

Comparative Analysis of Role of Local Government in Metropolis Amongst Canada, India, Pakistan and China

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Abstract:

Governance of metropolitan cities is a significant challenge for countries globally. This research examines the role of local governments in Canada, China, India, and Pakistan, focusing on their successes and struggles in metropolitan and district-level governance. The study analyzes finance (tax collection, revenue generation), governance (decision-making and civic engagement with public accountability), service delivery (health, sanitation, police, firefighting, transportation, housing), and administration (public participation in locally elected administrations). It explores how developed countries like Canada and China manage local governance challenges through historical efforts, providing equal opportunities, financial and administrative autonomy, and public participation. In contrast, developing states like Pakistan face issues due to ineffective local governance systems, frequent political changes, and corruption. The research highlights alternatives and policy recommendations by comparing governance models, suggesting that Pakistan adopt principles from developed nations, emphasizing financial and administrative autonomy, a focus on metropolises, and public participation for improved services and governance.

Key words:

Metropolitan governance, Local government, Civic engagement, Public service delivery

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Introduction

The rise of the modern nation-state paved the way for laissez-faire governance at both central and local levels, allowing substantial self-government locally. New socio-political and economic pressures from globalization, rapid urbanization, and migration, as well as growing large metropolises, have led policymakers to review how to overcome these challenges (Rouse, 2006). Modern democratic systems demand public awareness, transparency, and participation in decisions affecting citizens' lives. These responsibilities and functions of the state gave birth to a new form of government called local self-government, aimed at making service delivery more effective. Almost all nations worldwide have adopted local self-government to extend the response and voice of the state at the grassroots level through legislation and executive orders to deliver services (Shah et al., 2006). Democracies emphasize local self-governing authorities to address local community issues at the grassroots level, supporting federal governments (Sisk, 2001).

States have adopted devolved government setups according to their demands and needs (Osiander, 2001; Shah et al., 2006). Developed states like Canada and China have successfully transitioned from centralized to local government models with fiscal decentralization, accountability, and true representation, best fitting local needs. In contrast, developing countries like Pakistan and India are still striving to cope with the challenges of fiscal decentralization, accountability, and service delivery. Despite extensive research by scholars and policymakers from both developing and developed countries to establish ideal local government parameters, there is no exact criterion for an ideal government (Shah et al., 2006; Donaldson, 2016).

Almost all modern nation-states have decentralized local governments to meet public demands at the doorstep. Moreover, in an era of globalization and complex interdependence, equitable economic growth depends on the quality of public service delivery. Countries like the USA, Canada, and Sweden have decentralized systems to reduce economic disparity and inequality, reduce poverty, ensure economic growth, and provide better living standards and employment opportunities for all (Manor, 1999). This is achievable only when power is shared between the center and lower levels for sustainable policy outcomes at the grassroots level (Malik & Rana, 2019). Local government is defined as solving public problems locally (Prof Laski). Local self-governance strengthens democracy by extending government to the doorstep and providing better problem-solving through public engagement in decision-making (Manor, 1999). "Local self-governance represents the rights and capability of local authorities to manage public affairs under the constitution for the community's welfare" (European Charter of Local Self-Government, Part I, Article 3).

The aims and objectives of this study are to highlight the comparative analysis of Canada, China, India, and Pakistan under three main circumstances: the evolution and sustainability of territorial structure, responsibilities and power-sharing between the center and grassroots level, management and finances, and local democracy along with the election process. Additionally, this research aims to highlight the governance of large metropolises in Pakistan, addressing emerging challenges such as financing and decision-making issues due to rapid urbanization, health and sanitation, drinking water supply, communication, law and order, and housing (deSouza, 2003).

Problem Statement

The role of the local government system in providing essential public services at the grassroots level is crucial worldwide (Shah, 2006). Developed countries like Canada and China have decentralized their governance structures, granting significant financial and intergovernmental autonomy from the central government. Conversely, developing nations such as Pakistan and India face ongoing challenges including fiscal constraints and heavy dependence on federal financial support. Scholars and policymakers have conducted numerous studies across different countries to define ideal parameters for effective local governance, yet due to diverse state natures and geographical variations, a universal criterion remains elusive (Shah et al., 2006). This study aims to establish comparative parameters for understanding the local government systems of Canada, China, India, and Pakistan, each tailored to their specific governance needs and structures. Key principles underpinning successful local governance—such as service delivery, public policy formulation, financing, and governance structure—are examined (Donaldson, 2016). The research focuses on four main indicators to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of local governments in both developed and developing contexts, emphasizing lessons that Pakistan can learn from Canada and China. It explores how these countries manage public service delivery, administration, policy-making, and local finances, particularly in governing large urban centers and local communities.

Significance of the Study

This study addresses a pressing issue in today's political landscape: the increasing demand for doorstep public service delivery across all political systems. It seeks to investigate the decentralization processes in both developed and developing countries, focusing on specific parameters to assess the effectiveness of local governments. Local governments have become pivotal in enhancing the quality of life within their communities. This research elucidates the key features of successful local governance that strengthen democracies, while also highlighting significant

challenges in Pakistan's decentralization efforts. The study aims to provide policymakers with insights to address critical issues within the local government system and formulate successful policy outcomes. Its objective is to highlight challenges faced by Pakistan's local government system, urging policymakers, local authorities, parliamentary members, and administrative officials to consider adopting effective policy options from models seen in developed countries.

