

Agricultural Changes in Pakistan: An In-Depth Analysis of Agricultural Policies Comparing Military and Civil Governments (1971-1989)

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Abstract

Agriculture is the life line of Pakistan. It plays a major role in contribution for the GDP. Pakistan has seen a lot of change in government policies from its advent. Agriculture is the most important economic sector of Pakistan. In this paper it was analyzed the agricultural policies of Zia-ul-Haq and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This comparison was in order to critically analyze the military and civil governments for their contribution to Pakistan and its future. This paper is a pure Qualitative research on route of exploration. In addition to exploratory, this study also used ethnographic, explanatory, descriptive and historical methods to gain contextually grounded insights into functioning of Pakistan's agricultural policies. It was found that mostly the rulers of Pakistan emphasized upon extending their rules and for this extension they used every negative means. Instead of being remembered in the history for their high-end results and futuristic approach they controlled the masses by un-achievable promises and vague goals. If the previous rulers would have done something good for the economy of Pakistan after 1971, there would have been quiet a boom in the economy and the economic and energy crisis we are facing now wouldn't have been our fate.

Keywords: Agricultural Policies, Economic Impact, Military regimes, Civil Regimes

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan's economy. It accounts for 21% of the GDP and together with agro-based products fetches 80% of the country's total export earnings. Majority of the population, directly or indirectly, is dependent on this sector. It feeds whole rural and urban population (Program & through Parliamentary Development, 2009). Realizing its importance, planners and policy makers are always keen to have reliable area and production statistics of agricultural crops well in time. Policy makers primarily need accurate and timely statistics for the important crops such as wheat, cotton, rice, sugarcane, maize etc. However, in recent years, due to persistent hikes in the prices of essential commodities like pulses, onions, potatoes, chilies and tomatoes these crops have also gained in economic importance.

Pakistan has seen a lot of governments from its beginning since 1947. Civil and Military rules have enjoyed almost equal length of time in the government but as a matter of fact the Military rules enjoyed a lasting period at an average of 10 years each. On the other hand the Civil governments were usually suspended during the initial years of their rule. The two eras we will be comparing in this article are briefly described below.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, (born Jan. 5, 1928, near Lārkāna, Sindh, India [now in Pakistan]—died April 4, 1979, Rāwalpindi, Pak.), Pakistani statesman, president (1971–73), and prime minister (1973–77), a popular leader who was overthrown and executed by the military (Bhutto & Panhwar, 2013). During his regime, he announced that no single entity shall bear an agrarian land more than 100 acres of canal irrigated or 200 acres of barani land. His decision in some way resulted to be futile and in other ways was applauded. There were several other agricultural policies he introduced in his era, he believed that Pakistan should have adopted these policies years ago. As recorded in his autobiography,

“If the Government of Pakistan had paid as much attention to agriculture in its Second Five Year Plan as it is doing in the current Plan, the country would have become self-sufficient by now.” (Bhutto & Panhwar, 2013)

General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (12 August 1924 – 17 August 1988) was the sixth President of Pakistan from July 1977 to his death in August 1988. Distinguished by his role in the Black September in Jordan military operation in 1970, he was appointed Chief of Army Staff in 1976. After widespread civil disorder, he overthrew ruling Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in a bloodless coup d'état on 5 July 1977 and became the state's third ruler to impose martial law. He initially ruled as Chief Martial Law Administrator, but later installed himself as the President of Pakistan in September 1978 (Ziring, 1988).

Economic growth during the Zia-ul-Haq period was quite impressive, partly attributable to the good performance of agriculture – in no small measure to availability of water and fertilizer - rehabilitation of private sector and the law and order situation. Also, there was no political intervention.(Janjua, 2005)

1.2 Problem Statement

Government policies have changed from time to time. As Pakistan is an agrarian country, it needs to have special emphasis upon this sector. Unluckily, this is one of the most ignorant sectors by the governments. Although efforts are made to boost this specific area, but does not suffice the need of extra attention this sector requires. Punjab is the main stakeholder in the agriculture business of Pakistan. Pakistan has one of the best irrigation systems available to date. Even the desert areas lying with the border of India (in FortAbbas and Yazman Tehsils) are made available for farming with the help of desert canal.

Apart from whichever form of government existed, there had been a trend of adopting policies in each rule. Agriculture, as being the most essential part of revenue and survival of Pakistan, faced the most of the changes in each era. Our research work is based upon the analysis of each of the above mentioned governments and agricultural policies defined and adopted in their era.

