

Administrative Issues and Reforms in the Bureaucracy of Pakistan: An Analytical Study

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Abstract *This article highlights the nature of governance in bureaucracy in Pakistan during various regimes. The bureaucracy involved itself in politics and ignored the golden sayings of Quaid-i-Azam, which led it to face various sociopolitical and administrative issues and problems. Bureaucrats' sense of primacy resulted in the politicization of bureaucracy. This intervention, as a result, led to decay, arbitrary decision-making, corruption, kickback culture and lack of accountability, etc. This study attempts to present various issues and problems faced by the bureaucracy of Pakistan and suggests reforms to minimize them so that the cherished goal of a developed Pakistan in the 21st century may be achieving.*

- Vol. VI, No. I (Winter 2021)
- Pages: 306 – 312
- p- ISSN: 2520-0348
- e-ISSN: 2616-793X
- ISSN-L: 2520-0348

Key Words: Bureaucracy, Corruption, Governance, Institutional Decay, Intervention, Politicization

Introduction

At the outset, it is important to grasp the term governance. Governance refers to the formation and of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm. Thus, bureaucracy cannot be restricted to its role of implementation only but governance as well. Thus, governance refers to behavioral disposition in different political regimes. Governance can be seen at the economic, political and administrative level. Its roots also lie in different roles of various section of society in cooperation. Socialization, the wise role of the public in making political society, the executive impact of government, administrative part of bureaucracy, regulatory aspects of financial institutions and conflict resolution by the judicial administration; make essential parts of good governance. The disorganized role of any of the dynamics would certainly disturb the usefulness of the other. Policies are implemented by the administrative machinery.

The pivotal role of bureaucracies in the rise and fall of countries cannot be undermined. Bureaucratic field of governance possesses dominant importance. However, bureaucratic performance in the form of the rule of law, politicization, efficient delivery system, public confidence, economic development, institutional

strength, rent-seeking attitude and corruption, etc., may be dissected in various regimes.

Governance in Pakistan

the civil administration is one of the continuing legacies of the British rule in the area of Colonial administrative structure stemmed its roots from Weberian model of administration-‘Domination or exercise of authority instead of service or performance of duty’. Primary obligations of the administrative machinery of Pakistan were meant to be citizen-centric, rule-based and apolitical in spirit, wherein decentralization was necessitated to be the hallmark to cater to the needs of the common man at the grass root level. Nation-building and economic survival was the overwhelming tasks for the civil servants of Pakistan. Unfortunately, bureaucracy of Pakistan could not succeed to realize such objectives.1

After independence, “Pakistan inherited the powers of the British Government of India but also its administrative machinery. Junior ICS officers were granted promotions while none of them deserved to be posted as federal secretary of a sovereign state. Quaid-i-Azam presaged the bureaucrats on different occasions in clear words. In an address to a gathering of civil

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officers of Baluchistan on 14th February 1948, he advised;²

*"We have met here today without any distinction of being big or small, as servants of the state in order to think out ways and means of advancing the interests of the people and our country. From the highest to the lowest, we all are the servants of the state."*³

Addressing the Gazetted Officers at Chittagong on 25th March 1948, he warned:-

"You do not belong to the ruling class; you belong to the servants. Make the people feel that you are their servants and friends, maintain the highest standard of honor, integrity, justice and fair play."

During another informal talk to Civil Officers at Government House Peshawar on 14th April 1948, he said,⁴

*"Do your duty as servants to the people and the State, fearlessly and honestly. Service is the backbone of the State. Governments are formed, Governments are defeated, Prime Ministers come and go, Ministers come and go, but you stay on, and, therefore, there is a very great responsibility placed on your shoulders. You should have no hand in supporting this political party or that political party, this political leader or that political leader-this is not your business".*⁵