Research methodology

This research employs a qualitative, descriptive, and historical approach to explore the evolution of local government in both developing and developed countries. The study aims to highlight challenges faced by local self-government and analyze governmental responses. Data were gathered from secondary sources, including scholarly articles, books, government websites, interviews with officials, and newspaper articles. The researcher also examined ongoing developments and historical experiences of local government under various civil and military regimes.

Literature Review

Local government system in China

China's political structure is rooted in the socialist system introduced by Mao Zedong, characterized by centralized government control. The National People's Congress (NPC) serves as the highest decision-making body at the central level, overseeing an administrative system divided into four tiers: provincial, municipal, county, and township (Zhong, 2015). Delegates to the People's Congress are chosen indirectly by the population, with central government appointing members (Swift, 2004). The administrative hierarchy includes the central government, provincial governments (23), municipalities (4), counties, and townships.

Joseph and Xiang (2014) note that both metropolises and county-level administrations are governed by the central government through the People's Republic of China (PRC), with specialized agencies handling various functions such as transportation and family matters. Local administrative structures in provinces are organized into counties, wards, and town municipalities, with city governments in small and large cities acting as intermediaries between provincial and central authorities. Major cities like Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, and Hong Kong are focal points for economic development, attracting foreign investment and aiming for high living standards (Joseph & Xiang, 2014). While local governments in China implement central policies, they wield significant autonomy in decision-making (Joseph & Xiang, 2014).

China's decentralized fiscal system has proven effective in generating and implementing economic projects directly benefiting the population. Local revenues are primarily derived from taxes on agricultural income, real estate, collective enterprise income, and individual goods and services (Joseph & Xiang, 2014). However, criticism persists regarding the lack of public rights, as local governance in China restricts freedoms of speech, religion, and security, a concern frequently raised by Western critics. Despite these challenges, China remains the world's second-largest economy with one of the fastest GDP growth rates, driven by strategic economic initiatives, infrastructure development, and adherence to legal frameworks (Lardy, 1994; Swift, 2004). County-level governments in China are entrusted with responsibilities spanning health, education, security, legal affairs, rural development, finance, ethnic affairs, and family planning, with authority to make decisions and discipline administrative members who violate national regulations.

Local government system in India

The Democratic Republic of India is divided into three tiers:

- Central government.
- States and Union territories (28).
- Local level.

The local government in India is further subdivided into various districts, sub-districts, and blocks with specific names given below:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| • Rural | Urban |
| • (Village) Gram Panchayats | Municipal council |
| • (Sub-districts and block) Panchayat Samiti | Municipal committee |
| • (District) Zila Parishad | Municipal corporation |

At the local level, urban areas have municipalities and rural areas have Gram Panchayats, guided, motivated, and supported by the central government. These entities are directly supervised by the state government through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, respectively. At the state level, a ministry oversees acts, laws, by-laws, manuals, and guidelines for localities (Mattahi, 1915). In urban areas, municipalities are classified into those transitioning to urbanization, municipal councils for larger towns, and town Panchayats for smaller towns. The functions of these local authorities include financial matters, revenue collection, tax collection, water supply, sewerage, waste disposal, etc. (Iqbal, 1976).

Non-elected officials such as the Commissioner are responsible for policy execution, while the Mayor serves as the political head of the district. At the village level, Gram Panchayats address issues such as water supply, schools, garbage collection, and community legal matters. A Gram Panchayat typically consists of approximately 420 households (Lee, 2021) and represents all village residents, constituting the lowest tier in the PRI system hierarchy.

Gram Sabha functions as the smallest unit, overseeing village-level legislative functions. The executive body of the Gram Panchayat consists of Panch and Sarpanch (depending on population), with the Sarpanch serving as the head of the Gram Sabha. The Panchayat Secretary oversees all correspondence at the village level. Gram Sabhas manage drinking water, sanitation, agricultural welfare functions, and a total of 29 subjects covered by these local bodies. Members are elected for four-year terms, with the Sarpanch elected as the head of all villages by the Panch members of each village (Joseph & Xiang, 2014).

Panchayat Samiti or Zila Parishad operates at the district level, where elected council members oversee legislative affairs. The Sarpanch, elected from several villages, formulates laws and policies for the district. The executive head, such as the AIS officer or Commissioner at the district level, manages budget estimates and oversees the District Planning Committee, which bridges the gap between central and state-level governments, receiving funds from the central government. While local revenue collection falls under the jurisdiction of the Collector for states, both India and Pakistan suffer from low tax ratios, highlighting a major shortcoming. In contrast to developed countries, where public policies are formulated from the bottom up, many legislative bodies and decisions in India are made at higher levels, often resulting in ineffective policies (Lee, 2021).

In major cities, the Maha Nagar Municipal Corporation oversees municipal functions. Municipalities were constitutionally incorporated into India in 1992. City governments in India are categorized into three levels: small, medium, and large, with the Mayor serving as the head of the municipality. Executive functions are managed by AIS officers such as Municipal officers and Commissioners, alongside elected legislative members and technocrats who contribute to the legislative process but do not participate in decision-making. Cities are divided into ward constituencies, with the political role of the Mayor being honorary. Municipal budgets are prepared under these local bodies, with councilors deliberating on matters related to roads, public health, and other topics

overseen by the election commissioner at the Nagar Panchayat city government (Lee, 2021).

