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**Will 'devolution' improve the accountability
and responsiveness of social service delivery
in Balochistan, Pakistan?
A Political economy perspective**

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Abstract

Pakistan's weak historical record of social service delivery is widely blamed on its over-centralised, inefficient, elite-centric government. I ask whether, six years in, decentralisation is successfully improving the accountability and responsiveness of government in Balochistan.

The research adds to the discourse by collating intermediate indicators of decentralisation's success. I find that to-date, decentralisation has been more successful for some sectors than others. This is explained by the deeply-embedded clientelist networks that underlie the tribal, ethnically-polarised context of Balochistan. Clientelist relationships appear to have grown stronger where social service provision was non-excludable and information asymmetry high, as with health and education.

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1. Introduction

"The basic issue is to empower the impoverished and make the people master of their own destiny..."

(General Pervaiz Musharraf, Public Address, 14th August 2000)

There is substantial evidence - widely recognised by major development actors - that government in Pakistan has systemically failed to provide social services to the poor. Following the assumption of power by Musharraf's government in 1999, this failure of government to respond to the needs of the poor was ostensibly accepted by the newly-empowered military administration and decentralisation became the core policy initiative of the new executive. The government's "Devolution of Power Plan" has since become the cornerstone of development policy in Pakistan. This paper evaluates whether current decentralisation reforms are proving effective in improving the accountability of government to the broader population in the province of Balochistan.

In spite of high levels of foreign assistance, Pakistan has had markedly weaker development indicators than countries at similar levels of development, in Easterly's words experiencing "growth without development" (2003:460).¹ Authors such as Gazdar (2000), Easterly (2003) and Husnain (2005) attribute these weak social outcomes to Pakistan's political economy; in particular the highly centralised nature of Pakistani government institutions and pervasiveness of elite dominance within government institutions and the bureaucracy. It is undeniable that Pakistan's government was extremely centralised. Prior to devolution, Pakistan retained only 101 districts as loci of local government introduced under British rule. Each district represented an average 1.4 million people, relative to 0.49 and 0.57 million in the Philippines and Indonesia, and 0.03 million in most countries of Latin America (Manning et al., 2003:25).

Disillusionment with the past performance of government institutions led a recent interagency report on devolution to contend that "the track record of social sector service delivery in Pakistan is so poor that it is tempting to assert that almost any reformed governance arrangements could only do better" (Ibid:10). Given the genuine challenges facing democratic systems of government in Pakistan, I approach this topic from a political economy perspective. Why have politicians discounted the votes of the majority? And why would decentralisation enhance the capacity of voters to transmit preferences and hold politicians

¹ Relative to countries of similar income per capita, Pakistan's had illiteracy rates 24% above comparators, 27 excess infant deaths per thousand and 23% lower access to sanitation (Cross-country regressions; Easterly, 2003). This is despite being the 9th highest recipient of Overseas Development Assistance 2003-5 (DAC databank).

accountable? This work provides early scrutiny of what is necessarily a long-term process of institutional reform.

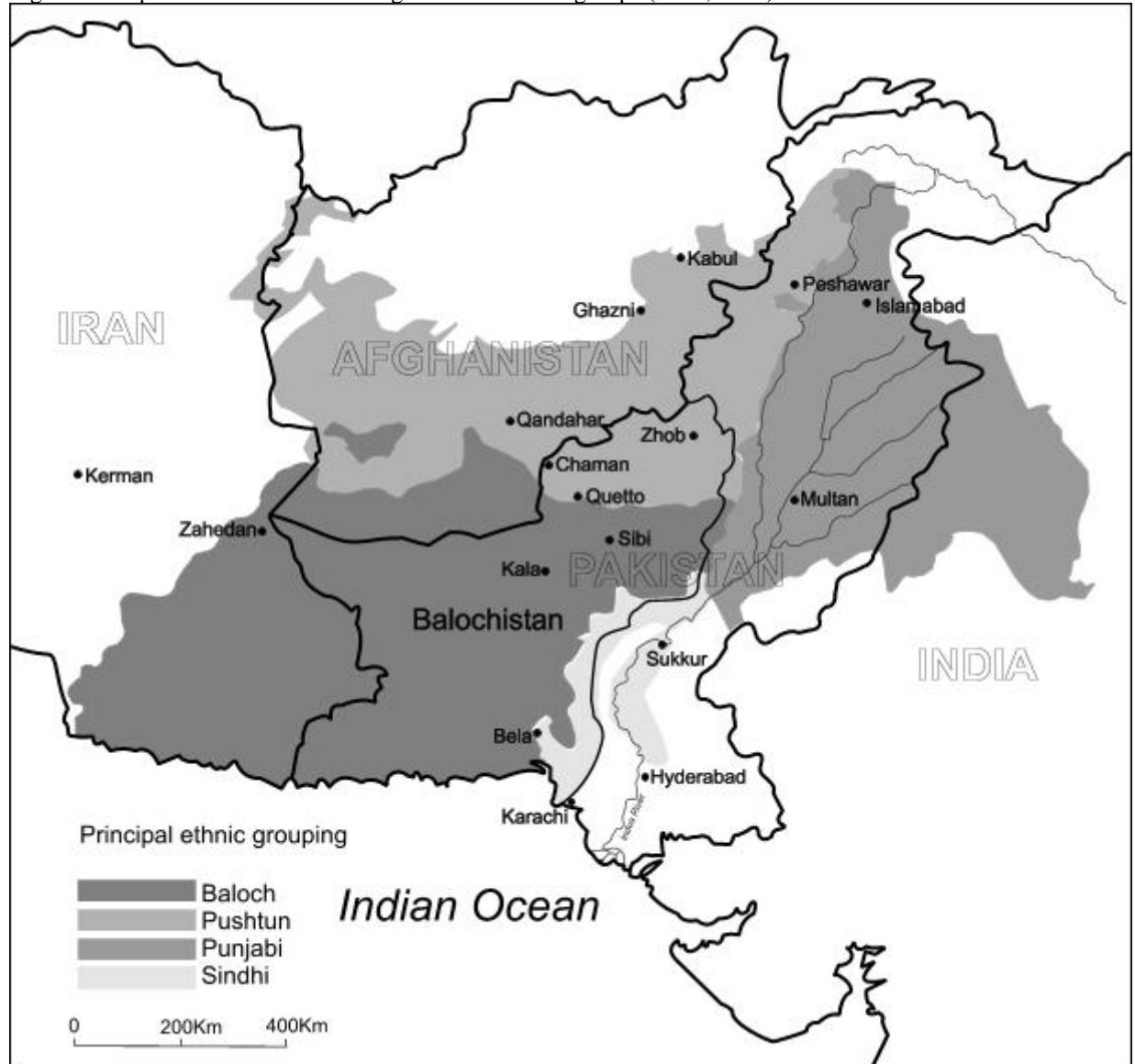
I focus upon the province of Balochistan for three reasons. Firstly, it is the poorest of Pakistan's four provinces, characterised by the weakest development indicators in Pakistan, strong separatist movements, resurgent ethnic tensions and regular, brutal violence. In a 2002 baseline survey, its population were the least satisfied with its public services in health, education, sewerage, transport, the police and the courts (CIET, 2002). If attributable to unresponsive provincial government, decentralisation might not only bring about the most likely improvement on social service provision, but also the most dramatic results.

Secondly, Balochistan is a deliberately extreme case-study of a province where ethnic identity and traditional tribal systems might subvert the exercise of citizenship within democratic institutions. The two major ethnic groups, the Baloch and Pashtun, are geographically polarised within the province and have distinctive social structures and hierarchies. Given that authority was traditionally exercised along patriarchal lines within kinship groups, I investigate whether decentralisation is assisting pluralism to take hold and encouraging a deepening of civil-society. Across the border in Southern Afghanistan, attempts to overlay traditional structures with sub-national governments have proved unsuccessful.

Thirdly, I must restrict my analysis somewhere. Decentralisation legislation has been enacted at the provincial level in slightly different forms and Balochistan is doubtless the least studied of the four provinces.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 describes my identification strategy; I reformulate the research question into a framework to test political economy models of government responsiveness. Section 3 describes the reforms, and assesses how much power has in reality been decentralised across different social services. Section 4 evaluates existing models that explain government responsiveness, particularly those relating to credibility, clientelism and social polarisation. Section 5 assesses preliminary evidence for the success of decentralisation and the pertinence of these models across different social services. Section 6 concludes.

