

Path Dependency and Implementation of Administrative Reforms: Case of Civil Services of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the structure and characteristics of the civil services in Pakistan and determine the extent of application of path dependency principles to the civil services in Pakistan. The paper also aims to discuss the factors that have led to the path dependency in civil services of Pakistan. More specifically, this study will try to identify the set of initial conditions that triggered the events that led to path dependency in civil services of Pakistan and debate on the nature of the mechanisms that have kept the civil services of Pakistan on the same track, making it path dependent. Also in the context of path dependency, what have been the critical junctures in the path dependent model of civil services of Pakistan? This paper also explores the various attempts of reforming civil service since the creation of Pakistan and argues that path dependency has acted as a barrier to the civil service reforms in Pakistan. The study also proposes a theoretical model for conducting empirical research on the implementation of civil service reforms in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Path dependency, administrative reforms, civil services, Pakistan*

Introduction

The recent market oriented reforms, including privatization, liberalization and deregulation, under New Public Management (NPM) have put a challenge to bureaucracy, in developing countries, particularly in terms of its size and scope (Brosamle, 2012). Despite these reforms “there has been a minimal change in its inherited structure, normative and behavioral formations” (Haque, 1997). Institutional theorists have used path dependency to imply that the institutions become path dependent. Hall and Taylor (1996) argue that institution means “the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy. They can range from the rules of a constitutional order to the conventions governing trade union

behavior or bank–firm relations. In general, historical institutionalists associate institutions with organizations and the rules or conventions promulgated by formal organization”. Path Dependency provides the framework for comprehending difficulties in designing and implementation of change at policy level (Tshewang, 2015). “The path dependency approach focuses on theorizing how policy can become so institutionalized and historically embedded that it becomes nearly impossible to break free from the established policy path” (Greener, 2002b). The restricted progress on the civil service reforms in developing countries reflects the inertial tendency of this sector and path dependent nature (Stuteville & Jumara, 2010).

This paper has three different sections. The first section elaborates the concept of path dependency and its implications for the institutional change. The second section focuses on the structural characteristics of civil service in Pakistan. It also highlights the civil service reforms efforts under taken so far. The final section tries to bring forth the path dependent nature of the civil service of Pakistan by pin pointing the factors responsible for generating path dependency and proposes a theoretical model for analyzing the implementation of civil service reforms in the context of path dependency.

Path Dependency

Path dependency not only explains the stability and permanence of the entire system but also helps in understanding change over time. Moreover, path dependency includes the idea of abrupt changes in relatively long paths. So it implies non-linear change which has attracted the attention of complexity theorists. Institutional theorists like Pierson (2000), Mahoney (2000), North (1990) and Thelen (1999) have used path dependency to elucidate institutional stability over longer time horizon. William Sewell (1996) says that path dependency means "that what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time" (as cited in Pierson, 2000). It is a general definition highlighting the general claim in social sciences that “history matters”. Pierson (2000) suggests that path dependency occurs when the events take place in a self- reinforcing order. The path dependent processes yield positive feedback because with the passage of time it becomes comparatively beneficial to remain on the same path. In other words, the costs of switching to alternate paths grow over the period of time.

Arthur (1994) argues that there are certain important characteristics of increasing return processes namely, unpredictability, inflexibility, non-ergodicity and potential path inefficiency. This implies that in these processes initial events are powerful and unsystematic so that it is difficult to predict the end before time. Moreover, random events play an important role in determining the future decisions and ultimately the locked-in outcome may be less beneficial than the previously given up alternatives.

According to Pierson (2000), there are three important phases of path dependency. Critical juncture marks the first phase that involves the beginning of the movement on the path out of various possible choices. The second is the reproduction phase marked by the reinforcement of the movement along the same path. The last phase marks the ending of the path because of some new events. So there is a critical juncture at the beginning and ending of every path. According to Pierson (2000)

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movement along the same path takes place because of increasing returns. Mahoney (2000) and Arthur (1989, 1994) have given a 'utilitarian' explanation of institutional reproduction. The four characteristics, namely, fixed costs, learning effects, coordination effects and adaptive expectations fortify the increasing returns. North (1990) has applied these increasing return processes to institutional framework. According to him, path dependency can be used to understand both continuity as well as change in the institutional context.

