Governance in Pakistan: Legitimacy Regime of NGOs

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Abstract
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have increased dramatically all around the world including Pakistan. They have become very much a part of contemporary governance with crucial roles to overcome challenges and threats to governance and national security. While their roles have been evolving, they have come under scrutiny of government, media, and civil society. The simultaneous proliferation of NGOs and militancy/insurgency in Pakistan is seen by many Pakistanis as a complementary phenomenon. Rise of NGOs is seen as failure of governance and the governance failure is considered the main cause of rise of militancy.

This paper examines the milieu of the NGOs in Pakistan and the prevalent practices and attitudes towards their legitimacy and accountability. It explores complexities of governance and legitimacy to meet these challenges, drawing from the knowledge and adding to the literature on governance, the processes of legitimation and hence national security. This paper takes a descriptive approach and democratic theoretical perspective that is so close to the ideology of Pakistan. It reflects as to how legitimate NGOs can become vital societal organizations, or conversely a security problem without public support for their missions. It provides an understanding as to what this sector is doing or not doing for Pakistan, and concurrently suggests measures for its efficacy.

Introduction
Pakistan has been exposed to conflict and terrorism since last three decades with varying intensity. The security threats are multidimensional ranging from internal to international which have ripped the very fabric of society and put severe strains on its governing mechanisms. Governance institutions face declining resources and limited spaces for their operations. Consequently it has created space for non-state actors to fill the vacuum. Global politics pushed Pakistan to frontline state, initially to counter communist threat and later to counter the right wing extremism. In both situations Pakistan was conduit to military operations and a fertile ground for growth of national and international NGOs due to multi billion dollars security market. The simultaneous proliferation of NGOs and rise of militancy/insurgency in Pakistan is seen by many Pakistanis as a complementary phenomenon. Both NGOs and fragile security milieu is thus considered as the two sides of the same coin. Putting it scholastically, one may refer to it as the problem of legitimacy of NGOs to engage in the functions of the state as they find little acceptance with skeptical Pakistani nation. Rise of NGOs is seen as failure of governance in Pakistan and the governance failure is considered the main cause of rise of militancy. NGOs do not have the power of the government, thus their survival hinges on credibility and legitimacy. If that becomes shady, their roles in society will be contested radically. Hence study on NGOs in Pakistan has both governance and national security overtones.

NGOs have become very much a part of contemporary governance with crucial roles to overcome challenges threatening interdependent world1. While their roles have been evolving, they have come under scrutiny of government, media, and civil society. It has resulted in a deep international concerns focusing on their accountability and legitimacy2. People suspect their credentials (e.g. Bexell and Mörh 2010; Börzel and Risse 2005; Schäferhoff, Campe, and Kaan 2009) and powerful stakeholders raise doubts on their ideologies and intentions to advocate some polices and engage in public service.

They are also criticized to be unaccountable and websites like “NGO Watch” are dedicated to expose NGO activities. These questions hit at the very heart of their legitimacy to engage in actions that are principally the domain of the government.

This paper examines the milieu of the NGOs in Pakistan and the prevalent practices and attitude towards their legitimacy and accountability. It explores complexities of governance and legitimacy to meet these challenges, drawing from the knowledge (Bernstein 2011; Quack 2010; Schouten and Glasbergen 2011; Steffek 2009) and adding to the literature on governance and the processes of legitimation. This paper thus takes a democratic perspective that is so close to the ideology of Pakistan. It reflects as to how NGOs with their legitimacy can become vital societal organizations in Pakistani context, or conversely a security problem without public support for their missions. It provides an understanding as to what this sector is doing or not doing for Pakistan, and concurrently suggests measures for its efficacy.

**NGO Phenomenon in Pakistan**

Phenomenal growth of NGOs in Pakistan in past few decades is mainly credited to inflow of massive foreign funding due to geo-political situation of this area dominated by the protracted American war on Afghanistan. USA, being just one of the donors, claims to have channeled more than ten billion dollars after the incident of 9/11. Consequently along with Afghan refugees, Pakistan was also a ‘refuge’ to international NGOs working for/in Afghanistan and beyond. This could be attributed to proximity of Islamabad and Kabul, liberal visa regime, and porosity of Pak Afghan border that allows NGOs’ workers to travel across even illegally. Another reason for proliferation of NGOs could be oscillation of Pakistan between democracy and dictatorships. Such instability provides fertility to NGOs to sprout on any known human issue. Natural calamities in the shape of earthquake (2005), and floods (2010-2011-2014) also provided rational to philanthropic sector and those with modern technological equipment and professional expertise to rush to Pakistan to get it out of trouble. With money raining on one pretext or the other, both governmental and non-governmental sector reached out to fill their buckets. Pakistan thus now relishes a government and NGO glut.

