

Decentralization, not centralization, is the solution to Pakistan's governance problems.

## OUTLINE:-

### 1. Introduction.

### 2. Explanation of the topic

2.1 Centralization vs. Decentralization

2.2 Centralism vs. Federalism

2.3 Theory of separation of powers.

### 3. Problems in Pakistan's governance system.

3.1 Poor delivery of goods and services.

3.2 Non-existence of true accountability and transparency.

3.3 Deprivation of people to make choices for themselves.

(case in point: NPM theory of public administration advocates citizen participation at grassroots level)

#### 4. Role of centralization in aggravating Pakistan's governance problems.

4.1 It increases the sense of deprivation and victimization in smaller federating units (provinces)

4.2. Hinders national harmony in multi-ethnic and diverse country like Pakistan.

(case in point: debates of new provinces, problems of water sharing and natural resources).

4.3 A continuous tug of war between centre and provinces puts public delivery on the back-seat.

4.4 A centralized form of government is prone to military coup or dictatorship.

(For example: History of multiple martial-laws in Pakistan).

#### 5. Decentralization — The solution to Pakistan's governance problems.

5.1 Ensures better delivery of goods and services.

5.2. Promotes national harmony by giving the federating units the decision making power.

5.3 local bodies government — The best structure to solve local problems.

5.4 Decentralization — an obstacle in the way of dictatorship. (For example: The impact of 18th amendment)

5.5. It is the true essence of constitution of Pakistan.

## 6. Conclusion.

### Essay:

The power corrupts, and the absolute power corrupts absolutely. This saying of Lord Alton provides the soul to the concept of decentralization. As, human history of empires and governments has seen all kinds of governments, from tyrant rulers to oligarchy, and from ~~the~~ oligarchy to the concept of the government of the people i.e. democracy. The study of political science and public administration and history makes it clear that there is no better form of government in providing basic human rights and fundamental amenities to the people than democracy. The empirical data of modern nation states highly and vehemently supports the concepts of decentralized form of government under the banner of democracy, especially for ~~countries~~ federations like Pakistan. Today,

Pakistan faces a myriad of governance challenges, from poor delivery of goods and services to fragile state of accountability. This eventually deprive people from their basic fundamental rights. Centralization aggravates, if not creates, almost all of governance problems of Pakistan. It hinders national harmony, increases the grievances of smaller provinces, puts the country in a continuous tug of war <sup>for power</sup> between centre and provinces. It has also, multiple times in the past, made ways for military dictatorship in the country which has further worsen the state of affairs. In such situation, the best solution to problems of governance in Pakistan is decentralization. As it ensures better service delivery, decentralized or local government is directly accountable to the masses, it promotes national harmony, it is an obstacle in the way of military dictatorship and it represents the true essence of constitution of Pakistan. In order to solve the governance crises and deliver the better services to the people of Pakistan, Pakistan must devolve powers to the provinces and from provinces to the local government at district, town and tehsil levels.

Centralization refers to the concept of government in which the centre holds the maximum

power and devolve a very limited power and autonomy to the federating units. In contrast to centralization, decentralization means a form of government in which the constitution provides maximum autonomy, power and sovereignty to federating units. Decentralized form of government is also called a federal form of government and this concept is called as Federalism. It is suitable especially for diverse and multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country like Pakistan. <sup>It is</sup> Because in any diverse country, no any one entity should hold or capture power of decision-making and the autonomy should be given to federating units.

Today, Pakistan faces a myriad of governance problems. A major one among them is poor delivery of goods and services. Pakistan lies at the bottom of Human Development Index, literacy rate, out of school children and many more. A new crises of climate change is also looming over but Pakistan is still failing to solve previous problems, let on focus on newer ones.

Another problem Pakistan faces today is lack of accountability and transparency. In recent Transparency International report the position of Pakistan is sickening and unfortunate. The accountability of government officials and public servants is also non-existent or politically motivated. In such situation, the funds released from the capital barely reach the grass-root levels. It worsens the already anaemic condition of public services.

