

From Ideology to the Consolidation of Regimes: What Drives Civil Service Reforms in Bangladesh?

Md. Fazle Rabbi¹
Sharif N As-Saber²

Abstract:

There had been a number of initiatives in Bangladesh since its independence in 1971 to reform its ailing civil service. However, the outcomes of such initiatives are considered barely significant and did not contribute to improve the service. The essay follows an aetiological approach to find out the underlying issues that have shaped reform initiatives in Bangladesh with a view to providing a broader picture of the causes of dismal performance of the past reform measures. The study has revealed that there were numerous forces responsible for such efforts, most of which were short-lived and overlapping and not complementary to one another. Political ideology such as socialism and capitalism, spirit of independence, economic expediency, colonial legacy, influence of development partners, consolidation of regimes and influence of technology have been the main drivers of civil service reforms in Bangladesh. The early reforms initiatives were guided by the spirit of independence along with socialistic ideology. However, factors like economic expediency forced the country to change its ideological position and created an opportunity for International Development Agencies (IDAs) to influence the reform initiatives. Since then, it is the IDAs and western development partners which had the dominant role in setting the country's reform agenda. New public management (NPM) and good governance practices were the major thrusts found in IDA driven reform initiatives. But, these agendas often lacked ownership and implicit agendas like consolidation of regimes prevailed over them.

Key Words: civil service reforms, IDAs, consolidation of regimes, Bangladesh

¹ National Consultant, Deepening Medium Term Budget Framework and Strengthening Financial Accountability (DMTBF&SFA) Project, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh

² Coordinator, 'Geopolitics, Business and Government' Research Cluster, Centre for Sustainable Organisations and Work, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

Introduction

The public sector worldwide has gone through significant changes since the 1970s. The traditional public administration or Weberian Bureaucracy has been in decline and it hardly exists in major developed industrialised countries (As-Saber, 1994). In keeping pace with the global trend, developing countries have also undertaken considerable efforts to supplant their archaic bureaucracies (Barzelay, 2002; Caiden, 1988; Halligan, 1991, 2007; Haque, 2001a; Hood, 1995; Laking & Norman, 2007; Terry, 2005). Bangladesh is no exception. Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has formed as many as 16 commissions and committees to bring changes in the public sector and the bureaucracy. International Development Agencies (IDAs) have also sponsored a number of studies for the same purpose (Sarker, 2004; UNDP, 2007).

Immediately after independence, the country tried to overhaul its traditional and colonial civil service to make it responsive and people oriented. To this end, it tried to establish political control over bureaucracy and to remove elitism from the civil service. Ironically, the government became more dependant on civil servants inherited from the pre-independent Pakistan regime and shelved the idea of reforming the civil service, at least for the time being. Size of the civil service expanded significantly as the government nationalised a significant proportion of the productive sector requiring more civil servants to administer newly nationalised industries (Uddin, 2005; WB, 2002).

The scenario changed abruptly following the change of political power and the new government in 1976 decided to start a new set of reforms in the civil service. At the same time, international development agencies such as WB and UNDP took an active interest in bringing efficiency to the bureaucracy under the much-touted Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). NPM-style reforms such as corporatisation and privatisation of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) gained momentum under the guidance and insistence of IDAs.

In the 1980s, the country went through another significant change in the administrative system. A new form of local government called “*Upazila Parishad (UZP)*”³ was constituted and a large number of civil servants were placed under the control of elected representatives. The government formed a number of committees and commissions to reform the public sector and bureaucracy. Different IDAs also sponsored as many as seven study groups/reports (See table 2) for similar purposes. This time, the issue of good governance was added to the efficiency, economy and effectiveness of public service.

During successive democratic governments from 1991 to 2006 a number of reform commissions, committees and study groups were constituted with the specific intention of reducing the public sector, infusing professionalism into the civil bureaucracy and establishing good governance.

However, the outcome is scarcely impressive. To date, a large public sector, and inefficient, non-responsive and overly centralised bureaucracy are major issues in public sector reform that only highlights the incompleteness of past reform initiatives (Sarker, 2004; Zafarullah & Rahman, 2008, Rabbi & As-Saber, 2010). In this situation, it is essential to explore the causes of poor outcomes of the past civil service reform initiatives in Bangladesh. Specifically, this study attempts to find out the driving forces behind the reforms in order to understand whether there is any incompatibility or incongruence between underlying impetus and desired outcomes.

