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## The History of Local Governance in Pakistan: What Lessons to Learn?

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### ABSTRACT

Most studies on decentralisation in developing countries reveal that the failure of decentralizing was due to inadequate local government framework, ineffective implementation or capture of local government by interest groups or a combination of these factors. The result was the inadequate delivery of services at the local level and failure to strengthen grassroots democracy. We argue that unlike most developing countries, the lessons learned from the case of Pakistan demonstrates that right from the outset the purpose of decentralisation was not to decentralise power and authority but to meet two prime objectives. First, strengthening of civil and military bureaucracies to establish the most centralised and coercive government structures through the political marginalisation of mainstream political parties and; second to co-opt newly emerging politicians from local councils who could act as conduits between the local constituencies and military established governments.

**Keywords:** decentralisation, good governance, military dominance, patronage client politics

### INTRODUCTION

Decentralisation of power and authority is considered to be a key to achieving more democracy at the grassroots level by policy analysts, international financial institutions, and donor countries (Malik 2016, p.2). Decentralisation is also a major condition for development aid provided by international donors. As 'democratisation has become a central concept introduced by the donor countries and international financial institutions in the developing world in both reality and international donor thinking, democratic decentralisation has also taken on increased importance' (Malik 2016, p.2).

Democratic decentralisation is defined as a strategy that brings service delivery closer to consumers, improves the responsiveness of the central government to public demands, improves the efficiency and quality of public services and empowers lower units to become more involved (Manor 1999). Most importantly, it significantly adds to a democratic culture at the local level (Manor 1999). Decentralization is classified into four types, i.e. privatization; administrative (delegation and de-concentration) decentralization; fiscal decentralization; and

devolution (political/ democratic decentralization) (Manor 1999). Overall, however, effective evolution needs to be accompanied by administrative and fiscal decentralisation. The recent wave of decentralisation in most developing countries preferred a devolutionary form of decentralisation.

The states of Karnataka and Kerala in India and Porto Alegre in Brazil present a success story of decentralisation. Karnataka's success was because of already existing strong governance based on a competitive party system, free press, a professional civil service (Crook and Manor 1998; Vaddiraju and Sangita 2011). However, Karnataka could achieve more success in political rather than administrative and fiscal decentralisation, whereas Kerala did much more towards this end (Inbanathan 2009). In Porto Alegre in Brazil, the success of decentralisation was because of a strong and efficient central state, a well-developed civil society, and highly organised political forces (Wyngowski 2013). In other countries such as Cote D'Ivoire and Ghana, where the pre-conditions mentioned in the above cases were absent, the experiments with decentralisation were not

that successful (Conyers 2007). In Cote D'Ivoire, the weak links between elected councillors and the population resulted in an enhancement of the public profile of the commune at the expense of local development (Conyers 2007). The major issue was central government controls over local government revenue-raising making decentralisation ineffective (Conyers 2007). In Ghana, fiscal and political decentralisation did not accompany administrative decentralisation (Awortwi 2011). Opting for mere administrative decentralisation 'made LGs so subordinate to the central government that CG politicians and executives who benefited from weak LG systems did not have any desire to break free of the path' (Awortwi 2011, p.370). Decentralisation, therefore, eventually led to re-centralisation. Decentralisation in Ethiopia though followed the narrative of 'equity and fairness' and 'efficiency and productivity,' did devolve important land administration prerogatives to the local administrative structures. However, it further strengthened the hierarchical system of local administration (Chinigo 2014), at the expense of participation and empowerment of local communities. In South Asia, decentralisation in countries such as Bangladesh has also been a failure (Crook & Manor's 1998; Khan 2009). The local governments' performance has been disappointing. Decentralisation significantly increased corruption.

In East Asian countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines also, decentralisation could not achieve the desired goals. Decentralisation increased corruption and policy uncertainty across different levels of government (Hadiz 2004) and promoted organisations and groups that were not accountable and evaded the rule of law (Hadiz 2010). Further, Hadiz (2010) argued that the design of institutional change resulted in unintended consequences. Decentralisation brought a social and institutional change that eventually led to social conflict in local areas of power (Hadiz 2010).