Local government System in Canada

Canada operates under a parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate (105 members) and the House of Commons (338 members), with the Prime Minister as the head of government. Further decentralization extends to local government systems within each province. Powers are constitutionally divided between the federal government and the provinces, comprising 10 provinces each governed by various legislative acts (Plunkett, 1961). The Canadian Constitution, through Section 92(8) of the Constitutional Act of 1867, empowers provinces to legislate and formulate policies for their respective jurisdictions.

Local governments within each province in Canada operate under various models at the grassroots level, organized into 143 regions and 3,700 to 4,500 local communities including counties and wards, with elected terms typically lasting four years. The Canadian local government is structured into unique systems:

- Single-tier government: A single municipality responsible for all municipal services within defined boundaries, common across Canada for both large cities and small rural villages.
- Two-tier government: Found in regions like British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, where a higher-level government agency oversees lower-level municipal authorities, sharing responsibilities (Local Government System in Canada, 2021).
- Multi-tier government: Similar to two-tier, but with additional layers providing national and local services respectively (Spicer, 2022).

Each tier of local government in Canada manages essential functions such as revenue and tax collection, policing, public transportation, fire protection, sanitation, and sewerage systems (Dawson et al., 1989). The financial commissioner serves as the executive officer in each municipality. Canada's constitutional history of local governance dates back to the Municipal Government Act of 1994 and the City Regulation Charter of 2018 (Taylor et al., 2020).

Provincial governments in Canada oversee domains including education, health, direct taxes, prisons, property, and civil rights, while municipal governments manage services like safe drinking water, libraries, parks, local police, roadways, garbage collection, registration fees, licenses, permits, and parking (Statistics Canada, 2022). The Canadian system is notably successful due to its bottom-up policy-making approach: community issues are addressed through public participation and

decision-making processes tailored to local needs. For instance, waste management involves specific collection units like blue (recyclables), black (general waste), green (organic waste), and brown (garden waste), ensuring effective household waste management as scheduled by municipal governments. Property taxes constitute the primary local income source, reinvested into community development.

Local government System in Canada

Pakistan has a protracted political history marked by frequent regime changes since its inception in 1947, including three constitutional setups in 1954, 1962, and the current constitution of 1973, which features a parliamentary bicameral legislature comprising the Senate (100 members) and the National Assembly (342 members). The Prime Minister holds the official head of state position with delegated powers defined by the constitution. The government structure is organized as follows (Musarrat & Azhar, 2012):

- Federal government
- Provincial governments (four units, including FATA merged into KP and PATA Azad Kashmir)
- Divisional government
- District government
- Tehsil government
- Village-level government

The first local government was introduced by General Ayub Khan (1959-1969), followed by a second setup initiated by Zia-ul-Haq, who introduced Local Government Reforms from 1979 to 1985 through the promulgation of Local Government Ordinances (LGOs). Subsequently, General Pervez Musharraf introduced the Local Government Ordinance of 2001, establishing a three-tiered local government structure comprising provincial, district, tehsil/town, and union council administrations. More recently, new municipal government setups were introduced at the grassroots level in 2013, 2015, and subsequent revisions in all provinces have brought significant changes to previous local government acts. However, the government has yet to achieve the true spirit of local governance, which is a fundamental indicator for sustainable and effective governance (Arif et al., 2010).

Fundamental features of an effective local government system

For successful local governance, we require sustainable government at the grassroots level. Following revolutionary changes in political systems during the 1990s, the need for local governance became central for all

communities. Local governments worldwide flourished due to rapid urbanization, increased migration to metropolises, improved health facilities, and education.

Financial Management

The developed states provide financial transparency and accountability at the local level. The government of Canada, in this context, operates autonomously and possesses sufficient economic resources at the regional level. The Canadian government generates revenue through property taxes, while the central government functions independently at the federal level. Despite its highly centralized system, the Chinese government has adopted a policy of less interference in local finance and budget matters (Jabeen et al., 2016).

Good Governance

Good governance refers to how governments respond to public issues through their institutions. At the state level, good governance pertains to how administrations effectively run government machinery (Khan, 2020) and gauge public satisfaction with governmental responses in modern societies (Guess, 2005). Local governance encompasses local and marginalized communities, resolving problems through effective administration and ensuring public satisfaction in all democracies.

Service Delivery

One of the most crucial functions of a welfare state is meeting public demands and needs through optimal service delivery (Agagu, 2004). Understanding the role of local government in service delivery and governance has gained momentum in scholarly circles (Shah et al., 2006). Scholars, policymakers, and development experts from both developed and developing nations endeavor to establish necessary infrastructure for achieving ideal local government states, concurrently enhancing governance and service delivery. Canada and China strive to enhance income and employment opportunities at the local level (Donaldson, 2016).

Administration

Administration primarily concerns the formulation of policies, plans, and their implementation across all government institutions from top to bottom. Effective administration ensures the success of an enterprise (Khan, 2020). Locally elected administrations make decisions and policies with public participation. Fiscal decentralization, a key factor achieved through power transfer, is evident in Canada's political system, as well as in the USA and Australia. In contrast, the old British bureaucratic system persists, where authorities are often resistant to change. For instance, the Zia and Musharraf governments in Pakistan struggled to implement basic administrative reforms (citation needed).

