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RURAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA, INDIA PAKISTAN

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Introduction

During the 1950's the three largest states in Asia—China, India and Pakistan, respectively—embarked upon mobilizing the rural populace towards the goal of national development by introducing three diverse types of institutions at the grassroots. Consistent with its ideological commitments, as manifested during the War of Liberation, the Chinese leadership attempted to accomplish the collectivization of agriculture and rural mobilization by establishing mutual aid terms, agricultural producers cooperatives and finally, communes. In India the national leaders sought to create socio-political awareness among the rural people and involve them in the developmental process by introducing Panchayati Raj institutions—the village panchayat, panchayat samiti, and zilla parishad—in rural areas. Finally, after the collapse of democratic institutions at the national level and political instability, the new military regime in Pakistan introduced Basic Democracies—the union, tehsil/thana, district and divisional councils—at the grassroots in order to encourage popular involvement in government programs and promote the political education of the rural population. However, as shown later, the Communes, Basic Democracies and Panchayati Raj can be easily differentiated on the basis of their characterization. The present study seeks to explore how the characteristics of rural governments in these countries affected patterns of rural development during the 1960s.

There is no consensus among scholars on a definition of "rural development". In examining the phenomenon, however, three goals of the agricultural rural development process are identifiable. These are : increases in agricultural productivity; increases in the provision of housing, water systems, roads, education, sanitation etc. ; and equitable distribution of benefits resulting from the above measures, including equitable access to government initiated programs and facilities. These three goals can be treated as an index for measuring rural development in cross-cultural situations.

In order to accomplish the aforementioned objectives, there are numerous roles or tasks in rural development process which need to be performed. The first of these is facilitating the creation of an institutional framework for popular involvement in the local decision-making process and development programs. This, in turn, enables the national leadership to mobilize the rural population for rural development and, furthermore, serves as an effective means for increasing popular support for the government.

The second task in the process of rural development is that of planning and implementing development programs at the grass roots in accordance with the national development strategy. As has commonly been observed, one of the major problems in developing countries is the implementation of national government development programs and decisions affecting rural areas. Therefore, effective performance of the task of local planning and implementation is vital for the accomplishment of rural development goals such as the provision of infra-structure facilities.

The third task in the process of rural development is that of establishing an effective communication link between the national modernizing elites and the rural populace for the articulation and communication of the latter's demands. The representatives of the central government or field agencies need to be brought closer to the people, thus facilitating the identi-

fication of local needs. In view of the disparities between the "political cultures" of the urbanized national leadership and the rural poor, an effective communication link at the grassroots for the purpose of increasing agricultural productivity and providing civic facilities is of vital significance.

The fourth role which needs to be performed in order to accelerate the pace of rural development is that of developing rural local leadership capabilities. The rural leader needs to be provided with the necessary training to assume positions of responsibility at the national and/or sub-national levels. Innovative and skilful local leadership committed to the goal of nation-building would be able to mobilize the rural people, and furthermore, would take advantage of the facilities provided by the government for increasing agricultural productivity. It can be argued that training the "village headman" in the "art of government" would bring him closer to the machinery of government responsible for implementing development programs. His support would provide the national government with access to the people. There is a strong likelihood that the change in his role from village head to elected chairman of the village council would not alter the village power structure. However there is no denying the fact that the village head's absolute hold over the community would be loosened, thus increasing the level of citizen input in the collective decisions of the community.

The fifth role which needs to be performed in achieving the goals of rural development is that of creating socio-political awareness among the rural populace. The emergence of politically aware participants at the grass roots, needless to say is indispensable for initiating and implementing those programs of rural development, land reforms for example, which are designed to achieve social justice. Furthermore, without socio-political awareness in the common man, equitable access to government initiated programs and facilities cannot be ensured.

Finally, the role of facilitating the development of a politically responsible and socially conscious bureaucracy at the local level is also a prerequisite for the achievement of rural development goals. The emergence of a responsible bureaucracy at the local level has several implications: It would enable the rural populace to challenge the rural elite, if necessary, in order to safeguard its interest. It would make public servants more accessible to the common man leading to greater input in the collective decisions of the community; and it would facilitate equitable access to government initiated programs.

An assumption of this study is that, both for the policy-maker and the political analyst, a comparative approach to rural government is more useful than single country analysis because it enables to identify the explanatory factors from a broader perspective by incorporating intra-national and cross-cultural variations into the analysis. This, however, necessitates the delineation of characteristics of rural institutions in cross-cultural environments. Despite some attempts which have already been made in this field, the existence of methodological and conceptual problems involved in such an exercise should be recognized.¹ The characteristics of rural local government included for comparative purposes are: ideological scope; the degree of local autonomy and decentralization in decision-making; the degree of popular participation; financial and administrative capability; bureaucratic responsiveness; and interaction with political parties. These characteristics are inter-related rather than mutually exclusive. Their choice has been determined by their hypothetical relevance for rural development, frequency of use by scholars, and the availability of secondary data.

Ideological rationale or scope implies the perceived role of rural local government within the national political system. Autonomy at the grassroots or decentralization in the local decision making process means the capacity of rural government to make effective decisions concerning local

affairs. Participation means the extent of voluntary popular involvement in the local decision-making process and in the activities of local institutions. The scope of functions and capability of local government implies the extensiveness of its functions and its administrative as well as financial ability to carry out those functions. Bureaucratic responsiveness implies the extent to which the administrative roles are politically directed. Interaction between political parties and tiers of rural local government means the extent to which the former is involved in the activities of the latter and vice versa.

We have identified the goals of rural development, roles which need to be performed at the grassroots for their accomplishment, and the characteristics of rural local government which may affect the rural development process. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to examine what characteristics of rural local government in China, India, and Pakistan during the 1960s led to the performance of which roles and how the performance of tasks by local bodies affected the accomplishment of the three goals of rural development.

Rural local government as an independent variable is complex institutionally partly because only a few of the roles in rural areas are clearly demarcated. In structural terms, Luykx has delineated six elements of rural government which include both formal and informal governing institutions and which facilitate interaction among various components within the local political system.² The elements of rural government included in our analysis are those which have some participatory, representative and decision-making functions. These elements are :

- (a) formal local bodies in the rural areas ;
- (b) field representatives of central and sub-national governments ; and
- (c) the local political party.

In addition, wherever relevant, interaction between formal and informal local institutions will also be discussed. The

focus of our analysis, therefore, is on the three levels of decision-making structures, which are the production team, brigade, and commune in China ; the village panchayat samiti and *zilla* parishad under Panchayati Raj in India ; and the union, tehsil and district council under Basic Democracies in Pakistan (before 1971). For comparative purposes, a time span of 15 years—1955 to 1970—will be used.

In the discussion following the introduction, an attempt is made to examine how rural local governments in the three countries under study performed their roles in achieving the goals of rural development. Wherever relevant, environment factors which impeded or facilitated the role performance of rural government in these nations will be discussed. In the final section the experiences of the three countries will be compared and suggestions will be made for improving the role performance of local bodies.

The conclusions of this study should be regarded as highly tentative and impressionist due to : the lack of firm data, particularly on China ; the complexity of the phenomena of rural development ; methodological problems involved in cross-cultural comparisons, the delineation of equivalent indicators for example ; intra-national variations in the three countries under study ; and limitations of the existing theory in social sciences. No attempt is made to establish a causal model. Rather, the objective is to learn from the past experiences of the three countries under study for the purpose of exploring useful alternative strategies of the local political systems' modernization for rural development.

I

The Chinese Case

Rural government in China was, from the very beginning, perceived to be an important instrument for radically changing

rural areas. Specifically, it was expected to play a vital role in the following : redistribution of income among various segments of society ; acceleration of agricultural output and rural industrialization ; elimination of private ownership ; mass mobilization of rural labour ; indoctrination of the rural populace to eradicate capitalist tendencies ; motivating the peasant to work for the "revolution" and the national ideology rather than for private economic gain ; creation of grassroots support for the Communist Party and national development strategy; and meaningful participation of the masses in the process of socio-political transformations in the rural areas.³ Thus, the ideological scope of rural government was wide.

