

# ***Political and Administrative Crisis in Sindh during Musharraf Regime***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The causes of political and administrative instability in the provincial administration of Sindh, which led to a complex administrative crisis including mismanagement, corruption, favoritism, nepotism, and feudalism, need a thorough investigation. The problem began with the replacement of the Commissionerate System by the Nazimate System of 2001. The bill (Restoration of an old Commissionerate System) was moved in the Sindh assembly and passed in July 2011 by the then ruling Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP). The Article addresses the question as why the rural political elites of Sindh opposed the local government system while the urban political elites supported it. This paper is divided into three parts, the first part discusses the changes that the Local Government System brought about in 2001, the second part addresses the stakes of rural politicians and the third part deals with stakes of urban politicians in the local governance of Sindh.*

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## Introduction

Karachi is the provincial capital of Sindh that plays a great influence over the political atmosphere of the state. The political instability in Karachi resulted in a greater administrative crisis that engulfed the province of Sindh. There was a difference of opinion between the rural political elites support given to the old commissionerate system and the urban political elites that favour the new local government system. Political parties like the Pakistan Peoples party, the Awami National Party (ANP), the Jeay Sindh Mahaz (JSM), the Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz (JSQM), the Jeay Sindh Taraqqi Pasand Party (JSTP), the Jeay Sindh Mahaz Shafi Barfat Group (JSM-S), the Jamat-i-Islami (JI) and the Muthaheda Qaumi Movement (MQM) were either supporting the new administrative system or opposing it. The lack of consensus and sincerity among these parties have further deteriorated the administrative set-up of Sindh. Furthermore, arbitrary transfers of bureaucrats on political grounds have contributed to a profound impact on the crisis at the local government level.

The Local Government Ordinance, 2000 (LGO) was introduced in order to minimize the powers of the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police who ran administrative affairs at their personal whims. This was considered to be a silent revolution while decentralizing the power from bureaucracy to the local elected people's representatives.<sup>1</sup> The Local Government Ordinance was promulgated on August 14, 2001 under which the *Nazim* was designated as the head of the district with powers of over-all control on the district bureaucracy.<sup>2</sup> The Basic Democracy (BD) System was a similar system of devolution which was introduced by Ayub Khan in the 1960s. Similar to the BD, the objective of LGO was to decentralize power and

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1 Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 172.

2 Ilhan Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan 1947-2008* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 125.

democracy at the grassroot level in order to empower the common people.<sup>3</sup> Under the Local Government Ordinance, elections were held on non-party basis. Therefore, panels were formed by political parties for example the Awami Dost Panel (PPP) and the Khushal Pakistan (PML-Q). Ironically, all the *Nazims* elected under the local government elections of 2001 were traditional power wielders, *Waderas* (Urdu: feudals) in case of Sindh. For instance, the *Nazim* of Nawabshah was Faryal Talpur (MNA) sister of the former President and co-chairperson of the PPP Asif Ali Zardari, *Nazim* of Hyderabad was Makhdoom Rafique Zaman brother of Makhdoom Amin Fahim renowned Sindhi landowner, politician and core member of the PPP, *Nazim* of Khairpur was Nafisa Shah (MNA) daughter of the former Chief Minister Sindh Qaim Ali Shah and *Nazim* of Dadu was son of Liaquat Jaotji ex-minister of water and power and *Nazim* of Ghotki was Ali Ghur Mehar. However, this picture shows the decentralization of *wadera* power at grassroot level, all enjoyed power as District *Nazims* and many *Taluka Nazims* were also the *wedaras*.<sup>4</sup>

The Sindh Local Government Ordinance was promulgated on August 26, 2001.<sup>5</sup> Under this ordinance, the District Coordination Officer (DCO) replaced the Deputy Commissioner and *Nazim* became the administrative head of a district leading to chaos and confusion at the grassroot level.<sup>6</sup> The objective of LGO was to decentralize the political, administrative and financial powers to the District, *Taluka* and Union Council level in order to ensure an effective delivery of services, transparency and participation of

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3 "Local Government System (2001)" on Story of Pakistan <http://www.storyofpakistan.com/articletext.asp?artid=A144> accessed (12/12/2011).