Comparative Analysis of China, India, Canada & Pakistan

Different Modes of Governance (A Conceptual Perspective)

The basic difference among all the countries lies in their modes of governance. Canada operates with a parliamentary system featuring a bicameral legislature (Senate and House of Commons), further decentralized into local municipalities. China maintains a highly centralized government with the President as the top administrator, overseeing both central and local leadership. India's political structure includes the President and a bicameral legislature (Council of States and Lok Sabha), while Pakistan follows a parliamentary form of government with a bicameral legislature (Senate and National Assembly) (Lopes & Farooq, 2020). Canada and China have effectively managed metropolises like Beijing, Shanghai, and Toronto through specialized municipalities, promoting better urban and rural life. Conversely, India and Pakistan face challenges in integrating governance models at the local level, with their local governments often politically immature and subordinate to bureaucratic control.

Canada: Municipal Management and Local Governance - A Service Delivery Perspective

The Canadian government provides extensive municipal services across various regions through public-private partnerships. As previously discussed, Canada's governance structure is organized into smaller units such as villages, towns, wards, counties, and metropolitan municipalities. Each province and region operates under various tiers including single-tier, two-tier, and multi-tier governments. Locally elected representatives, known as councilors, select executive heads like Mayors and Deputy Mayors, along with boards of directors and elected and non-elected members. These municipalities manage functions such as recreational parks, transportation, policing, land management, schooling, parks, sewage, and sanitation systems. Regional districts coordinate larger services such as land use planning and waste management, overseen by boards of directors and electoral area directors, with the chair elected by the council. Property taxes form the primary revenue source, ensuring fiscal autonomy and administrative self-sufficiency. Canadian municipalities report activities frequently for accountability and transparency to the federal government, covering security services, road maintenance, water supply, sanitation, waste disposal, park maintenance, land management, and property taxation. The Canadian approach emphasizes community engagement in policymaking, employing a bottom-up approach for effective results (Spicer, 2022).

China

China operates under a highly centralized unitary government structure. The Chinese constitution delineates governance into five tiers: provincial governments, autonomous regions, municipalities, special administrative zones, and prefectures. Local governments further divide into smaller units such as counties, townships, and village municipalities. Major cities like Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Chongqing are directly controlled by the central government. From March 1998 to 2000, China undertook significant administrative reforms aimed at enhancing grassroots service effectiveness. The government established special economic zones in major cities to drive socioeconomic growth and alleviate poverty, particularly since the 1960s. Municipalities are led by mayors under central government supervision, with ultimate organizational authority resting at the municipal level. Local governments generate revenue through property, agricultural, and individual income taxes, as well as through finance department-managed joint ventures. While local governments determine their budgets, they receive substantial allocations from the central government (Joseph & Xiang, 2014).

India

India, the world's largest democracy by population, operates under a political system divided into central and state governments. The central government manages functions such as finance, defense, railways, and other nationwide concerns. The power division allows states to handle issues inaccessible to the central government directly, leading to the creation of local governments addressing water supply, drainage, sewerage, public transport, birth registration, and marriage registration. Local governance in India aims at political decentralization, direct democracy, and devolution of powers to local communities. The Panchayat system, integral to the Indian constitution, operates at the village level, with the Gram Sabha serving as the smallest legislative unit. Executive bodies like Gram Panchayat members, Panch, and Sarpanch (depending on population size) oversee drinking water, sanitation, and agricultural welfare, among other functions. These bodies are elected for four-year terms, with the Sarpanch as the highest local leader implementing policies (Aijaz, 2008). At the district level, Panchayat Samiti or Zila Parishad serves as the legislative authority, with elected representatives making laws and policies. An AIS officer, such as the District Commissioner, serves as the executive head, managing budget estimates and overseeing the District Planning Committee's role in bridging central and state governments. While local revenue collection remains a state responsibility, India and Pakistan face low tax ratios compared to developed countries, largely due to top-down policymaking approaches, hindering policy effectiveness (DeSouza, 2003; Biswas, 2020).

Metropolitan Municipal Corporations in large Indian cities, incorporated into the constitution in 1992, operate under a three-tiered government system, with mayors leading municipalities and executive functions managed by AIS officers such as municipal officers and commissioners. Legislative bodies include elected members and some technocrats, although technocrats do not participate in decision-making (Biswas, 2020).

Pakistan

Pakistan's political history features frequent regime changes and varying local government structures, with constitutional setups in 1954, 1962, and 1973. General Ayub Khan introduced the first local government in 1959-1969, followed by General Zia-ul-Haq's Local Government Reforms (LGOs) in 1979-85 and General Musharraf's LGO 2001, establishing three-tier local governments comprising central, provincial, district, tehsil/town, and union council administrations. Contemporary governments have introduced new local government acts in 2013 and 2015, with provinces recently enacting vigorous changes to previous local government legislation. Despite these efforts, Pakistan has struggled to achieve the quality of good governance essential for sustainable development (Arif et al., 2014). The 2021 Local Government Act introduced two-tier governments by each province according to their needs, with KP recently adopting a system comprising Village/Neighborhood Councils and Tehsil governments. Village council members are directly elected, with chairpersons leading Village/Neighborhood Councils and serving as part of the Tehsil government. Tehsil mayors are directly elected through adult franchise, overseeing municipal functions and services (Javed et al., 2020). Municipal services include tax collection, regional and local development, birth, marriage, and divorce registration, sanitation, sports, and cultural events. Unlike China and Canada, Pakistan's local governments rely heavily on provincial funding, with most legislative powers subject to provincial approval (Cheema et al., 2010).

