

**The Establishment and Termination of Devolution Plan of 2000:
The Interplay of Interest, Institutions and Ideas in Public Policy Making¹**

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Abstract

General Musharraf's military regime announced a comprehensive programme of local government reforms through the Devolution Plan 2000. Despite its emphasis on inclusiveness, equity, and accountability in local governance, the Devolution Plan was abandoned following the fall of its principal architect, General Pervez Musharraf. This paper examines this outcome using the Triple I (3-I) framework, which focuses on the interaction of interests, institutions and ideas. The study identifies and analyses the principal stakeholders involved in the devolution reform project, including the military, the higher bureaucracy, politicians, civil society, and multilateral and bilateral development agencies. The paper is organised into five sections. Section I provides the historical background, emphasising the colonial origins of local government in Pakistan and the nature of the reform challenge. Section II outlines the Devolution Plan 2000 and its major features. Section III presents the analytical framework, explaining the interaction and interdependence of the three major factors—interests, ideas, and institutions. Section IV analyses the stakeholders in terms of their interests, institutional positions, and ideas involved in the devolution reform project, highlighting their interplay during the establishment of the Devolution Plan 2000. Section V examines the interaction of these factors that contributed to the eventual dismantling of the reform initiative. The paper finds that each stakeholder embodied more than one dimension of the Triple I framework and that interests, ideas, and institutions were mutually constitutive, interacting and reinforcing one another in shaping the trajectory of the devolution reform process.

Key Words: Local Government, Devolution Plan 2000, Triple I, Stakeholders, Military, Higher Bureaucracy

¹ This paper is mainly based on Postdoctoral Research completed by Dr Rafaqat Islam under the supervision of Dr. Marianne Johnson, Professor of Economics in the College of Business at the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, USA.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pakistan as part of the Indo-Pak subcontinent shares the local government traditions often termed as Panchayat system² and characterised as ‘democracies of the East’³. The foundation of local government in the institutions of modern district administration was laid during the eighteenth century by the British though its origin may be traced much earlier. The Mughal Emperor Akbar (rule 1542 – 1605) developed a highly organised and efficient system by dividing the vast country into Subas (Provinces) each of which was, in turn, split into sarkars (districts). A district was divided into tehsils which comprised several villages⁴. The British adapted the existing institutions making District the pivot of local government. The head of the district was variously designated in various provinces. In the areas that eventually came to form Pakistan, the district was headed by Deputy Commissioner (DC), also designated as District Magistrate for judicial powers and collector for his powers to collect revenues. The DC’s duties were so numerous and so varied that the India Office list of 1920 contained the following description:

His title by no means exhausts his multifarious duties. He does in his smaller local sphere all that the Home Secretary superintends in England, and a great deal more; for he is the representative of a paternal, and not a constitutional government. Police, jails, education, municipalities, roads, sanitation, dispensaries, the local taxation and the imperial revenues of his district, are to him matters of daily concern. He is expected to make himself acquainted with every phase of the social life of the Indians, and with each natural aspect of the country. He should be a lawyer, an accountant, a surveyor, and a ready writer of state papers. He ought also to possess no mean knowledge of agriculture, political economy, and engineering⁵.

The authority, influence and prestige enjoyed by the DC did not end at his being the head of the District. He was the leader of the district team that contained local heads of the provincial departmental services, whose professional officers were directly responsible to their own provincial chiefs, such as the Inspector-General of Prisons, the Chief Conservator of Forests, the Surgeon-General, etc. The district heads of professional groups were expected to keep in close and regular touch with the DC.

² H. D. Malaviya et al., *Village Panchayats in India* (New Delhi: Economic and Political Research Department, All India Congress Committee, 1956).

³ Radhakamal Mukerjee, *Democracies of the East* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1923).

⁴ Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Administration of the Mughal Empire* (Karachi: N. V. Publications, 1966).

⁵ Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Britain’s Imperial Administrators, 1858–1966* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

As against the total powers of a Deputy Commissioner, The Punjab Government, in 1864, resolved to promote local participation in the district's local governance. The highly entrenched bureaucracy did not pay much heed at the ground level to such policy sentiments for people's participation in local governance. In view of negligible success, Mayo's Resolution of 1870 hoped that "the operation of this Resolution in its full meaning and integrity will afford opportunities for the development of self-government for strengthening Municipal Institutions and for the association of Natives and Europeans to a greater extent than heretofore in the administration of local affairs".

Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882, reiterated self-government at local level, particularly for political education; it was practically subordinated to the 'preservation of efficiency in services' by the bureaucracy. In spite of urgings by the Royal Commission upon Decentralisation (1912) and the Indian Statuary (Simon) Commission 1927, local self-government in India till the Second World War remained under the control of the district officer.