³ Upazila is an administrative unit equivalent to a sub-district. Previously it was thana (named after police station) and under the administrative control of the bureaucracy. Under the new system, it is headed by an elected representative and civil servants are deputed to work under the control of this elected person.

The objective of the study is set from an aetiological approach which is used in medicine and epidemiology to explore causation and includes study of background/historical information to link them together to find the real causes of the ailment (Malone & Agutter, 2008). In addition, this study looks at background issues behind the reform initiatives which are usually ignored in studying this kind of issue but potentially have significant influence on the ultimate outcome.

Methodology of the Study

A case study research approach has been adopted to conduct the study where civil service reforms in Bangladesh are considered as a single case. The study is both descriptive (see Sekaran, 1999) and exploratory (see Zikmund, 2003) in nature and based on secondary and qualitative information. Documentation and archival records (see May, 2001) are sources of data in conducting the study.

Content analysis using editing approach has been used as the technique of data analysis where 'content analysis has been defined as a technique for systematically describing the form and content of written or spoken material' (Sommer & Sommer as cited in Tharenou et al, 2007) and editing approach involves searching meaningful segments in the text, rearranging them, and finally reducing them to interpretive truth. Editing approach is appropriate when 'the goal is subjective understanding, exploration, and/or generation of new insights/hypothesis... ..' (Tharenou et al, 2007, p. 256). In this study, the editing approach has been used as the study requires strong interpretive and inductive focus. The analysis focuses on agreement of theme contents among available sources of data and triangulates the agreements.

Civil Service and its Reform: A Literature Review

The concept and practice of civil service emerged from the idea of 'Platonic Guardian' which entailed selecting good people for public offices and giving them the knowledge and power to do what they believe is in the public interest (Das, 1998). At least some components of these attributes were present across ancient and medieval bureaucratic empires of Greece, Egypt, Rome and China (As-Saber, 1994; Li, 2005; Subramaniam, 1987).

However, the modern day civil service is based on traditional model of public administration which got shaped by Woodrow Wilson's policy-administration dichotomy theory, Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy, Frederick Taylor's scientific management theory and the Northcote-Trevelyan Report in the UK (As-Saber, 1994; Hughes, 2003). The underlying principles are political control, permanency in the job, recruitment based on merit, a hierarchical and rigid structure, neutrality and anonymity, following standardised rules and regulations, division of labour, and striving for public interest (Hughes, 2003; Peters, 1996; Stoker, 2006). The concept emerged to break the practice of political and personal patronage in recruitment and selection, sale of offices for personal gain, absence of a clear line of responsibility between ministers and higher civil servants, and arbitrary dismissal of public employees.

For a considerable period of time, the traditional bureaucratic model ran well and resolved many basic problems of the society. It worked well during two World Wars and the great depression and provided a wide range of services in the welfare society (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). However, with the rise of competition in the global marketplace, increasing pressure on financial institutions, emergence of the information society and knowledge based economy, and growing demand for quality, customised products and value for money from citizen, the bureaucratic model fell short of expectations (Common, 1998; Hughes, 2003; Minogue, 1998). The notions of 'public interest' or 'benevolent social guardianship' were challenged by 'public choice' theorists (Aucoin, 1990). The situation demanded smaller, flexible and adaptable institutions capable of delivering high quality goods and services and ensuring value for money, and which are responsive to customer needs and expectations (Butcher, 2003; Caiden, 1991b; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; WB, 1996). Consequently, a new paradigm started emerging.

The new paradigm is presented in many different ways and titles, such as ‘managerialism’ (Pollitt, 1990, 1993), NPM (Aucoin 1990; Hood, 1991; Terry, 2005), ‘entrepreneurial government’ (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), and/or neo-managerialism (Terry, 1998). Whatever the term is, the ultimate objective of the concept was bringing efficiency, effectiveness and economy to the civil service by adopting business-like practices with greater emphasis on professional management, personal performance, managing by results, value for money, customer focus, and, above all, smaller government with a greater role for the private sector and civil society (Aucoin, 1988; Farnham & Horton 1996; Hood, 1991). Measures like privatisation, corporatisation, decentralisation, devolution, contracting out, etc. emerged as common practice in the public sector to supplant centralised, hierarchical and permanent bureaucracy (Davis & Rhodes, 2000; Hughes, 2003, Sarker, 2005).

