

Decentralisation in Pakistan

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Benefits of Decentralisation

- Dilutes State Authority and Control
- Distribution of Power Away from Elite
- Incorporation of Marginalised in Decision Making
- Greater Efficiency of Service Delivery
- Greater Perception of Needs of People

Criticism of Decentralisation

- Can Create Complicated Relationship Between Local and National Development Priorities
- Can Lead to Regional and Financial Inequality
- Leaves Decision Making Open to Capture by Elite Elements and Special Interest Groups

Prerequisites of Decentralisation

- Strong Central State
- Strong Civil Society Closely Associated with State
- Organised Mass-based Political Party/Force
- Structural Reform e.g. Land Reform
- Political Competition



History of Decentralisation in Pakistan

The Colonial Legacy

- Attempts by Non-Representative Central Government to Legitimise Centralisation of Political Power
- Despite Increasing Representation, Discretionary Powers in the Hands of Non-Elected Officials
- Bureaucratic Control Exercised Through Personal Rule of Powerful District Commissioner
- Urban/Rural Divide

Ayub Khan

- 1962 Constitution gave Power to President and Governors
- Further Centralisation Through One Unit Policy and Interventions Against Political Parties
- The Absence of Mass-based Political Parties Created a Lack of Pressure to Decentralise

Basic Democracies (BD)

- Need for Legitimacy met through this System of Circumscribed Representation at the Local Level
- Strong Elements of Bureaucratic Control
 - Provincial Governments and Non-elected Council Chairmen Given Power to Nominate and Suspend Council Members,
 - Also Given Power to Overrule Decisions by Councils
- Rural Elite Co-opted Through BD System
- Introduction of Personalised, Clientelist Politics

Bhutto

- Repealed Basic Democracies, Promulgated but did not Implement LGO 1972 and LGO 1975
- Fear of Losing Power to Regional Mass-based Parties Provided Disincentive for Decentralisation
- Growing Urbanisation Changed the Social Structure
- Consequent Political Change, with the creation of a More Organised and Politically Active Urban Middle Class

Zia-ul-Haq - I

- Centralisation Reinforced Through Direct Military Control of Quasi-Presidential Government
- Implemented Bhutto's LGOs
 - No Constitutional Protection Given to Elected Bodies
 - Provision of Municipal Services Primary Objective
 - Local Governments Given Little Financial Power
- Non-Party Basis of Elections Curtailed Power of Parties, and Perpetuated Clientelist Politics and Elite Capture

Zia-ul-Haq - II

- Urban Councils Enjoyed Higher Levels of Revenue and Income than Rural and Peri-Urban Ones
- Urban Councils Under No Obligation To Provide Funds to Rural or Peri-Urban Areas
- Rural and Peri-Urban Areas Dependent on Provincial Administrative Tier for Financial Support
- Competition between Urban Middle Class and Numerically Strong Rural Elites for Resources

Zia-ul-Haq - III

- Non-Party Based Elections in 1985 Created Localisation of Politics at all Levels
- Revival of Party Basis (1988) Did Not Reverse Localisation of Politics Due to Weakened Parties
- Space Left by Parties Filled by Fluid Local Political Factions
- Disincentive for Parties to Empower Competing Tier of Political Patronage

Summary (1947-2000)

- Institutionalisation of Clientelist, Personalised Politics
- Disempowerment of Provincial Elected Tier
- Circumscribed Power of Elected Local Governments
- Strong Bureaucratic Hold Over Local Governments
- Political Power Highly Centralised