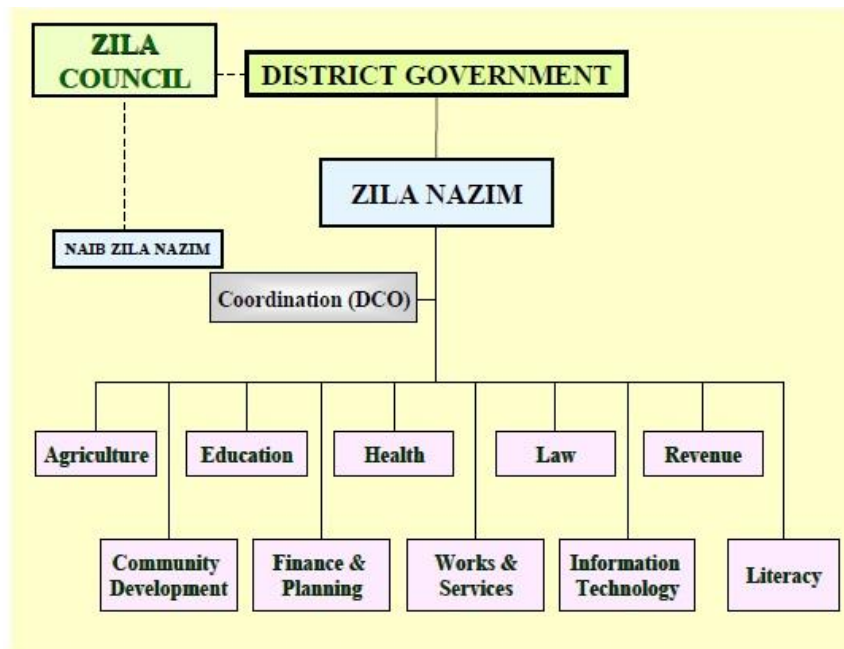
4 Interview by author with Aijaz Mehar, Correspondent at the BBC, 09/12/2011, Islamabad.

5 Government of Sindh, *The Sindh Local Government Ordinance 2001* [http://www.sindh.gov.pk/dpt/services/RULES/SLGO%202001%20February03\\_.pdf](http://www.sindh.gov.pk/dpt/services/RULES/SLGO%202001%20February03_.pdf) (accessed 10/12/2011)

6 Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan*, 125.

common people in decision making while institutionalized it at gross root level.<sup>7</sup>

Administratively, Sindh was divided into Union Council, *Taluka (Tehsil)*, Town, Districts and City Districts were formed.<sup>8</sup> The role and responsibilities of *Nazims* were to visualize direct district wise development, to make strategies for projects, maintain law and order, decentralize district government, present proposals to the *Zila* (District) Council, look after delivery and services, maintain financial and administrative discipline in the district government, present tax proposals in the districts, and manage relief activity (see Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1: Responsibilities of *Zila* (District) *Nazim***

SOURCE: "Local Government System in Pakistan and the Aberdeen Agenda" in *Symposium on Strengthening Decentralization in Pakistan and the Commonwealth* organized by National Reconstruction Bureau in collaboration with Commonwealth Local Government Forum & Commonwealth Secretariat Held in Islamabad, 24-25 July, 2006. p.34.

[http://www.nrb.gov.pk/publications/TOC\\_LG\\_System\\_Final\\_Book.pdf](http://www.nrb.gov.pk/publications/TOC_LG_System_Final_Book.pdf) (accessed 10/11/11)

<sup>7</sup> Government of Sindh, *The Sindh Local Government Ordinance*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Government of Sindh, *The Sindh Local Government Ordinance*, 13.

