

## Roundtable Discussion on 'Relationship Between Bureaucracy and Politicians For Better Governance' (August 04, 2022)





## Introduction

The School of Governance and Society (SGS) arranged a roundtable discussion on Relationship between Bureaucracy and Politicians for Good Governance. The keynote speakers who participated in this academic engagement were: Prof. Naveed Elahi (Moderator), Mr. Ameer ul Azeem (Secretary General, Jamat-e-Islami), Syed Zaeem Qadri (Independent political candidate), Ms. Faiza Ahmad Malik (Information Secretary, PPP), Dr. Saeed Elahi (Former MPA & Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent), Mr. Amjad Bhatti (Former Secretary information), Prof. Rahat-ul-Ain (Professor of Practice), Mr. Sarmad Saeed (Former IG Police), Mr. Javid Hussain (Former Ambassador) and Mr. Shaukat Javed (Former IG Police). The session was also attended by Director SGS – Dr. Aisha Azhar, Director Center for Disaster Management – Dr. Ahmad Ali Gul, Sr. Liaison Officer – Ms. Amna Siddique and students of SGS.

Prof. Naveed Elahi welcomed the panelists on behalf of SGS UMT and expressed pleasure on hosting the luminaries for debate on a very important topic. The guests, though mostly quite well-known, were introduced formally. He opened the discussion by stating that *bureaucracy and politicians are conjoined twins that have to operate together for good governance*. Politicians and bureaucrats, are always inseparable and indispensable to each other. Both have distinct roles in the administration of the state. He clarified that politics is the special domain of the statesman, administration of the technical officials. Policy does nothing without the aid of administration, but administration is not politics, as expounded by Wilson.

He further elaborated that *despite clear distinction of their roles, different background, training, approaches and goals create challenge to work together in a coordinated and effective manner*. A long-standing issue is how politicians and bureaucrats perceive themselves in their roles and relationships with their counterpart in the process of governance and development and which factors affect or configure the orientation or perception of the politicians and bureaucrats.

He pointed out the positive aspect and prevalent practice that *seasoned and sensible politicians and rational bureaucrats avoid turf war* and move wisely as per the vision of the leader and as per constitution to achieve the desired goals.

He brought forth a ticklish point, often highlighted by academics, that *major governance failures are political, not bureaucratic*, and the first step to better governance is to recognize the underlying political causes. Usually, political institutions fail to provide clear policy goals, rarely allocate adequate resources to deal with the scope of the problems, and do not allow the bureaucracy sufficient autonomy in implementation. Rational bureaucratic responses to these problems, in turn, create additional governance problems that could have been avoided if political institutional performance abetted bureaucratic goals.



*From L to R: Prof. Naveed Elahi, Mr. Shaukat Javed and Mr. Javid Hussain*



Before opening the house for debate on the above four points, he highlighted that the most elemental and theoretical debatable issue here is that - what will be the apt relationship between politicians and bureaucrats?

## Discussion

*Mr. Shaukat Javed (Former IG Police)* commented that the roles of both the stakeholders – politicians & bureaucrats- are defined. The organs of state – legislature and executive have their own processes of recruitment and selection. Political side is responsible for the formulation of the public policies and the bureaucratic side is equally responsible for their execution and implementation. They both are ‘public servant’ and have their own boundaries and technical expertise. Both face different challenges but we need to make cohesive, inclusive and collaborative communication practices and to strengthen this relationship for the sake of better service delivery. For instance, we usually come across to the administrative issue of ‘Red-tapism’ but, on the other side we also counter biasness, favoritism and lack of respect from political side. To achieve good governance, ‘good’ means people want security, sound law & order, economic growth, human development and many more, both have to work closely and amicably. Thus, to improve the system we need to describe our boundaries and demands within the legitimacy of our rules and regulations because in present times, governance is all about collaboration and coalition of public policy stakeholders.



*From L to R: Mr. Javid Hussain, Prof. Rahat-ul-Ain and Mr Sarmad Saeed*

**Syed Zaeem Qadri (Independent Political Candidate)**, elaborated that we need to learn about the distribution of ‘power’ between both the organs of state – legislature & executive as it must be in accordance to our ‘constitution’. We need structural changes for our national issues to build a strong culture of national cohesion/integration. While shedding light on the four introductory points of this discussion, he said that corruption now a days is a big problem for both political and bureaucratic sides. In making good government, both of the sides have to work with honesty, and bureaucracy is indispensable in administering rules and regulations. Policy making is a problem since inception. Politicians at times do cross their boundaries, but bureaucracy cannot be absolved of similar charges. We need to make and assign our national goals and work together in cohesion without indulging in unnecessary conflicts.