Tinker sums up the meagre success achieved during the British rule in India:

Despite the clear directive given as official policy by Lord Ripon, and periodically re-affirmed thereafter, neither the central government nor its officers in the districts, gave a sustained impetus to the development of the ideal of local responsibility in the colonial period till the First World War. After the War, some movement toward local self-government was made but it remained tutelary in nature"⁶.

After the Second World War, the subcontinent was divided into two countries, namely, Bharat (India) and Pakistan. The tutelary situation continued in the independent Pakistan. In many ways it got worse. During the first decade, 1947 – 57, the party in power would indulge in malpractices in local government elections; bogus votes were cast to an unbelievable extent. Most of the urban municipal committees and rural boards were dysfunctional with members of administrative services appointed to administer affairs of the local government. Successive martial law governments under Ayub Khan (1958), Zia-ul-Haq (1977) and Pervaz Musharraf (1999) made efforts to reform the situation in some systemic way. In order to study Musharraf's Devolution Plan, 2000, the subject of this paper, it is important to make a brief mention of local government reforms under Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq.

The local government system under Ayub Khan was created under the *Basic Democracies Order, 1959*⁷. Arrangements in rural and urban areas bore different nomenclatures:

⁶ Hugh Tinker, *Foundations of Local Self Government in India, Pakistan and Burma* (Bombay: Macmillan Company, 1954).

⁷ Government of Pakistan, *The Basic Democracies Order, 1959* (Karachi: Ministry of Law, Government of Pakistan, 1959).

Rural Areas

1. Union Councils (aggregate of villages having population around 10,000)
2. Tehsil councils (containing rural union councils)
3. District Councils (containing several Tehsils)

Urban Areas

1. Union Committees
2. Town Committees
3. Municipal Councils

There were also divisional and development advisory councils but overtime they became dysfunctional.

Ayub Khan's system of Basic Democracies was built on his stated philosophy that in governing themselves people should have powers over matters that they know at their level and can understand well, and that lower tiers may function as training grounds for the higher ones⁸. As such, Basic Democracies scheme did not mean control by people over local matters except in an extremely limited manner.

The tutelary nature of the system was obvious from the fact that direct elections were held only at the Union level. Above that level, elections were indirect; members of tehsil council were elected by members of Union Councils. Over and above such practice was the practice of nomination by the government. At the union council level two-thirds of the total members of the council were to be elected, while one-third to be nominated. At the tehsil level, one-half were to be indirectly elected, while the other half to be nominated.

In rural areas, nominating authority was the leading government officer in a district, simultaneously entitled Deputy Commissioner (DC). In urban areas, nominated seats were to be filled by the leading government official in a division, namely the Divisional Commissioner⁹.

The Basic Democracies scheme came to an end with the fall from power of Ayub Khan. Bhutto regime (1971-1977) published ordinances bearing titles People's Local Government in 1972, but they were not enforced. The next systematic effort at revival was made by General Zia-ul-Haq.

Zia established local bodies primarily to cloak an extremely centralized, autocratic political structure. Through provincial ordinances, he restored local governments in September 1979, mostly following Ayub Khan's model but with some significant modifications. In rural areas, Zia created three levels of local government: zila (district) councils, tehsil (sub-district) committees, and union

⁸ Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends Not Masters: An Autobiography* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967).

⁹ Herbert J. Friedman, "Pakistan's Experiment in Basic Democracies," *Pacific Affairs* 33, no. 2 (1960): 107-125.

councils (composed of villages). Town committees, municipal committees, and municipal/metropolitan corporations for big cities (Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi) are examples of urban organizations.

Eighty percent of the members of union councils and town committees were chosen by universal adult suffrage in nonpartisan elections held in 1979, 1983, and 1987. Reserving 20% of the seats for women, workers, tenants, and peasants was innovative.

General administration, law and order, and policing were not given to Zia's local councils; instead, civil officials (commissioners and deputy commissioners), who also functioned as ex officio, nonvoting members of pertinent councils, were given these responsibilities. In contrast to Ayub Khan, Zia's local government representatives did not establish an electoral college for the presidency or province or national assemblies.

Zia's main goals in establishing local organizations were to legitimize the military regime, expand its base of support outside the military, and use the newly formed and submissive local elite to weaken its political rivals. The local organizations essentially served as the "civilian base of his military government, supporting it in return for economic and political benefits"¹⁰. These local governments eventually developed into a massive system for giving state support to prominent politicians, giving the military administration plenty of opportunity to hold favourable, nonpartisan elections.

Under Zia's scheme, local government elections were last held in 1987 for a three-year term. After his demise in 1988, began the so-called 'decade of democracy' – 1988 to 1999, also known for 'crisis of governability'¹¹. During this period, local government was allowed to decay, almost all the elected provincial governments dissolved the elected local bodies. Local councils began to be run by government appointed administrators for purposes more of control than welfare and development. Democratic governments, both federal and provincial, ceased to exist on October 12, 1999. Musharraf undertook far reaching reforms under his Devolution Plan 2000. The next section gives the summary of the Devolution Plan.

