*Ilhan Niaz**

The Lost War for Specialization: Pakistan's Higher Bureaucracy in the 1960s and 1970s

ABSTRACT

During the 1960s, while the world lauded Pakistan's development trajectory, a debate raged within the higher bureaucracy on the subject of institutional design. Those engaged in this debate fell, broadly speaking, into advocates of a specialized higher bureaucracy selected on the basis of subject-knowledge and technical competence, and a general-administrator dominated higher bureaucracy chosen for leadership ability. This debate was lost by the former and won by the latter leading to an enormous concentration of responsibility within the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) cadre of the higher bureaucracy. It also led to polarization within the bureaucratic elite and made them vulnerable to reforms that in the 1970s, diminished civil service autonomy, pay, and services conditions, and increased politicization. With the case for specialization having been lost, the reforms advanced since the 1980s assumed that no transition to a specialized ministry-based civil service structure was possible. This paper examines this debate and draws out its implications for Pakistan's underperformance and development management.

Keywords: Governance, Pakistan, History, Bureaucracy, Public Policy, Reform.

Introduction

The 1960s are often regarded as Pakistan's most successful decade. The Ayub Khan military regime (October 1958-March 1969) presided over an outstanding period of economic growth characterized by vital investments in water and power infrastructure and the launching of the Green Revolution in Pakistan. The Ayub Khan regime also reformed marriage laws to the advantage of women and made the only serious attempt in Pakistan's history to introduce family planning. On the world stage Pakistan, as an ally

* Associate Professor, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

in the West's quest for containment of the Soviet Union, enjoyed a favorable international image and, more importantly, access to advanced weapons and foreign aid inflows. The Ayub Khan regime depended upon the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) cadre of Pakistan's higher bureaucracy to deliver on its program of order and progress. The CSP was the direct descendent of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) that had staffed field, coordination, and leadership positions, during the British Raj. Although the All-India Services of the British Raj included, until 1935, the Indian Police Service (IPS), the Indian Education Service (IES), the Indian Medical Service (IMS), and the Indian Service of Engineers (ISE), as well as the ICS, it was the ICS that led the bureaucratic apparatus. For all practical purposes, ICS officers serving in the field as commissioners were area governors with powers encompassing land revenue collection and magistracy as well as broad responsibility for supervising all departments of the administration. These officers were expected to move around their jurisdictions and employ their vast powers to address grievances on the spot. For all the romanticism associated with this elite within the elite, a sentiment cultivated by ICS officers in their writings, their importance to the British Indian state was firmly rooted in the requirements of governance that prevailed in the 1800s and 1900s in South Asia.

The first of these requirements was that land revenue was a major source of income for the British Raj until the late-1930s. From a high point of about 60% of all revenue (1859), taxes on land still contributed about 25% of receipts in 1933 (Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 1933-34). Consequently, the ICS, as collectors of land revenue, generated a very substantial revenue stream that was, however, in relative decline to other sources, such as taxes on income and customs duties. From a purely functional perspective, the ICS literally earned their importance through the weight of their revenue contribution. As India's economy became more services and industry oriented, a change that greatly accelerated due to the Second World War, the share of land revenue in total tax collection dropped and was 7% by 1946 (Kumar 1984). The importance of the ICS in terms of its tax function had been substantially eroded by the time India and Pakistan became independent even though the structure of the public administration remained essentially that of a state that derived much of its revenue from taxes on land.

The second requirement stemmed from the rural nature of Indian society. While the share of land revenue in total taxes collected dropped steadily between 1859 and 1933, and then steeply after 1935, the fact remained that 85% of South Asia's population was rural and agrarian. Much of discord in this society, including disputes over ownership, was connected to the land revenue administration. As the heads of the administration, ICS officers spent much of their time in the field and were

often the only visible representative of the central government in the rural areas. Disposal of disputes and dealing with criminal cases brought the ICS officers into sustained and close contact with the ground realities of governance in India. This experience was what made the ICS valuable as policy advisors and administrative leaders to the colonial political elites, who were often sent from England with little first-hand knowledge of South Asia.

