

Poor Pakistan or Pity Pakistan: A Power Play of Patronage, Politics, and Payola in the Global Scenario Policy and Religious Implications

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Article Information		Abstract
Received:	November 05, 2024	The exercise of patronage politics with massive implications has been widespread often with turmoil. The system of political appointments started off from olden times where a political party, after assuming power gave government jobs to its supporters as an incentive for functioning towards triumph, rather than on merit. There is a history of so many “Ps” in Pakistan for more than six decades. This article explored poor or pity state - the existence, indicators, current situation, effects and consequences of patronage in Pakistan - and the way out. Political patronage contradicts Islamic values of justice, merit, and accountability, as it promotes nepotism and corruption, undermining the state's obligation to serve all citizens fairly. In an Islamic governance framework, public office is a trust that must be granted based on capability and integrity. Patronage politics therefore weakens the moral and functional foundations of a just society as envisioned in Islam.
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1 Introduction

The exercise of patronage politics with colossal ramifications has been rampant often with turbulence. The system of political appointments originated from a history of the spoils system which is a practice where a political party, after winning an election, gave government jobs to its supporters, friends and relatives as a reward for working towards victory, rather than on merit. Generally known as *Patronage system*, the adage by Marcy (1832) “*To the victor goes the spoils*” explains the philosophy behind the practice which is, also, very common in Pakistan. Whether the appointments through patronage affect the public policy remains a debated issue among the scholars of public management (Culeac, 2012). There is a history of so many “Ps” in Pakistan for more than six decades. However, this article explored the indicators and effects of patronage appointments in Pakistan.

The article seeks to address the widespread and persistent issue of political patronage in Pakistan, which has severely impacted the country’s governance, economy and public institutions. It explores the indicators, consequences and historical roots of the patronage system while analyzing its detrimental effects on merit-based appointments, justice, accountability and transparency. The study also examines how patronage politics conflicts with Islamic principles of governance and proposes solutions to eradicate this vice for socio-economic welfare.

Although the issue of political patronage has been widely studied globally, there remains a significant gap in analyzing its pervasive influence within the socio-political and economic landscape of Pakistan, particularly in connection with its alignment (or misalignment) with Islamic governance principles. While previous studies (e.g., Ertman, 1997; Gradel et al., 2011) have highlighted the historical and

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global dimensions of patronage politics, limited attention has been given to its localized indicators, systemic impact, and specific policy-based solutions tailored to Pakistan's unique socio-cultural and religious context. Furthermore, while Islamic governance emphasizes meritocracy, accountability, and justice (Al-Nisa 4:58; Khan, n.d.), research seldom examines the intersection of these principles with contemporary political practices in Pakistan. This study fills this gap by investigating the roots, effects, and implications of political patronage in Pakistan through a comprehensive qualitative and analytical approach.

2 Literature Review

The word "Patronage" has Latin roots in the word Patronus which indicates the process of conferring benefits to one's clients or favorites. Political Patronage as a financial aid or special privilege has roots in history, art and culture where it referred to the support that popes, kings and the church bestowed to the artists such as painters, sculptors and musicians before the eighteenth century (*Bartleby.com*, 2010). The crude form of patronage refers to the purchase or sale of offices for cash, a practice much prevalent in medieval and premature modern Europe (Ertman 1997, Fischer & Lundgreen 1975). More often, positions are bestowed in barter for sponsoring the regime against contenders in the political battle. In 19th Century, patronage appointments in U.S were granted for continuing allegiance to the party in substitute of regular pecuniary gains (Carpenter, 2001).

The history of patronage dates back to the era of British rule in 18th century. The expansion of British Empire and fiscal changes led to the establishment of governance institutions such as the Navy Board and the Office of Works which appointed staff through their own system by purchase or payola. On the recommendation of the officials, who had visited China and observed the Imperial examination system, Honorable East India Company established a college near London, in 1806, known as the East India Company College to train administrators (Bodde, 2004). However, a unified permanent and politically neutral civil service was introduced on the counsel of the North-cote Trevelyan Report of 1854 to abolish the power play of patronage and advocate merit (Cox, 2011).

The British model of civil service inspired American system. The patronage vice dominated the political landscape even prior to the President Jackson's tenure, when he formalized it as "rotation in office". This triggered more than 30,000 political inductions till President Harrison's epoch around 1841. Although 1851 and 1853 resolutions were passed to rectify the evils of civil services, but the patronage practice continued through the term of President Lincoln. By 1860s and the Civil War, patronage had led to extensive wastefulness and political sleaze spreading itself from cabinet to executive departments. James Garfield on assuming presidency appointed corrupt individuals to political offices thus, leading to his assassination by Charles J. Guiteau in 1881. To thwart further political hostility, Congress passed the Pendleton Act in 1883 setting up the Civil Service Commission. Henceforth, federal government jobs were offered after formal examination thus plummeting politicians' manipulation over the bureaucratic appointments and patronage was abandoned as a national political vice. But then again, when President Benjamin Harrison assumed office in 1889, thirty one thousand federal postmaster positions changed hands (Cox. et.al, 2011). To control this vicious game, in 1920, Congress limited tenure of federal administrators to 4 years. Furthermore, Hatch Act 1939 curbed partisan activities by the federal employees. In Supreme Court, 1969, Micheal L. Shakman vs Democratic Organization of Cook County was filed in Chicago to question legality of political patronage. Through successive legal encounters and negotiations, the two parties agreed upon The Shakman Decrees declaring that the public employment status ought not be affected positively or negatively based on political allegiance (Fross, 2004). However, Chicago, under Mayor Richard Daley, remained the last citadel of patronage in purest type until late 1970s (Gradel, & et.al., 2011). Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, due to non-responsiveness of federal bureaucrats towards the elected officials, replaced the Civil Service Commission with the Office of Personnel Management, under closer control of the president giving the president greater discretion in reassigning top officials to departments and agencies. By 1980s, 90 % of federal positions had become part of this system (Cox. et.al, 2011).