Moreover, *Nazim* had to inspect *Taluka*, Municipal, Town and Union Council administration, supervise the working of internal audit office and issue executive orders to the District Coordination Officer (DCO) and Executive District Officer (EDO).<sup>9</sup>

The post of DCO was created in Grade 20 to replace the DC. All the DCOs were from the District Management Group (DMG)<sup>10</sup> or provincial management groups. Under this system, the DCO had to coordinate between the district officers, general supervision over the projects, assist the District Nazim; prepare reports on development projects/plans and give presentation on the annual budget of the district.<sup>11</sup>

The office of DCO decreased the power of the DMG. In the commissionerate system, the DC had powers of collecting land revenue, magisterial, and police supervisory, through which politicians exercised powers in their constituencies.<sup>12</sup> However, politicians had to look forward to the DC because he had both powers of magistracy and authority over police. Under the Local Government Ordinance, authority was eroded from the DMG. Hence, in Sindh, *wadera* himself became the executive head of the district while holding the office of *Nazim* which has proved to be the disaster for the rural Sindh.<sup>13</sup>

### **Increasing power of *Wadera* / Strengthening Feudal System**

Theoretically, the LGO scheme was good in its objective and agenda, but practically it was designed for elite class. No doubt funds were distributed at the *Taluka* and Union Council level but there were evidences of rampant corruption and mis-management of funds. Hence, the people and rural

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9 Government of Sindh, *The Sindh Local Government Ordinance*, 21.

10 Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan*, 125.

11 Government of Sindh, *The Sindh Local Government Ordinance*, 28-29.

12 Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan*, 124.

13 Interview with Aijaz Mehar.

political elite of Sindh opposed the local government system as there were two groups of the rural political elite. One was part of the LGO scheme and received benefits from another group who was not a part of the scheme and could not get benefit from it. Consequently, those who fall in the second category were opposing it. Besides the conflict of *waderas* with each other on the LGO scheme, there was also a belief in the common people of rural Sindh that this scheme has strengthened either the existing old *wadera* families or led to the emergence of a new *wadera* class owing to corruption and mismanagement of funds. The fact is that prior to the scheme *wadera* culture of Sindh was dying down a natural process because their land had been distributed among their children and grand children. Therefore, they were not as much influential anymore as were supposed to be in the past.<sup>14</sup>

Under the LGO scheme, broad level administrative changes took place merely on political grounds. Instantly, new districts were formed by virtue of strengthening the *wadera* and certain political parties. For example, Karachi, Hyderabad city, Nawabshah Taluka, Mirpurkhas Taluka and Sukkur Taluka *Nazims* belonged to the MQM.<sup>15</sup> Remaining *Zila* and *Taluka Nazims* were from the king's party, PML-Q.<sup>16</sup> The classical example of favoring *waderas* is Qambar at Shadadkot newly declared district where many people were killed in the dispute related to the nomination of its head quarters. After making new districts, it was handed over to Nawab Shabbir Ahmed Chandio who left the PPP to join the PML (Q) and became District *Nazim*. Similarly Kashmore at Kandhkot was formed for Saleem Jan Mazari who became its district *Nazim*. Hyderabad was divided into four districts in order to strengthen the MQM which had an alliance with the ruling PPP, other wise it was impossible to elect *nazim* of the MQM from undivided Hyderabad. When Hyderabad was not

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14 Interview with Aijaz Mehar.

15 Interview by author with Altaf Rahemo.

16 Interview by author with Altaf Rahemo.

divided its District *Nazim* was Makhdoom Amin Fahim's brother Makhdoom Rafiq uz Zaman.