Success Stories of Metropolises in Canada and China

Canada: The global cities index shows that more than four cities in Canada are among the top 100 cities in the world. The survey report is based on their current conditions and policies, including living standards, security, healthcare services, employment, housing, etc. Toronto is a mosaic cultural city, ranking 18th in the world best city index (Batool, 2014). According to the Gallup World Poll survey, in comparison with developed countries, Canadians are more optimistic about the government and their institutions. Regarding education and health services, 3 out of 4 citizens show satisfaction, with 71% considering the quality of education the best. Living standards have improved by 14% over the last two decades. The city of Ottawa ranked 43rd

on the global prosperity index and 11th in better education. The Canadian government frequently reviews policy programs based on regional council responses. For accountability to the federal government, external evaluations are conducted through Auditors-General and private consultants to highlight inefficiencies within each project, based on their current conditions and policies, such as living standards, security, healthcare services, employment, and housing (Musarrat & Azhar, 2012).

China: China is one of the fastest-growing countries, with explosive growth in big metropolises such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. In 1978, Shanghai's economic growth was 27.3 billion Yuan, which has since jumped to 3.3 trillion Yuan with enormous economic growth. The main factors behind these cities' growth and prosperity include administrative reforms since 1979, a special focus on large cities for economic uplift, and gradual changes in governance models.

The challenges in big cities of Pakistan and India

Pakistan: Among the urbanized countries of South Asia, Pakistan is one of the most urbanized. According to the IGC report (Javed et al., 2020), by the end of 2030, more than 250 million citizens are expected to live in metropolises. As these cities are major sources of employment opportunities, migrants are attracted to better lives and access to services. Urban cities in developed countries are major sources of income and contributors to GDP, such as China, where 63% of cities contribute 89%, and India, where 30% of the urban population contributes 58% to GDP. In Pakistan, 38% of the urban population contributes only 55% to GDP. The most daunting challenge for policymakers is the issue of physical insecurity. In megacities, the major challenges are policing, maintaining law and order, and curbing militancy (Musarrat & Azhar, 2012).

Political polarization: The government faces major challenges in big cities such as Karachi, Lahore, Mumbai, and Delhi. The new policies of each government disrupt the development chain in the cities and metropolises. On the other hand, rampant corruption further aggravates the situation. The history of Pakistan's local government system shows that most local government systems were introduced by military regimes, such as Ayub Khan in 1962 with the BD system, and Zia and Musharraf also introduced local self-government.

Housing shortage: According to a study by Hasan (2002), all major cities in Pakistan were facing a housing shortage of about 4.4 million in 2015. In the future, the cities will face a 78% housing shortage throughout the country.

Water crises and sanitation: The supply of water is 4 to 16 hours per day in most Pakistani cities (Ahmed, 2009). About 90% of the schemes are not safe

for drinking water (Asian Development Bank [ADB]). The disposal and management of solid waste services are not up to standard (Hasan, 2002).

Transportation: Karachi is one of the megacities without mass public transport. People live in unplanned inner-city neighborhoods. The urban roads are congested due to increased private transport.

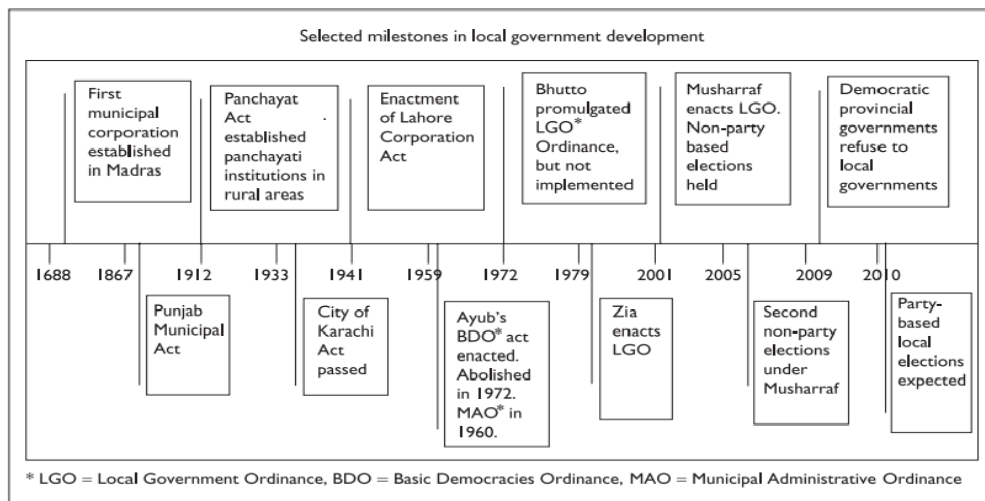
Poor health: The rural population is not as healthy and well-nourished as the urban population. According to the WHO city index for air quality, Karachi and Lahore are among the most polluted cities in Pakistan. The high levels of air pollution in Lahore and Karachi jeopardize human lives through various infectious diseases (Sabiha et al., 2008).

