

Impact of Authoritarianism on Democratisation and Local Governance in Pakistan: Historical Perspectives

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Abstract

This paper narrates the history of authoritarianism in the post-independence Pakistan and its effect on the process and prospects of democratisation and the possibilities of institutionalisation of local government reforms. The political history of Pakistan after the independence and other associated contextual factors highly differentiate her contemporary political organisation from other comparable countries in South Asia. For instance, India and Pakistan emerged as independent states from the colonial rule on the same day and both states inherited the almost similar administrative setups from the British rule nonetheless, the subsequent development of democratic credentials and the establishment of local governments as a regular third tier of government in India unequivocally distinguishes her case from that of Pakistan's. Pakistan's six decades of chaotic history has seen frequent changes in government including three major military regimes. The politically centralising factors have led Pakistan to become a security state where the apex twin institution i.e. the civil-military bureaucracy takes the lead in running the government and state's affairs at all levels. In such a context, the process of democratisation has remained precarious at large.

Key Words: Authoritarianism, Democratisation, Local Governments and Pakistan.

Introduction

Pakistan became independent in chaotic political circumstances, which made worse the already embedded regional and local identity problems in the Indian Sub-continent. An effective strategy for the delegation of political, administrative and fiscal authority to the regional levels could have proved to be a long-term solution to the centrifugal forces that threatened the national unity and territorial integration of the state. However, the authoritarian leaderships of the country opted for nurturing the civil-military bureaucracy for containing the regional political uprising and eventually Pakistan's army and civil administration became the most powerful and domineering institutions of the country. Effective decentralisation reforms were crucial not only for the pacification of the secessionist uprising by accommodating the interests of regional socio-political actors but also for meeting the diversified social services needs of Pakistan's society that is geographically scattered and highly fragmented across the social,

political and economical divisions. This paper reveals that the rhetoric of decentralisation has only been abused as a justification for protracting incumbency of authoritarian regimes and for re-directing the stream of political power and administrative authority towards the centre.

The three major sets of local government reforms were designed and implemented by the military dictators in such a manner that fragmented the regional political power bases into smaller and politically insignificant entities. Given the circumstances, the civil administration and public sector organisations under the central command of military establishments failed to meet the social services demands from a burgeoning population. Since the governing powers and authority of civil-military bureaucracy expanded beyond the legitimate constitutional limits, the institutionalisation of other critical institutions of governance like judiciary, political society, economic society and civil society was severely hampered by a corresponding consequential impact. Eventually, the political and civil society of Pakistan became characterised with features like the absence of issue based politics, the use of executive power to suppress the political opposition, politicisation and corruption of bureaucracy, organisationally weak and dynastic political parties, politics based on ethnic ideologies rather than manifestoes, factionalism, and hegemony within the political parties.

Historical Background

Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the founder of Pakistan who got involved in the politics of Indian subcontinent as an active member of the Indian National Congress. However, later he joined and led Pakistan's movement, upholding the ideology that Hindus and Muslims were two different nations and therefore demanded a separate nation state for the Muslims of subcontinent. Muslim League (Pakistan's founding political party) and Indian National Congress (INC) failed to reach a consensus on the arrangements for political power sharing in the government of united India. Consequently, the British Indian government, Muslim League and Indian National Congress had to agree for the separation of Pakistan in 1947. In 1947, 'although Pakistan emerged as a state with a new identity, its political culture and characteristics were profoundly influenced by historical inheritances from the colonial era' (Talbot, 2005:12). According to Talbot (2005), Muslim League, was poorly institutionalised *ab initio* as compared to her counterpart, the Indian National Congress. Whereas the hallmark of Indian National congress was her earned political capital in the form of popular regional support and a comprehensive political organisation, the Muslim League, on the other hand, was more of an elite group that lacked intrinsic democratic principles. In fact, the centralisation of power within the Muslim League was her core feature and was one of the reasons that led to conflicts between regional and Pakistani identities in the post-independence era.

Talbot (2005) relates that provincialism became a barrier to the nation building immediately after Pakistan's independence. Besides that, the level of

political activism in Muslim majority areas of united India was relatively low. Therefore, to begin with, the Muslim League had to deal with higher degrees of factionalism and violence in the newly established state. The League was left with limited options; it became inevitable for the League to accommodate the centrifugal factional interests and other associated crude realities in order to be able to extend the influence of Pakistan's movement into the socially and geographically diverse peripheries. Equally important is the fact that the founding leaders of Pakistan remained equivocal about the nature of future Pakistani state i.e. whether an Islamic state was to be the objective of Pakistan's movement (an agenda that was earlier pursued for manufacturing a populist demand for Pakistan and eventually for mobilising the political support of the Muslim population) or was it a pluralist secular society as it was proposed later by Jinnah (*ibid*). Such unfavourable legacies were just the beginning of stumbling blocks that were to follow in the post-independence Pakistan. The inherited conflicts and bewilderments between Pakistani, regional and Islamic identity remains one of the core reasons for the political and social mayhem in contemporary Pakistan. Shaikh (2009) for instance, believes that other than the external influences and domestic issues, the political trajectories of Pakistan have also been influenced by the fact that there is still a widespread ambiguity in the minds of Pakistanis about their national identity as a 'Pakistani'. According to her, such confusions have undermined the establishment of a coherent civil and political society.

