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Integrated Response to COVID-19: A Case of Good Governance in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has shaken the whole world economically, politically, socially and administratively. It has forced the governments globally to reimagine the governance innovatively to deal with the new types of challenges posed by this pandemic. Pakistan was also in crisis initially due to weak governance framework, low cooperation and coordination between different actors and puny institutional capacity. These factors aggravated the situation in terms of disease outbreak and its adverse effects on the livelihood of the people of the country. Far along, Pakistan dealt this pandemic creatively through newly established body in the form of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). NCOC has designed national integrated response for fighting this menace of COVID-19 effectively. It has proved itself a success story over the period of time and a case of effective governance in Pakistan. The effective national integrated response of NCOC towards pandemic has been acknowledged internationally as well. Therefore, it has been studied in this research as a case study through qualitative methodology for exploring its effectiveness and contributions towards overall governance framework and policy arena of Pakistan. The findings of this research show that pragmatic and creative initiatives of NCOC through whole-of-the-government approach at different fronts have made it a successful model in Pakistan and its experiences and lessons can contribute positively in the governance framework and national resilience of the country in the post pandemic world.

Keywords: *Integrated, NCOC, Good Governance, National Resilience, COVID-19, Pakistan*

Introduction

One year has passed to fight against the COVID-19, a contagious, infectious and fast moving virus, which affected 124 million people worldwide and caused 2.72 million deaths (Worldometers, 2021). Each country has devised different strategies to address the challenges posed by this illness, these efforts resulted helping 70.1 million people to recover and restart new life (Nawaz et al., 2020). Still, it is an endangering public health threat and has become the prime focus of the global community to control its spread. It has impacted the socioeconomic, political, cultural, and environmental spheres of the citizens' lives around the world. It has exposed the weaknesses of healthcare systems, preparedness, infrastructure and legislations to respond this medical emergency. The case of Pakistan is not different than the rest of the world, currently there are 633,741 confirmed cases and 13,935

deaths reported (Pakistan, 2021). It is still considered a low magnitude of COVID effects in Pakistan because there were all possibilities of hard-hit by this pandemic due its close geographic proximity to epicenter of COVID-19, China located in the northeast of Pakistan. Other important factor was influx of infected individuals (zairreen) from Iran which had devastating effects on the outbreak and caused high death toll in the country. The public response, another significant factor, was quite an apathy and unconcerned due to the lack of awareness that led to misinformation and rumor mongering that raised fear level among the people and trust deficit on the government increased. The government had multiple challenges too, besides responding to the medical emergency they have to deal with a rigid cleric to tackle religious schism, political pressure groups, sensational media, conspiracy theories, and constitutional limitation for a national response after the 18th amendment. The provincial responses proved counterproductive and revealed some of the cracks in governance; WHO and government took measures on war footing and a National Action Plan for Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) Pakistan was prepared for a national response (Pakistan, 2020). Real challenge was the implementation of this National Action Plan (NAP) which required the creation of well-coordinated structure and multilayer governance after the 18th amendment that rests responsibility on provinces for health care and delivery as devolved service. It was difficult both administratively and politically in the multilayered governance structure of Pakistan. Despite the severe criticism from the opposition, the government worked in concert with the military and establishing a National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) to oversee a national integrated response by adopting whole-of-the-government approach (Christensen & Lægheid, 2007) in the hour of crisis. This paper has analyzed the role of NCOC and explored to what extent this institutional arrangement has responded to control the pandemic.

Statement of Problem

Pandemic has generated a debate not only around the medical issues but also regarding governance and capacities of governments. Governance is essential for the governments across the globe for effective and efficient service delivery. It provides comprehensive and inclusive framework through its multidimensional construct for satisfying the needs of masses. Pakistan is a federation which has different tiers of government, thus, multilayered governance is a feasible solution but governance is ineffective in the country due to many reasons including low coordination and cooperation between the different tiers of government. This problem of coordination and cooperation between federal and provincial governments has been clearly manifested during the recent pandemic (COVID-19). Thus, the federal government has devised a new mechanism in the form of National Command and Operation Center for dealing this emergency situation through the integrated national response. Henceforth, it is required to explore this institutional arrangement of federation of Pakistan and its effectiveness in dealing with the menace of COVID-19 in the country.

