

Local Governments under Military Regimes in Pakistan: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Pakistan is a unique country which has experienced changing patterns of local governments in its political history. One significant change appeared as a common factor found in the three military regimes which were led by General Ayub Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervaiz Musharraf. All these three military leaders explored possibilities of enhancing their popularity from the grassroot level, making local governments as their base. This research paper analyzes the characteristics of local governments given by the above three military dictators for their vested goal-achievements. However, they failed in their endeavor as their own philosophical democratic political society, leading to political development in Pakistan making them popular democratic leaders, could not be established.

Introduction

Local government has come in the forefront of Pakistan's political system, particularly, from the period of the military regime of General Ayub Khan. In its history of around over a decade after independence, Pakistan realized the importance of local government during the three military leaders of the country: General Ayub Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervaiz Musharraf. Incidentally, all three of them, who ruled the country with centralized authority for little over a decade, gave emphasis upon the development of local government. Although they had come into power from above, they tried to enhance their central authority from below.

Generally speaking, in the continent of Asia which remained under the political administrative control and influence of the West during the 18th, 19th and almost half of the 20th century, the value of local politics for analyzing the political system remained insignificant. However, Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, having a strong historical traditional background, remained under local political systems in one

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way or the other since ancient period. The ancient Hindu India being an agricultural society followed village local political system in the name of *panchayat* rule which was the sole decision making authority of the day to day life of rural inhabitants.¹ During the medieval period, the Mughals being urban people, established urban local political system by abolishing the *panchayat* system and establishing the rule of the *daroga* system in town.² In modern time during British Raj, the British local political system combined *panchayat* rule and *daroga* rule, restoring *panchayat* system in village and continuing the police system in the towns.

Throughout the political history of the subcontinent the political leadership always remained under authoritarian type of government which continuously aimed at maximizing its power, authority and functions from above. The significance of local government was realized in the late 19th century in the subcontinent. The foremost reason for this was the growth of the demand of political participation by the natives. There were other reasons behind that too: It was realized that growth of development and change for the process of national political role could be actually experienced through local level. Therefore, the local government was seen as an important basis to analyze and compare the national political system in broader terms and in a clarified manner. Moreover, local politics is less complex to study than national politics for the analysis of political development and change. For example, data collections and research materials are easier to acquire at the local level as compared to the national level because, generally speaking, the availability of national leaders for contact is much harder than the local leaders. Similarly, the local politics is more interesting to study compared to national politics in regard to policy making and policy implementations. In view of these problems a research on the study of local government in Pakistan seems important. Here a comparative study of the military has one common factor – all military were more interested in promoting local government institutions as compared to that of the national level development plans. This study is a comparative study of local government under three military governments which endeavored for community development but politically looked for the growth of their leadership from the grassroot level.

¹ F. Alderfer Harold, *Local Government in Developing Countries* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969), p.69.

² Hugh Tinker, *The Foundations of Local Self-Government in India, Pakistan and Burma*. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), p.25.

Historical background

Historically, in the subcontinent the Mughals and the British established strong centralism with bureaucratic domination in local affairs which ultimately weakened local development.³ Such legacy continued with the inception of Pakistan as continuity of centralization of government remained a focal point of political authority.

Significance of local government was realized with the arrival of Lord Rippon as the Viceroy of India.⁴ He gave principles of local institution in 1882 with his famous Resolution of Local Self-Government.⁵ He proposed devolutions of administrative authority, decentralization of finance resources, provision of political education and mobilization and political participations of the people.⁶ He believed that 'the local institutions can be developed and modernized through local talents and interest'.⁷ This led him to advocate for the provision of local institutions which could lead to participation of the people and representation in governmental affairs. Later during the years of 1907-1909 the Royal Commission on Decentralization recommended formations of local body to developed democratic process in the country.⁸ From here the process of decentralization began in the subcontinent. Lord Rippon's proposal was accepted by the Royal Commission for this purpose.⁹ Since then the local institution firstly emerged when Lord Harding gave it a final shape in 1915.¹⁰ However, the local government institutional proposals were disrupted off and on because of internal national movement issues and opening of the two world wars. By the period of independence in 1947, the local governmental institutions had taken a proper shape for the purpose of local administrations in both independent countries of India and Pakistan.

