

An Analysis of General Pervaiz Musharraf's Devolution Plan

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Abstract: *President Musharraf introduced a devolution and decentralization plan for good service delivery and fiscal reforms at the grass-roots level, but he consolidated his power base in the disguise of this plan and was restricted by strong opposition. Hopes for the growth of grassroots leadership, political grooming, women's engagement, and the freedom of minorities, workers, and farmers were in trouble as the administration of President Musharraf dissolved. This study investigates Musharraf's Devolution plan, which was put into action in Pakistan in the year 2001. The study finds the quality of public services has made it possible for some degree of local autonomy to exist. It is also helpful for determining why the devolution plan is so off the wall, which is another way of saying "off the deep end."*

Key Words: General Pervaiz Musharraf, Devolution Plan, Decentralization

An Introduction to General Musharraf's Devolution Plan

Local government has always played a key role in the development of the country. The history of local government in Pakistan dates back to colonial rule. It was Great Britain that introduced the concept of local government to the subcontinent. When Pakistan was formed in 1947, the concept of local government was not new to them but our governments had paid no attention to it. The concept of local government is extremely necessary and important for the development of the country (Mishra, 1959) General Pervaiz Musharraf declared Martial Law and the entire country were controlled by forces led by military forces (Yaseen, Jathol & Muzaffar, 2016). The provincial and central government was let go, and the senate and national assembly declared martial law. Provincial constitutional order was issued by General Pervaiz Musharraf on November 1, 1999 (Aziz, 2001) All Pakistan courts, tribunals and other institutions were the subject of this order. The constitution confirmed the fundamental rights, which remain active. The independence of the judiciary was reduced and works as stamp and compelled by the chief executive. The government implemented a strategy for the reconstruction of local government, focusing on the "Devolution of power and responsibility" to the grassroots level. This implies that authority and decision-making powers were to be decentralized and shifted to the village and mohallah (neighbourhood) level, as well as to the provincial and inter-provincial levels. By doing so, the government aimed to encourage collaboration and cooperation among different stakeholders rather than promoting a competitive political culture (Ali, 2018)

General Pervaiz Musharraf announced the seven points agenda for the uplifting of institutional crisis and for the development of the state, and society. The following points were included in the seven-point agenda,

- Accountability of all politicians and bureaucrats.
- At the grassroots level develop the power through the electoral system.
- The economy and investor confidence reviving.
- All state institutions were depoliticizing.
- Increasing the level of morale among the people.
- To increase the strength of federation and inter-provincial harmony.
- Justice was strong in the country and law and order were restored on all levels in the country.

They constitute the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) for the reconstruction of political institutions through a devolution plan. In 2002 the NRB presented the report to the government, according to which the province governs the district and tehsil directly through bureaucracy and in town the local government is separate from the peripheries. The provincial bureau introduces rules on the authority, authority of power and colonial relationship among rural and masses of their areas. The crisis had to appear in the offices of the deputy commissioner.

Structure of Devolution Plan:

The National Re-construction Bureau has introduced the 2000 Power Devolution Plan, presenting a local government setup with three tiers. In the initial phase, Union Councils will be established, followed by Tehsil and District councils. Each of these tiers will appoint Nazims and Naib Nazims, forming their elected bodies and corresponding administrative frameworks. To actively engage the public in development projects, grassroots institutions like the village council and Citizens Community Boards have also been established. Here are the particulars of the administrative structure of the Council; (Jalal, 1995)

- Union-Council
- 2-Tehsil/Town-Council
- 3-District-Council
- The age of voters would range from 18 to 21 years.
- A functional Local Bodies structure would be established, accompanied by a smooth system for providing necessary financial support to the local bodies.
- Both men and women in the population would be granted representation in the Union Councils and villages.
- A fully empowered District Government would be set up, with the District as the fundamental unit for governance and development. Citizen community boards at the grassroots level would be established to involve people in civic affairs.
- An integrated rural-urban structure would be created at the Tehsil level, aiming to bridge the rural-urban divide and counter the ongoing trend of urbanization.
- A politico-administrative mechanism would be developed to address urban decay and promote the growth of cities as thriving urban centres (Ashford, 2015)

