



## RESEARCH PAPER

### NCOC-An Emblem of Effective Governance: An analysis of Pakistan's Counter Strategy for Covid-19 as a Non-Traditional Security Challenge

Dr. Iram Khalid

Chairperson, Department of Political Science, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Received:</b> October 29, 2021</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> December 29, 2021</p> <p><b>Online:</b> December 31, 2021</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> COVID-19 Decision Making Theory, Governance, Nontraditional threats, Strategy</p> <p><b>*Corresponding Author:</b>  iramkrc.polsc@pu.edu.pk</p>	<p>COVID -19 affected the world unprecedentedly. Lack of capacity and poor standards of <i>governance</i> caused nontraditional security challenges to Pakistan too. The NCOC is the central nerve center to guide the national response to COVID-19 by Pakistan and can be best analyzed in the light of the decision-making theory of Naturalist Decision Making (NDM). The study points out the effective role performed by NCOC at policy formation through a more prosaic combination of science, data, decision making and execution of decisions at the level of federalism. The study highlights the changing patterns of government's approach during the pandemic at various levels. Pakistan faced economic, political and social crisis during this phase. This study uses a survey and key informant interviews as the source of analysis for qualitative data collection. By applying the decision- making theory, the paper extends that there is a need to use a model to balance the existing gap within the system, to meet challenges. The study suggests a coordinating approach among various units and center; that might raise the level of performance to meet the nontraditional security challenges with innovation, creativity and boldness.</p>

## Introduction

COVID-19 has had unprecedented impacts on humanity. A more effective response to save the economy and human lives at the same time with direct and indirect possible measures to provide outcomes for alternative plans of actions remained the rational policy making amid the pandemic. During the first phase of pandemic, in March and April 2019, Pakistan's response was based on contradiction and confused decision making like many other states. In the absence of coherence decisions, Pakistan faced a surge in infections and fatalities. In April, the National Command and Operations Centre (NCOC) was formed. The rationale was to deal with pandemics with a holistic approach. In difficult times, when social, economic repercussions, governance matters more than ever. Governance is the channel to build new normal everywhere. From immediate response to manage long term implications of this nontraditional security challenge at global, regional and state level.

With this backdrop, the study aims to

- Evaluate Pakistan's strategy amid COVID-19 to manage political, economic and social challenges.
- Explore the patterns of change required in the structure and functioning of Pakistan's system to have a sensible strategy to meet challenges.
- Analyzing the existing policies to provide a workable solution by opting a holistic approach to political, economic and social challenges.

## **Analyzing NCOC in context of Decision-Making Theory**

Naturalistic Decision Making Theory (NDM) suggests that decisions are made on the experimental model which makes use of former experience and control appraisal through which decisions made by leaders and experts facilitate quick process of decision making. As stated in the section of Literature Review, even after the passing of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, governance in Pakistan did not improve. And since we are referring to Governance in terms of collective decision-making, in NCOC, many actors providing for an integrative system which addressed concerns of the citizen through quick practice of decision-making became involved. It became a nerve center projecting unified efforts and implementation of decisions playing a central role for devolution of powers bringing in specialists which guided leadership. These have included stakeholders which include NDMA, PDMA, ministry of health, health departments of the provinces, Ministry of Interior and other ministers of economic and financial affairs, civil administration from the provinces, political leadership and the ISI which heads the process of testing and tracing. Furthermore, it has paved the way for Pakistan to improve efficiency when it comes to the subject of consolidating executive and legislative process of decision making and implementation providing immediate action under extraordinary conditions, in this case the pandemic of Covid-19.

### **Literature Review**

In the 21st century, the evolution of the security paradigm shifted focus from traditional security issues to non-traditional security threats (NTS). In the non-traditional area, COVID-19 clearly entrenched itself as the single largest security disruptor of this century. It demanded a re-calibration of States' securitization frameworks, governance processes, and diplomatic maneuverings. In dealing with the virus, South Asia initially took a path that is loaded with flaws. This raised important considerations about COVID-19's distinctiveness as an atypical security entity (Saha & Chakrabarti, 2021). Owing to the conceptual difficulties surrounding the crisis, determining the state's policy framework was initially quite challenging. Every country's initial response to the COVID-19 was essentially dictated by past experience, pre-existing intellectual perspectives, and attitudes of the government's key administrative and law-enforcing organizations. Asian experience and tight application of regulations such as mandatory lockdowns, quarantine, physical (or social) distancing, proactive testing, and tracing methods were successful in mitigating the pandemic's social and economic effects. As a result, the effectiveness of these policies' execution became a significant criterion for evaluating and comparing them (You, 2020).