However, the notion of managerialism/NPM does not go unchallenged and is criticised for diminishing and weakening the administration (Terry, 2005), termed as the wrong model for civil service reform (Bogdanor, 2005), lacking a global perspective (Hood, 1995; Halligan, 2003; Kettle, 2005; Torres & Pina, 2004) and a strong theoretical underpinning (Caiden, 1991a; Richards, 2003; Torres, 2004). The suitability of NPM reform to developing countries is more questionable because of its high rate of failure in improving the public service (Dia, 1993; Polidano, 1999). No developing country has fully applied the entire suit of NPM-style reform process. The adopted practices have only showed limited success.

As a result, NPM started fading quickly and new ideas made their way. Developed countries gradually move to third generation or even fourth generation reforms. The concept of joined-up government (Bogdanor, 2005; Richards & Smith, 2006), New Public Governance (Aucoin, 2006), whole-of-government (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007; Halligan, 2007), network governance/collaborative governance (Stoker, 2006) and integrated government (Halligan, 2007) are significant shifts from NPM to third generation reforms (Halligan, 2007) mainly to facilitate cross-agency coordination and cooperation, and to create synergy (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007). Countries like Australia is now embracing responsive government based on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to make government approachable through a number of channels and responsive to customer needs in the most efficient way through a connected government system (AGIMO, 2006). Alford & Hughes (2008) and Stoker (2006) argue that this new phase of public management represents ‘Public Value Pragmatism’ where creating public value is the main concern. In developing countries, the dominant notion during this period is governance and good governance advocated by WB and its development partners (Dia, 1993; WB, 2002).

However, these reform stimuli are non-exclusive and there is no single line of direction in achieving desirable reform outcomes. For example, the Mexican public sector has gone through substantial change to adjust to economic liberalisation and decentralisation of the country without any planned strategy like NPM (Cejudo, 2008). The most dramatic reforms took place in the transitional economies through embracing the alternative economic system instituted under Gorbachev’s *perestroika* (Kaul, 1996) which was a major shift towards economic and political freedom while, at the same time, it was self-induced somewhat ideologically driven.

On the other hand, reforms in other developing countries are mostly induced by exogenous forces. IDAs such as the WB, IMF and ADB have exerted significant influence to initiate and guide reforms in these countries (Caiden, 1991a; McGill, 1997; Olsen, 2005; Sarker, 2006). Again, developing countries are mostly former colonial countries and they face a dilemma of removing the colonial ethos from their civil services in one hand, and having a clear inclination to taking similar reform measures undertaken by their colonial ancestors on the other (Subramanian. 1990). The colonial powers maintain significant influence and exert that on former colonies through various means like development assistance, foreign training, and the creation of special groupings with ex-colonies such as the Commonwealth of Nations (Alam, 1994; Ali, 2004; Ray, 1999; Subramaniam, 1990; Talib, 1999). The disproportionate influence of the UK on its former colonies and the influence of Australia and New Zealand on Fiji, the Cook Islands

and Papua New Guinea represent some good examples of colonial legacies in their respective reform processes (Laking & Norman, 2007).

Civil Service Reform Initiatives in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, since 1971, 16 commissions and committees were constituted by the government (Table 1) while a number of studies were conducted and reports produced with assistance from IDAs (Table 2). Some of them such as the National Pay Commissions (NPCs) and the Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee (ASRC), 1972 or the Pay and Service Commission (P&SC), 1977, dealt exclusively with the civil service. Some of them, for example, the Public Administration Sector Study (PASS), 1989 and the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC), 2000 encompassed the entire public sector. Others, like the Committee for Administrative Reform and Reorganisation (CARR), 1982 focused mainly on decentralisation.

Table 1 Major Reform Initiatives undertaken by Government of Bangladesh (GoB)