Figure I. Map of Balochistan indicating dominant ethnic groups (Titus, 1998)



2. Methodology

The research question that underlies my title – whether ‘devolution’ will improve outcomes in social services – is theoretically indeterminable and empirically challenging, even restricting the analysis to one province. The quality of pre and post-reform data for Balochistan is low, the scale and scope of decentralisation reforms evolve over time, and many external variables will have influenced social service outcomes over the period.

For these reasons, I confine my analysis to the political economy of decentralisation and the impact of decentralisation on the responsiveness and accountability of government institutions (rather than other important considerations, such as the efficiency of service delivery, or the benefits of representation and participation in themselves). The political economy problem can be structured as follows. The responsiveness of politicians can be considered a function of firstly, the degree to which citizen’s preferences are revealed to them, and secondly, the extent to which politicians are held accountable (i.e. the mechanisms by which they are incentivised to act in the interests of voters).

On the first, it is hard to theoretically justify why decentralisation would have hindered the preference revelation of voters. My focus therefore lies with the theoretically ambiguous second assertion that responsiveness is a function of accountability mechanisms. The research question could be rephrased as *are politicians in Balochistan more or less likely to discount the votes of the majority following decentralisation?* This paper tests theoretical models that describe the incentives presented to politicians at different levels of government, including models of credibility, patron-client relations and social polarisation.

Six years into the reform process, it is too early to assess whether social development outcomes have permanently improved. I therefore study intermediate indicators of decentralisation’s success, such as immediate changes in access to services, surveys of voter perception, and electoral participation. Equally, I am cognisant that exogenous economic, political and geographical factors may have influenced outcomes independent to the decentralisation reforms (e.g. drought, migration, commodity prices, conflict). Where these factors will impact all social services equally (e.g. potentially insecurity, or lower tax revenues), I am able to remove *the level effect* of these exogenous factors by focusing on the relative question; which social sectors have improved or deteriorated since decentralisation reforms.²

² Note that this will not always be the case. For example, drought may impact healthcare outcomes more than road-building programmes.

Implicit to understanding how politicians are held accountable and voters are mobilised will be recognising the underlying norms and value-systems embedded in Balochistan civil society. These include relationships of authority (e.g. patriarchy, clientelism) and social groupings (e.g. kinship groups, lineage). This research adds to the discourse firstly in its examination of intermediate indicators of decentralisation's success, but secondly in bringing together anthropological literature on social structures in Balochistan alongside more technically-orientated studies of decentralisation.

This paper does not aim to capture every contentious dimension of Balochistan's decentralisation process. Its focus lies with models of clientelism and credibility on the presumption that these might have the most transformative impact on the outcome of the reforms. It would nevertheless be worth further investigating the impact of direct citizen participation (the proposed 'Citizen Community Boards' largely rest unformed), and whether accountability mechanisms for the upper two tiers of local government might potentially have weakened given their indirect election (see section three).

3. Devolution in Balochistan: Decentralisation or Centralisation?

Decentralised systems of government can be very heterogeneous, and as has been widely noted (Ostrom et al, 1993:165, Faguet, 2002:11) the term ‘decentralisation’ is itself malleable and used interchangeably to describe an assortment of government reforms.³ Pakistani reform is billed as devolution, the most ambitious form of decentralisation, whereby local government offices are granted political and financial authority to undertake government functions. This is most easily conceptualised using Faguet’s (2004b) model, which conceives that the fundamental difference between centralised and decentralised governments lies with distribution of residual power, defined as “authority over all resources which are not explicitly allocated”. However, some authors have argued that Pakistani devolution was little more than in name (for example ICG, 2004:14), others that it was partial (Keefer et al, 2005:9), whilst others maintain that it was “remarkably ambitious” (Manning et al, 2004:1). As a point of departure, I analyse how much power was in fact decentralised in the 2001 reforms (resolutely titled "Devolution of Power and Responsibility. Establishing the Foundation of Democracy").⁴

Prior to devolution, there existed three tiers of government; federal, provincial and local government. For periods outside of military rule, federal and provincial government have been elected within a parliamentary system. At the local government level, elected officials had marginal powers, and all executive and judicial functions were controlled through the district level led by the administrative position of Deputy Commissioner (DC). The structure of Pakistan’s government was highly centralised; Balochistan had 26 districts, so one DC for approximately 320,000 people. Power was deconcentrated from the province rather than devolved to the district level. The DCs reported to the non-elected provincial secretariat, and were recruited in equal number by the elite District Management Group and Government of Balochistan (Keefer et al, 2005:7).

The reforms were radical in establishing three tiers of local government below the provincial level; the district, tehsil/municipality, and union-council, and ensuring that the administration reported to elected local government at each of these levels. The only directly elected representatives were to be at the lowest level of government, the Union-council (representing c.12,500 people on average in Balochistan). Union-councils comprised of a mayor and deputy-mayor (elected on a joint-ticket) and 19 other councillors, with seats reserved for

³ The widely used taxonomy of Rondellini et al. (1981:137-9) identified four types of ‘decentralisation’ – deconcentration, devolution, delegation and privatisation – where each has distinct theoretical impacts and motivations.

⁴ For a more detailed account of the reforms see Cheema et al.(2004) and Manning et al.(2003).

Muslims, women, peasants and minorities. Councillors of the upper tiers, the district and tehsil councils, were indirectly elected; two-thirds consisting of the union-council mayors and deputy-mayors. The remaining third of councillors and District and Tehsil mayors were indirectly elected by an electoral college of union-council councillors.

Federal Incentives

Pakistan's decentralisation reforms were not linear, and only shifted power from the provincial to the local level. No services, fiscal autonomy or legal authority was transferred from the centre. This is consistent with Faguet's (2004b) model; it is in the interests of central politicians and bureaucrats to undermine attempts to decentralise power in order to retain their residual claim on public resources. Indeed, many actors have questioned the motivation behind decentralising provincial power and noted the political benefits for the centre. The reforms were implemented top-down by a military-sponsored, non-representative government during a period of national upheaval, and certainly not driven bottom-up by the population, as might be explained by a Tiebout-style (1956) model of voter organisation. Decentralisation potentially disempowers separatist movements, and personalises the state structure where local representatives are not party-affiliated, akin to Ferguson's (1999) description of an "anti-politics machine".⁵ Consequently, some commentators have argued that the reforms effectively represented a recentralisation of power (ICG, 2004:3).

This is an important consideration. The motivation of the centre is no doubt critical in creating the conditions for decentralisation to succeed; in engendering broad social capital, the requisite legal and constitutional framework and a free press. However, it does not in itself imply that decentralisation of provincial power will be unsuccessful, and given the interests of capital dwellers, this may be the only realistic decentralisation reforms in centralised countries like Pakistan. This paper restricts itself to asking whether the reforms, as implemented in Pakistan, are likely to be successful.

Partial Decentralisation of Provincial Responsibilities

Whilst political decentralisation, in elections of local representatives, happened⁶, the capacity of politicians to respond to local preferences is constrained by the partial nature of administrative and fiscal decentralisation.

⁵ The donor community may equally be implicated, given their moral and financial support of 'governance' reforms without confronting issues of politics and power head-on.

⁶ Whether these truly represent the multiplicity of citizen preferences is discussed later.

Fiscal decentralisation was limited, and Balochistan has little discretion in raising revenue. At the provincial and local level, minimal revenue is raised anywhere in Pakistan; for 2006-07, 93.1% of Balochistan's receipts should come from federal government transfers (PFC, 2006). This funding is then allocated by a Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) of non-elected officers according to discretionary rules (in 2006, 75%/25% according to population/area), providing local governments little incentives to reward efficiency (Manning et al., 2003:64). An increasing proportion is being allocated to local government (44% in 2006/07 from 33% in 2002/03), although the bulk of funds remain assigned to the salary account (88% in 2006-07 (PFC)).

