

# ROLE OF BUREAUCRACY AND LOCAL-SELF GOVERNMENT IN PAKISTAN

**Mehwish Muzaffar\***

***Abstract:** The objective of this paper is to analyze the role of bureaucracy and local self-government in Pakistan. The local self-government system was always introduced by military generals like General Ayub Khan, General Zia ulHaq and General Musharraf. Decentralization model is always designed to distribute the power to ensure the good governance. But in the history of Pakistan local government models show that the working capacity and ability was different from the designed structure. Musharraf gave the long term and inclusive system of local government and system of good governance in 2001. Under the Devolution of Power Plan new local governmental institutions were introduced with unique powers and different roles in local affairs. All the local affairs were made under the elected members. First time in the history of Local government bureaucracy was made answerable to the elected member. Another change in local self-government was made after the local government act 2013 which granted many powers to the bureaucracy. In this research qualitative method of research has used. This study analyses the powers and functional capacity of bureaucracy in local self-government of Pakistan during the different systems.*

**Keywords:** Local Government, Local Self-Government, Bureaucracy, Decentralization, Pakistan

## **Introduction**

Local Self-Government system in Pakistan has its important and unique value like the local government system in many other states. This system is important because it affects day to day life of common citizens. Pakistan has a long history of local self-government system. Before the independence of Pakistan local self-government system was existed in the areas of

---

\*MehwishMuzaffar is PhD student at East China Normal University Shanghai, P.R. China (Email: [mahvish321@gmail.com](mailto:mahvish321@gmail.com) )

Pakistan. British ruler launched the system of local Panchayats which performed judicial, administrative and local functions. But at that time Panchayat was not the representative of the whole villages rather it was the representative of the elite people of the village. In 1982 the system of direct democracy was introduced in the system of local self-government<sup>1</sup>.

Pakistan followed the Indian Act of 1935 with few amendments till 1956. From 1947 to 1956 Pakistan practiced the inherited and amended system for the delivery of services at grass root level. The first local self-government system was introduced by the military government of Pakistan. General Ayub Khan introduced the system named Basic Democracy System (BD) in 1958<sup>2</sup>.

### **History of Local Government in Pakistan**

British India has a long history of local self-government. Pakistan enjoyed the inherited system of local self-government for many years. In sub-continent the local self-government was introduced in 19<sup>th</sup> century by British rulers. Before the British there was no presence of local self-government in this continent and no local bodies were working as autonomous bodies<sup>3</sup> but as the form of Panchayat<sup>4</sup> the local government institutions were prevailing from many centuries. The Panchayat worked for the tax collections, legal and administrative affairs, justice and it also worked for the communication between the local and central authority<sup>5</sup>. The history shows that every Indian village had a Panchayat as independent body. In the history the Panchayat was responsible for the guest houses, temples and security of public. The sources of money were the taxes which were based on daily use tax and toll tax.

---

<sup>1</sup>Aazar Ayaz and Andrea Fleschenberg, *The Gender Face of Asian Politics*(Oxford University Press, USA, 2009).

<sup>2</sup>S.A Khan, "Evolution of the Devolution Plan (2000): Local Government System Revived or Reformed? A Study Conducted in District Mardan of the Nwfp, Pakistan," *Unpublished master's thesis, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway* (2006).

<sup>3</sup>Sajid Mahmood Awan, "Nature and Functioning of Local Government in the British India (1680-1947)," *Pakistan Annual Research Journal* 50,(2014).

<sup>4</sup>Mahadeo Prasad Sharma, *Reform of Local Self Government in India*(Hind kitabs, 1944).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Before the British the Mughals were there in the Indo-Pak sub-continent<sup>6</sup>. Mughals<sup>7</sup> focused on the urban administration as they were urban people. They introduced a different system as they established the office of Kotwal. The Kotwal was appointed by the Emperor and he was having the high status. Law and Order was the responsibility of the Kotwal, horses, city guards and spies of army were maintained by him. He was the prominent authority at that time having almost authority over every aspect of life<sup>8</sup>. By 1840s this Indo-Pak subcontinent was completely under the British rule.