Any phenomenon which attains power and grows rapidly in a society will surely come under public scrutiny. One finds Pakistani NGOs subjected to all types of criticism challenging their legitimacy to exist. They are termed as an undemocratic creatures, insensitive to culture and religion, existing with the sole aim to act as an agent of foreign countries. However all NGOs are not evils and business concerns. They have many good works to their credit and people in Pakistan have channeled billions of rupees both in the form of donations and as charity through these organizations for the welfare of the poor and needy. Are NGOs doing something or do they exist as a vocations for rich and powerful? Are they working for Pakistani people or do they have a foreign agenda? The succeeding paper dilates on major functions NGOs in Pakistan

**Humanitarian Assistance**

Many NGOs in Pakistan focus on providing services to the poor and those in need. They are engaged in many human development ventures and government has relied on them to deliver aid to the needy. At any time of need and disaster, NGOs are faster than our government agencies to come to the support of communities and answer to people’s demands. They have performed for both the poorest and richest communities. “Subject to availability of funds, NGOs have outperformed government in the delivery of many public services.” Generally they have been more active than government in far flung and barren rural areas of Baluchistan. Agha Khan Foundation has deep roots and extensive involvement in development projects in Northern areas of Pakistan. NGOs have been efficient and

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forthcoming to assess and meet the needs of communities because of due to their familiarity with grassroots organizations and their superior functional abilities.

**Professionalism and Expertise**

NGOs focus on specific issues, collect relevant information, and then publicize it to promote awareness. This makes NGOs specialists in their jobs. “They have grown as competitor to the state in their efficacy and professionalism on some subjects. They deliver services to complement government assets and offset the averseness of government organizations in monitoring complex state functions.” Pakistanis have every so often reached to NGOs to acquire specialist advice and input. NGOs are forthcoming with their technical and legal and knowledge to contribute professionally. In one example, NGO provided data to government on women rights and violence to celebrate world women’s day. Consequently government published information and promotional material on women’s rights, which was filled with the references to information obtained from NGO. However name of NGO was not explicitly cited.

**Reservoir of Donations**

NGOs can boast budgets of millions of dollars, though this is rare. Pakistani governments have traditionally pushed rural development and urban community relief to their lowest priorities. NGOs have in such case come to fore to highlight these gaps, and used their money and clout to put these issues back on the decision agenda of the government. NGO have attained such power though the money they possess. More funds means extended abilities to do work for the needy. The money power also puts these NGOs in a position to monitor government actions or inactions on popular policies. The funds available to NGOs help them to obtain information, travel to needy people in remote locations and create a supporting infrastructure for delivering goods and services. Money also enables them to lobby for policies, to invest in research and generate policy options. Pakistani NGOs have spent money on many public issues that governments have ignored. Thus, some Pakistani NGOs have filled gap between requirements of the people and the competencies of the government. This partnership of NGOs with the governmental organization has given credibility and legitimacy to Pakistani NGOs and their projects.

**Government Watchdog**

NGOs with their expertise and special focus have been a tool to monitor Pakistani governments’ compliance with national and international standards. They have been compelling government for transparency by waging media campaigns. Some Pakistani NGOs have launched effective media campaigns to force both government and private businesses to change their detested policies or improve and speed up the implementation of desired projects. NGO monitoring has been vital on development issues and political rights of Pakistan. Without NGO monitoring, governmental performance could be dismal.

NGO monitoring of governmental actions to implement its popular policies has led to greater implementation concerns by political governments. “When you all go home, it is the NGOs that that keep a close eye on governments. We force government to act where it refrains due to political or financial priorities.” Pakistani NGOs have monitored the implementation of governments’ labor and wage policies in the private sector. This is commendable in a country like Pakistan where most political governments have been hostage to business and strong state enterprises. NGOs have been

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7Director APWA, Interview with author on March 15, 2013
9Snyder, Susi. NGO Joint Statement on the Secretary General’s Proposed Human Rights Council (April 18, 2005)
instrumental in getting concession for citizens where even government was reluctant to question corporate practices due to fear of losing the anticipated revenue from the corporate presence.