Administrative decentralisation is equally limited, and in many instances hierarchal lines of authority became more ambiguous. At the district level, significant power still lies with the District Coordinating Officer (DCO) and for specific social services (e.g. education) Executive District Officers (EDO). Theoretically, the DCO and EDOs report to the District Mayor but the Mayor is only empowered to transfer them or initiate a performance evaluation (Keefer et al, 2005). They cannot be fired or a successor freely appointed. However, this is not unusual in systems of decentralised government. Considering the necessity for a career path to attract civil servants, and top-down safeguards to ensure common standards (e.g. for education and health), Evans (2003) reasons that partial decentralisation may be preferable. The World Bank reviewed 'strong decentralisers' and found benefits from aggressive administrative decentralisation were marginal, and recommended local hiring and performance management as a feasible first-step (Manning et al., 2003:67), albeit something which Balochistan has yet to fully achieve

In sum, the impact of decentralisation is limited by its partial nature but such constraints are not unique to Pakistan. There are prudent reasons for only partially decentralising civil service management, and given that payroll represents the bulk of government spending, this implies less financial decentralisation. The hierarchical issues may be clarified in time. However, the implications are deeper when considering models of political economy. Partial decentralisation has the potential to *increase* information asymmetry versus complete centralisation/decentralisation, especially in services with large bureaucracies. It may also *reduce* the credibility of local politicians in delivering on reforms, obliging voters to pursue public goods through other intermediaries.

4. Literature Review

The literature on decentralisation is vast and has been approached within a number of disciplines. As discussed in the methodology section, I restrict my analysis to political economy models. I seek to explain why successive democratic governments in Pakistan have failed to provide public goods demanded by the median voter, and assess how bringing government 'closer to the people' might change this. Where decentralisation is predicated on improving accountability, the presumption is that pre-devolution government lacked responsiveness, i.e. outcomes "reflect[ed] implicit policy weights that deviate[d] substantially from welfare weights" (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2006:06). Thus I question why do politicians discount the votes of the majority? Why do voters continue to vote for them? And might Pakistan's partial and non-linear decentralisation programme alter these relations?

4.a. The Conventional Literature

The classic model of the benefits of central versus local government was detailed by Oates (1972), building on Tiebout's (1956) model where people will relocate if unsatisfied with government policy. Making the potentially unrealistic simplifying assumption that public goods are uniformly provided everywhere, it infers that decentralisation is preferable where inter-regional spillovers are minimal and local tastes vary. Subsequently, other authors have relaxed this assumption and assumed that the centre could allocate different resources to different districts. Besley and Coate (2000) contend that where spillovers exist, there will still be bargaining between different regions over public good provision. Assuming two regions and heterogeneous citizen preferences, they find that even with complete spillovers, centralisation is sub-optimal and some decentralisation is advantageous. Lockwood (2002) in contrast assumes many regions but homogenous citizens, and finds even with no spillovers, decentralisation is not always pareto-superior. Finally, Faguet (2004a) builds a model where decentralised government is better able to distinguish local preferences but centralised government has a cost advantage in providing public goods. Here, the optimal degree of decentralisation will depend upon the relative scale of the information advantage versus the cost disadvantage.

These models illustrate the static welfare implications of decentralisation and the would-be responsiveness of benevolent governments to heterogeneous preferences and spillovers. However they tell us little about corruption, patronage or the broader mechanisms of accountability. All make the assumption that political representatives act as perfect agents for median voters in their district. Given Pakistan's dispiriting record of elite capture and

ineffective social spending initiatives. I place greater focus on the body of work that assumes that politicians will have their own private utility function, which they will maximise subject to the constraints placed upon them.

4.b. Political Economy of Decentralisation

Political economy literature on decentralisation has centred on the argument that bringing government 'closer to the people' improves political accountability. Advocates of decentralisation argue that local elections (i) give 'louder' voice to the population, who may better transmit their preferences, and (ii) give stronger incentives to local politicians to deliver public goods as per public preferences or face losing the next election. Downs' (1957) simple model of political competition predicted that where one assumed political markets to be perfectly competitive and that the median voter was poorer than the voter of mean income, all candidates should choose identical party platforms reflecting the preferences of the median voter (Meltzer and Richard, 1981; Grossman and Helpman; 1996). Consequently, where the poor are in a majority, one would expect larger government and higher public good provision i.e. democratic politics ensures efficient redistribution.

What models are available to explain why political competition fails to produce an optimal allocation of public goods and the theoretical impact of decentralisation? Introducing asymmetric information explains why political markets may fail for certain categories of public goods but not necessarily why decentralisation will affect this. To explore this, I firstly examine models of patron-client relations within voting communities. Secondly, I discuss whether models of social polarisation have any implications for the success of decentralisation. Such models risk being described as technocratic (for example see Heller, 2001) but provide a starting point for understanding what will necessarily be a messier, nonlinear decentralisation processes balancing many entrenched interests.

4.b.i. Asymmetric Information and Credibility

The failure of government to provide an optimal level of public goods in public choice models is generally attributed to information asymmetry. Asymmetric information implies that politicians are unable to make *credible* promises to the populace. This can be modelled via an informational game where voters are principals and incumbent politicians are 'malevolent revenue-maximising' agents. Under such conditions, Persson and Tabellini (2000:75) find that even with optimistic assumptions that voters can co-ordinate ex-post to

vote out failing incumbents, it will remain optimal for the politician to extract positive rents and underprovide public goods.

The ramifications of information asymmetry are as follows. Firstly, given that acquiring information and monitoring compliance is costly, politicians will be more responsive to informed groups of citizens. Interest groups with concentrated private benefits incentivise politicians to engage in rent-seeking. Secondly, where voting is across multiple issues, it is easier to voice and monitor individual-specific favours than a menu of demands. From a voter's perspective demanding non-excludable public goods is suboptimal as others can free-ride on this, and improvements are far harder to attribute to your politician. This suggests most voters should remain "rationally ignorant" because the individual costs of collecting information outweigh the marginal benefit (Downs, 1957). Thirdly, Rogoff (1990) models how voters will be more likely to vote for public goods with short-term outcomes and public goods of lower complexity, given their greater ability to punish or reward politicians at the next round of elections.

Mani and Mukand (2007) construct a theoretical model distinguishing the importance of a "visibility effect"; politicians will provide aspects of social services which are visible and they can take credit for. Thus the quantity of buildings and jobs are prioritised over efficiency of allocation and the quality of the healthcare or education that is provided. Interestingly, Mani and Mukand model that this effect can be non-linear, ie as democracy increases, the 'visibility effect' can increase in intermediate democracies but decrease in comprehensive democracies. Thus the success of decentralisation may depend on the depth of democracy and strength of the media (as modelled in Besley et al.(2002), Stromberg (2004)).

Note that one mechanism for politicians to establish credibility is to associate themselves with a political party. In the Pakistani context, decentralisation from the party-dominated province to a non-partisan local level may reduce the ability of candidates to establish credibility (Keefer and Khemani, 2005:14). Alternatively, one might argue that they have different community mechanisms to establish credibility, and voters would have the ability to punish through non-electoral social structures.

These theories demonstrate how political markets may fail, but not in themselves why they would fail more or less frequently at a decentralised level. Decentralisation is often advocated on the presumption that information asymmetry is lower at the local level. Is it intuitive that for long-term, complicated, low-visibility projects, decentralisation alone might do little to improve responsiveness. However, will electoral accountability mechanisms

would be stronger or weaker at the local level? Two theories with potential explanatory power are models of clientelistic relations and social polarisation.

4.b.ii. Clientelist Politics

The literature on clientelism stems from anthropology and is arguably even broader than that on decentralisation. Given that decentralisation creates new local state institutions, there is potential for clientelist relations embedded in social structures prior to decentralisation will persist and evolve within the new democratic institutions. I define political clientelism here as a political exchange between a politician, a 'patron', who provides patronage in exchange for the vote of a 'client'. The "exchange is vertical and obligations asymmetric" (Putnam, 1993:174). At the core of these clientelist relationships are two parties "unequal in status, wealth or influence" who maintain a face-to-face relationship dependent upon "reciprocity in the exchange of goods and services" (Powell, 1970:412).