### **Local Government Act 1919 and 1935**

Many amendments were made by the Indian local government Act of 1919<sup>9</sup>. According to this act the diarchy system was introduced<sup>10</sup> and local government was administered by the ministers of India. Union boards were made in this system and they were consisted of both elected and nominated officials. Local government was supervised by the district administration.

Under the local government act of 1919, the local government was made the provincial subject and Indian ministers were made head of local government. Chief Secretary was important personality during the British raj in the Indian states. He was the second most important officer after the governor in the state. He was the in charge of all official documents in the state. Division was made to control the state and divisional commissioner was made head of division.

Local government act of 1935<sup>11</sup> provided greater autonomy to the provinces. Under to this act the municipal government was developed. First time provinces were made powerful. Later, many amendments were made. Nominations in local government of Sindh were abolished by the Act of 1940. In Punjab Panchayat system became strong for the local self-government<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>6</sup>Stanley A Kochanek and Robert L Hardgrave, *India: Government and Politics in a Developing Nation*(Cengage Learning, 2007).

<sup>7</sup>Barbara D Metcalf and Thomas R Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*(Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup>Awan, "Nature and Functioning of Local Government in the British India (1680-1947)."

<sup>9</sup>EA Home, "The Political System of British India,"(Oxford, 1922).

<sup>10</sup>Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya, "Local Government in India Select Readings," (1969).

<sup>11</sup>Ivor Jennings, *The Approach to Self-Government*(Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup>Awan, "Nature and Functioning of Local Government in the British India (1680-1947)."

At that time the divisional commissioner was the head of communication between the various departments. He was the appointing authority in the division. After him the senior authority was district collector. Divisional commissioner was assisted the officers of division and also by the district collector. The district collector was the district magistrate and he had powers over the courts and also in police work. As a district magistrate he had to perform his duties like maintenance of law and peace in the district, supervision of police department and collection of taxes and coordinate with in divisional commissioner in all matters<sup>13</sup>.

### **Post-Independence Period and Local Self-Government System in Pakistan**

When Pakistan became independent it did not have its own governmental systems. Local government system was inherited from Indian Act of 1935<sup>14</sup>. Pakistan adopted this system with few amendments. It is known that Pakistan did not have its own formulated constitution till 1956. From 1947 to 1959 the local government of Pakistan was under the control of bureaucracy as deputy commissioner had strong position in the local government system.

The system was divided into Union Government, State Government and Local Government. In 1947 the inherited system was existed in which the councilors were not only the elected members as there were nominated officials. After independence the local government was expanded only in Punjab in the form of Panchayat. In 1955 the Panchayat system was extended in whole Pakistan. Local government structure was existed in Pakistan but it was not implemented properly. Elections were not held and limited local government was controlled by the central authority and bureaucracy. Pakistan formulated its first constitution in 1956 after a long struggle. After that in 1958 General Ayub Khan took the charge of the country and many changes appeared in the structure of the country.

---

<sup>13</sup>Shriram Maheshwari, "Indian Administration," (1959).

<sup>14</sup>Muhammad Ibrahim and Razia Mussarat, "Electoral Politics: A Case Study of Pakistan (1947-1985)," *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 5, no. 1 (2015).

**Local Self-Government System during Ayub Khan's Period**

General Ayub Khan took the charge of the country in 1958<sup>15</sup> and Pakistan experienced a new form of government by this martial law. General Ayub Khan dissolved all the assemblies and introduced a new way to govern. First and new form of local self-government was introduced by General Ayub Khan in 1959. The name was given as Basic Democracies (BD) system.