Patronage appointments are mostly criticized for their negative impacts upon public policy but attempts are also launched to focus on certain positive outcomes. At one hand, the neutral competence of bureaucracy is regarded as the key to high performance by experts like Heelo (1975) but on the other hand there is a stress laid to increase the political responsiveness among the bureaucrats (Culeac, 2012). William West (2005) stated that to boost the efficiency of the public bodies, the nonpartisan objectivity (merit) must be combined with the responsiveness towards the political executives (patronized system). There are views that political appointees add more energy to administration but the advantages that the careerists have outweigh it as far as strategic planning, management and outcomes in comparison to the ill-performing administration by the political appointees are concerned (Lewis, 2007). The reasons behind the ill-performance of the patronage appointees deter the efficiency of public sector thus favor the merit based systems (Evans & Rauch, 1999).

God Almighty in Holy Quran calls human beings as his vicegerents on earth. He has provided mankind with all the essential skills and tools so that they could streamline their lives towards realizing their potential. Almighty says in Holy book that "It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He hath given you: for thy Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful" (Al-An-aam, 6: 165). Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), as stated in Saheeh Al-Bukhari, has explained the qualities leadership and its importance by saying, "Each of you is a shepherd, and all of you are responsible for your flocks." Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (R.A) said that "I have been appointed as ruler over you although I am not the best among you. I have never sought this position nor has there ever been a desire in my heart to have this in preference to anyone else... If I do right, you must help and obey me; if I go astray, set me aright... Obey me so long as I obey Allah and His Messenger. If I disobey them, then you have no obligation to follow me" (Khan, 2014).

Islam encourages a governance system rooted in justice and merit, as outlined in the Quran (Al-Nisa 4:58) which directs leaders to entrust responsibilities to the most capable. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized this by saying, "When a task is assigned to someone unworthy, expect the Day of Judgment." The Islamic principle of 'Shura' (consultation) in decision-making also contrasts with political patronage, highlighting transparency and accountability as essential governance qualities. Historical Islamic leaders, such as Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, exemplified this by appointing officials solely based on merit and character, regardless of familial or tribal connections. Scholars argue that political patronage undermines these principles by fostering inefficiency and mistrust. It promotes an elitist system where resources are concentrated among a few, while the majority suffer. Aligning leadership practices with Islamic principles ensures that governance remains transparent, accountable, and dedicated to public welfare, contrasting sharply with the self-serving nature of patronage systems.

3 Methodology

This research adopts a comprehensive qualitative approach to explore the dynamics, indicators, and consequences of political patronage in Pakistan, with an emphasis on its socio-political, economic, and governance implications. The study integrates historical analysis, content analysis, and thematic interpretation to provide a multi-dimensional understanding of the subject. The methodology is designed to bridge the gap between theoretical discourse and practical solutions. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing both primary and secondary sources to gather and analyze data. The study focuses on the contextual understanding of patronage politics and its alignment (or misalignment) with governance principles, particularly within the framework of Islamic values.

Data was collected from academic articles, government reports, historical documents, newspaper articles, and books addressing political patronage globally and within Pakistan. Specific focus was given to: historical trends in governance and political appointments, comparative analysis of global practices in addressing patronage and Islamic governance principles as outlined in the Quran and Hadith. The grounded theory approach is used that allows content to be analyzed and explained. It allowed for the identification of patterns and themes related to patronage politics, emerging organically

from the collected data. Systematic examination of content and textual data was conducted to identify key indicators, trends, and consequences of political patronage. The political patronage system in Pakistan was compared with international case studies to identify similarities, differences, and lessons. The quantitative and qualitative secondary data is analyzed. Content analysis, historical trends' analysis, graphs, notable events, online/ newspaper articles, books on Pakistan's politics or history are some of the sources. The collected data was evaluated against Islamic principles of justice, meritocracy, and accountability to highlight areas of conflict and potential alignment. The study analyzed qualitative and quantitative secondary data, including: governmental and organizational policies, relevant historical accounts of civil service and bureaucratic reforms, statistical trends from credible databases (e.g., Transparency International) to link corruption indices with patronage systems and legal and constitutional provisions related to meritocracy in Pakistan. Triangulation was applied to ensure the validity and reliability of findings by cross-referencing multiple data sources and frameworks (e.g., global standards of governance and Islamic values). Pointers contributing to the prevailing patronage system in Pakistan's bureaucracy and political system have been attempted to identify in this paper. Many aspects are still in the descriptive phase and much of the data to validate the ideas is not easily available or accessible.

4 Analysis And Discussion

Pakistan's Historical and Global Context (Indicators): The age-old phenomenon and power play of political patronage all over the globe has not, in any way, gone obsolete despite the passage of centuries of tall promises and measures of control; all of which proved ineffective. The origin of corruption in Pakistan dates back to the colonial era when the British conferred lands and titles, arbitrarily, to the loyalists. They made discretionary appointments of personnel within the state, thus, wide spreading patronage and nepotism. The tradition continued, after the establishment of Pakistan, through the General Ayub's epoch (Khalid, 2009) and the One Unit led to public outcry in East Pakistan on being marginalized by the Punjab's landlords who occupied top bureaucratic positions. Numerous patronage schemes like industrial and trade licensing, bonus voucher and route permits were introduced from 1954 to 1971 (Ahmad, 2001). Thus; the factors of *unrepentant demonstration of plutocracy*, along with its *favoured authoritative bureaucracy*, and the West Pakistan's *feudalism* not only led to the secession of East Pakistan but are major instances of patronage practice. The same reasons are visible in a third world country like Pakistan and surprisingly in an advanced country like Canada- when scrutinized deeply. The Canadian tradition is a living example where the Prime Minister appoints senators and the heads of various commissions and agencies benefiting those who support the political party of the Prime Minister (Reeves, 2011).