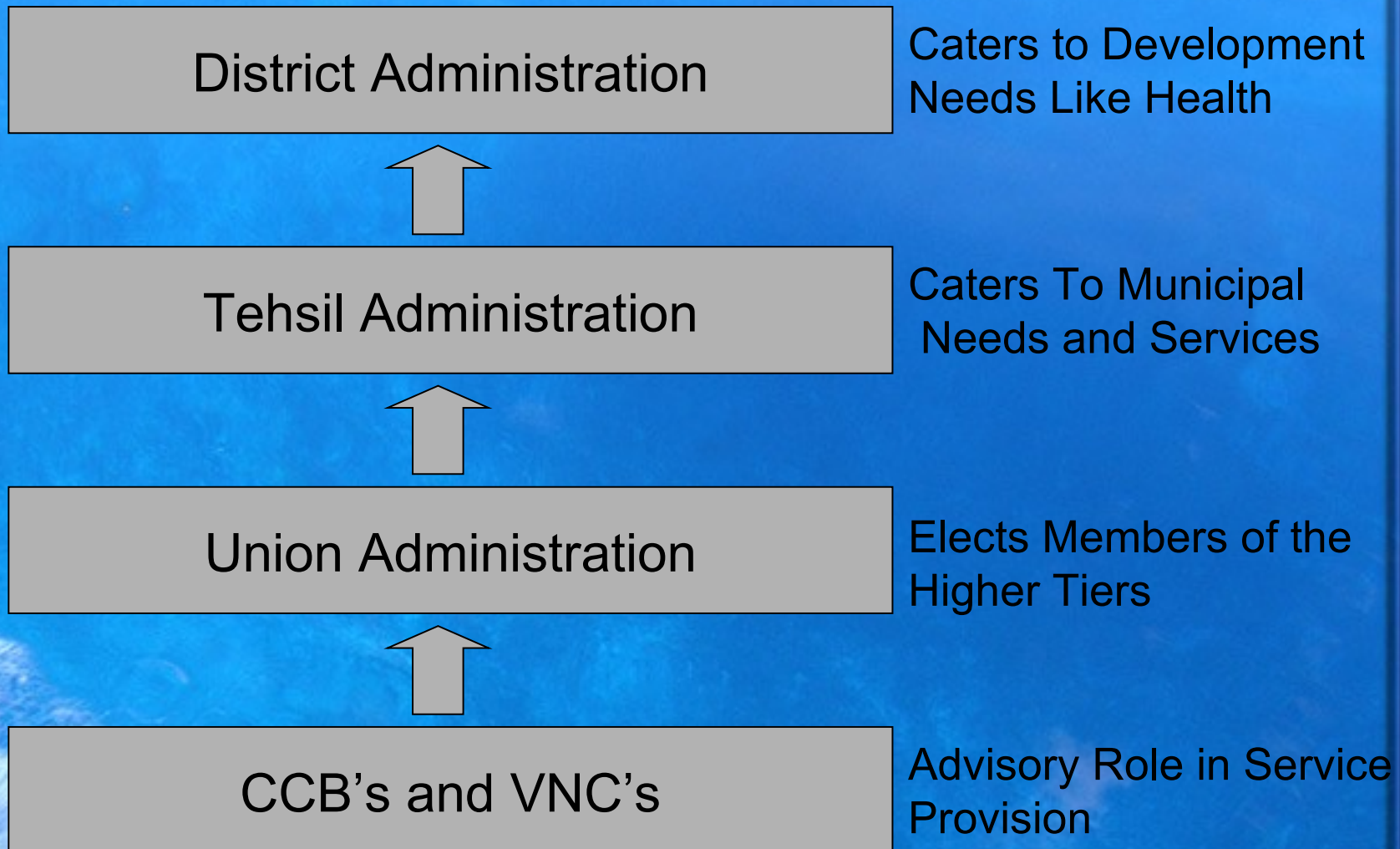
Repairing the System

- Increase Powers and Autonomy of Local Government
- Reduce/Eliminate Bureaucratic Control
- Devolve Some Federal Functions to Provinces
- Reduce Patron-Client Politics
- Balance Power Between Provincial and Local Government
- Provide More Equitable Flow of Resources to Rural/Peri-Urban Areas



The Current Local Government Reforms

Three Tiered Local Government System



Current Reforms - Overview

- Provincial to Local Decentralisation, with no Federal Devolution
- Limited Constitutional Support for Local Governance
- Separation of Service Delivery Functions
 - Some Services Retained by Provinces, Others Devolved to Local Level Such as Health and Education
 - Budgeting, Planning and Development Functions of Services Devolved to Local Level

Overview - II

- Legislative Division Between Urban and Rural Areas Eliminated
 - Pooled Resources and Rural Voting Strength Allow Greater Rural Access to Development Funds
- Users (Citizens) Given Role in Service Delivery Through CCB's and VNC's
- Deputy Commissioner (DC) Replaced by District Coordination Officer (DCO) Answerable to Nazim

Overview - III

- Accountability to Citizens Through Electoral Process
 - Electoral Process Creates Linkages Between Different Levels of Local Government
 - Union Councilors Elected Through Majority Vote
 - District and Tehsil Council Made Up of Nazims and Naib Nazims From the Union Level
 - Seats Reserved for Women and Peasants



LGO 2001 and Pro-Poor Change

Weakening Political Collectivities - I

- Attempt to Institutionalise Role of Military at Centre Through Presidential Power and NSC
- Elections on Non-Party Basis
 - Enables Military to Create Complete Tier of Local Level Political Collaborators
 - Lack of Linkages Between Political Parties and Local Governments Creating Rivalry
- Clientelist Politics Continued
 - In Punjab, 30% Nazims Former MNA's or MPA's, 90% Members of Political Families
 - In Rural Areas, 70% Seats Won by Traditional Elites