Section-II : Devolution Scheme

Salient Features of the Devolution Scheme (2001)

Electoral Reforms

- Minimum educational qualification prescribed for candidates for Nazims.

¹⁰ International Crisis Group, *Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression?* ICG Asia Report No. 77 (Islamabad and Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2004).

¹¹ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, "Democracy and the Crisis of Governability in Pakistan," *Asian Survey* 32, no. 6 (1992): 521–537.

- Election manifesto made mandatory for candidates for District and Town/Taluka Nazims.
- Local government elections conducted by the Election Commission of Pakistan instead of provincial election authorities.

Gender Representation

- Reserved seats for women increased to 33% at all three tiers of local government.

Administrative Devolution

- Divisional tier abolished.
- Office of the Deputy Commissioner abolished and replaced by the District Coordination Officer (DCO).
- DCO made accountable to the District Nazim, with interaction with the provincial government routed through the Nazim.
- District Nazim designated as the chief executive of the local government with extensive administrative and financial powers.
- Mechanisms introduced for the recall of elected representatives and for officials to seek redress against unlawful or politically motivated orders of Nazims.

Fiscal Devolution

- Provincial Finance Commissions (PFCs) established for the distribution of provincial resources to districts.
- Allocation based on population, fiscal capacity, fiscal effort, and the specific needs of districts.

Criminal Justice and Police Reforms

- Executive magistracy abolished, ending the judicial powers previously exercised by Deputy Commissioners and subordinate magistrates.
- Police Act 1861 replaced by the Police Order 2002.
- Responsibility for law and order vested in the District Nazim, while the District Police Officer remained accountable to the professional police hierarchy.
- District Public Safety Commissions established to resolve disputes between the District Nazim and the police.
- Police Complaints Authorities created to investigate serious complaints against police officials.

Community Participation

- Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) established as grassroots institutions to promote community participation in local development.

- CCBs empowered to identify, plan, implement, and monitor development projects in collaboration with local governments.
- A specified proportion of local development funds earmarked for projects initiated through CCBs.

The Plan was terminated around 2009. This paper studies the establishment and termination of the Plan with reference to the concept of Triple I i.e. Interests, Institutions and Ideas as a framework to analyse process of public policymaking. The next section spells out the use of the framework in the discipline of Public Policy.

Section-III: Nature of the ‘Triple I’

The discipline of public policy is comparatively new in the world of knowledge; it had a humble origin, the first writing being a small article, ‘the policy orientation’ in a book edited by Daniel Lerner and Harold Lasswell¹². It seems the thought remained dormant till the Executive Order by US President, Lyndon Johnson, in 1966. The Executive Order required the government entities to have public spending proposals examined in the planning, programming budgeting system (PPBS) format before being submitted for budget allocations. Such requirements involved analysis and procedures to translate broad policy goals into actionable, measurable programs, rational resource allocation after evaluating alternative ways, making data-driven decisions and evaluating whether government intervention eventually worked¹³. With policy analysis coming of age, several ‘paradigms’, theories and lenses, have come up to account for adoption and for measuring success or otherwise of policy initiatives. “A policy paradigm”, in the words of Hogan and Howlett “constitutes a theoretical tool to specify and understand the guiding principles or ideas, for creating public policy, why the various actors involved are involved, and why they pursue the strategies they do”¹⁴. One such lens/ paradigm is known as “Three Is” namely, Interest, Institutions and Ideas¹⁵. Some of the seminal works on the subject include: *Role of Interests, Institutions and Ideas in the Comparative Political Economy of Industrialised Nations* by Peter Hall and *Ideas, Institutions and Interest: Canada’s Provinces and Territories in a Global Era* by Peter Phillips and David Castle.

The Three I’s, *Interests, Institutions and Ideas*, has become a central concept in the social science, particularly in international political economy, political

¹² Daniel Lerner and Harold D. Lasswell, eds., *The Policy Sciences: Recent Developments in Scope and Method* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1951).

¹³ Beryl A. Radin, *Beyond Machiavelli: Policy Analysis Comes of Age* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ John Hogan and Michael Howlett, eds., *Policy Paradigms in Theory and Practice: Discourses, Ideas and Anomalies in Public Policy Dynamics* (Cham: Springer, 2015).

¹⁵ Paul Cairney, *Understanding Public Policy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

science and public policy. These three factors are often used to explain why political policy actors act as they do.

