



Evolution, Restructuring, and Effectiveness of Belgian Local Governments: Lessons for Pakistan

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Abstract

Almost every democratic country has some sort of a local government system. But the success story of these local governments varies from country to country depending upon their democratic values, intensity of public participation, and faith in power sharing. In most of the third world countries the existence of local government is merely taken as a part of a system, thus, rendering them ineffective and fragile. Moreover, they appeared to be a source of conflict because politicians quarrel over the sharing of power. Consequently, the whole system gets paralyzed. Bureaucrats are also often reluctant to concede their powers to local authorities. Disagreements over the financial issues and budgetary planning have been common in these countries. On the contrary, the developed countries have established extremely effective and stable local government systems fully capable of responding to the grass root issues.

Keywords: Decentralization, Greek civilization, democratization, multilingual

Introduction

A local government is considered as the corner stone of democracy. In the process of mass participation, in decision- making, and in democratization local government plays a crucial rule. A political system without local government remains incomplete and ineffective.

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Hence, all the strong, stable, and civilized democratic countries have very strong local governments, which contribute immensely to their political governance. They mainly serve two purposes. The first purpose is to get the local populace involved in determining specific local public needs and their possible solutions. The other is the provision of goods and services at the local level. All is mere hollow sloganeering if the aforementioned objectives do not materialise.

The idea of local government has emerged from the concept of decentralization. Decentralization is defined as the transfer of resources, responsibility, and authority through devolution and delegation from the center to the lower levels of administration.¹

Since the emergence of the concept of decentralization, it has taken various forms and shapes in different parts of the world depending on their national faith in democracy, attitude towards public participation, and perception of governance. Although the idea of decentralization of the power dates back to the Greek civilization, the concept began attracting attention after the Second World War. It matured in three phases. The first phase of decentralization, in the 1970s and 1980s, focused on the hierarchical government structures and bureaucracies. The second wave, started in the mid-1980s, widened the concept to include political power sharing, democratization, and market liberalization, expanding the scope for private sector decision making. During the 1990s decentralization was seen as the phase of opening governance to wider public participation through organizations of civil society.²

There is an identical approach to the definition of local governments. One approach regards every government as a local government that comes below the national structure. And this concept of local government is considered much compatible in comparative studies. On the other hand, the second approach seems more comprehensive, dynamic, and circumspective, which identifies a local government by special features such as: legal entity

¹ Dennis A. Rondinelli, "Government Decentralization in Comparative Perspective: Theory and Practice in Developing Countries," *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 47 (1981):133-45.

² Dennis A. Rondinelli, John R. Nellis, and G. Shabbir Cheema, "Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience," Working Paper 581, World Bank Staff, 1983.

with special powers to perform a range of functions, substantial budgetary and staffing autonomy subject to limited central control, effective citizens' participation, and localness.

Many social scientists have deemed these characteristics as misleading because all the local governments do not effectively enjoy these qualities. For example, all the local governments do not offer opportunity for effective participation of citizens, do not enjoy similar legal positions, and are not equally autonomous and sovereign in fund raising budgets for themselves.

Robson offers another definition of local government from a legal point of view. According to him, generally, local government involves the conception of a territorial, non-self-governing community possessing legality and necessary organizational powers to shape its own affairs. This presupposes the existence of a local community with power to act independent of extraneous control as well as the participation of the local administration of its own affairs.³

Thus, on paper, almost every democratic country has some sort of a local government system. But the success story of these local governments varies from country to country depending upon their democratic values, intensity of public participation, and faith in power sharing. In most of the third world countries the existence of local government is merely taken as a part of a system, thus, rendering them ineffective and fragile. Moreover, they appeared to be a source of conflict because politicians quarrel over the sharing of power. Consequently, the whole system gets paralyzed. Bureaucrats are also often reluctant to concede their powers to local authorities. Disagreements over the financial issues and budgetary planning have been common in these countries. On the contrary, the developed countries have established extremely effective and stable local government systems fully capable of responding to the grass root issues.