Research Questions

- How has government of the country responded to the current pandemic within the multilayered governance structure of Pakistan?
- Has it contributed towards the good governance in Pakistan?

Research Methodology

This research study has followed qualitative methodology. It is a case study which is based on the primary as well as secondary sources of data. The primary data has been collected through semi-structured interviews of different stakeholders of NCOC like government officials working in this institution at the federal and provincial levels, health officials, civil society members and donor agency representatives who are partners of NCOC. Total 15 interviews have been conducted in this regard and purposive sampling has been used for the selection of these interviewees as the participants of this research study. The secondary sources of data have been included published reports on the pandemic, government documents like National Action Plan for Corona Virus disease, government notifications, newspapers and research articles. The content analysis has been used for analyzing the collected data.

Significance

Pakistan is experiencing poor governance since long and there are different causes of bad governance in the country. The lack or poor coordination and cooperation between different layers of government is one of the major and significant reasons in this regard. The provinces are enjoying considerable autonomy after 18th amendment due to which there is multilayered governance in the country but the situation of governance is getting worse day by day. COVID-19 has exhibited the weakness in the governance system of the country evidently. The failure of appropriate response to the infectious illness, devolved system impediments and disintegrated disaster and risk governance have intuited the need for an integrated national response. These deterrents framed Term of References (TORs) and paved way for the formulation of National Command and Operation Center (NCOC). NCOC has provided a common platform to all the stakeholders for consultation and data based decision making in medical emergency crisis. Since its foundation, all efforts and initiatives are considered as a success through its integrated response in terms of controlling the spread of disease as compared to the other countries of the world. The data driven consensus-oriented decision making has set an example of good governance in the country. It has proved itself a successful model in the multilayered governance system of a federation of Pakistan. Therefore, it is essential to study and reconnoiter this model and its institutional arrangement in detail for finding out its strengths and weaknesses along with its relevance as a permanent part for the future governance structure in Pakistan. Furthermore, the lessons and experiences of NCOC can contribute in the overall policy arena and governance framework of the country positively and can improve the policy outcomes and performance of the government of Pakistan as a whole.

Literature Review

Human and societies have been evolved over the period of time politically, socially, economically, culturally, institutionally and administratively. The economic and technological advancements in the lives of humans as well as at the societal levels have increased the intricacies and complexities of the world. Likewise, the problems faced by humans and societies at large are also becoming complex and multifaceted day by day. According to Weber and Rittel, these problems are 'wicked' because these are intricate, complicated and convoluted (Bannink & Trommel, 2019). Consequently, the administrative response mechanisms adopted by the governments

and different institutions have also been evolving with the passage of time for dealing with these ‘wicked’ problems effectively (Berggruen & Gardels, 2013).

Public administration had provided a comprehensive framework to governments for dealing with the problems and issues of the masses of the countries. It facilitated the governments for effective service delivery to general public through state machinery but with the passage of time it had lost its effectiveness and efficiency because of the growing complexities of human problems (Bannink & Trommel, 2019). Therefore, public administration had converted into New Public Management (NPM) and then it had taken the shape of governance for dealing with the modern issues and problems of humans. Governance provides an integrated, comprehensive and multidimensional approach to governments for dealing with the complex and wicked issues of modern human world (Hyden, Hyden, Mease, & Mease, 2004). Governance involves multiple actors, institutions and dimensions for dealing with the issues of the general public and for effective and efficient service delivery to the masses (Hyden, 2001). Stoker and Chhotray (2009) consider governance as the collective decision making of multiple actors or institutions where the relationship between actors and institutions are not dictated by the formal control system. Thus, governance offers integrated mechanism or institutional arrangement based on multiple actors and organizations for dealing with the issues of general public and for effective service delivery to common masses of the country (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009).