The new Pakistan passed through a political vacuum from the period of its inception because of many socio-political and economic reasons. Its two leaders, the father of the nation the Quaid-e-Azam and

³ Arshad Syed Karim, 'China: Nature and direction of Change'. *The Journal of Political Science* (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1987), p.304.

⁴ Hugh Tinker, *op.cit.*

⁵ Arshad Syed Karim, *op.cit.*, p.306.

⁶ *Report of the Royal Commission upon Decentralization, 1907.*

⁷ Arshad Syed Karim, *op.cit.*, p.307.

⁸ Hugh Tinker, *op.cit.*, pp.97-105.

⁹ Arif Hassan, 'Local government reforms in Pakistan: some issues', Karachi, *Express Tribune*, 2011.

¹⁰ Malik Muhammad Ashraf, 'Need for a local government', *Pakistan Today*, Lahore, 2013.

his lieutenant, Quaid-e-Millat, left the world within four years of the independence. Their demises created a political vacuum and continued instability in the political system at the national level. The weak emerging leaderships were so much involved in national political crisis that they neither had the time nor opportunity nor even an interest to look into the social, political, and economic conditions at the local level.

Hence, local government passed through several ups and downs, particularly in the early phase of Pakistan's history (1947-1958). The emergence of military leadership for the first time in 1958 under the martial law of General Ayub Khan brought a new life to the institution of local government in the country with his own founded constitution of 1962. His departure after over a decade brought many political changes including secession of East Pakistan and formations of a popular civilian government of Z.A.Bhutto. The Bhutto government did not take much interest in local government institution, particularly because he was deeply involved into national affairs. Two subsequent military's governments of General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervaiz Musharraf introduced their own set of local government systems to fulfill their ambitions of seeking popularity from the grassroots. Therefore, there was a unique pattern of change among these three military leaders in their approaches to seek popularity for themselves through the formations of local government system.

Problem statement

The local government institutions in Pakistan remained under a constant debate since the inception of the country. In the first phase of its political history Pakistan faced a critical situation in the process of political development and change. Basically the new Pakistan functioned on the basis of the Government of India Act 1935 which had largely established the concept of provincial autonomy. In other words till 1956 Pakistan worked on the basis of this act as its constitution with certain amendments. Although, it followed the local government system established by the British government, the socio-political and economic crises could hardly allow the political leaders to look into local issues. The 1956 constitution had a very short life of two years. These two years saw severe political crises with number of prime ministers and several cabinets. Thus, there was a total national political chaos where local governments had no space even to look at.

It was the military government which took up the issue of development and progress at the local community level beginning from the period of General Ayub Khan. He introduced basic democracies system in his constitution for the purpose of local government with the

view that it would enhance his popularity from the grassroots. It is interesting to note that all three military leaders in Pakistan peeped through local governments for the enhancement of their leadership under the umbrella of facade of democracy. It is to be examined whether local governments and local politics do help centralized leaderships under military regimes in enhancing their popularity as political leaders creating and propagating democratization of society. For this purpose the research will be based upon the following hypothesis.

Local government institutions may not enhance the popularity of central authority of a military leadership in a democratic political society.

Objectives:

1. To look into the growth of local government and its role in a political system.
2. To look into the strength of local government in developing process of democracy.
3. To look into the role of local government enhancing centralized government authority.
4. To look into the military regime goal achievement of seeking popularity among the masses through local government.
5. To look into the role of local government in community development without political leadership.

Significance:

1. Local government is an important instrument for community development.
2. Local government has been traditionally practiced throughout Indo-Pakistan history.
3. Local government has always been under a process of change in different governments for one reason or the other since the inception of the Pakistan.
4. Local government has become an important instrument of change particularly from the period of General Ayub Khan.
5. Local government stands even today as an instrument of grassroot leadership and therefore has its own strong values in political development and change.