**Speaking for Minorities**

Pakistani NGOs have done work on gender issues specially empowerment of women in Pakistan. They have worked for the rights of Christians, for the emancipation of agricultural tenants “Harieś”, worked for Hindu population in Thar, supported people gone missing during American war on Afghanistan. They have spoken for the rights of Baluchistan poor and pressurized successive governments to increase public spending in underdeveloped areas. NGOs have pushed governments for child education, safe motherhood programs, run literacy programs, worked in katchiabadies, post conflict rehabilitation, and worked “under USA pressure” for making penal laws on honor killings. Pakistani NGOs have worked against use of drugs and rehabilitation of its addicts. They provide voice to voiceless, speak to remedy their pains and have advocated justice for poor. They have highlighted prison conditions and raised voice on rights of prisoners, especially women prisoners.

**Criticism on Pakistani NGOs**

“The answer doesn’t lie in the over regulation of the NGOs or their donors but a total dismantling of the NGO-industrial complex. Until then, conferences and consultations on ‘labor rights’ can continue to be held at five star hotels — which for one are known to underpay their employees — without a hint of irony and we’d continue to have lots of project reports to show for it”11. The Dawn

The greatest criticism of Pakistani NGOs is on their legitimacy. Such criticism finds its foundations in the lack of transparency, accountability in this sector. Legitimacy of this sector comes under severe scrutiny when NGO projects extend to the turfs of strong religious clergy or the feudal structure which sustains its life on the perpetuity of poverty and illiteracy in their fiefdoms. Pakistanishave expressed doubts that operations of NGOs are at times categoricallyimpervious. This is not at tangent to global perceptions about NGOs. They employ influence on government decisions ‘behind closed doors’ and without pluralistic participation.12 This brings into light the democratic connotation into study of the legitimacy of this sector. People believe that power and influence of NGOs should be controlled by some legal edifice in order to provide some form of visibility and accountability of NGOs in cases of their possible irresponsibility. NGOs are also considered to be anti-state and working on foreign agendas to seek approval and funding from their foreign masters.

**Non-Democratic**

**a) Democracy within NGOs**

Many Pakistani NGOs do not followdemocratic values in management of their organization. This is no different than NGOs elsewhere in the world.13 NGOs in Pakistan do not choose their leaders or governing members. “They make their policies without any input or consultation from their members. Most of their projects are conceived top down and thrust on lower employees for implementation. Such projects often reflect the interests of the leadership than that of the organization or its employees“14. They do not draw a popularly supported constitution. Even if they have a constitution at all, it is not acted upon and most people do not have access to such constitution. “NGO management relishes wide-ranging discretion regarding what policies should be followed. What is

11 Newspaper “The Dawn” Sunday Magazine Published on May 25, 2014
14 Discussion with Jehan, Samar, Program Manager at an INGO in Islamabad, September 19, 2014
to be followed sincerity, focus, and potency and what is to be just a semblance of activity”

In Pakistan however, it is strange that even well-established NGOs function as undemocratically like any smaller or ‘family’ NGOs. Even NGOs having standing with United Nations are least likely to be democratic. “This could be sobecause their policies and projects are based on the concerns of a “well-defined constituency”

b) Representativeness of NGOs

“What do they represent and who elected them. Most of these are small professional organizations, typically almost entirely funded by donors. In whose names do they speak”? Pakistani NGOs speak for women, speak against religious injunctions, patriarchy, and class discrimination etc without having any mandate form any of these communities. They claim to speak for children, who by themselves have no idea as to what is good or bad for them. Pakistani NGOs also have consistently lobbied for people’s right to education which is a fundamental right of every Pakistani in the constitution. There are numerous government departments at local, provincial and federal levelto execute the constitutional provision of universal education. Despite that, residents of modern cities of Pakistan, boasting comparatively high literacy rates, found themselves being subjected to an “Ailaan” (pronouncement) that “education is a virtue”. Overnight an NGO appeared from nowhere with funds from an international donor with half Pakistani elitist owner. NGO owner ‘has been an employee and contractor of USAID, is himself foreign educated having social links with foreign donor community. It is not the rights that are mostly disputed by Pakistanis, (although some are) but it is their representative nature. While majority may want those rights, minority which NGOs claim to represent may have some other definition for those rights, or may not be presently interested in those rights due to existing social or cultural environments. This could be major reason as to why even the targets of the NGO projects are sometimes unhappy with NGOs. People of Pakistan never voted for NGOs they encounter, to be their representatives. They have neither approved nor been part of their agenda setting. “Thus, NGOs contradict the most basic moral and normative rule that is to govern with the consent of the governed.”