The concept of local governments seems more compatible with the federal form of governments as compared to the other forms since provinces there are constitutionally autonomous. In multicultural states the local government systems could be instrumental in fostering consensus among

³ Dennis A. Rondinelli and G. Shabbir Cheema, "Implementing Decentralization Policies: An Introduction," in *Decentralization and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries*, edited by G. S. Cheema and D. A. Rondinelli (Beverly Hills, Calif. Sage, 1983).

diverse units. Investing governing powers in the hands of locals can be a huge source of satisfaction for the local population. There are many federal countries which have applied local governments systems to carve out their multiethnic, multilingual, and multi religious issues, and they have been successful. Belgium is one of the prosperous instances of federal countries which have effectively solved issues of multiculturalism and other grass root problems through the device of local government. On the other hand, Pakistan has faced political gridlocks and impediments in its quest for a stable local government system.

Local autonomy

In federal states such as the USA and the Federal Republic of Germany, some powers are transferred to the constituting elements of the federation (for the USA 'states' and for the FRG 'lander'). The Belgian system of government is a federal system, but with a difference. Instead of one type of constituting element, there are two types: Gewesten/Regions (regions) and Gemeenschappen/Communautes (communities). They operate under their respective set of government domain. Basically, language-related (culture) and people-related (welfare) matters are transferred to the communities while economic, spatial planning, and environment fall under regional setups.⁴

An additional complication is that the territory of a region does not necessarily concur with the territory of a community. Regions and communities cover different territories in Belgium. They overlapping each other. The key element in marking out the territories of regions and communities is language.

The double set of federated entities has created a complex institutional framework. Like the state, each community and region have its legislative body, called 'council' and a government with both legislative and executive powers. It implies that there are three councils for the communities: one for the Flemish community, one for the French-speaking community, and another for the German-speaking community. Likewise, the three regions operate as follows: each for the Flemish, the Walloon, and the Brussels Capital regions. Each of them has a government. Instead of six councils, governments and administrations, there are in fact only five. The reason is

⁴ Léon Dupriez, Local Government in Belgium, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (American Political Science Association, Aug., 1920): 408-422.

that, in Flanders, the councils and governments of the Flemish community and Flemish region, though not legally ‘merged’, are organized and managed as one entity. Both retain their separate legal identity. While having the same legal force, their law-making rules do have a different scope. They simultaneously deal with community and regional matters. In 1996, the Flemish Council adopted the name ‘Flemish Parliament’.⁵

Evolution of local governments in Belgium

Belgium was part of the empire of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. In 1830, as a result of popular revolt, it got independence from the Netherlands. Historically, the areas which later become the Kingdom of Belgium were governed by municipalities under the close supervision of the central government of the Netherlands. These areas were mainly big cities which were destined to constitute modern Belgium. The first constitution of the independent Belgium, in 1831, recognized the position of these municipalities, which were further strengthened through local government act in 1836. It made the local government system a permanent and an important feature of the governing system of Belgium. Since 1928, the number of municipalities has increased in direct proportion to increase in the population of the country. According to 2017 figures the number of municipalities increased to 2675, the highest number ever to exist.⁶

Until the mid-1970s, Belgium experienced a highly organized central government with three levels of administrative structures. The central government held sovereignty over the state. The provinces and municipalities were ‘subordinate authorities.’ These decentralized and subordinate government levels were authorized for matters of municipal and provincial interest under the close supervision of the central government. However, Belgium underwent drastic change after 1970.

As a state, it evolved towards a more federal structure from a unitary one, where the sovereignty was divided among the federation, regions, and communities, each with their own specific powers and responsibilities.⁷

⁵ Andrew Crompton, “Local Government in Belgium: Decentralization in Progress”, Policy Briefing, 3 August 2017.

⁶ Babeiya, Edwin, Local Government in Tanzania and the Legacy of a Faulty Takeoff, *The African Review* 43, no. 1 (2017): 128-160.

⁷ Yves Plees, Belgium: The Changing World of Belgian Municipalities: Comparing Local Governance Trends and Developments (2005): 47-64.

Essentially, this was the right epoch in the life of the country to rethink and revisit the role and importance of local governments in the process of governance and democracy of the country. Such an examination and consideration required destructuralization, revitalization, and reconfiguration of the institutions of local governments. This need was successfully actualized by the political elites and leaders. Being a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-linguistic country, it was inevitable for Belgium to have governance system which could accommodate all the diversities by ensuring widened opportunities for political participation and provision for basic amenities and services to localities.