The third requirement arose from the overall policy orientation of the British Raj as a low-taxing, limited-spending, imperial state with little interest in the holistic economic development of South Asia. In the broader scheme of British imperial political economy, India served as a captive market for industrial goods and modern services, a source of raw material, and as a provider of cheap manpower. This meant that unlike Meiji Japan, Soviet Russia, Republican Turkey, or Imperial Germany, India received little investment in health, education, and industrialization. The limited British interventions in these sectors, though substantial compared to other far more brutal and rapacious European colonial powers, were unimpressive compared to the developmental dictatorships established by a variety of indigenous modernizing autocracies of the late-1800s and early-1900s. The specialized services of the British Raj managed the educational, engineering, and medical projects of the government fairly well but were not tasked with bringing about rapid socioeconomic development (Whitehead 2003). Consequently, the ICS could continue to serve, on the basis of its magisterial powers and superior competence as general administrators, as the bureaucratic control and leadership mechanism of a regime which, if one wishes to be polite, can be described as gradualist in its view of economic development in India (Wolmar 2017). Since the British Raj did not seek to bring about swift and sustained positive economic change in South Asia, it made perfect sense to concentrate most of the administrative clout within a single service whose officers operated as sub-sovereigns in the field and elite mandarins in the secretariats.

After independence from British rule, Pakistan's leaders wanted to industrialize and modernize the country. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's first Governor-General and its *Quaid-i-Azam* (Supreme Leader), had engaged for decades with the problem of Muslim backwardness in South Asia and saw Pakistan as a vehicle for a renaissance of the secular fortunes of Islam. Other leaders during Pakistan's early years (1947-1958), who shared Jinnah's modernizing vision, also grappled with its practical dimensions that entailed changes to the governance framework. Modernization would inevitably expand the scope of state power and lead to sustained intervention in sectors that had been neglected by the British Raj (Ahmed Khan 2016). Managing the consequences of development would itself be a challenge as the demographic and economic profile of the

country changed and became unstable in response to government policies aimed at industrialization. While the desirability of industrialization was widely felt there were sharp differences between how the management of the process ought to be organized. Broadly speaking, there were two major schools of thought on the managerial dimension. One school, which drew support from the CSP and much of the political and military leadership of the country, as well as the United States, contended that institutional design inherited from the British Raj could be made to deliver swift results on the economic development front by empowering the CSP to continue to lead the entire apparatus. The other school of thought, which can be identified with its most eminent early exponent, Supreme Court Justice A. R. Cornelius, and which drew its strength from the non-CSP component of the higher bureaucracy, held that Pakistan needed to move towards a more specialized ministry-based bureaucratic structure where officials inducted into professional services would rise to leadership in their respective departments. The clash between these two schools played out in the 1960s and 1970s and led to the victory of those in favor of continued generalist domination and politicization of the state machinery. Even today, as Pakistan's new government talks of the need for reform of the civil service, the polarization within the apparatus prevents any worthwhile compromise from being worked out while the taskforce entrusted with the present reform exercise appears to have been captured by precisely those who have the most to lose from meaningful change.

The American Connection

In the early and mid-1950s the first wave of North American advisers and consultants arrived in Pakistan. Animated by the can-do spirit of post-1945 America and aware of the appeal of Soviet-style forced industrialization to many newly independent countries, these advisers set out to help countries like Pakistan achieve economic growth. Knowing relatively little about South Asia's historical experience of governance but backed by the promise of aid dollars these pioneers generated analyses and prescriptions that effectively threw their support behind the CSP's domination of the state machinery. Two of the most important of these benefactors were Bernard L. Gladieux and Ralph Braibanti and their views were accepted in large measure by the Government of Pakistan after 1955.

Gladieux, a US civil servant turned consultant, presented his report to the Planning Board of the Government of Pakistan in May 1955 after a five-month study. Gladieux contended, correctly, that from a development perspective, Pakistan's state was not properly organized as it gave far too much importance to the "administrative generalist" who was "well-suited to government in the law and order days of colonialism" (Gladieux 1955). At

the secretariat level, Gladieux stated that civil servants lacking technical skills had "to receive, review, note" and approve or reject "proposals and actions of the technical department heads." Gladieux also detected a centralization of power and the undermining of local bodies by federally appointed administrators. Having identified key aspects of the problem correctly, Gladieux envisioned three possible paths that Pakistan could take. The first was to do little more than make limited changes, which was clearly unacceptable from a modernization perspective. The second was to create a specialized development administration with integrated hierarchies, but this was deemed too expensive and likely to create redundancies. And the third, which Gladieux favored and was music to CSP ears was: "The alternative recommended here is to [convert] the government generally to the achievement of development objectives since these represent the basic purposes of government itself." This "transition from law and order to public welfare centered government" would require greater centralization and coordination for project appraisal, planning, and review. While declaring the CSP generalist "obsolete" in one breath, Gladieux declared, without realizing the contradiction, in the next "that the District Officer be placed immediately in command of those development projects and activities which relate exclusively to his district jurisdiction and that he be given the requisite authority and staff support to this end." Gladiuex then proceeded to misunderstand the logic of career-oriented service structures and recommended that pay-scales be revised downwards even as the CSP was to be given control of development functions.