	Committees/Commissions	Year	Aim/Focus
1	Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee (ASRC)	1972	Civil service structure
2	National Pay Commission (NPC-I)	1972	Pay issues
3	Pay and Services Commission (P&SC)	1977	Civil service structure and pay
4	Martial Law Committee (MLCI) for Examining Organisational Setup of Ministries, Divisions, Directorates and other Organisation	1982	Reorganisation and rationalisation of manpower
5	Committee for Administrative Reform and Reorganisation (CARR)	1982	Structure and organisation of the civil administration
6	NPC-II	1984	Pay issues
7	Special Committee to Review the Structure of Senior Service Pool (SSP)	1985	Structure of SSP
8	Cabinet Sub-committee	1987	SSP and promotion aspects
9	Council Committee on Senior Appointment and Services Structure	1987	SSP
10	Committee to Re-examine the Necessity of Keeping Certain Government Offices in the Light of Changed Circumstances (Muyeed Committee)	1989	Reviewing the recommendations of MLCI
11	NPC-III	1989	Pay issues
12	NPC-IV	1996	Pay issues
13	Administrative Reorganisation Committee (ARC)	1996	Structure and organization of manpower
14	Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC)	2000	Public sector reform
15	NPC-V	2005	Pay issues
16	NPC-VI	2008	Pay issue

Source: GoB, 1977; PARC, 2000; Sarker, 2006; Biswas, 2009

Table 2 Reform Reports Produced with the Assistance of Development Partners

	Name of the Report	Sponsoring Agency	Year	Main Focus
1	Public Administration Efficiency Study (PAES)	USAID	1989	Secretariat system and work procedure
2	Public Administration Sector Study (PASS)	UNDP	1993	Civil Service
3	Towards Better Government in Bangladesh (Four secretaries' report)	DFID	1993	Civil service
4	Bangladesh: Government That Works Reforming the Public Sector	WB	1996	Comprehensive administrative reform
5	Taming Leviathan- Reforming Governance in Bangladesh	WB	2002	To analyse the causes of poor governance and of slow response to public sector reform

6	Public Administration Reforms in Bangladesh	UNDP	2004	Civil service
7	Building a 21 st Century Public Administration In Bangladesh	UNDP	2007	Restructuring and reorganization of the civil service

Source: UNDP, 1993; Alam, 1994; Zafarullah, 2005b; UNDP, 2007.

What Drives Reform Initiatives in Bangladesh?

The literature review suggests that economic, technological, politico-ideological and organisational factors act as the main driving forces behind the reform initiatives in the recent past. However, some other factors like the influence of IDAs and historical factors like the colonial legacy also have significant influence on such initiatives in developing countries.

It is evident that reforms in Bangladesh have been influenced by almost all of these factors. They could be placed under some broader packages such as political ideology and the spirit of independence, economic expediency, the colonial legacy, influence of IDAs and dependency on foreign assistance, pressure for good governance, and urge for technology driven reforms like introducing e-governance. However, these forces are primarily exogenous in nature and are often not taken seriously by local political leaders. Ultimately, a parallel line of implicit agenda such as consolidation of regimes prevail over the explicit reform objectives. The factors are elucidated in the following sections.

Socialistic Ideology and the Spirit of Independence: Following independence in 1971, civil service reform in Bangladesh was shaped by socialistic political ideology along with the vivid memory of domineering behaviour of the civil servants of Pakistan and their alienation from the people (Zafarullah, 2006). The liberation war was not only a nationalist struggle but also a struggle to end civil-military bureaucratic regime (Jahan, 1980) and establish populist governance (Sobhan, 1993). The constitution of the country, which accepted nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism as basic principles, aimed at establishing a socialist egalitarian society, free from exploitation and injustice (GoB, 1972). The government of the new country was committed to disintegrate the elitism of the members of the erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP), and make civil servants serving the people and dedicating to national development (Khan & Zafarullah, 1982). The dominating tendency and dubious and unconstitutional roles played by the bureaucracy⁴ during the Pakistani regime further prompted to strengthen this approach.

Both Administrative Services and Reorganisation Committee (ASRC) and the first National Pay Commission (NPC-I) worked in tune with this socialistic ideology. ASRC observed that:

The service structure designed to serve a colonial federal form of government within capitalist framework was found unsuitable for the independent, socialist, democratic and unitary government and inadequate to meet the challenges of quick development and socialist reconstruction of the country (ASRC, 1973a, as cited in Khan & Zafarullah, 2005).

Abolition of elitism, introduction of a unified grading system and decreasing the salary gap between higher and lower level employees were some of the recommendations in line with the ideological stance of the government. The number of grades was reduced from more than 2208 to only 10 (Khan & Zafarullah, 1982). The government also gave emphasis on equity than merit in recruitment to the civil service and it was made more flexibility in recruiting from different groups of people based on geographic distribution, gender and contribution to the liberation war (Alam, 1996; Ali, 2007).