This system was based on four tiers which were interlinked. This hierarchical system was based on Union Council, Tehsil Council, District Council and Divisional Council<sup>16</sup>. The local government was made answerable to the bureaucrats. In this system Divisional Commissioner was made head of the division and Deputy Commissioner was the head of the district<sup>17</sup>. The DC was made controlling authority in the district and he had many powers and responsibilities<sup>18</sup>. The whole system was bureaucratic system in nature.

Divisional Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner did work as a chain of authorities. All main powers to run the district were under control of bureaucrats and few and limited powers were granted to the elected members. The bureaucrats have powers to dismiss the elected members and developmental projects were also in the hand of bureaucracy. The bureaucrats had political, administrative and fiscal powers<sup>19</sup>. In this system Union Council, the lowest tier of the local government was free from the bureaucratic control but this unit did not have fiscal and policy making powers. Commissioner was king to monitor the activities in the division performed by the elected representatives. The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner had powers to nominate half members in their Councils<sup>20</sup>. At district level the

---

<sup>15</sup>Ali Cheema, Asim Ijaz Khwaja, and Adnan Khan, "Decentralization in Pakistan: Context, Content and Causes," *Faulty Research Working Paper Series, Harvard University* (2005).

<sup>16</sup>Khan, "Evolution of the Devolution Plan (2000): Local Government System Revived or Reformed? A Study Conducted in District Mardan of the Nwfp, Pakistan."

<sup>17</sup>Razia Musarrat, "Basic Democracy System and Role of Bureaucracy in Islamic Republic of Pakistan."

<sup>18</sup>Cheema, Khwaja, and Khan, "Decentralization in Pakistan: Context, Content and Causes."

<sup>19</sup>Musarrat, "Basic Democracy System and Role of Bureaucracy in Islamic Republic of Pakistan."

<sup>20</sup>S Akbar Zaidi, *The Political Economy of Decentralisation in Pakistan*(NCCR North-South, 2005).

Deputy Commissioner was most powerful authority as he had fiscal, administrative and judicial powers. Union Council had elected chairman with limited powers.

The Commissioner, District Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner were given the additional duties and responsibilities as they were made chairmen of divisional, district and Tehsil councils<sup>21</sup>. Union Council was the only one tier which had directly elected members. The deputy commissioner was the supervisor of district council and he was responsible to manage the district matters. He was also a nominated figure and his function was to coordinate among the departmental activities. The assistant commissioner was the head of Tehsil council and thana council and headed by the SDO<sup>22</sup>. The system was based on the bureaucracy and it did not work as it was framed. All the powers were under control of commissioner and deputy commissioner like administrative decisions and financial matters. That's why the system faced criticism because it seemed that the local government departments were not working independently as the local government is the third tier of democratic government.

### **Local Self-Government during General Zia-ul-Haq Era**

General Zia ul Haq took the control of the state and he introduced the system of local government in 1979 named Local Government Ordinance. General Zia's local government was different from his predecessor. In BD system the main power was in the hands of provincial government but General Zia-ul-Haq provided these functions to the local authorities but under the control of provincial government. The district was headed by Deputy Commissioner; Union Council was under the Assistant Commissioner. In this ordinance the difference was that local government had some autonomy and they could take decisions and approved the budget.

Theoretically bureaucracy was away from the system but in actual bureaucracy was involved in local government affairs. Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner were having strong hold in District and Union Councils, Division was under the Commissioner. But the local government ordinance of General Zia's was different from his predecessor. When the system of local government was framed the powers and role of bureaucracy was kept away and

---

<sup>21</sup>Ali Cheema, Asim Ijaz Khwaja, and Adnan Qadir, "Local Government Reforms in Pakistan: Context, Content and Causes," *Decentralization and local governance in developing countries: A comparative perspective* (2006).

<sup>22</sup>Imroze, (Multan1961).

was not prominent in the local bodies but when the system was implemented the bureaucracy was involved as the Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner were made important personalities<sup>23</sup>. The Deputy Commissioner was made head of the district council and Assistant Commissioners were made king of Tehsils. These heads were not made answerable to the elected local government.