Some Features of the Plan

According to the devolution power plan elections and local government order was promulgated. Here are some features of the power plan,

- The local elected leader replaced the bureaucrats with Nazims.
- 1/ 3rd seats were specified for women and other minorities.
- The local councils were introduced with the right to operational information related to all departments.
- The registered citizen groups of people had the authority to gain access to local development budgets.
- Create municipal entities for maintaining the growth of basic practices such as drinking water, sanitation, public parks, and street lighting at the local level.
- The distribution of financial resources from provincial to local government for operative services.
- The taxation power was decentralized to the local level for development work.
- To maintain law and order, for development work in the provincial capital create the city government system.

The Function of the Devolution Plan

The 2001 Local Government Ordinance established an alternative institutional structure to effectively oversee power exercise and service delivery. Zila Mohtasib, formed under Provincial Government guidance, consists of a distinguished High Court judge, a respected Public Service Commission member, and the provincial Ombudsman. Zila Mohtasib's primary role is to ensure transparency and proper regulation by investigating cases of gross irregularities and maladministration. The commission had a legal mandate to review local government projects' functions and could conduct special reviews when deemed necessary. To ensure funds' appropriate use and investigate alleged irregularities in fund allocation, the commission could issue directions for audits and inspection reports. If conflicts arose between the provincial and local governments regarding resource allocation, the commission intervened to propose solutions (Mehmood, 2000)

The Zila Mushvirat Committee's primary function is to facilitate consultations and resolve outstanding issues that hinder work execution. Its inception aims to create a broad-based consensus on district-affecting matters or develop collective mechanisms to address challenges faced by the district.

The committee is envisioned as an instrument to foster an integrated vision for the district's development projects. It prioritizes areas where development work has been hindered by political considerations or victimization, ensuring equitable growth and equal opportunities for all inhabitants.

Decentralization is a strategy that is employed to implement these objectives. Other reforms that can be employed to accomplish the goals include de-concentrating functions, resolving conflicts, and strengthening through horizontal expansion. Another crucial element of this strategy is the district council's choice of a regulator, whose job it is to hear common people's complaints about the district offices (Punjab Local Government Ordinance, 2001)

Due to its voluntary nature, DTCE established strong connections with non-governmental organizations, motivating various community segments to work for the welfare of society. It monitored and supported projects undertaken by citizen community boards. Additionally, it mobilized civil society and conducted surveys to identify areas needing attention. However, this bottom-up approach did not yield the desired results. The institutions lacked proper mechanisms, and the community viewed these efforts with scepticism. As a result, the objectives envisioned in the Local Government Ordinance of 2001 could not be fully achieved.

The district's Nazim had control over the Tehsil Municipal Government. The district's Nazim would receive reports from the tehsil municipal officer. The TMA was tasked with performing city services, undertaking construction projects, starting up planning for space, and performing other auxiliary tasks. It served as an essential lure to win over electoral voters. Nevertheless, it was declared that the decentralization plan would prove relevant to all situations. However, some places, such as military garrisons and federally administered tribal lands, were not included (Hasan, 2005)

The district government receives the allocated amount for use on ongoing expenses and capital projects. Additionally, the provincial government may grant funds to the district for the completion of particular duties, such as those pertaining to education, health, and other industries. These initiatives are occasionally supported by foreign donor organizations. The district nazim was granted the power to put forward a district's financing, which would specify how money would be raised and used. The district council will seriously evaluate the suggested funding proposals in this regard (Keefer, 2003)

The hierarchical makeup of the society is firmly ingrained in the social milieu of the villages, where the elders still wield a lot of power. Therefore, the Local Government Ordinance of 2001 defined village and community councils in order to gain support and aid. It goes without saying that the majority of the group consisted of senior citizens who were worried about the future of their descendants. In a public notice, the Tehsil Municipal Administration would provide the names of the residents of the village or community. They will support small-scale managing projects locally (Bari, 2001).