Pierson (2000) has applied the concept of increasing returns processes to political sphere. According to him, four features of politics lead to increasing returns. These include the vital role of collective action, existence of high density of institutions, creation of power asymmetries through the use of political authority and its inherent complexity and murkiness. The political activity needs to be coordinated because of various reasons. In contrast to this, the consumers in the economic markets have the freedom to choose without taking into consideration others' choices. However, in political field the situation is different. As the goods produced and consumed are public goods, their consumption cannot be restricted only to those who were involved in their production. Therefore, these goods are usually taken for granted by the individuals. So, collective action becomes possible by making the conditions favorable. Also, the political goals have the quality of "winner-take-all" thus making coming second meaningless. This implies that the efficacy of actions of actors is interdependent. Thus adaptive expectations play a significant role in this situation where the relationship between effort and effect is non-linear. Therefore, individual makes political decisions keeping in view the decisions taken by others (Pierson, 2000). Moreover, as there are huge costs involved in establishing institutions and benefits of learning effects also arise over time (North, 1990), so once a path is chosen it becomes hard for the actors to move to another alternative. Another complexity in the political environment is difficulty not only in measuring performance but also identifying the reasons for poor performance. Simultaneously, it is not easy to pinpoint the areas that need to be corrected. In this multifaceted situation where learning is hindered, information is processed by the actors according to their existing "mental maps" which ultimately results in increasing returns (Pierson, 2000). Pierson (2000) argues that increasing return processes become "intense" in political field because of the poor processes for increasing competition and learning, the short term perspective of political actors and the inherent tendency of the political institutions for maintaining status quo.

According to Thelen (2003), institutional beginning and continuity has been explained through path dependency using the political, utilitarian and functional reasoning. Several factors contribute to path dependency (Kay, 2005). These may include sunk costs, prioritization of some groups over others through certain policies and change in the administrative infrastructure through investment or disinvestment. Greener (2005) argues that the system can also become path dependent when the desire to hold power makes the interest groups structurally and culturally inter-dependent. Some of the previous studies also indicate that movement along the same path is sustained for reason that the other options lose attraction because of some reasons (Arrow, 2000; Kay, 2005). Therefore

strengthening of one path needs “at least one negative externality” to make the other choice less desirable (Vergne and Durand, 2010).

Another important area of concern is to comprehend the role of change in path dependency theory. Previous literature throws light on the nature of change and its sources in the context of path dependency. The explanation based on historical institutionalism maintains that critical junctures or “policy windows” (Kingdon, 1995) are points where change can take place (Greener, 2005). However, the onset of critical junctures is yet under explained in literature, therefore, change is considered an external feature of path dependency (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Most of the researchers believe that a new path can only be created by a deep-rooted change. North (1990) argues that moving to a new path may result from irregular changes such as wars, revolutions, or natural disasters. This implies that in the absence of such broken changes, creation of a new path is evolutionary.

The fate of administrative reforms can also be explained using the path dependency theory. According to the path dependence theorists decisions taken earlier in time have a strong bearing on decision taken later. The reinforcing nature of the institutional arrangements resulting from the choice of one path makes it difficult to switch to other policy path. The movement along the same path is fortified because of the comparative benefits resulting from the continuity of the similar activity (D'Apice, 2014). By applying the same explanation to the administrative systems, institutional resistance to change can be understood. It turns out to be more complicated in countries where major overhaul of the administrative systems is required (Stuteville&Jumara, 2010).