First time in the history the local government was consisted of elected members. This system granted many powers to the elected mayors and chairmen<sup>24</sup>. Many times, the divisional commissioners conducted open court for the local people<sup>25</sup>. In this system Assistant Commissioners also had powers of magistracy. Assistant commissioner punished many criminals who were proved as a criminal. Deputy Commissioners established committees at district level to take actions against corruption in government and semi government institutes and Deputy Commissioner was the Chairman of this committee<sup>26</sup>. Divisional Commissioner was controlling authority in the division he could dismiss the members of local government<sup>27</sup>.

In the local government system, which was introduced by Zia-ul-Haq the deputy commissioners were having powers of magistracy. He could hear the different appeals<sup>28</sup>. In this local government system, the deputy commissioner could ask for court inquiry and investigation for a matter. He had power to call investigation. Deputy Commissioner appointed the assistant commissioner as investigating officer<sup>29</sup>. The Deputy Commissioner was the most powerful personality in the local self-government system of General Zia. He had many powers over the district. He was not answerable to the elected representatives. Under this act of local government, the elected mayors were not powerful. During this regime the powers were in the hands of provincial governments. General Zia's regime conducted the non-party base election

---

<sup>23</sup>Additional Commissioner Maqbul Abbasi, interview by Mehwish Muzaffar, 26 November, 2017, Bahawalpur.

<sup>24</sup>Rehbar, *Rehbar*, 19 February 1980.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Maghrabi Pakistan, 4 June 1983.

<sup>29</sup>Kainat, 6 April 1985.

which became the reason of localization. In 1979, 1983 and 1985 three times local government elections were held during General Zia regime.

Hypothetically the bureaucracy did not involve in the local government but in reality, the bureaucracy had strong position. The deputy commissioner had powers and was free from answering to the elected mayor. Assistant Commissioner was controlling the Union Councils, municipal and town committees were under the DC. One major difference in this system was that there were direct elections for the chairmen.

In this system the DC reported to the provincial secretariat instead of elected representatives. DC was granted executive powers. During General Zia regime the chairmen have some autonomy which was not granted by his predecessor. General Zia's local government system was beneficial for the rural and urban both middle class and especially for the military bureaucracy. General Zia's regime was having heavy taxes like property tax, school fee and agricultural exhibition fee although this system was different but the motives were same<sup>30</sup>.

### **Local Self-Government System during General Musharraf Period**

After General Zia ul Haq's a new system of local self-government was introduced by another military ruler General Pervez Musharraf. General Musharraf took the charge of the country on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1999. He introduced a long term and inclusive system of local government and system of good governance. Under the Devolution of Power Plan new local governmental institutions were introduced with unique powers and different roles in local affairs. DOPP has focused on the localities<sup>31</sup>. Devolution of power plan was developed in 2000 and local self-government system was introduced in 2001<sup>32</sup> and three tiers of local government were introduced by this system. Union Council, Tehsil Council and District Council were three tiers of this new system and each level was consisted of Nazim and Naib Nazim, elected local body included male and female councilors and administrative body.

---

<sup>30</sup>Razia Musarrat and Muhammad Salman Azhar, "Decentralization Reforms in Pakistan During Ayub and Zia Era," *Journal of Public Administration and Governance* 2, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>31</sup>Yaqoob Khan Bangash, "Local Government and Democracy," *The Express Tribune*, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/207360/local-government-and-democracy/>.

<sup>32</sup>Aamer Taj, Muhammad Nouman, and Saleem Gul, "Impact of Authoritarianism on Democratisation and Local Governance in Pakistan: Historical Perspectives," *South Asian Studies* 29, no. 2 (2014).