Jalal (1995) recounts that after the independence, assets inherited by Pakistan were extremely scarce and hence for the sake of survival, the centre began extracting resources from the provinces. At the very onset of the country's birth, the top-level central executives of the country inevitably relied on administrative bureaucracy to offset the mounting resentment in the provinces. Tensions in terms of resource allocation between Punjab (province) dominated civil-military bureaucracy and the rest of the provinces were therefore the first blow to the political stability of the infant state. The consequences of such critical events were later seen in the form of weak civil society and handicapped political institutions. 'Poverty, regional, linguistic and religious group conflicts do not of themselves create instability. It only occurs when institutions are too weak to cope up with the conflict over scarce resources which results from increased social and political mobilisation. In this situation, newly emerging groups are not socialised into the system nor are their demands absorbed. Instead they enter it on their own terms and civic politics are replaced by disorder which in turn results in praetorianism' (Huntington, 1968 cited in Talbot, 2005:8). Many historians consider Pakistan as a praetorian state because the reins of government have largely remained under the command and control of civil-military bureaucracy. It is mainly the protection of institutional interests of the army that triggered military interventions (Aziz, 2008). Pakistan's centralised administrative and political organisation had a long-term profound impact on fuelling authoritarian tendencies, thereby undermining the political and democratic institutions.

During the exchange of migrating population between India and Pakistan in 1947, violent massacres, pumped by the centuries' old hatred and bigotry among various ethnic, religious and social groups led to further aggravating the arch-rivalry between the two emerging states of India and Pakistan. India, rattling her sabre, was a constant and substantial threat for the survival of independent yet weak Pakistan and this provided the ruling executive of Pakistan with a valid reason for nurturing Pakistan's army at the stake of building other civilian institutions. Malik (1996) explains that after the partition, Pakistan opted for maintaining the pre-partition status quo and preferred administrative divisions instead of accommodating regional identities. He argues that the predominant structure of ethnic heterogeneity severely obstructed the possibilities of national integration, which were further aggravated by cross-border migration, urbanisation, weakening of the civil society and prioritisation of scarce resources for non-developmental sectors like national defence. The colonial legacy of erratic development in diverse regions, preference of administration over the consociational governance, repressive public policies and preference of individuals over institutions fuelled the ethnic tension in post-independence Pakistan.

The trajectories during the first decade of Pakistan's history depicted a continuation of political instability with increasing centralisation in terms of policy-making and execution. The centre was dominated by the civil and military bureaucracy at large (Jalal, 1995; Callard, 1957; Talbot, 2005). Cheema and Sayeed (2006) relate that like India, Pakistan also inherited one of the most developed civil service systems from the British Indian government. Political instability in Pakistan's initial decade, owed to the devastating events during partition, further contributed to 1) undermining the political institutions and 2) the superiority of the executive / bureaucracy over the legislatures. It was obvious that the task of state building was thoroughly pursued at the cost of forgone alternative – nation building. The army did not take over directly till 1958 however Pakistan's army increased her influence in the national policy affairs during the initial decade of independence, especially when Pakistan joined the SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation) military alliances. Khan (2010) accounts that in early 1950s, Pakistan, under the bureaucratic-military oligarchy, had joined the US-backed alliances - SEATO in 1954 and Baghdad Pact in 1955. Baghdad Pact was subsequently renamed as CENTO. One of the major reasons for Pakistan's participation in these pacts was propounded as the need to strengthen her defence against India.

The Process of Democratisation in Pakistan and India – a Comparative Analysis

In spite of the fact that India and Pakistan emerged as independent states from the same colonial womb, their post independence political trajectories reveals a remarkable difference in terms of democratisation process and outcomes. To explain the factors that led to authoritarianism in Pakistan and gradual yet

effective democratisation in India, Jaffrelot's (2002) analysis is referred to as follows. The transfer of political powers from the British Raj gradually began with the elections of municipalities in 1882 and finally the Government of India Act of 1935 established a parliamentary democracy at the provincial levels in the pre-partition India. Although the British Viceroy and provincial Governors still held the reins of power, most of the ministerial responsibilities were devolved to the provincial ministers. Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 and by 1947, it had acquired the status of a mass based political party. Gandhi mobilised the INC into the rural peripheries and was successful in making inroads to the masses of population living in the rural India. The party was secular by nature and democratic internally. Even after the partition, the INC was popular among the majority of Indian citizenry.

