

## **Civil Service Reforms from 1972-2002: An Analytical Study of Coordination between Civil Bureaucracy and Various Governments in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

*After partition, the civil service in Pakistan at center came to be known as "All Pakistan Civil Service" (APCS) or "Central Superior Services" (CSS). These services have been playing a key role in policymaking in the country since its very beginning. Given their role and character, much has been said and done about them. Almost every government whether civilian or military tried to introduce its own civil service reforms. Whatever the scope of these reforms might have been, it remains to be found whether these reforms affected the independence of civil service and paved way for political interference in civil service's domain making them succumb to politicians' illicit demands leaving no room for them to object or oppose in addition to causing trouble to the dissidents in the form of demotion, suspension, dismissal and transfer to unwanted places. This entire study revolves around this theme and involves subjective as well as objective analysis of the historical facts in order to establish the truth.*

**Keywords:** Civil Service, Civil Service Reforms, Politics, Political Interference.

### **Introduction**

Before the advent of British in the subcontinent, this piece of land was unaware of civil service but with the advent of British, the subcontinent came to know of civil service known as the "Indian Civil Service". (Braibanti, 1966). With death of great Mughal emperors like Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, the British got maximum freedom to establish their own rule in the subcontinent which they eventually did. They in the beginning ruled through the East India Company but war of independence in 1857 changed the circumstances. Though Indians lost this war, it sent a message to the British crown that it could not rule the subcontinent through

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trade agencies. Accordingly, the government of India Act, 1858 was enforced that sanctioned the authority of British crown in the subcontinent and laid the foundation of administrative machinery and constitutional framework in the subcontinent. The legislation continued and several other acts and ordinances were enforced. The system of administration adopted by the British was quite simple which had at the provincial level, governor at the top seconded by a divisional commissioner and a deputy commissioner at the district. The system being simple had enormous power accumulated in its every tier and came to be known as the “Indian Civil Service” or the “ICS” (Braibanti, 1966) which after partition was transferred to Pakistan with minor adjustments and changes. Here, it came to be known as “All Pakistan Civil Service” or “Central Superior Services” (CSS) with “CSP” being most effective and powerful cadre (Braibanti, 1966).

When Quaid-I-Azam and Liaqat Ali Khan died, there was dearth of able and competent political leaders. All the left overs were either inept or irresponsible who lacked the character and competence to bear the responsibility of running the newly established state. Their incompetence created a vacuum which was readily filled by all willing bureaucrats who not only occupied the available space rather held their ground so tightly that it barely left space for the politicians (Khan, 1997). The bureaucrats became the real power holders who left no stone unturned to tighten their grip over the levers of power. When they found it difficult to handle their foes on their own, they sought the help of military who first sided with them first as the problem solvers but later took over as the rulers of the state when Ayub Khan removed Sikander Mirza and imposed martial law in 1958 (Khan, 1997). He had been witness to their power tactics and maneuvering and after watching them closely for several years, it became his conviction that they needed reform. In early days of his government, he was rather harsh on civil servants and punished them by expelling and suspending them. Yet, he could not remain rigid in his conduct because of his reliance on civil service.

Being a military dictator, he needed advice and legitimacy. Owing to its knowledge and expertise, the civil service could provide him both. It made Ayub soften his stance toward civil servants. He made them central part of his Basic Democracies (BD) System (Jones, 2002). Apparently, the power was in the hands of military but the formulation and execution of policies was still in the hands of civil service who were not to blame for good or bad of any policy. Resultantly, the governance worsened and the people suffered causing turbulence in the state that forced Ayub Khan to resign. He handed the power over to Yahya Khan who conducted general elections in 1970 (Jones, 2002). These general elections brought Zulfikar Ali Bhutto into

power. He had the experience of working closely with civil service during his ministerial assignments in the period of Ayub Khan. He knew how they grabbed and manipulated power and politicians for personal aggrandizement. So, he introduced civil service reforms which were the result of his envy toward civil bureaucracy. These reforms aimed at all of the central superior services in general but had particular emphasis on CSP cadre (Braibanti, 1966). Bhutto called them as “Brahman” who in his views really needed to mend their ways. The most important of his reforms was the elimination of the constitutional guarantees available to the civil servants (Khan, 1997).

