


	<h1 style="margin: 0;">GOMAL UNIVERSITY</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">JOURNAL OF RESEARCH</h2> <p style="margin: 0;">Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan</p> <p style="margin: 0;">ISSN:1019-8180(Print) <span style="float: right;">ISSN: 2708-1737 (Online)</span></p>		
	<p><b>Website</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.gujr.com.pk">www.gujr.com.pk</a></p>	<p><b>HEC Recognized</b></p>	

## THE BUREAUCRACY OF PAKISTAN: FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MAX WEBER'S 'IRON CAGE' PHILOSOPHY

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
<p>Bureaucracy, Rationality, Iron Cage, Colonialism, Bureaucratic Reform</p>	<p>The 'Theory of Bureaucracy' is considered to be one of the most widely used administrative models. It was conceptualized by Max Weber, who envisioned it as a rational, impersonal, rule-bound, hierarchical system having a clear division of labor and specialization. Despite suggesting a highly mechanical administrative system, Weber was well aware of the challenges that overemphasis of rationality may pose. He predicted that extreme rationalism of bureaucratic capitalism could result in individuals descending into the quagmire of the 'Iron Cage.' He stated that "It is horrible to think that the world would one day be filled with little cogs, little men clinging to little jobs and striving towards the biggest ones." This article utilizes the ideas of Weber's 'Iron Cage' philosophy to explore the British Colonial bureaucracy through the lens of its history, motives, structure, and the patrimonial role it plays for the Bureaucracy of Pakistan. This article also explores the role colonial legacy played in the consolidation of such immense power by the Pakistani bureaucracy, that no reform agenda has been wholly successful in curtailing it.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>2020 Gomal University Journal of Research</i></p>
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### INTRODUCTION

The mainstay of the British state machinery, ensuring British rule in India, was its bureaucracy. The post partition Pakistan adopted the British state machinery in its totality, and to date, the reflection of the British legacy can be seen in all aspects of governance (Dwivedi, Jain & Dua, 1989). The adoption of the machinery was so complete that it even included the mentality of the bureaucrat. Thus after the departure of the white master, the brown 'babu' (master) took over, acting as public administrators and, to an extent, ruler of the new state rather than taking on the role of a public servant. In past seventy years of this country, every regime has relied heavily on bureaucracy, which has resulted in bureaucracy becoming ever more autocratic, to the extent that, in extant times, it seems unreformable (Kureshi, 2017). British carried efficient bureaucracy

to India with premeditated intent of producing perfect rational beings that could serve British interests. In formative years of the Bureaucracy in India, all bureaucratic posts were held by the British.

In due time the natives were inducted into bureaucracy but could never aspire to attain the top positions. In due course, the civil service in British India morphed into a more Weberian styled Bureaucracy, theory which to date is in praxis in all postcolonial South Asian countries (Shahzad, 2017). In early 20th Century Max Weber, a German social theorist, and philosopher formulated the "theory of bureaucracy," which to date remains one of the most influential theories in the administrative sciences. Weber, while a great admirer of bureaucracy, was aware of its flaws and presented 'Iron Cage' of rationality as its antithesis. (Douglass, 2018) This article explores the historical forces that gave rise to colonial bureaucratic model and shaped current administrative system of Pakistan. It examines Bureaucracy of Pakistan in its current form to test out its adherence to and/ or deviation from the Weberian bureaucratic model and the concept of 'Iron Cage. It then goes on to postulate plausible hurdles that stand in way of bureaucratic reforms in Pakistan.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section comprises of two parts; the first part entails the history of bureaucracy of Pakistan in the light of existing historical literature concerning pre and post-partition era of the British Raj. Second part provides an insight into Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy in consideration of his idea of the iron cage of rationality and its implications on the bureaucratic structure of Pakistan.

### **Max Weber & Bureaucracy Theory**

During the 19th Century, the term "bureaucracy" referred to a system of public administration, whereby jobs were performed by individuals selected through the extraneous conditions not intrinsically related to the occupation (Nelson, 1982). However, in early part of 20th Century, Max Weber developed an elaborate model of bureaucracy. His model presented an ideal form of bureaucracy in which professionals, operating in hierarchical organizations, were chosen on merit to perform bureaucratic tasks. According to Weber, guiding tenet for execution of these administrative operations was to be rationality coupled with impersonality and specialization; the end goal was attainment of maximum efficiency by prudently following the written rules and procedures (Stojanovski, Denkova, & Trajkov, 2014). To quote Weber, Bureaucracy has rational character: rules, means, ends, and matter-of-factness dominates its bearing" (Gerth & Mills, 1946). In an era when nationalism and capitalism were on rise, Weber put forward idea of the rational-legal authority of government. Opined with capitalism setting pace of bureaucratization of the economy, and bureaucratic system was an inevitability of the modern world (Anderson, 2004).