Besides districts, new *Talukas* were formed. For example, Dokri was divided and new *Taluka* Bakrani came into existence formerly which was town of Altaf Unar ex-minister without portfolio.<sup>17</sup> The majority of *nazims* were *waderas* who were not well educated.<sup>18</sup> Some of them had never been to school after middle school (8<sup>th</sup> grade). There was a culture in Sindh that instead of *waderas* their servants or managers arrange person who were to appear in the examination. Consequently, *nazims* were incompetent and unable to deliver requisite services. During the natural calamities, for example, the devastating floods in Sindh, *nazims* had to make sure service delivery to the community of the district but they failed hopelessly. Needless to say they ask help from NGOs to provide them with shelter and food. Further they were trying to provide facilities to their voters and relatives. They did not consider it their responsibility to work for other community except their voters that had become a norm in the politics of Sindh.<sup>19</sup>

In the LGO, the police directly came under the jurisdiction of *nazim* who was authorised to write the ACR of the District Police Officer (DPO); which was written by the DC previously. In district, personal relationship between the *nazim* and the police chief was required to be fine otherwise coordination would broke down.<sup>20</sup> The *nazim* often seeks favour from the police and exercises his power against his opponent for personal gains. In the district, it was difficult for an ordinary citizen to register the FIR against any crime without kickback or support of ruling political party. It has been reported that people rushed to the court and got the FIR registered from the session court according to the CRPC

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17 Interview with Aijaz Mehar.

18 Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan*, 126.

19 Interview of Aijaz Mehar.

20 Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan*, 201.

22A<sup>21</sup> and 22B<sup>22</sup>. The judge gave directives to register the FIR. What happened was that the SHO registered the FIR owing to the courts directives but practically after getting kickback from the party he disposed it off either in B Class or Class that ultimately gave benefit to the criminal.<sup>23</sup> Under the Local Government System in Sindh, Dharel<sup>24</sup> ((Sindhi: dacoits) culture was deliberately provoked in order to victimize opponents and whosoever stood against *wadera*. *Dharel* culture was kind of a force of *wadera* who can use them whenever he wanted. Police and *wadera* were the great supporter of Dharel. They were the people who provided shelter and weapons to them. Both police and *wadera* make money while taking *bhatia* (Urdu: illegal money) from them.

In the commissionerate system, price control and magistracy powers reside in the hands of the Deputy Commissioner.<sup>25</sup> It was slightly better in that system because the *Mukhtiarkar/ Tahsildar* (first class magistrate) or Deputy Commissioner visited markets and in order to check the prices of commodities. During the LGO system, price control became lax because everyone had approach to the city *nazim* through chamber of commerce and trade etc.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, many *nazims* had their own private businesses. Encroachment and price hike was a very common phenomenon during the local government system. As a consequence, a business mafia emerged that established its hegemony in the markets.<sup>27</sup> Somehow it had created open

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21 Bare Act, The Code of Criminal Procedure: Act V of 1898, (Lahore: Khyber Law Publisher, 2011), 11.

22 Bare Act, The Code of Criminal Procedure: Act V of 1898, 12.

23 Gohar Ghanghro, "Sardar Zardari ji dil kiyen mutasir thi" in Sindi Daily Kawaish, [http://www.thekawish.com/Article/column/writer\(C\).html](http://www.thekawish.com/Article/column/writer(C).html) (accessed 10/12/011)

24 Dharel kidnap people for ransom and these groups are backed by feudal and police. Police and feudal provide them weapons and shelter. They always live in kacha area where forest is on the bank of Indus River.

25 Niaz, *The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan*, 126.

26 Interview with Altaf Rahemo.

27 Interview with Altaf Rahemo.



grounds for the business community to sell things on their own rates. It caused misery in the rural Sindh.

Under the local government scheme, magistracy powers were exercised by the Judicial Magistrate. Before the LGO, magistracy powers were laid in the office of the Deputy Commissioner. Judicial magistrate dealt with cases of 13D, gave remand and price control that was basically the jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner. While appearing before Judicial Magistrate, one needed to seek help of lawyer and paid him fee that was a minimum of Rs. 5000. During commissionerate system, one had to appear before *Mukhtiarkar* or Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) without the help of a lawyer. In the court of magistrate, cases lingered on and it took long time unlike commissionerate system. In other words appearing at the court of judicial magistrate was very complicated, complex and created unease for the poor people.