Structure of Local Government

Provincial organization

In provincial government, there are three different authorities which are the governor, the permanent deputation, and the provincial council. The provincial council is the elected body of the inhabitants of the province; the member of provincial council varies from 44 to 93 according to the population and territorial size. These members are elected for an 8 year-term on the bases of universal suffrage. The permanent deputation is a kind of an executive body which is comprised of 6 members chosen from the elected members of the provincial council. It is presided over by the governor who is the representative of the central government appointed by the Crown. He changes as the government in center passes to another party.

Besides one annual session of two to four weeks, the provincial council can hold special one or two-day session any time. The main concern of provincial council is to make legislation for the province. It lacks special duties that other organizations hold playing a diminished role in the political lives of Belgians. On the contrary, the provincial council meets once in a year while its permanent deputation must meet once in a week, though it can meet more often if required. They are salaried persona, and the law confines them from taking another assignment. They devote their energies in the execution of their duties. Their main task is to supervise the communal authorities. They perform important administrative duties; hence they are paid from the state treasury by the central government.

The governor of the province supervises the execution of the duties performed by the permanent deputation. He is bound to act upon the advices given by the deputation.⁸

Communal organizations

There are also three distinct authorities in communal councils: the burgomaster, aldermanic college, and the communal council. The communal council is the representative body of the inhabitants of a particular commune. The number of councilors starts from 7 to 39 depending upon the population size of the commune. They are elected for the period of six years based on universal suffrage. The aldermanic college is elected by the communal council from its members. Its functions tantamount to permanent deputation of a provincial organization. The number of alderman starts from two in densely populated areas to five in big cities. The burgomaster is appointed by the Crown; he is usually chosen from the communal council so that he appears as a local representative more than a representative of the Centre. The burgomaster and alderman have specific powers. They exercise the authority delegated to them by the communal council. In most of the communes, like the permanent deputation, they are salaried persons so that they devote themselves only to execution of communal duties. There is no specific number of sessions that a communal council holds in a year. It can hold its session whenever it is assigned a duty, therefore, the number of sessions varies every year. As compared to the provincial council, in the administrative and political system of Belgium, the communal council enjoys a more active and important role.

The communal sphere of interests includes the building, maintenance and administration of streets, public squares, boulevards, and public highways, parks and gardens. Likewise, everything connected with public health; the administration and maintenance of primary schools; all that has to do with public benefaction, relief for underpaid, asylums, hospitals; the cemeteries; the administration and development of the properties of the commune buildings, lands and forests; the administration of markets, slaughter houses and fairs ; the police and the maintenance of good order; and the furnishing

⁸ Louis Albrechts, Devolution, Regional Governance and Planning Systems in Belgium, *International Planning Studies*, 2001,6:2, 167-182.

to the inhabitants of certain commodities which involve a monopoly—drinking water, electricity, gas, tramways etc.⁹

Principal of uniformity

Besides the variance in names, population and territorial size, all cities, villages, and communes enjoy uniformity in laws and regulations. The principal of uniformity prevails within the organization of local governments in Belgium. There is the least difference with respect to law and administration in all the constituent parts of the local government. There is no indication of special privilege, right or status attached to the city or village. Since the inception of provincial and local laws in 1836, many modifications have been made to the laws. However, on each occasion, the principal of uniformity has prevailed.

One would not find any single provision in the legislation of the state which particularizes a single village, province or area of the country. The constitution applies equally to all. This principle of uniformity is different from the many well established federal countries such as the United States of America.

Sub-ordinate to the Central Government but Autonomous

Formally, a local government in Belgium is sub-ordinate to the central government, but, practically, it enjoys autonomy as the central body does not interfere unnecessarily. Thus, in the first instance, it is under the supervision of the central executive body, but on the other hand, it is free for all other legislative bounds.

Unlike the United States of America, where local authorities are kept within their bounds of power and conformity to law by the legislature or court of justice can overturn their rules and restrict their power. However, they are independent of the governor and other state officers. On the contrary, in Belgium neither the court of justice has any power to annul the laws nor it can make any injunction. Additionally, they are sternly forbidden to adjudge administrative acts. The entire power regarding local governments lay in the hand of an executive body. Following the principal of hierarchy, the provincial governments work under the supervision of central government and communal governments act under the supervision of provincial and

⁹ Andrew Crompton, "Local Government in Belgium: Decentralization in Progress", Policy Briefing, 3 August 2017.

central government. If the local acts and laws are injurious to public interest, the central government has the power to annul it. It does not have the power to modify it. Due to this sub-ordination process, the central and local governments in Belgium impinge on each other.

