



Political Interference and Bureaucratic Performance in Pakistan: A Perspective of Civil Servants

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on Pakistan's bureaucracy and tries to ascertain how political influence on Pakistan's civil service ultimately contributed to the institution's decline. The methods used in this research are entirely qualitative in nature, and it uses relative methodologies to get the desired results. This study conducted semi-structured interviews with current and former civil servants. Political influence has consistently harmed Pakistan's civil service, contributing to its current level of inefficiency. This study aims to find the extent of this connection between politics and Civil Services from the very start of the new-born state. To identify the problem, more literature has been added about the public sector in general and the Civil Service in particular. The research reveals that Political leaders and bureaucrats have certain connections, which is why the civil service is deteriorating over time. To make choices free from outside influence or interference, bureaucrats must be independent.

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1. Introduction

The functioning of Pakistan's institutions, particularly the Civil Service, has always been under threat from political influence. Pakistan is in a precarious period of its political future. It can either get stuck in poor leadership, the financial crisis, and politics or use societal change to create a whole new and effective state structure. Pakistan has struggled with a myriad of issues ever since its inception. Soon after its creation, it experienced the loss of its important leader Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The bureaucracy was the only effective institution Pakistan had at the time of independence (Paracha, 2013). Constitution-making was long overlooked in Pakistani politics, which ultimately led to weak governance since the leaders were preoccupied with debating the place of Islam in governance (Jalal, 2012). The British left Pakistan with a well-established bureaucracy (Saayed, 2006). At its inception, Pakistan was enmeshed in several issues. The government, for instance, lacked the necessary resources, an enormous refugee crisis and a shortage of funding made things more difficult for things to run properly. However, bureaucracy overcame these difficulties to elevate the State in the eyes of the world's superpowers. For nearly 25 years, Pakistan's bureaucracy exercised autonomy and influence within the nation and accomplished much (Husain, 2018).

It took around 9 years to enforce a new constitution Pakistan. The constitution was enforced in March 1956. In October 1958, the constitution was suspended as a result of coup d'état which took place with bureaucratic, military and judicial nexus. Military dictatorship in the following decade set in motion a chain of events that ultimately resulted in East and West Pakistan splitting apart in 1971 was the most unfortunate thing to ever happen in Pakistan's history due to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's political party's intransigence. Then came the 11 calamitous years of Zia-ul-Haq, which plunged Pakistan into institutional, political, and economic chaos. After 1999, the political tenure of two major political parties turned into the final and fatal diversion from

improving Pakistani governance (Maleeha Lodhi, 2012). Even though during first military coup, Gen. Ayub Khan recognized the value of an independent bureaucracy to make Pakistan rise in the eyes of the world. However, this institution's decline started as a result of Z.A. Bhutto's period. The new constitution of 1973, took away the constitutional safeguards from the Civil Services and it was placed under the Civil Servants Act of 1973 which played a pivotal role in the decline in the performance of the civil services. Further, a unified scale and pay system was introduced which wreaked havoc on the motivation of the civil servants (Husain, 2018).

Therefore, after 1973, the bureaucracy's heyday came to an end. Three issues—political knowledge, lateral entry, and horizontal mobility—that emerged from the constitution of 1973 eventually led to the decline of the civil service. It was hoped that the expertise of the professional technocrats would help the bureaucracy. This tactic originally succeeded, but due to the manner the tool was applied, the entire bureaucracy became tainted. After 1971, the independence of the bureaucracy was severely compromised. The implementation of the unified grade system and subsequent lateral entry into its structure during the Bhutto administration was perhaps the first fatal blow to the efficiency of bureaucracy. Because political appointees would now directly be a part of the Civil service system, it was the beginning of bureaucratic decay (Fennell, 2010). This dynamic compelled Civil Servants to exert some political influence, which in turn guaranteed their success in their careers. By politicizing appointments to secure their position in politics, the democratic and military regimes that came after them only made the bureaucracy's already severe wounds worse.