⁴ A small number of civil servants (and some ex-bureaucrats-turned politicians), in conjunction with the military, enjoyed decisive power in the Pakistan polity. The heads of the states of Pakistan for 20 years were either from the civil or the military bureaucracy. Later, the Army took charge and bureaucrats played the second fiddle. Bureaucrats like Gholam Mohammad, Chowdhury Mohammad Ali, etc., occupied the highest posts of in Pakistan such as the presidency, in an unconstitutional way (Mascarenhas, 1971).

In addition, the government made some efforts to turn the bureaucracy subservient to political forces. In doing so, the government decided to introduce a one-party government system (BKSAL⁵) on January 25, 1975 and designated 61 district governors to take over district administration mostly replacing the civil servants (Jahan, 1980; Maniruzzaman, 1976). The government termed it as the ‘second revolution’ (Ingham & Kalam, 1992; Ziring, 1992).

It will not be a digression to mention that this ideological position of the government was not purely home grown. Though Awami League, the party led the liberation war of Bangladesh, from its inception worked for the interest of the deprived, it was not a socialist party (See Rahman, 2012). It is worth mentioning that the support of the Soviet Union during and after the liberation war played a significant role in influencing the government of the day in taking a definitive path. The Cold War, bitter relations with China, and the urge to maintain the balance of power in South Asia prompted the Soviet Union to take necessary steps to keep the possible new nation of the region within its caucus (Alam, 1990; Rahman, 1977). It supported the struggle for independence of the people of the then East Pakistan morally and strategically during the war (Alam, 1990) and actively engaged in reconstructing the war-ravaged country after the liberation. Subsequently, as a grateful nation, the newly liberated Bangladesh tried to remain a good friend of the Soviet Union and the country’s policy directions were influenced by the socialist ideology (Rahman, 1977). Bangladesh embraced ‘socialism’ as a fundamental principle of the State which was reflected in the newly written constitution of the country.

The post-independence scenario, in other way, can be explained as political dependency on ‘Moscow’ and to a lesser extent on ‘Delhi’ (Ahmed, 1983; Novak, 1993; Ziring, 1992). As a consequence, attempts were made to follow a pro-socialistic philosophy to administer government activities in Bangladesh. It was reflected in the government’s move of making the ruling political party and politicians as the ultimate source of state power that significantly undermined the role of bureaucracy in nation building activities.

Capitalism or Market Economy and Return of Defused Elitism in Civil Service: The socialist chapter of Bangladesh history ended in 1975 with a military coup d’état. The military-backed new government took a u-turn from the previous ideological position and established a capitalist system (Alam, 1996; Hossain, 1988; Khan, 1998; Khan & Zafarullah, 2005; Maniruzzaman, 1976; Ziring, 1992). Two of the four fundamental principles of the State policy, secularism and socialism, were changed or modified. Socialism was interpreted as ‘economic and social justice’. Thus, the government of the day shifted the State from the left to the right on economic, political and social issues (Chowdhury, Hakim & Zafarullah, 1996; Zafarullah & Khan, 2005). Subsequently, market-based reforms started under the influence of WB and IMF, coupled with aid conditionality and structural adjustment programmes (Azmat & Coghill, 2005; Uddin, 2005) and programmes like privatisation of SOEs got a quick start. The country shifted its alliance from socialistic ideology to capitalism.

Along with this, a significant change occurred in the structure of the Bangladesh civil service (BCS). Government introduced 28 functional cadres in the civil service such as BCS (Administration), BCS (Police), BCS (Agriculture), etc. These functional cadres, which are still in practice, function like tight chambers and scope for lateral entry to the cadre or inter cadre movement is more or less absent. The scope of vertical entry to the cadre post is also very limited. Again, the cadre system includes only a small proportion of the civil servants and a shift from the concept of classless bureaucracy with a unified career structure (Khan, 1989; WB, 1987). The number of pay scales was also increased from 10 to 21 (Khan, 1998, p.100). In fact, though the cadre system brought back some structural discipline in the civil service, it was, in essence, a return to the bureaucratic elitism but in a defused form.

⁵ BKSAL stands for Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League created to establish a one-party government system in the country.

Colonial Legacy: The colonial legacy influenced civil service reforms in Bangladesh. Like many other post-colonial countries, Bangladesh inherited a strong bureaucracy which was considered as rigid, centralised, overly self-serving, domineering and non-responsive to the citizen (Khan, 1989). It, therefore, required a new orientation to make it suitable for the new society (Zafarullah, 1998). The initiative emanated from an urge to remove what Chou En-Lai (as cited in Lifschultz, 1979) called 'colonial root'.