### **Iron Cage of Rationality**

The Max Weber in his 1905 book "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus" referred to a "Stalhartes Gehause" metaphor, which the translated means "shell as hard as steel." Steel being a product of the human fabrication, serves as an allegory to modernity, whereas shell symbolizes modern capitalism, which confines the human. The concept was interpreted as "Iron Cage" by American sociologist Talcott Parsons in his 1930 translation of Weber's book (Baehr, 2001). Weber, an advocate of systematic bureaucracy while regarding rationality as prerequisite

of modern world and changing nature of administration (Yüksel, 2014), feared that instrumental rationality would subject individuals to oppressive routine. In his opinion, the "instrumental rationality" would not only lead to humans becoming less empathetic and impersonal but would also result in them being solely concerned with efficiency, i.e., maximum results with minimum effort.

He postulated that ascent of "instrumental rationality" would forge an "Iron Cage," restricting universal freedom of the human, and it would require a herculean effort to escape the cage (Anderson, 2004). Additionally, servitude to the rational order would enter the humans into a machinesque age where they will serve as the raw material required to produce a final product for the consumption of another (Feenberg, 1998). Weber anticipated that bureaucracy with its inherent rationality and inbuilt continuity would turn public into subjects; permanence that is intrinsic to bureaucratic rule would in time provide it with such clout and influence that inspite of all its malpractices, it will remain unaccountable and unimpeded. The latter part of article attempts to analyze germaneness of these Weberian ideas to Bureaucracy of Pakistan in its current state.

### **Bureaucracy in British Raj**

In 1608, when the British arrived for trading purposes, India was not a unified state ruled by one monarch but a morass of warring princely states. Throughout India, depending upon the polity and its ruler, several administrative systems were in use. All states lacked a systematic recruitment process for staffing of the public administration offices. Instead, individuals were granted these posts through rampant nepotism, favoritism and/ or political patronage (Kincaid, 2018). The grant of the Diwani of three provinces in 1765 to the British, operating under the East India Company banner, lay the foundation of their emergence as the sole territorial power in India. For the first time, the British were responsible for the civil administration of large areas in India, and to ensure effective control, a need for a robust administrative system was felt. This need marked the beginning of the first systematic civil service system in India and led to the formation of the Covenanted Civil Service, which was reserved solely for the British, and the candidates were nominated by the Directors of the Company (Ascoli, 2019). In 1833, with the passing of the Charter Act of 1833, Indians were permitted into government services for the first time, and a lower category of the Indian Civil Service known as Uncovenanted Civil Service was formed.

While this allowed Indians' entry into administration but their prospects were blocked by a rigid service system, which ensured that they could not rise above subordinate positions. It must be noted here that despite the 1833 Act calling for racial equality in employment to the government service in India, the Indian Civil Service till the middle of the 19th Century comprised solely of the British elite in the top positions (Sabharwal & Berman, 2017). It was only with the passing of the Charter Act of 1853 that India got its first modern civil service. The Act abolished the patronage-based system and replaced it with merit-based system of competitive examination as the mode of recruitment for the Covenanted Civil Services. Theoretically, this provided natives an equal opportunity of entering the upper echelon of the civil administration. In practice, as the exam was held in England, it was practically impossible for the Indians to sit for these exams due to the financial implications of undertaking a voyage to England (Sabharwal & Berman, 2017). In 1858, under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1858, India became a direct British colony, and the Indian Civil Services was reinstated under the office of the

Secretary of State for India; furthermore, provision was made for the Indians to be admitted to service.

Likewise, the Civil Services Act of 1861 laid down that "any person, whether Indian or European, could be appointed to any of the offices provided that he had resided for a minimum of 7 years in India." However, these proclamations remained a dead letter and could not help the Indians secure employment in the Covenanted Civil Service. From 1860 onwards, all efforts to establish simultaneous civil service exams in India and England were stymied at all levels and in near concurrence by all British officials linked with India; it was not till 1922 that simultaneous exam became a reality. These circumstances led to only 111 Indians competing for civil service exam between 1862 to 1886, out of which only 19 were successful (Compton, 1967). Lee Commission appointed in 1923, by British government to deliberate the Natives composition in Covenanted Civil Services, recommended that 40% of the future entrants to civil services should be Natives another 40% appointments should be held by the British while the remaining 20% senior posts should strictly be filled on merit basis. Through the Indianization of the civil service, the British hoped to maintain and prolong their rule in India. The proposed structure of Covenanted Civil Services by Lee Commission endured till partition of British India in 1947 (Sabharwal & Berman, 2017).

