

Abstract

In the last two years, it has been impossible to ignore the persistent complaint about bureaucratic indecision in Pakistan. There is *ad infinitum* iteration of this complaint in public discourse. It crops up on a daily basis in media discussions, op-eds, cabinet meetings, judicial hearings, and at any other forum where governance and bureaucratic behaviour are being discussed. A popular thesis has emerged: indecision in the Pakistani bureaucracy may be a consequence of a phenomenon of ‘multiple accountability’ wherein officers are hesitant to take decisions. This study uses a comprehensive survey instrument among the public/civil servants to ascertain perceptions of various hierarchical levels of decision-makers in Pakistan. The study provides evidence for the notion that by its own estimation, the Pakistani bureaucracy is beset with indecision. In addition, the study shows that NAB, media trials, public interest litigation and pressures generated by the political economy considerations are contributing, in moderate to intense degree, to bureaucratic indecision. Attacks on social respect and prestige are opined to be major demotivating factor affecting efficient decision-making.