



ORCID of JARH: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0723-9485>

DOI Number of the Paper: <https://zenodo.org/records/19512484>

Link of the Paper: <https://jar.bwo-researches.com/index.php/jarh/article/view/516>

Edition Link: [Journal of Academic Research for Humanities JARH, 6\(1\) Jan-Mar 2026](#)

HJRS Link: [Journal of Academic Research for Humanities JARH \(HEC-Recognised for 2025-2026\)](#)

Implication of Pervez Musharraf Decentralization of Power Agenda to Transform the Bureaucratic System of Pakistan

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Paper Information

Citation of the paper:

(JARH) Shah, A. A. S. (2026). Implication of Pervez Musharraf Decentralisation of Power Agenda to Transform the Bureaucratic System of Pakistan. In *Journal of Academic Research for Humanities*, 6(1), 21–28.

Subject Areas for JARH:

- 1 Political Science
- 2 Public Administration

Timeline of the Paper at JARH:

Received on: 28-08-2025.
Reviews Completed on: 16-11-2025.
Accepted on: 25-2-2026.
Online on: 31-3-2026.

License:



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Recognised for BWO-R:



Published by BWO Researches INTL:



DOI Image of the paper:

DOI [10.5281/zenodo.15649213](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15649213)

Abstract

QR Code for the Paper:



This paper looks at Pakistan's decentralisation policy under the Musharraf era and emphasises how it has affected the bureaucratic and administrative structure of the nation. The main contention is that Musharraf decentralization initiative were designed to improve governance and address disparities between the civilian and military sectors. The research technique, which draws from a variety of government and academic sources, involves a thorough analysis of legislative modifications, policy changes, and their practical ramification. The article summarises Musharraf's original seven-point plan, emphasising the transfer of financial and administrative authority to local levels. The national reconstruction bureau NRB and the provincial finance commission PFC were two important reforms that attempted to transfer authority and funds from the federal to local governments; nevertheless, bureaucracy and political parties posed strong obstacles to the execution, which reduced the efficacy of these changes. The results show that while decentralisation attempts enhanced women's participation and community involvement and briefly strengthened local governments, they were eventually undermined by a lack of resources, poor administration and ongoing military supervision. Although the national accountability bureau was established with the intention of combating corruption, it was criticised for being abused for political purposes. According to the report, improved coordination between different levels of government, a sincere desire on the part of the political class to maintain changes, and continued support for local government are all necessary for decentralisation to be successful. Developing institutional capabilities and promoting an open and transparent culture are essential for long-term success.

Keywords: Decentralisation, bureaucracy reforms, local government, policy impact

1.1 Introduction

President Musharraf took charge after the takeover and held public office for the further necessary conditions and administrative work. He ensures the general public for the improvement of good governance and democracy restoration according to their desires and needs. Civil unrest was created due to political instability and a military coup, but the military regime controlled all the affairs of the state with immediate effect. Later, military government consistency brought some comfort zone and was delivered with the passage of time. The Musharraf era comprised a civil and military regime from 2002 -2008 and consigned much civilian power through public representatives, but he was the chief executive of the government. The Musharraf regime is considered a landmark for promoting good governance and transforming administration at the grassroots level. Such reforms of the Musharraf government were implemented through various channels in Pakistan and brought some sustainable goals for the time being (Abbasi & Musarrat, 2015). The administration was running through PCO, and it was not a new implementation of his policies. In the past, the same policies were implemented by previous regimes, like the Musharraf regime, for running the state system on behalf of public representatives (Alam et al., 2020). Upon assuming power, the Musharraf administration aimed to administer the state machinery, offer assistance, and implement sound governance practices for the benefit of legitimate representatives and public employees. The NRB was established by the military administration to distribute power and decentralise the organisation. In this manner, to establish the NRB, the Musharraf administration sought to assign authority to a legitimate representative for each candidate and established a three-tiered local government structure throughout Pakistan. Another type of governance was instituted by the military, known as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), which looks into official misbehaviour and corrupt activities. In an attempt to monitor the opposition, NAB took the wrong turn and was dragged into an accountability court by a spurious accusation. The military government introduced the LFO order and also held elections in 2002 under military supervision, but it cannot be considered a fair election in Pakistani history (Khan et al., 2020b). Devolution Plan 2001 offers all forms of coordination to relevant authorities for the benefit of those with vested interests. The