After Bhutto, during Zia's regime a military quota was added into Civil Service. This move further severely harmed the institution. Additionally, the agitation years (1988-1999) were the final blow. The damages done to civil services during Bhutto and Zia period had already weakened Civil services and made them vulnerable to political influence. Politicians in positions of authority started influencing civil staff's work during the period of 1988-1999. Political unrest immediately following independence, which still existed, caused Pakistan significant harm on many different levels. Regrettably, political unrest also affected the civil service (Memon, Memon, Shaikh, & Memon, 2011). Every time a new political party entered Pakistani politics, that party's dominance in Civil Services work was evident. Government operations have been significantly impacted by political involvement, not just in the bureaucracy, but also in other governmental organizations.

The bureaucracy in Pakistan now is the antithesis of what it once was. Political influence in bureaucracy is to blame for the state of the bureaucracy today. As a result, the bureaucratic organization plunged into chaos and a bottomless pit of degradation from which it has been unable to emerge. It might be claimed that politicians view this intervention as their right based on the current amount of interference. If a bureaucrat rejects a politician after taking the proper steps, he is either demoted or fired from his position.

2. Literature Review

In contemporary countries, bureaucracy is a key institution of a state with a deep history in Europe and Asia. There are numerous bureaucracy notions and definitions that have been outlined by various researchers. Weber's bureaucracy is possibly the most significant of all. Max Weber discussed the growth of bureaucracy while contrasting modern forms (like feudalism) with historical models (Kalia, 2012; D. S. Khan, 2016). The state's bureaucracy is a key pillar, and it is closely related to politics. Legislation is passed by politicians with the assistance of bureaucracy. Bureaucrats are also responsible for carrying out laws. Therefore, bureaucracy has a crucial role to play in the development and implementation of policies. Simply said, politics without bureaucracy are empty words. Governments make crucial decisions regarding how to allocate social resources and how to administer justice to the people. While traditional political actors play a significant role in many important government decisions, bureaucrats are responsible for putting many policies into action. Policy implementation is frequently a challenging process, and many government employees have considerable power over decisions regarding implementation, even in areas of policy where there isn't political unanimity. Therefore, bureaucracy plays a crucial role to identify how political systems function. Even though they frequently play a crucial part in putting policies into action, bureaucrats might not have the same level of legitimacy as other political actors, especially in a democracy (Favero, 2018).

Before the division, the British imposed their constitution on India. They were in charge of running Pakistan's institutions during the time of partition. At the time of its founding, Pakistan

was faced with several crises, such as refugees from India, an institutional vacuum, a lack of a codified constitution, and a fragile economy. Pakistan's Civil Services excelled in these challenging times. Only with the assistance of competent bureaucrats were the British able to control the entire subcontinent. Pakistan was assigned the same institution following the division, which over time began to deteriorate. Uniform rules and procedures for civil personnel to follow became a pipe dream because of the frequently shifting political forces. As a result of this never-ending struggle, Pakistan's government officials felt under pressure to obey political orders to maintain their employment status (H. Khan, 2017).

With the advent of the Ahmadi movement in 1953, the first occurrence that led to an institutional imbalance in Pakistan began. The Pakistani army put an end to the violence against Ahmadis by declaring martial law for three months, giving the military control over institutions. As a result, a series of events occurred that eventually led to national institutions overwhelming one another (Sarwar, 2019). The administrative ministers were advised by Quaid-e-Azam not to be swayed by political parties or to submit to any sort of pressure from them. Shortly after we gained independence, Pakistan's institutions began to become weak. East Pakistan's suppression was one of the challenges. There wasn't a single Bengali working in the government. Only 2 of the 32 army chief generals up until 1968 were from East Pakistan. They were weak due to neglecting East Pakistan's financial requirements. The 1956 Constitution did not change the status of the bureaucracy, ensuring their absolute security from interference from the political authorities. As these bureaucrats were trained by the British Raj itself, they continued to perform admirably. After assuming power, Ayub Khan intended to eliminate the civil service but soon realized that without bureaucracy, the nation could not function properly. Pakistan was the fastest-rising regional power as a result of the status of bureaucracy to its prior stature (H. Khan, 2017). Ayub Khan disapproved of the disruptive politicians' actions. He introduced the EBDO committee, whose job it was to hold a politician accountable for his misdeeds.