In the commissionerate system, revenue collection was the prime responsibility of *Mukhtiarkar* to make sure *Dhal* (tax on agriculture) which was collected twice in a year from the land owners possessing land more than ten acre.<sup>28</sup> Small landowners who had land up to ten acres were exempted from it. During local government scheme almost all *nazims* were landowners, therefore, they did not pay *Dhal* at all. Thus, it was collected from the small landowners. Ironically, all the forest land was grabbed by *waderas* who cut trees and occupied government plots. Initially, the Local Government system appeared to be an opportunity for the feudal system that was dying out. However, the MQM factor changed the dynamics of local governance in Sindh.

### **The MQM Factor-Urban Political Elite Support LGO**

The election of the Local Government scheme had taken place in 2001 and the MQM boycotted it. Consequently, *nazims* were from the PPP, the PML (N) and the JI. In the second term the MQM participated and got seat of city

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28 Interview with Altaf Rahemo.

*Nazim* Karachi. However, five districts of Karachi were merged into city government. Though, Karachi is multi-ethnic city where Pathan, Baloch, Sindhi, Punjabi, Bengali and Kashmiri are residing, the Mohajirs through MQM became the sole powerful community in Karachi by virtue of the city *Nazim* which was the most powerful post. The population of Karachi was over 9.8 million<sup>29</sup> in five districts which were merged into city government. On the contrary, Hyderabad had population of 1.1 million<sup>30</sup>; it was divided into four districts. The division of Hyderabad was made on the grounds of population; whereas this principle was not applied to Karachi.

In fact, Karachi and Hyderabad being big cities of Sindh and important economically and politically, therefore, it was perceived that Sindh should come directly under the MQM power.

When the MQM became successful in getting city *Nazim* Karachi and *Nazims* in the other cities of the province, it started to open its political units all over the province. In other words, it had started its outreach from urban areas to the rural areas of Sindh. By and large, it was successful in its agenda. It had opened its unit offices and sub-offices in the old municipality offices.<sup>31</sup> The MQM got municipality offices on lease and opened its units which increased the outreach of the MQM from Karachi to Kashmore, that is, all over Sindh.<sup>32</sup> However, its outreach was indigestible for the indigenous Sindhi people and *waderas* especially who belonged to the PPP.

Since, the power of MQM was increasing in political, economic, and social terms; Sindhis had great apprehension

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29 Population Census Organization, *Population Size and Growth of Major cities*, (Government of Pakistan, 1998).  
<http://www.census.gov.pk/MajorCities.htm> (accessed 12/12/2011).

30 Population Census Organization, *Population Size and Growth of Major Cities* (Government of Pakistan, 1998).

31 Interview by author with Altaf Rahemo.

32 Interview by author with Altaf Rahemo.

regarding its penetration into the interior Sindh. Poverty in rural Sindh created grounds for the MQM. Owing to drastic changes in the interior Sindh due to the climate changes that caused floods, draughts and very poor situation of law and order, poverty had increased. The interior Sindh has an agrarian based economy. These climatic and social changes caused insecurity for the rural Sindhis. Therefore, they rushed to Karachi in search of jobs for a better future; while staying in Karachi, Sindhis felt more insecure and alien to their own city which was capital of Sindh due to the immense power and hold of the MQM in every walk of life. They felt the compulsion to join the MQM in order to get jobs and survive in Karachi. However, becoming a member of the MQM to be considered high treason in rural Sindh. Furthermore, the MQM started to create counter weight against other parties especially the PPP in interior Sindh, the ANP and the JI in Karachi.