The Chinese communes mobilized their resources by (a) renting their tractors, trucks etc. to production teams (b) engaging in small industrial enterprises, such as brick-making, and (c) by drawing from reserve and welfare funds managed by lower production units. The Agricultural Bank of China transacted loans to those production units which needed assistance.⁴ Allocation of income within communes took place in accordance with a formula prescribed by the state government.⁵ However, county officials were quite liberal in permitting the production units "to deviate from the distribution formula."⁶ Supervision of communes, coordination of their development plans and the provision of technical and financial assistance to them were the responsibilities of two parallel structures at the national, state and country levels *i.e.* Communes Affairs Departments/Offices, and bureaus of Commune Management. The plans given to communes were in the form of production costs. It was the responsibility of the communes to formulate programs for achieving their targets.⁷ Once the annual plan of a commune was approved by the county, the former had greater control over the actual implementation of development programs. After the failure of the Great Leap Forward and the consequent reorganization of communes, even greater emphasis was placed on local planning and implementation, and decision-making powers were further

decentralized. Communes and other production units in China were, thus, able to exercise a significant amount of autonomy due to local planning at the village level, the self-reliant financial base of the production unit, flexibility of the control from above, greater involvement of the commune management and the people in program implementation, and their control over resource mobilization and allocation.⁸

Rural government in China was designed to encourage the involvement of both elected leaders and the masses in local affairs. The Maoist strategy of rural mobilization was based on the "mass line" approach and "revolutionary governance" of the rural areas. Popular participation in the rural areas was facilitated by many factors such as the policy of "open-door rectification", community control of education by the people, greater interaction between high-level officials and the rural populace, and the establishment of Revolutionary Committees consisting of a large number of people's representatives. Model workers and peasants were chosen to represent the masses in the highest decision-making bodies such as the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Thus, Chinese efforts during the last three decades to delegate positions of responsibility to people's representatives and to provide for the accountability of the political and administrative roles at the local level have provided that country with an institutional framework conducive to meaningful participation at the grassroots level.⁹

The functions assigned to communes particularly in the field of agriculture were wide in scope.¹⁰ To carry out those functions, the Chinese communes were empowered to mobilize and allocate resources for various projects. Put differently, all expenditures of the local development programs were to be channelled through the commune or brigade or production team management. While this fact is no indicator of the adequacy of their financial resources, it does point to the important role which the production units played in planning and administering their local programs. Furthermore, the

emergence during the 1950s of mutual-aid teams and agriculture producers cooperatives had led to the development of administrative skills among local leaders. In particular, party cadres served as an important link between the administrative hierarchy and the rural populace. Consequently after the emergence of communes in 1958, there already existed peasants, administrators and party cadres with considerable experience in planning and implementing local development programs.

Bureaucratic responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of the masses was one of the main features of the Chinese Revolution. The Chinese leadership firmly believed that the local political party and political leaders at the grassroots should be encouraged to provide an effective check on bureaucracy. Despite the temporary adoption of the Soviet model which emphasized "specialization, hierarchical and stratified relationships, centralized bureaucratic methods, individual material incentives and conventional technological development,"¹¹ the Maoist strategy stressed holding the bureaucratic roles responsive to the people's representatives who, in turn, were put under community controls such as "open-door Rectification" and "May 7 Cadre Schools." The organizational structure of production units was based on this principle.

China has millions of well-organized, disciplined, and hard-working members of the Communist Party. Their involvement in the local decision-making process had led to greater interaction between the local party organization and commune management. After the establishment of communes, Supervisory Committees at the commune and brigade levels were established. The membership of these committees was drawn from the Communist Party. Their function was to ascertain whether the programs and policies of the Party as defined by the national leadership were followed. Furthermore, the local party organization was entrusted with the responsibility for ensuring bureaucratic responsiveness. After the Cultural Revolution, Revolutionary Committees were set up at the local level. The vast majority of the members of these committees were also party members. In addition, leadership

recruitment at the local level is filtered through the Party hierarchy.

(1) The Impact of Chinese Communes

In China, the autonomy of rural local governments and the existence of an effective institutional framework for popular participation have facilitated rural development in two ways. First, local autonomy and the involvement of the people's representatives in the developmental process have contributed to the development of local political leadership capabilities and the emergence of leaders who are younger and ideologically more committed to the national development strategy. In addition, the mass line approach to rural mobilization and the communization of agriculture have paved the way for the recruitment of leaders from the poorer segments of society.¹²

Secondly, the active involvement of the people and their representatives in local affairs and their autonomy in the decision-making process contributed to the establishment of an effective communication link between the national leadership and grassroots organizations. This link was further encouraged by Party organizations at the local level. Despite their self-reliant economic base, commune leadership frequently interacted with high-level officials. This enabled national and local leaders to better understand each other's problems. The link between national and local leadership was further strengthened by the Socialist Education Movement and the Cultural Revolution.

The emergence of new leadership and the establishment of a communication link at the local level had many implications. First, the process of identifying local needs was facilitated. Secondly, the new rural leaders played a vital role in the successful implementation of programs introduced by the national government partly because they were strongly committed to the national development strategy and, furthermore, possessed the necessary skills to carry out the functions assigned to them. Thirdly, the recruitment of local

political leaders from the least advantaged groups, and the greater degree of interaction between them and high level officials increased the political support accorded national government in rural areas. Fourthly, new leadership and communication channels enabled Mao to successfully resist capitalist tendencies in the rural areas and to experiment with innovations such as the "work-point" formula.

It is difficult to assess the impact of rural local government's capabilities on the implementation of government programs and the general socio-economic welfare of the rural masses. Many factors, including the type of power structure in the rural community and the availability of resources, may effect the developmental process at the local level. Similarly, the presence of the most favourable socio-political framework may not be able to negate the effects of bad weather on agricultural production. For comparative purposes, the impact of a rural government's capability can be delineated by focusing on increases in agricultural production, mechanization of agriculture, and the extent to which development expenditures are channelled through the rural local bodies.

We find that 1958 and 1959 were the best years for Chinese agriculture, the grain output having increased by approximately 35% and 45% in those 2 years. The period between 1960 and 1963 witnessed a decline in grain output due mainly to unusually bad weather. However, after 1964 the situation improved considerably. Average grain output rose from 185 million metric tons in 1957 to 201 million metric tons between 1958 and 1970 representing an average increase of approximately 8% from the base period. There has been a significant increase in the use of mechanized equipment in Chinese agriculture. Between the period 1957-64, the horsepower of agricultural equipment in use increased by more than 300 percent, with an average yearly increase of approximately 44 percent. During the same period, the average yearly increase in the number of machines in use was approximately 16 percent. During the

1960s the production and import of chemical fertilizers increased rapidly. The average yearly increase in production and imports between 1952 and 1970 exceeded 300 percent. The increased use of chemical fertilizers contributed to greater crop yields and, consequently, to the general welfare of the rural masses. Administrative and financial capability of the Chinese communes positively affected land developments, water conservation and water distribution.¹³ The Chinese model enabled commune management to mobilize rural labour on a large scale for the accomplishment of the above purposes. Large-scale mobilization of labour has enabled communes to minimize the effects of bad weather.¹⁴

The above-mentioned quantitative data have been further substantiated by numerous studies of the Chinese village which report that communization has led to increases in (1) agricultural productivity, (2) income, (3) provision for schooling, (4) medical care, etc.¹⁵