Braibanti, whose experience in Pakistan would be far longer and whose views about Pakistan's administration would become authoritative for a generation of American advisers and analysts, helped propel the CSP along the path identified by Gladieux. Since the goal was to convert the CSP into a development executive, great attention was paid to its training by the Americans. Between 1955 and 1960, law and procedure, which were 75% of the curricula at the Civil Services Academy, were reduced to 35% to make way for development subjects (Braibanti 1966). Braibanti was pleased that "1200 officers...had direct contact with American public administration technology" thanks to a variety of tours and short courses. The Harvard Advisory Group, with 56 advisers and 26 consultants, furnished the brains of the operation. Although civil servants privately regarded (and continue to regard) these tours and short courses as little more than paid vacations, their ability to parrot in good English the lessons of their training were regarded as proof of the great success of this approach. Braibanti was pleased to report that "the most noteworthy characteristic of American-induced administrative training in Pakistan is the manner in which it has become accepted at the highest level of

government, attracted some of the best talent, and has been absorbed by the elite cadre [CSP] as an important part of its functions."

While the outward absorption of pre-packaged ideas endeared the CSP to the Americans, its substantive absorption of state functions gained newfound legitimacy thanks to this foreign patronage. By 1964, 89% of central government department heads, 66% of provincial government department heads, 75% of divisional heads in the field, and 51% of local commissioners, were from the CSP cadre. In the meanwhile, the Ayub Khan regime's use of the CSP to manage the local bodies created under the Basic Democracies scheme of 1959 made it politically important. The elevation of the 80,000 elected Basic Democrats to the status of the Electoral College for the presidency under the 1962 Constitution meant that Ayub Khan now depended upon the CSP and their local minions to secure a further term as president. The CSP saw itself as the linchpin of the entire system and was, by the early 1960s, so enmeshed with power political dynamics of the government and its foreign supporters that it could shoot down any proposal that might undermine its position as the dominant element in the higher bureaucracy. The preservation of that dominant position, regardless of consequences, became, and remains, the central mission of its leadership even today.

The Cornelius Hypothesis

From the CSP's perspective, which, in the 1960s, enjoyed the support of the military and the United States, concentrating decision-making, coordination, and field implementation functions in one cadre made eminent sense. Those who performed best in the recruitment examinations almost invariably opted to join the CSP and so this service could legitimately claim that its members represented the best of the best at the point of initial recruitment. The special care given the training of CSP recruits between 1948 and 1959, which included a year abroad at Oxford or Cambridge, did imbue its members with a considerable breadth and depth of knowledge. As the successors of the ICS, the CSP continued to be the repository of power as collectors of land revenue and magistrates adding to their clout at the local level. This enabled them to engage with local notables, whose cooperation was needed to ensure the success of development projects, with a confidence that technical specialists could not be reasonably expected to possess. The domination of the higher echelons by the CSP meant that lines of responsibility were clear and the bureaucracy possessed coherent leadership. Civilian and military leaders could, in equal measure, rely upon the CSP to deliver upon policies using the vast array of powers and, less tangible, though no less important, prestige to push things through. While the CSP's exalted status was irksome

to other civil servants, it helped insulate the state machinery from direct encroachment by the Ayub Khan military regime. The intellectual and moral superiority of the civilian bureaucracy vis-à-vis the army was asserted through the cohort of senior officials drawn almost exclusively from the CSP. The governance philosophy of the CSP emphasized leadership and integrity over technical expertise and experience and in the 1950s and 1960s it appeared to deliver impressive results (Munir Husain 2016). Given the stagnation and missed opportunities that characterize Pakistan from 1969 onwards, the years between 1958 and 1969 are still wistfully remembered as the golden age of Pakistan's bureaucracy and a time when the country was headed in the right direction.