Civil Services structure and Reforms in Pakistan

Pre-Independence

The arrival of British and the creation of East India Company laid the foundation of the administrative structure in the sub-continent. A system of appointing permanent officers for direct administration was introduced in 1790 by Lord Cornwallis (Brabanti, 1959). The employees of the East India Company assumed the form of a mercantile service (1601-1858) and imperial service (1858-1947). The civil service structure was adapted to the requirements of the colonial rule during this period. The initial change in the civil service was introduced through the Aitchison Commission (1886-87) which recommended eliminating the distinction between Covenanted Service (higher category employees with formal service agreement) and Un-covenanted Service (lower category employees with no formal service agreement). It also recommended the establishment of Imperial Civil Service of India which was later named as Indian Civil Service (ICS). A class distinction was initiated by the Islington Commission in 1912. The civil servants were divided in four classes. Class I for executives, Class II for operational level, Class III for clerical jobs and Class IV for peons etc. (Hussain, 1987). According to Wilder (2009), the British developed extremely centralized and authoritative bureaucracy to rule the empire. Their introduction of representative bodies was sluggish with their limited role in governance system so that power was not transferred to the locals. In fact, their purpose was to legitimize the bureaucratic state.

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1947-1973

At the time of independence, Pakistan inherited a well -organized civil service structure that was categorized into All India Services and Central Services. The members of All India Services usually served the provinces while that of the Central Services served the central government. Moreover, the government structure was designed to serve the purpose of the colonial rule with non-representative local governments and imperialistic local level bureaucratic control (Cheema, Khawaja and Qadir, 2006). Kennedy (1987) has identified four characteristics of civil bureaucracy in Pakistan. These include “the secretariat and the secretaries, preference for generalists, cadre system and the quota system”. The preference for generalists may be seen as an off shoot of the secretariat system of authority. The head of the departments, who are mainly technocrats, report to secretariat officers having generalist background. The system favors the staff officers (mainly generalists) over line officers (mainly technocrats) in career growth and administrative power. The cadre system incorporates a clear distinction between line and staff officers along with huge differences in status associated with particular cadres. Thus CSP held dominant position and prestige among civil servants prior to 1973 reforms, that have weakened CSP dominance but it nevertheless continues to be the most sought after cadre till date.

Post -independence, the civil service structure was maintained with slight modifications. It was divided into two categories namely All Pakistan Service that included the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) and the Police Service of Pakistan (PSP). The other was Central Services that included services which were under the direct control of the central government. Several measures were initiated to reform the civil services. In 1955, the recommendations of Egger Report included the formation of a single Civil Service of Pakistan to make the administration easier. Gladieux Report in 1955 also favored this idea and disapproved dominance of the generalists over specialist civil servants (Hussain, 1987). These recommendations were made part of the First Five Year Plan.

The major task of the government was to develop the constitution of the newly created country during the first decade of independence. The first constitution was promulgated in 1956. Following the adoption of one unit system in 1954, this constitution proposed a very strong form of federal government. There was no provision for the local body government. The civil service became the major tool in the hands of the government for implementing this increased centralization (Cheema et al, 2006). The 1948-1958 was a politically chaotic decade. Political coalitions were formed and broken repeatedly. Consequently, the administrative vacuum was filled by the civil servants particularly CSP who dominated the administration (Burki, 1969).

In 1958, General Ayub Khan enforced the Martial Law in the country. The military regime held the CSP partially responsible for the prevailing situation and demonstrated that it would purge CSP if they did not abstain from corruption and inefficiency. The Establishment Division, in 1959, started the policy of training all CSP officers to enhance their capabilities (Shafqat, 1999). Brabanti (1966) points out that the Ford Foundation and USAID were prominent in establishing training

institutions and awarding overseas scholarships. The purpose was to make the civil servants technically capable and more professional.