There has been long debate on the question of primary or otherwise of one of the three factors over the other ones. For example, authors who recognise the primacy of interests hold that policy is shaped by self-interested politicians, voters, and bureaucrats who seek to maximise benefits and minimize costs. Examples include Downs (1957)¹⁶, Buchanan and Tullock (1962)¹⁷ and Lowi (1969)¹⁸. Other authors emphasise the primacy of ideas in institutional change and political processes. Examples include Heclo (1974)¹⁹, Sabatier (1988)²⁰, Hall (1993)²¹, Blyth (2002)²² and Schmidt (2010)²³. They hold that policymakers act within interpretive frameworks - mental maps that shape what they perceive as problems and solutions. Still others emphasize prime role of institutions. Institutions, i.e., rules, structures and routines constrain or enable political behaviour and shape how interests compete and how ideas gain traction. Examples include Skocpol (1979)²⁴, March and Olsen (1989)²⁵ and Ostrom (1990)²⁶.

The emerging view emphasises the interaction, interdependence and interpenetration of the three factors. For example, taking the case of rational interests, it may be said that policies emerge from a bargaining where organised interests dominate policy sectors. Groups form around shared material concerns, and

¹⁶ Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957).

¹⁷ James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962).

¹⁸ Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

¹⁹ 15. Hugh Heclo, *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden: From Relief to Income Maintenance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).

²⁰ Paul A. Sabatier, "An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change and the Role of Policy-Oriented Learning Therein," *Policy Sciences* 21, no. 2-3 (1988): 129-168.

²¹ Peter A. Hall, "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 3 (1993): 275-296.

²² Mark Blyth, *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²³ Vivien A. Schmidt, "Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously: Explaining Change through Discursive Institutionalism as the Fourth 'New Institutionalism,'" *European Political Science Review* 2, no. 1 (2010): 1-25.

²⁴ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

²⁵ James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

²⁶ Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

policy decisions often respect lobbying by well organised interests for private gains. Policy making takes place at market place of bargains among legislators, bureaucrats and interest groups. However, the notion of primacy of interests in policy making ignores values, ideas and beliefs that motivate action. Such notion also assumes a neutral institutional arena when institutions often privilege some interests. Further, the notion of interest cannot explain paradigm changes. Arguments over the best course of action to pursue in order to help societies achieve their desired goals are part of the politics of policy making. It takes significant consideration and debate regarding the causal effects to evaluate alternative ideas for change (or lack thereof). These arguments are ideational in the sense that participants weigh the evidence about these policy possibilities, apply values, invoke concepts, and utilize reason. The process of creating decisions includes using concepts for altering the world (or stopping things from happening) while the policy maker goes about their work. Majone argues this very cogently and concludes: “We miss a great deal if we try to understand policy making solely in terms of power, influence, and bargaining, to the exclusion of debate and argument.”²⁷

On the other hand, ideas require advocates—people who devote time and effort to promoting policy change—in order to develop and succeed. If the policy initiative is effective, these “entrepreneurs”—politicians, bureaucrats, experts, or lobbyists for interest groups—stand to gain professional advancement. In a similar vein, certain players support the concepts of the established interests that are reflected in the policies that are in place. These business owners are specialists, officials, and lobbyists for interest groups, and they stand to lose if their proposals are rejected. In other words, ideas can only have an impact on policy if they are in line with powerful institutions and interests. That is, ideas may influence policy only when aligned with strong interests and institutions.

Institutions may mean rules, structures and routines that constrain or enable political behaviours. Institutions shape how interests compete and how ideas gain traction. Each of the three major schools of institutionalism has its variant focus, namely, under historical institutionalism, policy paths are shaped by historical sequence and path dependence; early choices lock in future options. Under rational choice institutionalism, institutions provide the rules of the game within which rational actors pursue their interests. In sociological institutionalism, institutions are infused with norms and meaning that shape behaviour beyond instrumental calculations²⁸. Emphasis on structural determinism underplays agency and creativity. Institutions may come to be treated static. When seen dynamic, they are products of belief. In their essence, intuitions are embodiments of past value interpretations and, as well, power of interests. Understood as rules, structure,

²⁷ Giandomenico Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

²⁸ Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” *Political Studies* 44, no. 5 (1996): 936–957.

routine path dependence institutions can explain stability better than transformation/ abrupt change²⁹.

Conclusion of the above discussion is that the use of Triple I in the explanation of public policy decisions and their longevity or otherwise overtime, is that no one of the three factors can fully explain a public policy making phenomenon alone; the Triple I – interest, institutions and ideas – have to be seen in their interaction, interdependence and interpenetration. In order to see these factors in interaction and interpenetration in our study, there is need to map out actors and stakeholders involved in the interplay of interests, and institutions in the establishment and termination of the now famous *Devolution Plan, 2000* undertaken by the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf. Below is given a list of relevant stakeholders.