In 1959, as part of its reform agenda, the Ayub Khan regime set up a Pay and Services Commission mandated "To review the structure and organization" of the civilian bureaucracy (Pay and Services Commission 1962). Headed by Supreme Court Justice A. R. Cornelius, a former ICS officer who had opted to join the judiciary, the Commission received over 600 memoranda, held 155 meetings, and interviewed 150 heads of departments, delivering its verdict on May 28, 1962. The Commission observed that during British rule the higher bureaucracy, led by the ICS, was staffed by officers "notable for high intellectual status, and great capacity for practical administration" who also "enjoyed a high reputation for personal morality." Within the British Raj, the ICS was clearly the dominant service and specialists were subordinate to it. This made sense as the British Raj focused on land revenue collection, the maintenance of order, the dispensation of justice, and the construction of such infrastructure as was vital to communications and agriculture but, at the same time, was not concerned with the modernization of Indian society and economy along Western lines. After 1947, the priorities changed in favor of bringing about an industrial revolution, which, in theory, ought to have been followed by changes to the institutional design of the bureaucracy:

The inferior position of all these Services *qua* the ICS during the period of British rule is therefore easily understandable, but what is less acceptable is that with the departure of the British, the concept of the 'governing corporation' should be carried on, to the great discontent and discomfiture of the Specialized Services.

If the government was serious about development then "the hope of the administration of the future lies in the 'administrative technocrat'" who ought to be "equipped with the intellect, education, and ability to conceive of a plan of development, with the aid of modern techniques and machinery." The need for senior civil servants to have specialized knowledge of the areas they were responsible for was growing because of the increasing complexity of subject matter and the risk of corruption due to

rapid hikes in development spending. The opportunity cost of relying on the CSP to deliver development was the diversion of the cadre's attention away from its historic functions of collectorship of the land revenue, the local magistracy, and supervision of the police. As regards the collection of land revenue, "the work" had become the monopoly of the district and provincial civil servants while "the credit" went to the CSP "whose touch with it is, in truth, remote." The age of the collector on horseback touring his jurisdiction disposing of issues related to the revenue collection was, by the 1960s, largely over. The situation "with the Magistracy" was "similar":

> The trial of cases, and the management of a file of cases are tasks which involve expenditure of time and attention to detail…For those tasks the District Magistrate of today simply has no time, and the result is that they are performed by the Magistrates, under the guidance and control of the Additional District Magistrate, who is a senior member of the Provincial Service.

The American consultants and the CSP leadership had, evidently, fallen into the trap of believing that the land revenue and law and order functions of the cadre would somehow proceed on inertial momentum while its officers busied themselves with more important development and policy level tasks. In effect, the CSP wanted to *retain* all its authority from the British Raj while blazing a trail as the principal development agent and local political manager for the Ayub Khan regime. The Commission declared in favor of placing "the various functions of a special nature, which are at present incorporated in the person of the Deputy Commissioner under their own district heads" and phasing out the reservation of posts in specialized departments for the CSP. This, the Commission advised, ought to be accompanied by the "integration of all the secretariat departments with the appropriate operational field departments." This would mean that officials of specialized services would rotate between federal, provincial, and local, jurisdictions under their parent ministry, and eventually rise to senior positions in the secretariat. This "general recommendation that specialized functional services should be developed, and that superior posts in the secretariat should be integrated with their relevant field services, would be equally applicable in respect of the services dealing with the financial administration." Pakistan would, therefore, acquire over time specialized ministry-based services with field rotation, allowing professionals to rise to the top of their respective departments. The CSP would still be extremely important and continue to lead the federal administration as heads of the Cabinet, Establishment, and Interior, divisions and as senior officers aiding the president, while, at the provincial level chief secretary posts would

remain in its hands, and at the local level it could either refocus on the land revenue and magistracy or risk losing these functions to the provincial services that were doing the real work anyway.