Unsatisfactory education system: Schools in urban areas are readily available, resulting in higher student enrollment and better learning outcomes. People are compelled to move to big cities due to the unavailability of educational and health facilities in smaller cities.

Land management: The absence of an organized land record system results in poor urban land management. Most cities have housing shortage issues. Cities like Karachi, Lahore, Mingora, Peshawar, and many others lack land management. Rapid urbanization has also affected agricultural lands (Ahmed, 2009).

A brief history of Pakistan local government

The first local government system in Pakistan was introduced by the British government under Lord Ripon in 1892. The history of local governance before and after independence in Pakistan is outlined below (Salem & Iftikhar, 2012).



Source: Adapted from Cheema et al., 2005

Ayub Khan Era

The first local government setup was introduced by the first Martial Law administrator, General Ayub Khan, soon after declaring martial law on October 7th, 1958, to subjugate civilian supremacy (Musarrat & Azhar, 2012). President Ayub, following his takeover, initiated bold measures to gain public support and legitimize the military regime in the country. He introduced the Basic Democracies (BD) system, comprising 80,000 members as an Electoral College for nominating national and provincial members, alongside the President (Batool, 2014).

Zia Ul Haq Era

Political emergencies in Pakistan led to another military intervention in Pakistan's politics during the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, which was overthrown on July 5th, 1977, by Zia-ul-Haq (Jalal, 1995). According to the ordinance, the local government comprised the following tiers:

- Two tiers at the rural level
- Four tiers at the urban level
- Union Council at the village level (rural areas)
- Zila Council (rural areas)
- Town Committee (urban areas)
- Municipal Committee (urban areas)
- Municipal Corporation (urban areas)
- Metropolitan Corporation Karachi, Lahore (urban areas)

Musharraf Era

The subsequent local government system in Pakistan was promulgated by military leader General Pervez Musharraf through the Legal Framework Order (LFO) after assuming power on October 17th, 1999. The local government system was structured into three tiers as follows, empowering Nazim and Naib Nazim as heads of the district government (Hasnain, 2008) and (Local Government Ordinance, 2001):

- District-level government
- Tehsil-level government
- Union Council-level government

Local government reforms after 18th amendment and provincial autonomy

The remarkable 18th amendment was a commendable step by the civilian (PPP) government on April 8th, 2010, towards civilian supremacy. The amendment opened the doors for provincial autonomy. However, the civilian government still remains hesitant about actual decentralization.

The 7th NFC award was another milestone for transparent and equitable sharing among all provinces (Chandio, 2014).

Intra-provincial Comparisons in the Local Government System in Pakistan

After the 18th amendment passed by the Government of Pakistan on April 8th, 2010, under Article 140A, provincial autonomy was provided. All provinces were empowered to develop a local government system and transfer power to local communities to strengthen democracy and political stability in Pakistan (Siddiqi, 2020).

Structure of Local Governments at the Provincial Level

Each province adopted a local government system according to its needs. KP, Sindh, and Balochistan have a tenure of 4 years, whereas Punjab has a tenure of 5 years. Currently, the PTI government has introduced new measures in various provinces by enacting new local government acts such as the KP Local Government Act 2022 and the Punjab Local Government Act 2021.

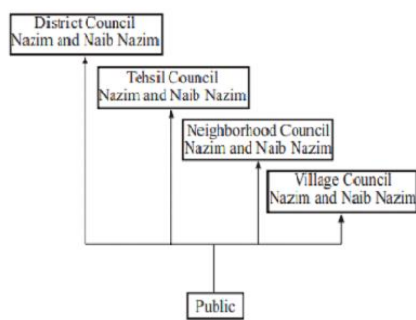


Figure-1: KPK Local Government Act 2013, Structural Breakdown.

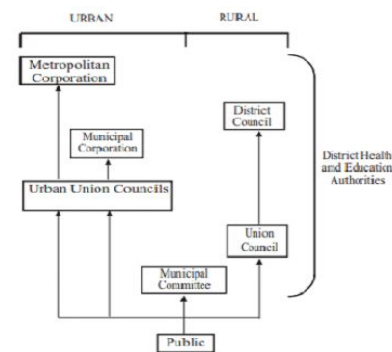


Figure-2: Punjab Local Government Act 2013, Structural Breakdown.

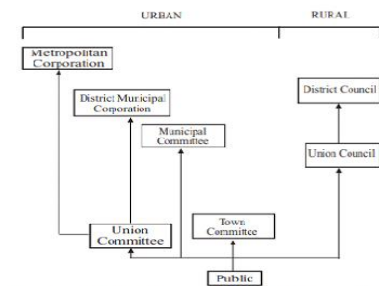


Figure-3: Sindh Local Government Act 2013 Structural Breakdown.

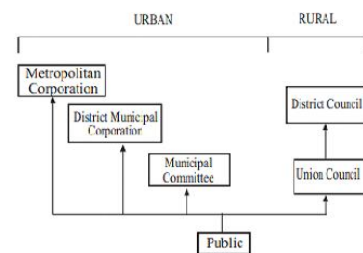


Figure-4: Balochistan Local Government Act 2010, Structural Breakdown.