Weakening Political Collectivities - II

- Interventions Against Politicians and Political Parties
 - Selective Accountability and Disqualification e.g. Education Criterion
 - Nazims Pressured to Align With Political Parties
 - Alignment of Nazims Gives Rise to Central Control and Friction With Opposition Parties
- Lack of Space for Collective Political Action
 - VNC'S and CCB's Only for Service Delivery, Not Political or Social Reform
 - Citizens Separate from Decision-making,
 - Lack of Vertical Political Linkages
 - VNC's and CCB's Sparingly Implemented

Extent of Electoral Responsiveness

- Nazims Not Necessarily Representative of Majority
- Union Councilors Elected by Popular Vote Have Limited Role in Budgeting and Development Plans
- Skewed Elections and Lack of Power at the Local Level Can Impair Accountability

Bureaucratic Power

- Provincial Bureaucracy Cannot Suspend Local Governments
- Although DCO Under Nazim, Fiscal Planning and Personnel Remain Domain of DCO
- Nazim Lacks Power to Suspend/Transfer Officials
- Provincial Level Bureaucracy Maintains Control Over Appointments Limiting Autonomy of Nazims to Effect Change

Tension Between Provincial and Local Tiers

- No Federal to Provincial Decentralisation, While There Has Been Provincial to Local Devolution
- Lack of Political Ownership by Political Parties Results in Competition Between Parties and Local Governments
- Recent Emergence of Parties as Principals Exacerbates Competition and Rivalry
- Encroachment On Each Others' Perceived Territory Leads to Inter-Tier Conflict, Hampering Efficiency

Extent of Financial Empowerment

- Rule Based System of Transfer (Provisional Finance Commission Awards) Controlled by Bureaucracy
- Inability of Districts to Increase Own-source Revenue Impairs Ability to Increase Development Spending
 - No Major Revenue Sources Devolved From Provinces
 - Dependence On External Revenue Provides Reduced Political Incentive to Respond to Citizens, and for Them to Hold Governments Responsible
 - Declining Per Capita Transfers Will Hamper Development
- Increased Transfers in Favour of Areas of Medium and Low Development

Rural-Urban Divide

- No Longer Legislatively Divided at Tehsil level
- Will Help Increase Provision of Municipal Services in Previously Underprovided Areas
- Greater Resource Allocation To Rural and Peri-Urban Areas Due To High Representation in Union Councils
- Peri-Urban Constituencies Likely To Be Empowered



Representative Vs. Participatory Decentralisation

Representative and Participatory Decentralisation

- Representative Decentralisation Allows Citizens To Elect People To Make Decisions For Them
- Participatory Decentralisation Requires Citizens To Directly Play a Role in Decision-making
- Participatory Decentralisation Allows Citizens To Take Charge Of Development Priorities
- Decentralisation in Pakistan is Representative

Representative Decentralisation in Pakistan - I

- Lack of Citizen Role in Planning
 - Citizen Participation Restricted to Service Delivery Through CCB's
 - Development Planning and Budgeting in Hands of Representatives and Bureaucrats
- Lack of Training and Awareness
 - No Provisions For Capacity Building of Citizens
 - Very Little Awareness Of CCB's and LGP 2000

Representative Decentralisation in Pakistan - II

- Lack of Space For Demanding Structural Change
 - While Service Provision Can Be Discussed, No Avenue For Debating Issues Such As Land Reform and Inequality
 - Example: Okara
- Lack of Legal Protection
 - No Safeguards to Ensure Citizen Proposals or Priorities Are Considered in Development Plans

Representative Decentralisation in Pakistan - III

- Danger of Elite Capture
 - Local Elites Can Dominate Elections, Leaving the Poor as Marginalised as Before
 - Clientelist Politics Resulting in Resource Allocation to Particular Support Bases
 - CCB's and Musalihat Anjuman Susceptible to Elite Capture
- Lack Of Political Competition
 - Citizens Unable to Choose Between Differing Ideologies
 - In the Absence of Party Support and Organisation Less Influential Candidates are Overshadowed by Elites

Representative Decentralisation in Pakistan - IV

- Top-Down Approach
 - System Imposed and Designed By State Elite
 - Emphasis On Institution Building
 - People Not Consulted, Especially In the Absence of a Vibrant Civil Society
- Power Struggles
 - Competition Between Local and Provincial Governments Precludes Devolution of Decision-making to Citizens
 - Attempts By Local Government To Gain Local Support Could Alienate National and Provincial Politicians

Highly Responsive Local Government

**Non-engaging
Civil Society**

"invited"
space

"jointly
defined" space

**Fully engaging
Civil Society**

"legally defined"
space

"claimed"
space

Unresponsive Local Government

Source: Nierras, 2002