Needless to say, the CSP component of the higher bureaucracy was not pleased with what Cornelius's Commission had come up with. Ralph Braibanti, who was Chief Adviser at the Civil Service Academy from 1960-62, had a ringside seat to the confrontation between Cornelius and the CSP. While stating incorrectly that the Pay and Services Commission deliberated infrequently, Braibanti concedes that the CSP's reform-minded junior officers and more conservative senior officers (who had entered service during the British Raj), "united, for self-preservation if for no other reason, in their belief that the CSP was an elite group whose destiny, inherited from the ICS, was to govern Pakistan. Virtually all were opposed to radical reform" (Braibanti 1999). The creation of a bureaucracy with specialized services integrating field and secretariat posts would have brought an end to the CSP's dominance of the system and made it difficult for generalists to colonize ministries at key positions. It would also mean having to actually do the hard work of the land revenue administration, magistracy, and supervision of police, while development work went to specialists answerable to their parent departments. Cornelius was originally from the ICS, had a fearsome reputation as an independent jurist, and no conceivable grouse against the CSP, but, his Commission's report, rather than being taken seriously, was shelved by Ayub Khan. Surrounded by officers from the CSP cadre, who were delivering good results for the time on the development front even though the specter of corruption was starting to haunt the CSP (Special Committee for Eradication of Corruption from Services 1967). Ayub Khan was apparently swayed by the self-serving criticism directed against Cornelius and the Commission he had presided over. The CSP prevailed but at great cost. Pakistan lost an opportunity to gradually modernize its bureaucracy at a time when funding and expertise was readily available. The polarization within the bureaucracy grew to such levels that by the end of the Ayub Khan regime civil servants could no longer even sit together and work out a scheme of reform (Working Group on Reorganisation of the Public Service Structure 1969). As the fortunes of the Ayub Khan regime fell so too, did it seem, did the CSP's. The *schadenfreude* specialists felt, however, was short-lived for Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's government (December 1971-July 1977) embarked upon a reform program that took the bureaucracy even further away from the specialization and professionalism envisioned by Cornelius and reoriented the state apparatus towards arbitrariness, politicization, and corruption, on a new order of magnitude.

Politicization and Arbitrariness: The Legacy of the 1970s Reforms

Having failed to heed the sensible advice provided by the Cornelius Commission, the higher bureaucracy, in general, and the CSP, in particular, faced the wrath of the first PPP government. The new regime clearly saw the higher bureaucracy as an enemy that had to be broken and rendered subservient to the will of the political leadership. In order to achieve this outcome a series of self-contradictory reforms, ostensibly inspired by American public administration practices, were implemented and gave Pakistan the bureaucratic structure and ethos it continues to possess at present. At a formal level, the changes stripped the Federal Public Service Commission and its provincial counterparts of all their authority save for conducting the examinations while leaving the regulation of these vital institutions to be managed by law, rather than by constitutional amendment. All recruits to the Central Superior Services (CSS), from 1973 onwards, began their careers via the Common Training Program, which, in essence, wasted, and continues to waste, time that would be better spent on specialized training and, amidst falling standards at universities, helping new recruits recover from the effects of their formal education. The diverse pay scales were standardized into a National Pay Scale or NPS (also called the Basic Pay Scale or Unified Pay Scale) with 22 grades (1 being the lowest and 22 the highest). Constitutional protections and legal status for the services were rescinded and they were reconstituted as occupational groups (the CSP became the District Management Group or DMG) via executive orders. Inspired by the American spoils system, the PPP government introduced the Lateral Entry Scheme that enabled the induction of thousands of political loyalists in the federal and provincial services and also allowed the government to move favored civil servants who had been recruited the normal way to other services. The nationalization of industries and services placed unprecedented wealth into the hands of government officials even as they were subjected to repeated purges and deterioration in their pay and service conditions. The civilian government, like its military predecessors, arbitrarily purged the civil service initially employing Martial Law Regulation-114 for this purpose (Jameel ur Rehman Khan 1986). Unsurprisingly, corruption and financial indiscipline spiraled out of control and even the five-year planning process had to be abandoned in view of the government's insatiable appetite for arbitrary decision-making (Taxation Commission 1974). By the time the PPP government was overthrown by the military (July 1977) and General Zia-ul Haq seized power, the civilian bureaucracy had lost much of its professionalism and integrity. Indeed, the debates of the 1960s would almost seem to belong to another world to civil servants entering service and gaining experience under post-1972 conditions. The military regime that ruled Pakistan from

July 1977 to August 1988, however, had little interest in civil service reform for the gravely weakened civilian bureaucracy effectively moved the institutional balance decisively in the military's favor. As a consequence, many civil servants tried as best they could to advise Zia-ul Haq on issues related to the civil service, corruption, police reorganization, and development, only to find the leadership apathetic towards the diagnoses and prescriptions flowing its way.