In the Philippines, though the local government system provided a strong framework for local government discretion and downward accountability (Yilmaz & Varsha 2013) and allocated 40 per cent of the national taxes to local government, the culture of patronage obstructed the discretion on paper to translate into downward accountability (ibid 2013). The result was the weak implementation of decentralised government. There are limits to the way the examples above can be generalized across all countries within the less-developed world; they,

however, suggest that excluding few exceptions, decentralization efforts vividly illustrate the distorted picture of local governance and in some cases (such as Ghana and Brazil) the failure of decentralization that led to re-centralization of governance. However, it can be argued that the failure in most cases (excluding decentralization during Ershad's period), was due to either inadequate local government framework, ineffective implementation or capture of local government by interest groups or a combination of these factors. It is in this context that the case of decentralisation in Pakistan adds to the literature on decentralisation in developing countries. As will be demonstrated in this article, unlike most other countries, local governments in Pakistan failed because most of the time, the primary aim of decentralisation, was to create a setup that could serve the predatory interests of military dictators. Decentralisation aimed to strengthen the military's power to establish the most centralised government structures. Coercive centralisation through decentralisation was achieved by the political marginalisation of existing political parties and by co-opting newly emerging politicians from local councils who could act as conduits between the local constituencies and military established governments. These newly emerged local leaders eventually became more active in establishing their links with the central government than strengthening their links in their respective constituencies. The military regimes, therefore, always laid more emphasis on introducing new local governments. A brief history of decentralisation in Pakistan will illuminate the point. However, before providing a glance at the history of decentralisation in Pakistan, a brief section on research methodology is in order.

### METHODOLOGY

Following Labaree (2009) typology of literature review, this article is based on a combination of 'theoretical' and 'historical' review of the literature on decentralisation using case study method. The theoretical review is conducted to examine relevant studies regarding decentralisation in developing countries. The literature review is concept-centric. Thus, the review of concepts such as better service delivery, accountability of state institutions, and grassroots democracy through decentralisation form the framework of a review. These concepts cover relevant literature on the topic not confined to one geographic location. The review constructively, albeit briefly informs about what has been learned about decentralisation in

various developing countries. The theoretical review helps to establish the reasons behind the successes and failures of decentralisation in most of these countries. On the other hand, the 'historical' review of the literature illuminates how the case of Pakistan is different to most developing countries and how it adds to the existing literature on decentralisation. The historical review focuses on examining the historical context of decentralisation in Pakistan, starting with the pre-colonial period.

The case study approach is used to answer the major question, i.e. 'what lessons to learn from decentralisation in Pakistan and how it adds to the existing research on decentralisation in developing countries?' Following Simons (2009), the case study approach is considered to be an appropriate method for qualitative research such as this one that necessitated the examination of the history of all tiers of state institutions in Pakistan. This method allows the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of specific actors, their policies, and behaviours through time (Woodside 2010). This article explicitly demonstrates such an understanding.

According to Markus and Robey et al. (1988) and Mohr (1982), theoretical models (including historical) are more commonly derived from variance (factor) or process theories. Variance theories incorporate independent variables that cause variation in dependent variables. In contrast, process theories use events and states to help explain dynamic phenomena (Markus and Robey, 1988; Mohr 1982). Both models were considered appropriate for this paper, and the literature survey selected journal articles, books, newspaper reports and non-government organisations (NGOs) reports to analyse the variation in dependent variables underlying successes and failures of decentralisation as well as social and political processes that led to such a phenomenon. Finally, though the general relevance of a specific case might have its limitations, it is hoped that this paper presents the case of decentralisation in Pakistan in a manner that it may have broader relevance