- Since partition, Pakistan has been dealing with issues of governance which can be attributed to a number of factors. In 2019, the emergence of the pandemic further added a strain to the country's governing system. Failure to respond appropriately

to disease, fragmented system barriers, and disintegrated disaster and risk governance highlighted the necessity for a coordinated national response.

- Hyden and colleagues (2004) defined governance as "an integrated, comprehensive, and multidimensional approach of governments for dealing with the complicated and wicked concerns of the modern human world." For dealing with public concerns and providing effective and efficient service delivery to the populace, governance requires numerous players, institutions, and dimensions (Hyden, 2002). Governance, according to Stoker and Chhotray (2009), is the collective decision-making by numerous actors or entities wherein the connection between these actors and entities is not governed by a formal control mechanism. So, governance provides an integrated system based on several bodies for dealing with public concerns and providing effective service delivery to the citizens. Natural calamities, catastrophes, and crises interrupt society's order, as well as the functioning of government (Ahrens & Rudolph, 2006). These cataclysms put states' institutional capacity to the test in dealing with unknown and unpredictable events during disasters in order to safeguard masses from vulnerabilities.
- According to Ahrens and Rudolph (2006), natural disasters are essentially a test of a country's governance structure and its ability to deliver in a time of crisis. During times of crisis, an organized and collaborative institutional framework with properties like flexibility and adaptability contributes to successful and effective governance (Nowell, Steelman, Velez, & Yang, 2018). Fareed Zakaria's recent book "Ten Lessons for a Post-Pandemic World" reaffirms the importance of better governance in light of the world's evolving picture, contextualizing COVID-19 to the past, present, and future, as well as the political, economic, technical, and social consequences in the post-pandemic era (Zakaria, 2020). Pakistan is a developing economy with a federal parliamentary system of government. It has an inadequate governance system, as a result of which the country's service delivery is weak (Aftab et al., 2020).
- Corona outbreak jolted the entire planet leaving devastating political, social, and economic consequences (Dodds et al., 2020). As per WHO, COVID-19 has impacted 216 countries politically, economically, socially, and administratively (Nawaz et al., 2020). The pandemic not only impacted individuals' health but also hampered globalization worldwide by restricting mobility etc. Because there was no medicine or therapy for the illness at the start, social distancing, restricted movement, lockdown, and quarantine management were all important parts of the pandemic's control mechanism (Dodds et al., 2020). This, just like all the governments worldwide, was a huge challenge for the Pakistani administration because coping with and managing corona demanded numerous multidimensional decisions.

- The first two months following the coronavirus's outburst in Pakistan were frantic, ambiguous, and chaotic at the government and public level, heightening susceptibility and the risk of spread. The political government and the civil administration were unprepared for this disaster, which generated serious concerns about decision-making and the state's governance framework's capacity (Hussain, 2020). Due to a weak healthcare system and disease monitoring under a federal system in a hazardous medical emergency, the virus rapidly spread in Pakistan. This circumstance required federating units and provincial governments to work together and create an integrated strategy to effectively combat the epidemic. The provincial and federal governments were needed to put aside their conflicts to fight the pandemic.

The "National Action Plan for Preparedness and Response to Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) Pakistan", presented by the "Ministry of National Health, Services, Regulation and Coordination" on February 12, 2020, was the first sign of the Federal government's analytic competence. The NAP emphasized fast and adequate answers to the epidemic, prioritizing economic resources and increasing domestic & global investment in trying to deal with the crisis, and 'strengthening inter-sectoral collaboration' between the private sector, civil sector, and government for the smooth completion of the emergency response plan. The GOP then established a "National Command and Control Centre" (NCOC) to facilitate effective coordination between the provincial and federal governments. The prime minister headed the national coordination group, which included relevant federal ministers, chief ministers, and health departments from all provinces (Siddiqi, 2021).

NCOC was established by executive order with a clear and inclusive framework. With a precise command and consensus supported by factual evidence, its process was directed downwards. NCOC used cutting-edge "information and communication technology" (ICT) and digital media to develop multifunctional policy solutions and multipronged strategies to combat the epidemic. Through digital media and ICT, positive responses were projected, while bad news and hoaxes were neutralized. NCOC's use of ICT and digital media facilitated and fostered informed decisions and e-governance in Pakistan (Sepehrnia et al., 2020), ensuring transparency and effective service delivery. NCOC established some core guidelines. First, the importance of reliable data and the role of technology in better understanding and drawing conclusions from it. Second, clear and effective public message and behavioral change communications are critical. Third, to achieve predictability and consistency in the national response, there is a requirement for clear and cohesive governance (Zaidi, 2020).