The successful candidates for the Covenanted Civil Services, irrespective of having passed the examination in London or India, were trained for a period of one or two years in England at the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, or the School of Oriental Studies in London. This system was indubitably aimed at producing a cadre of individuals that would serve the British Imperial interests in India by any means possible (Shantha, 2014). British weakened by the First World War, had a cimmerian need of the local support to sustain their hold in India, created a new class of Indians which, besides being efficient and exclusive, remained aloof and was class conscious. These native bureaucrats still Indian in appearance thought and functioned in wholly British fashion. The Indian Civil Services (ICS), with its many administrative branches such as the Home Government, the Indian and the Colonial Services, and Diplomatic Services, without compunction executed all the imperial canons and directives (Sabharwal & Berman, 2017). ICS demonstrated its allegiance to the British Empire at all times; it was never more evident than amid the period of resistance when the whole machinery was used to suppress the nationalist movements. It can thus be plausibly argued that the highly organized, well-knit, and well regulated civil service played a pivotal role in protracting the British rule in India (Burra, 2012).

### **Post-partition Bureaucracy**

With the exodus of the British from the region in 1947, British India was partitioned into two independent states – India and Pakistan and the Indian Civil Services were divided between the two dominions. Both countries chose to retain the British bureaucratic model, which was based on the Weberian model. The Bureaucracy in India came to be known as Indian Administrative Services, while its counterpart in Pakistan, was named the Central Superior Services of Pakistan (Mollah, 2011). During the colonial era, the Indian Civil Servants were trained as representatives and, as such, were an extension of the British Raj (Mollah, 2015). They were trained to be the 'agents of the masters' and put in place by the British Imperial powers to govern the citizens as subjects of the Queen. These purveyors of the British Imperialism, regarded as the prestigious

and privileged class of the society, trained to be mere public administrators and not the public servants.

This mentality persevered after independence with minor modifications. The local politicians replaced the Queen and became new masters. This continued legacy thus gained bureaucrats' unquestionable political as well as administrative powers (Kalia, 2013). The proceeding section of the article uses specific scenarios identified by Weber, when presenting his antithesis of the theory of bureaucracy, to examine the bureaucratic structure of Pakistan. We will explore the twists and turns Pakistani bureaucracy took during the frequent political instability of the country during its 72-year existence. The brief inroad into the postcolonial history of the bureaucracy is taken to help understand how far the deeply entrenched hierarchies, machine-like structure, impersonality and, rules and regulations ingrained in the Pakistani bureaucracy warrants its foray into realm of Weber's Iron Cage and helped it to consolidate unprecedented powers.

### **METHODOLOGY & SCOPE**

The modest ambition of this research is to explore the bureaucracy of Pakistan in light of Weber's bureaucratic model and test out its relevance to the 'Iron Cage' philosophy. The scope of this article is to shed light on the bureaucratic set up in British India before 1947, and its post-1947 counterpart practiced in Pakistan. The article, due to its succinct nature, does not delve into all aspects of Pakistani bureaucracy and is limited to one key facet, i.e., consolidation of power by the Bureaucracy in Pakistan. The study follows a qualitative approach and employs reviewing existing studies as primary tool of argumentation to link opinions of different scholars on the topic.

### **RESULTS OF STUDY**

This section presents the views of different researchers on Weber's iron cage of rationality and establishes their philosophical connections with the bureaucracy system of Pakistan to reach the results that may help to conclude the current study. The results utilize multiple dimensions offered by the iron cage philosophy to highlight the pathologies of the bureaucratic system of Pakistan.

#### **Polar Night of Icy Darkness**

Weber equates bureaucratic authority to 'polar night of the icy darkness' on the basis of notion that it becomes near impossible to curtail the powers of the bureaucracy once it succeeds in amassing powers and assumes supremacy. Regardless of representative government, the whole administrative structure of country is managed by bureaucracy (Lachmann, 1971). Bureaucracy is thus referred to as permanent government with an ability to monopolizes the state business, which implies there exists a very thin line between public service and autocracy. Despite being immensely powerful and with the ability to write-off any form of resistance, the bureaucracy furthers the cause of self-service by forging alliances with powers higher than the bureaucratic machinery and which it perceives as a potential threat to its well-being (Mazlish & Mitzman, 1971). The relevancy of these ideas can be traced through the bureaucratic history of Pakistan. After partition, only a few of Indian Civil Servants opted to join the Pakistani bureaucracy owing to scarcity of resources of this nascent state. The civil servants who did join were of imperialist mindset, and they saw the public as subjects and found new masters in form of the political elite of Pakistan.