### History of Local Governance in Pakistan

Pakistan is in Southern Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea, between India to the east, Afghanistan in the northwest, and China in the north. According to initial estimates of 2017 census, the country's population consists of 210 to 220 million (Dunya News 2017). Pakistan is a federal parliamentary state with a three-tier governance structure. It consists of the central

government (comprising of the national assembly and the Senate), provincial governments, and local governments. A village comprising of approximately 404.68 hectares of land is the basic unit of administration at the local level. A collection of villages forms a union council. Similarly, a group of union councils creates a Tehsil (town) council, and collection of Tehsils councils forms a district council. The history of local government in the areas that became Pakistan in 1947 goes back to the middle of the second to first millennium B.C. when the Aryans for the first time introduced the local government system in the Indian subcontinent (Alderfer 1964). The local government system in India was much extensive compared to other parts of the world (Mattahi 1915).

The villages and towns were small, isolated states-in-miniature, where assemblies with chief executive officers served the local needs (Mattahi 1915). According to Alderfer (1964), since agriculture was the major way of life in India, a village was, therefore, the centre of social life and the dominant political institution. Almost all of their affairs were governed and regulated by custom and community leadership with authority vested in a *Panchayat* (Mattahi 1915). Iqbal (1976) noted that the responsibilities of the *Panchayat* were to allocate land to peasants for cultivation, collect taxes and pay them to the central government, settle disputes, and take care of the provisions of the basic needs of the people. The state functionaries were interested primarily in maintaining law and order and collecting revenue for the central government. Besides this, villages were able to develop their systems and institutions through an evolutionary process (Iqbal 1976). These local bodies flourished as an active organ of the village community and performed development, administrative and judicial functions, not in the modern sense, but in their own way (Iqbal 1976).

Later, during the Muslim period, locally governing bodies continued to function much as before. The Arabs, Ghaznavids, Khiljis, Tughlaqs, and Afghans made no significant changes to the local government system during their rule in the Indian Subcontinent. The village people carried on their affairs in a peaceful and congenial atmosphere (Kosambi 1975). The Mughals, during their period of rule in the sixteenth century, also did not make any significant changes to the traditional patterns and practices of rural government. It was the British who for the first time broke away from the previous

legacy and introduced a new system of local governments after powerfully establishing a highly coercive, centralised state apparatus over diverse regions and nationalities in the Indian subcontinent. The whole system of agricultural production was changed and with it the entire power structure at the village level. The British introduced 'feudalism from below' (Kosambi 1975) for the first time by privatising the land through the law of permanent settlement enacted by Lord Cornwallis in 1870 (Gardezi 1983, p.29). This law introduced a new class of feudal lords. This new class of rural elite was patronised by giving limited representation to them in local councils in the countryside, though the bureaucracy mainly controlled these councils. While on the other hand, urban council's were primarily created to provide municipal services in urban areas (Siddiqui 1992). Such a policy created the rural-urban divide regarding the provision of essential services because rural councils mainly served the interests of rural elites, whereas any such interest groups did not significantly circumscribe urban council's ability to provide municipal services in urban areas.

The colonial legacy persisted in the post-colonial period. Sustenance of such a legacy was because the middle class educated in the English language during the colonial period led the nationalist movements for independence from the British Empire (Guha & Spivak 1983; Talbot 1996). This middle class served in British administration and got exposure to metropolitan culture and ideologies (Alavi 1980). The nationalist movements were, therefore, inspired by the western ideologies, and reproduced modern organisations, such as associations, parties, trade unions, and farmers' cooperatives to fight British rule (Ayaz 2004; Siddiqui 1992). In the end, the primary agenda of indigenous leadership was not to destroy the colonial state structure but to get control over it through modern organisations (Rizvi 1976; Siddiqui 1992).