We have seen that models are readily constructed under conditions of asymmetric information where elites seeking concentrated, private benefits become clients of politicians. Bardhan and Mookherjee (2000) developed the first formal model to demonstrate this and found that the impact of decentralisation on government responsiveness depended on the degree of capture of local government by elites. There is a trade-off from decentralisation; local provision tends to improve the responsiveness of services to local needs, but increases the risk of elite-capture. Elite-capture of the state depends on "traditions of political participation, voter awareness...the allocation of social and economic power within communities..." amongst other factors (Bardhan and Mookherjee (2001:3). The model infers that elite-capture will generally be greater in regions of high poverty such as Balochistan.

This relationship becomes more pronounced where elites are able to guarantee control over their own clients' voting behaviour. Democratic theory asserts that democracy holds political elites are more accountable to the population than any other form of government. However, politicians face the core problem of being unable to make credible pre-election promises to all voters (Keefer, 2002). Politicians will therefore expend more resources prior to elections to commit to contracts with voters. In a world of perfect contracting, they would aim to make the strongest contracts with the median voter to secure (re)election. More realistically, they would negotiate with voters with whom they can contract reliably (generally the elites). However, an alternative strategy is to contract with key patrons who act as intermediaries in their ability to guarantee the voting behaviour of a constituency. The politician is then able to

form a contract with the intermediary based on deliverable results (e.g. resources and influence for votes)⁷.

This model theorises two patron-client relationships; that between the politician and intermediary, and that between the intermediary and median voter. This intermediary-voter relationship bears some resemblance to the role of political parties within the “Machine Politics Models” (Scott, 1969) of circa forty years ago. Competitive voting blocs might be considered similar to initial models of political parties, where parties might have mass appeal and a high ability to mobilise people to cast votes. However, Scott argued that such models were even unrealistic in the socially fragmented, disorganised urban politics of the United States from the late 19th to early 20th century. Scott found that local political organisations had only succeeded by systematically exchanging patronage for political support (Ibid:1150).

Balochistan resembles Scott’s picture in the fragility of its newly-founded democratic institutions, its social fragmentation, and large migrant populations. However, its institutions are likely to be equally impacted by historical tribal, ethnic and cultural legacies⁸. Such clientelist relationships developed through history to provide clients with economic stability, security, protection from official harassment, dispute settlement and patrons with economic services, political benefits and stature (Powell, 1970). The credibility and security of these relationships may be stronger than the democratic accountability offered by new decentralised institutions, due to the ties of mutual obligation, personalised transactions and long-term credibility built up through repeated exchange (Lemarchand, 1972:72). For this model to work it must explain why there is not effective political competition amongst intermediaries enforced by the voters. Powell’s (1970:416) explanation is that this relationship is defined by its inequality. The power of intermediaries is founded in the economic or social power that they leverage over individual voters, and their consequent ability to reward or sanction voting behaviour

In summary, we have seen models that explain how decentralisation may increase the risk of elite capture, and how where elites become intermediaries for voters, patron-client relationships at the local level can engender voting bloc behaviour. These models are dependent on assumption that local capture is greater than central capture and will remain so

⁷ Given limited resources, contracting with intermediaries enables the politician to allocate superior allocations of resources to groups than would be possible to individuals. They are also more able to guarantee benefits that cannot be extended to all swing voters around the median (e.g. employment, personal ‘access’).

⁸ Heller (2000) articulates well how the caste system in the Indian subcontinent ritualised exclusion and led to deeply-rooted hierarchical structures. Within this system, clientelist ties have remained fundamental to the survival strategies of subordinate groups.

in the long-term.⁹ This assumption may be theoretically defended on two counts. Firstly, at a central level, elites are more likely to be divided into competing, heterogeneous groups, and thus the returns from contracting with each will fall (Bardhan, 2005:116). Secondly, central capture is more likely mitigated by constitutional checks, a more active, independent media and judiciary, and a broader array of horizontal accountability mechanisms. Ultimately however, the extent of central relative to local capture is unanswerable through theory, and these assumptions remain to be tested. Local and central capture will be equally a function of patterns of political participation, the necessity for campaign financing and the extent to which government performance is transparent to voters.

This analysis brings us to the same place as many authors. Decentralisation is intrinsically neither a panacea nor a curse. Rather, there are a number of preconditions that are necessary for decentralisation to be successful; the extent to which it truly reduces information asymmetry, the extent to which elites compete for political patronage, and the ‘social capital’ or horizontal checks existent within local society (Crook and Manor, 1998; Putnam, 1993). Decentralisation will not in itself ensure a ‘culture of accountability’ and may increase returns to local interest groups, but is *more likely* to improve accountability where combined with a wider system of relationships of accountability, through competitive political parties, a wide free press, independent judiciary and professional civil service.

4.b.iii. Social Polarisation

Underlying theories of social polarisation or fractionalisation¹⁰ is the powerful hypothesis that polarised societies provide voters less opportunity to optimally collectivise and express their preferences through democracy. The implications of this would be far and wide, but in particular it implies that broad, deep institutions rather than elections *per se* are indispensable to build trust and shared interests (akin to discussion of previous section). This could be relevant to Balochistan which is arguably fractionalised along two lines; kinship and ethnicity. In 1998, 55% of the population were Balochi, and 29% Pashtun (census). Both ethnicities have markedly different social structures, and generally reside in different regions of Balochistan.

There is some international evidence that polarised or fractionalised societies appear less able to hold politicians accountable, and are associated with low public good provision.

⁹ In Pakistan, as democratic institutions are younger at the local level, the transition away from clientelist relations may just be an earlier stage.

¹⁰ Fractionalisation is generally defined as the probability that two randomly selected individuals belong to the different groupings, e.g. on the basis of ethnicity, caste, religion.

Econometric analysis has found that highly fractionalised societies have been associated with higher corruption (Mauro, 1995), bad policies and lower growth (Easterly and Levine, 1997), and lower provision of public goods and less redistribution for US cities (Alesina et al., 1999). However, this evidence has significant limitations. It is impossible to find an exhaustive measure of fractionalisation (see Fearon, 2003:197). Fractionalisation could merely be causing substitution of one public good for another (e.g. less education for more water provision). Such findings could be endogenous; different levels of public goods may cause the population to relocate to seek the public good. Finally, there is a high risk of omitted variables (e.g. geography, land distribution, wealth).

A number of explanations have emerged to explain why the poor might vote with greater concern for ethnicity than the public goods promised by politicians. Most simply, voters may derive utility from identifying with a politician with whom they share an ethnicity. This strong ideological ethnic position can even be extended in hate models, whereby groups experience disutility from sharing public goods with other groups (Alesina et al, 1999; Gleaser, 2004). However, these necessitate strong assumptions about the shape of individual utility functions, and such ideological explanations could be deceptive. Firstly, ethnicity could simply be a means of resolving the predicament that politicians face in forming credible contracts with voters. Voters may only believe ex-ante promises of politicians with whom they have personal connections (Keefer and Khemani, 2005:11). Secondly, it may be easier for groups to collectivise around preferences within ethnic groups than between them. Therefore it is difficult for the heterogeneous group (e.g. the poor) to collectivise their common demand for a public good, coordinate how its private benefits will be shared (Banerjee and Somanathan, 2001) or form institutions to constrain rent-seeking.

It is often argued that social polarisation exacerbates clientelist relationships. Lemarchand (1972) disagrees arguing there to be no a priori reason why societies fragmented by ethnicity would have more clientelist relations, because clientelism describes a personalised relationship whereas ethnicity is a group phenomenon. Nonetheless, a certain weight of evidence has emerged to support the connection. Heller (2000:494) asserts that in India as elections have become more competitive, patronage is increasingly linked with ethnicity. "Identity politics" has resulted in swelling claims for quotas and special privileges by majority and minority communities. Again for India, Dreze and Sen (1995) found the relationship between caste and clientelism remains strong; using survey evidence and case-studies they found inequality in education provision between privileged and scheduled castes.

Where social polarisation leaves disadvantaged voters less able to collectivise and voice their demands, interest groups and elites are likely to be better placed to contract with politicians regarding their narrow private needs.