NCOC chose to discourage the full lockdown strategy and preferred a "smart lockdown," which limited quarantine to only those domestic sectors/suburbs and "streets within the suburbs" where the outbreak had been reported. The federal government's ability to revise policies in order to make them more sustainable also shows that it has good

analytical skills (Siddiqi, 2021). As existing institutional arrangements at the state and provincial levels were not equipped, capacitated, or innovative enough to deal with the intensity of this epidemic, the Pakistan government's decision to build a "National Command and Operation Center" (NCOC) was vital. As a result of the immediate failure to respond initially, an institutional arrangement formed in the shape of NCOC took a whole-of-government approach with the primary goal of "prevention, detention, and response". The analysts saw it as a nationally integrated approach to the Covid-19 dilemma, combining the finest aspects of federalism without limitations. It demonstrated a boom in Pakistani government innovation, originality, and bravery (Zaidi, 2020). As per a public health researcher and infectious disease specialist, Pakistan's strategy of establishing a devoted COVID-19 response body in the form of the NCOC acts as the nerve center to integrate and articulate cohesive efforts against the pandemic and enforce consensus-based steps is a good one. Ahmad and Ashraf (2021) conducted interviews in their study and found that 90% of study participants consider the NCOC to be effective, and stated that the pandemic jolt was a blessing in disguise because it compelled the government to take disciplinary action. Moreover, the success of NCOC lies in the fact that in comparison to India, the USA, and much of Europe, Pakistan is believed to have done a great job in combating the virus. (Hashim, 2020)

- In short, NCOC gave all stakeholders a common platform for discussion and data-driven strategic planning against the pandemic. Since its establishment, all initiatives and efforts have been deemed a success owing to its integrated response in terms of disease control in comparison with other states. Pakistan's data-driven, consensus-based decision-making through NCOC has established a precedent of excellent governance. It has not only proven to be a viable model for a multilayered governing structure in the federation of Pakistan (Ahmad & Ashraf, 2021) but is deemed as a COVID-19 miracle for the country (Zaidi, 2020).

### **Discussion and Findings**

NCOC formed under an executive order to counter this nontraditional security threat. The structure and function of NCOC is 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 proven 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 advice 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 corona virus has been made possible by the extensive infrastructure of the 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 of experts and executives for suggestions and consultation at large. Thus, the decision making is 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 efficiently like enforcing lockdowns and SOPs at public places. Research participants (political leadership and Civil Society Organizations) have shown their concerns over the criticism on the 18th constitutional amendment warranted, however they had the realization that such an 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. To evaluate the performance, a survey conducted. Some important findings are.

**Gender of the Respondents:**

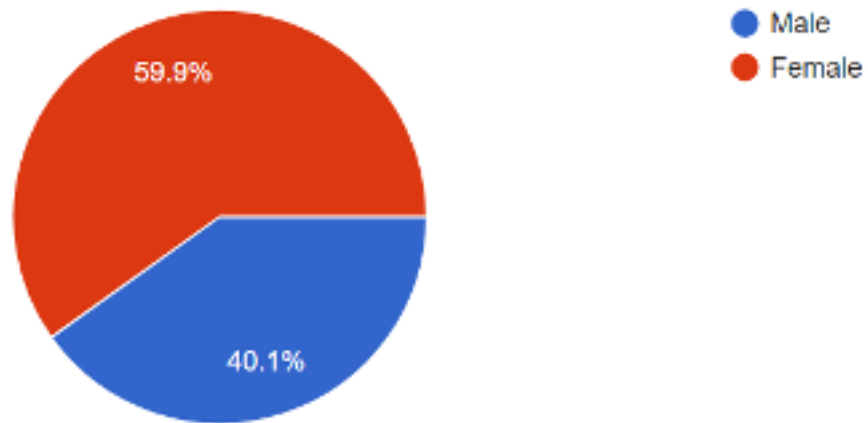


Figure1;To check participation on Gender Basis

To evaluate properly, both the male and female were concentrated. It is important that both the components of society showed interest to response.

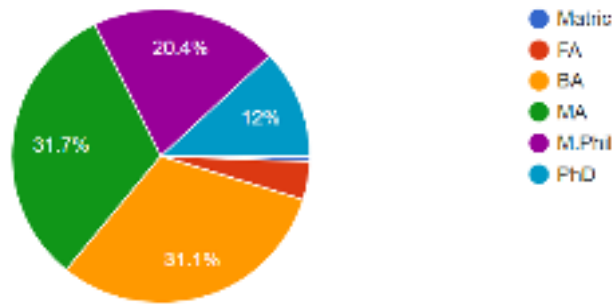


Figure 2; Qualification of the Respondents

As the issue is of great importance, hence, the educated class is mainly focused. Matric is the basic education which is taken as standard to fill the form.