In Belgium, the local and provincial governments perform a dual role. On one hand, they perform local duties to satisfy their locality while, on the other hand, they take part in the administration of a central government under the absolute orders and controls of a central government. Although, a local body acts as an agent of the central government, local government, however, enjoys a good degree of autonomy. Yet, this autonomy cannot be compared with the autonomous status of the French local governments, which has the most autonomous system in Europe. However, the tradition of local government in Belgium is so strong, and public opinion about communal liberty is so robust that the central government remains much cautious and feels reluctant to assert even its own incontestable rights. It has given the local authorities the greatest autonomy in the exertion of their functions, and even permitted them to extend these functions to the utmost limits that the text of the laws allows, perhaps, in some cases, to even trespass. Custom and tradition, more than law, guarantee the authority and the vitality of the local authorities.¹⁰

Accessibility and political participation

Preliminary challenges on many issues initially occur at local level, many issues unknown to central government are primary concerns of local government. In both directions, from client to the government and from government to public, a local government stands accessible. Phillips is of the opinion that it is not merely the issues that are familiar to the local governments but the members of the municipal council know the public individually as coming elections remain their incentives.¹¹ The Belgian communal level government translate this characteristic of accessibility and political participation on ground. The communal council and the aldermen remain in touch with the locals and provide services at their door step. The inhabitants of a particular commune know their elected councilors by their names making accountability in at the time of polls inevitable. The turnover

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ A. Phillips, (1996), "Feminism and Attractions of the Local", in *Rethinking Local Democracy*, D. King and J. Stocker, eds., (London: Macmillan, 1996),111-129.

of the voters remained above 85% in the last local election, which indicates the degree of local participation.¹²

Finance for Local Governments

Despite many reforms made to local government system in last decades, Belgium has a highly centralized system of revenue generation. Only 25% of its revenue is generated at regional and municipal level. The rest of the 75% is made by the central government. Interestingly, Belgium has one of the highest levels of decentralized spending in the EU member countries. It has a sound and powerful but complex mechanism for passing money from Centre to the regions and from regions to the municipalities.¹³ Since the Communities are not independent in creating financial sources for their spending, the Belgian Finance Act 2011 was designed to solve this issue. It intended to give some personal income taxation powers but it could not be applied except in Brussels. The only sources for municipal income are taxes on property, waste and leisure, which is almost 50% of their whole income, which they do not share with the central government. Sporadically, they also receive grants from the regional governments and central government in a financial year. In 2012, the central government spent about 58% of public expenditure (including social security spend), 28% by the Regions and Communities, and 13% by the municipalities and provinces. The Regional and Community spending is projected to rise to over 30% of the total public spend, whilst central government spending should drop below 55%.¹⁴

Local Governments in Pakistan

Overview

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has a federal structure and its governmental affairs are guided by the constitution of 1973. The constitution, besides describing the powers and functions of the federal and provincial governments, in its Article 32, emphasizes the need to promote local self-government. It also recognizes its institutions as part of the whole democratic exercise.

¹² Andrew Crompton, "Local Government in Belgium: Decentralization in Progress", Policy Briefing, 3 August 2017.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ S. Shahid Ali Rizvi, *Local Government in Pakistan: A Study in Clash of Ideas* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1980), 30.

Local government is not something new for the Indian subcontinent. Although the British East India Company set up the first municipal corporation in Madras in 1687,¹⁵ the corporation did not function as planned. In 1726, new municipal charters were announced for Bombay, Calcutta and Madras,¹⁶ but with reduced participation for Indians. The Conservancy Act was passed in 1842, under which the Sanitary Committees for disposal of garbage were formed. This was the first formal step towards a municipal organization in the subcontinent. A Board of Conservancy was established in Karachi in 1846, while the Municipal Act for Lahore and Rawalpindi was passed in 1867. The local self-government resolution of 1882, introduced by Lord Rippen, provided for the elected members in municipal committees and the establishment of local governments in rural areas. The Decentralization Commission setup in 1907 recommended that for municipal committees, non-official chairman should be appointed. The report on reforms presented by the Montague-Chelmsford team in 1917. It was incorporated into the Government of India Act 1919. It was a milestone in the history of local government in India for it declared local government as a transferred subject.¹⁷