Given that some social polarisation is likely to occur at all levels within a democracy, would decentralisation exacerbate or reduce the impact of fractionalised societies? The weight of evidence for India implies that decentralisation in socially polarised states can exacerbate the costs of clientelism. This is similar to Shleifer and Vishny's (1993) model where the costs of uncoordinated bribe-taking are higher than where it is centrally coordinated (centralised monopolists are less extractive than decentralised monopolists). Manor (1999:72) agrees that where "disparities between rich and poor" or "conflicts between social groups" are deep-seated, and especially if combined, "it is extremely difficult to make decentralisation work even tolerably well". Therefore, we must surmise for Balochistan whether the ethnic or kinship groups are territorially distinct, how decentralised government is designed (e.g. where boundaries are drawn, relative powers of mayor versus councillors, and what incentives the electoral system provides for inter-ethnic coalitions (Bardhan, 2005:192).

5. Evidence

This section evaluates the effectiveness of these models in describing Balochistan's decentralisation process to date. This is undertaken in full awareness that despite reforms being depicted as 'fast-track, decentralisation itself has been partial, and we are only five years into what is necessarily a long-run process of tackling entrenched interests.

In section 5.a, I summarise some baseline evidence for Balochistan, to detail the nature of the challenge to reduce poverty and improve government effectiveness. Section 5.b discusses the quality of data available. Section 5.c. details the evidence regarding where responsiveness has and has not improved. Sections 5.d and 5.e explore whether such differences can be in some measure explained by theories of patron-client relations and social polarisation.

5.a. Background

Balochistan is, by most measures, the poorest of Pakistan's four provinces. Largely, indicators of health and education outcomes, service provision and government satisfaction are substantially poorer than for the other three provinces and the country as a whole (see Figure II). There is no reliable data available on absolute poverty levels, but it can reasonably be assumed that income and consumption-based poverty measures are the weakest in Pakistan¹¹.

Figure II. Selected social indicators

	1998-99 PIHS		2001-02 PIHS		2001 SPDC		2004-05 PSLM	
	Balochistan	Pakistan	Balochistan	Pakistan	Balochistan	Pakistan	Balochistan	Pakistan
Primary Enrolment Rate	64%	71%	62%	72%	58%	74%	67%	76%
Literacy Rate (10 years+)	36%	45%	36%	45%	31%	51%	37%	53%
Infant Mort. Rate (/1,000 live births)					89	80		
Life Expectancy (1999)					57.3	61.3		
>1 infant immunisation (12-23m)	59%	73%	57%	74%			66%	83%
Population Density (per km ²)					21%	179%		
Urban unemployment rate					13%	10%		
Dependency Ratio					102	86		

Sources: PIHS (Pakistan Integrated Household Survey), PSLM (Pakistan Social and Living Measurement Survey), Social Development in Pakistan Annual Review 02-03, SPDC

Physical geography is the major exogenous cause of the province's poverty. Its vast, harsh terrain and chronic water insecurity explains its light population density, high transport costs, poor agronomic conditions and low livelihood security. Geographical factors also impede the

¹¹ Recent survey data showed the head-count ratio of poverty falling from 45% in 1996-97 to 22% in 1998-99 during a severe drought! These data-sets suffered from too small survey sizes given the high dispersal of poverty and government services (ADB, 2005).

provision of effective government services; a highly dispersed population will be more expensive to serve, reflected in Balochistan's high social sector spending, which totalled 1,492PRs per capita (c.\$25) for Balochistan versus 625PRs (c.\$10) for Pakistan as a whole (SPDC, 2003). My analysis treats geographical factors exogenously and endogenises the other explanatory factor often cited for the provinces weak development incomes, governance.¹²

Experiences from comparator countries demonstrate that poor social service outcomes in Pakistan are not merely the consequence of poverty (Easterly, 2003). The 1990s witnessed a concerted effort to improve service delivery through the government's Social Action Plan. Donors targeted funds at social services, fearing that the deteriorating macroeconomic situation would starve funding with drastic consequences for already-weak social services (Hasnain, 2005). Ultimately, Balochistan's funding to social sectors rose 36% in the period 1990-2002, more than any province, and remaining static during the late-1990s whilst funding for other provinces fell (SPDC, 2003). Two thirds of funding within the Social Action Plan was targeted to education, and over the period 1988-2000, the Government of Balochistan saw a 29.5% increase in employment (WB, 2004).

Despite the injection of resources, intermediate and outcome indicators stagnated over the decade and the primary enrolment rate declined (Hasnain, 2005:03) The Auditor General of Pakistan conducted a Third-Party Review of the Social Action Plan in four rounds over 1998-01. The audit found that Balochistan had the lowest proportion of cases following correct procedures for recruitment (48% versus 72% average for Pakistan), and procurement (29% v. 43% Pakistan). Although employment rose, only 40% of cases were found to follow the correct procedures to monitor absenteeism, and staff transfers were endemic. One might assume that average tenure in Balochistan would be similar to that in Sindh and NWFP at 9.4 months for a Secretary of Education. This failure to translate spending to responsiveness to the needs of the poor majority provided justification for tackling issues of governance.

5.b. Data Sources

An evaluation of decentralisation reforms for Balochistan is challenged, as in many contexts, by data availability. The quality of data collected for service delivery is low with high incentives for misreporting and political sensitivity in its collection. The World Bank and

¹² I have not rigorously explored the degree to which geographic conditions were static over the period. Drought is a continual hazard in Balochistan. The province suffered drought conditions in 1998-00, and 2002-04, pushing up food prices.

UNICEF are sponsoring long-term surveys to remedy this situation, but these sources are not yet available.

Accordingly, I focus less on indicators of outcome (e.g. infant mortality, literacy) than intermediate indicators of responsiveness and accountability. Some outcome indicators may respond suddenly to changes in governance: for example, user fees or access to public services where low investment is required. However, the richer evidence lies with analysis of the mechanisms through which decentralisation changes relationships of accountability and responsiveness. These may be appraised through broad survey-based satisfaction ratings. Such surveys presume voters will discount future expected benefits and avoid problems associated with public expenditure data, but have two pitfalls. Firstly, perceptions are not necessarily converted into outcomes, and voters may be duped during the first period of electoral reform. The credibility of politicians is likely to be already low, but satisfaction rates will certainly be prone to influence by expectations, unconfirmed reports and political campaigns (either for or against decentralisation). Secondly, voters may gain utility from factors other than the quality of social service outcomes, such as participation itself or the opportunity for enhancing patron-client relations. Where possible, I supplement the survey evidence with other primary and secondary evidence for a more complete picture.

I utilise four main sources of data. The most robust source is a national 'social audit of governance and the delivery of public services' commissioned by an NGO called CIET. CIET collected survey data in 2002 and 2004-5, surveying 12,752 households in Balochistan using a methodology that mitigated the potential for selection bias. Secondly, I conducted telephone interviews with three local contacts; a local teacher, the project coordinator of an international NGO, and a national staff member of an international donor. Thirdly, I used a number of secondary reports, mostly sponsored by multilateral banks. Finally, I scrutinised newspapers and official reports for policy changes and reversals occurring following the introduction reforms. Understanding what motivated these second-phase initiatives, who controlled these reforms and how widely they were accepted provides helpful evidence for the effectiveness of decentralisation.

5.c. Preliminary Evidence

Contact with local government

The CIET 2004-05 survey gives a intriguing picture of the effectiveness of the new Union Councils in transmitting demands to government.

- Households in Balochistan had the *most contact* with Union Councils of all provinces. The proportion of households contacting a Union Councillor during the prior 12 months in 2004 was 31.8% (23.7% in 2002).
- Balochistan had amongst the *highest satisfaction rates* for contact with Union Councillors at 55% in 2004. This had fallen from 67% in 2002, the largest downward revision of all provinces.
- Surprisingly therefore, Balochistan had the *lowest* proportion of respondents who would contact the mayor or councillor where they needed something for the community (36.7% in 2004), significantly below the Pakistan average (46.8%).

The survey suggests that households in Balochistan have contact with and access to local government and are relatively satisfied with its output (albeit appreciably less so than in 2002). However, citizens are more likely to use community actors for help in communal problems relative to other provinces. These actors are unspecified, but the result implies that there are intermediaries alongside local government who citizens contact to demand public goods. Therefore the high satisfaction rating for local government might relate to low expectations in its ability to deliver public goods.