Muslim League was on the other hand, more like a defence movement that portrayed herself as the saviour of Islam in order to mobilise the popular support of Muslims in the subcontinent. Muslim League was never as organised as INC and was largely dominated by a small group of leaders belonging to the intelligentsia and aristocracy. After the partition, most of articles from the government of India Act of 1935 were incorporated in the Indian constitution that was enacted in 1950. It took Pakistan almost a decade to frame the first constitution in 1956. Since New Dehli remained the political and administrative centre of India, her political and administrative machinery remained intact. Indian stake in the treasury was also greater than that of seceding Pakistan. The First Prime Minister of India - Nehru was successful in maintaining good terms with both US and USSR and that is why India was not threatened with external insecurity. On the contrary, the establishment of Pakistan's political and administrative set up was a hard task. Leaders of Pakistan felt extremely vulnerable militarily, economically and politically due to war with India over the Kashmir dispute in 1947.

Pardesi and Ganguly (2010) narrate that in the provincial elections of 1946 (before the partition), Muslim League could only form a government in the provinces of Bengal and Sindh. Muslim league was opposed by the elected governments in Punjab and the North West Frontier Province - NWFP (renamed as Khyber Pukhtunkhwa in year 2010), where, in coalition with the Indian National Congress, the Unionist party and Khudai Khidmatgar party had formed governments respectively. Consequently, in March 1947, Jinnah who chose to be the Governor General of prospective Pakistan, abolished the government of Punjab and NWFP and the provinces were brought under the direct control of Governor General of Pakistan. By doing so, Jinnah himself set the anti-democratic tradition for the future governors of Pakistan. Jaffrelot (2002) believes that the continued anti-democratic attitude of the Muslim League's leaders, during the first decade after independence, diminished the hopes for democratic Pakistan. In response to the Pakistani states' efforts to centralise the government, the civil-military bureaucratic oligarchy - apprehensive of the local opposing political groups' access to power - adopted a predatory approach towards the local political uprising

(Samad, 1995). Similarly, Pakistani judiciary remained under an enormous pressure from the civil-military nexus especially for indemnifying the military coups and associated abrogation of the constitution. The INC on the other hand continued to consolidate the political institutions. India's well-organised army and civil administration did not intervene in the domain of parliament. The Indian judiciary has also been more independent despite pressures from the democratic governments and this, according to Jaffrelot (2002), was owed to the protection provided by the Indian Constitution and free press.

According to Jaffrelot (2002), Pakistan diversity in ethno-linguistic terms was lesser than India's however, Indian leaders (Prime Ministers) utilised that ethno-linguistic diversity to form a pluralist political society; the central political powers effectively negotiated with the uprising regional voices. The inclusion of marginalised groups e.g. the untouchables castes and other backward classes into the political mainstream and the linguistic reorganisation also played an important role in meeting the challenges of ethnic diversity and democratic consolidations in India. Before the partition, religion Islam was used as a monolithic identity by Muslim League; the Muslims of the subcontinent were projected as a nation instead of a religious minority. This primordial factor (Islam) was superimposed on the ethno-linguistic cleavages that resurfaced immediately after the partition when the ethno-linguistic diversity posed a real threat to the ruling elites of Muslim League. Ever since, the regional political uprising has been consistently suppressed with the help of Punjab dominated civil and military bureaucracy. Similarly, Mukherjee (2010) observes that in India, landlordism, or the Zamindari¹ system, was abolished soon after independence that ultimately helped secure the social foundation of Indian democracy. On the other hand, the situation in Pakistan was quite the opposite wherein the rhetoric of land and agrarian reforms could hardly affect the clientelistic relationships in rural politics. Adeney and Wyatt (2004) opine that before and after the partition, the politically weak Muslim League had to appease the landlords and elites of rural areas. The party was soon split into factions as the party leaders prioritised to consolidate their regional position rather than working for national integration. Bengalis, the majority of the population and the largest ethnic group residing in the Bengal Province of Pakistan (now Bangladesh), were not represented proportionately in Pakistan's army, bureaucracy and political institutions. In fact, the government of Pakistan heavily capitalised on Bengal's natural resources (mainly jute) in order to consolidate West Pakistan's (Now Pakistan) economy and feed the civil-military bureaucracy.

India and Pakistan had the same colonial history nonetheless both countries diverged remarkably in terms of their political trajectories mainly because their political experiences at the time of independence differed a lot. For Pakistan, national security and territorial integration was the top priority that eventually made her a security state while India was relatively less concerned with external threats therefore political institutions nurtured gradually in India. The nomenclature of ethnic diversity severely hindered the growth of democracy in

Pakistan, whereas the same factor strengthened plurality of the political actors in India. The composition of founding political parties of India and Pakistan was different in both countries i.e. INC had a broader mandate from masses of citizens and the party's credentials were democratic whereas Muslim League lacked internal organisation and political representation in areas that were to become a part of independent Pakistan.

The following part of the paper highlights the history of major local governance reforms undertaken in Pakistan. It explains why despite several attempts, the institutionalisation of public sector reforms failed by and large.