Immediately after independence, this factor acted as a major rationale behind civil service reforms in Bangladesh. There were deliberate efforts to drive away the ghost of colonialism from bureaucracy. The bureaucracy was frequently criticised by politicians, both government and opposition, with irritation and even with contempt (Zafarullah, 2005a). The new constitution withdrew the protection civil servants used to enjoy under the 1956 and 1962 constitutions of Pakistan. Article 134 of the constitution of Bangladesh declared that civil servants 'shall hold office during the pleasure of the president' and article 135(3) stated that 'the decision thereon of the authority empowered to dismiss or remove such person or to reduce him in rank shall be final' (Ahmed, 1980, pp.144-145). These provisions were not only on paper but also were in practice. Some 53 civil servants were removed from office in early January of 1972 and 303 government officials were dismissed under presidential order no. 9 (Ahmed, 1980, pp.146-147). The recommendations of the ASRC and NPC-I reflected this position quite explicitly.

On the other hand, the active colonial legacy has still been manifest in various forms, such as being a member of the various post colonial institutions like the Commonwealth of Nations, and by receiving development assistance, higher education, foreign training, foreign consultancy, and sponsorship for administrative reforms from the UK and its Western allies (Ekekwe, 1977; Schaffer, 1978). During the first government of the country, there was not much sign of active colonial influence behind the reform initiatives (Sobhan, 1982) except forming the commissions, a practice followed by past colonial masters. However, the commissions confined themselves to the traditional practices introduced by the Westminster system such as merit-based recruitment in the civil service, continuing with the same form of Public Service Commission (Ali, 2002) and even holding a 'special type' of examination for first class graduates for limited vacancies which was mostly in line with the 'Method II' examination in the UK (Zafarullah & Khan, 1983).

The colonial legacy became explicit in the recommendations of the Pay and Services Commission (P&SC) which mainly resembled the recommendations of the Fulton Committee in the UK (Fulton Committee, 1968). Later on, the Overseas Development Administration of the British Government (afterwards named as the Department for International Development, DFID) took an active interest in reforms in Bangladesh (Zafarullah, 1998). Sponsoring the tour of the four secretaries from Bangladesh to the UK and the report produced by them afterwards is one of the examples showing the DFID interest in the civil service of Bangladesh (Sarker, 2006). DFID is now one of the members of the 'Aid Group', for assisting development in Bangladesh. DFID, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA) and Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC), has completed two Managing at the Top (MATT) programmes which covered all senior and mid-level civil servants of generalist group who play key role in policy formulation in the country. The programmes were aimed at creating a critical mass of reform-minded civil servants in the country. The commonwealth secretariat also undertook studies on the civil service of Bangladesh (Ali, 2007).

Economic Expediency: Economic expediency is considered as a major cause of administrative reforms in developing countries to pave way to economic liberalisation and prosperity. It is often seen as an impediment to take a definitive path of progress of their own. Within three years of independence, the country faced the hardest economic challenge in the aftermath of a natural calamity on the domestic front and economic slowdown in the international arena (Maniruzzaman, 1975; Novak, 1993). The government of the day started retreating from its socialistic ideology to gain support from the western world and prosperous Middle Eastern economies. For example, in 1974, the government imposed a

moratorium on nationalising private enterprises for 15 years, increased the ceiling of private investment from Tk. 2.5 million to Tk. 30 million and declared a tax holiday for private investment along with other incentives (Maniruzzaman, 1975, pp.118-120).

The next government initiated measures like privatising the SOEs nationalised earlier to reduce the size of the government as well as to reduce the fiscal burden, generate savings and bring efficiency in the public sector. Privatisation of SOEs continued under successive governments at varying pace (Uddin, 2005). In addition to this the military-backed government led by Lieutenant General H M Ershad reduced the number of ministries, divisions, departments and subordinate offices. His government placed a large number of senior civil servants under the control of elected local representatives as a means of achieving greater accountability, better use of taxpayer's money, and local resource mobilisation. The government accepted study reports from IDAs and constituted its own commissions and committees mostly to secure foreign investment and assistance from its development partners to overcome financial deficits and improve the country's economic situation.