There was huge criticism on the performance of the civil servants in Cornellius Pay Services and Reform Commission of 1962 and recommendations were made to reorganize the civil service into seven groups (Hussain, 1987). The major objective of 1962 constitution was to build such political structure that can legalize the prevailing military rule. The constitution pleaded a very powerful role of the President in the capacity of the head of the state as well as the head of the government. The One-Unit system was continued and a one house legislature known as the National Assembly was formed. President Ayub revived the local governments. The 80000 Basic Democrats created under the Basic Democracies Ordinance became the Electoral College for the election of the President and the Assemblies. This system aimed to provide political legitimacy to the military government (Cheema et al, 2006). The civil servants favored the basic democracies because their power and benefits increased tremendously. They interacted frequently with the local politicians and became the agents of the military regime (Shafqat, 1999). After the fall of Ayub Khan's government, General Yahya Khan became the Chief Martial Law Administrator. Various reform initiatives were initiated during his short tenure that included setting up of Service Reorganization Committee. Moreover, three hundred and three Class I officers were removed from service in 1969 in an effort to reduce corruption (Kennedy, 1987).

1973-2000

1973 saw Zulfikar Ali Bhutto coming to power. He had a reform agenda to overhaul the administrative structure in Pakistan. According to Shafqat (1999) there were three major reasons for undertaking these reforms. First was the huge criticism on the civil servants during the mass movement of 1968-69. It was also evident from the much appreciation by the public and the media when Yahya Khan removed the class officers. Secondly, the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 added to downfall of bureaucracy. Thirdly, Bhutto himself greatly criticized the bureaucracy in anti-Ayub movement. His aim was to reduce the power of bureaucracy, which he called "NokerShahi". He held bureaucracy responsible for the deteriorating conditions of the country. He commented that "no institution in the country has so lowered the quality of our national life as to what is called Naurshahi [bureaucratic rule]. It has done so by imposing a caste system on our society. It has created a class of 'Brahmins' or mandarins, unrivalled in its snobbery and arrogance, insulated from life of the people and incapable of identifying itself with them" (as cited in Wilder, 2009). Prime Minister Bhutto proposed the reform agenda for civil service in 1973. Consequently the CSP cadre came to an end. A new group namely District Management Group (DMG) was created to absorb these CSPs. The reservation of posts for the CSP in the top Secretariat position was discontinued. The numerous groups like Pakistan Audit and Accounts (PAAS), Pakistan Military Accounts (PMAS), Pakistan Railway Accounts (PRAS) were all merged into the Accounts Group (Shafqat, 1999).

One thousand three hundred civil servants were flushed out of the system before the introduction of these reforms causing a considerable change in the bureaucratic structures. The purpose was to improve the competitiveness and openness of

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federal services but no steps were simultaneously taken to improve the accountability and efficiency of the system (Shafqat, 1999). Hence the real meaning of the 1973 reforms was not achieved in practice. The dominance of high-level positions continued in the Central Superior Services (CSS) and ex-cadre and non-cadre were not treated equally with the established cadres. They had limited opportunities for career development. This led to de-motivation among employees, which was reflected in poor service delivery to citizens. On the other hand, the process of lateral entry was considered political incumbents. This policy of lateral recruitment allowed the politicization of the bureaucracy and enabled the implementation of Bhutto's policies in the face of "a self-interested bureaucracy that was resistant to change" (Wilder, 2009). This disturbed the competency and the neutrality of the civil servants. The 1973 constitution also took away the protection given to the civil servants against the removal from office, decrease in rank or obligatory retirement. This further reduced the independence of the bureaucracy and made them vulnerable to the politicians.

The next major reform effort came in the form of recommendations of Anwar ul-Haq Commission (1978-79) which was formed by General Zia-ul-Haq with the purpose of reversing and defusing Bhutto's policies. The objective of setting up of this commission was to restore the strong military-bureaucracy ties. The commission, therefore, advocated restoring constitutional guarantees for the higher cadres, selective lateral entry and stimulating new training programs for the civil servants. After the fall of Zia regime, after every democratic regime there were large scale posting and transfers of civil servants. This resulted in the politicization of the civil service. The politicians started rewarding loyalists and punishing conscientious officers on routine basis. Fakhar Imam (1999) Report of the Commission on Administrative Restructuring and Re-engineering of the Federal Government recommended merger of some ministries and elimination of others. The scope of this commission was widened to include civil service reforms but the report failed to come up with any concrete suggestion.