The primary role of the village and neighbourhood council is to enhance the inhabitants' quality of life by providing civic amenities. The council will collaborate with the local government to ensure access to safe drinking water. It will designate areas for garbage disposal and solid waste management to prevent disease outbreaks in the vicinity. Considering the settlement's geographical location, the sanitation system will be improved. Additionally, the council will propose measures for poverty alleviation and offer plausible recommendations to the government (Ali, 1980)

Educational Development

The local government receives funding from the provincial legislature for education, and there is also an appropriate budget allocation. This money is distributed to the tehsils according to the number of schools in each district. The district educational officer spends this development fund on district government-approved projects. Immediate development initiatives are carried out by the province and the federal government's project leadership divisions. The recruitment of new instructors for schools and colleges, the provision of quality curricula, laboratories, and computer labs, and the creation of textbooks are all responsibilities of the regional authorities; as a result, the growth of education is closely related to that of the province.

Challenges faced for the provision of education by local administration:

- Lack of teachers in the schools of the remote areas of the province
- Unavailability of proper system for monitoring.
- Issues of standard and up-to-date curriculum and contents.
- Political intervention.
- Plagiarism and cheating environment.
- Unavailability of materials in labs.

- Social issues; especially for female education and enrollment

The local administration has made significant efforts to meet all of these obstacles. The very first action the local government took was to upgrade the educational facilities in both urban and rural areas, as well as to increase the number of schools. Throughout the past year, which was extraordinary, all of the existing schools were improved, new schools were established, and the number of pupils grew. It is now obvious that the proportion of girls who are educated in southern Punjab has significantly increased as a result of the recruitment of new staff and the focus on education for girls

Law Enforcement

The Local Government Ordinance of 2001 brought significant changes to the role of law enforcement agencies. Previously, according to the Police Act 1861, the District Superintendent of Police reported to the Deputy Commissioner for operational duties. However, with the abolition of the Deputy Commissioner's office, the district police chief began reporting to the elected Nazim, establishing contact and liaison with the provincial hierarchy. This shift led to a change in the perception of the police and their approach, transforming them from a mere force to a service. Community policing gained relevance, rendering previous police practices outdated and obsolete (Cheema, [2005](#))

To promptly address public grievances, a Safety Commission was introduced. Moreover, the functions of the police were integrated yet separated into investigation and patrolling. Independent prosecution centres were established to deter crime in various areas. Extensive efforts were made to improve the law and order situation. However, critics argue that the abolition of executive magistracy contributed to a steady deterioration in law and order. Instances were reported where police refused to cooperate with the district administration in executing certain tasks, as they were not subordinate to the administration in their chain of command (Dawood, [2014](#))

Conclusion

General Pervaiz Musharraf's Devolution plan has the main purpose of distinguishing the real visions, views, potentials, and abilities of the local self-government system in Pakistan. General public awareness related to the role of local self-government system due to various existing impacts, especially with the media development, the findings of this project support this declaration through the analysis of various steps.

Under the leadership of General Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani community witnessed another military coup at the close of the 20th century, when the municipal government system was established. This resulted in the establishment of a new authoritative regime in Pakistan by overthrowing the representative and democratic government. The constitutional legislation specifies that the local government units have a significant role in sharing obligations with the central government. In order to "ensure the highest level of public service at the level of government as close as possible to the public," or the idea of subsidiarity, power is devolved from the federal to the state and municipal levels. Education, public health, customs and culture, monasteries, civil society development, human rights, and the distribution of information to the public and among stakeholders are all part of social development. Local governments are responsible for fostering cultural preservation and revitalization through funding community-led projects, events, and organizations.

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