



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Deliverance of Devolution Plan 2001 in Pakistan: An Analysis**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research paper investigates Musharraf's Devolution plan, which was put into action in Pakistan in the year 2001. Over the course of the past twenty years, advancements in governance have placed a greater emphasis on decentralization and local administration. Local self-government was introduced, for the first time in Pakistani political system, by military dictators in order to disconnect masses from the mainstream political parties and somehow find the way to legitimize their de-facto governments. However, President Musharraf introduced devolution plan for the good service delivery at grass-roots level. This research based on qualitative research methodology and the data has been collected from the secondary sources. The plan's primary objective was also on giving municipalities more power and control. To better serve their constituents, local officials are now more empowered to make decisions about development projects, social services, and public works at the district and city levels. The study comes to the conclusion that the effects of decentralization on the quality of public services have been good. This paper recommends that Local self-government should shape policy decisions via public discussion and dialogue with the community.

**KEYWORDS** Administration, Decentralization, Devolution Plan, Service Delivery

**Introduction**

The Devolution Plan was launched in 2001 with the goal of restructuring local governments and transferring significant fiscal and administrative authority to them. In Pakistan, the elected government was defeated by the military regime in 1999. It quickly made an announcement regarding a national reconstruction strategy in order to justify their assumption of power. This plan included, among other things, a complex proposal for devolution, decentralization, and the development of a local government structure. This paper also provides a summary of Pakistan's devolution, which began in 2001 with the election of local officials and the adoption of local government legislation. It covers the years 2001 to 2003, when local administrations were still getting their feet under them. The paper examines the circumstances of Pakistan's municipal governments' history. By examining its political, administrative, fiscal, and development components, it analyses the devolutionary process. It outlines the precise issues that different stakeholders are having with implementation and provides suggested policy changes to address the issues. This article's findings are aimed at the government's devolution plan and its service delivery from federal to provincial level, numerous linked organizations, donor supporting the process, as well as academics and publics with an interest in the topic. It shares their concern that a governance system with a number of dysfunctional elements cannot properly implement decentralization. Alternating periods of civilian and military administration have been a defining feature of Pakistani politics, with each phase of military rule patronizing and promoting its own kind of grassroots democracy.

In that environment, General Musharraf's Devolution of Power Plan (DOPP), which was implemented in 2001, was a dramatic departure because it included a number of public sector reforms, such as decentralization, electoral, public service, and police reforms.

### **Literature Review**

Author explained the gaps in the devolution plan that were responsible for the failure of the educational system in Pakistan and said that laws were made but there was neither goodwill nor commitment within people involved in the betterment of this system. The laws were there but there was no proper implementation and even resources were not available so he further said that it is important to understand that devolution plan is a process and it is as simple as it looks and this process needs a proper time to understand that a proper time is required to transfer power from central level to lower level or district level. It is important that people who are working within this system should have goodwill and commitment towards their work and for any process to work properly or for a plan to be successful it is important that there should be proper implementation of the laws and rules (Haroon, 2013).

Author actually explained how to avoid or to overcome the loop holes that were present in the devolution plan he said that local government plan have been tried a lot of times in the history of Pakistan mostly during military regime and this system was not successful in Pakistan. His plan was dominated by elements seeped in corruption and traditional elite. In this plan the leaders ignored the rights of the common man and built their own power base and every local government plan have brought elite and corrupt people in front. He have also explained that any local government plan or devolution plan cannot change the attitude of the civil officials or the traditional elites. He also explained the dangers that were present within the system and how this can be avoided like there should be complete check over the working of the civil officials and all the issues between Nazims and DCO should be resolved by doing a periodic meetings between the top heads to the heads of district level and thirdly the flow of funds, 21 granting of awards can create conflict and it can be prevented by clear demarcation of power and authority (Hassan, 2008).

Since General Ayub Khan's time, local government has grown into a significant factor in political transformation, serving as a tool for grassroots leadership with its own distinct set of principles. Understanding why this system has changed so drastically over time is also crucial. The primary purpose of this research is to examine the organizational framework, operational procedures, and service provision of Pakistan's local bodies system. For the simple reason that people naturally look to their local governments to address pressing social issues and safeguard basic liberties. The citizen also gets the greatest possible chance to actively and directly engage in decisions made for the entire society at this level of democracy (Ahmad, et al. 2015).