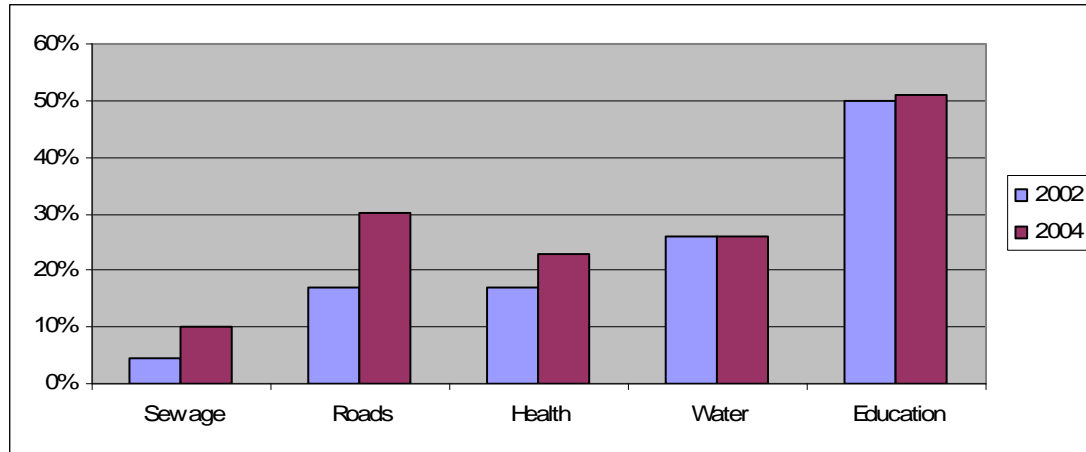
Satisfaction rates

Voters present a menu of demands to politicians, as indicated by different satisfaction rates amongst social services.¹³ In 2002, the population were least satisfied with sewage, roads and healthcare, and most satisfied with education. Despite the overall decline in satisfaction for Balochistan, the three sectors with lowest approval rates witnessed significant improvements over just a two year period. Sewage and Roads in particular have seen an almost doubling in approval ratings. 28 of the 101 communities surveyed in Balochistan had road improvement projects underway during the two year period (Ibid:58). 7 of 55 communities surveyed had had improvements in sewage provision over the period (Ibid:64). The international donor

¹³ Note I do not address what determines the demand for public goods (which may differ in Balochistan given its remoteness, social structures and low human capital). I deliberately restrict my analysis to the failure of political institutions in translating this demand into supply.

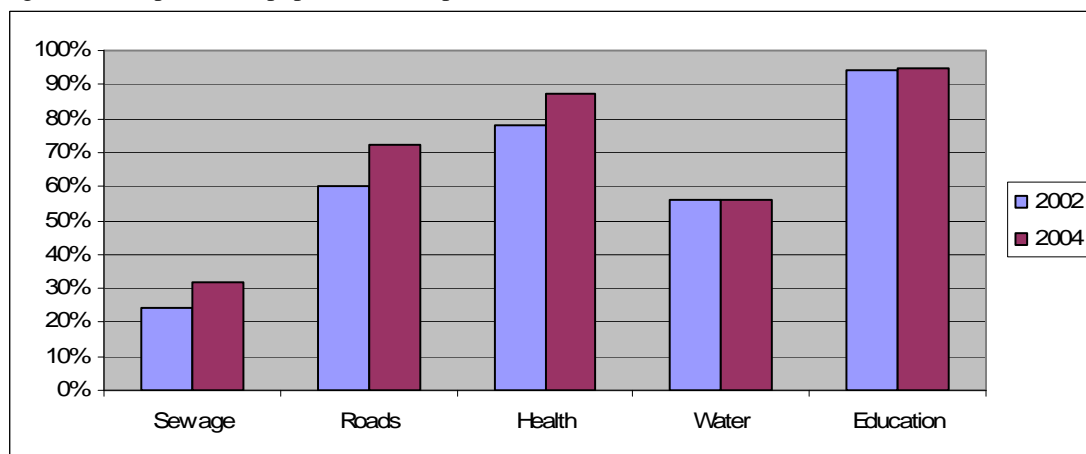
employee interviewed advocated that water, sanitation and irrigation had been amongst the most successful projects since decentralisation because resources became more readily accessible. For instance, each council was given six borehole drills giving them the opportunity to be responsive to local needs.

Figure III. Proportion of the population 'satisfied' with social services, Balochistan (CIET, 2004)



A similar picture emerges with 'access', with significant progress in access to sewage, roads and health provision over the period. This data represents perceived access; interestingly, the pecuniary cost of access rose significantly over the period. For example, the average monthly cost of water provision rose from 377PRs (\$6) in 2001 to 572PRs (\$9.5) in 2004. (CIET, 2004:66).

Figure IV. Proportion of population with perceived access to social services, Balochistan (CIET, 2004)

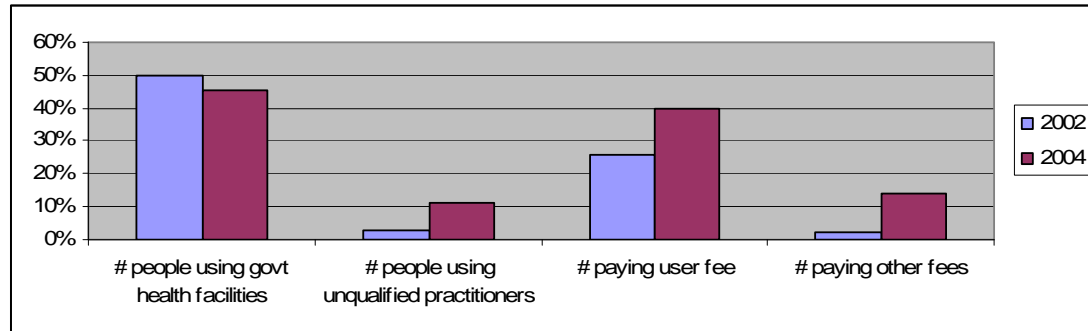


Healthcare

The picture on healthcare is more nuanced than the above statistics suggest. Despite the higher perceived access to healthcare, the survey details this has been reached through large increases in the proportion of patients using unqualified practitioners. Numbers using

government health facilities fell, the number paying user fees – which will disproportionately hit the poorest – rose substantially, and average expenditure on medicines in government facilities rose from 267Rps (\$4.4) in 2001-02 to 385Rps (\$6.4).

Figure V. Healthcare statistics (CIET, 2004)



The international NGO employee interviewed believed that access had declined and costs risen since decentralisation within the public healthcare system in Balochistan. He attributed this to the weak management of healthcare units, and an unclear hierarchy between the local mayor and Executive District Officer (EDO) for Health, the administrative role positioned under the District Mayor. He witnessed government health-centres repeated stock ruptures of medicine two-thirds of the way through the month. Patients were often sent home for the remaining ten days.

The federal government appear to have recognised the funding deficiency and hazy management lines through their recent initiative to *recentralise* primary healthcare. Rather than direct new funding via decentralised government, a vertical programme called the President’s Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHCI) was introduced in 2005. This national programme directed funds via a new federal representative at the district level. 14 of the initial 32 districts lie in Balochistan (Govt of Pakistan Annual Plan 2005/06).

Education

Qualitative evidence suggests that education sector performance following decentralisation has been weaker than the above surveys suggest. The relatively high satisfaction rate combined with extremely weak outcomes indicates that ‘demand’ for education, especially for girls, is extremely low. This was confirmed in an interview with a local senior teacher. He suggested that schooling had “suffered a great deal from union reforms”¹⁴. He argued that local mayors were using their power to promote their family and friends; “the problem is relatives of nazims [mayors] are working in schools...if the headmaster or EDO says that staff

¹⁴ Weak education outcomes are also reported in a Dawn Newspaper editorial (28 March 2005)

are not attending and should be fired, the nazim prevents them”. He reports low teacher attendance rates, large classes of 70-80 students and morning and evening classroom shifts given the lack of school buildings. Since decentralisation, new funding has not been forthcoming, although more is promised to construct new government schools in Dera Bugti and Kulu.