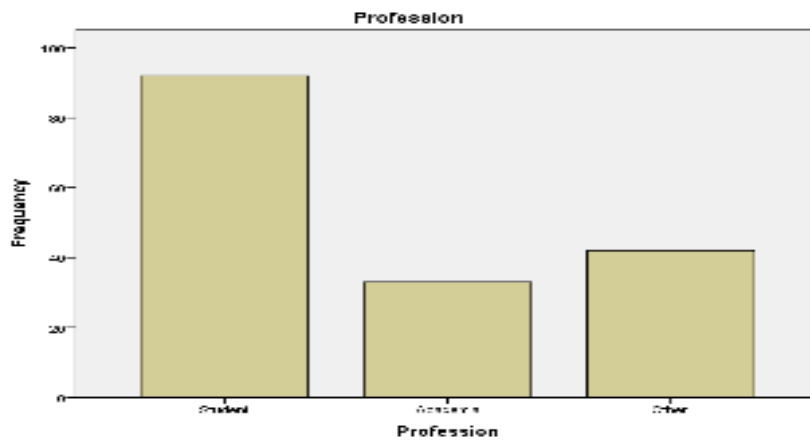


Table 1

Profession	Frequency	Percent
Student	92	55.1
Academia	33	19.8
Other	42	25.1
Total	167	100.0

COVID impacted many sectors. But the educated professionals, they faced a grave challenge to meet new demands of use of technology, on line classes, evaluation system, and mainly to handle the youth without direct modes of learning. This changed scenario is a sensitive matter related to future generation values and norms. Everyone is ready to respond the questions and commented on performance of NCOC.

Respondent were asked about the nature of issue of COVID. Majority is simply agreed as COVID is nontraditional security challenge to Pakistan. Majority has the consensus over the efficient role of NCOC too.

**Table 2**  
**COVID-19 as Non Traditional Security Challenge**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Covid-19 is a non-traditional security challenge to Pakistan	4.3473	.67599
NCOC is an effective model of Governance	3.9341	.74557
Pakistan faced swear economic challenges during Covid-19	4.5689	.62555
Pakistan faced political challenges during Covid-19	3.7725	1.02191
Pakistan faced strategic challenges during Covid-19	3.9521	.84887

**Table 3**  
**Future perception Regarding NCOC**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Pakistan should opt NCOC like model to handle economic challenges	3.9042	.98319
Pakistan can opt NCOC model to manage strategic challenges	3.5509	1.07915
Pakistan can opt NCOC to manage political challenges	3.2814	1.19681
If Pakistan may introduce reforms in structure then challenges can be managed	4.2485	.85829
if Pakistan may introduce reforms in functioning of system then challenges can be managed	4.2994	.78014
Pakistan's problem solving lies in proper planning	4.5150	.79043

This portion has a very interesting picture. Federal Minister Mr Asad Umer in his interview with the researcher commented “the purpose of NCOC is to meet the challenge, not to draw policies for long term challenges. But the majority of respondents believe that such kind of administrative measures can set examples for other existing challenges too.



**Table 4  
NCOC Decisions**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
NCOC imposed Lockdown was effective	4.2635	.93913
NCOC imposed smart lockdown remained successful	4.0599	1.10148
NCOC remained successful in maintaining situation in Pakistan effectively	4.0719	.84003
NCOC introduced new standards of decision making in Pakistan more effectively	4.0000	.91177
NCOC proved itself a more productive example for governance in Pakistan	3.9042	1.05986

When the survey focused on the relevance of proper in time decisions and their execution for the betterment, the majority again showed trust.

Pakistan, during COVID-19 and in its aftermath, has endured significantly in developing a decisive plan of action for future pandemics and contemporary human security challenges including disease prevention and social security. NCOC as a platform and as an institution has provided a blueprint for ascertaining the cost-benefit analysis over the centralization-decentralization debate in decision making with respect to nontraditional security challenges. It has also allowed Pakistan to scrutinize its efficiency as a forum for combining legislative and executive decision making processes in their implementation yardsticks. NCOC also serves as a litmus test for separating regular course of government action and extraordinary circumstances demanding immediate affirmative action on prevalent concerns. Pakistan endured a complex debate during the first part of COVID-19 where provincial responsibilities and role of federal government in dictating or assisting capacity came under question. With NCOC being an additional institution in government infrastructure of Pakistan, the idea that centrality versus decentralization debate slowed down governance responses in the first wave magnified the impact of the pandemic. This magnification, coupled with a disconnection between federal and provincial government due to absence of local government platforms, allowed NCOC to prove its relevance as a short-term to medium-term response policy forum