Source: Adopted from Kalia, S. (2016).

Figure 1: Local Government System at Provincial Level till 2018

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The KP government further amended the Local Government Act 2013 to 2022. The recent local government act devolves governance to the Tehsil level by eliminating the District tier and appointing city mayors in 7 divisions. Previously, the local government setup in KP consisted of Neighborhood, Tehsil, Town, and District tiers. The new KP local government system is based on two tiers: VC/NC and Tehsil government across 35 districts, with City Local Mayors at 7 divisional headquarters (KP LG Act 2022).

- Union Council and Village council.
- Tehsil government (129)
- City government at (07) Divisional headquarters.

Baluchistan

Similarly, the Baluchistan government amended the Local Government Act 2015 to 2019, incorporating the following changes:

- Union Councils at village level (584).
- District Councils at district level (30).
- Municipal Corporations in cities, such as Quetta (01).
- Municipal Committees in towns (51).

Sindh

The Sindh government amended the Local Government Act from 2017 to 2021, resulting in a new government setup divided into 30 districts and 7 divisions:

- Metropolitan Corporation in big cities like Karachi.
- District Municipal Corporations in rural areas.
- Municipal Corporations in urban areas.
- Municipal Committees at urban level.
- Town Committees for urban areas.
- Union Committees for wards in urban areas.
- District Council and Union Councils in rural areas.

Punjab

The Punjab government recently replaced the old Local Government Act of 2018 with the 2021 version, covering 36 districts and 9 divisions:

- Rural areas: 36 districts.
- Divisions: 9 divisions.

- Metropolitan Corporation (Rural Urban).
- Municipal Committee (Rural Urban).

According to the notification, the Punjab government has also appointed local government administrators in all districts, with Lahore designated as the Metropolitan Corporation. It is pertinent to mention that the Punjab Local Government Ordinance 2021 expired on June 8, 2021.

Elections Process

The new local government setups nationwide are based on party-based elections.

Municipal Powers and Functions

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

Previously, powers were exercised by the District Nazim and Naib Nazim, along with District members at each VC/NC. The recent reforms have further devolved authority to the Chairman of Tehsil and City Mayors at Divisional Headquarters. These changes have caused confusion regarding power sharing between district and tehsil levels. All powers are now vested in the Tehsil Chairman for basic services like sanitation, housing, markets, roads, traffic, taxes, infrastructure, and public utilities. 20% of the budget is allocated to the tehsil level, with funds distributed by the TDC. The Assistant Commissioner serves as the principal accounting officer (KP LG Act 2022).

Baluchistan

Local elected councilors and the District Nazim oversee matters in each district, with City Mayors in cities like Quetta. Executive authority lies with provincial and federal administrations, including Assistant Commissioners and Tehsil Municipal Officers, responsible for financial and developmental activities.

Punjab

The principal accounting officer is empowered with significant authority and is responsible for coordinating between local and provincial governments (Malik & Rana, 2019). The Punjab Local Government Commission comprises five members, two nominated by the House leader and one by the opposition, responsible for annual inspections. Additionally, two technocrats and provincial secretaries conduct routine inspections and have the authority to suspend a mayor for up to ninety days.

Sindh

The Sindh Local Government Law empowers the provincial government to appoint Chief Executives to direct executive and administrative functions of councils. Chief Executives also issue licenses and permissions

for effective service delivery. The law allows the provincial government to supervise and direct councils in conjunction with regional directorates of local government. The recent reforms in Sindh empower the Mayor with additional powers compared to other provinces, appointing them as co-chairpersons of the Water and Sewerage Board and chairpersons of Waste Management Authorities (Malik & Rana, 2019).

Fiscal Powers

Fiscal powers are crucial for achieving local government objectives, with each provincial law relying considerably on discretionary fiscal powers. Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have established Provincial Finance Commissions comprising technocrats and provincial ministers from elected local governments. These commissions consolidate funds from fines, taxes, and tolls for distribution as grants to provinces (Awortwi, 2011).

Gap Between Theory and Practice

There remains a gap between theory and practice in the overall local government system. While the constitution theoretically supports independent local self-government at provincial and local levels, the absence of clear rules threatens decentralization success in Pakistan. Despite the 7th NFC Award adopting a multi-factor criterion for resource distribution, its design still falls short.

Findings and policy lessons for Pakistan

Since the main aim and objective of local government is to provide self-sufficiency to local communities, developed countries such as Canada have successfully transferred power to the local level, resulting in better services. Local communities are empowered in decision-making, and policies are crafted according to public demands. This enables governments to gain support and trust from the public. Contrarily, revenue collection makes Canadian localities financially independent from the federal government. The local government systems in these developed countries are sustainable; continuous political socialization has raised public awareness about their rights and responsibilities towards the state. One of the most striking features in modern states is the shift towards e-governance, driven by the rise of e-communities, which facilitates rapid service delivery and enhances a country's attractiveness and capability for economic growth. Executive and political leaders are directly accountable to the public.