1. The military headed by Musharraf
2. Politicians belonging mainly to two parties, namely, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) often called PML-N and Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Musharraf toppled Nawaz Sharif, who headed the PML-N. Members of the party were as such against the Musharraf's regime and its initiatives. On the other hand, the party contained dissidents who tended to change their loyalties. When representing people in legislatures politicians are styled as Members of National Assembly (MNAs) at the federal level and Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) at the provincial level. Now out of office, several MNAs and MPAs lost their perks and privileges and nourished anger against Musharraf.
3. Bureaucracy, particularly the District Management Group which manned the Federal and Provincial secretariats, public sector corporate bodies and commissions and, above all, the local district governments, enjoying multiple executive, judicial and revenue collection, and law and order powers. The DMG component of bureaucracy resisted change.
4. Under the federal constitution, the provincial governments had the right to establish local governments and supervise their functioning. Any change in local government structure required meaningful consultation with them.
5. Civil society and media, promoting revival of local government as a constitutional right.
6. Donors including multilateral agencies of the United Nations and bilateral governments and their agencies, with all their benefits to Pakistan and their burdens on the country.
7. Ordinary Pakistanis, voters.

Some of the actors/ stakeholders were more active in the establishment of the Devolution Plan 2000, others were more decisive in its termination. All were

²⁹ Schmidt, "Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously," 1–25.

involved in one way or another in the interplay of interests, institutions and ideas. This is taken up in the next sections.

Section-IV: Mapping The Stakeholders

In military as a stakeholder in the Devolution Plan 2000, all the three factors of the 'Triple I' concept are reflected and interacting with one another. The Pakistan Military pursues a number of interests as an institution, which link it with all other institutions in Pakistan, particularly political institutions because they relate to authoritative decisions affecting all groups in the society³⁰. In the peculiar setting of Pakistan's political life, the military institution has been active, particularly in foreign policy decisions and economic health of the country. This means that Pakistan military leadership looks at the two things as vital values which, in term, bestows the military with important ideational power³¹.

The major proximate reason for military takeover in October 1999 seems to be its institutional interest³². Musharraf was appointed as Chief of the Army Staff because the then Prime Minister had forced the resignation of General Jehangir Karamat, Musharraf's predecessor. The humiliating sacking was repeated in the form of attempted removal of Musharraf when he was returning from a visit to Sri Lanka in October 1999³³. Military was not happy with the performance of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister. The army came to see two choices. It could either watch the removal of its chief for the second time. This could have divided the army and undermined its eminence in the power structure. Or, it could take the plunge, they took over. After the takeover, the military expounded its ideas, the seven-point reform agenda.

1. Rebuild national confidence and morale: Restore trust in state leadership and institutions.
2. Strengthen the federation: Remove inter-provincial disharmony and build national cohesion.
3. Revive the economy: Stabilize the financial system and restore investor confidence.
4. Ensure law and order: Dispense swift and accessible justice.
5. Depoliticize state institutions: Remove political interference from government departments.
6. Devolution of power: Shift administrative and political authority to the grassroots level.

³⁰ Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1990).

³¹ Aqil Shah, *The Army and Democracy: Military Politics in Pakistan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

³² Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

³³ Shah, *The Army and Democracy*.

7. Ensure across-the-board accountability: Crack down on corruption and transparently manage public offices.

After the takeover, the immediate interest of the military was to seek legitimacy of its rule. For this the military used its characteristics as Pakistan's institution par excellence. It has/ had a history of asserting its predominance since 1953 when the Corps Commander, Lahore, imposed martial law in the city³⁴. Since then, a number of martial rules were imposed. The 1999 takeover was attributed to the Chiefs of Staffs of Armed Forces, and Corps Commanders of Pakistan Army' led by Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf'. These entities acted as body, representing the military as an institution. On the military's behalf, Musharraf issued proclamation of emergency, which made Musharraf Chief Executive of the Islamic republic of Pakistan who, on the authority of the Proclamation, issued the Provisional Constitution Order on the same day, i.e. October 14, 1999. The military thus constructed its own framework to exercise dominance over the country. It secured validation from the superior courts, on the basis of the doctrine of state necessity which held that on 12th October 1999, a situation arose in which the Constitution provided no solution and that intervention by the Armed forces became inevitable. In a way, military as institution put constraints on other institutions particularly judiciary. Arguments were made on the basis of the principle *salus populi suprema lex* (welfare of people, the supreme law). Both of the strategies show how ideas were put into the service of institutional interest.

Bureaucracy as a Stakeholder

The higher bureaucracy in Pakistan meant the group that succeeded the all powerful colonial group, the British Indian Civil Service. Higher bureaucracy had gathered lot of power since the inception of the country. In her early life, Pakistan faced tremendous problems of building a country. The higher bureaucracy managed the task, bringing a degree of order to the chaos created by partition of British India. The revenues were collected and other traditional functions were carried out in much the same way as before partition. With respect to its powerfulness, the higher bureaucracy provided a Finance Minister, a Governor General and Prime Minister during the first decade, 1947-1957. Some of its members flourished even under the military regime of Ayub Khan³⁵.