1-NCOC has provided a potent platform for executive-legislative synchronization which has been a principal caveat in nontraditional security challenges concerning human security in Pakistan. Pakistan’s governance structure is currently transitioning between centralization and a dominant role of federal government and adjustments with provincial governments debate incorporated through 18<sup>th</sup> amendment. With incorporation of the NCOC, executive and legislative inertia caused by a vexatious bureaucratic process was detoured from. Initially, such a centralized system of response mechanism was not

effectively received but by incorporating a wide array of stakeholders as contributors to NCOC's *modus operandi*, a flexibility was achieved that allowed both the option to subscribe to NCOC's plan of action or adopt a standalone working preference by stakeholders themselves. NCOC as a consultation forum does not interfere in federal-province relationships insofar as their constitution mandate is concerned. It does, however, provide a sufficient discourse opportunity to decide where each government (federal or provincial) reserves the right to communicate and implement an effective response mechanism. This creates an enabling environment for stakeholders to extend their area of operability during nontraditional security challenges (pandemics etc.) by extending their outreach through consultation with other stakeholders. Without engaging in the center-province debate and without infringing upon constitutional mandate of governance, NCOC has been able to diversify its response mechanism in COVID as a litmus test in reducing bureaucratic process by minimizing executive-versus-legislature operability. This policy-to-practice approach under a singular platform does create centralization of governance but being a byproduct of extraordinary circumstances, NCOC reserved its position as a significant stakeholder. This not only reduced friction among principal stakeholders operating in a pandemic environment but it also created layers of responses and rehabilitation through effective sustenance of requisite resources in high-density pandemic zones. NCOC provided an effective micromanagement resource structure for addressing pandemics and created a proactive response mechanism.

2. A major challenge in the pandemic was interpretation of global guidelines and WHO response mechanisms at national level. A major challenge in that was how each stakeholder would interpret its rights and responsibilities regarding COVID-19 mitigation. Governance mechanisms and their interpretation of guidelines for pandemic prevention and disaster mitigation was an essential link in how states were able to manage their situation within and beyond their domestic impact of COVID-19. NCOC in this interpretability of standard guidelines developed for COVID-19, created a conference forum for all stakeholders to provide their interpretations to the guidelines and developing situations regarding global requisites to mitigating COVID-19. It also provided a domestic to international approach in scrutinizing any interpretative discrepancies to responding to developing situations, emerging research on COVID-19, cooperative arrangements with international organizations and state partners and assistance programs with stakeholders. NCOC created a liminal space where a forum was provided for simultaneous discourse between provincial and federal stakeholders, healthcare organizations and ministerial representatives, various on-ground organizations and government decision makers and emergency distribution of funds and resources required for mitigation. Nontraditional security challenges to human security aspects, as evident from COVID, required a singular interpretation of policy

guidelines and global requirements not to create a uniform response strategy but to create a comprehensive clarity by engaging a large array of stakeholders. By inducting a single organization catering to this need, NCOC served the need of creating singularity of interpretation with specific requirements to be addressed individually once a national response mechanism was determined. A major impediment in Pakistan during the initial phase of COVID-19 was that federal government, provincial governments and private-sector response/mitigation systems were acting in a desynchronized manner, creating discrepancies causing a spike in COVID-19 cases. NCOC not only provided a comprehensive set of domestic guidelines for implementation but also created a synchronized interpretability of international/global requirements/guidelines for mitigation.

3. For Pakistan during COVID-19 there was a deficiency of domestic outreach for institutions and organizations dealing with mitigation of the pandemic. Provinces had discrepancies in approaching pandemic mitigation due to availability of medical facilities, condition of infrastructure at both urban and rural levels, situation in inaccessible regions and communicability of guidelines to all governing bodies involved. There was also a major challenge of communicating operability of mitigating strategies to all enforcement agencies involved which needed a centralized system of administration, monitoring and management of pandemic prevention. For Pakistan, a major issue was creating vaccine equity at national level and creating a flexible resource system for distribution to major disease epicenters and vulnerable regions. The major challenge was to manage financial activity in Pakistan to reduce economic shocks, smart lockdowns and SOP implementation to decrease disease intensity and political synchronization to create buoyancy for policies created for human security. Though micromanagement of pandemic was challenged by non-availability of local government systems in Pakistan, NCOC created margins for such discourse without burdening existing systems of administration. By combining stakeholders and response resources into NCOC, Pakistan was able to recover from the onslaught in the first wave by reducing the impact of subsequent waves. This was achieved by creating fluidity in social, economic, political and administrative functions of governance by multitasking through a combined feedback process of stakeholders that are decision makers in the NCOC framework. NCOC was then able to separate nontraditional and traditional response mechanisms against requisite threat perceptions caused by COVID-19 and was able to divide resources and attention accordingly. A major target was separating short term mitigation strategies from medium term and long term strategies by dedicating resources in such consonance. For NCOC, the ability to steer mass inoculation with maintenance of social distancing, pandemic research progress with healthcare performance and maintenance of social security with economic national financial activity were key targets to achieve synchronization.