Furthermore, as the powers and rights exercised by local governments are close to none except ~~for~~ in a couple of metropolitan cities. Fragile and non-existent state of local bodies deprive people to make choices for themselves and choose their own representatives at local levels to solve their problems. The much appreciated NPM theory of public administration advocates for citizen participation and community involvement through devolution of power and local bodies to improve governance crises.

Centralization surely aggravates, if not directly creates, governance problems of Pakistan. It entails a sense of deprivation and victimization among the people, especially in

those who belong to smaller provinces. It snatches away their rights of policy formulation and implementation at provincial and district levels. Furthermore, a rigid centralized government can make it easier for larger provinces to subjugate the rights of smaller federating units.

Moreover, centralization gives a sense of deprivation and victimization and in doing so it hurts national harmony and unity of the country. It hinders autonomy and thus gives rise to nationalist movements which further worsens the public delivery and governance by consuming much of government resources and attention.

Centralization also gives birth to a continuous tug of war between provinces and the centre in order to gain more power and autonomy. This disorderly state of affairs worsens the governance crises. For any country to provide and ensure good-governance, the harmony between centre and province and also between state institutes is an integral factor.

Furthermore, a centralized system, in which there is only one power centre, makes it easier for one person (dictator) to capture the power and control of the country. Pakistan's history is marred with examples of military interventions and coups. In such a country a centralized system increases the risk of martial laws. In order to run the democratic system swiftly and without any ebbs, there must be decentralization of power among different units of the state.

The solution to above mentioned democratic and governance problems in Pakistan is decentralization and devolution of power. ~~It~~ For the decentralized system ensures better delivery of goods and services and upholds the true spirit of democracy. The theory of new public management (NPM) provides enough empirical data in the favor of decentralization as sole solution of governance problems of Pakistan. It is because it provides the right of choice to the grass-root level, increases citizen participation and enables them to solve their governance crises through mutual cooperation and community engagement.

Moreover, the decentralization also promotes national harmony and unity, in contrast to centralized system. Decentralization promotes citizen rights at local level, treats their sense of deprivation by engaging them in policy formulation process. In today's time, the debates of new provinces is erupting due to poor governance and centralization at the top. Decentralization can easily solve this crises without formation of new provinces by better governance delivery and by strengthening the federating units and this would lead to country wide unity and national harmony.

Furthermore, it is an unarguable fact that the local bodies government can ensure the best governance. Pakistan has tried these local governments a few times, especially in the eras of military dictatorships of Ayub Khan (Basic Democratic units) and pervez Musharraf (local bodies act). Although the military dictators chosen this devolution of power to gain legitimacy and to discourage local opposition (politicians). In the democratic and civilian set up, the government must ensure timely local

government elections and also give them powers, in order to solve governance problems and uphold true spirit of democracy.

In the same context, the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution of 1973 proves that decentralization ~~and~~ is inevitable to curtail military intervention. Since 2010, when the parliament passed the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment, there has not been a single military coup in more than 15 years. It is the longest time that Pakistan has survived or experienced without a dictatorship. The civilian government also completed their first complete term between 2008 - 2013 for the first time ever, and that too after the decentralization and 18<sup>th</sup> amendment. In order to strengthen the democratic norms, Pakistan must continue onto the road of decentralization swiftly without any ebbs.

Furthermore, the centralization and local bodies governments not only improve the governance but they also reflect the true spirit of constitution of 1973. The constitution, without any ambiguity, makes it obligatory for the central and provincial governments to form a well-structured local government system, in order to provide citizens all the basic amenities of life. The greed

of power has already hurt the governance and democratic nations of the country enough, Pakistan can't afford to move on the same path as that of the past. To provide the citizens of Pakistan, a better governance and solve their problems, the state of Pakistan must ensure decentralization and devolution of powers.

In the nutshell, decentralization, not centralization, is the solution to Pakistan's governance problems. It is because centralization is nothing but a total failure in countries like Pakistan.

On the other hand, decentralization ensures better delivery of goods and services, it upholds the true democratic spirit, encourages the citizen participation, and community engagement. The centralization also weakens the unity, hinders national harmony and integrity; whereas, decentralization promotes national unity and harmony. Hence, it can be said that for Pakistan to achieve good governance, decentralization is the only way to go.