### **Material and Methods**

The value and consistency of a study are based on the research technique used to conduct the study. It's like a road map for conducting research according to a specific model or set of criteria. There are two main ways to approach research: qualitatively and quantitatively. The research here combines qualitative and quantitative methods, while the qualitative method is employed by means of theorizing and theory development. Research was conducted using both primary and secondary resources. We used an analytical research strategy since our primary literature was the work of academics in the form of books and journals. The paradigm proposed by President Musharraf has been extensively researched, and its results analyzed in great depth.

## **Devolution Plan**

Pakistan has been a federation since 1947, and throughout its history it has been ruled by the military, had authoritarian political leaders, and had a highly centralized government structure, even when it was governed by democratically elected politicians. The unequal distribution of resources across and within different areas of the country has not been helped by political patronage or elite-led development policies. The idea of decentralizing power is not new for Pakistan; in fact, local administrations in Pakistan have been reshaped and separated several times by military governments since the introduction of the modern government system in 1959. This has led to inter- and intra-provincial complaints, the neglect of downgraded from any specific group and their claims, problems of demotions and deficiency of huge sections of the population. However, the current attempt at devolution is exceptional in nature because it is the first time in history that local governments have been formed under a democratically elected government. However, it is not sufficient for local governments simply to exist under a democratic setup, not least because the current system of local governance remains severely behind schedule. To grasp this concept, one must look back to Pakistan's devolution plan history (Wilder, 1999).

The Devolution of Power Plan (DOPP) has been studied by several researchers from foreign development agencies, but their findings do not provide a comprehensive picture of the 2001 local government changes. The primary claim of this section is that the DOPP was not only another local government system, but rather was a serious effort at decentralization conveyed by a comprehensive package of the changes. Among these were alterations to voting processes, municipal governments, and the national police and bureaucracy. All of these shifts were made with the good intentions of bringing about social progress and modernization. In Pakistan's political history, military control has been sporadic. Since its independence in 1947, the country has gone through four successive dispensations, each of which instituted martial law and established a new constitution (1956, 1962 and 1973). Since 1947, Pakistan has had military governments in power for about half of its history. The pattern of alternating democratic and military regimes has had a significant influence on the development of grassroots democracy by altering the form and architecture of local government institutions. It has both bolstered and harmed the nationwide viability of local governance at various times. Historically, it has been military leaders who have promoted local democracy, whereas civilian rule has typically resulted in the establishment of non-participatory, unelected municipal bodies governed by government-appointed civil officials. As a result, depending on where you look, you can say that the country has either a "dictatorial democracy" or a "democratic dictatorship" in terms of local government.

The devolution opens the door for more efficient service delivery to the disadvantaged by making government more accountable on the local level. Local governments are now responsible for providing services after devolution, and they must answer to their constituents. If the district administration saw fit and local income was sufficient to cover costs, however, this option might be feasible. The effects of devolution will be muted if they are not followed by fiscal decentralization. However, a consistent and predictable transfer of cash from the central government is required to guarantee that low-income areas also experience significant growth (Cheema, 2005).

As local governments are better able to evaluate expenditure priorities and use their resources, devolution is seen to boost service delivery. The potential hazards, however, must be understood. It's crucial that this reform be successful, as it might negatively impact service delivery if the local government bungles its implementation (Kemal, 2003).

A system of checks and balances between Nazims (Civil Administrators) and the District Co-ordination Officers (DCOs) needs to be ensured with the goal of enhancing governance. Hassan (2002) argues that the DCO should act as the State's only representative in the district, with authority over all sub-districts. Nazims should have the option of independently reporting in writing to the provincial administration in the event of a major dispute.

The devolution plan proposes the district administration will consist of 13 departments as follows:

1. Fiscal arrangement and Budgetary issues
2. Public work rural and urban development water supply system , cleanliness, energy sectors, infrastructures roads and other organization
3. All issues relating public health including and providing basic and rural health units hospitals, women and child care and health sub-departments(Family planning also)
4. Literacy/ education: literacy campaigns in all over country, continuing education and vocational education for the welfare of people
5. Social Development through institutions and institutional development, community resource growth, labor and social security for community, social welfare, cultural and co- operatives.
6. Information technology (I.T) and district data base should organize.
7. Revenue border revenue and taxation.
8. Agricultural system food, livestock and irrigation and also drainage and fisheries and forests.
9. Education including elementary and high education, secondary level education for boys and also secondary education for girls including technical education, schools and colleges and sports etc.
10. Commercial Industry: asset, trade and commerce.
11. Law: trial and legal functions and legislation.
12. Environmental protection and education
13. Estate, excise and taxation of estates

The list of sub-departments is indicative rather than exhaustive, and will change depending on the specifics of each district. In addition, additional responsibilities linked to literacy, social development, IT, and the environment are being added despite the absence of dedicated provincial agencies in these areas. To recap, what we are seeing in Pakistan is a vast programme of fiscal decentralisation to the local level, as was said previously. In the history of Pakistan, and of most other developing countries, this has never happened before (Shafique, 2013).