General Ayub's Basic Democracies (BD) Reforms

General Ayub Khan imposed Martial Law and assumed power as the first military ruler in 1958. Pakistan's first constitution of 1956 was suspended and national and provincial governments were dissolved. In order to legitimise the regime, Ayub needed some form of democratic representation at some level of the government. Local Governments in the form of Basic Democracies (BD) was the idea that was instigated and operationalised by General Ayub Khan and this approach was later used as a time-tested strategy by all succeeding military dictators. The rationale presented by Ayub for proposing Basic Democracies at local level was that Western type of parliamentary democracy was not suitable for a country like Pakistan and hence it could not be 'imposed' on the people of Pakistan but some sort of progress towards democracy could be achieved. Ayub believed that the requirements essential for the western type of democracy - social and political awareness, universal education, and advance system of mass communication - were lacking in Pakistan (Khan, 1967). In Ayub's own words, 'it is too much to expect a man sick and illiterate, and worried about his next meal, to think in terms of national policies' (Khan, 1967:233). Ayub wrote in his autobiography that asking people to join in a 'mass ritual' of voting for candidates whom they had never seen or known really meant depriving them of their right to vote either by inducement or intimidation. He was convinced that under such (a democratic) system, people would find their power being really used against themselves.

Consequently, the military regime of General Ayub Khan introduced the system of local governments called the Basic Democracy (BD) Plan in October 1959. The elected members were referred to as Basic Democrats. Elections for the Basic Democrats were held after two months of the introduction of the Basic Democracies Order (BDO). The BD set up was established in Ayub's regime at four levels i.e. at the Union, Tehsil (Town), District and Division levels. At the lowest level in the system, local governments were established in the form of Union Councils in the rural areas, Town Committees in towns with a population of less than 14000 inhabitants and Union Committees in towns with more than 14000 inhabitants (Siddiqui, 1992). Tehsil was the next higher tier in the system, where local governments were set up in the form of Tehsil Councils in rural areas and Municipal Committees and Cantonment Boards in the urban areas. The next

higher tier was the District Council, followed by the Divisional Councils (Zaidi, 2005). Under the BD system, the country was divided into 80,000 wards. A single ward had a population of around 1000 to 1200 people. These elections were held on the ward basis (ICG, 2004). Earlier in October 1955, the federal structure of the state was radically transformed by abolishing the four provinces in West Pakistan. Instead, the West Pakistan became one unit or province, East Pakistan being another.

Zaidi (2005) describes the electoral mechanism of the BD plan as follows. Members of the Union Councils, Town Committees and Union Committees were elected on the basis of adult franchise. These elected members, from amongst themselves, indirectly elected the Chairman. For the higher tiers, the directly elected members from the lowest tier were to indirectly elect some members, while the rest of the members were appointed by the government. For example, the Chairmen who were the most important figures in all three higher tiers were nominated and appointed by the government. In case of Tehsil Councils, either the Assistant Commissioner (AC) or the Tehsildar² was appointed as the Chairman. Similarly, at the District and the Division levels, the Deputy Commissioners (DC) and the Commissioners headed these councils respectively. According to ICG (2004), half of the members of the local councils were officially nominated and appointed rather than being directly elected. The councils were virtually controlled by the district administrative bureaucracy who had the power to override the councils' decisions and to suspend any bills passed by them (ICG, 2004; Siddiqui, 1992). In simple words, the local government set up called BD was nothing more than mere window dressing that was conceived in order to mask the realities of a highly centralised command at the centre. Cheema et al. (2005) comment that the electoral function of the BD System, based on Ayub's concept of 'controlled democracy', was a legacy of the paternalistic colonial concept of 'guardianship' whereby the colonial bureaucracy was supposed to guide the local politicians.

A study by Cheema and Sayeed (2006) relates that Ayub's military takeover of 1958 provided the bureaucracy enough space to take over the control of the policy-making process. The bureaucracy was able to insulate herself from political interference by acquiring protection in the 1962 constitution. The Basic Democracies system was structured in order to enhance bureaucrats' powers at the local level over the local politicians; senior bureaucrats - the CSP (Civil Services of Pakistan) cadre - could easily manipulate the political process and policy formation at the local level (Nadvi and Sayeed, 2004). On a similar note, Sayeed (1980) mentions that in the late 1960s the civil bureaucracy was also seen as having acquired tremendous social and economic power through linking relationships with other elite groups in society notably the military and the business circles.

Basic Democrats served as an electoral college for the election of the president. Ayub Khan effectively got himself validated as the president by getting an ironically high percentage i.e. 96.6 % (ICG, 2004) in the presidential

referendum held in 1960. ‘Elections to the Basic Democracies councils were held at the lowest tier, called the Union Councils, but at that time martial law extended over the country and elected representatives were usually people who were not active in national political affairs and who, because they owed their very existence to the national government, supported the martial law regime in a plebiscite’ (Friedman, 1983:37-38). This asymmetrical amalgamation of political and bureaucratic system was used for patronage delivery in return for securing a mandate in presidential referendum (Gauhar, 1996) and for building a dependable constituency for Ayub’s military regime (Burki, 1980).