Arguably the most prescient and trusted of these advisers was Ijlal Haider Zaidi, Secretary Establishment from 1979 to 1985, and, as such, responsible for salvaging what was possible from the wreck that was left. Though a member of the CSP/DMG, Zaidi made the case that Pakistan's bureaucracy needed to "encourage elitism, not in one or two cadres alone, but in many fields – engineering, agriculture, administration, education, and others" (Zaidi 1981) Zaidi dismissed the American experts who had arrived in the 1950s and dished out "authoritative pronouncements on administration" to developing countries, like Pakistan, as deficient in "maturity" and historical sense. American public administration was so chaotic and politicized by first world standards, and presented such a fragmented picture owing to the special circumstances of its evolution, that it wasn't surprising its prescriptions did not work well in Pakistan. Pakistan's "authorities could not appreciate the requirements of a change-over from the career structure to a Unified Grading Structure" and "were apparently misled by a superficial knowledge of the working of this system in the USA" (Zaidi 1985). If one were to draw comparisons, then the evolution of the civil service in other bureaucratic states, like Japan, Germany, and, especially France, provided much better frames of reference. Of these, Zaidi contended that France offered the strongest lessons as its bureaucratic structure combined ministries that were "self-contained units which" were "administratively autonomous of each other" with a field administration headed by prefects that had the functions of South Asian "Commissioners" but with "much wider administrative, regulating, and coordinating, powers". France's system produced "highly professional elites both in administration and in technical services" with "key posts" reserved for the "elite services called *Grand Corps*...."

Reference the deterioration in pay and services conditions, Zaidi warned of the "graver dangers of mediocrity succumbing to greed" unless strong measures were taken to reverse course. The idea that civil servants entrusted with tremendous patronage but paid less than a living wage while being rewarded in perks could deliver was absurd. Instead, such conditions created perverse incentives that the best possible candidates were likely to avoid, leaving a dwindling pool of quality recruits. It was not in Pakistan's "interest to put up with the indifferent and the mediocre for this will ensure neither economy nor efficiency." Zaidi also attempted to explain how

wrong the decision to divert the CSP to development administration, to the neglect of law and order and land revenue, had been. Pakistan had, as a consequence of American tutelage, gotten "trapped in the barren controversy of law and order oriented *versus* development oriented" administration (Zaidi 1981). The political and bureaucratic leadership was "carried away by the slogans denigrating the law and order arm of this set-up and applauding its development arm" and failed to realize that the "citizens of an independent nation require even more stable law and order conditions and cheap and even handed justice than the subjects of a colonial power. In Pakistan, the "revenue and law and order" functions had atrophied relative to the needs of society as the government splurged on development with diminishing or adverse returns, with corruption and waste spiraling out of control over "the last ten years."

The basic message that Zaidi tried to drive home was that without addressing substantive underlying problems, shaking off American tutelage, tackling behavioral regression, and working to improve the quality of Pakistan's civilian bureaucracy in a holistic manner, tinkering around with technical aspects of the crisis was not going to redeem governance structures to the point where they became responsive and effective. Essentially, the leadership had to make a political decision to have a high quality bureaucracy and stay committed to the requirements of implementing that decision in the long-term. This being said, Zaidi proposed a conservative compromise solution to the problem of specialization. This proposal advised in favor of creating an umbrella Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) (Zaidi 1984). All DMG and Secretariat Group officers would automatically become members of the PAS. In addition to these two services, the PAS would recruit, via an in-service exam to be administered by the FPSC, 50% of officers against vacancies in NPS/BPS-18, with 20% going to the Provincial Services and 30% to all other services. Then, all officers working with the federal government would automatically join the PAS upon reaching BPS-21. This proposal would limit the generalists to about 50% of secretariat posts, allow professionals working in the federal government to join the PAS upon reaching a senior grade, and enable the best officers in the specialized services and the provincial services to rise to the top of their respective departments. Combined with measures related to improving pay and services conditions and evaluation procedures, this proposal could, possibly, allow for the system to accommodate greater specialization without doing away with the basic structure of the field administration or the secretariat organization. The Zia regime, however, was unmoved, and while eager to use martial law powers to turn Pakistan into a theocratic state, it felt that the matter of comprehensive civil service reform ought to be taken up after civilian government had been restored. Zia was willing to

approve relatively minor changes, like quantitative ratings, but not much beyond that (Zaidi 1984). When that happened in 1985, Zaidi was transferred to the Ministry of Defense and nothing further was done on the civil service reform front.