### **Formation of Devolution Plan**

The two main issues with Pakistan's economy are the government's lack of openness and the country's poor infrastructure. Low investor confidence, slow economic

development, and exacerbated macroeconomic imbalances all stem from Pakistan's poor quality of governance. Corruption has reached alarming heights due to the government's lack of openness in making decisions. The issue of governance and transparency is one that the government is taking very seriously, and as a result, reforms that attempt to improve governance and increase openness are high on the list of priorities for the current administration (Ali, 2018).

Among these are

- a. Developing a Devolution Plan to reorganize government functions and duties amongst different levels of government.
- b. Strategies for better managing tax dollars. Devolution Plan seeks to strengthen the voice of local citizen groups in determining government spending priorities and decentralize the delivery of government services. Local governments' budgets would be devolved to unprecedented levels under the Devolution Plan, which is a first for Pakistan.

### **Devolution Plan and its Tiers:**

Both the union and district levels of government have tax collecting systems at their disposal, as well as resident; s tax agendas. Access to revenue sources will be made operational as part of the district and local government reform by:

First, the transfer of power from the provinces and divisions to the departments.

Two methods for bringing in funds from the community are presented:

(a) Citizen public panels and projects

b) A district-wide plan to boost financing and support for initiatives.

Third, the requirements below must be met in order to validate the financial independence of the district with respect to the provincial government.

Financial needs evaluated in light of regional conditions; Financial equalization evaluated in light of fiscal capacity; Efforts in economic development; Purpose of transfers connected in accordance with standards.

Fourth, the district assembly will have the power to establish a new tax schedule for things like healthcare and education.

Lastly, the development system needs credit assessment activities, auditable accounts, and legal and regulatory foundations in addition to the necessity for fiscal distribution. The local government reforms' medium-term objective is to achieve this.

Profits will increase thanks to compensation and revenue projects.

### **Local Self-Government Plan 2001: Musharraf Era**

The military seized control of Pakistan in October 1999, overthrowing the democratically elected government. A "seven point agenda" was quickly developed by the Military Government to overcome the alleged institutional crises and achieve "national reconstruction". These were some of the seven points on the agenda:

Boosting the federation while eliminating interprovincial argument Restoring national confidence and moral.

- Reviving and regaining the confidence of shareholders
- Ensuring law and order and delivering justice promptly
- De-politicizing government institutions
- Transferring authority to the populace
- Ensuring immediate and universal accountability

The Local Government Plan was introduced by NRB in 2000 (Bari, 2001) the provinces directly administer the districts and tehsils through the bureaucracy at the division, district, and tehsil levels. Moreover, the municipal governments in towns and cities are distinct from those in rural areas. The provincial bureaucratic setups are the local governments' designated controlling authority but they frequently undercut and override them, creating a colonial relationship between ruler and subject. The conflict between rural and urban areas is exacerbated by the administration's role as "managing authorities" and the distinct local government structures. These two basic organizations completely separates, along with the lack of straight incorporation and the subsequent insufficient practical management among the departments at the division level, district, level and the tehsil levels, are the primary contributors to incompetence and dishonesty and the crunch of local power. So, the problem seems to have handled through an unnecessary awareness of power, mainly in the office of the D.C to raising concerns about misuse of power and spreads working attention and stimulates the crisis management of regular bases. Reorganize the bureaucracy set up and decentralize the organizational authorities to the district level and tehsil level or below. The applied fundamentals of the model are personified in the Local Government Regulations that the provincial governments issued in August 2001 in accordance with the model ordinance created by the NRB. The structure is planned to safeguard that the interests and welfare for the people should serve and their basic fundamental rights should safeguarded through an empowering setting, people's contribution, strong executive responsibilities without any political intervention, and making it responsible to the designated through district authority according to the Plan. Checks and balances are assured through that plan at the same time to prevent misuse of power. The NRB has provided the following more detailed system change goals (Patten, 2006).

