

Q) Discuss in detail the development of local self-governments in Pakistan. [20]

1) Introduction:

The development of local self-government system in Pakistan has evolved through many phases since the country's inception in 1947. The process has been influenced by historical, political, administrative factors leading to changes in the structure and functioning of local governance.

2) What is a local self-government system:

A local self-government system, also known as local governance system or municipal system, refers to the administrative organisation and management of public affairs at the local or community level within a country. The main purpose of this system is to provide essential services and address the specific needs of local communities efficiently and effectively.

Development of local self govt in Pakistan-

1) Early Years after Independence (1947-1958):

After gaining Independence, Pakistan initially adopted a decentralized governance model, inspired by Government of India Act 1935. The country established a 3-tier local government model, consisting of Union Councils at the grass roots level, Tensil Municipal Boards at intermediate level and District Boards at district level.

2) Centralization under Ayub Khan's Regime (1958-1971)

In 1958, a military coup led by General Ayub Khan brought an end to the democratic rule and ushered ~~the~~ ~~the~~ centralization in Pakistan. Ayub Khan introduced the Basic Democracies system in 1960, abolishing the existing local government structure and replacing it with Basic Democracy Councils. These councils were appointed rather than elected and served as an instrument to consolidate power in the hands of central government.

3) Return of Local Government in 1972:

In 1972, Pakistan returned to a democratic system, and the local government system was reintroduced. This time, the local governments were given the status of "autonomous institutions of local self government". However, the system faced many challenges and elected local bodies were dissolved at various points due to political disputes.

4) Devolution Plan of 2001:

In 2001, under the presidency of General Pervez Musharraf, a significant step towards decentralization was taken with the introduction of the Local Government Devolution Plan.

The plan aimed to transfer administrative and financial powers from the provincial governments to local governments. It established District Nazims (Mayors) and Union Nazims (Chairpersons) through direct elections, along with the creation of district and union councils.

This plan sought to empower local governments, promote public participation & improve service delivery.

5) Changes in local Government structure:

In subsequent years, there were changes in the local government structures and functions. Different provinces introduced their variations of local government laws and systems for instance, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa introduced a local government system with village councils, while Sindh adopted a system with Town and Union - Committees.

6) Recent Reforms (2019-2021):

In 2019, the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) introduced a new local government law in Punjab, followed by similar reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other provinces. These reforms aimed to strengthen the local government system, ~~provide~~ promote decentralization, and enhance service delivery at the grass-to grass roots level. They sought to empower local government by transferring more authority and resources to elected representatives.

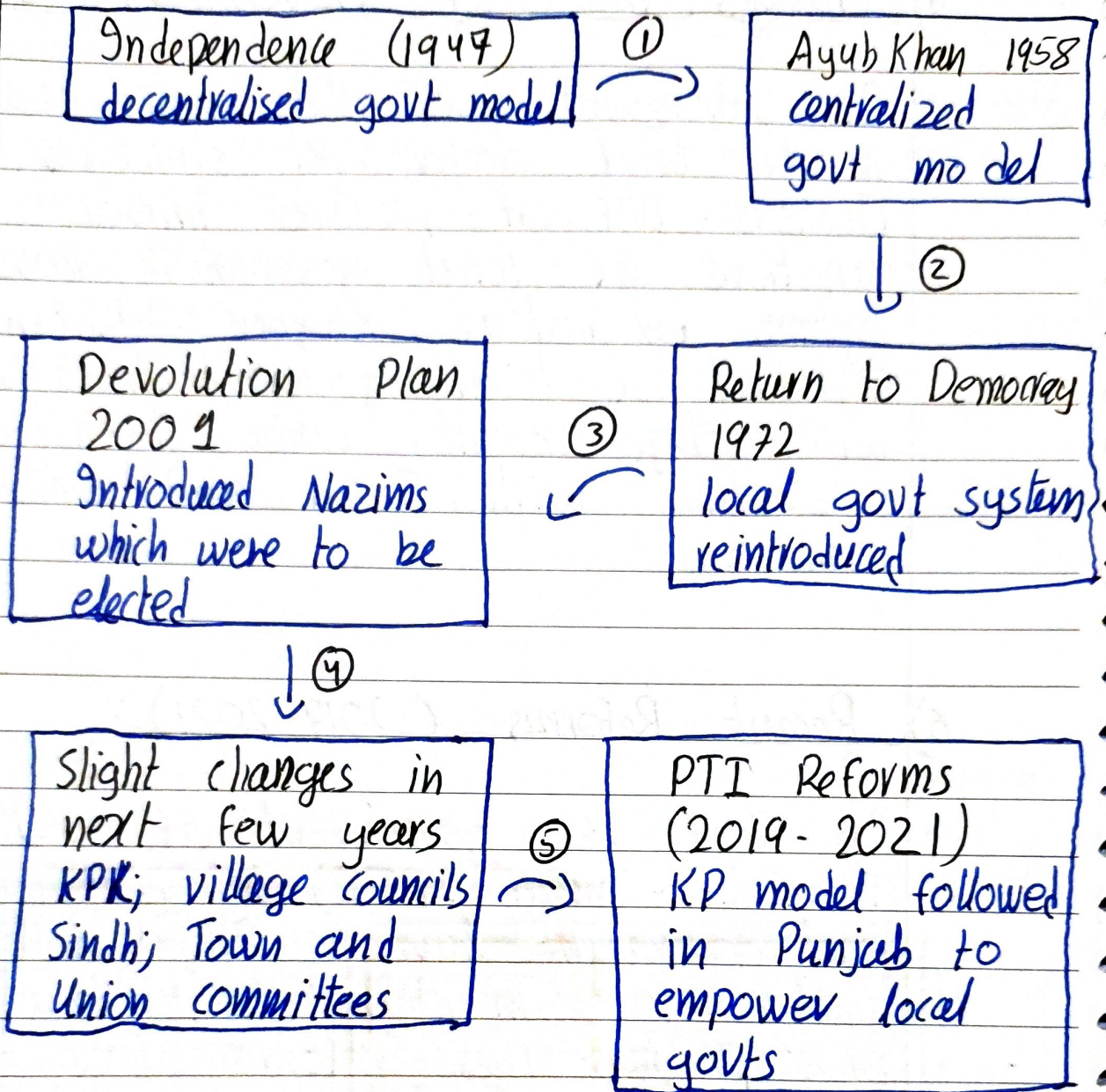


Fig 1 Overview of the development of local govt system in Pakistan.

7) Conclusion:

In a nutshell, the local government system has evolved through ~~the~~ various phases. Despite these evolutions, the development of local ~~the~~ self-government in Pakistan still faces many challenges. None the less, the country continues its journey towards effective and ~~robust~~ empowered local government system with the resolve to build a robust and responsive local government system that can serve the people.