

Real Powers in the Hands of Bureaucrats

Raagini Sharma

(RIEAS Senior Analyst)

Copyright @ 2021 Research Institute for European and American Studies (www.rieas.gr)

Publication date: 27 March 2021

Note: The article reflects the opinion of the author and not necessarily the views of the Research Institute for European and American Studies (RIEAS)

1. Abstract

In the modern era, most nations are run by two main actors: lawmakers who come to power by public votes and designate bureaucrats. The partnership between politics and administration defines the extent of a country's legitimacy. Bureaucracy should act as a box in which the electorate's needs and wishes are collated, analysed, and translated into measured actions and meaningful policies. However, it is an ideal situation as there are several bad and wrong policies implemented. There is always a peril that looms largely of bureaucracy becoming corrupt, being too assertive or defunct being spineless. This paper analyses the role of bureaucrats of two countries, India and Pakistan and how the various pillars of government have shaped the characters of both countries' bureaucracy and how real is the power of bureaucrats? Historical research is used to demonstrate redemptive analysis, assessment and present state of policy matters.

Keywords: Bureaucrats, Real power, Policymaking, India, Pakistan, Government, Military, Constitution, Democracy, Supremacy.

Methodology: The study seeks to identify various contributory factors, pertaining only to India and Pakistan, those guide bureaucratic mechanisms. Amongst the prominent factors are the form of government - Democracy or Military rule, historical perspective, the existing state of governance, the influences over the bureaucracy of Legislature, Executive and Judiciary in case of India and add to it the fourth dimension of

Military in case of Pakistan and the state of economy and development. These are the tangible factors and there are several intangible factors and influences from various stakeholders. This essay enables hypotheses to be studied and generalised, a system of grounded theory and a comparative analysis between Indian and Pakistan bureaucracy is used. Historical trends, notable events, content analysis and observations, all these factors are used to examine what the real power of bureaucrats is in India and Pakistan.

2. Introduction

If the word "bureaucracy" is an invention of the 18th century, the bureaucracy-like organisational structure had developed in ancient times and persisted since then to fulfil the state's functions, albeit in different forms. Since the first use of the phrase by Vincent de Gournay, other French authors popularised the concept, but only in the 19th century, the British social scientists began using the expression. Two prominent sociologists, Mosca and Michels, wrote extensively on bureaucracy as well. However, **Max Weber**, a German sociologist and author, did the systematic analysis of the subject and wrote the **Bureaucratic Theory of Management**. The essence of contemporary bureaucracy grew with Max Weber's intervention, and his concept of bureaucracy was found to be efficient then and later. However, as countries started to develop and dynamics of governance continued to change and evolve, it lost its effectiveness against societal expectations.

Bureaucracy and public policy are essential elements of our social lives, and the policies affect the lives of citizens. Whatever the democratic system does the government follows, it is not a single public entity. However, it is composed of numerous organizations, departments, and agencies that function together to effectively run the nation and, hence, impact societies? The use of political legitimacy and application of political control to achieve the goal of the welfare of the people is in the hands of different bodies of the state. Every government aims for the harmony of society, the rule of law, economic stability and improved living standards for citizens through good governance and policymaking.

The task of policymaking is highly dependent upon the governing system. A democratic system will ideally render this task to the elected representatives who are politicians. (Kalia, Sumrin) The task of implementing the decisions taken by the law and policymakers of the nation, however, remains attributed to the bureaucratic machinery that forms the essence of administration and is referred to as an actual vehicle of governance. However, this is not as simple as it sounds. There are many grey areas where the boundaries overlap. (Alberto, 2004). Politicians and bureaucrats have a partnership like a network. Even though the elected representatives have to make laws, policies, and programs and connect with the people, the administrators are accountable for the execution, without which all of these are merely on paper. The relationship between the two thus plays a vital role when it comes to governance.