Before NCOC was instituted, these factors were major sources of contention between provincial, federal and local governance frameworks. A major challenge of achieving this target was creating an institution that provided all organizations and institutions an opportunity to submit their progress and their challenges during pandemic. For nontraditional security challenges to human security, creating a system of accountability and a pool for prospective investments is an effective means to mitigate exacerbation of the status quo. 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 with 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 Integrated Response to COVID-19: A Case of Good Governance in Pakistan 163 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 a health emergency but it has proved itself a successful model in terms of good governance. It has developed and adopted a 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 effective governance by revamping existing mechanisms and institutional arrangements to strengthen the frontlines of the 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 have 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.

### **COVID 19 and NCOC Performance- An Analysis**

There is no doubt in determining that COVID 19 pandemic has set an exclusive standard to gauge the global health management sector. Each state has strived to deal with the disastrous situation according to the readiness of its crisis management and governance skills. Hence the graphs of efficiency and effectiveness of the risk management sector and standards of governance are varied in nature around the globe. Amid the euphoria of criticism, public demands and governance deficiencies, there is one established phenomenon that everywhere in the world some sort of health risk management model is at work. This research project has also strived to gauge the health management model of Pakistan during pandemic, the NCOC.

An exhaustive work is presented in the paper which sheds light on the detailed pros and cons of the entire model. In order to wrap-up the entire argument it is pertinent to describe that the level of Governance can be measured by two elements i.e. effectiveness and efficiency. If these elements are applied to measure the performance of NCOC, there comes to light a detailed pattern of ups and downs in the performance of this model. There is no doubt that NCOC has issued clear and efficient policy lines and the decision making process has been timely and sufficient. The success of policies is generally estimated by their effective execution. That is why when the effectiveness of NCOC is taken into account, there emerge several discrepancies. Some of these discrepancies are related to the infrastructure and facilities and some are related to the non-consensus or disinterest of the stakeholders. All these inconsistencies on the implementation side have cast a compound effect on the success of this Model.

COVID 19 has occurred as the severe non-traditional threat to the entire humanity which has not only posed a valid threat to human life indiscriminately but also has shaken the world economic and manpower. Amid this global calamity, governance has come under the most critical lens as facilities and services were urgently required to each citizen simultaneously without any delay. Under these circumstances, whether developing or developed, each country has to devise plans and execute them to the best of their capacity. NCOC in this perspective was not an exception but considering the infrastructure, economic conditions, mass cooperation and coordination scenario, this model has served fairly well.

Looking up to the future in the condition where the danger of more pandemic and epidemics, natural calamities and environmental hazards is lurking large, several editions

are required to be made in the present NCOC Model. During the pandemic of COVID 19, the element of threat to life and fear of immediate loss was so valid that it naturally called for quick compliance to the government directives. Public compliance made the first phase of countering the pandemic rather effective. Government was consequently able to propel the plan even further in the upcoming waves of the pandemic.

As the world is now going through the implications of the deadly pandemic, there is a need to apply an equally efficient model of economic rehabilitation of the nations. It has been noticed that alongside successes there have been noticed flaws in the NCOC model, especially on the executional and implementation side. Secondly this model was adopted as a short term disaster management strategy. Economic rehabilitation and development, on the other hand, is a huge task which requires long-term planning and implementation mechanisms. In this scenario, first it is necessary to understand and to convey that each occurrence either through environment or natural calamity is an indiscriminate threat to humanity. Hence it must be dealt with as a non-traditional security challenge. Secondly the plans and policies devised to deal with such no-traditional threats must be over and above petty politics. Policy formation, implementation and awareness campaign must be done on national and state level with the involvement and support of all stakeholders. Lastly there comes the quantitative side of the executional plan which includes data collection, communication, infrastructure, bureaucratic coordination and resources. These sectors cannot be put to task without prior preparation. Keeping in view the net performance of the NCOC model, it is required to work more on the practical and quantitative side of the model and make it a more effective and multi-dimensional mechanism which could be applied to many urgent and emergency occurrences and incidents equally. Unless the issues of non-traditional security threats are well recognized, there cannot be developed or modified models to counter such urgent and risky situations. Pakistan, in its limited capacity has developed the NCOC model to counter emergency situations. Now it is required to modify and develop the same Model and work on the gaps and flaws of the Model and further implement it on the economic rehabilitation of the nation and manpower management of the country. COVID 19 Pandemic and other issues of non-traditional security threats emanating from disease, natural disasters and environmental issues require permanent set up to deal and counter risk situations with national consensus and efficient executional preparation like that of the Traditional security threats.