Organizational processes to promote public involvement in decision-making. Assist the local council monitoring committees in their oversight of government officials. Justify administrative setups to boost effectiveness. To recognize effective officials, implement performance incentive programs. To achieve a synergistic effect and enhance service delivery, ensure that the associated offices are operating cohesively. By giving district and tehsil level officer's greater administrative and financial responsibility, delays in decision-making and business disposal can be eliminated. Enhance the district's administrative and financial management procedures and operational unit management controls. Resolve complaints from the public against poor management by using the Mohtasib; s office. The govt. employees will also have the right to file victims about the illegal and improper directives issued by the selected officers. Encourage the proactive facets of society to engage in progress and public related actions. Elections for the new local govt's structure were held in December 2000 to September 2001 in order to plan. In August 2001, the Local Government Ordinance became official.

The new local government system has the qualities listed below, among others: elimination of the district administration system, one of the last vestiges of the colonial order, and establishment of three levels of government at the national level: union councils, tehsils and districts (led by Zila Nazim) (headed by Union Nazim (Siddiqui, 2002).

- Giving locally elected officials control over outsourced bureaucrats.
- Reserving one-third of the available seats for women and other underrepresented groups, such as laborers and peasants.
- Giving local councils the authority to request details on departmental operations and to impose penalties for non-performance
- Permitting citizen groups that have been properly registered to have direct access to a portion of local councils' development budgets.
- Forming a "municipal" agency to create and manage municipal necessities including water, sewage, roads, lighting, parks, and enterprise regulation.
- Local governments are given the means to grow and provide essential services by having access to provincial budgetary transfers based on formulas and having particular taxation authority devolved to them. Establishment of city governments in the provincial capitals with the potential for future expansion the division will no longer exist as an administrative level.
- Citizen Community Boards are a newly established institution that enables proactive members of society to engage in community service and development-related activities in both urban and rural settings.

### **The Devolution of Power Plan: What was new?**

The coup in 1999 may have been the immediate catalyst for devolution, but the World Bank and other international funders and lenders had been advocating for changes in local administration for much longer. Globally, decentralization, and especially market-based decentralization, received a boost in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programme for developing countries. According to World Bank reports from 1996 and 1983 cited by Cheema et al. (2003), multilateral pressure for decentralization in Pakistan had grown since the mid-1990s, but no significant steps towards decentralization had been taken in Pakistan prior to the 1999 election of General Musharraf (Cheema, 2003).

Since the decentralization process in Pakistan would have taken much longer in its absence, the 1999 coup might be seen as a watershed moment in the reform of local administration. Governments at both the federal and provincial levels in Pakistan had excessive sway over the provision of public services, as was the case in many other developing countries. As a result, most service provision was handled by the bureaucracy, rather than by democratically elected politicians at the community level.

The consequence was a system of de-concentrated administration rather than decentralized power, in which the central and provincial governments made policy choices and the local authorities<sup>4</sup> carried them out with little to no input. As a "think tank" to aid in the transition from a centralized and inefficient service delivery system to a decentralized and responsive one, General Musharraf established the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) to solve this problem. His government's plan to devolve power and authority was first unveiled in 2001, after a lengthy period of deliberation. This was the beginning of the third phase of decentralization in the country. The Devolution of Power Plan (DOPP) of 2001 marked a radical change from previous arrangements by devolving authority from provinces to districts and other subnational units. Prior to the formation of the DOPP, the term "subsidiarity" was rarely used in either the public debate around Pakistani development or in the corridors of power (Alam, 2004).

## **Local self-government: a new phenomenon in Pakistan**

Pakistan had no local government associations before or during most of the DOPP era. In contrast, the DOPP helped raise public knowledge of and confidence in local governments, which in turn fostered a greater feeling of unity and common purpose among those in elected positions. The province of Punjab's first attempt was the Local Councils Association of Punjab (LCAP), established in 2007. LCAP has been in the forefront of advocating for local democracy across the country and lobbying provincial and federal governments since its inception. The other three provinces of Pakistan (Sindh, Punjab, and KPK) all formed their own local government organizations soon after LCAP. In the subsequent months, a countrywide alliance of local governments was formed in November 2009. In order to ensure the survival of local democracy in Pakistan and to ensure the holding of additional local elections in the early post-Musharraf period, the DOPP's local government associations sought to attract public support from civil society, business, and the political spectrum. Local government officials, such as the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (Local Government Alliance, 2009), backed the groups' fruitless efforts. Local democracy in Pakistan is a source of worry for the international world (Ahwoe, 2010).