In today's scenario of heightened awareness of citizens, the political problems for the ruling government have increased due to the massive demands put on government agencies to become leaner, more productive and get programmes closer to the people. The laws that govern institutional processes, whether structured or informal, are essential for public perceptions of how the state functions.

Implementation of policies, either at the senior or at the grass-root level, is done by the bureaucrats. Bureaucracies are an essential part of the government, and they are doing much more than just implementing policies. A bureaucrat can be a Cabinet Manager, a state-owned company's President, a Director-General or a street-level administrator of health services, lower courts, law offices, and other organisations. Bureaucrats, to whichever level they belong, have significant and crucial roles to play.

Under political institutions, there is an organ that conducts policymaking who are also non-elective government officials. It is every government's backbone in a society. According to Max Weber, the administrators should be moral, legitimate and impartial. They are a key element in the efficiency of the administration and for the country. Within developing economies, bureaucratic productivity is extremely important. Bureaucracy should not be politized, nor should it be under any political party; rather, it should be neutral.

The essay aims to fill some of this literature void by researching India and Pakistan's elite civil servant system.

3. Emergence of Bureaucracy in India and Pakistan

In the 20th century, the British started to gradually transfer power to local authorities in several regions throughout India. In the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Punjab, two regions that would make up the bulk of Pakistan after the partition in 1947, they did not pursue any legislation very far. These areas were significant military recruiting grounds for the British Raj and were situated along its fractious Western frontier, where the security threat was perceived to be more prominent. While several of India's provinces inherited from the Raj had some democratic history, Pakistan inherited two highly militarized provinces with no such context, laying the groundwork for the military-bureaucratic culture of the region. The concept of India was born and established in Delhi with an entire political structure, whereas in 1947, under an emergency regime, Pakistan had to create a whole administration.

Furthermore, India inherited their institutions from their colonial past that best suited the British purpose. In India, colonial governance had developed during the British Raj and served to protect and maintain British values until 1947. After attaining Independence, the key responsibility of nation-building was entrusted to Indian bureaucracy. The bureaucrats in the early years had been quite successful in the social and economic

development of the emerging democracy. It was the vision of Sardar Patel to reinforce cohesion and national unity through civil services.

1947, Pakistan's emergence as an independent country was so surprising and sudden that for the first decade (1947-1958), "Pakistan, while theoretically a parliamentary democracy was ruled by a cabal of a senior civil servant with the military as a junior partner" (Group, 2010). However, gradually this kind of bureaucracy's function began to suffer from problems such as politicisation and bureaucratisation, making it less successful and less competitive.

British India, the imperial purpose was represented by the hierarchical body. The bureaucracy had also worked satisfactorily to lift the country after India's freedom. But after a few decades, other ills plagued this institution. In India at that point, the administrative order existed almost unchanged not only as a checklist of office-procedures, office-buildings, and former employees, but as existing practises, biases, desires, and aspirations among officials and people. There was no significant departure from the past administrative tradition although the bureaucratic machinery established by the British was politically denounced. (Bribanti, 1966).

In the context of Pakistani governance, the imperial history tends to be visible, operating in the manner given by the British. It undermines its stakeholders' autonomy, especially the local government, to which Pakistan's constitution vests appropriate authority. Barring few changes, the government has retained the old bureaucratic system, mindset, old practices, and other colonial tendencies, which are still evident in the essence of Pakistani bureaucracy and are proving to be a roadblock to the incorrect implantation of democratic principles.

It was impossible to fundamentally change an institutional framework in a large and heterogeneous nation like India that effectively preserved political unity and law and order. Few changes have been made in the institutional system, such as the replacement of the Indian Civil Service by the Indian Administrative Service. In Pakistan, the oligarchy of bureaucracy and military did not let any political party establish and run the government democratically (Ashutosh, 2009). In order to control India, the British strengthened its state bureaucracy, so was the pattern of governance in ensuing years where the control of the state was in the hand of the military and bureaucracy (Siddiq, 2007).