Friedman’s (1960, 1961) assessment of the BD setup indicates some of the intrinsic weaknesses of the system. Insufficient training programmes for the basic democrats, inexperienced councils; limited availability of resources, communication gaps, inter-departmental liaison and coordination issues among the administrative departments, lack of prestige of local councils, and executive’s control of the local councils were the main features of BD system. Eventually, the system lost its support in peripheries owing to the rigid hierarchical structures, corruption and clientelistic resource allocation. On the other hand however, Friedman (1960, 1961) notes that the BD reforms aroused enthusiasm in the communities; helped institution building to a certain extent, politically educated people and finally the reforms improved the turnout for example in the BD elections, the turnout went up as high as 75 % of eligible voters. This, according to him, was a successful display of political activism in a country where 80% of the population was illiterate.

Although the central executive command of the country was authoritarian and hierarchical in its formation, the idea of formalising the informal and traditional social institutions (like communal dispute settlements usually headed by the village elders and notables) in the rural areas with setting up of a local government, was a ray of hope for the marginalised social groups. Irrespective of the political motivation behind the introduction of BD reforms, the establishment of local government system was a critical step in streamlining the informal institutional affairs of local governance. For instance, Friedman (1983) believes that these local governments had very little influence in terms of resources and (administrative) authority yet they were able to perform as arbitrators among the villagers, which was a traditional need of the society.

Civil Service Reforms (1973)

General Ayub Khan’s regime was succeeded by General Yahya Khan in 1969. After the fall of Dhaka to India and subsequent secession of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) from the West Pakistan in 1971, Z. A. Bhutto took over two positions from General Yahya Khan: as the President and the other as the (First Civilian) Chief Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan. After the promulgation of the 1973 Constitution, the elections for the President, Prime Minister, Chairman of Senate, Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly were held. The 1973

Constitution had adopted a federal parliamentary system for the country in which the President was only a symbolic head of the state whereas the *de facto* governing authority was vested in the office of the Prime Minister. Bhutto was sworn in as the Prime Minister of the country on August 14, 1973. The first democratically elected government of Bhutto found it more useful to capitalise on the established civil administration setup for consolidating his control of the government and delivering patronage. Local governments were also neglected because Bhutto's regime did not have to seek political legitimacy as he was a civilian head of the government, elected into the office via ballot box. On the face of it, Bhutto's civil service reforms introduced and implemented in 1973 were intended to make the civil bureaucracy more efficient and accountable to the elected governments however, the impact of the reforms was quite different. Cheema and Sayeed (2006) account the features and consequences of Bhutto's 1973 Civil Administrative Reforms as follows.

Bhutto created the 'All Pakistan Unified Grade System' which ended the distinction between Civil Services, Police Services and others civil services cadres. Such provisions enhanced the political institutions' control over the bureaucracy and curtailed the influence of the CSP cadre within the central bureaucracy. The well-structured hierarchy of the CSP cadre was also broken by the new provisions that allowed lateral entry system and vertical and horizontal movements of civil employees between cadres (Cheema, 2003). These changes fragmented the internal cohesion of the bureaucracy and ensured that bureaucracy was no longer an insulated and exclusive arm of the state (Cheema and Sayeed, 2006). General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988) later used these provisions to institutionalise the induction of armed forces personnel in to the civil service by setting up a 20 % quota for armed forces in the Civil Services (Shafqat, 1999). Cheema and Sayeed (2006) believe that the strategy of 'militarisation' of the bureaucracy by General Zia not only intensified the fragmentation of the bureaucracy but also significantly affected the criterion of merit-based recruitment that used to be the hallmark of Pakistan's CSP cadre.

Bhutto's populist strategies resulted in expanding the role of the state significantly, which in turn increased the total public expenditure to GDP ratio (Pasha and Fatima, 1999). Main beneficiaries of public sector expansion (referring to the nationalisation of major private sector industries in Bhutto's government) were the civil bureaucrats in the higher echelons (Jalal, 1995). Also, those populist approaches made the bureaucracy an employment agency through which patronage was delivered to party stalwarts (Noman, 1988). Such clientelistic tendencies which used the public sector employment for patronage delivery helped prolong Bhutto's tenure as prime minister because of the expansion in the size and purview of the administrative machinery (Haque and Montiel, 1992). Bhutto's massive nationalisation of the industries that were developed in the economic boom during Ayub's era stretched the scope of civil service far beyond the social service delivery as now a large public sector was to be run and administered by the

civil servants. In a nutshell, the civil administration reforms of 1973 did not bring about any noteworthy changes in the procedures of bureaucratic conduct and bureaucracy remained large in size, non-transparent, and discretionary (World Bank, 1998).

General Zia's Local Government Reforms (1979-84)

General Zia-ul-Haq took control of the country in 1977 as a result of a military coup. With the imposition of Martial Law, all political activities were banned once again. Ziring (1988) accounts that Zia reckoned political parties as divisive, counterproductive and useless in an Islamic state which thwarted the maturation of political organisations. However, applying the same strategy as that of his predecessor - General Ayub - General Zia-Ul-Haq revived the local governments through the promulgation of LGO (Local Government Ordinance) in 1979 and 1980. Zaidi (2005) describes that according to the LGO 1979, there were three tiers of local governments in rural areas: Union Councils, Tehsil Councils and District Councils. These local governments were mainly organised at the Union Councils and District Councils levels. The existence of the middle tier i.e. the Tehsil Councils was just nominal. In urban areas, local governments were established at four levels: Town Committees, Municipal Committees, Municipal Corporations, and the Metropolitan Corporations.