### **Role of the Local self-Government**

The Devolution Plan broadens the scope of power held by local governments. Local governments have taken on new tasks, including information technology, commerce and industry, law and order, environmental education and protection. The chapter questions whether the local government can handle these kinds of tasks. Given that municipal governments have historically failed to adequately carry out even the most basic of their duties, it's hard to see how they'd handle any additional expectations placed upon them. Previous significant issues that the local administration had to deal with include:

- (i) Scarcity of Funds
- (ii) Insufficient Ability
- (iii) A shortage of skilled workers

Local governments are an institution that has shown to be reliable across several administrations. If local governments carried out their duties effectively, it was the governments themselves, not the local governments' institutions. Not be adequately funded; to have its institutional capabilities reinforced by the previous governments; and for the Devolution Plan to be implemented. However, it is true that the local government's strength will be gradually built up through time. Positive effects of training last for a long time (Ghaus Pasha & Khan, 2000).

### **Conclusion**

The government of Pakistan accepted the LG System with mandatory revisions, and it remained in existence until General Ayub Khan replaced it with the Basic Democracy System. The Pakistani Parliament enacted an ordinance in the '70s, but it never went into effect. Having been overhauled by General Zia, this system is now known as the Local Government system. There was no problem with this setup until the year 2001. The government's Devolution Plan 2001, which included reforms to the whole administrative structure, took effect that same year. This Degeneration Plan 2001 was a great success during the Musharraf's era. Despite these similarities, the intergovernmental and intralocal government interactions remained distinct and dynamic throughout the aforementioned systems.



The central and provincial governments make most of the decisions related to local government, especially in the financial sector. Central and provincial officials were much more interested in keeping as many resources as possible in the central and provincial governments. The central and provincial representatives were interested in maintaining their contacts by offering specific services to their circumscriptions. Thus, they were always either eliminated or given a large sum of money to spend as they pleased in their respective fields. This action went against the spirit of the local government.

Services provided at the neighborhood level, where they are most accessible to residents, but which have seen their authority eroded and ultimately relinquished by provincial and federal authorities through their representatives. Similarly, there were legitimate requests that the central province representative had to meet through the medium of local government. Moreover, the responsibilities of local government and upper tiers of governments were not clearly defined. So, upper tier of government was in habit of interfering in local affairs. There was need to evolve some mechanism to ensure constructive interaction between various tiers of government.

Not only is it important to enhance the functioning of municipal administrations, but also of lower levels of government, which often serve as training grounds for the politicians who will eventually lead the provinces and the country. There is a need to establish long-term institutional processes for capacity building in all four provinces, even if donor agencies are already hard at work in several of them.

### **Recommendations**

1. For future growth at the local level, political will and central government commitment are necessary.
2. Local government institutions, local human resources, and additional information channels must be fortified immediately. All of these things will help get the word out and strengthen programs that boost wages and employment.
3. Law and order, poverty, lack of access to social services, inefficient government spending, and taxes are only some of the pressing problems that may be addressed by devolution reforms.
4. Efforts to improve the local economy and give citizens a say in policymaking through legislation have largely been fruitless.
5. For a strong federation to function, it is important that provincial assemblies recognize the importance of autonomous local governments as a tool to enhance governance and service delivery. Provincial assemblies must also enact laws and regulations to clarify the proper allocation of authority between the provincial and municipal levels of government.
6. As new municipalities are formed and county-level administrations begin working with them, it is hoped that LG statutes will be drafted to reflect the shift in power dynamics.
7. With the goal of defining guiding principles for local government reform, the federal government may want to look into ways of fostering inter-provincial coordination and experience sharing. Greater legitimacy for local governance and a more robust federation would result from such an undertaking.

8. Now that there are more municipal governments, civil service reform should be revived.
9. Increased public understanding of the importance of local government to better governance in our society requires a concerted effort from academia, the media, politicians, and business leaders.
10. For state institutions to avoid conflicts of interest, we must recognize that village-level action is their primary area.
11. The political establishment must make the choice to establish the local government by means of political consensus.
12. Without functioning local governments, democracy cannot function properly. Decentralizing authority is the best way to ensure that democracy is upheld and that popular opinion does not distort reality.
13. Strengthening democracy, guaranteeing access to justice, and instilling a sense of civic duty at the community level are all tasks that fall squarely within the purview of the local bodies system.
14. A strong political will on the part of the government and the political parties is necessary to ensure constitutional protection for the devolution of power to the grassroots level.
15. A shift in political parties' perspectives on LGs is essential. Maintaining policy stability will be beneficial in fixing the problems that have plagued the LG system.

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