The Simon Commission sent by the British government in 1925 set-up a mechanism for the assessment of the performance of local self-government institutions. The Government of India Act 1935 permitted limited provincial autonomy and allowed provinces to legislate on their respective local governments. Institutions of local self-government were a provincial subject under the 1935 Act. Thus, the British government's decision to give some autonomy to the provinces led to the passage of the Punjab Village Panchayat Act in 1939. During the Second World War, the local government reforms introduced were suspended. Local government was in a bad state in the years leading up to independence owing to Hindu-Muslim riots.¹⁸

At the time of independence in 1947, all the areas which constitute Pakistan had not experienced a sophisticated system of local government. Only

¹⁵ M. Abuzar Wajidi, *Local Government in Pakistan: A Case Study of KMC (1842-1988)* (Karachi: Royal Book, 2000), 21; Tasneem Sikandar, *Local Governments in Pakistan* (Karachi: Bookland, 2005), 28.

¹⁶ Tasneem Sikandar, *Local Governments in Pakistan*, 14; *Ibid*, 30.

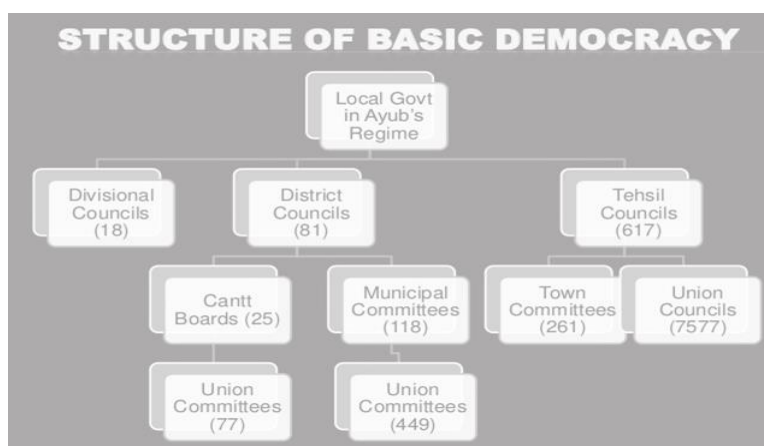
¹⁷ Syed Abdul Quddus, *Local Self Government in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd., 1981), 67.

¹⁸ Tasneem Sikandar, *Local Governments in Pakistan*, 31.

districts in Punjab and Bengal had had a restricted local government system. A pivotal role was played by the deputy commissioner in framing the policy. The 'Panchayat' system was revived in few villages of the country.¹⁹ While in city municipal committees and corporations were established, in towns, district boards were formed.²⁰ Still, in the first decade there were no elections for local governments.

Basic Democracy

In 1958, the provincial and central governments were dismissed by Pakistan's first military regime. After some time, the regime realized that there should, at least, be the appearance of people's participation in governmental affairs. In 1959, the wiz kids of the Ayub regime, devised the system of so-called 'Basic Democracy' in which 'Basic Democrats' at various levels were elected to serve in the local government. They also formed an electoral college to elect the president and assemblies. The system collapsed along with the Ayub regime.



People's Local Government

After East Pakistan seceded in December 1971, a democratic government took over in what was left of Pakistan. This government gave the country a new constitution which upheld the federal system and parliamentary democracy. The Bhutto regime introduced 'People's Local Government' for third tier, which provided representation for the marginalized communities

¹⁹ Ibid., 33.

²⁰ Ibid.

e.g., peasants, laborers, women, and minorities in the local councils. However, the local government institutions were not revived during the Bhutto government which took over in January 1972 until its eventual ouster in 1977.²¹



Local Government during Zia regime

The third Martial Law regime took over in 1977. General Zia-ul-Haq promulgated the local government ordinance in 1979 under which non-party elections were held for local councilors. The Zia-ul-Haq regime held three local government elections in year 1979, 1983, and 1987. The elections for local bodies, though regularly held during Zia regime, were not independent. The central government meddled in their affairs maneuvering them to further its own interests.