One of the major changes in Zia's local government reform was the direct election of the chairmen who acted as executive heads of these local councils. 'Zia consciously adopted populist measures introduced by Bhutto's unimplemented Local Government legislations (1972 and 1975), which abolished the direct representation of the bureaucracy in local governments as members and chairmen, and instead stipulated that all members (including chairmen) of all tiers of local government were to be directly elected through adult franchise' [(Sections 12 and 13 of LGO 1979) cited in Cheema et al. (2005:9)]. Khan and Shah (2007) highlighting the features of local governance in 1980s, describe that there was centralisation in terms of services delivery and lack of coordination between the Union Council and District Councils as well as with the other public sector departments like agriculture, health and education etc. The Union and District Councils were incapacitated in terms of finances, project planning and implementation. Therefore, the local governments in Zia's regime could not be essentially institutionalised. There was also a continuous intervention from the state institutions in the domain of local government system. Quite similar to the BD system utilised by General Ayub, the cosmetic set up of Zia's local governments was also not anything more than a strategy for securing a local supportive political base as Cheema et al. (2005:24) very rightly argue: 'legitimacy has been sought by creating a localised patronage structure that produces a class of 'collaborative politicians' who act as conduit between local constituencies and the non representative centres'.

Cheema et al. (2005) point out that Zia's local government legislation retained suspension powers in the hands of the provincial government, which could overrule any proposal by the local governments. This also meant that the military had significant control over local governments because the military officers appointed as provincial governors headed the administration of provinces. Zia's Era is critically important in this discussion because it is reckoned as one of the most tyrant regimes in the history of Pakistan. Blatant use of state's police and military force to suppress the simmering resentments and regional surging political voices was one of the core features of Zia's regime. Rhetoric of the local government was just an instrument that Zia thought would ease off the steam that was cumulating across liberal and democratic factions in the whole country against his ruthless dictatorship. Talbot (2005) accounts that 'Islamisation' programme was initiated by Zia in 1979 which implicated judicial reforms, implementation of Islamic penal code, economic reforms, and new educational policies. Islamisation thus became the most distinguished feature of Zia's regime but it never provided cohesion for Pakistani society partly because of the predominant conflicts between modernists and the reformists who wanted the incorporation of Islamic laws into the modern state's framework and partly because the state sponsored Islamisation process intensified the ethnic divisions within the sects of Islam in Pakistan (*ibid*).

General Zia pursued the strategy of Islamisation of Pakistan's civil society to appease the hardcore religious factions and some ethnic groups and consequently used them in suppressing the uprising regional political forces. Islamisation of the civil society was also a core factor that inculcated the Jihadist sentiments and ideologies (against the USSR and India) among religious factions of Pakistan. Pakistan's indirect yet active involvement and alliance with US against the then USSR in Afghanistan's war was crucially helpful for Gen. Zia in order to protract his regime under the auspices of Washington DC. His twin strategies of militarisation of the state and Islamisation of the civil society were thus effective bulwarks against any indigenous and foreign threat for the survival of his regime however, Rizvi (n.d.) writes that his policies spurred religious extremism and militancy and undermined the prospects of social and cultural pluralism and participatory institutions and processes.

Rizvi (1986) narrates that in an attempt to secure his political future, Zia also manipulated the Islamic sentiment in his dubious presidential referendum in 1984 and despite the visible absence of popular enthusiasm on the day of referendum, the official results showed a turnout of 62.15% with 97.71% voting in favour of Zia's retention of presidential office. In order to exclude the political parties from electoral process, the general elections under Zia's regime were held in February 1985 on a non-party basis. Rizvi (1986) argues that this strategy discouraged the interaction among politicians at the national levels which led to fragmentation and regionalisation of political forces. The tradition of excluding the political parties from elections was set earlier as Jalal (1995:103) quotes that 'the holding of non-party elections to local bodies in September 1979 (was) aimed at driving a wedge

between different levels of political system, making the twin task of militarisation and Islamisation of society much easier to accomplish'. Ziring (1988) describing the long term consequences of holding the elections on non party basis, cites that since the conventional parties and regional interests were not permitted to function, parochialism and sub-national identities became more emboldened, better organised and funded, and more aggressive.

Even after the withdrawal of martial law in 1985, Zia made it extremely difficult for the political parties to register for elections (Rizvi, 1986). Despite the fact that Zia's patronage was mainly limited to those directly engaged with martial law administration, Cheema and Sayeed (2006) relate that the local election results led to a critical backlash; mass-based popular political parties had emerged as important players in the electoral arenas including the PPP (the party that was overthrown from the government by Zia with a military coup in 1977). Zia's decision to exclude political parties from the federal and provincial elections of 1985 enabled these local political forces to raise to the higher tiers of the state where these networks eventually captured significant electoral positions at the provincial and federal assemblies later (*ibid*).