Natural disasters, calamities and catastrophes disturb the normal functioning of the societies and communities and disrupt the typical state operations (Ahrens & Rudolph, 2006). These cataclysms test the institutional capacities of the governments to deal with the uncertain and abnormal situations during the time of disaster for protecting the people from the hazards and vulnerabilities. According to Ahrens and Rudolph (2006), these calamities are basically the test of governance structure of the countries and their abilities to deliver in the hour of crisis. The integrated and coordinated institutional arrangement with flexibility which can help to adapt while responding to the changing situations leads towards effective and good governance during the time of disaster (Nowell, Steelman, Velez, & Yang, 2018). Fareed Zakaria’s recent publication “Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World” has reiterated the fact of improving governance because of the world’s changing landscape contextualizing COVID-19 to past, present, and future featuring the political social, technological, and economic consequences in post pandemic world (Zakaria, 2020).

Pakistan is a developing country and it follows the federal parliamentary system. It has weak governance structure due to which there is a poor service delivery in the country (Aftab, Khan, & Ali, 2020). It is a serious matter of concern since long and people of the country are suffering because of the poor governance. There are different reasons of bad governance of Pakistan including weak institutional capacity, low skills and abilities of professionals, low coordination and cooperation between different actors and organizations, mismanagement, miscommunication or low communication and lack of accountability and transparency (Shafiqat, 1999). Pakistan enjoyed strong federation with less provincial autonomy till 2010 but later on 18th amendment has changed the scenario (Aftab et al., 2020). This amendment has ensured significant autonomy to the provinces. It has also legalized the local government system in the country (Niaz, 2010) which has introduced multilayered

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governance system in Pakistan. There are three layers or tiers functioning in Pakistan after 18th amendment including federal, provincial and local. It has devolved multiple subjects to provinces including health and education. Now, it is provincial responsibility in the federation of Pakistan to deliver health services to general public. 18th amendment has brought government machinery closer to the public through the multilayered system of governance (Aftab et al., 2020) but it has not made difference in the quality of service delivery. Furthermore, the issues of integration, cooperation and coordination between different actors and institutions have roused which has affected the governance of the country adversely.

Recent pandemic in the form of COVID-19 has shaken the whole world. It has devastated social, political, and economic effects globally (Dodds et al., 2020). It has tested the governance of the countries specifically in the context of public health. This pandemic has caused serious crisis in the whole world including both developed and developing countries because of its contagiousness and rapid spread across the world. According to WHO, COVID-19 has affected 216 countries politically, economically, socially and administratively (Nawaz et al., 2020). Coronavirus disease has not only affected the health of the people of the world but it has also troubled the globalization in terms of mobility, pluralism and simultaneity (Kanter & Pittinsky, 1995). The social distancing, restricted mobility, lock down, quarantine management are all significant aspects of the controlling mechanism of this pandemic because there was no medicine or treatment of this disease initially (Dodds et al., 2020). These have tested the governance of the countries. Likewise, it was a test of governance of Pakistan because multidimensional decisions were required with the involvement of multiple actors and institutions within the federal system of government for dealing with this menace of COVID-19.

Discussion and Findings

“There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen.”

Vladimir Lenin

Covid-19 is a reflection of above mentioned Lenin’s quote as sudden outbreak caused devastation and exposed shackled structure, systems and societies; compelling the governments for reimagining the governance from the traditional politically managed systems to effective and responsive governance as highlighted by Nicolas Berggruen and Nathan Gardels in their book “Intelligent Governance for 21st Century: A Middle Way between West and East” published in 2012.