Foreign Agents

Pakistan is filled with rich and large NGOs from the developed west. Most of these organizations are either working directly or through their associated Pakistani NGOs. The purpose of their agenda is thus either subtle and masked or not openly shared with their targeted communities. This sets in perpetual fear in local population in many precincts. They are reluctant to be even part of their projects. Polio vaccination project is an excellent example of such projects. The project has not been able to achieve its targets because some NGOs’ workers were found spying for the donor countries. The conservative society in the Northern parts of Pakistan has even declared this vaccination against the teachings of Islam, which essentially is a consequence of lack of trust on the NGOs. Thus, “it is the foreign donors which create and fund the projects. Pakistani NGOs simply toe them without any question. This is only to get funds. It makes them rich and enables them to live in Islamabad in plush offices and cozy houses.”

Alien Development Perspective

While most rich NGOs are from the developed western countries, Pakistani NGOs are comparatively minion. “Larger NGOs attract the greatest donor funding. About fifty of the roughly 2,000 NGOs control as much as eighty percent of NGO resources”. The power of international development

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16 Mertus, Julie, From Legal Transplants to Transformative Justice: American University International Law Review. 1335, 1373-74 (1999)
17 Univ, Peter, Human Rights and Development 100-01 (2009)
19 Mehmood, Kashif. Islamabad. Beneficiary of a missionary NGO in a local slum. Comment during discussion on site on August 17, 2014
agenda setting thus has remained and will perhaps continue to remain in the hands of rich western NGOs. “INGOs and international donors impose their self-interested agendas. They impose a foreign agenda on Pakistani population. No doubt that Pakistani press has every now and then blamed NGOs as foreign agents. The repetitiveness thus becomes dappled by moving into the realm of anti-state agenda”. This manner of imposing and carrying agenda is what encourages government officials, normal citizens, as well as some NGOs to question the legitimacy of such NGOs.

One NGO manager told me that he was doing a project on child labor. Knowing that an INGO was about to fund a program on literacy, he dropped her child program and started a literacy initiative to obtain the funding. Some women’s NGOs are under criticism for promoting an agenda set by upper class “begums”. Another smaller women NGO leader proclaimed that these rich women did not know the problems of local women because these women are local by name only. Most have dual nationalities. They use western nationalities to rope in foreign donors and local nationality to consume these funds on paper projects. They are oblivious to social realities in Pakistan. My interaction with middle and lower class people reinforced her critique for no real representation of minorities.

**Elitist**

“Criticism on legitimacy and accountability of NGOs is the developing elitism guised in professionalism.” Pakistani NGO leaders do not represent the poor and voiceless. “NGO managers are rich and absolutely not in touch with the poor segments of Pakistani society that they assert to represent”. Those who run Pakistani NGOs are from power wielding networks of professionals. Professionalism in NGOs has become preservation of personal interests or class interests. NGO leaders may thus fail to understand the targeted poor and illiterate recipients’ needs. Most paid professional have an interest in the perpetuation of their NGO and the persistence of their projects. All NGOs are not altruistic and may in reality be a vocation, a profession or business, like employment in any government or corporate position. While such criticism is normative for our politicians, public servants, international governmental organizations, its application on NGO sector goes against the very foundation of these organizations.

**Careerism**

With increased funding to NGOs in Pakistan especially after 9/11 and Kerry Lugar Act of USA, there has been a surge in wages and job security for NGO employees. This has led to increased competition for jobs in NGOs. Such competition brings in highly qualified applicants with relevant education and/or experience to this profession. All of this leads to increased professionalism. However, such professionals need to devise avenues that help them talk to and understand the people they represent; people who are going to be subjected to the policies they make. They need to mingle with these people and know their concerns and desires. They should also seek proposal from their clients to bring improvements in their projects.