The nationalization policy of Prime Minister Bhutto encouraged a new breed of corrupt officers in government through lateral entry in 1970s. Thus, another factor is that the *elite oriented policies* paved way to *politicize state's fiscal plans* ensuing in a mass uproar against the corrupt (Noman, 1990). The *disregard of lawful procedure* of appointments and the *elitist's control over state policy and strategy* are two other reasons of political patronage not only in our poor Pakistan but in other countries also. As in China, Central enterprise is the one with its control over rights' managerial appointments, asset disposals, strategic directions of the firms, and some or all of the income rights reside with the central government (Lim & et.al, 2012).

In the era of General Zia-ul-Haq, there was a surge of patronage in religious and business circles (1980s). This led the military dictator to draft policies regarding denationalization of the institutions which only ended up benefiting a few rich business magnates (Hiro, 2012). The *one man show* not only is the factor of increasing patronage by distributing favors at one's own whims rather it also results in the more *unjust and unequal economic division*.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who himself was brought forth by the military elite, patronized the then General Musharraf thus promoting him out of turn (Siddiqui, 2013). Another instance, in which a High Court's case highlighted patronage, was related to the spouse of Ex-Prime Minister Y. R. Gillani, who

received loans from the National Bank and Agriculture Development Bank worth of millions of rupees. This capital amount aided the establishment of two mega corporations (The Express Tribune, 2012). These *misuses of prestigious positions and colossal finances* are two other indicators of the existence of patronage politics in underdeveloped country like Pakistan though such are also found at international level as in America. In United States, President Obama rewarded 80% of the participators in two years' campaign with more than \$500,000 along with cushy government's jobs and other benefits. Approximately, 200 leading donors got advisory positions and hooked federal contracts worth millions of dollars. However, the US government termed such appointments being made on the merit basis (Los Angeles Times, 2011).

Ironically, a pity state in Pakistan arose when General Musharraf, making huge claims, became himself a beneficiary of the then Prime Minister's patronage. Nevertheless, on assuming presidency during his military regime, he addressed the nation highlighting the evil of patronage politics. According to him when he came into power, terrorism, corruption, nepotism and extremism were on the surge. The government stood for plunder and loot. The state institutions were eaten up by parasitic public personnels. Pakistan was rated by Transparency International as the second most corrupt state. He was of the opinion that a lot of improvement was made to this shameful situation by reducing nepotism and corruption. Though, he also claimed to have improved institutions, including Pakistan International Airlines, Railways, Pakistan Steel Mills, WAPDA etc. which were previously corrupted with favoritism and nepotism (Musharraf, 2004). So, *corruption, nepotism and opportunist officials* are some other indicators of political patronage. The similar erosion of government's institutions is found in Malaysia, where the political patronage encompasses the granting of contracts, extreme red tape and embezzlement of funds in the name of maintenance of government buildings (The New Straits Times, 2007). Malaysia, in 2008, was placed on 47th number out of 180 countries in CPI by Transparency International (Reeves, 2011).

Thus, here the reality seems to point out a pity condition that Pakistan's politics rotates around the so-called democratic politicians' pulling out of resources illegally from the state using corruption, and then giving out the followers to flatter them. The country, though blessed with abundant national and natural assets, has suffered poor state of affairs due to the process of *extortion, extraction and redistribution* which have questionable morality and legality. The discussion of the content also makes it evident that one tries hard to be as popular as he can be, when in rule, by ruthlessly exploiting state's resources. However, when striped of power the same epitome of corruption launches a vicious campaign against the opponent's patronizing acts thus attacking the state's stability as well. It thus sounds that the previously discussed democratic and military regimes fabricated their own gigantic patronage networks, robbing state resources and offering concessions.

However, Professor Lieven exposed the reality of the Musharraf's patronage politics in Pakistan. The content of the writing, "*Pakistan-A Hard Country*," presents the difference between Pakistan and Nigeria as that instead of being devoured by pride of lions or shredded by a horde of vultures, the doom of Pakistan's assets resembled minutely to being gnawed away by a flock of mice. The consequence on the state's performance and resources are cultivated back into the society which is a significant differentiation between the two states (Haq, 2011). The *ill-performing institutes* and *misuse of resources* due to the elite's extortionist agenda are some other indicators of patronage, also detected in Nigeria. The Chief Executive Officer of Resources and Trust department stated that Nigerian political structure endorsed wastes, high expenditure of administration and unaccountability. The political set up and mode of rewarding the political candidates led the governmental system towards exorbitance and lack of sustainability (Ojeme, 2011).

Current Scenario (Indicators): The current context is much the same. An article by Abbasi (2012) which called the coalition government formed by Pakistan People's Party (2008) as the most corrupt era in the national life, the *lack of accountability* and the *corrupt policies in political sector* can be deduced as the main indicators of patronage and payola.

State *institutions become inefficient* and a place to *induct and pamper flatterers* in the politics of patronage. In a statement by a famous politician, the appointment of the chairman of Pakistan's Cricket

Board was termed as a case of political patronage and rewarding cronies, and a reason of poor performance of the organization (Khan, 2014). Similar indicators of *bypassing the formal rules and procedures* are seen in the spoils system all over the globe. The content presented by Golden (2003) is relevant in this context when he states that the public administration in Italy carried itself out poorly in the post-war era due to the calculated conduct of parliamentary officials. They were engrossed in enhancing their chances of re-election by bribing voters with lavish compensatory services in order to boost the partisanship and political allegiance of civil servants. They were usually appointed on patronage criteria and thus provided them with the broad opportunities to participate in bureaucratic corruption.

The Bofors issue, during 1980s and 1990s involving India and Sweden, was a grave corruption scandal. Congress commenced the inquiry indicting eminent Indian politicians and prime defense officials who were accused of embezzling \$10 million U.S dollars from Bofors AB for supplying India field howitzer (Mukherjee, 2012). The illegal kickbacks were involved in Sweden's biggest arms deal by diverting the money reserved for the development projects to win this contract and *flouting rules and bypassing institutions* (The Bofors story, 2012). In another newspaper article, Bhartiya Janta Party in India termed the chopper helicopters deal (worth 700 million) as an instance of corruption based on the political patronage and called for a legal probe in (Dutta, 2013). Such indicators are similar to corruption found in Pakistan's contracts like Rental Power Project, Metro bus projects and various dams.