After the death of Quaid-i-Azam and the assassination of Liaqat Ali Khan, the civil servants became entangled in a struggle with the emerging elite of the political parties; CSP soon conflicted with a variety of sectional and entrenched interests²⁰. Members of ICS agreed, not without persuasion, to suffix the letters (ICS-Pakistan) after their names. They felt pride on the fact that they were entitled to have their pension in Sterling and their home leave in England²¹. The CSP was set up under the patronage of Chaudri Muhammad Ali, a former member of Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IA&AS) it gained strength under another, Ghulam Muhammad, and then reached its zenith under the care of an Indian Political Service officer, Iskandar Mirza. In 1954, bureaucratic elite stimulated resolution to unite four Western provinces called West-Pakistan. This was meant to create parity between the East Wing (Bengalis) and West Pakistan provinces⁶

Ayub Khan, being martial law administrator, purged few old ICS officers to curtail the

unrepressed role of administrative actors. The CSP-class nervously turned to acquiescence. Most of 3, three thousand dismissals, compulsory retirements and reduction in rank took place at the lower rank. The purge rekindled among citizens a sense of rightful pride in the administrative efficiency, patriotic fervor and high moral tenor of President Ayub's revolutionary regime. CSPs posted in East Pakistan commanded Bengalis in a disparaging manner. Principle of 'national integrity' was plunked at the back burner. Soon, grievances multiplied, and some people went so far as to suggest that the behavior of West Pakistan officers was the main cause of estrangement between East and West Pakistan. Though this is an exaggerated view, it has an element of truth in it. No special arrangements were made for selection of federal level officers from East Pakistan. Although ICS/CSP Officers introduced 'Quota System' to escalate the number of Bengalis (East Pakistan Representation) yet their actual strength remained below one fourth of the total despite majority in East Pakistan with reference to population. Let's glance at the bureaucratic representation of the two wings in the Civil Service of Pakistan.⁷

The struggle between East and West Pakistan showed itself in the assignment of officers, in the allocation of funds, and in the establishment of quotas at the Civil Service Academy. West Pakistan elite and the Bureaucracy worsened the gulf between the two wings that ultimately led to disastrous conclusion. During their posting in East Pakistan, Punjab-based bureaucrats treated Bengalis hatefully bearing in mind arrogant superiority of being 'steel frame of administration'⁸

Today, it is unbelievable to understand the reasons for issuance of notification of Bengali language in Arabic manuscript. The Bengali administrators were a different quality from West Pakistani bureaucrats as the Bengalis were egalitarian in demeanor, more democratic in outlook, more informal, closer to the people in mood and attitude and less haughty. The supercilious, snobbish and distant demeanour of the West Pakistan bureaucrats sowed the seeds of hatred among the general public and civil servants belonging to East Pakistan. This disposition accentuated feelings of alienation between the two wings of Pakistan.⁹

General Zia gave greater confidence to civil servants by putting an end to the practice of

screening. During the Zia regime, army exerted a pre-eminent role in policy making while the bureaucracy was only meant to implement the policies. However, bureaucrats felt a sigh of relief in terms of their purges.¹⁰

In Musharraf Regime, Devolution plan-2001 was strategized to devolve political, financial and administrative power to district, tehsil and union council levels. Office of the Deputy Commissioner was abolished on 14th August 2001 and replaced with District Coordination Officer. A newly carved out slot of elected Mayor (District Nazim) was introduced as an administrative pivot in the district whereas the District Coordination Officer and District Police Officer were kept under his subordination. Local Government Ordinance, setting detailed rules for district-level governance, was recognized by the World Bank as silent revolution in Pakistan. Initially, bureaucrats took this system as another move to curtail their administrative powers. 11 Many DMG officers opted for higher study programmes abroad. However, keeping in view hefty financial powers of District Coordination Officers (upto 50 Million) as 'Principal Accounting Officer' and incharge of twelve departments at district level, they again hustled in the mainstream.¹²

Rent-seeking attitudes, kickback and corruption culture seeped widely in the higher echelons of bureaucracy through a channelized system of lucrative postings for blue-eyed young officers. Pakistan Muslim League (N) issued a white paper referring corruption scandals of stock exchange, sugar scandals, oil and cement cartels, Pepco, land mafia's loot, privatization of HBL, Pak American Fertilizer, PTCL etc, pertaining to Musharraf regime.¹³