Globally, responses were different while dealing with this pandemic. In the case of Italy, the exponential spread of the virus from one province to another was attributed to the decentralization of health and control of police and emergency services by local governments resulting in the fragmented responses. On the other hand, local leaders in New York (USA), Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Kerala (India) have been praised for their pro-activeness whereas the national leaders seemed in denial or delay. The lessons from the Ebola outbreak in West Africa during 2014-16 demonstrated that top-down quarantine was ineffective (Leach, 2020) till the community leaders (village chiefs, women and youth leaders) were involved in the decision making for dealing with the epidemic effectively (Rajadhyaksha, 2020). It also challenged democracies, political acumen and

demanded out of the box solution or an approach responding effectively to the emergency.

First two months after the coronavirus detection in Pakistan were frenzied, contradictory and chaotic at the state and citizens level increasing vulnerability and threat of spread. The political government and civil administration were ill-prepared for this crisis and raised the critical questions on decision-making and capacities of the governance framework of the country (Hussain, 2020). The pandemic COVID-19 spread was wide open in Pakistan due to inadequate health system and disease surveillance in a federal setup under precarious medical emergency situation. This situation demanded federating units and provincial governments to cooperate and provided integrated response for dealing with this pandemic effectually. It was required by the federal and provincial governments to disregard their differences in the prevention of disease outbreaks whereas there were different responses from the different federating units of the country which had aggravated the situation in Pakistan regarding the spread of the pandemic.

The novel coronavirus requires both short and medium term policy responses and strategies based on global practices and the learning from the past experiences. It has been found that the centralized governance positively affects reactive strategies while the healthcare infrastructure and learning from past pandemics positively influence proactive and reactive strategies (Sharma, Borah, & Moses, 2021). Pakistan government's decision for establishing a National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) was need of the hour because existing institutional arrangement at the provincial as well as at the federal level was not prepared, capacitated, and visionary to respond the severity of this pandemic. Consequently, initial failure to respond the pandemic resulted in an institutional arrangement in the form of NCOC with a whole-of-the-government approach with prime objective of *prevention, detention, and response*. The analysts viewed it a national integrated response to the Covid-19 crisis that combines the best features of federalism without the burden of its limitations. It proved a surge of innovation, creativity, and boldness in Pakistani governance (Zaidi, 2020). According to a public health researcher and infectious disease specialist, the government of Pakistan's approach of creating a dedicated and devoted coronavirus response body in the form of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) that serves as nerve center to synergize and articulate unified efforts against COVID-19 and implement the consensus based decisions. During the interviews with the participants of this research, 90% has acknowledged the effectiveness and success of NCOC and expressed that *pandemic jolt is blessing in disguise* that forced government to take punitive action.

Compared with the neighboring country India, the United States of America and much of Europe, Pakistan has done well (Hashim, 2020). There are several factors of this good performance including lockdowns in phased manner, smart and micro-smart lockdowns, intelligent decision making (based on empirical real time data), consensus oriented policy responses and strategies, development of Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs), effective communication strategy, valuing demographic and culture sensitivities, hospital case management and treatment protocols. Interviewees of this research study have acclaimed the contributions of NCOC, however, they showed reservations on the stepping in military leadership in the process. Majority (70%) of the participants has agreed that operational preparedness was not possible without the support of military and stated *as its role*

grew, control and containment increased. Despite hurdles and criticism, the following description asserts the success of NCOC, while Pakistan is going through the *third-wave* of the pandemic. It provides a pandemic management framework for good governance and national resilience.