Another factor of the spoils system is the *dynastic politics* and the *federal interference* as appointment of the daughter of the Prime Minister, Maryam Nawaz, as the chairperson of Prime Minister's Youth Program, National Steering Committee of National Health Insurance Program, Interest Free Loan Scheme, Youth Schemes related to business loans, training, Skills development, provision of laptops, reimbursement of students' fees from the less developed areas (The Express Tribune, 2013). Upon hue and cry, Marvi Memon, a political worker, replaced the incumbent and announced that services would be delivered on merit basis (Farooq, 2014) though her appointment itself compromised merit. Thus, the politics of patronage was further strengthened in this case.

Through the above discussion, the working of the patronage system can be mapped as below:

The Operation of Political Machinery

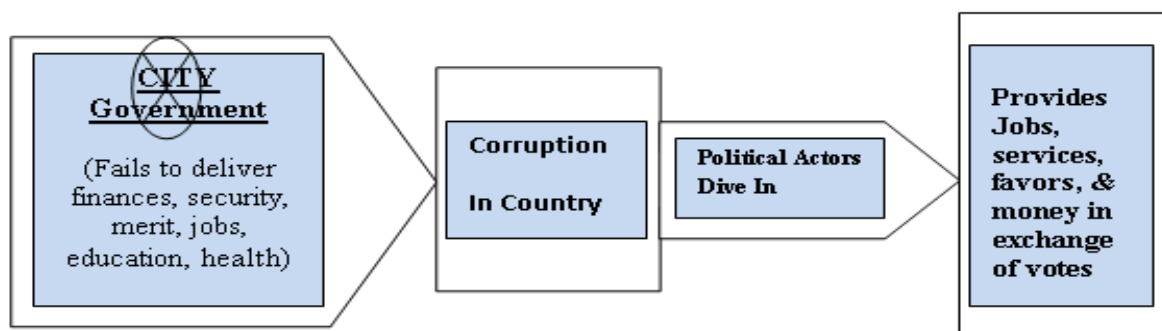


Figure No. 1 Operation of Political Machinery Under Patronage

Source: Athor's Own Work

The spoils system does not exist in vacuum. When it does exist, it penetrates from top to bottom and from federal to local level.

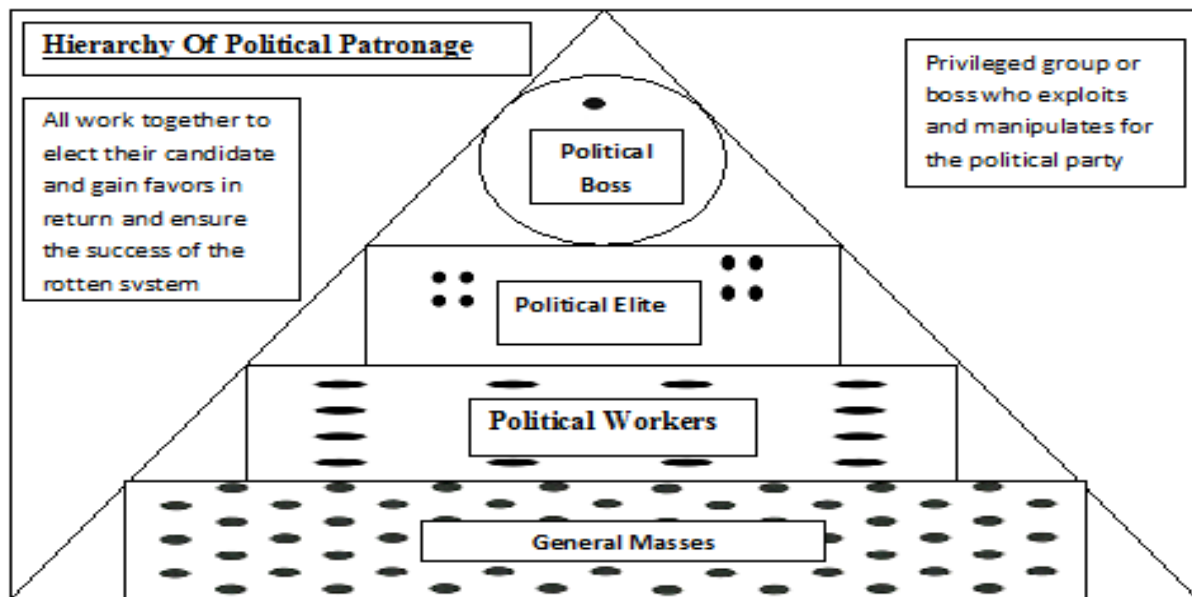


Figure No. 2 Hierarchical Functioning of Political Patronage

Source: Athor's Own Work

After examining the example at federal level, there are numerous instances of patronization at the provincial level, police institution and provincial machinery. Ali (2013a, 2013b) mentions the chief minister appointing his favorites as C.C.P.O., D.I.G and D.P.O.s. The provincial government serving in the year 2013, provides two more indicators of the political patronage; *government's failure to reach an understanding* with the working machinery officially responsible for the governance and secondly, honoring the *sympathies* developed for those earlier tested and felt comfortable with.

Sheikh (2013) stated, in an article that the Punjab government (2013) conferred the additional responsibility of the advocate general of Punjab to Mustafa Ramday, who the son of retired Supreme Court judge. Some other factors of the spoils system can be deduced through this article i.e. the adoption of an indirect *procedure for appointments*, *violation of the Constitutional requirements* and *bestowing favors for an indefinite period of time*.