Civil servants were placed under the Civil Service Act by the 1973 Constitution, making them prey for political predators. Governmental civil service positions were contested. Approximately 1300 influential bureaucrats were fired in 1972 as a result of their tight ties to the previous government. The unified grading system of all governmental offices further weakened the bureaucracy. Additionally, Z.A. Bhutto adopted a practice of publicly criticizing and humiliating civil workers for holding high positions and frequently blaming them for inequity. He gave ministers sole authority while fully abolishing the role of civil servants in determining government policy. A uniform scale system was first introduced by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to start the intervention. With this action, civil servants' privileges were significantly reduced. They stopped caring about helping the country and started engaging in unlawful activities to make money. As a result, the core of bureaucracy began to deteriorate to a greater extent (Maleeha Lodhi, 2012).

The Zia-ul-Haq administration, which is regarded as the worst in the nation's history, seized power via 'Islamic' propaganda. The most dangerous phenomenon, militant Islam, replaced political Islam. Without even consulting lawmakers, Zia-ul-Haq declared a modification to the constitution in 1985 when he assumed power. Because they were up against the proverbial wall, politicians made an effort to strengthen their position by turning to the civil service. The Pakistani presidential system has diminished the influence of other posts in governance. The military got more authority than Pakistan's civil sector. Instead of including all political parties, the elitist and ambitious military had a disproportionate amount of authority. The period of instability, which was marked by frequent democratic setbacks between Benazir Bhutto's PPP (Pakistan People's Party) and Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League, added insult to injury. While political parties were driven by personalities rather than by structures and plans, the government was severely underutilized (Maleeha Lodhi, 2012). People are promoted to prominent positions based on their loyalty to the political party leader rather than their skill. After coming to power, General Musharraf introduced a campaign slogan in 1999 to ensure universal public accountability and Remove corruption from itself. To combat corruption, the NAB (National Accountability Bureau) was established in 1999. Sadly, it was just used as a weapon to keep Musharraf in power by highlighting his rivals (Maleeha Lodhi, 2012).

Changing governments between both the civil and military governments fed the flames. The intentions of each government were still unclear to bureaucrats, who were compelled to

concentrate on short-term solutions that would benefit the ruling class. These actions ultimately caused harm to the nation's administrative and operational sectors (Siddiqua., 2007). Political parties have historically demonstrated that maximizing personal benefit comes before the nation. The democratic system was made weaker by the political party in power who abused the treasury and government institutions. Religious radicals and emotions of provincialism filled the void left by the bad government (Maleeha Lodhi, 2012). The debate above demonstrates that Pakistan's civil service, which until the 1980s was thought to be its backbone, is today plagued by institutional degradation and a crisis of political involvement. They no longer draw the best and most qualified candidates. There aren't many competent and intelligent newcomers to this institution. The transition to party-led government has increased the politicization of government and expanded the gap between those who are professionally competent and those who are inadequately qualified.

3. Research Methodology

In particular, the civil service is the focus of this research study, which aims to investigate the impact of political meddling on Pakistan's bureaucracy and its effect leading to Civil services' decay. This study is entirely qualitative, and the choice of this approach was made to gain insights from in-depth interviews. The research's descriptive methodology is based on both primary and secondary sources of information. To uncover the solutions to the research topic, a historical and descriptive technique is applied. The descriptive investigation itself contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon. As part of the study, primary data are analyzed and documented. The researcher conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews to obtain insightful data. In more detail, semi-structured interviews were done, and an interview guide was made expressly for this. Secondary data is gathered from sources like books or journals that are pertinent to the issue. The majority of the assistance from secondary sources was used to first conduct a literature review and then to develop the framework for this study.

12 interviews were conducted where the respondents were current as well as former Civil Servants. Different groups of civil services like financial services departments, Pakistan administrative services (PAS), Pakistan human resources group, office management group (OMG), S&JD department, foreign services of Pakistan (FSG) were chosen to get various perspectives. Apart from these groups, there are a few respondents who have been included in this study from different occupations including the Director of IAS (institute of administrative sciences) Punjab University, a Professor of the IAS Department Punjab University, and Scholars. The underlying philosophy behind the size of the sample was interviewing significantly a few over insignificant many. Interviews were stopped when information started saturating. The grade level of these bureaucrats was from 18-21 with experience of minimum of 10 years and maximum of 18 years. The Pakistani institution known as the civil service is the subject of analysis in this research. Because of the political effect on it and the causes of its deterioration over the years, which began with the founding of Pakistan, this institute was selected as the subject of analysis. All of the civil service occupational groupings are included in the population of this study.