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) remained in power for five years (2008- 2013) and maneuvered to complete full tenure for the first time in the political history of Pakistan. Punjab - the biggest province, was run by Pakistan Muslim League (N) while the centre and Sind by PPP. Apart from the 18th amendment-2010 and 7th National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, the government was confronted with serious governance issues and corruption scandals. Junior federal officers (DMG & ex-cadre) of 18 and 19 grades came to be regarded as de-facto rulers of Punjab. In a dissent to the principle of subsidiarity, Local Government elections were always avoided deliberately, denigrating the

same as a legacy of Musharraf regime. State-owned enterprises like Pakistan International Airline (PIA), Pakistan Steel Mill (PSM), Pakistan Railways fell victim to inefficiency mainly because of nepotistic practices. Rental power Scam, NICL corruption case, Swiss-bank and Ephedrine quota cases adversely affected the governance indicators. During this regime, bureau-politic collusion and their corruption was the trademark of the provincial and federal governments in Pakistan.¹⁴ Federal DMG officers were able to enhance their status through a change in nomenclature from District Management Group (DMG) to Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) on 21st May, 2012. PAS members started the use of suffix PAS with their names. This was a tactical move to divert the attention of the nation that was well conversant with the corrupt practices of DMG officers.¹⁵

During the PML (N) government (2013 till date), bureaucracy was politicized. Some Federal officers working in Punjab were pulled out to run the affairs of the federation. Both the governments at the federal and Punjab levels came to be run by federal DMG/PAS officers. Political posting of junior officers at higher levels, cronyism, tax concession packages to favoured business concerns business-friendly economy rather than market-friendly economy, economic growth through the business elite have been the main features of the PML (N) regime. Pakistan's premier, Nawaz Sharif, was ousted as a result of the Supreme Court's verdict in Panama Paper Leaks.¹⁶

In 2014, deaths of around 200 innocent children in Sind (Thar-Mithi) due to food (starvation) and health issues represented a testimony of the mismanagement, governance crisis and lack of accountability in the administrative machinery of Pakistan. The worsening law and order situation and daily killings in Karachi (Sind) and Quetta (Baluchistan) raised big question marks on the skills and institutional quality of the bureaucracy of Pakistan.¹⁷

Provincial officers of Punjab were discriminated vehemently in terms of promotion, transfer and posting. They were not promoted at par with their due share after 18th March, 2011. The government extended the federal quota system for further twenty years. Extension of quota and discrimination with provincial officers was contravention to the spirit of provincial

autonomy bestowed through Constitution 11 (18th Amendment)-2010.18

Administrative Reforms

After the death of Liaquat Ali Khan, bureaucracy grabbed power with a dominating role. This fault line weakened the other institutions. The primacy of unelected institutions over representative organs left Parliament weak and docile to the executive. Political institutions became weaker than the steel frame of bureaucracy. The higher bureaucracy diverged from the sayings of Quaid and adopted a dominant position over politicians. Constituent Assembly was dissolved. During this period, there was an alliance between the bureaucracy and the army through the “gang of four” consisting of Ghulam Muhammad, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, Iskandar Mirza and General Ayub Khan. Power-sharing arrangements were made between the army and bureaucracy during the Ayub regime (1958-68).¹⁹ The bureaucracy acquired strength by adopting a subservient role under the military. The ICS/CSP bureaucrats as commissioner, Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners played a biased and political role through the Basic Democracies (BD) System. The presidential election of 1965 allowed the CSP to show its ‘loyalty to the military dictator. During the military regime of General Zia, they heaved a sigh of relief from the Damocles Sword, hovered by Z.A.Bhutto. Bureaucrats enjoyed the political instability of 1990’s and PPP’s period (2008-2013) wherein different political parties faced the dilemma of multi-party governments at federal and provincial level. Shrewd bureaucrats were articulate in manoeuvring such asymmetry of governments as the chief executive of the province had no administrative powers to suspend any federal officer.²⁰

Civil servants have learnt the art of being a part of political regimes to enjoy the power corridors, arbitrary authority in decision-making, being defacto rulers, channelized environment of policymaking for vested interest, imperial life-style, white-collar corruption and unlimited perks and privileges. A culture of amassing unlimited wealth by hook or by crook in the shortest possible time has taken root. They have concerns only to please the ruling elite for their vested gains, not for the common man. Now, these little cogs of Max Webber are no more

servants of state but the real masters of the destiny of the marginalized public.²¹