### **Implications of NCOC's Counter Pandemic Strategies**

Implications are the part and parcel of every plan or strategy. Each coherent and well planned strategy serves as a precursor for another. The case study of NCOC not only investigates its strengths, weaknesses and gaps but also there is a well justified part of discussion on the implications of these pandemic and counter strategies on the social fabric, economic development and political discourse of the country.

NCOC has taken up its task and shown speedy actions and quick decision making. Consequences of this quick and effective mechanism have made their mark. In the same place the transitional phase from pandemic to 'new normal' is casting its deep shadows over the social, economic and political fronts. Each aspect has its distinct complications yet they intersect each other in an intricate manner. From social psychology till national economy to general politics, each sector is facing hardship that asks for some logical relief. In the early phase of the pandemic the entire cycle of normal life was put on halt. Although a barrier was created against the spread of virus, it has seriously hampered the tempo and momentum of the economic activities. Many people who used to work on daily wages or were engaged in small business like shop-keepers and vendors have to face severe brunt. As the lockdown went long and strict, the production, distribution and selling of the industrial products also saw a decline. The entire chain of production from raw material to production and from marketing to transportation seriously disturbed and ultimately it resulted in the multi-layered unemployment at all levels.

As economy is the basic column of sustainable socio-political process, there has been visible dismay on these aspects as well. As all the businesses, jobs and educational activities were halted; there emerged a prevailing sense of disappointment in the society. A certain sense of progress and activity keeps things propelling towards a certain direction. That direction makes nations to cover certain milestones. Although NCOC has tried its best to save the nation from bigger disasters, now the declining socio-economic and socio-political conditions are haunting the nation.

Many nations' counter-pandemic strategies have suffered challenges and counter-productive socio-economic conditions. Pakistan is not an exception in this case. Here it would not be pointless to mention that NCOC now has sufficient data and mechanisms to initiate some rehabilitation policies to help people adjust to the new normal. Although people's level of compliance would not be as efficient as that during the peak times of COVID but there are high chances to create some level of communication network.

Economic devastation, political challenges and social dissatisfaction are general corollaries of pandemic around the globe but amid this dismal situation the level of efficiency and effectiveness of each nation is different and diverse. Pakistan is also in need to pull-up its masses from the ditches of disappointment. As the pandemic halted the chain of communication in the economic cycle, it is now required to be facilitated. All official and academic activities were stopped at one moment; it is now much needed to teach citizens how to carry on with life with precautions in the new normal mode of life.

This would certainly be the second aspect of NCOC to initiate the socio-economic and socio-political coordination programs. The media has helped NCOC previously at all

levels of execution of the policy. Likewise, media must be utilized in order to bridge the gaps and rifts left by the COVID pandemic.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Crisis situations set the criteria to gauge the efficiency and effectiveness of any type of governance. Usually governments pass through the crisis times by emergency policies and plans of actions but the post emergency phase becomes a real tough time to make-up for the losses and rebuilding process. The cycle of development once disrupted by any calamity, war or health emergency like pandemic or epidemic, becomes difficult to catch up with the previous ratio. Here comes the phase when all-encompassing and comprehensive policies and plans are required to offer a complete pattern of rehabilitation in all aspects of life. NCOC is facing the same challenge at the moment and such a comprehensive policy and executional plan is awaited by this body which could provide long term and short-term remedies to bring all social segments to a stable and normal condition.

### **Process of Losses Assessment of the Middle Class**

There is no denial of the significance of a strong upper class, fully engaged in the socio-economic process of the country but the creation of a stable and wide-range Middle class is a challenge for each government. Middle class has a vital role in the emergence of a solid basis of a balanced and progressive society. From 'Rank and File' to the 'Upper Bureaucratic' working class comes from this class. Small business class and entrepreneurs also belong to the Middle Class. Once this class suffers from the financial crunch, the socio-economic and socio-political balance of the society is completely disrupted. Pakistan has been suffering from a developmental crisis even in the pre-pandemic phase, the post-pandemic conditions have seriously added to the already traumatic economic scenario. Consequently, there are rather unrealistic mass expectations associated with the NCOC to come up with a comprehensive plan of overall socio-economic rehabilitation. Keeping in view the performance, adoptability and working of NCOC during the pandemic as a successful model and joint venture of federal/provincial coordination and cooperation, the study recommends following necessary steps to be taken and adopted as a permanent legal/constitutional feature to deal with such disastrous issues in future.