Devolution of Power Plan was totally different from the historical local self-government system in Pakistan. Previously every local self-government system provided the strong position to the bureaucracy but DOPP weaken the bureaucracy in local self-government system by assigning many functions to the locally elected representatives from the provincial bureaucracy by abolishing the post of Deputy Commissioner. Another important feature of this system was that district administration became under the elected representatives like the Nazim and Naib Nazim. The office of the Deputy Commissioner was replaced by the District Coordination Officer who was answerable to the District Nazim<sup>33</sup>. During General Musharraf's regime the bureaucracy had weak control in the local self-government system in Pakistan.

Deputy District Officer was made head of revenue. Executive District Officer of revenue evaluated the tax recovery and advised to the DDO to make sure the recovery of finance<sup>34</sup>. On 15 October 2001 an amendment was made and District Police Officer became under the elected Nazim. DPO was made answerable to the Zila Nazim. The elected Nazmeen and members were given authorities of administration and revenue<sup>35</sup>

### **Administrative Structure during the Musharraf Regime**

During the devolution of power plan Citizens Community Board (CCB) was established which was completely different from the previous system. Before the DOPP the local self-government system was centralized. The central government or the provincial government had interference in the developmental projects in the district<sup>36</sup>. But the establishment of Citizens Community Board mobilizes the community to work for the delivery of services by the sense of self-help initiatives. During this period the local government was allowed to perform main functions in the district for the development. All the main powers became under the elected Zila Nazim and bureaucrats like DCOs and ACs were supporting body of Zila Nazim<sup>37</sup>.

---

<sup>33</sup>Ayaz Muhammad and Ayaz Mohammad Rana, *Local Government Finance: Some Political Aspects: A Case Study of Punjab*(Oxford University Press, USA, 2004).

<sup>34</sup>Tabeer, *Tabeer*, 3 October 2001.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Abbasi, "Role of Bureaucracy and Local Self Government in Pakistan."

<sup>37</sup>Zahoor Ahmad, Iram Khalid, and Muhammad Muzaffar, "An Analysis of the Relationship between Local and Provincial Governments in Pakistan (2001-2009)."

DOPP provided autonomy to the districts and districts could use fund according to the priorities of the district. In DOPP the magistracy power of DCO was taken and given to the judiciary. The civil servants received instruction from its own hierarchy for the policy making and implementation of those policies. The bureaucrats were working under the control of elected Mayor<sup>38</sup>. The role of bureaucracy cannot be neglected in the local self-government system of Pakistan. Although the devolution of power plan granted the main functions to the elected government but still the bureaucracy is important actor in the local government.

Due to the devolution of power plan the local government was divided into multiple authorities. Two major changes were occurred in the local government system due to the changing powers of the bureaucracy. The one was that the policy making became in the hand of elected Zila Nazim who decided the developmental projects in the district. The second major change was that in many other areas the control was exercised by provisional department through the civil servants.

In this system local government reforms and police reforms were also introduced. Police Act was changed after more than 100 years. Police chief of the district was made under his professional hierarchical authority. Police complaint cell was also introduced to deal with complains. Public safety commission at district level was also constituted which was consisted of both elected and appointed members. Financial resources were allocated from the provincial authority to the districts. Divisional council the fourth tier was abolished which was introduced by his predecessor. Post of the DC was replaced by DCO who had to report to the District Nazim. Nazim was made chief executive in the administration and financial matters. In short bureaucracy was made answerable to the elected Nazim. Every department was given under the control of executive district officer who worked with the assistance of deputy district officer. Role of deputy commissioner as district magistrate and collector was abolished by the new post of DCO. The district police officer was under the supervision of Zila Nazim.

The study of the local self-government system in Pakistan says that every time bureaucracy was involved in the local self-government system of Pakistan. Not only after the independence but before the independence the local self-government set up which was introduced by Mughals and British also had the nominated officials. It was the devolution of

---

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

power plan 2001 which decreased the dominance of bureaucracy and elected representatives were granted upper hand. Bureaucracy became answerable to the Zila Nazim.

### **Relationship between the Elected Officials and Bureaucrats**

During the Devolution of Power Plan, the District Coordination Officer was the chief authority in the district administration but he was under the elected Zila Nazim. Same as the DCO the head of district police reports to the Zila Nazim<sup>39</sup> about the maintenance of law and order in the district.