The Debate after Specialization Was Rejected

Zaidi's proposals represent the last serious attempt to make the case for a more specialized and professional bureaucracy. After 1988, reform efforts would implicitly or explicitly reject the need for genuine specialization and professionalism and introduce changes that took the higher bureaucracy even further away from this outcome. A classic example of this is the local government plan introduced by the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf, which ruled Pakistan from October 1999 to August 2008. The central plank of this reform was to create elected local governments with indirectly elected chairpersons/mayors (*nazim*s) who would have control over the civil service and police, the latter being liberated from the notional control of the DMG via the 2002 Police Order. The Musharraf regime was more than happy to manipulate inter-service rivalries in pursuit of its policy of establishing direct control of the army over the civil administration. In turning the commissioner system into one of coordination officers without magistracy or police supervision powers, the Musharraf regime eliminated the traditional basis for the authority of the district officer while entrusting to that officer far wider responsibilities amidst formalized subservience to local notables, who were backed by the military, and led the new local government setup. These reforms were supported by international donors, including DFID, CIDA, NORAD, the UNDP, and lauded by the World Bank as evidence of Musharraf's commitment to decentralization and good governance (Musharraf 2008). Musharraf boasted that he brought true democracy to Pakistan by ending the domination of district administrators belonging to the DMG and Police Service of Pakistan (PSP) by subordinating these educated middleclass professionals to *nazim*s who were, in many instances, actually feudal or tribal leaders (International Crisis Group 2004). The overall organization of the higher bureaucracy, however, stayed more or less the same with the DMG continuing to dominate the secretariat and, as collaborators with the *nazim*s, remaining important in the field.

The most substantive reform exercise undertaken by the Musharraf regime with regard to the bureaucracy was the National Commission for Government Reform (NCGR). This commission initially worked for two years (2006-2008) and submitted a comprehensive report (NCGR 2008). Even as the commission deliberated, the fortunes of the Musharraf regime tanked due to popular resistance centering on the crisis created by the

military ruler's attempt to remove the Chief Justice of Pakistan from office. The restoration of civilian rule in August 2008 led to the rollback of many of Musharraf's administrative reforms while the political leadership focused on strengthening the provincial tier of the federation, leading to the Eighteenth Amendment (2010). The central recommendation of the NCGR, which was to create a National Executive Service (NES) at the BPS-19 going on BPS-20 level, fell by the wayside. It wasn't under the advent of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI, literally, "Pakistan Movement for Justice") government, in August 2018, that civil service reform was taken up with apparent serious intent by the political leadership. Ishrat Hussain, a former CSP officer and eminent political economist, who had led the Musharraf-era NCGR process, was brought in as the prime minister's advisor on reforms and placed in charge of a new taskforce with the mandate to review the entire service structure and make recommendations.

Key features of the NES proposal are that it is to be based on open competition amongst all services and non-cadre specialists of the federal and provincial governments. Anyone with 15 years of service having reached BPS-19 would be eligible for the examination to join the NES. Important posts, including those of departmental heads, would be reserved for officers who join the NES. In this way, specialized services, capable members of the provincial bureaucracy, and technical specialists, would be eligible to join an umbrella cadre responsible for providing leadership to the state apparatus. The material incentive for NES officers would be that they would go on a special pay scale that would increase their salaries relative to other civil servants. The proposal sets out to find a balance between technical specialization and leadership ability and provides provincial and federal civil servants with the opportunity of absorption into a single elite service at an upper-middle-management level. In effect, the NES would be a reincarnation of the DMG/PAS in terms of its dominance over senior positions but represent the integration of many groups into one.

There are a number of issues with the NES that need to be addressed. First, much of the present intra-bureaucratic rivalry and polarization stems from the resentment of specialized services towards the DMG/PAS. Replacing, the DMG/PAS with an NES could shift the form of this reactive polarization while leaving its substance in place. Second, wrangling over the precise distribution of posts within the NES in terms of shares outlined for the federal services and the provincial services will likely furnish additional fuel for inter-service rivalry. Third, the basic quality of entry-level civil servants will determine the quality of the pool of candidates to compete for the NES. Without fixing the base of the pyramid moving blocks around at the higher levels is not likely to produce much improvement in terms of performance. Fourth, once an officer is selected for the NES, there doesn't appear to be any process whereby staying in the NES is made