4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed from the interviews conducted by the researcher. All the recordings which had been made during the interviews, were first listened and then got transcribed word to word. Once the transcription was done, themes of the interviews were identified to conduct analysis. Any issue raised by the respondents either by all or maximum ones were integrated in a broad theme. In some cases, even the actual words of the interviewee have been quoted within inverted commas while conducting analysis. Any critics or different opinion which was made by respondents and that didn't match with the rest of the respondent are also taken into account. Since this study is purely qualitative in nature and face-to-face interviews were recorded apart from words, facial expressions, any reactions or cues made by respondents also helped a lot in interpretation the given responses.

4.1. Limitations of Research

In this study, the sample size is only 12 respondents.

- Some officers didn't provide accurate and satisfactory information.
- Unintentional non-cooperation of the target group/respondents in providing necessary information, as they were busy is also a remarkable limitation of the study.
- The results could be unreliable due to the small sample size.

4.2. Thematic Analysis

- Why There Is an Influence of Political Powers on The Bureaucracy of Pakistan and Its Effects on the Working of Bureaucracy
- The Reason for Civil Service in Pakistan's Decay

All respondents admitted the decline of the civil service due to political influence. A bureaucrat and a political leader have a very close working connection. According to the respondent 2 of the research, the last thing anyone wants is for a bureaucrat to be known as a bureaucrat of a particular political party. Some aspects of the US Spoils system can be found in Pakistan's system as the recruitment of Civil servants is done on favoritism to some extent. Institutional imbalance is a different dilemma in which one strong institution dominates all the others and pursues its interests. In Pakistan's instance, the institutional imbalance was caused by the military. One respondent noted that "our bureaucracy suffers from colonial and feudal complexes, which is another cause of the decay of civil services." (Views of respondent 6) Institutional imbalance started establishing differently in 1999 when the military took control of the matters. It was pushed back by bureaucracy. As mentioned by respondent 2 "The crux of the matter is that Pakistan is not really democratic and we may actually have taken the turn for the worst of late". How civil workers make judgments was another factor mentioned. In Pakistan, the decision is taken before the official protocol for decision-making is started, according to the implicit favorite model. The choice is predetermined.

The involvement of the judiciary was also cited as a factor in the decline of the civil service. In the past, the judiciary has never contributed to such disparities, but today it goes too far. Politicians' and bureaucrats' interaction has made Civil Service less effective as well. Because of this relationship, there is currently an atmosphere of unfairness and injustice throughout the civil service. Politicians enlist their favorite individuals to perform the menial tasks. This institute lacks cohesion, which eventually contributes to its current state of decline. When a bureaucrat declines to carry out an improper action, another will seize the moment to take the lead and benefit from the attention, praise, and incentives that will follow. Stressed-out and underpaid bureaucrats take the wrong steps to fulfill their needs. During interviews, many of the bureaucrats described the system in this way.

4.2.1. Level & Intensity of Political Interference in Bureaucracy

Every interviewee brought up the political meddling in the implementation of policies. According to popular belief, a nation's executive and political branches must cooperate closely for the good of the whole. Because of this proximity, the boundary between political guidelines and political meddling can occasionally be crossed. The researcher was informed by respondent 5 that is transferred to a comparatively low area is a fairly light penalty for avoiding political meddling. According to respondent 8 Political meddling harms the implementation of policies. It should be very little. While guidelines come from the government, reform implementation falls under the purview of civil servants. To make Pakistan more competitive and modern, the nation has implemented several social, economic, and administrative changes. Many administrative reforms failed to produce the desired outcomes. The government's failure was the cause to develop a native public management model that would address the country's social, political, economic, and geographic conditions. Pakistan instead, implemented a borrowed NPM approach that was inappropriate for the nation (Hussain, 2020; I. Khan, 2020).

An account was provided by respondent 11 "The CM interviewed me in 1985 for the position of deputy commissioner. CM was concerned about my commitment to the government. I gave CM my word that I would be obedient and would accurately analyze the situation of the facts. I'm sure CM didn't get my argument, which is why I wasn't hired. The bureaucracy has been politized in this way". Even if they have to make compromises with their job descriptions, bureaucrats are typically more concerned with not upsetting the political powers. One of the major Constitutional protections for civil officials was removed during the Bhutto era, which made it easier to replace any bureaucrat who disobeyed politicians in power. This dealt a blow to political intervention. According to respondent 3, there is currently no tenure security. Politicians have the power to frequently change the roles and postings of bureaucrats.