During the devolution of power plan Citizens Community Board (CCB) was established which was completely different from the previous system. Before the DOPP the local self-government system was centralized. The central government or the provincial government had interference in the developmental projects in the district<sup>40</sup>. The CCB creates the sense of ownership in the community. It allows involving of community in developmental projects. In this system the developmental budget is provided at local level and free from the provincial interference. During this period the local self-government was allowed to perform main functions in the district for the development. All the main powers became under the elected Zila Nazim and bureaucrats like DCO and ACs were supporting body of Zila Nazim<sup>41</sup>. The provincial government was not happy with this system as they wanted to spend funds according to their own choice of city but DOPP provided autonomy to the districts and districts can use fund according to the priorities of the district. In DOPP the magistracy power of DCO was taken and given to the judiciary. The civil servants received instruction from its own hierarchy for the policy making and implementation of those policies. The bureaucrats were working under the control of elected Mayor.

The new structure of local self-government and working environment for the bureaucrats built a pressure on civil servants to work. Devolution system created the local government norms which were different in the history of civil services in Pakistan. The role of bureaucracy cannot be neglected in the local self-government system of Pakistan. Due to the devolution of power

---

<sup>39</sup>Gareth Wall, "New Century Local Government: Commonwealth Perspectives," *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, no. 15 (2014).

<sup>40</sup>Abbasi, "Role of Bureaucracy and Local Self Government in Pakistan."

<sup>41</sup>Tabeer, *Newspaper*, 19 February 1980.

plan the local self-government was divided into multiple authorities. Two major changes were occurred in the local government system due to the changing powers of the bureaucracy. The one was that the policy making became in the hand of Zila Nazim who decided the developmental projects in the district.

In the past the civil service got directions from the central authority and it was responsible to implement the policies given by the central or provincial governments. But the devolution system made many complications in the local government administration. Nazim was made head of budget and management. Sometimes DCOs performed functions which were used in traditional administration method because the system became complicated. The DCO had vital role in the decision making and policy making, he also had important role in budgetary. In this system the civil servants were a source of negotiation between the district government and provincial authorities. The elected members and political management were made able to make decisions. The performance of the district management was evaluated to the Zila Nazim. In this new system many committees were working but most important committee was the budgetary or account committee. This committee had the right to check the audits and could review them.

The DCO was head of the account committee and he could stand to response the audit objections. The local government law clearly assigned many functions and empowered the local government and local elected councils. Although local government give importance to the locally elected representative but it has to rely upon the skills of the civil servants<sup>42</sup> because immediate change in the structure and functions of the local government cannot change the value of skilled civil servants. Another important development was in the devolution of power plan was that a Zila Nazim could request to the removal of DCO or the DPO to the Zila Council and the council could conduct vote for the removal of DCO or DPO. The focus was given to the accountability and for that purpose audit system for the accounts of local government was established.

This system made the people comfortable to make their demands to the local government. People could convey their demands and local government could allocate finance according to the demand without any interference from the provincial or central authority. The system was

---

<sup>42</sup>Musharraf Rasool Cyan, "Civil Service Management in Devolved Government: Reconciling Local Accountability and Career Incentives in Pakistan," *The Lahore Journal of Economics* 17(2012).

helpful to the common people to convey its demand without approaching the central or provincial authorities and it also discouraged the Rural Urban migration<sup>43</sup>.

DOPP made powerful to the elected members and civil service had to accept that. The functional freedom was in the hand of Zila Nazim. By this system many other powers were granted to the DCO and DPO like some powers of recruitment in district which was not given them before the devolution system. The system based on a formula that if one authority has become empowered the other will be underpowered. This system was implemented by the local government ordinance rather than any legislation of constitution.