new military regime plan was to guarantee and facilitate the quick decentralisation of authority and financial distribution for all stakeholders. A crucial component of the military takeover in 1999 was the structural restructuring of the administration and its supporting agencies. The Musharraf government prioritised health, tax collection, openness, and accountability in order to achieve sustainable goals. Although Pakistan's military administration changed the country's paradigm for good governance, it was unable to sustain its goals due to a lack of resources and the inefficiencies of several institutions. Equal opportunity is maintained by excellent governance, together with the uninterrupted operation of the legal system and the rule of law. The military regime worked on economic policy with immediate effect and introduced many policies in privatisation and public partnership. Implemented such a policy in every department for favourable conditions and boosted the economy (Alam & Wajidi, 2013).

Musharraf's government ensured he was legitimised by the general public through well and conducive reforms in Pakistan and brought harmonious structural change in bureaucracy and administration. For this purpose, he brought various changes like the devolution plan 2002 and the introduction of local government, and also for the accountability process, he brought NAB to examine corrupt practices and recover looted money. But with the passage of time, it was just brought for the time being and cannot perform well in the military era. Musharraf's policy and reforms created some administrative challenges and brought weakness to the institutional base in Pakistan (Zafar & Qadri, 2022). The Musharraf reform policy brought some change, but due to bureaucratic hurdles, it was not implemented properly in Pakistan. Extensive restructuring of policy and reforms in the devolution plan would have a significant impact on the Pakistani bureaucratic system. Power was transferred from the centre to the provincial level, cutting down bureaucratic red tape. Furthermore, by including local stakeholders in decision-making processes, it is hoped to empower local communities, improve public sector accountability, and promote socioeconomic development (Graf & Wurm, 2013). Musharraf era, which is considered a dictatorial rule for many after the coup, brings a mixture of involvement on an institutional basis that is run indirectly by the military regime. Many institutions were under the control of the military,

and the remaining were in favour of the military and had full support for the military regime after 1999. Consistency in institutions did not go forward due to the rigid policy of the military regime, and it went into a weak position for many years (Khan et al., 2020).

1.2 Musharraf Decentralisation Agenda

Since its creation, Pakistan has faced some federating challenges, both civilian and military, in its administrative base. Various reforms and policies were implemented on an institutional basis just to get rid of such hurdles, but due to a lack of resources and poor management, they were not developed properly and still exist in a draconian way. With the passage of time, every government works on good governance and local government to bring less developed areas and marginalised people into mainstream politics and solve their concerns on a local level by their true representative (Ahmad, 2023). Good governance believes in accountability, transparency, and checks and balances in all institutions. The Musharraf government aimed to restore good governance and accountability in Pakistan, focusing on economic and democratic restoration. The military regime included these issues in its revival programme, taking foreign loans to manage the fragile economy. The devolution plan of 2001 aimed to decentralise power and financial distribution, facilitating participation in mainstream governance activities. Structural changes in administration and departments were crucial to the government's goals. However, due to limited resources and the inefficiency of multiple institutions, the military government struggled to achieve sustainable goals (Mahmood, 2001). The 2001 decentralisation reforms implemented by the administration of General Pervez Musharraf resulted in a major reorganisation of Pakistan's political and administrative structure. The Devolution of Power Plan, which attempted to transfer power from the federal and provincial governments to local governments, encompassed these changes and improved governance by empowering local communities. The devolution plan of the Musharraf government is to enhance service delivery and public participation at the local level. The main agenda of decentralisation in 2001 was to reduce corruption in all departments and bring transparency to the local level. Decentralise power in local plans just to minimise government activity, bring local activity to a record, and provide quick access to concern issues at the local level (Karim, 2016).