This proved to be a tumultuous relationship that did not last long. The politicians lacked the demeanor required of a true representative of the people, and this very early on led to political instability in the country. The vacuum created by the politicians in the power corridors was immediately filled by bureaucrats who were well familiar and equipped with the skills required to rule the public (Hussain & Kokab, 2013). Within four years of independence, the bureaucrats became so powerful that they started assuming political positions. In 1951, Mr. Malik Ghulam Muhammad, a bureaucrat, not only took oath as the Governor-General of Pakistan but also appointed Mr. Muhammad Ali Bogra, another bureaucrat as the Prime Minister of Pakistan (Mollah, 2015). In 1955, another bureaucrat Sikander Mirza took charge as the last Governor-General of Pakistan. In 1956, with the promulgation of the first constitution of Pakistan, he also became the first president of Pakistan. Bureaucracy played a vital role in the formulation of the first constitution of the country. However, the constitutional era in the country did not sustain as Sikandar Mirza in 1958 suspended the constitution and imposed martial law. He brought military influence into the politics by appointing General Ayub Khan as the chief martial law administrator.

Within a month of his appointment, Ayub Khan ousted Sikandar Mirza from power. Despite the imposition of Martial Law, the power of bureaucracy could not be curtailed mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, the military regime, which was under heavy criticism, relied on bureaucracy for running the administrative affairs of the country. Secondly, bureaucrat trained to be the 'agents of the masters,' whether it be a military or a civilian government. Hence, the bureaucratic system could form an alliance with the threat to its power structure and adjusted itself to the demands of its new master (Hussain & Kokab, 2013). After the end of Ayub's martial law in 1969, the democratically elected civilian government of Mr. Bhutto initiated bureaucratic reforms but soon realized that it would not be possible to repress and oppress both the opposition and the masses without bureaucratic assistance. As another martial law replaced the Bhutto led civilian government in 1977, bureaucracy again proved its allegiance by fulfilling the demands of the new ruling elite and by keeping the administrative machinery running. (Hussain and Kokab, 2013).

Despite efforts made on the part of various regimes, whether military or civilian, to curtail or eliminate the power of the bureaucracy, they had to surrender to the power of the bureaucracy to ensure the smooth running of the state machinery (Hussain and Kokab, 2013). The capability of the Pakistani bureaucracy for such rapid transformation of modus operandi to align with the power corridors finds its relevance with the idea of the 'polar night of the icy darkness.' It is an apt comparison as the Bureaucracy in Pakistan, owing to its colonial legacy, has found a way to enjoy unlimited powers and has directly/indirectly ruled the country since its inception in varied circumstances.

### **Specialists without Spirit**

Weber's stenographically recorded remarks delivered in the Verein für Socialpolitik at the Vienna meeting in 1909 and first translated into English by Mayer (Sica, 2004), "It is horrible to think that the world would one day be filled with little cogs, little men clinging to little jobs and striving towards biggest ones" (Mayer, 1988) best elucidates the phrase 'specialists without spirit' (Krieken, Habibis, Hutchins, Martin & Maton, 2006). The philosophy of bureaucracy firmly entrenched in the performance of tasks through rational, impersonal, and a rule-bound, hierarchical system leaves little room for innovation and creativity. As it turns human beings

into alienated administrative machines lacking emotions and empathy, an analogy can be drawn between bureaucrat and a robot—efficient yet emotionless. The lack of empathy and emotions coupled with the desire to get ahead and attain the highest position in organization opens up the possibility where the aim to serve the citizens is written off and is replaced by the self-serving task of climbing the highest administrative ladder. According to Weber, it is at this stage that specialists lose their spirit and fall in captivity or are under "iron cage" - a shell as hard as steel (Adler, 2012).