### **Local Government Act 2013 and Role of Bureaucracy**

By the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution of Pakistan the local government act in Balochistan was passed by the provincial assembly in 2010, Punjab, Sindh and KPK assemblies passed this act in 2013. This local government act is significant in because it has brought about many changes in local self-government.

According to the local government act 2013 Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan have Union Councils and District Councils in rural areas and Union Committee and Municipal Committees in urban areas. In KPK this act provides Tehsil Council, village council and neighborhood council. Local government act 2013 established the Provincial Finance Commission headed by the provincial finance minister<sup>44</sup>.The finance for the local councils is allocated through this commission.

The local councils have limited fiscal power as they have limited power to impose taxes. In Punjab the local self-government is working under the provincial government. Chief Minister (CM) has become the controlling authority in local self-government of Punjab and has power to dismiss the heads of the local authorities. In the new system of local self-government, the positions of Nazim and Naib Nazims have replaced by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairman and Vice Chairman.

---

<sup>43</sup>Mohammad Zakir Abbasi and Razia Mussarrat, "Devolution of Powers to Local Governments in Pakistan During Musharraf Regime," *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences (PJSS)* 35, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>44</sup>UNDP, "Local Government Acts 2013 and Province-Local Government Relations," [http://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/hiv\\_aids/development-advocate-pakistan/local-government-acts-2013-and-province-local-government-relatio.html](http://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/library/hiv_aids/development-advocate-pakistan/local-government-acts-2013-and-province-local-government-relatio.html).

According to the LG Act 2013 the bureaucracy has become supreme authority. The divisional commissioner and deputy commissioner are playing the role of coordinator between local self-government and provincial government; they can setup institutions and other provisional institutions in the district. Bureaucrats are working as the representative of provisional government in the district and can call any department at any time can call the record, stand an inquiry, ask about working about any organization<sup>45</sup>. By the local government act 2013 many changes have made in the local self-government. The district coordination officer has replaced by the Deputy Commissioner. The Nazim and Naib Nazim have become Mayor and deputy mayor. In this system the powers of and authorities of commissioner is not defined. Local self-government has its own revenue and district government has its own finance<sup>46</sup>.

Many powers are allocated to the elected members. For the development the Elected Mayor makes proposal and it could be implemented after the approval of Deputy Commissioner. That's why elected members get approval from the Deputy Commissioner. The local self-government is under the provincial authority and sometimes provincial government interferes into the matters of local self-government. The District Police Officer is answerable to the provincial government. The post of DDOR has replaced by Assistant Commissioner. The appellant authority of Assistant Commissioner is Deputy Commissioner and the appellant authority of Deputy Commissioner is Divisional Commissioner. The deputy commissioner is head of all departments in the district except judiciary and police. Commissioner has become commanding authority in the divisions.

Deputy Commissioner and Mayor are working with coordination. Neither deputy commissioner is under the mayor nor is mayor under the deputy commissioner. Both are not answerable to each other. The deputy commissioner writes the annual performance report and after the approval of divisional commissioner the report is sent to the Punjab secretariat<sup>47</sup>. According to the local government act 2013 the main powers are in the hand of chief minister and he can dismiss the elected members like mayor, deputy mayor, chairman and vice chairman. The chief minister could appoint chief executive for the health and education<sup>48</sup>. In this

---

<sup>45</sup>Assistan Commissioner Muhammad Tayyab, interview by Mehwish Muzaffar, 22 January, 2017.

<sup>46</sup>Abbasi, "Role of Bureaucracy and Local Self Government in Pakistan."

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Aamir Yasin, "Political Parties Find Flaws in Punjab's Local Govt Act " *Dawn*, 15 September 2013.

system the role and powers of mayor and chairman is not clearly defined. The financial and administrative matters are in the hand of district administration which assists to the provincial authority. In the devolution of power plan the Zila Nazim had control over district police officer and city police officer but the new system did not define the role of mayor in the police department.