Literature review

Arif Hassan in his article 'Local Government reforms in Pakistan: Some Issues' has expressed his views on local government with his personal experience while he worked with Government of Pakistan at the Union

Council level. Comparing bureaucratic attitude in different local governments, including General Pervaiz Musharraf's, he found that the devolution process of Musharraf gave opportunity to the entrepreneurs because the local leaders such as councilors, *nazim* and sub-*nazim* turned into contractor and suppliers. This led to higher degree of corruption in the local government system. Unlike other local government systems, Musharraf system carried more nepotism, particularly playing with the budget. Whereas during the Ayub system deputy commissioner held all powers in administration it was lessened during Zia's period and it was lost during Musharraf period. The author believes that elected representatives, effective bureaucracy and proper judicial system can only bring success in the formation of responsible and accountable government.

Malik Muhammad Ashraf in his article 'need for a local government' throws light on the importance of local government for achieving 'real democracy'. He noticed that only military governments in Pakistan were found interested in the formation of local government system in the country. He says that since the local government is not mentioned as a system in the constitutions, the military rulers used it particularly for their political interest at the grassroot level. He mentions all three military rulers attitude towards the formations of local governments based on their personal interest. His article also debates the role of political leaders in weakening the role of the local government for their personal interest.

Tasneem Sikandar in her book *Local Government of Pakistan* has given a comprehensive comparative analysis of all the three military governments.¹¹ In this brief study she has taken up a historical and descriptive approach in her analysis. She believes that local government is important for democratic process and development as in a democratic society decentralization is possible only through a local government system. She distinguishes the three military leaders, General Ayub Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq and General Pervaiz Musharraf, explaining Ayub's basic democracy, Zia's non-party system with de-politicization and decentralization and Musharraf's devolution plan. She believes that all these systems could not work effectively because of the central leadership's personal vested interest rather than benefits of the local community. She, however, fails to present an analysis of the major interests of these three leaders and deals only with the formation of their own design of the local government system in the country.

¹¹ Tasneem Sikander, *Local Government of Pakistan* (Lahore: Bookland Press, 2005).

Methodology

The study would base on qualitative research to analyze the role of local government during the three military leaders of Pakistan in search of enhancing their popularity from the grassroots. The research would be descriptive and exploratory to analyze the role of these three leaders in designing their local government institution planning. For such purpose their given paradigms will be used.

Experimentation of local government (1958-1969)

Ayub's martial law (1958) caused active changes in the political system of Pakistan. It dissolved the National Assembly, abolished political parties, and appointed military officials to head the provinces. All political activities were ended and a strong autocratic government was established. Soon, Ayub realized the difficulty of carrying governmental administrations and, therefore, started depending upon civil servants. The civil bureaucracy emerged as the new political elite. To name this new political society Ayub created the 1962 constitution. He further introduced the basic democracies system creating indirect representation and a hierarchical bureaucratic form of centralized government. The constitution established a National Assembly in the central government, Provincial Assembly in the provinces, divisional and district councils for administrative units in the divisions and districts respectively.

The basic democracies system became a part of local government of Ayub Khan. Under this scheme he tried to develop sense of participation from below. Ayub's centralist tendencies secured support from the locality because since inception of the country the local people were frustrated by the insignificant political parties and vested interests of the local leaders. Hence, Ayub formulated a new political system which was given a significant place in Ayub's constitution. It had two basic functions, political and administrative. Politically, it was to achieve democracy through popular participation and representation. Administratively, it was to achieve social and economic progress and development. His basic democracies system had a pyramidal structure where the popular participation was to begin from the base through people's representations.

The system was designed for both rural and urban areas. Therefore, in scheme of local government he constituted at the lower level Unions Council in rural areas, Union Committee in urban areas and Town Committee in semi-urban areas, *Tehsil* Council, District Council and Divisional Council were created at the upper level. The lower level body represented the people where as the upper level were headed by the government officials. The purpose was to seek popularity for Ayub Khan

from the grassroots as a centralized military leader. But the bureaucratic influence over the whole system resulted in the failure of Ayub's government with his departure through another martial law. Ayub could neither seek grassroot popularity and nor could he turn himself into a democratic leader.

Table 1 Basic Democracies Structure

Divisional Council (16)

Chairman: Commissioner (government official)
Members: half or more elected, remainder official

District Council (78)

Chairman: Deputy Commissioner (government official)
Members: half or more elected, remainder official

In Rural Areas

Tehsil or Thana Council (630)
Chairman: subdivision officer,
Tahsildar or circle officer

Cantonment Board (29)
Chairman: official
Members: half chairman
of committees, half
official

In Urban Areas

Municipal committee (108)
Chairman: official
Members: half chairman
of union committees,
half official

Union Council (7614)

Town Committee (200)

Chairman: elected
Members: 10 to 13 elected

Union Committee (88)

Chairman: elected
Members: elected

WARDS

Source: Arshad Syed Karim, 'Ayub Khan's Bureaucracy: A Modernizing Aristocracy,' *Journal of Research* (Humanities) 14:83 (1984).