Pakistan inherited the local government model established by the British colonial powers (Salem & Iftikhar 2012). In the beginning, however, little attention was paid to local governments. Local government members were not elected, and in cases where elections were held, they took place through limited franchise (Waseem 1989). The state was highly centralised and dominated by the civil and military bureaucracy (Jalal 1995; Talbot 1998). Later since the 1950s, for various historical

reasons, the military has dominated the state. Consequently, the military conducted the major experiments of decentralisation in Pakistan to co-opt local elites. Decentralisation was usually introduced by first dissolving the higher-tier elected governments (Friedman 1960).

### Local Governments during 1959-71 and 1977-88

After the independence of Pakistan, the first extensive local government system was introduced in 1958 when the military assumed power through the military coup of General Ayub Khan. The Basic Democracies Ordinance 1959 established the new local governments (Musarrat & Azhar 2012). Ayub Khan dissolved the higher-tier of elected governments in 1959 and revived local governments as the only representative tier of the government. The objective was to control the centre and cultivate pro-military leadership at the local level. For this reason, Friedman (1960) argued that the Basic Democracies Scheme did not introduce democracy as it did not empower people to have control over the government's power except in a tokenistic sense.

Later General Ayub introduced the Municipal Administration Ordinance 1960, which comprised a hierarchical system of four linked tiers. The lowest tier was union councils consisting of elected members. The union council members elected the chairman from amongst themselves (Batool 2014). The higher tiers of local government had some members elected indirectly by these directly elected members and some official members nominated by the government (Batool 2014).

Overall, following colonial legacy, local governments were controlled by the bureaucracy. Deputy Commissioners and Commissioners chief bureaucrats at the district and the division level respectively had the power to annul any proceedings or decisions taken by the local councils. The prime motivation for introducing local governments by Ayub Khan was to legitimise his Presidential Constitution (1962) that gave control of the state to the military through the office of the President (Cheema et al. 2005). After a short democratic term under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972-77), the military once again got control of state power through General Zia-ul-Haq's military coup in 1977 and ousted the government of late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (the founding father of Pakistan Peoples Party). Local governments were revived and reformed, and the Local Government

Ordinance 1979 was enacted that remained operational until 2000 in Pakistan. Zia-ul-Haq introduced the most coercive and centralised state apparatus through the imposition of Martial Law and put the 1973 Constitution (introduced by late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) in abeyance. Local governments were introduced in the absence of national or provincial governments under the direct control of the military. Local government elections were held on a non-party basis in all provinces in Pakistan (Batool 2014; Cheema et al. 2005). Once again the prime reason for introducing a new local government system was to create a new class of politicians prepared to legitimise military rule and ready to serve the interests of the military regime (Jalal 1995).

It is important to note that both during Ayub Khan and later Zia-ul-Haq's military regimes, gave much importance to local governments. However, no efforts were made to empower local governments by providing them with constitutional protection. Lack of constitutional protection put local governments vulnerable to the whims of other tiers of government to suspend local government heads, make changes at their will or abandon them altogether in the long run.

Another important feature of both regimes was that they followed the colonial policy of the urban-rural divide. Ayub Khan increased the share of development funding for rural areas compared to the past because he was relying on significant political support in these regions. Nevertheless, similar to the British period, the significant urban bias in federal and provincial development spending still existed (Amjad 1984). Zia-ul-Haq also maintained rural-urban divide, as his local government system did not require urban councils to share the benefit of such councils increased per capita income with that of rural councils. Cheema et al. (2005, pp 392-393) noted that: Urban councils were privileged for not sharing their resources with rural councils because Zia sought to accommodate the interests of the urban middle classes who had formed the core of the anti-Bhutto movement and it appears that the decision to retain the urban-rural divide, at a time when urban local council incomes were increasing, allowed the state to accommodate strong anti-Bhutto urban middle-class political mobilizations by giving them control, albeit circumscribed, over funds that could be used for

the entrenchment of localized clientelist networks.