In the local government act 2013 the finance, education, health, literacy, community development and information technology have become under the provincial authority as in devolution of power plan it was under the local government. The Deputy Commissioner has become the king of district administration and he is not under the elected Mayor. According to this system the provincial government makes budget for the district. The post of district coordination officer is changed by the deputy commissioner; additional district collector of revenue is changed by additional deputy commissioner and additional district collector is replaced by additional deputy commissioner<sup>49</sup>. By this system the divisional commissioner is head of the division and deputy commissioner became the head of the district. The divisional commissioner and deputy commissioner are under the provincial government and they are answerable to the provincial government.

The assistant commissioner reports to the deputy commissioner about the matter of district administration and he reports to the divisional commissioner. The divisional commissioner reports to the provincial government<sup>50</sup>. This ordinance allows making divisional, district or Tehsil coordination committee for the good delivery of services.

The divisional commissioner and deputy commissioner could call any official or any record for the satisfaction of service delivery. They can make inspections and can give instructions to the department for the betterment, they can also give directions. The deputy commissioner can call meeting with the district police officer by own or by the demand of local officials or on request of district police officer. This meeting will work on the law and order and for the safety of public. The decisions which will be taken in this meeting will be implemented by the concerned department. The local government act reverses the role of bureaucracy in local self-government of Pakistan. Before this act the elected members had supreme authority in the local councils but this act changes their power. After the DOPP this act again provides the

---

<sup>49</sup>"Districts to Lose Budget-Making Powers," *Dawn*, 13 May 2015.

<sup>50</sup>Intikhab Hanif, "Civil Admin Ord Promulgated: Dc Office Back after 15 Years," *ibid.*, 1 January 2017.

opportunity to the bureaucrats to hold upon the matters of the local self-government. Changes again and again in the authorities of the local self-government have made this system complicated.

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan has long history of local self-government from the Mughal period to British and then after the independence Pakistan continued the inherited system and first local government system was introduced by General Ayub Khan which has the characteristics of both elected and nominated officials. After that General Zia ul Haq introduced the new system of local government with the less involvement of bureaucrats. General Pervaiz Musharraf introduced a new system and bureaucracy was made under the elected Nazim. In 2013 Local Government Act brought some changes in the system and DC replaced the post of DCO. In this new system bureaucratic control is prominent again which shows that central and provincial governments use bureaucracy in local governments for their interests.

There is no doubt that bureaucracy remained supreme authority in the local self-government system in Pakistan as the study showed that how bureaucrats are given high status and they are playing important role in local government. Many factors are behind this to facilitate the bureaucracy to establish its supremacy. Through the bureaucracy the provincial authorities get their interests so that they give powers to the bureaucracy to perform major role. As the result the bureaucrats get their interests from the provincial authorities. Both provincial and bureaucratic authorities look at their interest which is becoming the reason that local institutions are becoming weak. In Pakistan there is a game of struggle between the elected and nominated officials. Both elected and nominated persons want to get more and more powers to influence upon the districts. Bureaucracy never wants to give the powers to the elected persons as these powers are included the financial matters. Fiscal area is the interest area of bureaucrats and central authority and same as for the elected officials. The bureaucracy has strong hold in these matters. As the research identifies that civil servants are the permanent worker in the district administration while the elected officials are elected for a specific time period. It is a problem in Pakistan that new elected government does not consider the system good which was introduced by predecessor so bureaucracy use it for their interests and implement on those reforms which matches to their interests.



As it came to know that bureaucracy was given important and superior role in the local self-government and district administration from the period of British but now civil service should change their mindset as Pakistan is now became a sovereign state and civil servant should play their role to improve the local self-government system. Civil servants should realize that they are the servant of the community so they must think and work for the interests of the public rather than their own interests. Civil servants are not directly answerable to the public but the elected representatives are directly answerable to the public that's why more responsibilities should be given to the elected people rather than the bureaucrats. Focus should be given on the mutual cooperation and modern technologies for the better communication which can increase the knowledge of the councilors and Mayors.