Local government redefined (1977-1988)

In between General Ayub and General Zia's military regimes there was a civilian government of Z.A. Bhutto from 1971 to 1977. Bhutto failed in his political task of giving Pakistan a democratic political society on a permanent basis. Ultimately he was removed after seven years of being in the office by the military coup of General Zia-ul-Haq who replaced him as Chief Martial Law Administrator and held political power. General Zia did not abrogate the existing Constitution of 1973 but, with passage of time, he sought full power for the presidency through amendment in the constitution. Zia emphasized on 'Islamization' and 'decency in politics'. This led him to continue as an elected President

through referendum seeking dictatorial powers for himself.¹² His policy of Islamization turned him towards local government institutions from where he could establish his two purposes at the same time: First, seeking grassroot popularity for himself; and second, establishing policy of Islamization through non-party elections. This led him to recognize the significance of locality. For the general welfare of the society, he passed the local government ordinance, order and regulations for all the provinces and federal territories which became his local government system. He gave a comprehensive scheme of local government, making it a powerful representative institution without the influence and participation of any political party. Hence, the local leadership emerged from the non-party system which was influenced by the process of Islamization.

Zia emphasized decentralization unlike Ayub Khan. He also created a non-pyramidal structure unlike basic democracy system of Ayub Khan. Thus, Zia established local government by avoiding political influence on local elections, on the one hand, and adopting the principles of decentralizations, on the other hand. However, Zia's approach to seek popularity was with the propagation of Islamization, but for its base he used the local government institutions establishing representation on non-party basis. Consequently, he succeeded in giving a comprehensive scheme of local government with decentralization, de-politicization and Islamization. But he failed in seeking democratization of the society in the absence of politicization of a state.

Table 2
Structure of Local Government (1979-1980 Ordinance)

Province	District Council	Union Council	Town Council	Municipal Committee	Municipal Corporation
Punjab	Zila Council in each dist: 50,000 population per ward	Up to 15 members: 1,000-2,000 population per ward	9-15 members: 5,000/ 20,000 population	15-35 members: 20,000 to 5 lac population	50-100 members: 5 lac and above population
Sindh	20-65 members	1,500 population per ward	5-18 members: 5,000-25000 population	20-65 members: 25000 to 5 lac population	20-65 members: above: 5 lac population: KMC= 150 members

¹² Hasan Askari Rizvi, *The Civilization of Military Role in Pakistan* (California: University of California, 1986), p.226.

N.W.F.P.	32 members	1000-20000 population per ward	8 members	11-15 members	35 members
Baluchistan	One member from each union	7-15 member: 1000-15000 population	5-13 members: 5000-10000 population	9-35 member: 10000 to one lac population	40-60 members: population as determine by government
Azad Jammu & Kashmir	One member form each union or 10000 population	Government fixed membership; up to 3000-25000 population	Government fixed membership; up to 10000 population	Government fixed membership over 10000 population	
Northern Areas	Government fixed membership	Government fixed membership	Government fixed membership; up to 10000 population	Government fixed membership; over 10000 population	
Federal Capital Territory		Government fixes membership			

Source: Mohammad Afzal, *Local Government in Pakistan* (Islamabad; ministry of local government and rural development, Govt. of Pakistan, 1985), pp. 18-19