Sindhi *wadera* was against the Local Government system because he was losing his influence owing to the emergence of neo-feudal class. The middle and lower middle class was against the LGO by virtue of insecurity of rising hegemony of certain groups. The nationalist groups were against it because they believed that the LGO scheme only served the interests of the MQM and *wadera*, therefore, this system should be changed. During the Local Government, many nationalists were sent behind the bars. For example, the MQM workers attacked Bashir Qureshi, Chairman of Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz (JSQM). Sindhis believed that the LGO scheme was directly proportional to the power of MQM.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, not merely rural political elite was opposing the local government scheme but urban political elite also opposed it except the MQM. The ANP and the JI which have power base in urban Sindh were strongly opposing the local government scheme. It had damaged and discouraged Pathan, Sindhi, Baloch, and Punjabi in Karachi. The existing system was commissionerate in Sindh which was not

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33 Interview with Altaf Rahemo.

completely in its previous shape because magistracy power had not been given to them.

### **Sindhi Nationalists**

Sindhi nationalist politics is issue oriented. When they observed that the local government system could not serve their interests at large, they tried to mobilize and sensitize the Sindhi masses against the scheme. Though the nationalists have no vote-bank as such, they still have street power while mobilizing the masses. The nationalists also became the victims of the Local Government scheme hence strived hard to restore the Commissionerate system in the province.

### **Opposition to LGO and Role of Sindhi Media in Rural Sindh**

In rural Sindh, the role of Sindhi media was very appalling. It served the interests of *wadera* and influential persons. Journalists in rural Sindh were nonprofessional and not well educated. Therefore, they emerged as a mafia while blackmailing police and other officers. The local newspapers and media channels do not pay salary to their journalists. Hence, they merely depend upon the mercy of *wadera* and influential persons in order to get tip for their work. In rural Sindh, the people preferably watch Sindhi channels and read Sindhi newspapers. All newspapers and channels are owned by *wadera* who always project their interests. Hence, majority of the channels were opposing the Local Government scheme because they knew that this system was not in their favor.

### **Opposition to LG by Educated Class and Rural Population**

The Local Government failed to receive popular support in rural Sindh. Ironically, during the Local Government system all appointments were not made on merit. Mostly appointments were held either on kickback or favoritism. Many new schools were opened in rural Sindh which became *Autaq* (Sindhi: guest house) of *wadera*. *Wadera*

voluntarily offered their land for the school because they were not in favour of the villagers but for the sake of their own interest. Ultimately, these schools became ghost schools which were present in the large number in the rural Sindh even today. The appointments of the teachers were merely based on the services of a person as *Kamdar* (Sindhi: manager) of *wadera* therefore, educated youth was ignored. Consequently, the educated youth had not been supporting the Local Government system.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

The devolution of power which depended upon the elite class and their interplay with the political and civil administration weakened state institutions. Hence, it had strengthened the power base of MQM in urban Sindh and *wadera* culture in rural Sindh. It further weakened the state administration. For example, Karachi which comprised of five districts and multi-linguistic ethnic groups was handed over to the DCO and District *Nazim*. It was very difficult to control and address the problems of such a big city by a single office of the DCO and the city *Nazim*. While in the interior Sindh, division of districts created misgivings among the people of Sindh. Even urban Sindhis were confused to vote for whom. The urban-rural division had created more rifts between both ethnic groups in Sindh.

The political implications of the LGO were also very significant. It interfered with the dynamics of local politics in Sindh. Not only it empowered the *wadera*, it also introduced a new factor of the MQM into local political milieu. The result was a clash of interests. This conflict escalated so much that Sindh came to be ruled by two administrative systems. The local governance in Sindh became tarnished due to repeated experiments

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34 Interview with Aijaz Mehar, Sep 9, 2011, Islamabad.

with administration. Therefore, there was a need to look into the power dynamics of Sindh; reduce the rural urban divide and enforce a uniform administrative system that would ensure effective service delivery and maintenance of law and order.