This table provides a comprehensive overview of the decentralisation reforms during General Pervez Musharraf's tenure in Pakistan.

Aspect	Details
Initiative Name	Devolution of Power Plan 2000
Implemented By	General Pervez Musharraf's Government
Objective	To decentralise administrative and financial authority to local governments, empowering local officials and communities.
Key Features	1. Establishment of three tiers of local government: District, Tehsil (sub-district), and Union Council levels. 2. Direct election of local government representatives. 3. Devolution of administrative powers from provincial to local levels. 4. Increased fiscal autonomy for local governments. 5. Creation of Citizens Community Boards (CCBs) to involve the community in development projects.
Administrative Structure	District Government: Headed by a Zila Nazim (District Mayor) Tehsil Government: Headed by a Tehsil Nazim (Sub-district Mayor) Union Council: Headed by a Union Nazim (Union Mayor)
Elected Representatives	Local government representatives were elected for a term of four years.
Financial Reforms	Local governments were given control over a significant portion of the development budget and the authority to generate their own revenue through local taxes and fees.
Citizens Community Boards	CCBs were established to facilitate community participation in local development initiatives. They could initiate and manage development projects with financial support from the local government.
Challenges	1. Resistance from provincial bureaucracies. 2. Political instability and lack of continuity in policies. 3. Limited capacity and resources at the local government level. 4. Issues with transparency and accountability. 5. Overlapping responsibilities between different tiers of government.

Outcomes	Mixed results: Some success in increasing community participation and local-level decision-making, but overall effectiveness was hindered by political and administrative challenges. The system faced discontinuity and alterations by subsequent governments.
Legacy	The decentralisation efforts under Musharraf's regime laid the groundwork for future local governance reforms, though many of the initial structures and systems were modified or dismantled in later years.

1.3 Paradigm Shift in Bureaucracy

Musharraf wanted to implement reform policies across the state level and bring a paradigm shift in the bureaucratic setup. During Musharraf's presidency, the decentralisation agenda aimed to solve the bureaucratic system's long-standing problems with centralisation, inefficiency, and lack of accountability. The goal of the reforms was to improve the administrative system's speed and transparency so that it could better serve the numerous people of Pakistan by restructuring the governance structure. A crucial element of this effort was the Local Government Ordinance of 2001, which instituted a threefold local government framework consisting of district, tehsil (sub-district), and union councils (Naqvi, 2021). Under the devolution plan, a new local government was introduced, consisting of a district and a union council. Under this setup, Nazim had full authority over governance issues, tax collection, and other auxiliary work in the concerned area. The district administration head in the devolution plan of 2001 was the district coordinator officer and was responsible to the district Nazim on behalf of the new set-up. It was a new setup from the previous setup, where deputy commissioners were responsible for the provincial government. The office of the deputy commissioner was abolished, and the district coordinator officer's power was reduced in the new setup (Cheema et al., 2005). The bureaucracy reshuffle in the devolution plan was the core value of the Musharraf government. From centralisation to decentralisation of bureaucratic power, just to maintain local community empowerment and bring it into the decision-making process. The reshuffle in bureaucracy was just to modernise the bureaucracy pillar and restore good government delivery.

Bureaucrats were ensured recognition for their contribution and a safety and comfort package for good delivery and service. Restructure departments, ministries, and divisions just to get rid of bureaucratic red tape and posting orders. Posting orders was minimised with immediate effect (Cheema & Sayeed, 2006).