Careerism is challenging to be addressed in Pakistan. It exists in the developed world and it does so in poor world including Pakistan. In the developed world however it is not the wealthy, highly educated or most internationally connected who join NGOs. It is the same employees who hop from one NGO to other, or in government or private agencies. Conversely in Pakistan, NGO sector boasts wealthier employees who are socially mobile at national and international level. Their lifestyle, perks, privileges

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21 Farooq, Umer, Consultant with an INGO is Islamnabad- December 21, 2013
22 Discussion with Tufal Hussain of NGO ‘Nashaiman’ Wazirabad, Pakistan June 15, 2013
23 Interview with Ms Aqsa of Tahrk-I-Niswan, Karachi (April 26, 2014)
25 Discussion with Khan Arjumand, The Voice, Narowal, Pakistan (July 5, 2014)
and comfort takes them away from abject realities of the lives of the people they work for.”

Pakistani NGOs managers and owners have become virtually a shadow copy of their donors from the west. Legitimacy of NGOshas thus become questionable in this setting.

Self-Promotion and Preservation
Pakistani NGOs is awkward because their management engages in enhancing their persona, rather than the objectives and policies they espouse to project. Instead of being servants to the poor and oppressed, as they claim on their web sites and in their missions, they have fattened and become the privileged class of our society. One government official dealing with these NGOs at federal level commented, “Many championing human rights come from elite backgrounds. They have very selective and limited membership base. They have no popular support nor do they interact with those whose rights they claim to protect. They are a community of narrowly interested professionals or careerists. NGOs should be a medium of social justice or ideological movement. But it has become the specified language of choice professionals with its own rites and methods.” Sacred human issues have become a certificate of privilege personality building.”

NGOs in Pakistan have become a money-spinning business. Globally also this is an attractive sector with plenty of professional jobs. NGOs with enormous funding and media attention have become exclusive phenomenon, especially in Islamabad. These people are seen in the top restaurants like those at Saidpur village, Kohsar Market, on all days of the week gossiping with existing and potential donors.

Evaluating Legitimacy of Pakistani NGOs

Legitimacy and Democracy
Democracy has progressively grained into political values of Pakistani population. That is how they assess the legitimacy of these organizations.Strangely however theyoverlookthat many government institutions are also non-democratic but no criticism has ever been directed to thoseinstitutions. For example Pakistanis not question the legitimacy of religious institutions or private educational institutions. Similarly there are many public companies, private companies, housing societies, transport agencies, semi government departments etc that though having undemocratic credentials are legitimately accepted to exist.

While democracy is good as a value, it does not snugly fit into the philosophy of the existence of this sector. Majority rule can mean tyranny of majority, exploitation of minorities, silencing of the disenfranchised and so on. If NGOs follow egalitarian procedures, they might cease to claim emancipation of women, protect racial factions, and speak for oppressed and voiceless minorities. Thus the very value we look into the structure of NGOs for its legitimacy can be at tangent to its mission.

Moreover what will be their raison d’être in a democracy because there is already a government representing majority. Also “the cost of creating a membership base and securing representation is expensive and therefore unattainable for many smaller NGOs”.

The criticism off course does have a merit. Pakistani NGOscanbuy public opinion by funding selectively. Pakistani people have frequently denounced NGOs as a means of cultural interventionism. While democracy and formal representation of people may notbe possible, NGOs in Pakistan still need

26 Id
27 Discussion with a Director of a Provincial Social welfare department, speaking on conditions of anonymity. Lahore, Pakistan. (September 15, 2014)
30 My ongoing research into the NGO sector encompassing hundreds of interviews with members of NGOs, civil society and government employees discerns that these owners and employees are everywhere in Islamabad and other parts of the country, found mostly in drawing rooms and the studios of the national and international electronic media. These people drive expensive and mostly duty free cars, reside in exclusive houses and farmhouses are found in the most expensive restaurants everywhere and always. Author’s ongoing PhD thesis since. January 2012
to be accountable for their claims to represent voiceless. These claims are thrust on government through popular media as and when NGOs attempt to lobby for a law or policy or most importantly for seeking foreign funding. They make such claims to bolster their legitimacy but in reality those are mostly self-serving.