In China political awareness among the rural populace was increased by many factors such as the establishment of party branches in the rural areas, supervision of the commune management by party activists, bureaucratic responsiveness to the party, community controls over the administrative and political roles at the local level, recruitment of local political leadership from the least advantaged groups, the direct involvement of the rural populace in planning and implementing development programs, the Socialist Education Movement, and the establishment of Revolutionary Committees. Socio political awareness at the grassroots and the emergence of a socially conscious and politically responsible bureaucracy at the local level have, in turn, facilitated Chinese efforts to safeguard the interests of the poorest segments of the rural society and to build "a new society in which the principle of socio-economic equality has probably been pushed further than in any similar society at the same level of economic development."¹⁶

Collective consciousness has been created among the rural masses and their revolutionary convictions strengthened. Distribution of income in accordance with the "work points" formula has, at least partially, reduced economic disparities between workers and peasants and given them "five guarantees".¹⁷

Our contention, then, is that bureaucratic responsiveness at the local level and greater interaction between party branches and the commune management in China fostered political awareness among the rural populace which, in turn, facilitated the implementation of those programs, income distribution for example, which were designed to achieve social justice and create an egalitarian society. An assumption here, of course, is that well organized and politically conscious peasants and landless labourers are in a better position to safeguard their interests which, more often than not, are contrary to those of elite. Put differently, since most of the policies and programs which seek to redistribute income are opposed by the rural elite, instilling political awareness in the common man is the only way through which the national government can create an egalitarian society.

Two environmental factors have facilitated the role performance of Chinese communes in achieving increases in agricultural productivity and better distribution of the resulting economic benefits. The first of these is the content of the rural development policies. Consistent with their ideological commitments, the Chinese national leadership has emphasized that, in addition to increases in agricultural productivity, the creation of an egalitarian society and elimination of disparities in the rural areas are the guiding principles of their strategy of rural modernization. This focus, however, has been marked by conflict among policy makers regarding policy directions. One group led by Mao himself has argued that the achievement of "socialist goals" necessitates the elimination of rightist tendencies, the creation of an egalitarian society and the

provision of "basic guarantees" to rural workers and peasants. It is added that workers need to be taught how to work for the ideology and the "revolution" rather than profit. Others, such as Liu Shao-Chi, have sought to increase productivity as a policy priority by providing an incentive system and by mechanizing agriculture.

The conflict between the "pragmatic" and "ideological" goals of rural development as supported by the groups has, since the 1950s, forced the national leadership to change the focus of national policies from one goal to the other. After "liberation," land reforms were introduced. Influenced by the Soviet developmental strategy, the policy priorities were to establish political controls, to rebuild infrastructures, and to create heavy industries. At this stage Mao realized that effective steps had to be taken to forestall capitalist tendencies among the rich peasants. This paved the way for formation of mutual-aid teams, agricultural producers cooperatives and, in 1958, communes. After 1959, communes were reorganized. The failure of the Great Leap Forward strengthened the hands of "pragmatic" element in key decision-making positions. As a consequence, peasants were eventually allowed to cultivate private plots. In the early 1960s, following improvements in agricultural productivity, the Socialist Education Movement, a vehicle for the political indoctrination of the masses, was initiated by Mao. Another shift in policies occurred during the Cultural Revolution when, once again, Mao attempted to mobilize the rural poor for better distribution of income and to achieve the goals of a socialist society.

The argument being presented is that due to clearly articulated national policies which sought the creation of an egalitarian society, Chinese communes were able to experiment with many innovations such as the "work point" formula. With the political support of the national leadership, commune management could, thus, remove any hinderances in performing the function of distributive justice,

A second environmental factor which facilitated the role performance of Chinese communes, was the agrarian structure or patterns of land ownership in rural China. Even before "liberation" the Chinese communists were convinced that the successful implementation of land reform programs was a prerequisite for the accomplishment of the socialist goals of the society. Consequently, they gave top priority to programs of land reform. The implementation of the land reform program amounted to a radical transformation of the rural power structure. The traditional dominance of big landlords over poor peasants and landless labourers was broken. The distribution of land to the rural poor gave them new economic status and encouraged them to organize in order to safeguard their interests. With the political support of the national leadership and local party organizations, peasants and workers could effectively forestall the traditional power of former landlords. Thus, unlike rural local governments in other Asian countries, the commune management in China could more easily perform its roles. There were no insurmountable pressures from the rural elite, not incidentally the case in countries such as India. The redistribution of land and subsequent changes in the rural power structure were particularly conducive to the emergence of a politically responsible bureaucracy at the grassroots:

II

The Indian Case

(1) The Characteristics of Panchayati Raj

In comparison with China, the perceived role of rural local government in India was narrow. The Panchayati Raj institutions were neither designed to nor could they accomplish the radical transformation of rural areas. Rather, their objective was to seek rural modernization within the existing

socio-political framework. The goals which the Panchayati Raj institutions were expected to achieve either directly or indirectly included : involving people in government-initiated programs ; instilling political consciousness among the villagers ; creating "democratic" attitudes among them ; facilitating the implementation of development programs at the local level ; training local political leaders to shoulder responsibilities at higher levels ; and helping the administrative structure in rural areas to maintain law and order.¹⁸

The introduction of Panchayati Raj represented a shift from the action-oriented Community Development Program to "democratic decentralization" at the local level. The Mehta Committee's report, which later became the basis for state legislation on rural institutions, sought planned development in the rural community by delegating the power to make and implement decisions to the people's representatives. Despite official pronouncements on democratic decentralization, many factors determined the amount of local autonomy actually exercised by the Panchayati Raj institutions. These factors included : the dependence of rural local bodies on grants-in-aid or financial assistance and their failure to levy or collect all authorised taxes ; stringent control by higher authorities over the allocation of financial assistance for specific development projects ; a rigid administrative framework, leading to friction between government officials and elected leaders ; the allegiance of local bodies' staff members to their own departments ; and centralized planning and schematic budgets.¹⁹

Panchayati Raj provided for the involvement of the people and their elected representatives in the local decision-making process. Elections for the members of panchayats were to be held. Representation for women and scheduled castes was ensured. The delegation of power to the people's representatives opened new communication channels between citizens and government officials and also afforded elected leaders the opportunity to become involved in the planning and implementation of local development programs.

Quantitatively speaking, the range of functions formally available to the Panchayati Raj institutions was extensive. For example, village panchayats were responsible for the preparation and implementation of village plans for agricultural development, and for the provision of civil amenities to the villagers. They were empowered to levy taxes. Despite the extensive functions formally assigned to the rural local bodies of India, the latter's financial and administrative capability was severely limited. This was particularly true in the case of the village panchayat which was designed to perform a wide range of functions. In order to carry out their function village panchayats depended upon financial assistance from panchayat samitis. In addition, the former did not have sufficient trained staff. In most cases, members of the village panchayat were not familiar with planning and budgeting at the local level. The financial capability of the Panchayati Raj institutions was so limited that it made their contribution to the local developmental process insignificant.

The Panchayati Raj provided an institutional framework for a working association between the elected representatives of the people and government servants. In addition, democratic decentralization raised the level of the expectations of the people and their representatives who consequently sought radical changes in the attitudes and behaviour patterns of government servants. Elected leaders were suspicious of government servants whom they criticized for their "ignorance about rural life and the needs of the masses", and "red-tapism."²⁰ In most cases, state governments were authorized to inspect the Panchayati Raj institutions and, if necessary, suspend or dissolve them. Furthermore, relevant legislation empowered the state governments to remove office holders of local bodies, and to direct or prohibit the implementation of any programme. The above-mentioned powers were generally exercised by field officers such as the divisional commissioner, district collector or sub-district officer. On the behalf of state governments, field officers were, furthermore, empowered to

conduct inspections. In addition to field officers the state governments also provided local bodies with administrative staff report. The Panchayati Raj institutions had only limited control over the hierarchy. All these factors hindered efforts by elected local leaders to hold government officials responsive to their own and the people's desires.