During the British rule, the bureaucrats in India selected after arduous testing went through rigorous training aimed at producing highly efficient representatives of monarchy, possessing specialized administrative skills based on the rationality (Shantha, 2014). Post Partition, the recruitment and training procedures for the Pakistani bureaucrats are in a continuum of high standards maintained during the Colonial Era. This includes the possibility of the bureaucrat attending the best educational institutions in the world; to help them specialize in their area of expertise. Despite having such specializations, specialists lack the spirit of service, and hardly any organizational improvement may be witnessed in the administrative machinery. Where the administrative systems in the developed world are venturing into being more decentralized, service-oriented, flexible, and participatory, the bureaucracy in the Pakistan has resisted any positive reforms; through consolidation of immense power by aligning with the ruling elite and taking on a taking a partisan role. It is these self-serving motives of the Pakistani bureaucracy that has captivated it into an iron cage with a plethora of specialists that lack the spirit of public service.

## **DISCUSSION**

This article has argued that in Pakistan's case, historically, bureaucracy has been in a negotiating role, and the ruling elite has been dependent on it. To bring this point home, one only has to consider the fact that Pakistan came into existence in 1947, and it was only in 2013 that for the first time, a democratically elected government completed its tenure. The frequent derailment of democracy created a political vacuum filled by executives who eagerly involved themselves in politics and unwilling to let go of status quo would not let any administrative reforms take place. It is important to point here that effective and consistent public service reforms are the only means of ensuring bureaucrats use their specialties with a spirit of public service. This is evident from paradigm shift in realm of politics and administration that was brought on by emergence of neoliberalism in developed world and the advent of new approaches to public management based on market and network-oriented models such as new public management and theories of governance.

While the traditional bureaucratic model owing to its rigid nature was hardly responding to reforms, these revolutionary advancements created possibilities of reducing size of government by engaging non-state actors to perform public service and helped formulate more and more citizen-oriented public service. In recent years a disappointing facet of Pakistani bureaucracy that has emerged is partisan behavior of its bureaucrats, especially evident during the civilian regimes with bureaucrats openly exhibiting political affiliations toward diverse political parties. Every ruling party has bureaucratic factions that it activates as soon as it comes in power, while bureaucrats with opposite political affiliations are pushed back. This exit from bureaucratic rationality in organizational interest and the emergence of the personal interests of bureaucrats is slowly eroding collective bargaining power of bureaucracy. This presents an unprecedented

opportunity to bring about administrative reforms to bureaucracy that has held on unparalleled power.

## **CONCLUSION**

The article, through the historical exploration of bureaucratization process in the region, found that during the colonial era, there was an apparent politics-administrative dichotomy, and the role of bureaucracy was to implement the monarch's policies with absolute due diligence and rationality. Nevertheless, after the departure of British, the country that was to be democratic in nature faced a leadership vacuum due to the ineptness of politician, which was filled by the post-independence bureaucracy, the only institution ready and equipped for the state-running business. This advent of the bureaucracy into politics saw a departure from the principle of politics-administrative dichotomy. Unregulated absorption of power by Pakistani bureaucracy that started in 1955 in conjunction with the ability to form alliances with any threat to its power structure, may it be military or civilian regime, left Pakistani bureaucracy devoid of productivity, rationality, and the spirit of public service. The bureaucracy thus turned into an oligarchic structure that limited itself to rendering service to the ruling elites to help prolong their rule. In recent decades a new trend seems to be emerging, whereby Pakistani bureaucracy seems to be reverting to patrimonialism as bureaucratic oligarchs divide into groups and affiliate themselves to various political parties in hopes of climbing the organizational ladder based on their personal relationships.

This is another evident departure of the Pakistani bureaucracy from the Weberian bureaucratic ideal of a rational, rule-bound, and hierarchical system. Although the postcolonial bureaucracy of Pakistan deviates from Weberian principles of bureaucracy, the concept of 'iron cage' is still applicable as the institutional 'iron cage' of rationality is replaced by an 'iron cage' of capitalist productivity serving an individualistic agenda. The study also finds that Pakistani bureaucracy still operates in a traditional bureaucratic manner while the discipline of public administration has gone over revolutionary advancements. While, the traditional rational bureaucratic model was efficient in the era of absolute power. Scholars are engaged in philosophical discourse to formulate more and more citizen-oriented public service, to make possible the transition of people from subjects to clients and from clients to citizens, which requires robust administrative systems based on partnership and openness. (Bevir, 2012) The study, therefore, finds constant derailment of the democratic rule in country as most noteworthy hurdle to bureaucratic reform. Considering democratic culture in country is still in its early stages of infancy, idea of significant bureaucratic reforms is far-fetched. However, if democracy was to continue, we may expect the bureaucracy to go over effective reforms and break free from shackles of iron cage of self-serving agenda.

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