**Legitimacy and Accountability**

NGO legitimacy and improved functioning needs a transparent system of accountability. “Well-financed NGOs are likely to have more power than their poorer counterparts, and the lack of accountability in transnational civil society is likely to keep this power unchecked.” Funding agencies should also be accountable. “Scholars advise that more than representation, accountability is necessary to assure that all actors behave responsibly and ethically.” NGOs can willingly ignore the “big picture” as they are more interested in their narrow objectives that are tied to donor funding. This goes against the public interest, meaning that people will not be helped on merit or based on their needs but as a consequence of political and financial battles in the arena of aid. An NGO in Lahore knew that women are an important part of their community’s farming culture. Yet it was foreign donors who asked it to teach women how to stitch clothes to alleviate their poverty. Another Gujranwala-based NGO did a similar thing for the village women and instead went to improve their adult literacy rates. Some NGOs end up working against the very interest of the people they support due to their limited knowledge of its beneficiaries and lack of accountability to them. Inadvertently they end up harming people while they think they are helping them.” For example, a NGO paid for releasing women held in bonded labor. The outcome was more women in bonded labor as it suited the ulterior motives of the kiln owners and labor women both. Similarly NGOs helped people on both sides of the war, providing aid to both victim and terrorists during current American war on Afghanistan. Boutros-Ghali has been on record to ask NGOs to pay due attention to the politics in aid to peacekeeping missions. This takes a cue from the phrase that it is perfectly acceptable to lie for a good cause. There are unlimited accounts of NGOs engaging in lies and other unethical practices. Many Pakistani NGOs have adopted this as their main philosophy. Financial accountability is extremely necessary in Pakistan. People here lack trust in NGOs because NGOs have been reported to pocket money meant for projects. It is also because NGO leaders are very wealthy and public perception is that they are rich through stealing money meant for them. NGOs being accountable to their beneficiaries mean projects that produces sustainable benefits.

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35 Authors interaction with beneficiaries in June 2014

36 Dhillon, Kaiser. A journalist writing on social issues for small local newspaper in Narowal. Discussion with author (February 27, 2013)

37 Discussion with EDO Social Welfare of Hafizabad District. (January 21, 2014)

38 *Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Foreword in NGOs, The UN and Global Governance* (Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker eds., 1996)

39 UN Press Releases, NGO/296, PI/1029 PI/1272 etc (August 28, 2012)

40 Daniel Tucker, an international donor (name withheld on request) representative in Islamabad, told me during a meeting at Marriott Hotel in April 2014 that he has learnt in his interaction with Pakistanis from various strata that NGOs employees get high salaries with many invisible perks. Such perks and benefits are hidden from donors and Pakistan Government in connivance with Audit firms. Ironically the expenditures shown on projects are sometime fictitious. He was convinced that Pakistanis predominantly and generally hate NGOs and its members due to their lavish life styles that they afford in the name of poor and poverty. NGOs are thought be accountable to none, and with hand in gloves with their funders.

41 During the interview of various people for my Ph.D it was a common site and favorite rendezvous to meet at most expensive restaurants and Hotels in Islamabad and Lahore. I appreciate that most of times I was treated as guest. Sometime I would envy such jobs. At many moments it became difficult for me to decline plum job offers and stay focused on my doctoral research. Some would question my wisdom to stick to PhD instead of being one of them. Perhaps most offers were
This is a common challenge among Pakistani NGOs like other countries. "NGOs go for small projects lasting ridiculously for short periods, have no serious long-term vision, are not transparent and are designed by their foreign masters. Delays in projects go in their favor as it means pays and perks for longer time. They create a friendly auditing system and a weak monitoring system. While reviewing projects they interview those whom they have provided with financial benefits and not the targets of the project." It may be concluded that there is a need to adopt a middle approach that considers the interests of all and provides tangible outcomes from the projects.

**Legitimacy and the Donors**

NGOs in Pakistan have increasingly if not totally relied on government and foreign funding to act on their missions. This is true for other countries, both developed and developing, like America, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Kenya, and Bangladesh. This dependency compromises the very features that provide "independence and freedom of action" to NGOs. UN does the same for its NGOs to facilitate their support to host countries. However, by selecting NGOs for funding, the UN influences the ideologies and politics of the host nations. To get money from UN, Pakistani NGOs are ever inclined to adapt their schemes to echo UN thoughts, whether it is in the interest of their beneficiaries or not. UN also uses its funding clout by offering pleasure international junkets to NGO managers. Funding from private donors is also problematic as they "carve up the territory and fiefdoms. The pressure on local NGOs is thus enormous to mimic donor behavior and rhetoric." Pakistani NGOs hunt for shards of the foreign aid which is controlled through foreign embassies in Islamabad and UN establishments. Some, who are known for surviving on specific donor money, start behaving and thinking like their donors. This results in conformity of planned projects, and causes visible rivalry among Pakistani NGOs. Then they indulge in bad governance practices confronting and blaming other NGOs which are their competitors, and facilitating elite’s participation in their operations. Power is sought and gained through funding and consumed to obtain funding. "We, who advocate speaking for marginalized have ourselves been marginalized by the ‘big fish’ which is always ready and looking for opportunity to eat us “the ‘small fish’. We have been so marginalized that our protests are not heard. We are made voiceless.” Thus, big NGOs in Pakistan dominate not only the domestic policy making but also international dialogues by thrusting their agendas. There is a sever struggle between NGOs to grab the headlines and “breaking news” to prey funds. NGO names have become brands. “Name in Islamabad has real value. Donations and government grants come with “infamy”. Looking objectively, it is not bad to have vibrant media coverage. But this has led to exaggerated claims of transgression and bigoted press on a single issue at the expense of other more pressing issues.