The Express Tribune (2014) reported the appointment of the son of former Chief Justice of Pakistan as the vice chairman of Balochistan's Board of Investment, and in 2012 he was reported to have received nearly Rs. 400 million from a business tycoon to influence the judicial proceedings. This instance helps to extract another indicator of payola i.e. *control of capital investment (and associated instruments) by the influential people*.

Khan (2014) reported that Khyber Pakhtunkwa's former Chief Secretary resigned by noting the instances of political patronage which were *politically motivated transfers*, *posting of an accused officer as Commissioner*, *illegal extension of tenures* and *bypassing justice* in the jailbreak issue. Rehman (2014) mentioned Kpk's government *flouting of rules, regulations and merit* in the selection of Director General Sports. So the spoils system has its accompanied effects i.e. the *disregard for government policy*, *Supreme Court's verdicts*, *constitutional qualification*, *political influence and expertise in the field*. The gross *irregularity*, *disobedient behavior*, *unpunctuality*, *willful absence*, *disobedience of official S.O.Ps and orders*, and *violation of merit* are the key factors in a society rampant with patronage politics.

In a news report Sindh Government appointed more than seventy DSPs in its reigning times and majority was close ken to political leaders. The anti-merit policy has continued since 1974 when an illiterate person was posted DSP and often the announcement of the vacancies are not advertized. The problem reached its peak in 1994 when 45 DSPs were appointed. The Supreme Court in one of its verdict declared such appointments are the main causes of unrest and lawlessness in the province (Soomro, 2014). So, patronage has offshoots in the *existence of anarchy*.

Tunio (2014) wrote an article on nationwide existence of nepotism and violation of merit especially in Sindh's government departments. Prime examples related to the appointment and illegal promotions to the level of education department's additional chief secretary, health secretary, general administration secretary, numerous secretaries and special secretaries, education secretary, deputy commissioner Sindh Employees Social Security Institute, superintendents of police, senior position in the Federal Investigation Agency's Crime Circle, SSP, deputy commissioners, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's parking director and officers at Export Processing Zone Authority. All the political parties had their share in such appointments but such phenomenon indicates that *department conflicts and defiance to hierarchical orders* are associated indicators of the presence of such patronage.

The prestigious institution of civil services i.e Federal Public Service Commission has officially declared *quotas for various areas and classes*. Though it gives representation to the underprivileged according to their strength still it sacrifices the merit.

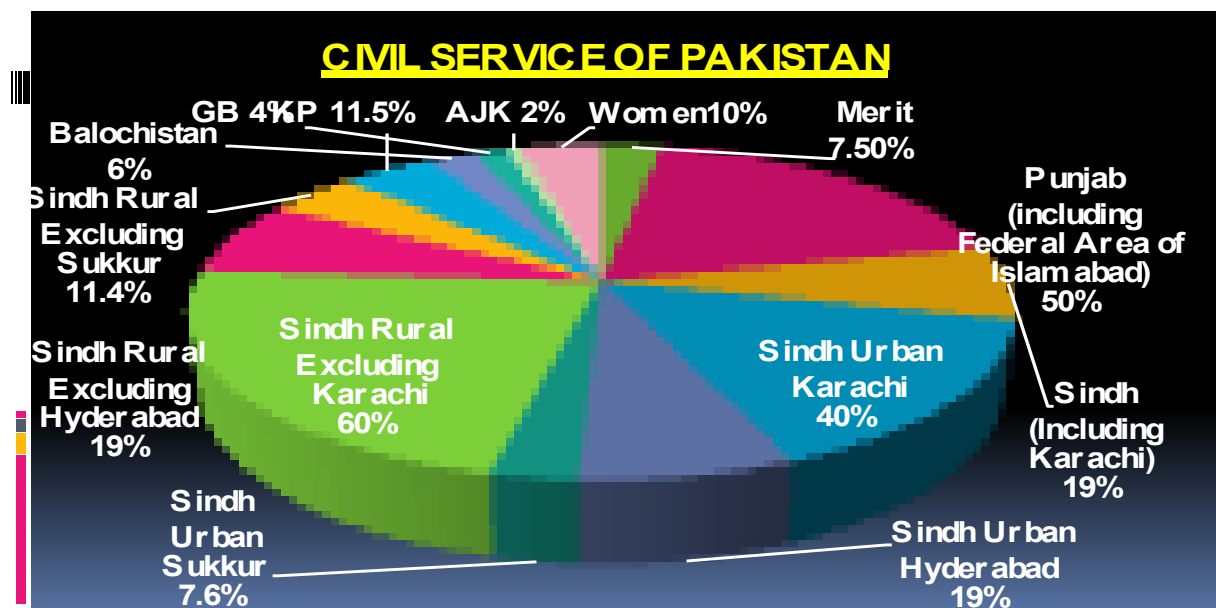


Figure No. 3 Adapted Civil Services' Graph (Rules For Competitive Examination, 2015)

According to the Article 51 of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), the National Assembly has 342 members, including reserved seats for women (60), non-Muslims (10), Punjab (183), Sindh (75), KPK (43), Balochistan (17), Federally administered tribal areas (12) and Federal Capital (2). A similar situation can be observed in the provincial assemblies in the table and graph below:

RESERVED POLITICAL POSITIONS IN PAKISTAN

Quotas in Pakistan were introduced in order to give equal opportunity for jobs, representation in assemblies and educational institutions to women, non-Muslims and people from under developed rural areas

Provincial Assembly	General	Women	Non-Muslim	Total
Balochistan	51	11	3	65
KPK	99	22	3	124
Punjab	297	66	8	371
Sindh	130	29	9	168
Total	577	128	23	728

Figure No. 4 Adapted in Tabular Format From a UNDP Report (Reyes, 2002)