2000 onwards

In 2000, President Musharraf undertook a reform program so as to increase the public sector responsiveness to the prevailing needs. One major area of reforms was civil services. These reforms were undertaken to make the civil servants more responsive to the citizenry (ncgr.govt.pk). These reforms were based on certain guiding principles. These included transparency and openness in recruitments with strict compliance to merit. These reforms also stressed on provision of equal opportunities for career development and on-the-job training. There was focus on the redesigning of the performance evaluation system. A living wage and compensation package should be made available. Career growth should rely on performance, on-the-job training outcomes and skill development rather than seniority criterion. For improving the accountability of the head of the department, audit function should be strengthened. Keeping in view these guidelines, the national commission of government reforms proposed the establishment of

“All Pakistan	National Executive Service (NES) Pakistan Administrative Service (formerly DMG) Police Service of Pakistan (PSP)
Federal	Pakistan Foreign Service (PFS) Pakistan Audit and Accounts Service (PAAS) Pakistan Taxation Service with two cadres for Customs and Inland Revenue (PTS)
Provincial	Provincial Management Service (PMS) Provincial Executive Service (PES) Provincial Technical or Professional Service (PTS) Provincial Judicial Service (PJS)
District	District Service”

(Source: ncgr.govt.pk)

Musharaf government also introduced the local government reforms in 2001. Devolution from 2001 to 2009 changed the incentives to the civil servants. The local government was established as a three-tier structure starting from district to tehsil and finally to union councils. This devolution separated authority and created new responsibilities for the civil service.

Path Dependency in case of Civil Services in Pakistan

Civil service in Pakistan has been greatly impacted by the colonial administrative legacy and the consequent building up of military-civil service ties and the politicization of bureaucracy. These political and historical factors have become institutionalized and have created path dependant tendency among the civil servants. Consequently, capacity to change the civil service has been restricted and it has become the main obstacle in the way of major civil service reforms. The dominating features of civil service in Pakistan include “elitism, paternalism, despotism, distrust, centralization, secrecy, formalism, aloofness, hierarchical rigidity and urban bias” inherited from the British Rulers (Haque, 1997). Wilder (2009) notes, there has been a great impact of the Colonial heritage on the development of bureaucratic institutions in Pakistan. British created a centralized civil service to rule its colonies by making the civil servants a symbol of authority and supremacy. In British India, the Collector, District Magistrate (DM) or Deputy Commissioner (DC) solely performed an endless list of duties making them center of power for the local population. Every district was run by a single ICS official who was responsible for a variety of tasks including the collection of revenue, conducting public works, allocation of land rights and solving disputes, framing laws and improvement of agriculture so on and so forth (Asia Report N°185, 2010). Post –independence the civil bureaucracy continued to enjoy this supreme and elite position and rendered all efforts to sustain it. Peter Drucker in his article “In defense of Japans Bureaucracy” argues that elitism and continuity are the key characteristics of a strong bureaucracy. Pakistani society like Japanese gives acceptance and legitimacy to its elites. This elitism can originate from two sources.

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First, it can be because of the descent or family class. Secondly, it may come from education or professionalism. In the context of Pakistan, the bureaucracy has continued to enjoy power through a mixture of elites of ascription and those of achievement.

Another colonial heritage is the existence of patron-client relationship between the civil servants and the local elites. This feature has been institutionalized creating a very strong impact on the political and administrative scenario of the country. This patronage involved grant of land, pensions and titles to the feudal landlords, religious leaders and tribal chiefs during British rule. The aim was to create political support for the “British Raj” and to gather revenues smoothly. After independence, the persistence of this direct patron-client relationship between the bureaucracy and local elites glorified the bureaucracy as the major source of patronage, power and security. At the same time, it weakened the role of political parties as the intermediators.