Despite people's increasing demands in a changing social and political climate, the nature of governance adopted from the British did not work to the degree they expected. The public servants' devotion and commitment to public service became low. Instead of serving the public good, they were busy pursuing their own needs.

4. Recruitment of Bureaucrats in India and Pakistan

In India, the bureaucrats are selected on the basis of merit through All India Services, Central Civil Services and the State Civil Services Examination. A professional cadre of bureaucrats or civil servants are recruited and placed by the central government to serve at the central and state governments, providing administrative synergy to the federal union of India. The All-India Services and the Central Civil Services together contribute the permanent civil service bureaucracy in India, that is Indian Administrative Services (IAS), Indian Police Services (IPS), and Indian Forest Services (IFS). Public services are an inseparable part of the Indian government's board. As such, the bureaucracy remains politically neutral and guarantees administrative continuity to the ruling party or coalition (Bhattacharjee,2017). After the selection process, the successful candidates undergo training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand. (Ghose, 2011).

The Pakistan Administrative Service or PAS, previously known as the District Management Group (DMG) before 1 June 2012, is an elite and most prestigious cadre of the Civil Service of Pakistan (Malik Asad, 2014). The Pakistan Army, Air Force and the Navy have their own 10 per cent allocation in all Central Superior Service classes, but they have traditionally only entered the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), the Office Management Group (OMG), the Foreign Service of Pakistan (FSP) and the Police Service of Pakistan (PSP). The evaluations are administered by a committee chaired by the Federal Public Service Commission Chairman.

5. The Real Power of Bureaucrats

The politically neutral bureaucrat is a desirable notion of an optimal system of government, nevertheless, this is a conventional notion. Nations that have recruited, maintained and empowered strong technical and morally competent civil servants allowing them to function in the wider public interest have been effective in maintaining good governance. Singapore and Malaysia are examples. In the case of Pakistan where politics is a function of patronage, bureaucracy remains plagued by institutional decline and its compliance generally comes from means of coercion (in the case of autocratic regimes) and negotiability (in the case of democratic regimes).

Merle Finstad differentiated five forms of bureaucracy when addressing the relationship between bureaucracy and political authority movement: -

- a. Ruler-dominated Bureaucracies.
- b. Military-dominated Bureaucracies.
- c. Ruling Bureaucracies.
- d. Representative Bureaucracies.
- e. Party-state Bureaucracies (Fainsod, 1996).

As we know, Pakistan has been moving from parliamentary to military governments, where there has been constant manoeuvring of administrative machinery. Even, the 2013 Local Government Act does not grant adequate authority and empowers administration as a significant grassroots player. In Pakistan, the government's principal is free to choose his agent as bureaucrats, while governmental structures are independent in essence, as in India.

According to Rumki Basu, "While the Indian bureaucracy today has lost many of its discretionary power in the age of liberalisation, they are still able to influence and shape legislation, and their views and inputs may strongly shape policy discourse in the years to come" (Basu, Rumki, 2015). In Pakistan, whether it's military, legislative or executive branch, the government seems to be exercising an undefined sphere of influence. The executive branch expresses unrestrained control and especially local government has made the political system dysfunctional. Political shyness has paved the way for Pakistan's bureaucratic hegemony. The reason why the elected representatives are not empowered is that they are not prepared to implement grassroots democracy. Importantly, every military regime's statement that "Pakistan was not yet fit for the full democratic experience" was the same. Which means that the bureaucracy under the democratic system in Pakistan has been on the side-line. Unencumbered to its control, a bureaucratic system of service delivery has been brined by bureaucracy in Pakistan that does not favour the people but the political boss. Throughout Pakistan's bureaucracy, the colonial mentality and lifestyle are why the bureaucracy partnership with the person looks like "client and subject."