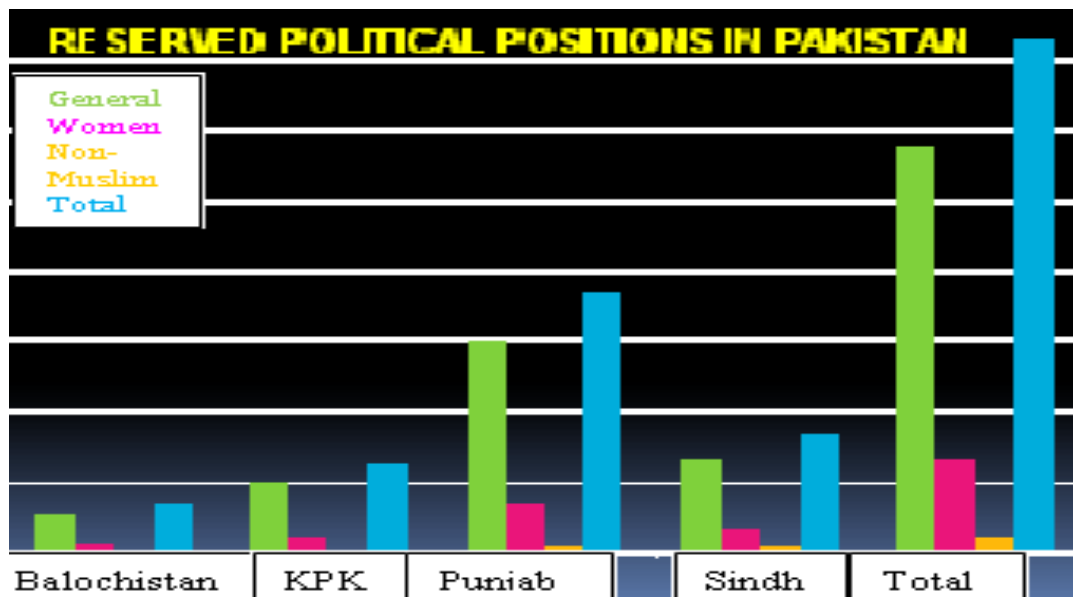


Figure No. 5 Adapted In Graphical Format From a UNDP Report (Reyes, 2002)

In the election of year 2013, approximately the 70 members selected on reserved seats held 20% of the National Assembly's strength (Quota, 2014). The patronage indirectly permeates on the pretext of *encouraging underprivileged classes* however the reality is that the seats are allocated on the basis of political affiliations and not to the deserving.

According to the government report (2010–11), Pakistan was ranked on CPI as the 47th most corrupt country. Transparency International presented the causes with their percentage e.g. *lack of accountability* (31.68%), *monopoly of power* (16.43%), *low salaries* (16.54%), *discretionary powers* (12.61%), *power of influential people* (4.59%), *lack of transparency* (9.97%, *red-tapism* (4.28%), and

others (4.9%) (Farooq & et.al, 2013). All these indicators symbolize and strengthen patronage (UNDP, 2002).

Patronage permeates and corrodes the health and medicine sector. The *poor medical facilities and appointments of cronies* indicate the presence of this evil as can be examined in a news report regarding Hayatabad Medical Complex where HMC filled vacancies violating merit (Doctors, 2014).

The education sector has borne the brunt of the existing state of affairs. Dawn (Bureau Report, 2014) reported the appointment of several Vice Chancellors and Rectors like the ones of Allama Iqbal Open University, Quaid-i-Azam University and International Islamic University by the President or the prime minister are pointers of political patronage. The *educational and professional institutes face the violation of merit* due to power play of patronage politics, also seen in Kenya's case that heavily suffered the irregularities though the attempts to improve the condition have started off. In words of Reeves (2011), the patronage politics is rampant in Kenya's government where the leaders exert to ascertain very tough civil service administration founded on merit as was the vigorous inspection of the posts of Chief Justice etc. Thereby, it was attempted to shun the undesirable brunt of payola prevailing in state functionaries and the economy.

The policy making institutes become instruments to *disregard the selection process* as could be observed in the case of appointing the chairman Higher Education Commission by ignoring the deserving and the qualified and preferring those with strong political backing (Abbasi, 2014). One of the effects of the spoils system is highlighted in the civil society's protest against this violation of merit.

The case of appointment of twelve regular lecturers in Gomal University (Action, 2013) is a symbol of patronage's scathing effects on the *nation building and public awareness measures* by recruiting people with biased affiliations. Also, the patronage's corrosive outcomes upon the *composition and functioning of the public bodies* can be seen in a reported case of the appointment of the retired employee as Chairman, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Human Resource Research and Development Board, on contract by political executive of the province (Retirees, 2014).

The case of illegally appointing KPK'S media adviser by violating the merit criteria (Appointment, 2014) is a sheering example of patronage's *malining effects over the public opinion and media* as the political appointee can only be expected to voice the government's views.

The report by PILDAT (2014) also substantiated existence of patronage by giving five indicators: a) *transparency* (-4%), b) *anti-corruption* (-45%), c) *performance of regulatory bodies* (-12%), d) *merit-based appointments in regulatory bodies* (-14%), e) *merit-based recruitments & promotions* (-37%)- all these percentages present bleak state of affairs and existence of patronage.

Rana (2014) highlighted in the article that the federal government appointed commissioner Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, Competition Commission of Pakistan and prosecutor general of National Accountability Bureau for a third tenure. These practices are symbolic of the *public institutions being inactive and reinforcements of power structures* in a system of spoils.