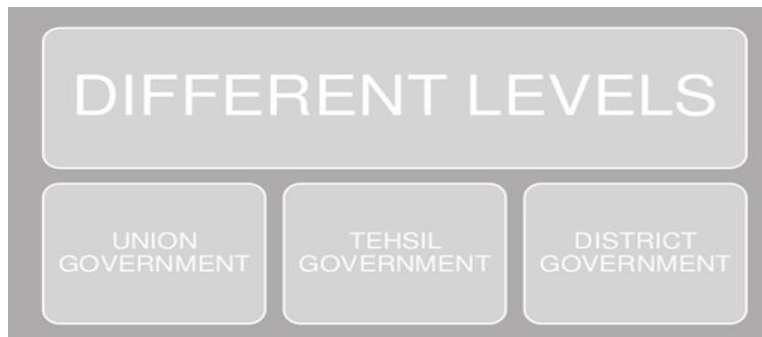
²¹ Ibid.

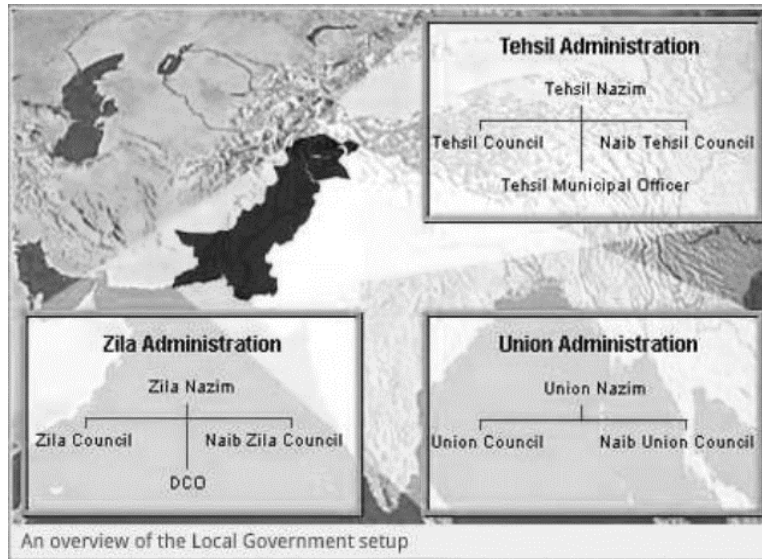
There were serious flaws in this system. No constitutional protection was given to elected bodies. The local bodies were given negligible financial powers. Moreover, the non-party basis minimized the strength and vigor of the whole process.

In the period between 1988 and 1997, four general elections were held. Democratically elected governments took the reins of power in the center as well as in the provinces, but there were no elections for the local bodies. The elected representatives of the federal and provincial assemblies took over many of the functions which were performed by the local governments.

Local Government during Musharraf regime

The third martial law regime seized power in 1999. To legitimize his rule, General Pervez Musharraf laid out the district and local government plan in 2001. This plan envisaged 'devolution of powers' at the grass roots level i.e., Union Council, the Tehsil Council, and the District Council. Local government elections were held in 2001 and in August 2005.





Local Governments Act 2013

In 2010, the federal government introduced the 18th amendment to the Constitution which devolved power to the provinces. The Baluchistan Assembly passed the Local Government Act in 2010 and the rest of the provinces promulgated their Local Government Acts in 2013.²²

All these Acts promised party base elections but the term limits are different. Punjab has a term of five years, Sindh and Baluchistan opted for four years while KPK for three years. Moreover, Sindh adopted indirect elections for Chairman and Vice-chairman of Union Councils. On the other hand, the Punjab opted for direct election.

The last elections for local governments were held in 2015 in all the provinces. On May 4, 2019, the Punjab Assembly passed the local government bill and put a halt on local government functioning. The KPK and Baluchistan local governments completed their terms but we see no movement towards new elections. The Sindh local government completed its term in August 2020. It too remained dysfunctional due to the interference of the provincial dispensation.²³

²² *The News*, October 20, 2019.

²³ <https://nation.com.pk/07-Feb-2020/pti-looks-reluctant-to-hold-lg-elections-in-provinces>

The KPK government made several amendments through Municipalities Act of 2019, which has only two tiers of government—Tehsil/Town Councils and the Village/Neighbourhood Councils.²⁴

Elections Act 2017

The government of Pakistan made electoral reforms in 2017 through the Elections Act 2017. The Act gave the sole responsibility to Election Commission to hold local elections. Section 4(219) of this Act sets out a legally binding timeline for the conduct of local elections which must be held within 120 days after local councils complete their tenure or they are dissolved. Article 140(A) of the constitution of Pakistan also demand the same.²⁵

However, after the 18th amendment to the constitution, it is mandatory for fresh elections that provinces should first carry the delimitation process of the Councils and provide legal documents to the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct local government elections on time.