6. Problems of India and Pakistan Bureaucratic System

The Political & Economic Risk Consultancy in Hong Kong rated the Indian administration as the worst in Asia, claiming that its authorities are barely held accountable and were the main cause of the trust deficit amongst the citizens. In Pakistan, the public administration has been the target of three rivals: overbearing military, incompetent politicians, and bloated bureaucracy. Moreover, bureaucratic stranglehold has corroded the structure of local government from within. Although the 18th amendment calls for the redistribution of legislative, political and financial resources, interestingly, higher administration has been hostile to local government. The hesitation in law-making by the civilian government and the inability to hold elections on time allowed the bureaucracy an opportunity to control the government. Bureaucracy intervention is one of the main challenges in Pakistan's system of effective and transparent governance.

Today's Indian administration's biggest problem is bureaucratisation, the problems for which bureaucrats themselves are directly responsible for. At the cost of public interest, the officials exploit their experience, information and influence to serve their own needs. Bureaucratisation induces corruption and inefficiency, and the defaulters are difficult to be punished due to complicated procedures and red-tapism. The case of Pakistan,

the political system has been troubled by repeated disturbances caused due to military takeovers of parliamentary regimes. An ideal society with multiple party system offers transparency as a major control mechanism for both politicians and bureaucrats, but there is greater uncertainty in defining the position of bureaucracy in circumstances where authoritarian regimes have longer tenures. In 2010, the Cabinet Secretary, the highest government official admitted literally that the bureaucracy has failed India due to widespread corruption and malpractices (Singh, Joginder, 2014).

A further challenge comes explicitly from the elected leaders, although this is implicitly the duty of the bureaucrats. This is the risk of the legislators politicising the civil service. Thus, sometimes the officials are politicised happily in exchange and sometimes under heavy pressure to get some unfair favour. "...in recent years, all over the country the members of the IAS and the IPS have shown a marked tendency to carry out wishes of their political masters without pausing to consider if the contemplated action is in accordance with the law." (Rafath, Mohammed Ali, 2012). Rather than just operating critically for greater public benefit, the administrators are forced to work for the party in power irrespective of its validity or some limited vested interests.

Another challenge to the bureaucratic system is to compete with other actors and the demands and expectations of the people. Earlier, the bureaucracy had the power to provide the public with services. Bureaucrats have to compete with private companies and private entities nowadays. Bureaucracy research is always under popular eye in today's government, with the participation of people. A bureaucrat is forced to fulfil the growing public standards and satisfy their demands. Currently, governance includes network management and collaborative policy making involving multiple entities such as corporate, non-governmental and charitable organisations. Thus, bureaucracy's tasks and responsibilities are tough as they must get all these parties to the table to discuss and promote their confidence-building policymaking. Bureaucracy's natural role was only as a service provider. Yet administration should function as a broker, facilitator and regulator as well as a service provider in the context of the 21st century.

In Pakistan, there are presently around 2.4 million regular civil servants for a population of 170 million or one civil servants for every 67 citizens. In comparison, India has one civil servant for 110 citizens. Under today's government both in India and Pakistan, there are many distressing patterns. There is also a lack of leadership skills among administrators. Very few political leaders accept the permanent executives' unrestricted, honest and unbiased guidance. Almost all of them allow their civil servants to provide guidance that fulfils their political or vested interests. On the other side, there is no less number of such civil servants who like to just say "yes sir" and keep their political masters satisfied to get unfair favour in their move, posting and promotion.

Barun Kumar Sahu, an IAS writes in his book, "Administration in contemporary India is complex. There are remarkable diversities in the vast country, which faces myriad problems. There are qualified men and women in

bureaucracy to administer the country. Yet, at times, the functioning of bureaucracy appears queer – or even downright ridiculous and agonising. A bureaucrat may have to face the brunt of vested interests for his misdemeanour, as also for his commitment. He may have to suffer mental agonies and his family may have to live in a recurrent paroxysm of uncertainties and anxieties.” (Sahu, Barun Kumar, 2004) He adds, “Many bureaucrats and activists do attempt to improve the system. However, they face severe constraints in their attempts and falter in achieving their objectives” (Sahu, Barun Kumar, pp 9, 2004). That leads us to an inference that, although the bureaucrats possess the strength of knowledge and expertise, they lack the willingness to use it fairly, honestly, fearlessly and without any external influences, rather most of them use the knowledge as a vehicle to promote their careers and please the political bosses.