As with healthcare, the deficiencies of decentralisation appear to have been recognised by *recentralisation* initiatives since. Firstly, the federal government announced that the federal Public Service Commission would take all responsibilities for teacher recruitment in government schools from mayors to ensure that appointments are made on the basis of qualifications, and guard “against the deteriorating standard of education in the Balochistan University and other educational institutions” (Dawn Newspaper, 8th October 2005). This judgement was upheld in the Balochistan High Court (7 Oct 2005) after prior Court Directives were ignored. More drastically, it was recently announced that “on an experimental basis”, 19 primary and secondary government schools in Balochistan would be put under the responsibility of the Frontier Corps, a contingent of the Pakistan army responsible for border control and reporting directly to their Director General in Islamabad (Newspaper article, 20th February 2007).

Summary

The data suggests a mixed report-card for decentralisation reforms to date. The interview data reported that decentralisation has changed power dynamics at the community level. The donor employee and teacher reported that central politicians had “lost their monopoly”, and the large number of councillors allowed opposition views to be represented within the Union Council. All interviewees stated that public services needed more funding. This view is reinforced by a monthly press conference by the Mayors of Quetta requesting more funds.

Despite this dearth of new funding, the CIET survey data indicates that perceived access and satisfaction improved substantially for roads and sanitation over a short two-year assessment period. This stems from a survey evidence and perceptions rather than outcomes and actual access and could be a result of a time-varying omitted variable. Nevertheless, it is a positive preliminary finding for local government. In contrast, the evidence for health and education is more disappointing; at best decentralisation has had no effect on outcomes, and at worst increased costs and reduced the quality of delivery. The qualitative evidence suggests that the poor responsiveness of the 1990s continues in health and education. Tellingly, the acceptance by interviewees of the recentralisation of primary healthcare and education services to

Presidential and Army units belie the belief that decentralisation would have improved accountability and responsiveness.

This result is consistent with the Leviathan literature, where officials make self-interested decisions to improve roads and sanitation facilities because these are more excludable goods: they can be directed to certain proportions of the community. By the same logic, less energy will be devoted to improving public healthcare and education because information asymmetry is greater and exclusion harder to achieve. Both are universal, complicated services and it is harder for politicians to make credible ex-ante promises or be held accountable ex-post. However, restricting our explanation to asymmetric information does not explain why healthcare and education provision may have *deteriorated* following decentralisation. Surely, information asymmetry or excludability would not worsen under decentralised government. This might be better explained by models of clientelism, particularly where services are prone to a higher degree of information asymmetry.

5.d. Clientalistic Relations

There is substantial evidence that patron-client relations, as characteristic of ‘feudal politics’, are central to socioeconomic and political interactions in Pakistan today. Wilder (1999:200) chronicles how following the lead of British colonialists, all rulers have distributed patronage in terms of land and power in exchange for the support of local leaders and their factions. Following ‘democratisation’, access to patronage has remained an important feature of political relations. Indeed, significant funds are still distributed to local communities via ‘development funds’ controlled by Members of Parliament.

Voting Blocks

Such patronistic relations are reflected in the tendency to vote within uniform blocs. Gazdar (2002) conducted an extensive field study in 12 rural villages throughout Pakistan, and found that voters almost exclusively identified with a voting bloc. These were generally led by a village influential such as a landlord, upper-caste member or teacher, with very little inter-voting bloc competition. The most rigorous study of the influence of voting blocs and patron-client on public service provision since decentralisation has been conducted by Cheema and Mohmand (2006:21) in Punjab. They found that decentralisation gave power to local government, but that this resulted in targeted biases towards the Mayor’s village and voting blocs headed by particular village influentials. Consequently, decentralisation did not benefit members of the lowest castes and increased inequality between villages and social groups.

The same study found significant results regarding the extent to which households could independently choose which voting bloc to join. They found that poor households could not make an independent choice, but responded to pressure exerted upon them by influential locals and dominant kinships group were more likely to be allied with village influentials (Ibid:25).

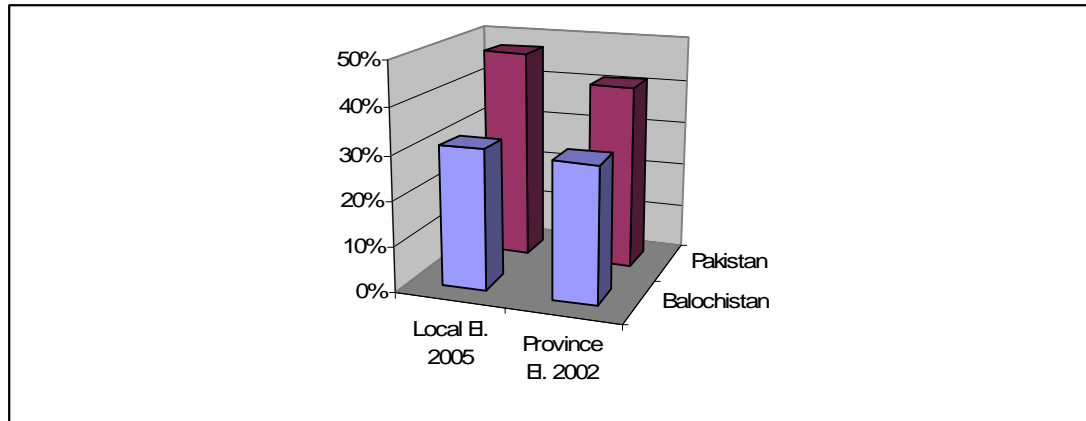
Voter Participation

Voter participation is an indicator of the strength of the electoral accountability mechanism, or the ‘long route of accountability’.¹⁵ Balochistan has had the lowest voter turnout in Pakistan in local and national elections, and in contrast to elsewhere did not see a substantially higher turnout in local elections (figure VI). This is consistent with models

¹⁵ Amongst other factors such as ease of voting. Note the turnout of female voters in Balochistan was not significantly lower than other provinces.

where (a) voters demand public goods through intermediaries other than politicians, and where (b) voters who do not belong an influential's voting block have lower incentive to vote. Cheema (2007:22) collated household data from seven districts across Pakistan that was consistent with this; the decision to vote was positively and significantly correlated with belonging to a dominant kinship group and the proportion of literacy of male household members. Poor, illiterate households from non-dominant kinship groups were less likely to vote.

Figure VI. Voter turnout recent Local and Provincial Elections (Election Commission of Pakistan)



Voting Patterns

Clientelist politics implies that votes are cast for individuals rather than policies or parties (although not that there will be no clientelism by party candidates). In the provincial elections, Balochistan has historically had the highest proportion of seats (15.3% in 2002) won by independent candidates of all of Pakistan's provinces (Electoral Commission of Pakistan). Equally, a higher number of candidates standing per seat potentially demonstrates the difficulties in transmitting voter preferences to politicians. For provincial elections, approximately seven candidates contested each assembly Balochistan seat from 1988-2002.

Contact with Union Councillors

CIET conducted a detailed household study in a region called Lasbela in Balochistan in 2003-04 investigating reasons for citizens contacting a Union Councillor. These were invariably individual-specific, predominantly linked to water and the then-recent flooding. Tellingly, of 524 interviewees, only 24 contacted a Union Councillor to 'report a community problem' (2004:53).

In sum, there is a mass of evidence for Pakistan to indicate that voting occurs through voting blocs and that the poor are constrained in their voting behaviour given the hold local patrons have over them. The data is not all specific to Balochistan, but the province's low voter turnout and weak party affiliation are consistent with patron-client relations. It is also not in itself a critique of decentralisation. In the next section, I analyse ethnic and social structures in Balochistan to understand relationships of reciprocity and dependency that might explain why clientelism may be higher following decentralisation.

5.e. Social Structures in Balochistan

This section relates how tribal social structures in Balochistan might influence patron-client relations and the relative effectiveness of local government. Are there competing, heterogeneous groups within social structures at the local level? Are horizontal checks greater at the local level? Do models of social polarisation along lines of ethnicity or kinship groups have any relevance to clientelistic relationships?