The provinces are not giving importance to municipal institutions. None of the provinces have provided any legal documents to the Commission.

The incumbent government, in its 2018 manifesto, also promised that “we will transform Pakistan by devolving power and decision making to the people through an empowered local government system”. However, despite having a majority in three provinces, it has not been willing to hold local bodies elections.²⁶

Lessons for Pakistan

In the contemporary world, most of the states are multicultural or even multinational in their composition. For such states, the federal form of government is most suited, owing to their heterogeneity. Pakistan and Belgium are both diverse states.

Both adopted the federal structure which means power has to be devolved to component units and the voters should have easy access to their representatives. Belgium has effectively solved issues of multiculturalism

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ <https://ecp.gov.pk>

²⁶ *The News*, October 20, 2019.

through a strong local government system. On the other hand, Pakistan in its 73 years of existence experienced direct military governments for around three decades. Thus, neither democracy nor a federal system was allowed to flourish in the country.

On the other hand, the political elites and leaders of Belgium worked hard to accommodate all the diversities and make sure the political participation of all the localities. If Pakistan wants to solve its grass root problems, it should empower the local authorities in letter and spirit.

The Belgian Local Governments are autonomous in their functions; therefore, they have a responsibility to fulfill the requirements of their communities. Pakistan should also learn this lesson because since the 18th amendment the local governments are in the clutches of the provincial governments. The provinces have shown reluctance to grant development funds to local authorities.

Free, fair and regular elections is also one of the main characteristics of Belgium's local bodies and Pakistan has also lagged behind in this regard.

Dennis Rondinelli stated in World Banks Working Paper in defining "What is Decentralization": Decentralization means moving decision making, authority, responsibility and financial resources away from centralized control and closer to local units of government, thus improve the responsiveness and performance of the state. Furthermore, decentralization gives citizens or their elected representatives more power and participation in public decision making, in formulating and implementing policies and plans of general interest.

Belgium to a great extent practicing decentralization through its Constitutional Amendments in 1980 and 90s. On the other hand Pakistan introduces decentralization through a Constitutional amendment in 2010. Pakistan largely devolved powers from federal state to provincial units but the next step of decentralization which is transfer of power and authority from provincial government to local governments as stipulated by the insertion of Article 140-A is not yet working well which caused problems in implementing the policies and political participation of masses.

While concluding we can calculate certain similarities between Belgian and Pakistan. Belgium and its capital Brussels is a seat of EU and NATO, on the other hand Pakistan is a geostrategically located country in the region, which is a junction of South Asia, West Asia and Central Asia, means connecting resource efficient countries. Pakistan played a role of frontline state in Cold War and post Cold War politics.

They are Parliamentary Democracies, densely populated and are heterogenous states. Belgium is divided between Dutch, French and German speaking populations which is resolved through constitutional amendments, granting them formal recognition and autonomy. Pakistan is divided among different languages and ethnicities and also on its way to granting autonomy to its provinces as a third tier of government.

Through constitutional reforms Belgium to a large extent come out from lingual and ethnic disputes but in the case of Pakistan. It is a long road toward a path of ethnic and linguist harmony.

The developed and democratic states adopted localized or decentralized policies which acts differently in different areas according to their needs. Local governments become very beneficial in crisis situations like the recent pandemic of corona. The local representatives in almost all the states managed and helped their communities in an efficient manner. However, in Pakistan, during the lock down, the federal government or even provincial governments found it difficult to reach to every home or collect proper data of infected people.

During the pandemic, Pakistan experienced the absence of local authorities. All the directives like 'stay at home', 'restrictions on public gatherings', 'closure of businesses', 'mandatory face masks' came from either the federal or provincial authorities.

A local government is the lowest tier of government and it is subservient to provincial government as far as its status, structure, and functioning is concerned. In Pakistan, it has become ineffective because it is not autonomous. The provincial government controls the affairs of local government by interference in appointments and transfer of staff and funding. Until the 2017 Election Act, all the provincial governments were responsible for organizing the local bodies elections which left room for

manipulation. A local government can be greatly helpful in launching a government on the path of development if it is representative, autonomous, and has at its disposal concrete authority. The local bodies system can also be an important source of nourishing political leadership at the grassroots level.