The fact that the emphasis is on patronage and not policymaking, the client-based policy has struggled to provide public goods and good governance to the citizens of Pakistan. Also, in the bureaucracy which is now nothing but a resource for legislators to serve their interests, this patronage system has collapsed. Such politicisation has also jeopardised bureaucratic activities that have left people helpless.

Thus, one infers about Indian and Pakistan’s bureaucratic system that, in both the countries, the power of bureaucrats is not real, rather they are manipulated by politicians and military personnel. That brings us to a statement in an article in Times of India, by Swagato Ganguly, "Pakistan has got its generals as a ruling class, India has got its bureaucrats who cloud and screw things up for the rest of us" (Ganguly, 2017)

7. 21st century Bureaucratic system

It is clear that bureaucracy is not the primary instrument of government in the 21st century, but it is still the main tool for policy development and execution. Currently, when the democratic countries are met with a multitude of challenges such as growing industrial development, rising people's expectations and demands, increasing population, improving quality of life, rural development, scarcity of resources, concern for sustainable development, etc. the chalking out and implementation of policies by the bureaucrats become vital and significant. Also, besides, the citizens look forward to welfare services such as public health, schooling, social security, the value of bureaucracy is then realised.

Bureaucracy and democracy go hand in hand, and it complements each other. When one compares Indian bureaucracy with Pakistan one can analyse the difference, India, on one, hand is led fully by the democratic system, whereas, in Pakistan, the elites and the military power control the policymaking of the country. According to S. N. Eisenstadt, political development cannot be achieved without the sufficient involvement of bureaucracy. C. P. Bhambri acknowledges that bureaucrats and politicians have a bond to serve their interests, he states unequivocally that bureaucracy is just one part of the political structure. Bureaucracy is therefore regulated by the other branches of the political system, such as the political parties, legislators and the legislature, to make it work for socio-economic development effectively.

Hierarchy and regulating actions tend to be difficult to reconcile with an atmosphere marked by new public administration, "governance" and postmodernity. Based on F. W. Riggs, in developing countries, in order to achieve overall development, there needs to be a balance between democratic and bureaucratic progress. This is what he terms "Polity Harmony". There is no question the administration has its drawbacks, but it plays a key role in a country's government.

Because of underperformance, bureaucracy faced further attention at the emergence of the LPG model. The private companies began to be accepted and encouraged by negating the presence and value of bureaucracy. But again, slowly it comes to light that the governance model of the economy is not all in one and cannot solve many of the society's problems. And, with certain drawbacks, even in the 21st century, governance has its significance. Nevertheless, this hierarchical institution needs to be reformed and rebuilt as an effective instrument for good governance.

At the Second Minnow brook Conference (1988), it was stated that public officials had to be more diligent in carrying out their duties and that it was important to promote transparency and the involvement of citizens in government. The New Public Government (NPA) argued that the administration should be sensitive to societal issues. The philosophy of public choice criticised the foundations of governance, and the viewpoint of New Public Management emerged influenced by the theory of public choice.

Since the 1990s, the assault on bureaucracy has become more common and violent. On the other side, it has also become apparent after studying the LPG model's roles and efficiency for over a decade that the market model also has several disadvantages and limitations. Governance is not possible without bureaucracy. But governance has to remain and as such has to be changed to resolve the drawbacks. New ideas, new processes, evolving requirements and growing perceptions are affecting and impacting government in the 21st century. In such a situation, the institutional machinery will make some improvements in its actions and activity.

8. Conclusion

In the governance architecture, bureaucracy has gained a pejorative reputation by associating it with red-tapism and corrupt attitudes, that works with its own standardized rules and regulation, going against reforms in its structure and preventing those who try holding them accountable (Ejersbo & Svava, 2012).