Administrative reforms under Bhutto were envisaged to minimise the power of the higher bureaucracy by converting it into a group – District Management Group – along with other ten groups. However, the DMG was allowed to fill the positions of commissioner, deputy commissioner, and assistant

³⁴ Keith B. Callard, *Pakistan: A Political Study* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957).

³⁵ Henry F. Goodnow, *The Civil Service of Pakistan: Bureaucracy in a New Nation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1964).

commissioner. “Occupying these positions”, writes an ex-member of the group, the DMG established a sphere of influence, and in conjunction with their counterparts from the Armed Forces gradually gained a stranglehold on secretariat positions in the regimes of General Zia ul Haq, Benazir Bhutto, and Nawaz Sharif. It was only after the coup of 1999, with Lt General Tanvir Naqvi, that the DMG was dealt a serious blow”³⁶.

Politicians as Stakeholders

Like the colonial bureaucracy, most of the political families have had their origin in the British rule in India. Following their conquest of areas that now constitute Pakistan, the British relied heavily upon the support of the powerful landed elite. The relationship between the two was one of mutual benefit, with the British using landed and tribal elites as allies to ensure the maintenance of order and effective economic accumulation in exchange for state patronage. After independence in 1947, institutions such as electoral politics and government bureaucracy (civil, armed and judicial) acted as mechanisms that facilitated the landed elite in ever remaining in the corridors of power in the country. During 1980s, the military also facilitated other groups, particularly traders and industry to form part of the political elite³⁷. During the democratic period of 1988-99, four democratically elected political governments gained power, but none of them focused on the local government system. They preferred instead to rely on provincial elites using their local patronage system to keep them in power.

With the Supreme Court verdict in favour of Musharraf’s takeover, in 1999, the political initiative and mobilization power came to rest with the military government. The political forces, on the other hand, were fragmented, demoralised, and leaderless. A number of politicians, e.g. Chaudhries of Gujrat were sympathetic to the army³⁸. Many others were unable to pose any real challenge to the military regime’s restructuring of the political system. No effective opposition on the part of politicians was built against the military’s initiative to restructure the local government. Even the politicians who were members of the legislative bodies did not present any active resistance to Devolution Plan.

Provincial Governments as Stakeholders

In the 1973 constitution, the subject of local government remained with the provincial government as a residual power. More importantly, the promotion of

³⁶ A. Chaudary, *Political Administrators: The Story of Civil Service of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁷ Akmal Hussain, *Elite Politics in an Ideological State: The Case of Pakistan* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1979).

³⁸ F. M. Masood, H. Iqbal, and M. Waris, “Pattern of Politics of Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain during Musharraf Era,” *Journal of Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2018): 57–69.

local government institutions was made part of chapter 2 relating to Principles of Policy. Article 32 of the 1973 Constitution provided as follows:

The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of elected representatives of the areas concerned and, in such institutions, special representation will be given to peasants, workers and women³⁹.

Although the provincial governments were a major stakeholder in any restructuring of local government institutions, they seemed to have remained circumspect on the matter. An important reason for this appears to have been that the four provinces were either headed by military generals or by individuals who were sympathetic to, or supportive of, the military takeover in October 1999. The provinces remained passive with regard to the restructuring of the local government.

Civil Society and Public Opinion

During the decade of 1990s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had proliferated in Pakistan and were acting vibrantly on national issues. Their emphasis was right-based since the 1973 constitution had expressly stated that participation of women, peasants and workers was to be ensured in local government institutions. The NGOs were advancing ideas related to human rights and promoting human dignity. In their advocacy campaigns, local NGOs were very much helped by international civil society organisations as well as multilateral (e.g. UNDP) and bilateral (e.g. CIDA) bodies.

Multilateral Organisations

Apart from their support to civil society organisations, multilateral and bilateral organizations were direct external influencers with regard to Devolution of Power in Pakistan. Thinking had grown among multilateral/ bilateral donors on the need for decentralisation to lower tiers of government. The World Bank strongly emphasized the need for “re-examining the roles of Commissioners and their Deputies” and for “safeguards to prevent their encroachment on local governments and intervention in their affairs”⁴⁰.

International agencies may be said to be promoting ideas on good governance. They also had interests – interests in the official execution of their country plans. For the establishment of devolution, most were ready to fund a program that would bring about devolution; CIDA ran the Democratic Governance Program mainly devoted to support “the devolution of power, decentralisation of

³⁹ National Assembly of Pakistan, *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 1973).

⁴⁰ James Manor, *The Political Economy of Democratic Decentralization* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1999).

administration and the participation of citizens in local governance”⁴¹. This, the CIDA hoped would lead to “improved local government policies and policy implementation, effective local democratic institutions and practices, and effective citizen’s voice in setting local priorities and delivering social service.”