1.3 Hypothesis

H₀: Change of national government has no effect on agricultural development.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory cum analytical study is to pitch light the difference in agricultural policies during military and civil governments in Pakistan. It is a comparative study of the military and civil policies used in the agriculture of Pakistan and their impact on it.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

It will be going through a brief study of that era. As a matter of fact this is a term paper no a regular thesis. Moreover, this task is time consuming and involves a lot of money for surveys, interviews from old people living in all over Pakistan and searching government archives available in distinct cities.

2. Literature review

Financial requirements of the farming sector have increased tremendously over the last few decades due to the extended use of fertilizers, biocides, improved seeds, mechanization etc. In order to provide the agriculture sector with loans and benefits the government in Pakistan has to declare it as an industry. Unfortunately none of the governments till date has done so. Even till the recent years, Zarai Taraqiati Bank was the only one which provided agricultural loans(Hanif, Khan, & Nauman, 2004)(Zaidi & Saeed, 2013).

Although few of governments provided with tractor schemes, but were ill fashioned and yet the tractors were provided on loan in against of a property equivalent to ten times the price of the tractor. Yet these schemes never benefited the poor and small scale farmers(Hanif, Khan, & Nauman, 2004).

The hierarchies of agriculture, from seeds to selling of good, have no proper framework allotted by the government. There is no proper body to control the adulteration of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. Certified seeds are not available in the required quantity to suffice the need of a farmer. The costing of fertilizers as well as pesticides is on the free will of the companies producing it. In the absence of a single body comprising of farmers and companies producing their products i.e. fertilizers and pesticides; farmer's consent is absent in the making of product as well as costing. These multinational companies even add their miscellaneous and employees expenses in the cost of their products. Moreover, there is no central point for agricultural produce.

Subsidies by the government are not available on any agricultural products. Although the government has provided this sector with electric tube wells but the farmer now has to pay the hefty electric bills as well as the "Abiana" (a rent for the usage of canal water). Abiana wavier is a cumbersome process yet no landlord can get it exempted.

During the period of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto as the Prime Minister, a number of land reforms were also introduced. The important land reforms included the reduction of land ceilings and introducing the security of tenancy to tenant farmers. The land ceiling was fixed to 150 acres (0.61 km²) of irrigated land and 300 acres (1.2 km²) of non-irrigated land. Another step that Bhutto took was to democratise Pakistan's Civil Service. In Baluchistan, the pernicious practice of Shishak and Sardari System was abolished. In 1976, the Bhutto government carried out the establishment of Federal Flood Commission (FFC), and was tasked to prepare national flood protection plans, and flood forecasting and research to harness floodwater. Bhutto later went onto to upgrade numbers of dams and barrages built in Sind province(Bhutto & Panhwar, 2013).

Bhutto was a strong advocate of empowering small farmers, when Bhutto argued that if farmers were weak and demoralized then Pakistan's agricultural strength would be fragile, believing that farmers would not feel psychologically safe unless the country achieved self-sufficiency in food. Therefore, the Bhutto government launched the programs to make put the country on road self-sufficient in ricing, sugar-milling, wheat husking, industries. Bhutto government intensified the control of ricing, sugar-mills and wheat husking factories with initially believing that public sector involvement would reduce the influence of mega-corporations transforming

into big monopoly sphere. The Government initiated schemes for combating water logging and salinity. The huge tax exceptions were also introduced for small landowners to encourage the growth of agriculture. His nationalization of Sindh based industries heavily benefited the poor mass, but badly upsets the influential feudal lords and most notables were PirPagara, although, the Sindhi feudal class were leftists as Bhutto but later allied with secular forces after Bhutto initiated more reforms for poor mass.

The economic policy performance of the Zia period was much better than that of the Bhutto period (Ziring, 1988). The point, however, is that the long period of political stability and sustained growth under Zia offered opportunities for tackling the difficult underlying structural issues, which were not exploited. For instance, the opportunities for raising national savings and improving the balance of payments offered by the huge worker remittances and rapidly expanding economy were not seized. Instead, the government launched another round of large increases in defense spending and pre-empted an important part of private savings through large-scale non-bank borrowing. The relative roles of state and private sector in development were left to be decided largely on the basis of inertia. Weaknesses of the direct taxation collection machinery, a fundamental cause of continued heavy reliance on indirect taxation, were not addressed even though martial law extended over a period of eight and a half years. The policy-makers did not learn from the mistakes of the 1960s, such as the overemphasis on growth, the neglect of the social sector, and lack of adequate attention to structural change in agriculture and large-scale industry

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Method

This research followed a qualitative research design. This will primarily be an exploratory study to provide relevant insight as well as understanding. Although further on the analysis will also take a more explanatory route due to the nature of the topic. Furthermore, explanatory, ethnographic, descriptive and historical methods of qualitative research were also used in this study.