It is the bureaucracy's job to ensure that the political elite adopts strategies that reflect the nation's wider needs, and that they survive even if the regime changes. Historical analysis, though, shows that civil service has become extremely variable and deceptive at present. Their politicization has weakened their efficiency, while lacking the necessary administrative authority at many stages, such as issues of price control, elimination of encroachments, implementation of municipal laws.

In Pakistan, the bureaucratic decision-making structure turns bureaucrats into de facto politicians, according to Garth N. Jonas & Shafik Hashmi, with collective actions based on politics and a complex understanding of Pakistani history rather than the technocratic requirements of Weber. Therefore, even though the bureaucracy of Pakistan has passed more than seventy years, it maintains the status of a ruling class that is neither attentive to its duties nor responsible for its acts, and we can rightly conclude that Pakistan's bureaucracy feels its job is to govern rather than represent.

The guiding principles of Indian and Pakistan's civil services remain the norm of integrity, impartiality and competence. Yet a lack of transparency and favouritism has contributed to collusion and politicisation in the administrative system, which should not be the case. The civil services should be impartial irrespective of the ruling political party. But in the case of India, the political party has an upper hand and is dominated by the military in Pakistan, which leads us to the assumption that there is a vacuum of the "Real Power".

References

1. **Ahmed, E.** (1980). *Bureaucratic Elites in Segmented Economic Growth: Pakistan and Bangladesh*. University Press.
2. **Alberto, A.; Guido, T.** (2004), *Bureaucrats or Politicians?* Working paper 10241, National bureau of economic research, Cambridge.
3. **Basu, Rumki**, (2015) *Public Administration in India: Mandates, Performance and Future Perspectives*, New Delhi: Sterling
- 4.
5. **Bribanti, R.** (1966) *"Concluding Observations"*, *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition*, Durham: Duke University Press, p.643.
6. **Christophe Jaffrelot** (2011). *The Indian-Pakistani Divide*. [online] Foreign Affairs. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2011-02-20/indian-pakistani-divide> [Accessed 24 January. 2021].
7. **Fainsod** (1996) *"Bureaucracy and Modernisation"* in Heady Farrel. *Public Administration: A comparative Perspective*, Fifth Edition (New York: Marcel Publications, pp. 312

8. **ISLAM BISWAS, M.** (2017). Bureaucracy in the 21st century India: Present status and Concern. [online] Available at: https://www.academia.edu/37446472/BUREAUCRACY_INTHE_21ST_CENTURY_INDIA_PRESENT_STATUS_AND_CONCERN [Accessed 13 January. 2021].
9. **Maheshwari, S. R.** (2001), Indian Administration, New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan.
10. **Prasad, D. Ravindra,** et al Administrative Thinkers, New Delhi: Sterling, 2010, p. 74
11. **Rafath, Mohammed Ali,** Bureaucracy and Politics, Jaipur: Rawat, 2012, p. 163
12. **Sahu, Barun Kumar,** (2004) Unwritten Flaws of Indian Bureaucracy, Delhi: Pustak Mahal, p.15
13. **Singh, Joginder,** Crruption: A Threat to Indian Bureaucracy, New Delhi: Gyan, 2014
14. **Singh, Har Swarup,** Indian Bureaucracy: Maladies and Remedies, Delhi: Shipra, 2007, p. 20
15. **Tanwir, M., & Fennel, S.** (2010). Pakistani Bureaucracy and Political Neutrality: A Mutually Exclusive Phenomenon . The Pakistan Development Review, 239–259.
16. **World Heritage Encyclopedia** (2010). *World Heritage Encyclopedia*. [online] Worldheritage.org. Available at: http://www.worldheritage.org/articles/Organisational_structure.
17. **Wilder, A.** (2010). The Politics of Civil Service Reform in Pakistan. Journal of International Affairs, 19-37.