1.4 Decentralisation of power through local government

The decentralisation process in a democratic state serves as a bridge between the centre and lower levels in every state of the world, but due to weak democratic processes, it brings some hurdles for the true implementation of lower levels in the world at large. The devolution of power plans by the Musharraf government was a bold step in the history of Pakistan, but due to some resource allocation and bureaucratic hurdles, it was not implemented on a true level, but somehow we can say that it was a bold decision where many marginalized communities were merged into this plan and brought a development phenomenon to Pakistan after a long period (Paracha, 2003). Local governments consider a lower-level development channel to bring less developed people into the mainstream and decision-making processes. It develops people on a lower level and contributes to concerns with immediate effect. However, local governments in Pakistan face various challenges and hindrances due to civil-military relations and democratisation at a lower level. Local governments in Pakistan are facing resource allocation and administrative issues because, in the history of Pakistan, the military government has empowered local governments, but civil governments have ignored such steps for a long time. Due to this concern, the local government in Pakistan is still in the experimentation stage, which has never been developed by a civilian government. (Ashraf & Iqbal, 2021). The devolution plan of 2001 was a comprehensive strategy to condense local issues under one umbrella by the policymakers at the time. It was just not relevant to bring another type of local government, but a grand strategy to develop local communities with a modern shift and achieve sustainable goals. The military government always experimented with such a system at grass root level after the creation of Pakistan. Soon after the devolution plan, local governments were empowered and responsible at the local level in their constituency. Checks and balances were the

core value of the devolution plan, which district Nazim and the district coordinator officer assess all the expenditure and revenue collection (Shah et al., 2016). The local government was introduced in 2001 by the NRB body at the state level, which was promulgated by the chief executive for all 4 province on nonparty base. The main agenda of the military government is to empower the local and marginalised general public on a modern level and bring it into the mainstream with immediate effect. The new setup was different from the urban area, and bureaucracy role were cut off and assigned some other auxiliary work. District government were more empowered, and budget expenditure was under the control of the district Nazim. Besides this, a tehsil government were in the plan and also a tehsil municipal officer for fiscal management and budget allocation at the lower level. Union councils were part of the district government and had access to the lower union level. So this plan was implemented just for the decentralisation of power neither it was launch for democracy share and any other hurdle of military government (Ashraf & Iqbal, 2021). The military regime's proposal for a local government system in Pakistan failed due to a lack of resources and mismanagement in 2002. The military introduced a devolution plan without credibility and insufficient resources during an economic disruption. Elections were held on a non-party basis without a constitutional guarantee, and federally administered tribal areas did not participate. Structural issues included the unjustified and indirect election of council members, a lack of resources, and delayed projects. Pakistan needs a uniform and organised local government system that focuses on the main concerns rather than political parties' agendas and political scoring. A comprehensive strategy is necessary for the remaining work, and the devolution plan created hurdles for bureaucracy (Taj et al., 2014).

1.5 Decentralisation of financial power

The military government, after assuming the charge, wanted to restore the fragile economy of Pakistan and bring some structural changes and policy changes with immediate effect. During that time, corruption was at its peak, and the economy was in a disrupted position. Both internal and external debt were serious threats to the Pakistani economy. In the devolution plan and Musharraf's six-point agenda on the reformation of country structure reforms, the economy was the main agenda, and

sustainable policy was the need of the time to bring emergency assistance to run the weakest economy of Pakistan. The existing system failed to manage the economy and boost economic progress. The military government decided to restructure all financial divisions with a new design.

Recommendations were proposed for economic management and the national economic council policy for fiscal division. The military government wanted to redesign the economic council, and it should be clear that the planning commission should consider a separate department and design a new policy for the distribution of resources and funds to the concerned departments. The project and implementation that launched the new government should be completed on time. For the betterment of the country, the fiscal data and resource management planning commission has some power to fulfil all the responsibilities with immediate effect. All this was proposed in the 2000 devolution plan, which was accepted by the setting government, but project implementation could not achieve this goal due to some hurdles and resource utilisation (Naqvi, 2003). After assuming the charge, the Musharraf government wanted to change some colonial structures in administrative and financial power for its vested interests in Pakistan. At the beginning of the military regime, Musharraf presented a seven-point agenda in front of the panel in a national security meeting. The decentralisation of financial and administrative power in Pakistan was a bridge between civil and military imbalances during the Musharraf era. Consignment of all civil administration and financial distribution across the lower levels was the main agenda of the military regime. For the betterment of good governance, the military makes decisions to ensure the general public and bring harmonious relations with all stakeholders for sustainable achievement and the focus goal. The new system just consigns power to all relevant and local representatives on behalf of the general public. A committee was established through the national reconstruction bureau, and a devolution of power plan was presented from 2000 until July 2001 (Mackenzie, 2002). Financial and resource allocation, which was allocated by the Musharraf government to a new phase of local people without party affiliation, was a serious concern to all political parties, as they were marginalised and had their allocation of power and resources in programmes.