These constitutional checks ensured continuity in office of the civil servants without arbitrary transfer, demotion, suspension or dismissal on behalf of their political bosses before completion of their term. Hence, these constitutional guarantees ensured independent and fearless working of bureaucracy but when Bhutto came into power he cast them aside. This move really hurt the civil service. They lost their independence and prestige due to unhindered political interference in their domain. The politicians now got free hand to pressurize them for the fulfilment of their illicit demands. In case of showing difference, the said civil servant would be transferred, demoted, suspended or even dismissed from the service. Bhutto’s another move that really hurt the civil service was lateral induction (Jones, 2002). Through it people with required qualifications as decided by the government could be appointed directly on important positions. It led to further politicization of civil service because friends and family of Bhutto and his party workers were recruited on these positions who in connivance with their political bosses worked for the attainment of their selfish interest instead of the general interest. This was the state of civil service when Zia-ul-Haq took over the reins of government. Zia’s rise to power was unexpected. He came to power after ousting Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in a military coup (Khan, 1997). So, he possessed little experience of civil administration and had barely worked with the civil bureaucracy. Only his rise to the power gave him an opportunity to work with them. When this interaction took place, he found their plight miserable and amendable. Hence, the civil service reforms thus introduced by Zia ul Haq largely aimed at improving the condition of the civil bureaucracy and revitalizing its morale lost by it as a result of the civil reforms of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (Jalal, 1995).

Zia’s regime witnessed restoration of majority of the civil servants removed by the previous government. The unusual thing of this regime was the appointment of civil servants as ministers which had been unprecedented. Zia categorically directed them to avoid defiance with him but on the whole

during his period the civil servants were not as persecuted as in the previous regime. The sudden death of Zia ul Haq in a plane crash on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1988 paved way for installation of the civilian government (Khan, 1997). The ensuing general elections brought Benazir Bhutto into power. Being first time in the government she had to face several difficulties. The military though out of government, nevertheless had no intention of withdrawing completely from the politics. Its check on her government was definitely there. The national kitty was empty, the prices of commodities were skyrocketing, unemployment and illiteracy were rampant and above all there was no cordiality between president and the PM. They clashed on several occasions, the result of which was arbitrary dissolution of all assemblies and dismissal of national government by the president (Khan, 1997). Thus, during her first term in the office, Benazir did not find enough time to pay heed to civil service reform. Her dismissal resulted in next general elections where Islami Jamhuri Ittehad (IJI) under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif secured victory and formed government. Nawaz Sharif became the next prime minister but like his predecessor he too could not survive long in the office. Once again his government was dismissed by then president Ghulam Ishaque Khan because of their mutual clashes (Khan, 1997).

Other general elections that took place in the country brought Benazir into power once more but this time she immediately got elected Farooq Laghari\_ a PPP stalwart as the president in order to avoid bad relation with the presidency. Despite it, differences emerged between them, as a result of which the president resorting to his discretionary power expelled Benazir from the office hence, yet again general elections were held in the country that proved good luck for Nawaz Sharif who became the prime minister of Pakistan a second time. This time he was successful in acquiring two thirds majority which enabled him to amend the constitution. Within a year he got rid of the president's discretionary power to oust the elected government on will along with the passage of legislation to stop the possibility of defection (Jones, 2002). By these moves he further consolidated his power and became assertive. In doing so, Nawaz Sharif annoyed the military by removing Jahangir Karamat and replacing him with Pervez Musharraf as the new Chief of Army Staff (COAS).

Though Musharraf was Nawaz's handpicked general, he disagreed with his boss on several occasions leading to rift between them thereby prompting the PM to fire him during his visit to Srilanka (Jones, 2002). On his return to Pakistan, Musharraf's plane was not allowed to land at Karachi airport who while in the air consulted other senior generals and with their help toppled the government on Oct 12<sup>th</sup>, 1999 with the imposition of martial law.

Thus, the era of civilian rule in Pakistan came to an end. During this entire decade the unending wars between the main political actors left no space for political reform to take place. None of them had the time to improve the plight of civil service. No significant step was taken in this regard. There was one common practice. With change in government, the new regime would bring in the team of its favorite bureaucrats. It made the civil service patronage seekers and created division among them. There was a group who supported PPP, the other patronized Nawaz Sharif while there were some of them who waited for the third party to come over and prove good luck to them which eventually happened when Pervez Musharraf came into power. Nevertheless, those who had the patronage of both of these parties had to work according to their wish.