Table 3
Structure of Local Bodies Provincial Government

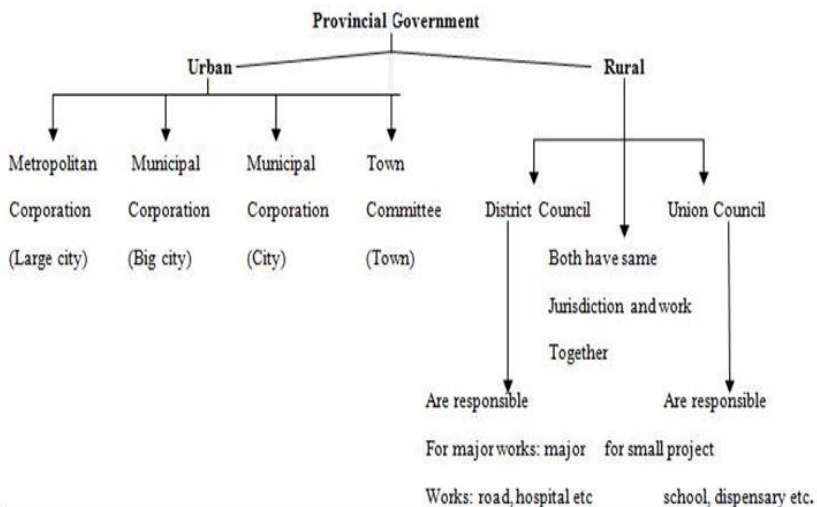
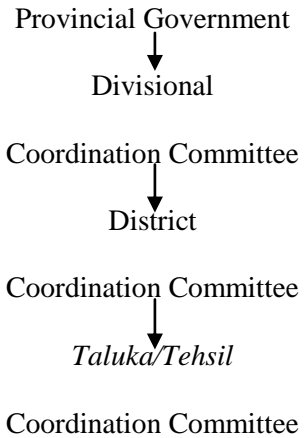


Table 4
Constitution Committee



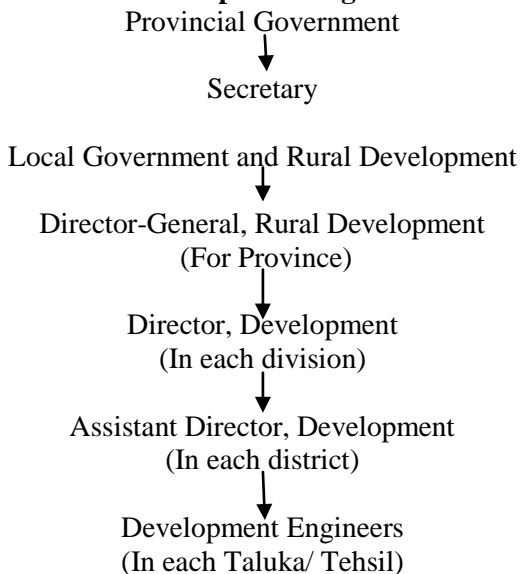
Source: Arshad Syed Karim, ‘Pakistan’ in Chang SI Ahn (ed.), *The Local Political System in Asia* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1987), p.320.

Table 5
Supervision



Source: Arshad Syed Karim, ‘Pakistan’ in Chang Si Ahn (ed), *The Local Political System in Asia* (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1987), p.320.

Table 6
Rural Development Organization



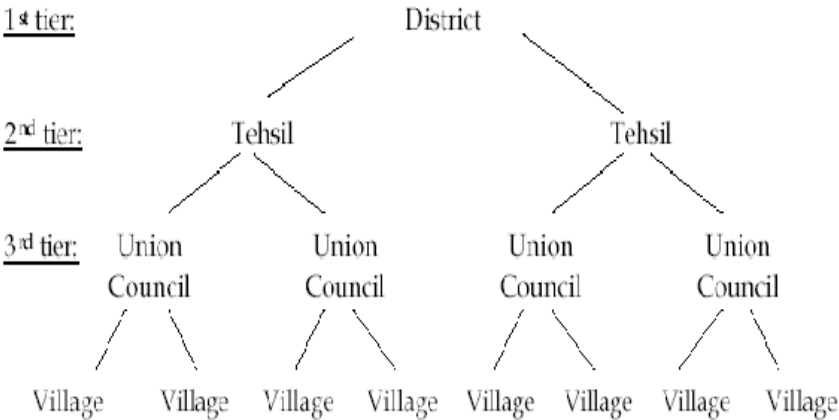
Source: Arshad Syed Karim, 'Pakistan' in Chang Si Ahn (ed.), *The Local Political System in Asia* Seoul (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1987), p.321.