The system of non-party elections for local governments introduced by Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq had a long-lasting impact on Pakistani politics. The candidates could not mobilise people on party bases and consequently relied on their clans and castes to support them in local government elections. Consequently, local government elections led to politics based on clan and caste loyalties and significantly segregated population on clan and caste lines. Such loyalties ultimately strengthened the politics of patronage. The case of Zia-ul-Haq is of particular importance in this regard. In 1985, after several years of direct military rule through Martial Law, he revived the 1973 Constitution. The constitution was, however, significantly amended through 8th Constitutional Amendment that distorted the Constitution of 1973 and established indirect military rule through a quasi-Presidential form of government (Batool 2014).

The new political elite that emerged from local councils during his time was elected to national and provincial parliaments through a non-party system of elections and came to power through military patronage and the strength of their clan and caste (Noman, 1988). These new politicians after becoming members of national and provincial parliaments introduced politics based on their experience of local governance, i.e., that they introduced the politics of personalised patronage and started patronising their clan-based constituencies by using development funds to boost their chances to be re-elected (Wilder 1999). Such a situation also created conflict between different tiers of governance, as provincial politicians started considering local councils representatives as their competitors with regards to development funds (Wilder 1999). Such situation persisted even after Zia-ul-Haq death in an aeroplane crash in 1988 due to a systematic weakening of the political party system through local governments by the military in Pakistan. Resultantly, civilian governments after 1988 resisted any meaningful efforts to decentralise power and authority.

### General Musharraf's Local Government System

General Musharraf's introduced a new local government system, through Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2001. His LGO has some distinctions, and is therefore worthy of close examination, as it substantially restructured the

local governments. Previously the powers of the local governments were somewhat limited, and most of the functions were carried out by provincial line departments (a de-concentrated bureaucratic tier that did not report directly to the provincial elected representatives) (Batool 2014; Cheema et al. 2005). Under devolution, a newly elected government was created at the district level and politically linked to local governments at the sub-district levels [Tehsil (town) and union council (see LGO 2001).

The major distinction of the Local Government Ordinance (LGO) 2001 compared to previous ordinances was that it overcame the urban-rural divide and established the local government at three levels: Union Council, Tehsil Council, and District Council (Batool 2014). The Union was the core unit and the Union Nazims (mayor), and Naib Nazims (deputy mayor) were directly elected by the voters and became members of the District and Tehsil Councils, respectively (Batool 2014). The LGO removed the previously existing hierarchical relationship between the local and provincial governments. Local governments were instead directly linked to the President's office through several institutions, such as the National Reconstruction Bureau and the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment (Cheema et al. 2005). Even after the quasi-civilian government was reinstated in 2002 through a presidential referendum that elected Musharraf as the head of the state, and the military-sponsored political alliance under the banner of Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam group) won the elections and formed national and provincial assemblies, for all practical purposes the hold of the central government on local governments remained.

Unlike previous local government systems, Musharraf devolved administrative, financial and development powers to the elected officials in the local councils and all the government departments became accountable to the District Council. The devolution abandoned the Deputy Commissioners' rule, and their successors in office, the District Coordination Officers (DCOs), were subordinated to the District Nazims legally and administratively (Batool, 2014). For the first time, Musharraf also introduced the Provincial Finance Commission to provide an institutional framework to allocate resources between provinces and local governments. Previously only National finance commission existed to provide an institutional framework for resource allocation between federal government and provinces. Another

distinctive feature of the LGOs 2001 was that it allocated 33 per cent reserved seats for women. Musharraf prided his regime for empowering women for the first time in the history of local government in Pakistan. The LGO 2001 also introduced District Monitoring Committees to monitor the work of government departments, Citizens Community Boards to empower citizens to participate in designing and overseeing development projects, and Citizen Police Liaison Committees for promoting the rule of law and protection of civil rights (Hasnain 2008)

Despite several distinctions, however, the LGO 2001 had some similarities with previous local government systems. For example, Musharraf also followed the legacy of previous military regimes and conducted local government elections on the non-party basis that further entrenched the politics of personalised patronage based on clan and caste loyalties.