The politicization of the bureaucracy has also damaged its functioning by making the transfers and promotions a function of the proximity to those in power. Politicization makes it difficult to make a distinction between public positions and politicians. The politicization of the civil service to such an extent has undermined the idea of an unbiased and capable civil service. Dixit (1996) cites the vested interests of bureaucrats that make them protectors of the status quo. Both arguments can be evidenced in the case of Pakistani civil service. As for the senior bureaucrats, the status, from which they can gain most benefits, is the best thing, hence they rather scry some freedom but resist any changes. Bureaucratic corruption occurs in numerous ways, including abuse of discretionary power and misuse of regulatory authority. The British gave discretionary powers to the civil servants to safeguard their colonial interests. However, post-independence these powers have rarely been revised or even reviewed.

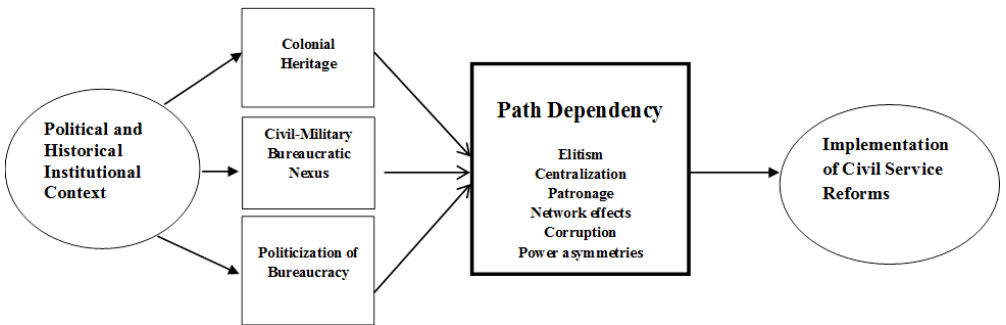
Pierson (2004) argues that due to network effects “...institutions and policies may encourage individuals and organizations to invest in specialized skills, deepen relations with other individuals and organizations, and develop particular political and social identities.” (p.32). The development of military-civil service nexus in case of the civil services in Pakistan during military rules reflects how the bureaucracy has served as the military’s willing junior partner in establishing patronage politics, opposing politicians, and helping implement military government’s agenda. The civil service realized that the grouping with military was useful to their interests. The civil bureaucracy joined hands with the military in retarding the growth of democratic institutions to create power asymmetries in their favor (Chengappa, 1999).

During general Ayub’s era, 272 armed forces officers were appointed to key administrative positions in the civil service and numerous bureaucrats were dismissed on the charges of corruption and inefficiency (shafiqat, 1999). The civil service acted pragmatically and reached a compromise with military to maintain their power and dominance. The civil service provided great support to the Basic Democracies and Rural Development Program as these programs gave huge boost to the power and prestige of the civil servants particularly those working at district levels. Thus by allowing military officers in civil service, benefitting from the

training programs and providing backing to the Basic Democracies and Rural Development Program, the civil servants were able to sustain their elite status (Imam & Dar, 2013).

Pierson (2004) argues that grant of political authority to certain actors can become the basis of positive feedback mechanisms. These actors can use this authority to change the rules of the game for enhancing their power. These changes can lure the weak and undecided actors to join the winners and leave the losers. In case of bureaucracy, civil servants resist any change that can disturb their networking with the military and the politicians resulting in the shifting of power from them to other actors in the scenario.

The discussion above can be summed up in the following theoretical model:



Conclusion

In order to understand the path dependent nature of civil service of Pakistan, it is significant to understand the sources of resistance to the reforms attempts. Historical institutionalism provides explanation to the phenomena of later choices getting influenced by the decisions taken earlier in time. The centralization of power at the top has been the major feature of the British colonial rule and has greatly impacted the shaping of the civil service in Pakistan. It is worthwhile to comprehend that the network created over time though investment in relationships by the key actors in the administrative structure namely, civil servants, military and politicians. Any reform initiative that threatens this network of relationships is deemed to face resistance if the institutional arrangements appropriate for these actors are to be changed.

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