**Mr. Javid Hussain (Former Ambassador)**, enlightened the audience by giving a brief snapshot of the responsibilities of the politicians and bureaucrats. He said that the bureaucracy is appointed to serve the country not to rule it and elected cabinet is supposed to work according to the will of people. Democratic government works hand in hand with bureaucracy and other



political parties. Inefficient and incompetent government is the one which exploits its given resources and surpasses the limits. The main problem is the ‘communication gap’ because bureaucrats portray them as very honest, competent and superior but they need to realize that they are not the policy makers, they are just there to give options, advice and suggestions to the government and it is up to government to make decisions for their ‘citizenry’. Bureaucracy just needs to focus on its ‘performance/service deliverables’ – that what they should be responsible for.

***Dr. Saeed Elahi (Former MPA/ Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent)***, expounded that lack of ‘team work’ is our biggest bane. We need ‘good teams’ to achieve our targets and ensure good governance. Besides, both actors jealously cling to their powers and try to encroach on other’s mandate. We have often seen that the promotions and postings of bureaucrats are not on merit. They become a part of political game and resultantly fall prey to ‘political victimization’. The whole political culture and their administrative ethics are not up to the mark. On basis of his political experiences as a former MPA and member of Chief Minister’s core team, he advocated for meritocracy, which is conspicuously lacking in the political elite. It is crucial to revisit and realign the working protocols of both of the politicians and bureaucrats as they are mutually dependent on each other and should have equal tendency to reform themselves first rather to reform the system. They should work on improving their ‘behaviors’ towards each other.



*From L to R: Syed Zaeem Qadri, Ms. Faiza Malik, and Dr. Saeed Elahi.*

**Mr. Ameer ul Azim (Secretary General, Jamat-e-Islami)**, maintained that our political parties lack ‘collective wisdom’. There is no agenda setting, both in political and bureaucracy side, we just see the representation of ‘elite class’ solely. The recruitment and selection of bureaucrats have been biased as they are just giving opportunities to those who have ‘good English’ background and foreign qualifications. The national language ‘Urdu’ has been given a back seat. The youth is confused and caught in a catch 22 situation whether to bank on English or Urdu to excel. Besides, we need to work on our attitudes that how should we perceive power, and entitlements. Bureaucrats (service providers) have to reflect upon their ‘status quo’ behaviors towards service recipients (general public).



*From L to R: Mr. Sarmad Saeed, Dr. Ahmad Ali Gul and Dr. Aisha Azhar.*

**Mr. Sarmad Saeed (Former IG police)**, commented that in his professional career, the postings and in other things he never felt any political pressure; but focused only on his 'duty'. It is quite tough but it is bearable. Usually, bureaucrats seemed to be the 'god fathers' of public policies but now politicians do that job. We need to make them realize that everyone has its own stake/part in public programs. And, we need to emulate international standards of good governance. We need to fix society at primary levels to bring forth long term change in the society. '*Educational development*' can create mutual culture of collective action and have influential impact on the development of the nation as a whole.

**Prof. Rahat-ul-Ain (Professor of Practice, SGS UMT)**, explained that for the first twenty-five years of Pakistan, bureaucracy was firmly in the saddle and called the shots. The dismissal of bureaucrats and the manipulation of their powers in the past including the eras of Yahya Khan, Ayub Khan, Z.A Bhutto and General Musharraf has transformed the real essence and legacy of bureaucracy. Inevitably, these policy stakeholders, politicians and bureaucrats, are mutually



dependent on each other, but their relationship is based on disbelief, and distrust. They are facing 'credibility crisis'. We need to be loyal to our institutions and specifically bureaucrats have to be more efficient and vigilant in the service delivery because politicians & governments come and go, but bureaucrats remain and they are the custodians of public policies and governance. Commenting on the current situation of 'governance' he lamented 'there is no governance at all'. He suggested to work upon that with mutual cooperation and collaborative leadership.