Section-V: The Interplay of ‘Triple I’ and The Termination of The Devolution Plan

Elections under the provision of the plan were held in phases, beginning December 2000 and ending August 2001⁴². All tiers of the local government began functioning. Interplay of the various factors began to be re-invigorated, partly because of empirical evidence pointing to inadequacies of the new local government system. Such evidence emboldened some of the stakeholders who had hitherto exercised prudence and remained silent. Prominent among such stakeholders was the higher bureaucracy.

Just after the new local system began functioning, the Dawn pointed out quite early November 12, 2001, to the turf battles between the District Nazim, the District Coordination Officer and the relevant police officers. Such small issues such as who was going to get what sort of transport facility, what sort of house to live in and what sort of additional frills and perks, tended to occupy the centre of attention.

By and by ‘battles’ became more serious, resulting in sorts of sabotage of the development work under the local government entities. For example, in an important district the District Nazim and DCO fell out. Owing to the standoff between the two, over the particular period, only nine out of 273 development schemes were processed⁴³.

In the wake of the Dawn’s comments on new local government system, several other turf battles were reported. “In many districts unseemly and undignified tussles broke out between Nazims and DCOs as to who would occupy the erstwhile deputy commissioner’s office”⁴⁴. The matter then extended to the criticism of the design, particularly the one related to the need for the institution of magistracy in the district administration. An ex-member of the DMG commenting on the then undesirable law and order situation in the Balochistan province poignantly wrote:

⁴¹ Rasul Bakhsh Rais, Syed Mubashir, and Muhammad Amjad-Saqib, “Re-Inventing Governance: A Case Study on Devolution,” in *Devolution and Governance: Reforms in Pakistan* (2008), 333.

⁴² S. Bari and B. H. Khan, *Local Government Elections 2001* (Islamabad: Pattan Development Organization, 2001).

⁴³ Government of Punjab, *Amendment to the Local Government Ordinance, 2001* (Lahore: Government of Punjab, 2005).

⁴⁴ Chaudary, *Political Administrators*

“What has not helped is the administrative reorganisation called devolution of perhaps more accurately Naqvi’s demolition plan ... The focus of the administration has been torn apart by doing away of the district administration setup which had so successfully maintained law and order while establishing deep linkages with the tribes. Naqvi, whose only qualification for administrative reorganisation was that he had progressed to the rank of Lieutenant General in the Army, set about remaking the state with zeal of the ignorant⁴⁵.

One observer found sluggishness in the system and wrote:

“the lethargy, which surrounds the new grassroot structure of government, i.e. the nazims and their cohorts, offer little hope for delivering efficient government. In hindsight, there has been an important lesson in what has followed the tearing down of the previous order under the deputy commissioner and commissioner. Such an order needed to be revamped and reformed, rather than thrown out of the window as a precursor for long overdue reforms”⁴⁶.

Active opposition from the bureaucracy was supportive of the activities of the politicians, particularly in the opposition of the government. After the establishment of Devolution, Musharraf moved quite quickly to perpetuate his rule. With self-appointment as President after Tarrar in June, 2001, Musharraf sought more legitimacy through a referendum in April 2002. In the referendum, support of District Nazims was sought which went to the discredit of the local government system. In October 2002, general elections were held. By that time Musharraf had been able to sew up a new party, Muslim League Quaid-i-Azam, (PML-Q).

Allegations of marred elections affected government’s credibility. But Musharraf was working for perpetuation of his rule and more legitimacy. Through PML-Q leader, Shujaat Hussain, he was able to muster help from the religious party, Mutahidda Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), a party having government in a province and being a coalition member in another (Ibid). Musharraf achieved several of his objectives through the seventeenth amendment to the Constitution, with two important concessions to the opposition: constitutional protection to the new local government would end by December, 2009, and Musharraf would resign as Chief of the Army Staff in December 2004⁴⁷. He refused to step down as COAS by the appointed date.

The October 2002 elections resulted in revival of democratic legislatures and government at federal and provincial levels. Politicians came to possess an opportunity to work against the longevity of the local self-government established

⁴⁵ S. Mahmood, “The Devolution Debate,” in D. H. A. Rizvi and A. Khatoon, *The Evolution of Devolution: A Critical Study of the New Local Government System* (Lahore: Mashal Books, 2007).

⁴⁶ Farhan Bukhari, “The News,” July 29, 2004.

⁴⁷ Government of Pakistan, *Seventeenth Amendment to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2003)

under the Devolution Plan 2000. The first success came in the form of amendment in 2003 whereby Nazims were made answerable to the chief minister of a province. The Chief Executive's procedure for suspending the Zila Nazim was modified to significantly expand the province executive's authority. The suspension period was extended from thirty to ninety days. The provincial assembly's role was eliminated. Rather, an inquiry was required to be conducted by the Local Government Commission. If it determined that the Zila Nazim should be removed, the Chief Executive of the province had the authority to decide whether to do so. Additionally, the authority to suspend was extended to all Nazims, including UC Nazims, which was previously limited to Zila Nazims. The province's chief executive was granted the authority to suspend any Zila Nazim order⁴⁸.