**Legitimacy and Accreditation**

Exercise of power by NGO must be legitimate and made accountable. Government thus has to intervene to establish a system to ensure it. Pakistan has number of laws and regulations under which also keeping in view my long experience in military service in senior positions. My interviews spanned over a period of one and half years in 2013-2014.

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42 Interview with senior government officer in Ministry of Economic Affairs, Islamabad, October 18, 2014
48 Hulme, David & Edwards Micheal, NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort? at 3 (1997)
50 Mertus, Julie, From Legal Transplants to Transformative Justice: American University International Law Review. 1385 (1999)
51 Khan, Attiq Ahmad, Media manager at an NGO “Awaz”. discussion with author on August 22, 2014
various types of NGOs have registered to claim legitimacy. Government has also created few structures at public and private level to accredit NGOs. While government merely boasts a redundant bureaucratic structure (Trust for Voluntary Organizations, TVO), one elitist NGO called Pakistan Center of Philanthropy (PCP) exists only to accredit, but primarily to promote its own business interests. Most of these accreditations are merely to evade income tax liabilities. PCP was somehow provided with a questionable mandate by Pakistani tax authorities to be a certifying agency to get income tax incentives. Many organizations who have not opted for this certification process, view it as an illegitimate mechanism of certification. NGO certifying NGO can potentially turn into an unholy alliance for corruption. It was interesting to discover that leadership of PCP itself was author of a funded study few decades back to recommend creation of certifying agency, which they themselves created after completing that study. One is thus not surprised to note that only few NGOs who currently hold “certification” from PCP are not being monitored for accountability and transparency.

Conclusion
Are NGOs something good for Pakistan and its people? This remains a very difficult question as the perceptions are on both extremes. It is mainly the beneficiaries of this phenomenon who are very enthusiastic about these organizations. Such beneficiaries include people serving in these organizations, with deep acknowledgement and support coming from the NGOs leaders and managers. However there is an equal if not more resentment and censure of NGOs originating from the middle and upper middle class citizens, academia, media and government agencies who look at these organizations very suspiciously. NGOs are accused of anti-Islamic practices and equated asan evil in the society. Such stronger criticism against NGOs does have its root in the American war on Afghanistan, where the people of these areas blame them for their sufferings. This view gets practically manifested in the violent reactions to NGO programs in these areas.

Looking at output side, perhaps these organizations are considered to provide more benefits than there discernable costs. This is a rationalistic view, as people think they get something without paying for it. This is prima facie legitimacy provided to these organizations. The negative answers are serious but are considered to be manageable. If serious efforts are made to tape potential of these organizations, the threats that they face to their legitimacy can easily be addressed. The criticism towards NGOs in Pakistan could be a consequence of lack of maturity of this sector. As government, people and civil society become familiar with, and NGOs experience the environment in Pakistan, it may lead to processes of self-correction and improvement in both civil society as well as NGOs. Both NGOs and civil society might have to have a relook at their attitudes. Especially NGOs will have to look for measures of coexistence with local, provincial and federal government in Pakistan. It would enable both partners to gain from each other.

Pakistan needs NGOs that are professional and committed to indigenous culture and philosophies. Such NGOs should have a very motivated team to head and manage these organizations instead of making it a family business. This sector must draw in volunteers who do not make NGO as their vocation. Pakistani NGOs also need to reflect high standards of morality, transparency, accountability and representation to be accepted as legitimate agents of change and collective good. If Pakistani NGOs start paying attention to remedy these problems, they will perhaps have not to look towards foreign donors as Pakistanis are known to be one of the top philanthropic nations in the world. It will enable them to play important roles not only at national but also at international levels.

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