amendment provided local governments with limited immunity for only six years during which, provinces may make improvements to local government legislation with the President's approval.

In its programme, the NRB recognized "bureaucrats" as the root cause for corruption and all incompetence in governance. They recommended complete reform of the Civil Service administration. The target of the Devolution of Power Plan would directly affect Pakistan's current "Commissioner Structure" and disrupt the provincial bureaucracy, dramatically limiting their position as large numbers of responsibilities being attributed to them.

An effort was made to substitute the district administration under the Police Order of 2000, but it was tough for the government to succeed. This led to the entire nullification of the DC office. The district bureaucracy could not find it a dignified move by Pakistan's Chief Executive to give direct powers to the elected District Nazim while decentralizing provincial authority and power to local government with no parallel decentralization at the federal level. Similarly, devolution tangled a transfer of provincial authorities and responsibilities to the district and lower levels of administrations. It is interestingly enough, there is no devolution of any federal powers to either the provincial level or local level.

## **CONCLUSION**

The process of devolution took place at a time in the absence of elected governments at provincial and federal level while local government elections were conducted on a non-party basis. Not a single attempt was made to incorporate the newly elected local government into the soon-to-be-elected provincial and federal governments. That resulted in an interesting but not unexpected confrontation between local, provincial & federal elected administrators. There was no substantial connection observed between elected federal, provincial, and local governments.

The politicians in Pakistan are always seeking the support of the armed forces and are warmly welcoming the military takeovers during political crises. Therefore, through Parvez Musharraf's reforms, Pakistan had entered into a new and exciting debate about the role of military in politics. It was determined that the words and actions of role models should not be contradictory. For example, if ensuring transparency is the aim, and policy in any state institution should be applied across the board.

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