Housing, college education, and certain other major responsibilities were re-centralized. For other important tasks including public health, municipal governance, and community development, the provincial government established parallel field formations. The number of women's seats was cut from four to two, while the number of generally elected members was lowered from twelve to six. The issue of administrative directives was even more important for devolution changes. Districts were prohibited from moving any education department employee, regardless of rank, without the Chief Executive's express consent. Even after the PFC award, the amount and timing of the provincial government's funding flow, particularly to TMA, may be erratic. By issuing administrative directives, the provincial finance department persisted in imposing its will on district government spending. An amendment introduced in 2005, gave the provincial government the authority to order any local government to examine and revise its budget if it was found to have broken any budgetary regulations. Acts passed by provincial governments further reduced the powers of local governments established by Musharraf, almost reshaping them⁴⁹ (Ibid).

The politicians in the major opposition political parties, namely, PPP and PML-N gathered in London on May 14, 2006, and signed a 36-point Charter of Democracy. It primarily outlined a framework to end military dictatorships, restore true civilian democratic rule, and prevent future political intervention. The document provided a roadmap for the parties to work together. At the same time, it helped the opposition to solicit more active help globally, particularly from the United States of America. Internal and external forces came together to strip Musharraf of uniform. Within a few months of the 2008 elections, he had to resign, fate of his Devolution Plan hanging in the balance.

Indeed, the original shape of Musharraf's Devolution Plan was changed by Musharraf himself as compromises with elected politicians in the form of

⁴⁸ Government of Punjab, *Amendment to the Local Government Ordinance, 2001* (Lahore: Government of Punjab, 2003).

⁴⁹ Chaudary, *Political Administrators*.

amendments to the Local Government Ordinances, 2001, in the years 2000 and 2005⁵⁰. Rumours about demise of the system were rife and local councils in the Punjab got together to form Local Councils Association of the Punjab (LCAP) in 2007. With local councils of other provinces, Association for Development of Local Governance (ADLG) was founded in 2009 to advocate for the retention of Musharraf's system. The effort was of no avail, and system created under Devolution Plan 2000 was demolished by provinces one after the other.

Conclusion

The Devolution Plan 2000 represented one of the most ambitious attempts in Pakistan's history to restructure local governance by transferring administrative, political, and fiscal authority to elected local institutions. Emerging in response to a longstanding governance deficit and neglect of local government, the reform incorporated ideas of decentralisation, participation, inclusiveness, accountability, and improved public service delivery. These ideas were supported by domestic reform advocates, civil society organisations, governance experts, and international development agencies promoting decentralisation as a component of good governance.

However, the establishment and termination of the Devolution Plan cannot be explained by a single factor. The analysis through the Three-I framework demonstrates that public policy outcomes emerge from the interaction of interests, institutions, and ideas. In the establishment phase, the military regime under General Pervez Musharraf aligned its institutional interests with reform-oriented ideas. Devolution served not only governance objectives but also broader political purposes, including restructuring administrative authority, creating a new grassroots political base, and strengthening the legitimacy of military rule.

The reform, however, disrupted existing institutional arrangements and power relations. The higher bureaucracy, particularly the District Management Group, viewed devolution as a challenge to its historically dominant role in district administration. Although bureaucratic resistance remained limited during the military regime, it resurfaced as implementation difficulties increased. Similarly, provincial governments and political actors, initially constrained by military dominance, regained influence after the restoration of elected governments and gradually sought to reclaim authority over local institutions.

The termination of the Devolution Plan was therefore the result of a changing configuration of interests, institutions, and ideas rather than merely administrative shortcomings. As political parties regained institutional strength, their ideas of democratic governance and provincial autonomy converged with

⁵⁰ A. Z. K. Sherdil and M. A. Rana, *Assessment of Local Government System in Punjab: Policy Recommendations for Reform* (Lahore: Institute of Public Policy, Beaconhouse National University, 2008).

interests opposed to the military-designed local government structure. Through amendments and administrative measures, provincial governments progressively weakened the original framework, leading to its eventual replacement after 2008.

The study demonstrates that policy reforms are sustained not only by the quality of their design but also by institutional support and stakeholder alignment. The experience of the Devolution Plan 2000 shows that even comprehensive reforms with strong normative appeal may remain vulnerable when they lack a durable consensus among competing actors. The Triple I framework, therefore, provides a useful explanation of how interests, institutions, and ideas interact to shape the emergence, evolution, and decline of public policy reforms.

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