The revival of elected national and provincial governments in 1985 extended the political culture of Pakistan's local politics to the national and provincial levels (Wilder, 1999) and consequently, the legislators at provincial and federal level took over the functions, that used to be performed by local representatives and officials earlier (Zaidi, 1999). The trends of patronage delivery gained momentum after 1985 when the then prime minister, Mohammad Khan Junejo, in his attempts to consolidate the political institutions, devised a policy of disbursement of annual development funds to all members of the provincial and national assemblies. Seeds of clientelistic patronage delivery and the associated institutional rivalry between the provincial and local governments were sown then. Wilder (1999) reports that MNAs (members of national Assembly) and MPAs (Members of Provincial Assembly) began to view the local politicians as their competitors in allocation of development funds and execution of local development projects. This provincial-local institutional rivalry had a two-pronged impact. Firstly, it diminished the stature and domain of local governments and secondly, it adversely affected the effectiveness of legislative bodies on national and regional level as they began to get involved in the domain that was never supposed to be theirs in the first place. Not surprisingly, the national and provincial assemblies became the institutions known for clientelistic social service delivery by involving in the micromanagement rather than their primary role - the making of legislation. Consequently, these tensions between provincial and local tiers resulted in the total suspension of local governments between 1993 and 1998" (Cheema et al., 2005). The advocates of local governments now had to wait for yet another military junta that would take over the reins of the country and then would reckon the establishment of local democracy 'useful' for the regime's survival.

Rizvi (n.d) relates that in the post Zia period i.e. between 1988 and 1999, the elected civilian governments were functional but only under the vigilant

surveillance of the military heads who kept on calling the shots in political and security matters. During the 1990s, the high command of army acted like praetorian³ guards in order to protect their professional and corporate interests. Rizvi argues that the four terms of government of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif between 1988 and 1999 signifies crucial and delicate relationships between the civilian governments and the top military command as the autonomy and survival of the civilian governments was highly constrained and mainly dependant on their ability to maintain amiable relations with the high command of Pakistan's army. In addition, Zaidi (n.d) cites that the intervening establishment and the army were quite successful in creating and sponsoring political candidates, parties and alliances for example in 1991, the civil-military agencies - mainly the ISI⁴ - orchestrated an alliance of political parties called the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (Islamic Democratic Alliance), which led to the election of Nawaz Sharif as a Prime Minister. During the 1990s, the so called democracy in Pakistan was an outcome of civil-military agencies' involvement in manipulation of political actors and processes therefore Zaidi (n.d) argues that such type of democratic institutions certainly did not reflect the 'will of the people'.

Pakistan in General Musharraf's Regime

Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Pervez Musharraf took over the reins of government in a bloodless coup in October 1999 by overthrowing the government of Nawaz Sharif. Several court petitions were filed in the Supreme Court of Pakistan challenging the constitutional legitimacy of Musharraf's military coup however, Musharraf issued the 'Oath of Judges Order 2000' which required the judges of Supreme Court to take a revised oath for the office, swearing allegiance to his military rule and to state that they would give no verdicts against his military regime. Many judges of the Supreme Court refused and resigned in protest. In May 2000, the Supreme Court of Pakistan summoned Musharraf to hold the National and Provincial Assemblies' elections by October 2002. In order to legitimise and secure his presidency, Musharraf held a highly dubious referendum (Ansari, 2003) in April 2002 that extended his term as the President of Pakistan for five years after the October 2002 general elections. The referendum's results announced by Election Commission of Pakistan declared that turnout was 71% in which 97.5% of the voters expressed their consent for the continuation of Musharraf's presidency.

Talbot (2005) explains that this referendum actually diminished Musharraf's stature in which multiple voting and coercive use of local government officials were clearly evident. Voters were marshalled by the local councillors who got elected in the 2001 local government elections. Orchestration of his referendum was made easier by mobilisation of voters via the elected local government representatives at District, Town and Union Council levels as they owed their very existence to the military junta. After the referendum, parliamentary elections in 2002 were also manipulated and eventually won by the King's party⁵ - PML (Q)

that was fully backed up by the powerful regime at the Centre. Musharraf reckoned that the constitutional role of army was critically essential for the internal political stability of the country and during his regime, the army expanded her non-professional role and took over majority of the civilian institutions. After the October 1999 military takeover, 104 serving and retired Lieutenant Generals, Major Generals (or equivalent ranks) among 1027 other military officers were inducted on civilian posts in various government ministries and public sector divisions (Dawn, 2003 cited in Zaidi, n.d.). Besides that, Shah (2003) argues that Musharraf's military regime was responsible for the forceful de-politicisation of the political institutions, unlawful jailing of political figures and arbitrary bans on public/political rallies. In academia, civilian intelligence agencies, public utility corporations, and the civil services departments, the military gradually took over in the name of fighting corruption and promoting accountability (*ibid*).