It certainly affected their independence. Owing to his military background, Musharraf really needed the help of civil servants and it was expected that he would introduce reforms that might prove really beneficial to them but the reforms that he introduced proved more damaging than his predecessors. On the pretext of devolving power to lowest level, Musharraf introduced his own version of local government system. Under it, the Nazim system was launched at the district level. Nazim was declared responsible for entire administration of the district (Cheema, 2005). He had to look after every administrative affair at the district level. The office of deputy commissioner (DC) at the district level was abolished and replaced with a new post known as the "District Coordination Officer (DCO)". The DCO as far as his powers were concerned was not a match to erstwhile DC. He did not enjoy the sort of autonomy, influence and powers as were a hallmark feature of DC. Nazim was given dominance over DCO who had to report every matter to the former. Nevertheless, this system did not allow the nazim to transfer or suspend DCO on will. These powers were with the secretariat (Cheema, 2005). These reforms overhauled the bureaucratic structure at district level and had significant impact on their working and independence.

## **Results**

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1. The civil service reforms did pave way for political interference in the domain of civil service
2. The civil service reforms introduced by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto opened door for political interference
3. The elimination of constitutional guarantees\_ regarding security of service to civil servants\_ by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in addition to lateral induction institutionalized the political interference in the domain of civil service

4. The principle of lateral induction was followed by Zia-ul-Haq and proved to be a source of extraneous influence on civil service
5. The civilian governments of 1990s promoted political interference in the civil service by patronizing them. Both Benazir and Nawaz governments would bring along a team of their own favorite civil servants
6. The devolution plan of 2002 was kind of unique because it gave Nazim the right to supervise his DCO but gave secretariat the right to transfer or suspend him.

### **Suggestions**

1. There should be a provision in the constitution regarding fixation of the tenure of a civil servant during his posting at any station.
2. It should also be provided in the constitution that unless this term is completed a civil servant could not be transferred
3. Fix term of posting of the civil servants at a particular station for not more than two years where they should be assigned with specific tasks that they must complete in the provided period.
4. There should be regular inspections and evaluation of their performance on the assigned tasks.
5. After every four months the inspection and evaluation teams should assess the performance of the civil servants and score them according to their progress.
6. The highest scorers should be rewarded through better postings, quicker promotions and other privileges like financial rewards, awards and roll of honour.
7. The MPA, MNA, Senator and even the locally elected representatives should be on the evaluation team which should also include representatives from the office of ombudsperson, service tribunal and services and general administration department (S&GAD).
8. The number of political and nonpolitical members on the team should be equal so that every party gets equal representation and no injustice is done to either side. If it happens it will create balance within the committee where evaluation should be done through individual score.
9. The score of every quarter should be totaled and the fate of the said civil servant should be decided on the basis of sum total of the score of two years. Their score should be categorized as bad and good one with further distinction as the highest, the low, lower and lowest scorers.

10. Then in accordance with the score, the fate of any of the civil servant working in any part of the country should be decided. This evaluation report should carry recommendations of the entire evaluation team. The basis of these recommendations or remarks will certainly be the civil servant's cumulative score. This evaluation report when received in the mother department should be acted upon in letter and spirit
11. The results of these reports should be published or presented in the media along with the provision of their copies in the public service commission offices, ombudsperson offices, service tribunals and the local government offices. It will be a relief from the obsolete and useless Annual Confidential Reports (ACR) system along with enhancement of merit and good values among the civil servants who can then be expected to perform better
12. In a case where a civil servant fails to meet the threshold, then the evaluation team can and should suggest disciplinary action against the said civil servant which could take any form. It will have the advantage that it will minimize the chances of political victimization of civil servants because the decision of legal action against them will be after thorough assessment and mutual consent of the evaluation team with least chances of the involvement of mala fide, grudge or prejudice.
13. In this way, it is expected that neither politicians nor the civil servants will cherish selfish interest thereby paving way for the happening of some real public service. It will be a check on the ambitions of politicians because none of them could unilaterally decide the fate of a civil servant

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