### **Administrative Proposals**

The working of NCOC during all three COVID-19 waves proved itself the most effective, well-coordinated and highly organized body taking strategic decisions under such unprecedentedly extraordinary emergency situations, where lives, health, economic and other social issues became a victim of such bizarre conditions. As the NCOC body dealt with this situation successfully, it is pertinent to say that it should be given a legal/constitutional status through proper legislative process from the parliament for its permanent existence



within the system. Not only should it be given a legal/constitutional cover to deal with such seen or unseen catastrophes, which directly target the lives of people, but it should also be provided with special powers and resources to cope with such emergencies situations diligently.

The center and its federating units (provinces) should be brought in close coordination through permanently establishing such a constitutional body on various unanimously faced issues to the country. After legislation from the parliament, both center and provinces would come in cooperation and coordination with each other on many different subjects of non-traditional security issues, apart from this one as well. It would end the unending criticism of an attack on the 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment because both (center and provinces) would cede some of their powers for joint sittings on such issues, and would also share the burden of responsibility to tackle the non-traditional security issues, apart from the tradition security matters, collectively. The most interesting aspect of this step is that everything would be done within the constitutional framework, and it would ultimately strengthen the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment further while removing the doubts of provinces of curtailing their provincial autonomy, through consensus.

### **Economic Proposals**

Although the government has provided some relief to the lower income earning classes through its Ehsaas program and other health and food related facilities, there are no significant efforts put into action for examining the economic and inflation burnout of the middle class during the COVID 19 pandemic. Studies have already established that a nontraditional security threat like a pandemic has more far reaching effects on the middle classes as compared to the elite and poorer classes because they are more vulnerable to the changing socio-economic patterns. It has been observed that middle classes have generally been dwindling into the lower middle class status because of the loss of their purchase power in terms of basic needs as well as luxuries. However, there is a need to conduct formal surveys and studies to gauge the socio-economic damages to the middle class. According to the findings of the surveys, special plans of rehabilitation of the working middle class and small business class must be devised.

Many small businesses have suffered badly during the pandemic. It will be appropriate to conduct surveys and studies to assess the enormity of their losses and offer short-term easy loans for the revival of small businesses and industry. These loans will help in the revival of the middle class which will further contribute to the overall social strength and economic stability of the country. As soon as the economic cycle is revived, the process of taxation and revenue shall also be stabilized.

## **Sociological Proposals**

Special arrangements should be made on the part of the government to educate the people through various socialization podiums and mediums for the understanding of such adverse issues, which collectively hit/target their health, economies, education and many other issues having negative trickle-down effect on their everyday life. As educational institutions like universities and colleges have an established system of conducting socialization and educational processes, they can also organize proper workshops, training sessions and skill development centers specifically focusing on youth in order to deal with present crisis situations. In the long run this procedure can be further utilized to meet other non-traditional security threats. It was evident from the highly spreading confusion among people when the first wave of COVID-19 attacked them, creating panic and misconception due to being less-informed and lack of awareness on a broader scale, which further damaged their lives, health and economy later on.

As the pandemic has shook the social psychology of the nation and it has threatened their status-quo and everyday existence. After conducting a comprehensive study of the impact of this non-traditional security threat, particularly on the middle class, the government or the supervision committee should chalk out some long term policies to both increase and empower the middle class' ability to purchase and sustain their status. It is required to ensure the restoration and maintenance of the Middle Class in the socio-economic hierarchy of the state. The governing bodies can discuss among themselves along with economic experts to carve out a long term relief plan for the middle classes because it is needed at this hour.

It is worth mentioning that this paper does not deny the importance of the upper class and bourgeoisie or elite class in the overall continuum and effect of COVID 19 because it obviously affected the upper class and has had a trickle-down effect on all tiers of the Pakistani society. So all sections of the society must be taken into consideration while studying the impacts of a massive non-traditional security threat like COVID-19 and accordingly some plans should be introduced for the relief and sustenance of each sub-section of the community.

In a nutshell, COVID-19 proved to be an eye-opener for the world in general and for Pakistan in particular. Under such highly unmanageable and sudden conditions, NCOC provided an effective governance model to deal with this natural calamity that has been killing the people and maiming the escaped on the socio-economic levels who luckily survived. Definitely there have been loss of thousands of precious lives, gross economic damage and halt in social activities bringing health, education and prosperity to the people, but the regular changing patterns of governing such ungovernable situation by the government through well-coordinated NCOC body definitely saved many lives and gave less damage to its economy as compared to many other developed countries even, on the whole.

So, the NCOC model adopted a balanced approach to face the pandemic and filled the gap existing within the system for decades to meet this non-traditional security challenge, which has been acknowledged as the best all across the world to defeat the lethal COVID-19 catastrophe successfully.

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