Effects: Thus the above discussion indicates that the *governance*, in Pakistan and all over the globe, would remain an enduring concern in spoils system. The effects of such a system are evident ranging from the precarious *law and order situation* to serious *social discrepancy* and *poor infrastructure*. A system which is based on inequality causes *alienation of people*. Political patronage has *soiled the state institutions* and the powerful *vie for authority* in the country. And a political economy favoring the elite mars the *inclusive development* and the *equality of employment opportunity*. The vicious circle of evils can be drawn below:

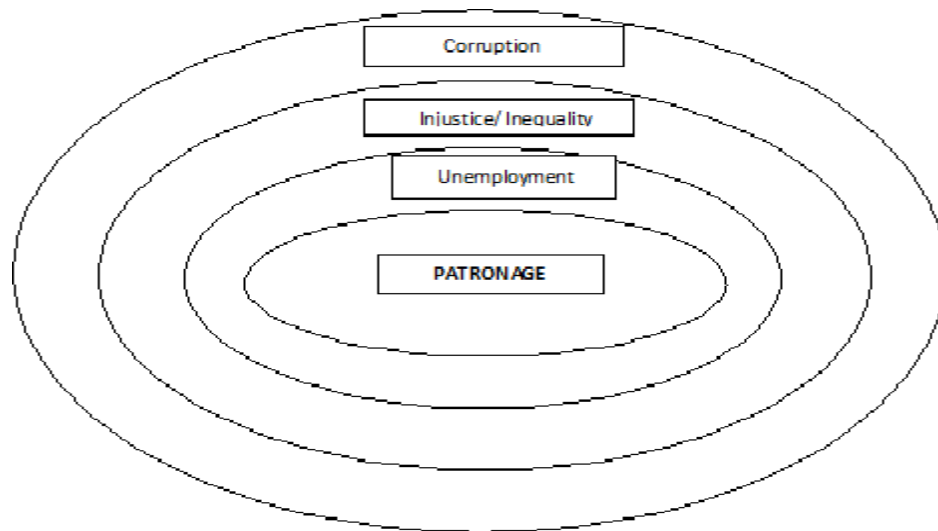


Figure No. 6 The Patronage Place in Corruption Circle

Source: Author's Own Work

The instances quoted previously suggest that the *administration* in such patronage systems would be mostly centralized, non-participatory and unaccountable. In such a state, the political parties, media and civil society would be weak to exert check on the executive head. The state institutions would lack change and growth due to undue patronizing.

The case studies of well-governed countries show that they have well-built institutions with specified rules of conduct - all contributing to GDP. The strong institutions lead to the concern for public welfare. But political patronage has inherent vices of extortion, public distress and economic disparity as opposed to public welfare. The poor performance, weak leadership and non-transparency accompany the patronizing culture as deduced from the plight of national institutions mentioned above. Reforms and people's interest would take a back seat. Pakistan has a long history of governance and civil services' reforms, but with scant improvement. Reforms have not been successful because they typically are not executed and the regime continues to patronize its preferred ones.

A formula can be extracted here by the debate expressed above;

The Greater your Political Patron is = Higher is the Political Patronage
The Lesser is the Merit/ Ability

Figure No. 7 Formula to Detect Patronage

Source: Author's Own Work

Some of the macro consequences can be deduced from the instances of patronage given above. Remmer (2007) stated that such systems exploit the administrative resources, especially public offices, as their personal property, thus, make the political institutions very fragile. This is accompanied by an excess of corrupt judges and ministers, fragmented society of friends and foes, faulty political system, discrepancy between political inputs and actual outputs, suspicion towards public institutions to the extent of transforming democratic rule into its antithetical – a distasteful form of governance. So, serious *political consequences* emerge, and this is very true in case of Pakistan and the rest of the world that experience non-democratic regimes taking over.

Lewis (2007) emphasized that moral hazards, adverse selections and discretionary appointments lead to sluggish management that shirks its responsibilities and acts on freaks, free will and self-interest.

Thus, the adverse effects of payola have *institutional repercussions* very relevant in case of Pakistan where poor performing state bodies often behave as a liability on national exchequer.

According to Flores & Smith (2010), the government of Pakistan (2010) protected only those districts from floods that offered bribes to the state officials, regardless of the substantial endowments from the global community. Societal spending is equivalent to patronage spending to win electoral battle. Thus, the welfare and disaster management and the *social policy* also suffer in a community enduring the evil of patronage.

Remmer (2007) stated that the adverse blow patronage has on state's economy and wellbeing discourages the entrepreneurs from making long term investments in a state rampant with patronized public sector as the corruption, lack of transparency, unpredictable bureaucracy and unaccountability are a threat to their profits. These ills have been observed in the flight of capital and lack of foreign direct investments in the country thus *financial consequences* are also borne in patronage system.

Several arguments can be established and are often found in texts in favor of patronage. It is regarded as a way to sustain a strong political organization and support system. It is a means to reward the political workers and to propagate the political agenda of the victor. It is taken as a mode to win loyalty, cooperation and trust and to bring new people and ideas into the system. Some may call it right that the spoils system increases the executive powers to match the individuals to demanding government positions. It has the tendency to initiate quick appointments without requiring the legislature's approval. The system may help to enhance recognition of minority communities by selecting them for top positions, thereby achieves democratic and egalitarian goals. Some may defend it on the grounds that it bridges political divides and makes coalitions.

However, the patronage system reflects innate weaknesses as it liquidates the state institutions. The examples quoted in the writing indicate that it maximizes the strife for power and influence in the country. A lot of favors are conferred to the elite leaving limited space for the underprivileged. Centralized administration, lack of participation and accountability, negativity in political parties in opposition, toothless media and civil society are a natural consequence. The powers are often misused thus stifling positive change and growth on the individual and national level. It may restrict to the candidates with political connections by ignoring public services. The judiciary, centralized economic system, rule of law and constitutional supremacy assume a questionable status.

In some countries, patronage and discretionary powers have a legal or moral respect. Nevertheless, Article 27 safeguards the fundamental rights of Pakistan's citizens against any form of discrimination whether they are federal and provincial government services by proclaiming that there shall be no discrimination among the citizens on the grounds of race, religion, residence or birth who are otherwise qualified for the appointment in Pakistan's services. However, the quota system, with its merits and demerits, contradicts and limits this constitutional right as it reserves posts for the persons belonging to under-represented class or area in order to secure the service of Pakistan for a period not surpassing twenty years from the day of commencement (The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

The speech by the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah is worth quoting and a guide in the current scenario to reject patronage when he said that "Along with many other things, good and bad, has arrived this great evil, the evil of nepotism and jobbery. I want to make it quite clear that I shall never tolerate any kind of jobbery, nepotism or any influence, directly or indirectly" (First presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan August 11, 1947).