Budget allocation at the district level was under the control of the district Nazim, but the previous system was totally different; before this responsibility, it was under the control of the deputy commissioner. It created a civil-military imbalance, and bureaucratic power was somehow marginalised (Keefer et al., 2003). The allocation of resources and financial activity was consolidated in the provincial finance commission under the devolution plan in 2000. The provincial government allocated all funds to the concerned representative body under the constitutional umbrella. The members of the provincial finance commission are recruited by the provincial government and assigned all policies to the district government. Local government resources primarily come from the provincial government, with the Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) and provincial governor deciding the formula for provincial allocations. The PFC is composed of provincial officers or nominated officials, with no automatic representation of locally elected officials. Under the devolution plan, many reforms were brought about with immediate effect, and a structural plan was formed. The finance committee recommended various proposals for the recruitment of staff, tax collection, and revenue generation. Decentralising power to many departments also eliminates pressure from external stakeholders (Jalazai, 2002).

1.6 Decentralization impact of Musharraf government

The main agenda of the military regime behind various changes and reforms was to legalise the de facto government and ensure the general public through these reforms, but political parties and bureaucracy were the main hindrances to such policy implementation. In 2002, the legal framework brought about further changes in the constitution and consigned absolute power to the president under new amendments, which were not constitutional and lacked political legitimacy. The new amendments, which are guaranteed by the legal framework order, increase presidential power and give the president the power to dismiss army officers, governors, and national assembly members under consolidated power. The President used absolute power against his opponent and brought all opponents into jail custody many times, and also put sedition charges on many politicians and civilians in the 2002 military era. The judiciary in the Musharraf era controlled and misused the fundamental rights of the general public during

that period (Faqir, 2014). Corrupt practice and the eradication of corruption. The Musharraf government introduced NAB in 2002 with immediate effect, eradicating the corruption menace. With the existing body of the PAC, it was a new body of accountability, and the chairman was more powerful. Everybody was responsible for the NAB, but only politicians were recorded in the accountability process from the initial day of its implementation in the history of Pakistan. The military regime introduced this body just for the larger interest of Pakistan and conducted large-scale corruption cases against the culprit, who was nominated in the corruption case. But NAB misused the politician and had no positive impact on the transparency base in Pakistan. NAB was not limited to politicians and bureaucrats; it called for civilian citizens to go beyond assets to recover looted state money. The NAB procedure for looting money and eradicating maladministration was consigned to the NAB chairman, who had full power, and was consolidated by the president of Pakistan. This power further improvements are needed to improve coordination and monitoring quality (Zaman & Ali, 2017). This ordinance, which misuses the power of the NAB chairman against opponents in Pakistan. The durability of the accountability process is dependent upon the creation of an autonomous agency responsible for apprehending those found guilty (Shah et al., 2023). Decentralisation in Pakistan boosts local involvement and productivity, tackles global issues like corruption, and promotes independence. The Asian Development Bank supports local government devolution, but the former government failed due to inadequate leadership, wages, and common government. Further improvements are needed to improve administration quality (Zaman & Ali, 2017).

This table provides a concise overview of the impacts of Musharraf's decentralisation policies on various aspects of governance and local administration in Pakistan.