Moreover, though Musharraf gave a short-term constitutional status to the local government up till 2009 through a Presidential Order (i.e., up till 2009 no government could dissolve local governments formed by Musharraf); the local governments were still not given a constitutional status permanently. Also, though unlike previous military regimes, much fiscal decentralisation was carried out, the planning of the budget remained in the hands of the bureaucracy. The District Coordination Officers (DCOs) and other bureaucrats appointed by the provincial governments prepared the budget proposals, and the district Nazim could propose the prepared budget to the council for approval. If the council failed to approve the budget, it would lead to zero spending fourteen days after the expiration of the financial year (Cheema et al. 2005).

The council was, thus, effectively presented with a fait accompli when a bureaucratically prepared budget proposal was submitted to it by the Nazim for approval. After the dismissal of Musharraf's government in 2008, the Pakistan People's Party under the leadership of Mr Zardari introduced the 18th Constitutional Amendment that enhanced provincial autonomy. By this time, the constitutional restriction on amending local government ordinance of 2001 had already expired in 2009. After that, it became possible for provinces to legislate a local government system of their choosing. Consequently, different provinces opted for different structures for their local governments.

## The History of Local Governance in Pakistan: What Lessons to Learn?

The provincial assembly of Baluchistan passed the Local Government Act in 2010, whereas the provincial assemblies of Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa passed their Local Government Acts in 2013 (UNDP2016).

The Local Government Acts for each province, in their current form, provide limited autonomy to the local councils concerning fiscal management and control over service delivery, revenue, and tax and police departments. While all the Local Government Acts devolved some service delivery functions to local governments, provinces still retained control of large entities such as the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, Sindh Building Control Authority, Lahore Development Authority (LDA), and Solid Waste Management (SWM), etc. (UNDP 2016). They also had administrative control of education and health service delivery (UNDP2016). Moreover, The Local Government Acts of all four provinces subordinated the local governments to the provincial governments in numerous ways. For example, they allowed the provincial Chief Ministers to dismiss a local government or head of the council and appoint officeholders after the dismissal of council leaders (UNDP 2016). Unlike Local Government Acts introduced by the military regimes, the new local government laws introduced by civilian governments in different provinces opted for party-based elections of local governments.

However, the laws provided were excessively deferential to provincial governments and were limited in their scope in providing any meaningful 'democratic ethos which is at the very heart of the idea of Local Government' (PILDAT 2013, p. 26). Overall, the reluctance of provincial governments during the civil rule for establishing strong local governments was because provincial ministers and members of provincial parliaments could keep the development funds in their hands to build their networks of personalised patronage. Such a situation exists because of continuous and long periods of military rule that systematically weakened political parties and democratic political culture that could bring any meaningful change.

The military force silenced dissenting voices and promoted politicians loyal to the military. Local governments were effectively used for this purpose and promoted the politics of patronage. Power and patronage being zero-sum games, any real authority exercised by local governments could only come at the cost of its

political use by provincial and federal governments directly or indirectly controlled by the military even during the civilian rule.

### Decentralisation during the Present Regime

A new government took power in Pakistan in August 2018 and Imran Khan, the cricket legend from the 1990s, became the Prime Minister. There have been widespread comments in local and international media that military establishment orchestrated Khan's rise to power. Soon upon assuming power, and in keeping with the tradition of military governments, Khan dismantled the local government structures in the provinces controlled by his party and introduced a new system.

In Punjab, the Local Government Act of 2019 codified the new system. Other provinces have not yet introduced the new Local Government Acts. The 2019 Act dissolved the existing local government institutions and gave the Punjab government until April 2020 to hold elections for the constitution of new local governments (see Punjab Local Government Act 2019). It reintroduced the rural-urban distinction and prescribed establishment of Metropolitan/Municipal/Town Corporations/Committees for urban areas and Tehsil Councils for rural areas. In a clear departure from earlier local government regimes, the head of each local government will be directly elected by the people. The elected head will have a cabinet to assist him in the discharge of functions (an extensive list [including education, but excluding healthcare] provided in Schedules 3, 4 and 5) by a set of councillors and professionals as specified in the 4<sup>th</sup> Schedule to the Act (see section 19 in the Local Government Act of 2019). In another significant departure from the past, the councillors will be elected on a closed-list proportional representation basis. Thus, elections will be held on a political party basis, and each party will provide a list of its candidates in order.