Influence of IDAs: NPM, Governance and Good Governance

Since 1974-75, like in many other developing countries, reforms in Bangladesh have mostly been driven by the various IDA agendas. Though the country tried to maintain a distance from multilateral development agencies during the initial years (Novak, 1993; Sobhan, 1982), in the face of huge economic downturn, it started softening its view towards IDAs and eventually succumbed to the prescriptions of aid agencies (Lifschultz, 1979; Khan, 1994). Aid agencies led by the WB formed the Aid Bangladesh Club/Donor Country Consortium (later called Bangladesh Development Forum). IDAs such as the UNDP, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and USAID took active interest in reform activities in Bangladesh. NPM style reforms which were advocated by IDAs like the WB and IMF got impetus in Bangladesh (Sarker, 2004; WB, 1996, Uddin, 2005) and consequently it became one of the fast movers in privatising SOEs. According to Lifschultz (1979, p.141) 'the proposed so-called reform package was one-directional and typical of American AID cum WB economics: a 50% devaluation of the Bangladesh taka, decentralization and divestment of state owned industries, import liberalisation and new rules favouring the private sector and foreign investment'.

IDAs invested a considerable amount of resources to bring efficiency, productivity and accountability to the civil service (Khan, 1994). The WB and the UNDP focused on expanded training, personnel management, and organisation and management. Both organisations conducted studies to suggest ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the civil service. The WB gave particular emphasis on enhancing the capability of the civil service to implement Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) undertaken by the Bank (Das, 1998; Sarker, 2004). Under the WB civil service reform program, Bangladesh worked on information systems, undertook diagnostic work, and restructured employment and management incentives for civil servants (WB, 1994, as cited in Das, 1998, p.16).

They also influenced the government to take its own policy measures under aid conditionality and hence, all reform initiatives undertaken by the government since the 1980s were influenced by them (Uddin, 2005). For example, administrative reform process through decentralisation during 1980s was primarily financed by IDAs. In the post-1990 democratic period,

...there has been persistent pressure on ...governments for comprehensive reform of the administrative machinery. The stimulus for change generally came from the international donor communities specifically, from WB, IMF, the British Overseas Development Agency (ODA) and the UNDP' (Zafarullah, 1998, p.106).

In particular, the Administrative Reorganisation Committee (ARC) and the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) were established by the government to satisfy its development partners (Uddin,

2005; Sarker, 2004). Thus, IDAs actively influenced the civil service reform process in Bangladesh by sponsoring reform studies and imposing reform conditionalities with aid.

The main focus of key IDAs appeared to be ensuring NPM-style reform and they persistently advocated for implementing NPM practices and ensuring good governance in the country. Though IDA influence was not the sole factor of this practice during 1970s, they had considerable role in pushing the privatisation programme in Bangladesh.

The issue of governance in relation to public service reform in Bangladesh arose during the early 1980s in the form of SAP advocated by the WB and other development agencies. Although the concept was not explicit in its early adoption stage, the use of local governments instead of the central government as the implantation authorities of international aid-based development projects to achieve efficiency through participation very much supports this notion of governance. Later on, development agencies relied more on Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), a step further in following the line of governance (Sarker, 2004).

The good governance issue was explicitly added to reform issues in the 1990s with the initiative of development partners. The DFID (1993) first gave high importance to transparency and accountability. Later on, the ARC (1996), WB (1996), PARC (2000) and all other reports considered good governance as one of their prime development agendas. The ARC placed importance on accountability, and the WB and PARC recommended for establishing an independent commission against corruption, a criminal justice commission, an office of ombudsman, and strengthening parliamentary oversight. Since 1990s, donors have been advocating for strengthening governance, which is, in fact, 'good governance' according to the Manila Declaration (World Conference on Governance, 1999,) that played a key role in shaping the civil service reform programmes in Bangladesh.

Beside IDAs, the civil society of the country has been becoming increasingly active in pursuing the causes of governance and good governance. Civil society groups like Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), *Adhikar* and *Shushashoner Jonney Nagorik* (SUJON) are acting as pressure groups in advocating for good governance-based administrative reforms and ensuring transparency, accountability and efficiency in the public sector (WB, 2002).