The official attitude in India has been against the involvement of political parties in the activities of rural institutions. Thus, unanimous elections at the local level were encouraged.²¹ The government has, since independence, recognised that placing a legal ban on the involvement of political parties in the activities of panchayats is neither desirable nor practicable. Therefore, political parties must use their own discretion in deciding whether or not to participate in the affairs of rural local bodies. Although most political parties at the national level agreed not to become involved in the functioning of Panchayati Raj their actions were contrary to this. In 1964, for example, the constitution of the Congress Party was amended in order to establish Block Committees. A large number of studies undertaken on the subject demonstrate that political parties have established themselves in rural India and highly politicized the institutions of rural government.²²

(2) The Impact of Panchayati Raj

In India local autonomy and an effective institutional framework for popular participation have had two consequences: First, due to democratic decentralization, decision-making powers have shifted from the state government to rural bodies and from administrators to elected local leaders. This has made it imperative for the national or sub-national political leaders to establish linkages at the local level and seek the support of elected local leadership for winning elections, thus predisposing them to greater accessibility. As compared to the 1950s, this, communication channel is being used more frequently.²³

Secondly, local autonomy and popular involvement at the grassroots have not only contributed to the development of the

local political leader's capabilities and skills, but have also facilitated the "democratization" of the traditional village leader and the election of members from lower income and less privileged groups.⁴ Positions of responsibility have made the local political leader more conscious of his powers. He is now more willing than ever to challenge the previously undisputed dominance of government officials. His involvement in the planning and implementation of development programs has provided him with new administrative and financial skills. Increased interaction with high level government officials and political leaders has made him an active participant in the national development process. He has been forced to change his tactics and outlook in order to achieve greater political legitimacy.

There is no doubt that the "intrusion" of political parties into the rural areas, the subsequent politicization of the Panchayati Raj institutions, and a decline in the predominant position of the bureaucracy have increased the local leaders' level of political awareness and made them more conscious of their rights as people's representatives. This has forced the bureaucracy at the grassroots to be more responsive to the demands of local leadership. However, there has been no significant change in the level of the common man's political awareness. He is not always aware of his rights and obligations towards the village panchayat. In particular, his involvement in activities of the panchayat samiti and the zilla parishad is minimal. He has remained indifferent to party politics. He does not always identify himself with the Panchayati Raj institutions. Since various programs of development at the local level are administered through traditional village leaders and government officials, the common man's direct involvement in the developmental process remains insignificant. The alliance between the bureaucracy and the local political elite has further frustrated any efforts on his part to communicate with government officials,²⁵

Here the pertinent question which needs to be raised is this: Despite democratic decentralization, politicization of Panchayati Raj, and bureaucratic responsiveness, why has the political awareness of the common man in the rural areas not significantly changed? Two factors, among other things, account for this: First, illiteracy, poverty and parochialism on the part of the villagers and their traditional perception of the environment as unchangeable have frequently hindered them from participating in local politics.²⁶ Secondly, land ownership patterns and costs system have historically determined patterns of political behaviour in the Indian village and frustrated meaningful participation by the common man. Studies on Panchayati Raj elections have shown that big landowners, the higher castes and older people have a better chance of being elected even though they may be less educated than their rivals. Similarly, the coopted members of the less privileged strata of rural society have served only a symbolic function and have not been able to safeguard their interests due to the dominance of big landowners and high caste groups in Panchayati Raj.²⁷

A comparison of Panchayati Raj and Chinese communes reveals that both were highly politicized. Both provided an institutional framework for popular participation. In both, the bureaucracy was to be held accountable to the people's representatives. As shown earlier, in China the combination of these characteristics of rural government radically changed the level of political awareness among the rural populace and contributed to the emergence of a politically responsible bureaucracy at the local level. On the other hand, in India, while these same characteristics raised the local leader's political awareness and made the bureaucracy more responsive to his demands, they did not significantly change the villager's apathy. Two tentative explanations for this variation can be presented. First, although before introducing communes, the Chinese leadership drastically reduced the degree of inequality in the distribution of income among various segments of the rural populace, in India similar efforts were doomed to failure

since the land reform programs were neither properly articulated nor did they have the unfaltering support of the ruling elite. Second, while the Chinese national leadership has consistently sought the support of poor peasants and workers for greater political legitimacy and for forestalling pressures from rightist elements, in India, rarely, if ever, have such efforts been successfully made.

Whatever the reasons for the villager's apathy, the fact remains that it has negatively affected the articulation of those national policies and programs which contribute to the creation of an egalitarian society. For one thing, the ruling elite are not necessarily dependent upon the rural poor to maintain their position of authority. Furthermore, their own interests do not necessarily correspond with those of the less privileged. The rural poor, on their part, are not well organized. This limits their capacity to put pressure on the ruling elite and safeguard their own interests. The irony of the Indian experience is that such a socio-political framework has frustrated all efforts to implement those programs and policies which seek to radically change the power structure in the rural community or which, in any way, threaten the economic dominance of the traditional village leadership.

As pointed out earlier, Panchayati Raj was conceived as an institutional framework not only for instilling political consciousness among the villagers and creating "democratic" attitudes among them but also for increasing agricultural productivity and improving social conditions. The assumption, of course, was that these last two goals could be accomplished more easily by involving people in planned development programs. There is no doubt that the "democratization" of traditional village leadership and the emergence of new leaders have created a group of entrepreneurs in village India who have been willing, more than ever before, to take advantage of the incentives which have been provided by the national government for increasing agricultural output. By using new fertilizers, improved seeds of high yielding varieties, and new agri-

cultural techniques, this group has significantly contributed to the "Green Revolution" in India.

We find that while during the 1960s there were yearly increases in the production of rice, wheat and maize, the output of other crops declined. Even then the average yearly increase in the total production of all principal crops combined was 2.85 percent. Similarly, the average yearly increase in the consumption of fertilizer was more than 100 percent. The farmers responded positively to the availability of high yielding varieties of seeds which, according to official estimates, contributed significantly to food production in the country. For example, the total food grains area being cultivated with high yielding varieties of seeds increased from 1883 thousand hectares in 1966-67 to 6034 thousand hectares in 1967-68.

Despite the vital role played by Panchayati Raj in accelerating the pace of the "Green Revolution," its over-all impact on the socio-economic well-being of the rural populace remained insignificant. For one thing, not all development expenditure was channelled through the rural local bodies, as was the case in China. More importantly, many rural local bodies were desperately poor. They were either not empowered to or were unable to collect taxes. In some cases, they were totally dependent upon higher authorities for all their income. Small wonder, their contribution to development efforts at the local level remained marginal.

A note of caution should be added regarding the relationship between the characteristics of Panchayati Raj and increase in agricultural productivity. Even though by modernizing rural leadership and encouraging economic entrepreneurs the Panchayati Raj indirectly contributed to the promotion of agriculture, its major responsibilities centred around the development of an infrastructure. Furthermore, during the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) partly due to the Intensive Agricultural District Program, a significant shift occurred away from the social welfare emphasis of the Community Development Program and democratic decentralization of Panchayati

Raj. The program emphasized increase in agricultural productivity rather than improving "the general context" for development ; it chose those districts which were more likely to accelerate the pace of agricultural production ; it focused on supplying the physical input of agricultural production ; it was carried on within the Block organizational structure. Finally, in view of significant variation states regarding the Panchayati Raj institutions, any generalization on the impact of rural local bodies on agricultural production in India should be considered highly tentative.

The task performance of Panchayati Raj in the process of rural development should be judged within the framework of the national policies of rural development and the agrarian structure of the rural community. The content of the rural development policy or sectoral policies are indicative of the goals and priorities of national leadership. In the case of India, we find that there was nothing which could be designated as a national policy of rural development. However, sectoral policies such as the agriculture policy had been stipulated. In broader terms, developmental goals have been included in the "Directive Principles of State Policy" which states the equality and amicable distribution of resources rather than the concentration of wealth should be the basis for future legislations. Policy-makers have been aware of the conflict between competing objectives of rural development and the sectional interests of the rural community. Thus, the Draft Outline of the First Five Year Plan emphasized the need for a balance between increased agricultural productivity and equitable distribution of income. The latter objective has also been a populist slogan used by politicians under the label of "socialist patterns of development."