According to respondent 1, the degree of intervention varies between the federal and provincial levels. Since the prime minister of the state is in charge of all matters at the federal

level, it is comparatively less at that level. Not all MPAs and MNAs have much power on these issues. The institutes primarily operate on their own. However, the chief of all matters at the provincial level is Chief Minister who can overstep. Similarly, the civil service's upper and lower levels face different levels of political interference in matters. As major decisions must be made at the federal level, political interference becomes more pronounced.

4.2.2. The Initiation of Political Interference

Political meddling has always been a component of our system; it has continued unabated since Pakistan's founding. The way this interference started and kept developing through time, taking a very horrible shape, has distinguished the past from our present. Respondent 8 mentioned that it all began with requests for favors, such as promotions or other things, but no politician would do this without his gain. Political parties demand favors in exchange for their gain. Politicians now have the authority to meddle in bureaucratic affairs because of this.

A suggestion given by many respondents of the research was that a Civil servant secures his position for 30 years while a political leader is on a 5-year term. Only this realization by civil service can make this institute strong. However, instead of taking matters into their hands and resisting political meddling, Civil servants give away the power to corruption. The institutions must unify in opposition to political interference. Politicians or bureaucrats alone cannot be held accountable. Respondents believed that if one has the ability to work and wants to work, this is one's extreme loyalty. That is not possible if one is spoiled by some politicians and bases their entire career on them. Personal skills and intrinsic abilities are always important for a Civil servant. Political leaders don't spare someone who is a freeloader.

5. Conclusion

This research concludes that being one of Pakistan's most important institutions, Civil services are politicized for the personal gains of political leaders. Politicians' intervention in Civil Service is what caused this institution to become weakened over time. Pakistan's civil service being the most powerful organization at the time of independence, lost its efficacy over time due to the continuous political meddling in its affairs. With only a few resources at their disposal at the time of independence, bureaucrats managed the state even without a constitution. The political meddling eventually damaged its worth. Instead of working for the country, bureaucrats had to serve political interests. It is discovered, nevertheless, that not only politicians profited from this meddling. Some of our officials benefited unfairly from their influence over lawmakers. They profited from the influence of politicians.

However, compared to history, the level of interference currently is different. The accountability system has significantly reduced political interference now. Nevertheless, bureaucrats face tremendous pressure, and it is thought that the current system of remuneration is unsatisfying. There were suggestions made to enhance the institute and restore its effectiveness. Bureaucracy must be independent to improve this institute as due to the reliance on politicians for policy implementation or policy development, the decisions remain pending which becomes a hurdle in the way of growth. Politicians should be restrained from handling bureaucracy and its business. Politicians should not be allowed to meddle in bureaucratic affairs of any kind, whether it involves job transfers, promotions, or anything else. Politicians' and bureaucrats' interactions need to be regulated and watched carefully.

Some of the recommendations given by the researcher are; Recruitment into the civil service requires a system staffed by people with high levels of intelligence, excellence, ethics, and leadership. While Public Service Commission continues to be fully independent and enjoy constitutional protection in all SAARC countries Since 1973, Pakistan's legislature has been in charge of it. Its status as an Attached Department of the Establishment Division has further reduced its autonomy (Rana, 2019). The Human Resources department must provide bureaucrats with a suitable job description to adhere to. Plans for career growth or succession should be very clear. Better pays should be granted to stop them from serving politicians for personal gains.

In Pakistan's bureaucracy, conflicts amongst occupational groupings are common for a variety of reasons. In the civil service, there have been many instances of inter-group disputes about productivity, ideal working practices, or politics. This is taking place as a result of an unorganized HR department that doesn't function properly. As soon as the cycle of performance

evaluation is over, the appraisal system should be improved. The requirements for joining Pakistan's civil service should be improved to draw in only the smartest and most intelligent young people. The effectiveness of an organization and its workforce is directly correlated with how competent individuals are appointed and how their performance is appreciated and evaluated (Ashraf, 2017).

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