contingent on continued performance. Logically, officers who fail to perform ought to be removed from the NES and their positions opened up for competition. Fifth, the NES proposal states by way of eligibility criteria: "Any officer belonging to the All Pakistan, Federal, Provincial and District Government who has completed 15 years service in Grades 17-19 with minimum prescribed academic qualifications and satisfactory performance record can appear at the NES examination" (NCGR 2007). How will officers who have been ground down by 15 years of service in the old system somehow be fit to rise after so long to the NES and have a reasonable chance of performing well? The mental and moral habits acquired in the first 15 years of service, often under conditions of real material hardship and relentless political pressures, will not be ameliorated by the elevation of a selected few to an enhanced pay scale in their middle-age. Sixth, the alternate course, of opening positions at NES levels to outsiders risks bringing in lateral entrants from the private sector lacking the technical, legal, and procedural know-how, inherent to the public services in addition to compounding conflicts of interest if they decide to revert to the private sector after a few years. And finally, even if the NES somehow succeeded in bringing together a few dozen or even a few score genuinely talented and inspired administrators who have survived the wreck for 15 years, what about the remaining 95-99%?

At the other extreme is the proposal to abolish the Central Superior Services altogether and replace them with clusters of professionals that would be able to circulate around different ministries (*The News* April 24, 2019). This proposal has also been taken up at present by the PTI government's taskforce and is reminiscent of the proposals floated in 2007 to phase out a number of services. While claiming to enhance specialization, the outlines of this scheme indicate that it is needlessly complicated and incompatible with the evolution of existing institutional design of Pakistan's administration. Whether one examines the NES proposal or the cluster-based regrouping, the broader but vital question of institutional reform of the services and their pay and service conditions does not appear to be a serious consideration.

Conclusion

Pakistan's civil service structure has evolved to accommodate greater political influence, reduce bureaucratic autonomy, and diminish or eliminate tendencies towards specialization and professionalism. This has meant that Pakistan's higher bureaucracy has lost the intellectual and moral stature it enjoyed during the 1950s and 1960s while becoming increasingly incapable of responding to the challenges of a rapidly changing society. The point in time at which Pakistan definitely set itself upon this trajectory

was in the early 1960s when it was decided to place greater burden on the CSP and enlarge the scope of its operations to include development. This enlargement of the CSP's role made short-term political sense since leaders could rely on this one service to deliver on a broad range of issues while also helping them secure legitimacy (as was the case with Ayub Khan and his Basic Democracies). In turn, once greater power was concentrated in the CSP, it effectively cut off alternate perspectives for bureaucratic reform that would have led, in the medium to long-term, to the containment of its hegemony. The 1962 Pay and Services Commission lays bare this struggle, as do other official sources from the Ayub Khan regime. Even where reforms were ostensibly hostile to the CSP (such as in the 1970s) or to its successor, the DMG (such as Musharraf's local government scheme), the objective was not greater professionalism or specialization. Instead, the reforms of the 1970s and early 2000s aimed at rendering the civil service structure incapable of resisting the political and military leaderships and both these exercises cynically exploited the generalist-specialist polarization.

Nor does there appear to be any realization that Pakistan could benefit by moving towards a specialized ministry-based civil service structure or towards a comparable arrangement that would allow for greater professionalism in the services. In the Pakistani context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is practically the only civilian department that operates along the lines envisaged by Cornelius with a dedicated service that staffs all key posts in its ministry with officers rotated between headquarters and diplomatic assignments and the administrative head of the Foreign Office (the Foreign Secretary) enjoying more or less complete autonomy over postings up to the rank of Minister (BPS 20) in missions abroad, and Additional Secretary (BPS 21) in the Foreign Ministry headquarters. There is no logical or empirical reason why other ministries or departments dealing with highly specialized functions like commerce, health, education, public works, information technology, and taxation, can't be organized along the lines of Pakistan's Foreign Service. Regrettably, the present reform exercise is in its composition heavily weighted in favor of the CSP/DMG/PAS, with no representation of other central superior services, technical cadres, or provincial services. The non-official members of the taskforce appear beholden to private or donor interests. The capture of the instrument of reform by those who have the most to lose in terms of importance, power, and lucrative consultancies, from the emergence of a professional, specialized, and ministry-based, civil service structure, that empowers provinces to build their local administrations as they see fit, does not bode well for the PTI government's ambition to rehabilitate the bureaucracy.

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