For nearly two decades, Pakistan has known only limited franchise wherein political institutions were weaker than the steel frame of bureaucracy. Successive regimes of Pakistan’s polity transformed bureaucracy into politicized institution to avoid imperils of dismissals, transfers and postings. Institutional strength was clubbed with regimes and rules of the game. Charles H. Kennedy disagrees with the quota system in the words, ‘the quota selects candidates who, according to whatever criterion of merit is employed, are not the ‘best available for appointment.²² Arguably, such a selection policy makes the bureaucracy less efficient’. Academic standards of colleges and universities are not capable of producing potential candidates for civil service examination. The current education system (policies, plans, programs and schemes) is not more than pronouncements and glowing optimism of success. Federal Public Service Commission recruits only 7.5% on open-merit while 92.5% are recruited on quota-basis, as under:²³

It has been observed that the best products of the present poor education system do not normally sit for the civil service examination. Federal and Provincial Civil Servants are trained through Civil Service Academy, Management and Professional Development Department (MPDD) and National School of Public Policy and Pakistan Administrative Staff College (PASC). Semblance of training is imparted mostly through guest speakers (seminars), multi-media presentations which is void of hectic research assignments.²⁴ The courses are so superficial and the evaluation of participants so soft as to pose no great intellectual challenge to the current generation of officers with rather modest intellectual endowments. Intellectual capacity of administrative machinery was also jeopardized by dismissals, transfers and postings. Politic-bureaucrat nexus resulted into arbitrary decision-making. The decline further aggravated institutional decay. Roedad Khan, a former member of higher bureaucracy asks: “Is it surprising that the image of service is tarnished and public confidence in its integrity, objectivity and ability to deliver is totally shattered?”²⁵

Intellectually and morally crippled machinery is incapable to resolve the issues of biting poverty and social polarization, ethnicity

and sectarianism, breakdown of law and order and economic growth. The prevalent training environment does not groom bureaucrats to cope with such formidable problems.²⁶

Estrangement was pre-eminent since inception of Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan passed a resolution in 1950 to maintain the CSP as an all-Pakistan service. East Pakistan initially conveyed reluctance to the posting of West Pakistan Officers. The Provincial Civil Service officers voiced their resentment against the virtual 'provincial zing'. It was also argued that if the duties and responsibilities of CSP and PCS officers were practically the same, why should

the CSP officers be promoted much faster than their PCS counterparts. As a result of CSP (composition & cadre) Rules-1954, 25% posts were reserved for Provincial Civil Service (PCS) Officers.²⁷ But this was changed because All Pakistan Unified Grades (APUG) introduced in 1973 gave no benefit to PCS. After the promulgation of the Constitution-1973, the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) was abolished, and a new service group, District Management Group (DMG) was introduced. DMG was not the successor of CSP. In fact, CSP comprised of two services

while DMG was only one. ²⁸

Table 1. Inter Provincial Coordination Committee Formula-1993

Province	BPS-17	BPS-18	BPS-19	BPS-20	BPS-21	BPS-22
Punjab	25%	40%	50%	60%	65%	100%
Sindh	25%	40%	50%	60%	65%	100%
NWFP	25%	40%	50%	60%	65%	100%
Baluchitan	25%	40%	50%	60%	65%	100%

On 19th September, 1993, DMG fixed lion's share for themselves and deprived PCS Officers in Inter Provincial Coordination Committee (IPCC) Formula. In Punjab, PCS were discriminated by the DMG officers. Promotions of PCS Officers from BS-17 to BS-18 were prolonged for almost 20 years while DMG Officers were promoted within 4-5 years. Junior DMG Officers were posted on one or two steps higher posts. Senior PCS Officers were forced to work under Junior DMG Officers. All important posts of Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary, Senior Member Board of Revenue, Chairman (P&D), heads of attached departments, autonomous bodies, and almost all projects were captured by DMG.²⁹ In 2010, posting of DMG officers in the provinces was challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan by the provincial services of four provinces through seven Constitutional Writ Petitions, i.e,53/2010,54/2010,55/2010,56/2010 and others. On peaceful demonstration for rights in Punjab civil secretariat, 73 PCS officers were arrested on 18th March, 2011. Provincial officers were suppressed and discriminated vehemently. In 2014, a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) opened up new litigations between even federal service groups (Secretariat Group and DMG). PCS and PMS Officers were despised as subalterns of civil service.³⁰ Provincial officers were intimidated by