Although necessarily a simplification, Balochistan society can be characterised at two levels. Firstly, there are two major ethnic groups readily identified in political discourse; the Baloch and Pashtun¹⁶, representing 55% and 30% of the population respectively (1998 census). Whilst culturally similar and both Sunni Muslim, their socio-political structures differ in significant respects. Baloch tribes are generally characterised as having more centralised, hierarchical power structures, and Pashtun tribes as decentralised and egalitarian (Titus, 1998:666).¹⁷ Secondly, within ethnic groups there are distinct tribal associations. Tribes act as the primary institutions through which families associate and collectivise, and tribal boundaries represent boundaries for social inclusion. It is therefore at the tribal level that clientelist relationships might dominate (Gazdar, 2007:64).

The dominance of tribal networks points to strong institutions of governance running parallel to the formal state.¹⁸ These associations act as an immediate basis for political affiliation and tribal leaders have natural social leverage over members. It is widely asserted that tribal leaders act as local elites, capturing public resources for their private gain (see Gazdar, 2005:23). The patriarchal, lineage-driven norms of local society enhance their capacity to 'control' the voting behaviour of the poor. Central governments are also likely subject to capture, but local tribal leaders face less competition, and fewer horizontal checks within local society. Checks only exist as instituted through higher-level government (e.g. bureaucracy, police) but are likely to be far weaker at the Union Council level.

Baloch and Pashto tribes differ in their organisational structure, with implications for decentralisation reforms. Baloch tribal structures are more accommodating to lineage outsiders, and adaptable to economic and political objectives. Baloch tribes are thus broader and more 'inclusive', but their scope has necessitated the development of stricter hierarchies (Gazdar, 2007:65). Given their majority, Balochi's have dominated Balochistan's provincial

¹⁶ Also known as Pukhtoon or Pathan.

¹⁷ The term 'tribe' has had no derogatory connotation in Pakistan, and is extensively used as a marker of identity and ancestry. Hereafter I use the term 'tribe' rather than 'kinship group'.

¹⁸ Excluding the region of Makran in south-west Baluchistan where tribal affiliations are weaker.

government, controlling the Governor/Chief Minister position for the last 35 years.¹⁹ Balochi elites at the centre will lose power, but their tribal hierarchy has normally been malleable to modern political realities, and it is likely that clientelist relationships will continue at the Union Council level with less competition and fewer institutional mechanisms to constrain corruption.

Pashto lineage boundaries are far stricter. Ancestry clearly demarcates insiders and outsiders, and there is a notion of equality between tribes (Ibid:65). Hence collective decisions are still today made on an egalitarian basis at community councils (*jirga*). Consequently one would expect clientelism to be stronger within the new Union Councils. In centralised governments, Pashto elders will be diluted and egalitarian decision-making inconsistent with majority voting. Consequently, Pashto politicians will have had to build power-bases on more than tribal affiliation with greater incentive to channel public goods to voters. Decentralisation will likely return power to Pashto elders. It is striking that close-by in Southeast Afghanistan, despite all attempts at state-building, Pashtun tribal systems remain the dominant holders of power at the local level. Attempts to implement sub-national government systems have failed due to the strength of informal rules and patronage networks (Lister, 2007:6). Equally, even attempts by Afghanistan warlords to wrestle power from tribal groups proved unsuccessful (Giustozzi and Ullah, 2006). Despite attempts to ‘deepen’ Afghan democracy, it is difficult to envisage decentralisation breaking down these long-term social structures in the immediate future.

Therefore, although decentralisation reforms will have stripped Baloch elites of their ‘monopoly’ at the provincial level, all the analysis of local tribal structures suggests that they will be replaced by local elites. These elites, generally elders, have innate economic and social power ingrained in their position within Baloch and Pashtun tribal structures. Returning to the initial questions, it appears that *no*; in most districts it is unlikely that there will be competing, heterogeneous groups within local government. Nor is it likely that there will be greater horizontal checks given that public life is organised hierarchically rather than horizontally. The most visible check on local elites will be the representation of 19 other councillors at the Union Council level, but perhaps this restraint is only effective in certain sectors under certain conditions, e.g. where information asymmetry is low. This would explain the unimpressive results to date for education and healthcare.

The evidence available is insufficient to robustly evaluate models of social polarisation. This itself is symptomatic. It is precisely the large sociocultural dissimilarities between districts

¹⁹ Excluding three years during imposed military rule.

that make it impossible to select 'representative districts' for case studies. However, such anthropological understanding of social structures alludes to strong clientelist forces within local government. Firstly, ethnic groups are territorially distinct (see figure I), ethnic identity is a key mobilising factor, and the Pashto and Baloch separatist movements are the most vocal in Pakistan. Secondly, at the tribal level, strong hierarchical relationships continue to be the basis of social identity and engagement in political systems. Given the high poverty rate in Balochistan and low credibility of political promises, it appears rational for risk-averse, poor voters to value the 'social safety-net' protection that patrons might offer them in exchange for political support.

6. Conclusion

These results are consistent with the Leviathan literature on the failure of ‘political markets’. Politicians in Balochistan have been proved responsive to electoral ‘voice’ where public goods are targetable (i.e. the less ‘public’ they truly are), and information asymmetry lower. This rationalises why decentralisation improved road and sewage provision, where monitoring costs are low and services are able to be readily targeted to households or sub-communities. However, this does not explain why health and education provision deteriorated. Surely information asymmetry would at worst have remained stable following decentralisation. A more extensive explanation calls for models of clientelism.

Patron-client relationships and voting blocs are a common feature of democracy in Pakistan. In Balochistan’s tribal, ethnically-polarised context, there is some evidence that decentralisation will empower traditionally powerful influentials. The hierarchal, paternal power of tribal elders is deeply engrained in Balochistan society and these networks remain strong regardless of electoral accountability mechanisms. Following decentralisation, tribal leaders face less competition at the Union Council level, and there are few complementary civil society bodies. Of all social services, universal healthcare and education provision are conspicuously vulnerable to clientelism because of their low private returns to individuals, requirements for educated, professional employees and high monitoring costs. This might justify why provision in both sectors appears to have suffered.

This is perhaps not a startling conclusion. Decentralisation has been observed to strengthen local elites in many contexts. This broad picture is actually remarkably similar to Putnam’s account of the ‘uncivic regions’ of ‘traditional’ Italy:

“Public life in these regions is organized hierarchically, rather than horizontally. The very concept of “citizen” here is stunted. From the point of view of the individual inhabitant, public affairs is the business of somebody else-*i notabili* “the bosses,” “the politicians” -but not me...Political participation is triggered by personal dependency or private greed, not by collective purpose.”(Putnam, 1993:115)

However, the power of the results from Balochistan is not in demonstrating that decentralisation universally hurt government responsiveness. Responsiveness did improve for the public goods, sewage and road provision, where satisfaction rates were lowest, and this success is not readily explained by exogenous factors such as funding or civil society involvement. Rather the evidence suggests that local clientelism has led lowered responsiveness where *combined* with (i) partial decentralisation, especially limited administrative decentralisation (ii) information asymmetry and (iii) limited possibilities for exclusion. These three features vary by social service, and might inform policy assessments

of how to decentralise. The customary solutions proposed by development banks tend to emphasise policies that debilitate existing clientelist relations (e.g. strengthening civil society, the press, legal systems), or mitigating factors (i) and (ii) above (e.g. Manning et al., 2003; ADB, 2005). The case-study of Balochistan indicates how difficult this might be to achieve. Despite the disparagement of development banks, recent government policies to selectively recentralise power in certain sectors, through introducing vertical programmes and top-down regulation, do address these clientelist constraints in the health and education sectors.

I would highlight three areas that warrant further investigation. Firstly, I have not rigorously analysed what size of local constituency would best encourage competition between heads of voting blocs. This is particularly relevant for the egalitarian tribal structures of the Pashtun community, which seems incompatible with the incentives presented by local democracy. Secondly, it would be worthwhile investigating the extent of the horizontal constraint imparted by the nineteen other Union Council councillors; where and how they have constrained opportunism of the Mayors and voting-bloc leaders. Finally, data limitations have restricted my analysis of hierarchical tribal relationships; i.e. how reciprocity and cooperation are 'enforced', and the nature of the underlying inequality in economic and social power (e.g. in the subordination of women). In the long-term, this is fundamental to understanding whether the new incentives provided through democratic decentralisation might slowly break down these hierarchical relationships.

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