In actual practice, however, policies and programs for achieving social justice were hindered by many factors. First, while the national leaders sought amicable distribution of wealth, they were not willing to risk the desired increases in agricultural productivity for the purpose of equitable dis-

tribution. Secondly, while national policies and programs were formulated by the central government, their implementation was left to state governments and the state administrative machinery. Insufficient controls were provided for ensuring the successful implementation of national policies. For example, land reforms were treated as a state subject. Despite the establishment of many committees such as the Agrarian Reforms Committee (1948) and the Central Committee for Land Reforms (1958), no uniform legislation on the subject was enacted by the states. Finally, policies formulated at the centre for achieving social justice could not be implemented due to the dominance of vested interests in the state governments and their alliance with the grassroots bureaucracy. For instance, we find that in such states as Assam and Haryana the progress of land reform was disappointing and only a small portion of area declared surplus was actually distributed.

We have seen that an important factor which negatively affected the task performance of Panchayati Raj in rural development was the socio-political dominance of big landlords in rural India. The failure of the land reforms program perpetuated the traditional authority of landed interests. No significant changes in land ownership patterns took place. In fact two economic groups in rural areas could be differentiated. The first group consisted of agricultural labourers, tenants, share-croppers and petty landowners. The second was composed of big and medium sized land owners. In states such as Andhra, Kerala, and Maharashtra, the proportion of agricultural labourers to total cultivators was more than fifty per cent. It was the big and mediumsized land owners who got elected to the Panchayati Raj institutions. The same people also took advantage of the government facilities for increasing productivity. The implications of such an environment for the role performance of Panchayati Raj are obvious. The common man did not identify with the local bodies, neither was he politically conscious enough to safeguard his own interests. An alliance between landed interests and the

grassroots bureaucracy emerged, thus frustrating the establishment of a communication link for articulating and communicating the interests of the rural poor.

III

The Pakistani Case

(1) The Characteristics of Basic Democracies

The factors which led to the declaration of Martial Law in Pakistan included the collapse of parliamentary democracy, political instability and corrupt administration. The military regime lost no time in recognizing the role of the rural populace within the national political system. Ayub Khan and the majority of his generals distrusted politicians and political parties. In addition, the former had little political support among the more articulate and vocal urban masses. By mobilizing the rural poor, the military regime attempted to forestall and resist possible pressures from the urban areas. Furthermore, rural mobilization could give the regime political legitimacy, a necessity for quieting increasing criticism against the regime. The introduction of the Basic Democracies scheme should, therefore, be examined from this broader perspective. It is difficult to grasp the task which Ayub Khan wanted Basic Democracies to perform because in response to pressures and demands he continuously made new concessions, thus changing the philosophy of the Basic Democracies Order. Briefly speaking, its main objectives included : the rural people's involvement in the developmental process and general administration ; rural mobilization aimed at facilitating national economic development ; and the provision of an institutional framework for training local leaders.

The tiers of rural local government established under the Basic Democracies were designed to shift authority and responsibility to lower levels. In the Second Five Year Plan it

was expected that the institutions of Basic Democracies would "assume a crucial role in decentralized development planning and implementation."²⁸ Decentralized planning was to be operationalized by formulating development plans at the union, district and division levels. However, the formal decentralization of planning and implementation under Basic Democracies was neither designed for nor contributed to autonomy at the grassroots. Although it gave government officials the opportunity to assess local needs through people's representatives, the Basic Democracies Order was not framed to develop autonomous local government institutions. Tiers of rural government were almost entirely dependent upon funds from the national or sub-national governments. Though district and union councils were empowered to levy taxes, prior approval of the provincial government and the commissioner was required. In many cases, local taxes were not approved by the controlling authority. In his analysis of union councils in two districts, for example, Inayatullah found that in 56% of the cases, taxes levied by the councils were not approved by the appropriate authority.²⁹ Rural local bodies usually depended upon government grants, loans and revenue sharing measures for meeting even their current expenditures.³⁰ They had no influence over the distribution of government grants.³¹ The autonomy of local bodies in programme implementation depended, at least partially, upon the relationship between the deputy commissioner and the assistant director of Basic Democracies. If the deputy commissioner was favourably inclined toward Basic Democracies, both assistant directors and local bodies had greater autonomy in implementing programs.³² After the introduction of the Public Works Program, rural local bodies were given a greater role in the planning and implementation of development programs.³³

In Pakistan, Basic Democracies, like Panchayati Raj of India, provided an institutional framework for popular involvement. The members of the union councils were to be directly elected. Chairmen of the union councils were to be

involved in the activities of the tehsil/thana district and divisional councils. Heads of nation-building departments at various levels were to be involved in planning and implementing development programs, thus making them more accessible to the people's representatives. In addition, government officials were urged by the military regime to change their traditional attitude of "guardian" and become more accessible to the people. The practice of nominating members to local bodies was discontinued. The members of the union councils were included in the electoral college for the election of the president and the national and provincial assemblies. It was designed to involve them with the political process in the country. Ayub Khan lifted the ban on political parties and sought to create "healthy rivalry" in the villages and increased involvement of the rural populace in the developmental process. Later the Public Rural Works Program further increased the involvement of the local political leader in planning and implementing local development programs.³⁴ The Basic Democracies provided for manifold communication channels between government officials and the rural people. The latter, through their elected representatives, could raise questions and demand relevant information regarding the administrative and developmental matters of their areas. Furthermore, Basic Democracies were useful in establishing closer contacts between the grassroots bureaucracy and the people.³⁵

Despite the military regime's desire for increasing popular participation, the institutional framework of Basic Democracies and the peculiarities of the national political system were not conducive to the people's involvement in the political process of the country. As pointed out earlier, bureaucracy enjoyed a dominant position in planning and implementing local development plans. The chairmen of the tehsil, district and divisional councils were government officials. The nomination of members to various local bodies continued a few years after the introduction of the Basic Democracies Order. The military regime in Pakistan sought popular

participation at the grassroots without changing the authoritarian nature of decision-making structures at the national level. Although Basic Democrats were to serve as members of the electoral college for implementing the 1962 constitution, this did not significantly change the nature of political participation in Pakistan. There was an inherent contradiction between Ayub Khan's desire to give the local political leaders an opportunity to accept political responsibility and his reluctance to share power with any other group in the country. As long as the military-bureaucracy alliance at the national level was intact, the power-base in the country could not be broadened. Nor could Basic Democrats organize and put pressure on the regime. The model which was adopted implied that government officials would make major decisions, and in that process, they would seek cooperation of the people and their elected representatives.

The Basic Democracies Order, 1959, allocated a wide range of functions to the union council for promoting agricultural development and providing amenities to the rural populace. The wide range of functions assigned to Basic Democracies, however, by no means implied that they had the financial and administrative capability to carry out these functions. They were not financially self-reliant. They lacked the administrative and financial skills to collect taxes in a highly inegalitarian society. Union councils had poor budgeting procedures. The lack of financial resources' in turn, hindered the establishment of public confidence and interest in the activities of local institutions.

As pointed out earlier, for all practical purposes, the Basic Democracies scheme was designed to promote economic rather than political development. Politicization of the rural elite and the rural populace was not Ayub Khan's primary goal. Although the ban on political parties was lifted and Basic Democrats were assigned the role of electoral college for implementing the 1962 constitution, the involvement of Basic Democrats and the common man in the national political

process remained minimal. There was no question of the local party organization exercising control over a local council.