Immediately after the coup, General Musharraf, tried to convey a message that his regime's priorities were economic revival, accountability, national integration and democratic consolidation. Talbot (2002; 2009) explains that Musharraf's wave of reforms for accountability and containing corruption were intended to pave the way for guided democracy by disqualifying the top political leadership in the country. Musharraf claimed that the devolution of power reforms were essential for transforming the 'sham democracy' into a 'true democracy'. On the face of it, the plan was designed to establish grass root democracy by making the district administration accountable to the locally elected officials and by integrating the previously marginalised social groups of the society into the political mainstream e.g. women and religious minorities. The plan also linked local democratisation policy with economic development and poverty alleviation. However, in the absence of land reforms, the outcomes of decentralisation plan were doubtful right from the beginning.

Talbot (2002; 2009) argues that among other reasons, the plan was designed in order to attract international donors and make them believe that his reforms could potentially alleviate poverty that was increased to unprecedented levels during the 1990s. By doing so, Musharraf not only secured economic assistance from international donors like the World Bank, DfID and ADB but also attempted to seek legitimacy for his regime under the garb of local democratisation. Nonetheless, it was anticipated that in the absence of land reform, the Devolution plan would, in fact, limit political participation and deliver the public funds into the hands of local elites. Despite significantly reported cases of violence and electoral rigging, the participation in local elections of year 2001 gradually increased however, the elections did not transform the political organisation along the lines that were envisaged in the plan. For instance, the embedded social conservatism particularly in rural peripheries obstructed genuine participation of women. In addition, the traditional political figures, party allegiances and elite networks reappeared on the local political scene (*ibid*). In a nutshell, the whole localisation scheme seemed like a repetition of Zia's strategy whereby Musharraf

orchestrated to capitalise on the local government setup as a collaborative political base that would help him legitimise and protract his authoritarian regime.

Consequential Impact of Authoritarianism on the Dynamics of Regional and National Political Organisation

Pakistan's history of institutions, beliefs and political dynamics had a profound impact on the options and strategies available to the political actors in the present era (Cohen, 2004). A multitude of events and critical factors shaped up the orientation of governing machine in Pakistan. In the wake of above-mentioned historical events, Pakistan ended up as a country that is reckoned as least conducive for genuine democratisation process in all levels of government. Militarisation of civilian society and civilianisation of military (Chengappa, 1999) resulted in weakening of institutions of governance on one hand and exacerbating the political opportunism on the other. In the absence of effective means of political interest articulation, masses of society that are caught in a day-to-day struggle for their economic subsistence remain unconcerned with politics. Since the political parties quite regularly failed to function effectively, the resultant frustration and social insecurity compelled people to look for support in their sub-national allegiances and in primordial group ecology (Weinbaum, 1996). At large, in the contemporary Pakistan, attitude of citizens towards the elections is that of indifference with feelings that political debate is irrelevant to their lives (*ibid*). The historical institutional hegemony of civil-military bureaucracy is one of the domestic reasons that is responsible for yielding many adverse outcomes. For instance, the general elections turnout is declining constantly since 1970s (Islam, 2001); practices like horse-trading (bargaining to switch political support), the use of executive power to intimidate the political opposition, and the politicisation and corruption of bureaucracy has been deeply embedded in post 1988 Pakistan (Talbot, 2005).

Similarly, the recent political culture in Pakistan is primarily characterised by humiliation of political opponents with personal attacks and the absence of constructive political dialogue (Weinbaum, 1996); organisationally weak political parties (Malik, 1996); a political structure that is more personality driven rather than ideology oriented (Talbot, 2005); electoral frauds and tampering of voters' registration lists, violence, rubberstamp legislatures, rule by executive ordinances instead of legislation, dynastic political parties, factionalism, autocracy within the parties, parties driven by ethnic objectives, politicisation of public services, and a 'Not so Civil Society' (Islam, 2001). The spread of such deeply rooted socio-political menaces is highly alarming; most of these effects have their causes deeply rooted in the institutional weaknesses of the political organisation. The extremely complex and difficult task of redress needs to begin with strengthening of institutions of government and the state. Talbot (2005:292) suggests that 'two critical tasks await Pakistan's democratisers: first to further loyal opposition and responsible government through processes of institutionalisation and consociation;

second to encourage wider political participation and re-establish civilian supremacy over the armed forces'.

Notes

1. Zamindar literally is a land-owner in India and Pakistan - an aristocrat who owned a substantial area of cultivable land and taxed the peasants who lived on it. Zamindars held enormous powers within their territories for instance, magisterial powers, influence in army recruitment, revenue collection and taxation.
2. Administrator of a Tehsil (Town)
3. Zaidi (n.d.) notes that one of the most innovative inventions of Pakistan's military governments is the creation of 'Praetorian Democracy' or more precisely 'Praetorian Electioneering' where some form of participation has been allowed by the military regime when in power.
4. ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) is Pakistan's premier military intelligence agency.
5. The terms King's party denotes Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) or PML(Q) that was formed with the support of General Pervez Musharraf before the general elections of 2002. Musharraf wanted to create a broad-based political party that will support his regime. Under the pressures from National Accountability Bureau (NAB), some of the key political figures from Nawaz Sharif's PML(N) party switched their loyalties and joined PML(Q) which was led by Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhary Pervez Elahi.

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