*From L to R: Prof. Naveed Elahi, Mr. Shaukat Javed, Mr. Javid Hussain, Prof Rahat-ul-Ain and Mr. Sarmad Saeed.*

*Ms. Faiza Malik (Information Secretary, PPP),* was of the opinion that there is a visible communication gap between politicians and bureaucracy and as a consequence 'public' suffers. At times, bureaucrats try to belittle politicians and impose their authority on them. Both actors must respect each other's mandate and role in the government. We need to look for systematic reforms specifically to define our powers and work collectively for the service delivery. We need to work on our 'human resource' and equip them with true leadership.

**Mr. Amjad Bhatti (Former Secretary Information, Punjab)**, explained that there is nothing more important in thinking about public administration than the nature and interrelations of politics and administration. By dint of his experience, he claimed that a cold tussle almost always existed between politicians and bureaucrats. Unfortunately, '*collective consciousness*' for public problems is non-existent. There is weak planning regarding human resource, and infrastructure. On one side, we are facing a different narrative of political parties - very confused & ambiguous; and on the other side bureaucracy is busy in preserving its 'status quo or fraternity'. The role of media in this regard is not upto mark as they are just doing '*yellow journalism*'. The commentaries and reporting lack evidence which further ignite and aggravate the situation. Both the institutions, bureaucracy and politicians, need 'fundamental changes' in their approaches for the promotion of good governance and better service delivery.



*From L to R: Mr. Amjad Bhatti and Mr. Ameer ul Azim*

**Director SGS – Dr. Aisha Azhar** gave a brief snapshot to improve this inevitable relationship and suggested to bridge academia with industry. She lamented that recommendations offered

by the academia and researchers are often not given due weightage to bring about positive changes in various fields of governance and administration. The students of SGS were given the opportunity to interact with the panelists. They asked a couple of questions which were responded well to the entire satisfaction of the students.

### **Conclusion**

Prof. Naveed Elahi pointed out that the empirical data and now this debate have revealed that the relation between elected politicians and bureaucrats is conflicting and it is influenced by many components. The colonial and semi-colonial legacy, dominant attitude of the politicians and bureaucrats, politicization, distinctive self-image and mutual interaction are highly associated to the conflictual relationship. Moreover, the increased fusion of the political and administrative roles of the bureaucracy has complicated the perceptions of the bureaucracy in Pakistan. In his concluding remarks he thanked the participants for the enlightening discussion and informed that a comprehensive report would be prepared on it for circulation among the stake holders and the students.



*From L to R: Dr. Aisha Azhar, Mr. Javid Hussain and Prof. Naveed Elahi.*



## **Recommendations**

- 1.** For amelioration in the relationship between politicians and civil servants it is essential to describe and demarcate their boundaries and ensure that they operate within the parameters of their allotted roles defined through laws and rules.
- 2.** An indefatigable spirit should be inculcated in the civil servants and politicians, through training and oath, to religiously adhere to the Constitution of Pakistan.
- 3.** If the civil servant, who believes that he/she is required or obliged to act illegally or in breach of norms of conduct shall report the matter to his/her superiors.
- 4.** There is a need to make and assign national goals and the politicians and bureaucrats ought to work together in cohesion to achieve these objectives. Key Performance Indicators would judge their relationship and performance.
- 5.** Bureaucrats must realize that they are not the policy makers, their role is to give options, advice and suggestions to the government to ensure better decisions as per the vision of the leader.
- 6.** It is crucial to revisit and realign the working protocols of both - the politicians and bureaucrats- as they are mutually dependent on each other and should have realization to reform themselves.
- 7.** Both should work on improving their attitudes and behavior towards the other. It can be achieved through regular training, guidance and accountability.
- 8.** It is the duty of the government to create an environment where all stake holders work with mutual cooperation and collaboration.
- 9.** There is onus on FPSC, PPSC and the political parties to recruit the best available 'human resource' and groom them for selfless and skillful performance for the country.
- 10.** Media must play an effective role in highlighting the tussle and turf-war between bureaucracy and politicians in order to let people react to it and compel them to come to terms.

- 11.** In order to meet the expectations of people and civil society, government must seem to be establishing and delivering higher standards of ethicality and integrity in the Civil Service and Government itself. This phenomenon can bring the bureaucrats and politicians on one page to deliver.



*Group photo with student volunteers of SGS*

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