Local Government revisited (1999-2008)

General Pervaiz Musharraf emerged on the political scene removing the overwhelming majority civilian government of PML (N), led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in 1999, through a military take over and declaration of martial law. Like General Zia this military takeover was also bloodless, and the constitution too was not abrogated. He tried to seek a stronger power for himself by further amending the 1973 constitution; like other two military leaders, Musharraf also looked into the grassroots for democratic popularity through local government system. Interestingly Ayub Khan used basic democrats as members of presidential electoral college, Zia used local body's non-party elected members for his referendum, Musharraf, on the other hand, placed a local government structure prior to holding elections of the national and provincial assemblies. He created a centralized system under his local government scheme and he used it to undermine the provincial government. To make himself a strong centralized ruler, and a popular leader at the grassroots, he used local government's structure by-passing provincial government. This led to the administrative chaos because of

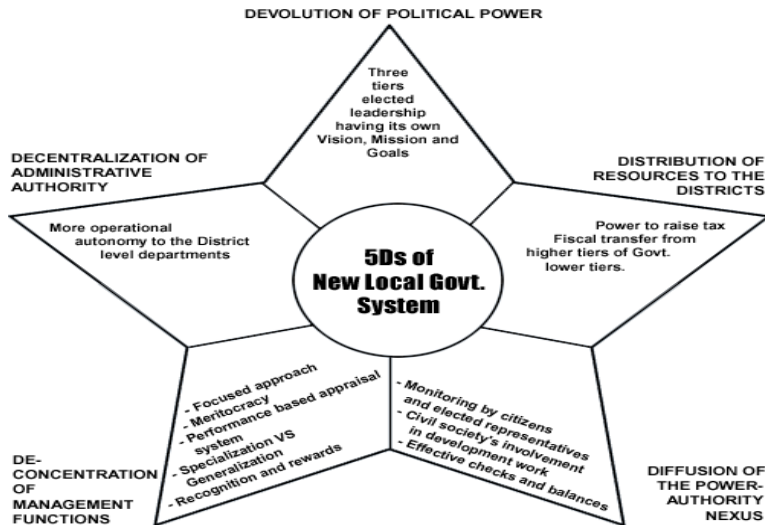
creating a conflicting situation with the elected nazim’s authority, on the one hand, and the district coordinating officer’s (bureaucrat), on the other hand. Although Musharraf secured his objective, his devolution scheme neither helped the underprivileged middle class in solving their immediate socio-economic problems, nor in strengthening his central authority.

Table 7
Local Government Structure of General Pervaiz Musharraf



Source: https://www.google.com.pk/search?q=structure+of+Musharraf+devolution+plan&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=9iTXUpO0DuHJ0QXek4HgAw&ved=0CAcQAUoAQ&biw=1034&bih=638#facrc=_&imgdii=_&imgcr=3Evv6sJ0mvBqJM%253A%3BdomjDmaDNJGmM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.theresearchers.org%252Fimages%252FCitizenEmpwrmnt_clip_image002_0000.gif%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.theresearchers.org%252FCitizenEmpwrmnt.html%3B305%3B299

Table 8



Source: https://www.google.com.pk/search?q=structure+of+Musharraf+devolution+plan&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=9iTXUpO0DuHJ0QXek4HgAw&ved=0CAcQAUoAQ&biw=1034&bih=638#facrc=&imgdii=&imgrc=3Evv6sJ0mvBqJM%253A%3BdomjDmaDNJ-GmM%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.theresearchers.org%252Fimages%252FCitizenEmpwrmnt_clip_image002_0000.gif%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.theresearchers.org%252FCitizenEmpwrmnt.html%3B305%3B299

Conclusion

The analysis of the three military regimes of Ayub, Zia and Musharraf with reference to their interests in the development of local government of Pakistan presents a unique characteristic of its own. It is found that all three of them had the same goal as military leaders. They wanted to seek mass popularity for their so-called democratic set up but they used democracy as a facade. A democratic society develops through a grassroot leadership which takes the shape of national leadership, making the state system politically democratized and, therefore, developed. In modern times in a political society the leadership emerges either from above or from below. The emerging leadership from above generally stems from the military leaders as has been found in many political societies of the contemporary world. The emerging leadership from below stems from the grassroot level which has the strength and ability to rule with the will of the people without any pressure. Such leadership succeeds in promoting process of democratization and political development rapidly and automatically.