(2) The Impact of Basic Democracies

The introduction of the Basic Democracies and Rural Public Works Program resulted in the involvement of a large number of elected local leaders in the developmental machinery, contributing to their education in leadership skills and training in development administration. Two consequences of the Basic Democracies on rural local leadership should be pointed out. First, it formalized the leadership of the traditional village, thus giving it greater legitimacy.

Secondly, the Basic Democracies strengthened the role of medium-size land owners who increasingly attempted to assert their power. Five factors led to their change in the pattern of rural leadership:³⁷

- (1) Medium-sized landowners attended meetings of the tehsil and district councils. Thus, they became aware of commercial opportunities in the cities.
- (2) In some cases medium-sized landowners complained to higher authorities against those landlords who maintained a "system of suppression".
- (3) In the union councils they were able to get the support of non-landowners such as traders against the big landlords.
- (4) Through the union councils, they were able to demand new amenities from the government.
- (5) In the process of organizing themselves and putting pressure on the government, they developed their leadership capabilities.

It should be pointed out that in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) the Basic Democracies and Rural Public Works Program had a comparatively greater impact on the rural local political leadership than in West Pakistan. This variation can in part be attributed to two factors. First, due to

the absence of big landlords, the rural power structure in East Pakistan was relatively more egalitarian. Second, historically, administration in East Pakistan had been less paternalistic than that of the western wing of the country.³⁸

The delegation of powers to Basic Democrats enabled them to make decisions on local affairs which were, in the past, made by the field administration. It opened a channel through which the requests and demands of the populace could be communicated to bureaucracy through selected local leaders. The frequency of use and effectiveness of this new link between the bureaucracy and the people's representatives is difficult to measure. Nevertheless, many studies have shown that the bureaucracy increasingly responded to the communications and demands of the people through their representatives leading to a closer relationship between them.³⁹ For the bureaucracy, the Basic Democracies scheme was a convenient method of communication with the rural populace for performing new tasks and meeting new challenges because its dominance over the local decision-making process remained undisturbed. The limitation of this vehicle of communication of course, was that any demand which threatened the predominant position of the bureaucracy could not receive a sympathetic hearing. This was one of the major differences between Basic democracies and Panchayati Raj. Whereas under the former, elected leaders were subservient to the interests of the bureaucracy, the latter empowered them to hold bureaucracy responsive to their needs. In both cases, the common man had limited access to the bureaucracy. Nor were his interests properly safeguarded. While the elected leaders in India were able to assert their traditional authority, their counterparts in Pakistan were forced into a marriage of convenience with the bureaucracy.

Many factors improved the capability of Basic Democracies to implement development programs. These included the financial and political support provided by the regime; cooperation between government officials and elected leaders;

training of government officials for performing new roles; and the launching of a Rural Works program. Consequently, the rural local bodies assisted in developing an infrastructure of canals and roads, facilitating loan distribution and collection, mobilizing the surplus labour force for constructive work, introducing a system of planning from below, and bringing the rural community into the "mainstream" of developmental activities. On the basis of the accomplishments of this program during the 1960s the Fourth Five Year Plan of Pakistan reported that the Rural Works Program contributed to economic well-being by facilitating the development of a rural infrastructure and the promotion of agriculture.⁴⁰

The financial and administrative capabilities of Basic Democracies contributed significantly to accelerating the pace of agricultural productivity. As was the case in India, the rural local bodies in Pakistan encouraged the involvement of local leaders in the developmental process and facilitated the distribution of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and improved seeds. This led to the emergence of economic entrepreneurs who took advantage of the facilities provided by the government and who, motivated by private economic gain, were able to increase productivity. These entrepreneurs consisted of big landowners and medium-size farmers. The role of Basic Democracies was limited to providing an institutional framework. It was this group which, serving as an agent of change in the rural community, was responsible for ushering in the "Green Revolution." The entrepreneur farmer made greater use of fertilizers, improved seeds and other modern means of agricultural development. Between 1960 and 1968 the use of new fertilizers and improved seeds increased significantly. Small wonder that the average yearly increases in the production of three principal crops, wheat, sugarcane and cotton, were more than six percent.

The lack of bureaucratic responsiveness and the absence of grassroots party branches created an environment in which the socio-political awareness of the rural populace could not be

developed. While the elected local leader established linkages with the bureaucracy for safeguarding his interests, the common man was at the mercy of both. Due to illiteracy and apathy, he remained unconscious of his rights. Neither elected leaders nor government officials were always accessible to him. Moreover, well-to-do farmers and big landlords took advantage of the facilities provided by the government for increasing productivity. On the other hand share croppers and small farmers either did not have access to these facilities or lacked the financial resources to utilize the new agricultural techniques. Consequently, the income inequalities among the various segments of the rural community have increased. In particular, landless labourers have suffered the most because the consolidation of holdings by middle landlords has led to the displacement of labour from the rural areas.⁴¹

Two sets of explanatory variables might account for the role performance of Basic Democracies. First, of course, are the characteristics of the Basic Democracies scheme. As we have already noted, rural local government in Pakistan did not provide for bureaucratic responsiveness. Interaction between local bodies and political parties was minimal. The nomination of members to various tiers of rural local bodies and the dominance of bureaucracy over the local decision-making process were not conducive to citizens participation. Furthermore, the Basic Democracies scheme was designed to promote economic rather than political development by seeking the involvement of rural citizenry in the developmental process. In other words, it was introduced not to radically transform rural areas, but to promote the socio-economic welfare of the rural populace within the existing framework. Obviously, Basic Democracies could not effectively perform some of the rural development tasks delineated in this paper such as paving the way for the establishment of a link for communicating the needs of the rural poor.

However, other characteristics of Basic Democracies were conducive to their role performance in rural development. The

introduction of the Public Works program, its integration into Basic Democracies, and the involvement of medium-sized landowners in the developmental process strengthened the capabilities of local political leadership and enabled economic entrepreneurs to take advantage of government facilities for improving agriculture. Under the guidance of bureaucracy, the implementation of development programs was facilitated. In addition, the Basic Democracies had the financial and political support of the military regime. The above factors, among other things, fostered the development of an infrastructure and the promotion of agriculture.

The second set of explanatory variables which might account for the role performance of Basic Democracies in rural development includes the policy environment and land ownership structure of the rural community. The main thrust of the policies of rural development in Pakistan during the 1950s and 1960s was to increase agricultural productivity and develop an infrastructure. No special attention was given to petty landowners and landless labourers. Programs of social justice such as land reforms were considered desirable. As early as 1949 the Muslim League Agrarian Reforms Committee proposed measures such as reduced rents from share croppers. However, during the first decade of independence no significant change in the plight of the rural poor took place. Another attempt to improve the lot of tenants and landless labourers was made by Ayub Khan when he introduced land reforms in 1959. These were all piece-meal efforts. No consistent policy emerged for the equitable distribution of income or for instituting special programs for the rural poor.

The principal reason for the absence of a national concern for the impoverished in the rural areas and for the inability of Basic Democracies to perform manifold tasks such as communicating the needs of the rural poor was the dominance of landlord interests in Pakistan. In particular, the implementation of any program contrary to the interests of the landlords was doomed to failure. This was especially true in the case

of former West Pakistan where more than 30 per cent of the total area was owned by approximately one per cent of the total land owners. Conversely, 64.2 per cent of the total owners held only 15 per cent of the total area and the size of their holdings was less than five acres. The overwhelming majority of West Pakistan's rural populace consisted of small landowners, share croppers, tenants, and landless labourers. Big and medium sized land owners dominated the activities of Basic Democracies. They had relatively easier access to the grassroots bureaucracy and as compared to small land owners and landless labourers, big and medium sized land owners had a greater chance of being elected. In the absence of a government program for alleviating the plight of the rural impoverished, and due to the inability of tenants and landless labourers to organize themselves, landlords interests in the local decision making process were never really challenged. Obviously, the grassroots bureaucracy felt no obligation to be more accessible to the common man and Basic Democracies rarely, if ever, effectively performed the task of communicating the less well-to-do to higher decision making structures.