Descriptive research was carried out in order to describe systematically the problem. Moreover, explanatory and exploratory methods were used to explore a specific area/ era to investigate the possible scenario and happening of that time. This research for specifically targeted to Pakistan and its population only. It covers some aspect of past in pursuance of knowledge gathered by historians and autobiography.

The research methodology implies qualitative methods to gain contextually grounded insights into functioning of Pakistan's agricultural policies during both forms of governments.

3.2 Data Processing & collection Procedure

Agricultural policies will be analyzed in this research. Also the agricultural output during 197-1989 will be analyzed so that a relation can be made for any cause and effect which is seen. We used following ways of data collection.

- Government Documents
- Government Websites
- Autobiography
- Documentaries , Video Records and media reports

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Agricultural Policies

The late Mr.Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, after assuming power in December, 1971, introduced land reforms on March 1, 1972. These were not confined merely to reduction of size of ownership holdings but had many other agrarian reform features. The salient features of the land reforms were as under:

1. The ceiling on land ownership was reduced to 150 acres in the case of irrigated land, 300 acres in the case of unirrigated land or 12,000 produce index units whichever was larger. Owners with tractors or tube wells were allowed to keep additional 2,000 produce index units (PIU's).
2. The area under "Stud and Livestock" farms was resumed free from any charge whatsoever.
3. The area shikargahs except historical shikargahs was resumed by the state for distribution among the peasants.
4. The land acquired by the state was distributed to the landless tenants free of charge.
5. In case of economic or above holdings, further sub-division by alienation or partition was prohibited if the resultant holding would be less than economic land.
6. Similarly in case of subsistence or above holdings, further sub-division was not allowed if it resulted in less than subsistence holding.
7. Restrictions were placed on the ejectments of tenants by the landlords. A tenant could only be ejected if he failed to pay rent or used the land in a manner which made it unfit for the purpose he got the land or sublet his tenancy.
8. In 1975, the Government gave revenue concessions to small land-owners holding up to 12 acres of irrigated land or 25 acres of non-irrigated land. These cultivators were exempted from payment of land revenue land rates,

development cases with effect from rabi crop of 1975-76.

9. On December 18, 1976, the Government declared that the tenants and the tillers of soil having less than subsistence holdings will be given cultivable and cultivable waste state land. It was also announced that all occupancy tenants of state land were declared the owners of the land.

10. On January 5, 1977, the Government announced a further reduction in the ceiling of land ownership. The individual land holding was reduced to 100 acres of irrigated or 200 acres of non-irrigated land equivalent to 8,000 PIUs whichever was more. These reforms also had some agrarian features such as abolition of land revenue on holdings of 25 acres or less and imposition of agricultural income tax on large land-owners.

Under the land reforms of 1972. A total of 1.3 million acres was resumed. Out of this .9 million acres were distributed to the farmers. The land reforms of 1972 were not effective as the landlords had distributed most of their fertile land among the relatives, friends and even to tenants. (Abbas, 2013)

4.2 New land reforms of 1971 by Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto

1. Land in excess of prescribed ceilings was resumed without compensation.
2. Payment of land revenue cusses water rate taxes surcharges levies on land and provision of seed was made the responsibility of the owners.
3. Cost of pesticides and fertilizers was to be shared equally between the tenants and the owners.
4. The tenant was given the first right of pre-emption in respect of sale of land under his tenancy.
5. Owners were forbidden to levy cusses on tenants or take free labor from them.
6. Contravention of these regulations was made punishable by rigorous imprisonment extending up to 7 years and confiscation of immovable property in case false declarations were made. (Zahoor, 2011)

4.3 Claimed benefits of land reforms

1. The total land resumed as % of cultivated land was only 0.4 in 1977 and 2.6 in the land reform of 1972 against 6.2% of the land reform of 1959. The actual steal surrender of land was small.
2. The occupancy tenant cultivators, though small in number, got the right of ownership of land. They, being the owners, now take greater interest in raising the yield per hectare.
3. The tenants have been saved from the exploitation of big landlords. They cannot be ejected at the sweet will of the owners of the land.
4. The area declared as excess by the landlords was distributed among the landless peasant. The economic position of these tenants has improved.
5. As the ceilings were fixed on the size of economic holdings and subsistence holdings, the chances of further fragmentation of land have been eliminated.
6. The landlords greatly lost their traditional superiority. They do not wield as much political power as they had before the agrarian reforms.
7. The land reforms have helped in increasing the middle income group. This group is more conscious of its duties and obligations to the fellow citizens and the state.
8. The consolidation of holding has made it possible to use the modern inputs more. The income of the small farmers has increased.
9. The landlords with decreased area of land have started taking interest in improving the agricultural production. They are using modern agricultural technology which has greatly increased the yield per hectare.
10. The increase in the income of the small farmers has increased the demeaned for various manufactured goods. The market for the industrial goods has thus widened.
11. As the tenants have now greater security of income in the villages, the large scale migration of labor from agriculture to industry has declined. (Shafqat, 1988)