Consolidation of Regimes: Despite persistent pressure from development partners to promote NPM, governance and good governance, and reshape the civil service accordingly, the response from the government is unenthusiastic. The reform measures undertaken under the auspices of development partners lacked political commitment as they are primarily exogenous in nature. Rather, consolidation of regimes and promoting political interests acted as the key implicit factors behind reforming or deforming the civil service and as the strongest crosscurrent deterring the natural flow of the reform process. Both military and democratically elected governments eschewed the recommendations of the various reform committees and commissions that might have affected the regimes' political interests (Khan, 1998). Since 1975, the country was run by military-turn civil governments and these governments continuously tried to master support from military and civil bureaucracies to consolidate their regimes.

The size of military bureaucracy was almost doubled during this period. The compensation package including wages and other benefits for the members of armed forces increased so abruptly that it became almost twice the package given to their civil counterparts. A good number of military officers were inducted to civil bureaucracy. 14 big-size corporations out of 22 were headed by serving or retired military officers and one-third of the ambassadorial posts were filled up by people from the armed forces (Maniruzzaman, 1996, p. 49). These measures were mainly targeted to consolidate support from the military bureaucracy.

The civil bureaucracy also received a share of the pie as a reward for its allegiance to these regimes. The salary and benefits of civil bureaucracy increased substantially though not equally with the military bureaucracy. Civil bureaucracy, especially the generalist group was shared with substantial power and authority. Most notably, the government introduced the provision of Senior Service Pool (SSP) in the civil service as part of the recommendation of Pay and Services Commission (GoB, 1977) but used it as a means of creating supportive civil administration through promoting civil officers at senior level primarily based on patronage and the level of allegiance rather than merit. SSP was introduced in 1977 and was kept outside the purview of Public Service Commission (PSC) and the government had absolute control over the business of rewarding senior civil servant for their support and allegiance. In the 1980s, the government promoted 523 officers to the SSP without consultation with BPSC using this provision (Khan, 1989, p.306). Thus the government created the support base by awarding the influential groups of civil bureaucrats.

During successive democratic governments since 1990, political interest prevailed over bringing efficiency and effectiveness in the civil service. Recommendations of the committees and commissions formed during the periods were mostly ignored except partial implementation of some recommendations by the various pay commissions. There was wide perception of having conscious effort to promote civil servants loyal to the party and government in power at the cost of professionalism. Parties in power are often blamed for trying to create party men in the civil service through promotion and posting based on patronage (Khan, 1998; Jahan, 2006, Jahangir, 2010). The practice indicates that changes in civil service were dominated by political interests and not driven by the rationale of bringing quality or efficiency in the civil service.

Recent push for E-government: The most recent wave of reform measures, as indicated so far by the various government initiatives, is likely to be shaped by an emphasis on establishing e-government. The current government, through its *Digital Bangladesh* campaign, has been endeavouring to introduce e-government using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The issue is still emerging in Bangladesh. Among the reform commissions and committees, only PARC suggested establishing e-governance. It is an agenda item for the current government to establish digital government by 2021. The significance of this wave is that it is the election manifesto of the government. As a result it has strong political commitment and showing some progress. Although this 'digital' campaign have not brought any significant change in the bureaucracy yet, it has the potential to give bureaucracy a different shape in terms of structure, function and culture as it is envisaged to enhance accountability, transparency and responsiveness of the government agency to provide better service for the citizen (As-Saber, et al., 2007).

Conclusion

It can be concluded that there are a number of forces guiding civil service reforms in Bangladesh. These forces are neither mutually exclusive nor complementary. The forces of political ideology like socialism and capitalism, spirit of independence, the colonial legacy, the influence of development partners, economic expediency, the thrust for good governance, consolidation of regimes and the influence of technology are the main drivers of civil service reforms in Bangladesh. The early reforms initiatives were guided by the spirit of independence along with socialistic ideology. Later on, factors like economic expediency forced the country to change its ideological position and created an opportunity for IDAs to influence the reform process. Since then, it was the IDAs which had the dominant role in setting the reform agenda, overshadowing the role of other stakeholders. NPM practices, governance and good governance issues were the main agenda items found in IDA driven reform initiatives. However, despite the promises of creating a better government through positive civil service reforms, the implicit objectives of consolidating the respective political regimes often overpowered all other reform drivers and ultimately made the reform initiatives redundant or futile. Given the intense rivalry among the key political parties, often the reform initiative undertaken during one government is not recognised and supported by the succeeding government as that could bear the legacies of the previous regime!

Nonetheless, the initiative of establishing e-governance can bring some changes in structure, function and culture of the civil service. But, similar to other reform agendas, it requires ongoing political commitment of the successive governments.

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