IV

Conclusions

The single party dominant rural government in China was based on the mass participation approach to rural mobilization. The bureaucratic, political dominant Panchayati Raj of India focused on the strategy of rural elite modernization and politicization. The bureaucratic dominant Basic Democracies in Pakistan sought the modernization of the traditional ruling elite and medium-size landowners towards the goal of greater productivity. Put differently, while the rural government of China was designed to accomplish the radical transformation of rural areas by increasing productivity and creating an

egalitarian rural community, the main objective of Panchayati Raj and Basic Democracies was to seek rural modernization within the existing framework by modifying it as and when necessary.

From the systematic perspective, then, the major difference between the impact of the single party dominant, mass mobilization-oriented Chinese model and the rural elite modernization and mobilization-oriented Indian and Pakistani models was that while the former by performing rural development tasks simultaneously facilitated increases in agricultural productivity and more equal distribution of income, the latter accelerated the pace of the "Green Revolution," at cost of further widening the economic gap between well-to-do farmers and the rural poor. There was a significant difference between the Indian and Pakistani models. Panchayati Raj politicized the rural elite but failed to awaken the political awareness of the common man. Under such circumstances, developmental activities at the local level were negatively affected by the "intrusion" of political parties and power politics at the local level. On the other hand, the bureaucratic dominant Basic Democracies scheme was more conducive to the successful implementation of development programs. Although Panchayati Raj provided for greater political participation in rural India, the Basic Democracies scheme had a greater impact partly because the latter had more support from national leadership.

The evidence presented in his paper suggests that rural local government can perform the following roles in rural development:

- (a) The creation of an institutional framework for popular participation;
- (b) The implementation of development programs;
- (c) The establishment of an effective communication link between the national modernizing elite and the rural populace;

- (d) The development of local political leadership capabilities ;
- (e) The creation of socio-political awareness among the rural masses ; and
- (f) The development of a politically responsible and socially conscious bureaucracy at the grassroots.

From a broader perspective, however, not all types of local political systems can perform each of the above roles. Rather, a relationship seems to exist between these tasks and the characteristics of given rural local government. For example, as the Chinese experience has shown, the rural local government which provides for bureaucratic responsiveness and greater interaction with the local party branches is more likely to foster political awareness among the rural populace and pave the way for the emergence of a political responsible and socially conscious bureaucracy at the grassroots. We find that, as opposed to communes, Basic Democracies in Pakistan provided for neither bureaucratic responsiveness nor the active involvement of political parties in the local decision-making process. Consequently, Basic Democracies failed to perform the task of increasing the socio-political awareness of the common man or making the grassroots bureaucracy more accessible to him. Under such circumstances the interests of the rural poor could in no way be safeguarded.

A comparison of the three cases under study suggests that a rural local government which provides for local autonomy and popular participations is conducive to the development of local leadership capabilities and skills and the creation of an effective communication link between the national modernizing elites and the rural citizenry. In each case, the extent of local autonomy strengthened, with varying degrees, the capabilities of local leadership which in turn, contributed to the successful implementation of development programs and increases in agricultural productivity. On the role of creating a communication link, there were significant variations between

the three countries. By performing this role the Chinese communes were able to articulate and communicate the needs of the rural citizenry, including those of the rural poor, to the higher decision-making structures. In India and Pakistan, however, due to environmental factors, rural local bodies failed to identify and safeguard the needs of landless labourers and small cultivators.

It is also evident from the data presented in this paper that the ideological scope and financial and administrative capabilities of a rural local government determine the degree of its contribution to the socioeconomic well-being of the rural populace and its overall impact on rural society. If the local political system has the unfaltering political support of the national leadership and/or is regarded as a significant instrument in the development process, then its overall impact on the society will be far-reaching. Conversely, if it is merely an extension of field administration or is dominated by the bureaucracy, its role performance will be limited in scope. Furthermore, the rural government needs to have the financial and administrative capabilities for effectively performing the role of implementing development programs. The formal delegation of functions which is not accompanied by the capacity to mobilize resources and administrative skills will not suffice to make rural local bodies important instruments of governmental action. In this regard the Indian and Pakistani experiences are pertinent. Although the union council and the village panchayati under Basic Democracies and the Panchayati Raj, respectively, were empowered to perform many functions, no consistent efforts were made by the national bureaucratic and political elite to strengthen their economic base or administrative capabilities. Thus, their over-all contribution to economic well-being of the people remained insignificant.

Two intervening variables which affect the relationship between the characteristics of a given rural local government and its role performance in rural development are the nature

of the rural power structure and the national policy environment. For instance, as the Indian experience has shown, in an inegalitarian rural society which is dominated by landlord interests, the politicization of rural institutions and bureaucratic responsiveness to local bodies do not necessarily lead to the political awareness of the common man. Furthermore, in such a society, even if rural government provides for local autonomy and popular participation, it does not necessarily succeed in performing the role of establishing an effective communication link for articulating and communicating the needs of the rural poor. Under such circumstances, rural government contributes to the modernization of the rural elite but at the same time fails to radically transform rural areas. Similarly, the role performance of rural local government in rural development is also affected by the content and environment of the national policies of rural development. If the accomplishment of egalitarian goals is the guiding principle of the national policy, as was the case in China, then rural government can more easily perform roles such as articulating and communicating the demands of poor peasants and landless labourers.

Even after holding the rural power structure and the national policy environment constant, the impact of the characteristics of rural local government on the three dimensions or goals of rural development remains indirect. Simply put, by developing local leadership capabilities, providing an institutional framework for popular involvement in the developmental process, and by facilitating the implementation of development programs, the characteristics of a given rural local government contribute to the promotion of agriculture and the development of an infrastructure. In addition, the characteristics of a rural local government can facilitate equitable distribution of income and equitable access to government-initiated programs by increasing political awareness among the rural poor, communicating the latter's needs and making the grassroots bureaucracy more accessible to the common man,

While the Basic Democracies scheme is dead and buried and Panchayati Raj is being severely criticized by scholars for its inadequacy in solving the problems of rural India, the Chinese communes have withstood the test of time by virtue of their capacity to effectively perform their assigned roles in rural development. Each of the three models, however, contain lessons in the light of which Asian policy makers can undertake new measures to modernize rural local governments for the purpose of accelerating the pace of rural development :

- (1) Persistent efforts should be made to enhance the administrative and financial capabilities of rural governments in Asia. Only a self-reliant economic base and administrative capability to implement development programs would enable the local political system to significantly contribute to the socio-economic welfare of the rural populace ;
- (2) Rural governments should be granted greater opportunities for local planning and program implementation. Furthermore, their jurisdiction on resource mobilization and allocation should be extended ;
- (3) The success of the Chinese experience points to the fact that in Asia mass participation in the local decision-making process rather than modernization of the rural elite should be the ultimate goal of rural governments. Provision needs to be made for the meaningful participation of the common man in the activities of rural local bodies. This certainly does not imply the adoption of the Chinese model in toto. In view of cultural peculiarities, each country needs to experiment and delineate its own methods towards the end of mobilizing the energies of its rural populace ;
- (4) If social justice and the creation of an egalitarian rural society are the goals of a policy maker, than politicization of rural local bodies and mass control over local political leadership and grassroots bureaucracy are indispensable. Here again methods for

instituting the common man's control over local leadership would differ from country to country ;

- (5) developmental experiences of Asian countries have demonstrated that the interests of the rural elite and the rural poor—small landowners, share-croppers, and landless labourers—are not always compatible. This, in the real world situation, means that even though a given rural local government provides for bureaucratic responsiveness, popular participation, and politicization, it does not necessarily contribute to equitable access to government initiated programs and facilities. Therefore, the environmental context of the local political system has to be changed. In the case of Asia, this implies that land reform programs need to be properly articulated and successfully implemented in order to break the political and economic dominance of the landed aristocracy in rural areas. Without significant changes in the structure of land ownership in Asia, the role performance of rural local government in ensuring equitable access to government facilities will continue to be negatively affected.