Structure and Functioning of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC)

NCOC has been formed under an executive order. The structure of NCOC is straight and inclusive. The workflow directed downwards with a clear command and consensus supported by the empirical data. The Integrated Disease Information Management System (IDIMS) has been used for real time data collection, processing and analysis regarding COVID-19. It has helped to store and access the data at one place after collecting from national, provincial and local levels of the country. IDIMS was created in 2015 for fighting with polio virus and then it was adopted for COVID-19 in 2020. It has been proved successful adoption. It has been ensured that the decisions made by NCOC are grounded on the best medical and scientific reasoning based on real time data along with the advises of the experts. Therefore, all stakeholders are part of NCOC such as National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), health ministry, all provincial health departments, interior ministry, other relevant ministries like finance and economic affairs, provincial civil administrations, political leadership and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) which leads the “Track Test Quarantine” (TTQ) process. The track and trace of affected cases by coronavirus has been made possible by the extensive infrastructure of polio vaccination program of Pakistan which consists of more than 265,000 community health workers and vaccinators. They have successfully tracked and traced the cases of pandemic in Pakistan. Additionally, there are multiple committees consisting on experts and executives for suggestions and consultation at large. Thus, the decision making are consensus oriented by all stakeholders due to which these decisions and policy responses of NCOC are accepted and owned by the whole country and implemented effectively by the state machinery. This hybrid governance model has permeated down into the field where local army corps joined with provincial administrations to implement policy decisions efficaciously like enforcing lockdowns and SOPs at public places. Research participants (political leadership and Civil Society Organizations) have showed their concerns over the criticism on the 18th constitutional amendment warranted, however they had the realization that such emergency needed a national response and pandemic might help to consolidate democracy in Pakistan. However, they showed positivity and expectation that *NCOC will serve as a national platform to fight against pandemic and will not mount political tension between federating units and provinces.*

Contributions of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) towards Good Governance in Pakistan

National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has taken different initiatives while dealing with pandemic which have contributed towards the good governance in the country. Few have been discussed below for proving the contribution of NCOC towards the effective governance of Pakistan;

Information Communication Technology

NCOC has adopted revolutionary Information Communication Technology (ICT) and digital media for devising multipurpose policy responses and multipronged strategies for dealing with this prevailing pandemic. ICT and digital media have helped to project positive response and neutralize negative news and hoax. It displays government will and resolve to fight with the pandemic successfully. Digital media and ICT have inculcated civic sense among masses by raising awareness through public service messaging. NCOC has launched different applications like national helpline, whats app chat bot for health care workers, Telehealth portal and developed Information Technology (IT) based national framework named as Resource Management System (RSM) for credible health resources mapping and management. RSM is linked with 4000 Covid and non-Covid hospitals of the country which are synchronized with an application called *Pak Neghayban* that provides real time visibility of hospitals' location and shows color coded status as per availability of the beds and ventilators. Furthermore, Integrated Disease Information Management System (IDIMS) forms the national repository for all Covid related data integrated with provincial systems for real time data exchange between different layers and actors of government. IDIMS supports data analytics for disease projection and identification for smart and micro-smart lockdown decisions. Moreover, large number of educational institutes (275,000) has been registered in Education Institute Monitoring System (EIMS) to report SOPs compliance and disease reporting on daily basis for necessary decision making. ICT and digital communication based initiatives have helped Pakistan to fight with COVID-19 effectively. Different above mentioned platforms are enabler for government of Pakistan to continue its business and disseminate official, trustworthy, and timely information to affected public at large. Online services have helped different segments of society like students, customers, and workers to stay connected to their institutions, offices, and other required services for running the affairs of life. The use of ICT and digital media by NCOC have encouraged and promoted *intelligent* decision making and *e-governance* (Sepehrnia, Alborzi, Kermanshah, Azar, & Sepehrnia, 2020) in the country which can ensure transparency and efficient service delivery in Pakistan.