4.4 Zia-ul-Haq's Agricultural Policies

Rapid growth, widespread prosperity, and relatively stable prices made the Zia period appear to be an era of exceptional political and economic stability in Pakistan's history. Like Ayub, Zia relied heavily on the bureaucracy for economic management, and under the able guidance of Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan the bureaucrats did a fair job of short-term economic management partly under pressure from international financial institutions which provided critical balance of payments support in the early and mid-1980s. The flexible exchange rate policy strengthened export incentives and improved the climate for private investment. The initial reduction in budget deficits, through additional taxation and efforts after 1980, to reduce subsidies and to bring agricultural prices in line with international prices helped economic growth and moderated the inflationary pressures. That high economic growth was partly a matter of luck and reflected the influence of exogenous economic developments, notably the boom in worker remittances, does not detract from the steady and more or less consistent day to day management of economic policies during the 1980s. (Ziring, 1988)

However, major structural weaknesses remained in the economy and indeed were intensified in some instances. Even though medium-term economic planning was revived in 1978, long-term policy issues were either not pursued with any seriousness or suffered due to poor implementation. A major criticism was the growth in public

spending from 23.5 per cent of GDP in 1976-7 to 27 percent in 1987-8. Government expenditures adjusted for inflation increased nearly 150 per cent during 1977-88. Since revenue growth was slow, the budget deficits had risen to an unsustainable level of over 8 per cent of GDP in the final years of the Zia regime – essentially mortgaging future production and price stability. (Zahid, 2011)

Finally, the two major policy problems inherited from the 1960s and the 1970s — the inelasticity of the tax system and the strong anti-export bias of the trade.

The economic policy performance of the Zia period was much better than that of the Bhutto period. The point, however, is that the long period of political stability and sustained growth under Zia offered opportunities for tackling the difficult underlying structural issues, which were not exploited. For instance, the opportunities for raising national savings and improving the balance of payments offered by the huge worker remittances and rapidly expanding economy were not seized. Instead, the government launched another round of large increases in defense spending and pre-empted an important part of private savings through large-scale non-bank borrowing. The relative roles of state and private sector in development were left to be decided largely on the basis of inertia. Weaknesses of the direct taxation collection machinery, a fundamental cause of continued heavy reliance on indirect taxation, were not addressed even though martial law extended over a period of eight and a half years. The policy-makers did not learn from the mistakes of the 1960s, such as the overemphasis on growth, the neglect of the social sector, and lack of adequate attention to structural change in agriculture and large-scale industry. They were also slow to gain from the experience of East Asian countries where an ‘economic miracle’ had been unfolding. (Hanif, Khan, & Nauman, 2004)

Just as much of the credit for the relatively good short-term economic management must be given to Ghulam Ishaq, a good deal of the responsibility for the missed opportunities in economic policy and neglect of structural issues must rest on him because he was clearly in charge of country’s finances and economic apparatus during 1978-85. Ishaq, a strong and able economic manager, had, however, a public sector bias which dated from his days (1961-5) as the successful chairman of WAPDA in West Pakistan. His mistrust of the private sector was probably a factor in his acceptance of the Bhutto nationalization as fait accompli. Bureaucracy as a whole also quickly came to appreciate the power and the privileges, which an extended public sector afforded it. Zia’s early attempt to involve pro-private sector individuals in decision-making was successfully undercut by Ishaq. Similarly, like many other economic managers in Pakistan, Ishaq was not totally convinced about the advantages of a strategy of labor-intensive manufactured export growth based on imported raw materials. Ishaq did make major efforts after 1978 at re-imposing financial discipline and mobilizing additional resources but was much less successful in improving the efficiency of the tax system.

However, during the Bhutto regime sizeable public investment took place in mega Public Sector Projects. Thus, if during 1974-75 the budget deficit was 10.6% of the GDP, the public sector program was over 10.2% of the GDP. Economic benefits of these heavy investments were largely reaped by the Zia-ul-Haq regime.