Depending upon the percentage of votes a party obtains in a local government; its nominees will become councillors for the local governments concerned. In other words, each local government will comprise a multi-candidate constituency. Another unique feature of the new system is the establishment of panchayat and neighbourhood councils for rural and urban areas, respectively. These are envisaged as grassroots forums to ensure democratic participation at the village and ward levels. These forums do not have any inherent power or function under the Act, but



they can be assigned/delegated any function by a local government forum. In other words, there will be institutions which can be used if the Metropolitan/Municipal Corporation or a Tehsil Council intends to do so. Whether the higher forums will be ready to delegate any of their powers and functions will depend upon the pressure grassroots forums can exert. History of devolution in Pakistan, however, does not provide much ground for optimism. As the previous experience since the 1950s has shown, each governance tier wants the higher tier to delegate authority but is reluctant to delegate the same to lower tiers.

The new law maintains the supervisory role of the provincial government by expressly requiring local governments to comply with provincial directions. This oversight extends, in particular, to financial matters. Section 137 requires the Chief Officer of every local government to send to the provincial government for prior appraisal every estimate of receipts and expenditure. The provincial government may suspend any resolution or stop any action of a local government if the same is deemed to be 'prejudicial to public interest' (see Section 228 of the Act). The Act also authorises the Minister, the Secretary or any functionary so deputed by them to attend (and speak to) any meeting/proceedings of a local government.

Further, the Act envisages the creation of a new institution, namely, the Inspectorate of Local Governments, with the exclusive function of inspecting, monitoring and reviewing local governments. This Inspectorate will inspect in detail each local government at least once every year and may commission as many special inspections as deemed appropriate. These inspections are additional to the usual audit processes already in vogue. In a sense, all this undermines the spirit of devolution by making local government subordinate to the provincial government not only in policy but also implementation. Unlike the 2001 system, the new local governments will neither be 'governments,' nor will they have an independent, robust revenue stream to support their initiatives.

### CONCLUSIONS

The article explicitly demonstrates that the reasons behind unsuccessful cases of decentralization in developing countries were inadequate local government framework, ineffective implementation or capture of local government by interest groups or a combination of these factors. On the contrary, the history of decentralisation in Pakistan reveals that the central tendency underlying major

experiments with local governments primarily conducted by non-representative military regimes was to establish the most coercive central state through decentralisation to further accumulate power. The civilian governments, on the other hand, were reluctant to establish strong local governments because provincial ministers and members of provincial parliaments wanted to keep development funds in their hands to build their networks of personalised patronage. Such a situation existed because of continuous and long periods of military rule that systematically weakened political parties and democratic political culture that could bring any meaningful change. The military force silenced dissenting voices and promoted politicians loyal to the military. Local governments were effectively used for this purpose and promoted the politics of patronage. Power and patronage being zero-sum games, any real authority exercised by local governments could only come at the cost of its political use by provincial and federal governments directly or indirectly controlled by the military even during the civilian rule.

Such state of affairs represents a significant paradox as, excluding few exceptions; the purpose of decentralisation was further centralisation of power. The legitimacy of military regimes was established by creating the localised patronage structures through local governments that produced a class of 'collaborative politicians' who acted as conduits between local level constituencies and the non-representative centre. The non-party basis of elections for local governments strengthened the politics of patronage and systemically destroyed the prospects of democratic governments accountable to the people. The practice has been similar to the British period. Before the British period, however, the part of Indian Subcontinent that became Pakistan had a strong tradition of locally governed self-sufficient village communities.

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