Aspect	Impact
Governance Structure	Established a three-tier local government system: District, Tehsil, and Union Council.
Local Democracy	Introduced direct elections for local government officials, enhancing local democracy.
Community Participation	Promoted community involvement through Citizens

	Community Boards (CCBs), encouraging local development initiatives.
Financial Autonomy	Granted, local governments have control over a substantial portion of the development budget and the ability to generate revenue through local taxes.
Service Delivery	Aimed to improve local service delivery by decentralising decision-making and administrative functions.
Administrative Efficiency	Reduced the bureaucratic red tape at the local level, potentially increasing administrative efficiency.
Challenges in Implementation	Encountered resistance from provincial governments and entrenched bureaucracies, limiting effectiveness.
Political Dynamics	Political instability and lack of consistent support affected the sustainability and continuity of reforms.
Capacity Building	Local governments often lacked the capacity and resources to manage increased responsibilities effectively.
Transparency and Accountability	While intended to improve transparency and accountability, the system faced issues with corruption and inefficiency at the local level.
Impact on Development	Mixed outcomes: Some areas saw significant improvements in local development and governance, while others struggled with implementation challenges.
Legacy and Reforms	Set the stage for future local governance reforms, although many aspects of decentralisation were altered or dismantled by subsequent governments.

In 2001, Pakistan's military coup introduced a delimitation of districts and a local government system, which failed due to a lack of coordination between line areas and local government. The devolution plan in 2002 sidelined political parties and gained legitimacy through elected representatives. The decentralisation plan of 2001 focused on empowering local governments through participatory representative processes, but faced obstacles like a lack of coordination and variations in local support. The New Order's government structure in 2001 required political backing for local governments, and

drastic measures were needed to implement effective governance. But it could not achieve measurable results in the fixed goal, so it was the biggest impact of Musharraf's government policy in the near future for democracy revival in Pakistan (Ashraf & Iqbal, 2021). Following its nine-year tenure in power, the military administration completely transformed into the Musharraf government's military wing. Over 3500 military officers keep an eye on civil bureaucracy at all levels, from the federal to the provincial. Civil servants worked under the supervision of military officers and were subject to military command. Military soldiers asserted that all of this government oversight reduced corruption and held corrupt individuals accountable. The government of Musharraf aimed to expand the number of military officers working in civil organisations. A military officer was appointed to important positions in civil institutions in 2002, including head and chairman. A military officer controlled several mills and public-private partnerships in addition to being the chairman of the federal public service department. The military oversaw the civil service hiring, posting, and training processes. The administrative staff college in Pakistan was converted into the National School of Public Policy, with a retired major general from the military taking up leadership. The military regime's performance on all these tasks was very concerning to the bureaucracy and gave military officials no moral justification. Accordingly, bureaucracy rule and regulations spread for the time being and could not provide precise results on time owing to military participation in politics from a long time ago in Pakistan's history (Aftab et al., 2020). Local governments in Pakistan received insufficient support and resources as a result of political elites and bureaucracies resisting the decentralisation movement. Corruption and poor leadership resulted from this. Despite these difficulties, Musharraf's initiatives had beneficial results, including more gender inclusion and community involvement. The changes encouraged people to take responsibility and ownership, particularly in rural regions. The sustained backing of these changes, the development of capability, and the acceptance of decentralisation and local empowerment by all parties involved are necessary for their long-term success. (Ali et al., 2012).

1.7 Conclusion

The Musharraf government brought various

policies and reforms to strengthen the bureaucratic model and eradicate the traditional and existing system for the larger interest and benefit of Pakistan, but due to a poor system and lack of resources, it was not sufficient for the country. Country need proper and approved policy without biased and without political involvement .local government were under the control of province but Musharraf government introduce in 2001 and burden put on central bureaucracy .due to lack of local of capacity and resource it was not properly implemented .bureaucracy power reduce in devolution plan it was a bad phenomenon for bureaucrats it resistance from entrenched bureaucratic elite .further changer were brought in constitution and president power were increase by force way so it derail democracy in Pakistan .at the political party, judiciary and civil society recorded strike and protest against the illegitimate decision and policy of Musharraf and brought Musharraf regime towards end period after charter of democracy between the two main political party of Pakistan. Overall, while Musharraf's power distribution agenda aimed to transform the bureaucratic model, it had a bad impact on Pakistan's political discourse.

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