Economic growth during the Zia-ul-Haq period was quite impressive, partly attributable to the good performance of agriculture – in no small measure to availability of water and fertilizer - rehabilitation of private sector and the law and order situation. Also, there was no political intervention and economic management was essentially in the hands of experienced bureaucrats. (Janjua, 2005)

5.0 Conclusion

Pakistani’s central and southern part is situated in semi-arid or arid zone respectively. There is a very little or no rain throughout the year and cultivation of crops is purely dependent upon canal irrigation system. Prior to 1969 the canals were dependent on run of the river waters. During the dry months, from March to May and October to December, there was always shortage of irrigation waters in canals, resulting with less area under cultivation. Moreover, the crops were sown late and irrigation water was not available for last watering of crops, badly affecting the crops yield.

In 1969, Mangla Dam (1961-1969) started to provide the additional irrigation waters sufficing the need in the dry months too. Apart from water problems, Mangla Dam also started providing cheap hydro electric power. However, the regime of General Yahya Khan didn’t take advantage of these additional irrigational waters and cheap electricity to introduce land reforms either due to turmoil of 1970 or lack of will and vision in this regard.

The visionary man who took full advantage of above stated additional resources was Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by introducing the 1972 land reforms. Fortunately in 1974, Tarbela Dam (1968-1974) was also completed and had started providing additional irrigational waters and electricity in 1976. Hence another golden opportunity was available for the Government, to introduce another round of land reforms in 1977.

If critically analyzed, both land reforms had no significant impact on crop yields because the land resumed through land reforms, was distributed among the land less tenants who had no resource to bring the undeveloped or barren land under plough. As a result, the total cropped area didn’t increased significantly. Secondly the influential landlords with the help of land revenue officers, managed to transfer their above ceiling lands in name of their own family members, relatives and obedient servants. Interestingly in many cases the land

was transformed in the name of newly born babies and in few cases, to be born babies. . Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto himself failed to implement the land reforms on his own “Jagir” (consisting of hundreds of acres of agricultural land) in Naudero, Larkana. It reflects that the said land reforms were politically motivated, rather than with real sincerity to bring the real green revolution in agriculture.

Contrary to the previous land reforms of 1959, no compensation was given to owners for surrendered lands. All resumed land was to go to the tiller who was not to pay a paisa for it. The land owners surrendered undeveloped or less developed lands whereas the tillers desired to get the land they were already cultivating. This pitted the peasants versus land owners.

Distribution of undeveloped or barani/ rainy lands to landless peasants never yield any fruit until and unless adequate funds/resources are not made available. ZaraiTaraqati Bank (Agricultural Development Bank), established in 1961, was the lone source to obtain agro-based loans. To get an agro loan, the land owner is required to get agro-pass book from Patwari / Tapedar (lowest revenue officer) and then get the loan in shape of cheque in the name of dealer/distributor of fertilizer, pesticide and Tractor. This is uphill task and impossible without payment of handsome amount in the name of commission to the Tapedar/ Patwari. The agro loans are provided on higher interest rates than commercial bank provides to the industrialists, importers and exporters, after pledging his agree land with the bank. Generally, a loan provided by a commercial bank is equivalent to 60% more of assessed value of the property pledged by the industrialists/ traders. Contrary to that (ADBP) Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan provided loans for tractors (costing 8 lacs) by pledging at least 12 acres of land (each acre costing at an average of 12-15 lacs). Hence for an agro loan of less than one million for tractor, a farmer had to pledge agricultural property of around 10-12 millions. Till recent, the ADBP was the only source for providing agro-based loans.

The National Identity Cards (NIC) was introduced in 1973, and Mr. Z. A Bhutto Government liberalized the issuance of Passport to enable the common Pakistanis to work abroad. With the boom in oil prices, common Pakistanis rushed to Middle Eastern countries in 1974 and onwards. They remitted huge amounts to their native places which were ultimately along with other uses, were utilized for development of agricultural sector as well. The remittances fulfilled the gap of shortage of funds in agricultural sector. Besides providing remittance/funds, the returnees also brought back the modern techniques i.e. tunnel farming, drip irrigation and Green house farming techniques which brought a green revolution later on.

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Unfortunately, neither Z.A Bhutto Government nor Zia-ul-Haq regime paid any attention to depleting water reservoir due to accumulating silt in both dams and no dam was constructed during their era. At present Pak agriculture sector is vulnerable because of non-availability of irrigation water and electricity for tube wells.

Although there was no development in agriculture in both eras, administrative changes were stronger in Zia-ul-Haq's tenure as compare to Bhutto's era and Bhutto's era saw a lot of reforms based on agriculture and other developments but the generic hypothesis in this research is accepted that Change of national government during 1971-1989 had no effect on agricultural development.

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