Spreading out Health Care Facilities

The expansion in the health care facilities of the country is noteworthy that helped to control the rapid spread of disease in the first phase during March-September, 2020. There are different achievements of government in this regard including the construction of 250 beds state of the art Isolation Hospital & Infectious Treatment Center in record time of 40 days. The government has established corona centers in all big cities of the country and enhanced the capacity of patient intake after increasing the capacity of testing. The government has also worked with private sector by turning 1800 three and four start hotels into quarantine centers for COVID-19 patients. Diagnostic network has been integrated into the health care services which is significant for dealing with this pandemic. This diagnostic network is working in coordination with the leading hospitals of the country. Now, the same infrastructure is being used for the vaccine administration in all over Pakistan in addition with a National Immunization Management System (NIMS) which will be operated by NCOC with less human interaction to keep the system transparent. This expansion and improvement in the health services of Pakistan has capacitated the

health sector of the country for the provision of efficient service delivery in the post pandemic world.

Support for Socioeconomic Uplifting

NCOC has assisted the government in uplifting the socioeconomic conditions of the people by sharing timely information in an uncertainty of the duration, magnitude, and impact of pandemic. NCOC has focused on the socioeconomic challenges posed to lives and also emphasized on the fact that a social safety and protection mechanism is essential during such devastating situation. Financial packages designed and launched under Ehsaas Emergency Cash program with the input and involvement of NCOC for pulling about 15 million families out of poverty plight by spending Rs. 203 billion in this regard. NCOC has also provided the platform to negotiate and devise the policy for incentivizing frontline health workers recognizing their efforts in this battle.

Social Mobilization for National Resilience

Civil society is a significant segment of any country. It is an important actor of governance which contributes in ensuring transparency and accountability in the society which leads towards good governance (Roy, 2008). NCOC has engaged civil society organizations in the fight against COVID-19. It is another significant step by NCOC which has increased the outreach of the state apparatus to the affected and unnerved population of the country. Using social mobilization for the compliance of SOPs and dissemination of guidelines in the form of different booklets devised for the guidance of different segments of society. 58 different booklets have been developed in this regard for frontline healthcare workers, practitioners, businesses, travelers, parliamentarians and mother child health etc. This developed material has distributed to the masses at large level with the help of civil society organizations through persuasive communication proved a good strategy. Moreover, involvement and engagement of the civil society and its outreach to masses has promoted trust building and social cohesion which is one of the important aspect of governance (Paquet, 1999). Civil Society Organizations' representatives have responded that social mobilization not only helped to create awareness but also assisted government to increase access for logistics and contact in remote areas to build resilience at national level. They have opined that engagement with civil society organizations is also constructive in terms of building their capacity to manage such level of medical emergencies directly affecting the lives. The participants of this research have suggested that government should expand its network to other regional organizations to ensure nationwide coverage and reliance for dealing with this pandemic effectively.

Coordination, Consensus, and Cohesion (3Cs)

NCOC demonstrates best example of coordination, collaboration, and capacitation of all stakeholders politically as well as administratively. NCOC has never compromised on the provincial autonomy and kept it intact which is a significant feature of a federation. It has given the federating units' free hand to implement the decisions made according to their own local conditions. Furthermore, NCOC adheres the principles of effective governance through stewardship, balancing civil-military relations, promoting ethical and responsible decision making based on consensus of all stakeholders through its platform. It encourages enhanced

performance by health workers and other stakeholders and ensures transparency and accountability. It has developed knowledge-sharing mechanism for multipronged strategies and policy responses. Systems' strengthening (through ICT, digitization and intelligent decision making) is another step to stop corruption and misappropriation. According to UNODC, globally 10% to 25 percent of all funds spent on procurement is lost to corruption while chances of misappropriation increase (International, 2020). Donor representatives during the interviews have showed their satisfaction and trust on the functioning of NCOC as they have good experience to plan critical resources and targeted interventions to manage this crisis. According to them *it is one-stop shop for efficient management of financial and technical resource mobilization and assistance*. NCOC and health departments with the assistance of USAID have automated and upgraded all systems included Pakistan Integrated Regulatory Information Management System, LMIS for vaccine and TB drugs, digitized DRAP record, LMIS for PPE, Travelers' Surveillance Management Information System (MIS), PPE calculator and COVID-19 Training MIS. These steps show the system's strength in terms of integration, appropriation and transparency which leads towards good governance.