ruling bureaucratic elite and made to embrace a subservient role under the Federal Officers (DMG). This estrangement between federal and provincial officers further marred prospects of good governance. Discriminatory policies of DMG(now PAS), slow promotion prospects of PCS officers and absence of All Pakistan Service (APS) as enunciated in Article-240 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 led to institutional decay and further inflated the already existing gulf between federal and provincial officers.³¹

Mutuality of interest between certain politicians and bureaucrats resulted into culture of corruption. In addition to this, lack of knowledge, skills and expertise, coupled with the myopic vision of the politicians, infested bureaucrats with an influential role in policymaking. National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) were run, directly or indirectly, by bureaucrats of the same clique. ACE has rarely lodged any corruption case against any Secretary, Commissioner or DCO belonging to a federal service group as compared to the provincial service officers. Commission culture has pervaded so deep in the development works that it is not considered as an evil practice now. Channelized corruption vitiated accountability mechanism.³²

Policy Recommendations

- Following policy recommendations can improve the governance parameters:-
- Decentralization and development of local government system with independent financial, political and legislative powers can improve the participation of civil society toward better governance.
- The disparity between groups must be wiped out during in-service training.
- Training institutes must emphasize development through research techniques under the supervision of skilled research scholars, not bureaucrats.
- The international community can help to improve the prevalent civil service structure through modernized methods of administration.
- Politicization of bureaucracy must be abandoned through new legislation and rules to keep the bureaucracy apolitical and neutral.
- Strict action must be taken against bureaucrats who have political affiliations. It would improve bureaucratic efficiency.
- Independent Judicial Commission may be established without the representation of any serving or retired bureaucrat. Commission may also remove the violation of Constitution relation to Article 240 and proviso of Article 27 of the 18th Amendment.
- Civil Service must be purged through screening and right-sizing.
- The role of Provincial Civil Services (PCS) must be improved through rigorous local and foreign trainings, higher studies, research methodologies and annual training courses.
- Corruption must be dealt with iron hand policy. Bureaucrats living beyond their means or involved in mal- practices must be screened out.
- Federal and Provincial Public Service Commissions must be transparent, and

independent. Currently, it comprises of retired bureaucrats who have already worked in the same bureaucratic environment. This may promote favoritism to their colleagues, minimizing genuine chances of selection for brilliant candidates. This practice must be put to an end to recover public confidence, transparency and validity of the recruitment process so that the common man may enjoy the fruits of equity, justice and fair play.

Conclusions

The gist is that bureaucracy has lost the effectiveness and capability which they had previously. Owing to lack of research, the current lot of bureaucrats is incapable to comprehend the nature of formidable problems of poverty, social polarization, ethnicity and sectarianism, breakdown of law and order and economic regression. The decline in intellectual capacity has marred the prospects of governance parameters. Major institutes like the National School of Public Policy and others meant for training and professional development have badly failed in achieving the target of skilled and intellectually well-equipped bureaucrats to run the affairs of the state successfully. The irony of fate is that training institutes in the country are also run by the same clique of bureaucrats. How can a constricted mind in a dark and evocative environment put forward fresh and healthy ideas?

Political involvement harmed this institution in different ways. The primacy of PAS officers during the current government resulted in politicization, bureau-politic bonhomie, institutional decay, arbitrary decision-making, corruption scandals, and lack of accountability. Channelized corruption further provoked the issue. bureaucrats with preminent and decisive position in policy making were empowered that harmed the institution. There remained no proper checks and balances, which made them unaccountable. Public policies continue to be formulated for the interests of high stratum only at the expense of the public exchequer and heavy debt of foreign and domestic loans.

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