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NOTES

1. In his descriptive analysis of local government in Asia, Friedman has focused on "comparative structures, participation in decision-making, the economic and socio-cultural environment and policy outputs of local political systems." See Harry J. Friedman, "*Local Government in Third World Asia*", General Learning Corporation (Morristown General Learning Press, 1973) p. 5.

In order to analyze differences in the institutions of rural local government in India, United States, Poland and Yugoslavia, Jacob and associates have relied on "ideological rationale for local government", "amount of autonomy", and "structure of decision-making in the governance of the community." See Philip E. Jacob et. al. *Values and the Active Community*, (New York : The Free Press, 1971).

2. Nicolass Luykx, "Rural Government in the Strategy of Agricultural Development" in John D. Montgomery and William S. Siffin eds, *Approaches to Development, Politics, Administration and Change* (New York : McGraw-Hill, 1966) pp. 115-16.
3. For an analysis of the historical evolution and ideological rationale of rural institutions in China and the problems involved in their functioning, see Marion R. Larsen, "China's Agriculture under Communism" in Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress, *An Economic Profile of Mainland China*, (New York : Praeger, 1968) ; Michel Oksenberg ed., *China's Developmental Experience*, (New York : Praeger 1973) ; Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, (Berkeley : University of

- California Press, 1971) ; and K. C. Yeh, "Agricultural Policies and Performance" in Yuan-li Wu ed., *China : A Handbook*, (New York : Praeger, 1973).
4. Shahid Javed Burki, *A Study of Chinese Communes 1965* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1969) pp. 11-13.
 5. According to the formula prescribed by the state government, there were five charges on the gross income of a production unit : (1) agricultural tax, (2) reserve funds, (3) welfare fund, (4) production costs and (5) distributed income. *Ibid* p. 22.
 6. *Ibid* p. 19.
 7. *Ibid* p. 4.
 8. The autonomy of China's institutions of rural local government in making effective decisions has been observed by scholars. For example see Richard M. Pfeffer, "Leaders and Masses" in Oksenberg ed *China's Development Experience*, op. cit. pp. 157-174 ; and Burki, *A Study of Chinese Communes 1965*, op. cit. pp. 8-16.
 9. Tang Tsou, "The values of the Chinese Revolution", in Michel Oksenberg ed. *China's Developmental Experience*, op. cit. pp. 37-38.
 10. Burki, op. cit. p. 4.
 11. Richard M. Pfeffer, "Leaders and Masses", in Oksenberg ed., op. cit. p. 161.
 12. Tang Tsou, "The values of the Chinese Revolution" op. cit. p. 36.
 13. Burki op. cit. p. 4.
 14. Far Eastern Economic Review, Oct. 1974, p. 15.
 15. Some of these studies are : Williom Hinton, *Fanshen : A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*, (New York : Monthly Review Press 1972) ; Jan Myrdal, *Report from a Chinese Village* (New York : Pantheon Books, 1965) ; Jan Myrdal and Gun Kessle, *China : The*

Revolution continued (New York : Vintage Books 1970); Jack Chen, *A Year in Upper Felicity : Life in a Chinese Village during the Cultural Revolution* (New York : Macmillan, 1973).

16. Tsou, op. cit. pp. 39-40.

17. Jan Myrdal and Gun Kessle, *China : The Revolution continued* op. cit. pp. 52-82. The five guarantees which the people in the village had were: enough food, enough clothes, enough fuel, an honourable funeral, and education for children.

On the "work-point" formula and income distribution, the authors write: "The basis of the new system of income distribution, now introduced, was that all members, whether working or not, should enjoy basic security in the form of grain. Income from work was additional to this basic security . . . This meant that whether one was chosen to do this job or that job made no difference to one's income. Whether one dug or harvested, fetched manure from town or worked at the nodule factory, the day's work had the same value". Ibid. p: 82.

18. For an examination of the ideological rationale for the Panchayati Raj institutions, see the following: Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship : Studies of Our Changing Social Order* (New York : John Wiley, 1964); H. Tinker, *The Foundation of Local Self Government in India, Pakistan and Burma* (London, Athene Press, 1954); Hugh Tinker, "The Village in the Framework of Development" in Ralph Braibanti and Joseph J. Spengler, eds., *Administration and Economic Development in India*. (Duke University Press, Durham 1963).

19. For an analysis of local planning, program implementation, resource mobilization, and resource allocation at the local level in India see R. N. Haldipur and V. R. K. Paramahansa, eds. *Local Government Institutions in Rural India* (Hyderabad : National Institute of Community

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 24. Iltija H. Khan "Local Government in Rural India" in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 15 : 3 (Dec. 1969) pp. 19-20.
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 28. Second Five Year Plan, Government of Pakistan, June 1960, p. 109.
 29. See Inayatullah, *Basic Democracies, District Administration and Development*, (Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, Peshawar, 1964 p. 182).

30. See Nazir Ahmad Nain, *Local Government Finance in Pakistan*, Country Paper for the Regional Seminar, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 5th—17th Aug. 1974, p. 22.
31. *Ibid* p. 18.

In East Pakistan over 50 per cent of the estimated district council revenue of 1962-63 came from government grants. In four districts, 70 per cent of the District council revenue was derived from the above source. See Malik M. Sadiq, "The Structure, Functions and Financial Resources of Local Government in Pakistan", *Journal of Administration Overseas* Vol. VI, No. 3 (July 1967) p. 188. In this study of the two districts in West Pakistan, Inayatullah found that in the district of Abad 50 per cent and in Sultanpur 72 per cent of the district council revenue came from government grants, see Inayatullah, *op. cit.* p. 238.

32. See *Ibid* p. 259.
33. For an analysis of Public Works Programs in Pakistan See Shahid Javed Burki, "West Pakistan's Rural Works Programmes : A Study in Political and Administrative Reforms", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 23 (Summer 1969) ; and Shahid Javed Burki ; "Public Works Programmes : The Pakistani Experience", Mimeograph, Development Advisory Service, Harvard University, Oct. 1973.
34. In East Pakistan, for example, an overwhelming majority of rural Basic Democrats worked as Chairman/Secretaries of Public Works Project Committee See—A.T.R. Rahman, "Rural Institutions in India and Pakistan" in *Asian Survey* Vol. VIII, No. 9 (Sept. 1968) p. 802,
35. Zuhra Waheed, *Contacts Between Villagers and Public Officials in Three Villages of Lyallpur Tehsil* (Lahore : The Pakistan Administrative College, 1964) p. 21.
A survey by Inayatullah showed that 67% of the councilors interviewed believed that government servants treated the public better than they did fifteen years before. See

- Inayatullah, *Basic Democracy District Administration and Development*, op. cit. p. 106.
36. Inayatullah, "New Bureaucracies of Development in Pakistan", p: 74 (paper).
 37. Khalid B. Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan*, Boston : Houghton 1967) Chapter 6.
 38. Ibid p. 260:
 39. In his study of Nowshere Tehsil, Inayatullah found that only 74 per cent of the communications between Union Council and government departments were answered. Furthermore, departmental action was taken on 63 per cent of those. See Inayatullah, *Study of Union Councils in Nowshere Tehsil*, (Peshawar: West Pakistan Academy of Village Development, 1961, pp. 36-38) quoted from Edward W. Weidner ed., *Development Administration in Asia*, Duke University Press, Durham 1970, p. 269.
 40. Planning Commission, Government of Pakistan, *The Fourth Five Year Plan 1970-75* (Islamabad, 1970) p. 341.
 41. For a survey of the studies on income inequalities in Pakistan see Shahid Javed Burki, "The Eradication or Poverty: The Pakistan Case", in *Effective Anti-poverty Strategies*, op. cit. pp. 241-245.

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