In contrast, the Chinese political system features a highly centralized government, albeit criticized globally. Nevertheless, the government has successfully implemented policies and services at the grassroots level, focusing particularly on major cities like Shanghai and Beijing, which

have contributed significantly to China's substantial GDP growth from 1970 to 2020.

On the other hand, the study identifies major challenges in developing states, particularly Pakistan's political structure. The following issues need addressing for better solutions:

- **Polarized Political Environment since Independence:** Successful democracies delegate power to local organizations. However, there is a gap between theory and practice in Pakistan. Military governments have historically transferred power to local communities to garner moral and political support, while civil governments have been hesitant, especially in 2010, due to the vested interests of provincial ministers. Sustainable local governance requires continuous local elections and regional autonomy for effective outcomes (Jabeen et al., 2016).
- **Issue of Civil Service Reforms:** Overpowered bureaucracy remains a significant issue in local communities, where financial matters are heavily controlled by administration. The solution lies in a top-down approach in public policy, but excessive political interference from politicians in administration hinders public service delivery.
- **Frequent Transfer of Power between Civil and Military Governments:** Pakistan's weak civil political setup has often empowered military regimes. The military has used local government as a means to legitimize its de facto rule, while civil governments have neglected local governance, reluctant to transfer political and financial power to the local level.
- **Bottom-Up Approach:** Developed countries involve communities in local issues through public representation, allowing problems to be identified at the grassroots level and discussed at higher levels for better policy and decision outcomes.
- **Accountability and Public Service:** Effective delivery of social services is crucial. Local management representatives can be more accountable, responsive, and accessible than higher-tiered politicians in provincial and federal assemblies, promoting better social services for communities.
- **Fiscal and Financial Constraints:** Local governments in Pakistan heavily rely on provincial and federal funds. While the provincial finance commission is a step towards empowerment, additional revenue sources are necessary. Public-private partnerships and voluntary contributions, as seen in Canada, can build public trust and generate revenue at the local level.
- **Emphasis on Metropolises:** Developing countries like China have prioritized big cities for economic prosperity and improved lifestyles. Similarly, Canada's focus on metropolises has led to significant GDP growth and global attraction. Pakistan, with 20 cities each with over

one million inhabitants, lacks dynamic and competitive cities. The future of modern states lies in well-managed cities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded by comparing local government models in developed and developing countries, highlighting their successes and failures. It argued that Canadian and Chinese local governments provide better services such as health, education, revenue collection, and local issue resolution, benefiting from constitutional protections and autonomy free from federal and provincial controls. In contrast, Pakistan's history of decentralization reveals that major experiments with local governments, primarily conducted by non-representative military regimes, aimed to centralize power through decentralization to strengthen central authority (Khan, 2020).

The following are key conclusions and subsequent recommendations:

Challenges of Decentralization in Pakistan: Successful decentralization hinges on true autonomy granted to provinces and local authorities through public participation in problem-solving at the community level. However, local politicians and executive officials often exert control over local governments, limiting development opportunities for marginalized communities (Ahmad & Abu Talib, 2013). Despite the 18th amendment delegating authority to local governments, the central government still influences their decisions. While the 7th NFC Award aims for transparent and equitable resource allocation, funds still flow predominantly from the central government to local bodies. Additionally, the oversized central government and unbalanced departmental structures impede effective decentralization (Malik, 2016).

Absence of Sustainable Government: Local governments require sustainability to implement policies and foster socio-economic development. Canada has successfully adopted local self-government with substantial political and economic autonomy. In contrast, frequent political system changes and polarization in Pakistan undermine local government sustainability. Thus, Pakistan's government must provide sufficient political and economic autonomy to stabilize local political systems (Khan, 2020).

Financial Autonomy and Laissez-faire Policy: In Canada, the central government ensures local financial autonomy, fostering public trust through local tax contributions for services such as sanitation and property taxes. Conversely, Pakistan's provincial governments often interfere in local affairs, subordinating local governments financially. Constitutional protections akin to provincial governments are crucial for effective local governance in Pakistan; without fiscal autonomy, local governments cannot function effectively (Khan, 2020).

Public Policy Perspective: Developed countries adopt a bottom-up approach to policymaking, identifying issues at the grassroots level and implementing laws and decisions with minimal resistance. In Pakistan, policies are often centralized, lacking public participation and failing to address local issues effectively (Taj et al., 2020). Adopting a bottom-up approach could yield better policy outcomes at the local level, improving governance effectiveness nationwide (Kuzemko et al., 2020).

Challenges in Metropolises and Government Response: Cities worldwide face significant economic, environmental, social, and demographic challenges in the 21st century. In developed countries, cities not only drive economic prosperity but also attract global populations seeking superior lifestyles, services, health, education, and security (Saba et al., 2020). Conversely, Pakistani cities grapple with poverty, rapid urbanization, migration influxes, pollution, and health issues (Lopes et al., 2020). Addressing these challenges requires a committed, inclusive, and participatory urban agenda at the national level to enhance city living standards.

Institutional Reforms: Developed countries like Canada, Australia, and the USA have devolved legislative powers to local governments based on the theory of separation of powers, enhancing service delivery and governance outcomes. In contrast, developing countries often centralize legislative and political powers, hindering effective local governance (Taj et al., 2020). Pakistan urgently needs robust institutional reforms at both national and local levels to ensure efficient management and participatory governance at the local level.

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