Evolving Public Health Diplomacy

The pandemic has entailed a significant deliberation and reconsideration of approaches in international relations because it has shaken up old structures and necessitated change and innovation. NCOC has extended its support to Ministry for Foreign Affairs to focus on health diplomacy to minimize the tension around trade and transport of medicines, diagnostic tests and hospital equipment for coronavirus disease. It helped establishing a Crisis Management Unit in the ministry, issuance of guidelines for travelers and operational SOPs for international inbound passenger flights, and briefings to ambassadors posted in Pakistan. This new shift from traditional diplomacy to public health diplomacy is pragmatic and supportive for bilateral and multilateral relationships. Moreover, it shows integrated response in the hour of crisis and sets an example for future governance framework of the country.

Conclusion

The pandemic is not over yet, it has posed numerous challenges and will stay across the globe unless medical science does miracles in near future. However, two factors have generally been identified as particularly significant for how competently countries have managed this challenge. The first and obvious one is *effective governance* and the second is *national resilience* (Lodhi, 2020).

This pandemic has tested the governance capacities of the governments across the world. Multiple governments have failed while dealing with this menace effectively and their governance frameworks have exhausted during the fight with COVID-19. Pakistan is also one of the affected countries of the world but interestingly, its performance is satisfactory in the control and prevention of the disease. Pakistan has not only controlled the outbreak of the disease at the mass level but it has also dealt it effectively at the fronts of economy, politics, administration and health governance. The initial response of the government was unsatisfactory as there was chaos and confusion at different levels of government. There were different responses towards the control and prevention of pandemic by different federating units which exhibited the weak governance structure and institutional arrangement

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of the country that is a longstanding concern. Later on, Pakistan has learnt and developed a platform of NCOC through an executive order for integrated response towards pandemic. This body does not have constitutional cover as it is a temporary arrangement in the hour of health emergency but it has proved itself a successful model in terms of good governance. It has developed and adopted the robust multidimensional policy towards COVID-19. Pakistan has turned this challenge into a prospect by assessing and building the capacity to foster readiness and implementation of strategic plans. NCOC has contributed successfully towards the effective governance by revamping of existing mechanisms and institutional arrangements to strengthen the frontlines of health-care system of Pakistan. Customized decision making based on local conditions and empirical data has been adopted. NCOC has developed national responsive systems of mapping at-risk populations and reduced their vulnerability through the access of essential services. According to Bill Gates (2020), “One would to admit that Pakistan achieved this success thanks to its excellent expertise.” NCOC has provided an efficacious governance institutional arrangement within the federal parliamentary system of Pakistan without compromising on the provincial autonomy of the federating units. The experiences of this body can guide the future policy process and governance framework of the country for ensuring efficient and effective public service delivery and for achieving good governance in Pakistan.

Lessons Learnt

International scholarship has acknowledged this fact that decisive, quick and collective action can help in the effective control of the spread of pandemic (Dr Sabine L. van Elsland, 2020). NCOC is working on this principal since its establishment and has proved itself a success story which is acknowledged internationally. There are different lessons which can be learnt through the integrated response of NCOC while fighting with COVID-19. These lessons can contribute towards the future intelligent decision making and governing framework of the country positively. Following are few learnt lessons from NCOC;

- Strong political leadership, early concerted response and whole-of-the-government approach are needed to deal all types of crisis of the country.
- Public engagement is essential and critical to contain pandemic as well as for successful policy development and implementation in post pandemic world.
- Guided and responsible role of digital and social media is the key to disseminate true and appropriate information and also for trust building and social cohesion.
- Global guidance and experience translated in to local context proved effective to control the spread and misery of the people in general.
- ICT and digitization is required to adopt and implement at mass level in public sector for ensuring transparent, efficient and effective service delivery to the masses.

Integration and cooperation of all actors are key to success in achieving good governance in the country.

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