The situation has some redeeming factors. A recent official paper tried to emphasize the patronage politics in the Liberian society in attempt to rid it from vices that hindered the progress and development in the country spread over the years. It suggested introducing the merit system in public service by fortifying the civil services agency from undue political manipulation (Reeves, 2011). Likewise, Haider (2014) reported that the first merit recruitment policy for the federal services, corporations and autonomous bodies as previously the government jobs were doled out heavily on political affiliations.

The press conference by Imran Khan (2016), Chairman of a political party known as Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaaf, shown on all the national televisions (nearly at 6:00 p.m) was a gigantic step to eliminate patronage politics when he announced the abolition of discretionary funds and development funds of the ministers as they were being employed for patronizing the flatterers by previous governments. These are some positive steps but it is just the beginning.

In world's rating, Pakistan is low on many indices as the good governance has been wiped out because of favoritism, corruption and political patronage. Experts plead that Pakistan's prosperity and stability depends on the improvement of governance (Hayat, 2014). Therefore, much focus must be given to political stability, participation and justice as only the effectiveness of the state can help improve the quality of service to people, control over corruption and rule of law which are anti-thesis to patronage. Pakistan could have attained the much-cherished development, on the pattern of Malaysia and Turkey, and emerged as a successful state provided a capable leadership had worked relentlessly utilizing resources honestly. The present situation, however, is contrary and unfortunate. Despite being rich in manpower and natural resources, the country is undergoing poverty and starvation in all the development sectors. So, the poor state of affairs has much evidence to be pitied at. It is a pity that all the wealth goes down the drain and into the pockets of the corrupt.

Patronage is a form of corruption that affects stability of the motherland in the troubled times being faced by Pakistan. Some recommendations to rectify the state of affairs are; the implementation of the prevention of Corruption Acts (1947, 1950, 1958), revitalizing National Accountability Bureau, provision of right to Information Act (as found in KPK), rigorous accountability, public education, propagation of meritocracy, transparency, rule of law, efficient role of media, equal employment opportunity, active judiciary and constructive role of pressure groups and civil society. The reform of governance systems, provision of essential services, capacity building measures, culture of responsiveness to limit patronage and improve governance are the solutions. These are primary and significant measures to attain objectives and build state effectiveness.

The patronage system in Pakistan disregards these Islamic principles, fostering a culture of favoritism, inefficiency, and inequality. As a result, it hampers the state's ability to deliver justice and equal opportunity. Eliminating such practices would align with Islam's emphasis on social welfare and accountability, fostering trust between citizens and the state. The entrenchment of patronage in Pakistan not only impedes administrative efficiency but also erodes public trust in government institutions. This practice conflicts with the Islamic principle of collective responsibility, where leaders are accountable to their communities and expected to uphold the public good above personal affiliations. By sidelining qualified candidates in favor of political supporters, patronage fosters resentment, alienates talented individuals, and leads to a cycle of mediocrity in public service. It also creates a power imbalance, reinforcing a hierarchy that benefits a select few while marginalizing the broader population. Islamic teachings advocate for equity and the elimination of corruption, emphasizing that leadership should be a trust, not a privilege. In a truly Islamic system, merit-based appointments would enable a more inclusive society, where leaders are selected for their competence and dedication to societal welfare, not political loyalty.

Thus, meritocracy - opposite of the Patronage system- is the only solution required direly in case of Pakistan. It is the process of appointing and promoting government employees solely on the basis of their capability to perform the work instead of political connections. Thus, aims to eradicate inefficiency and corruption due to patronage can only be materialized by implementing merit-based policies that value skill, aptitude, qualification, knowledge, experience and equality.

4.1 Islamic Implications for Policy and State

Islamic governance emphasizes the state's duty to act in the collective interest, guided by accountability and merit-based appointments. Policymakers should implement strict anti-corruption measures and uphold meritocratic hiring processes, ensuring that positions of authority serve public welfare, not

individual or party interests. Embracing these values would help Pakistan build a more just, efficient, and equitable governance structure, reinforcing Islamic principles in its political system.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

This study provides significant theoretical contributions to the discourse on political patronage, governance and their intersection with Islamic principles. The research expands the theoretical understanding of patronage systems by linking their impact on governance with the specific socio-political and cultural context of Pakistan. It highlights how the reliance on patronage undermines the principles of meritocracy, accountability, and transparency, providing a framework for understanding governance failures in developing countries. By contrasting the patronage system with merit-based governance models, the study introduces a perspective on the dynamics between political responsiveness and bureaucratic efficiency. The findings illustrate the role of political patronage in perpetuating elite capture and economic inequality. This contributes to political economy theories by explaining how patronage systems exacerbate resource misallocation and stagnate economic growth. The study also emphasizes the feedback loop between corruption and patronage, offering theoretical insights into the structural challenges of reforming governance systems in rent-seeking economies.

This research bridges the gap between Islamic governance principles and modern political systems by demonstrating how patronage contradicts Islamic tenets of justice, merit, and accountability. The study emphasizes the role of Shura (consultation), meritocracy, and equity as foundational elements of Islamic governance, offering a theoretical model for policy reforms in Muslim-majority countries. By tracing the historical evolution of patronage systems globally, the study enriches comparative political theories. It provides a theoretical lens to understand why patronage persists in certain socio-political contexts despite attempts at reform. The historical analysis reveals the conditions under which patronage transforms from a governance tool into a systemic hindrance, contributing to theories of state-building and institutional decay.

This research situates patronage within broader corruption frameworks, offering a theoretical explanation of how patronage fosters systemic inefficiency and erodes public trust. It links patronage to the cycle of corruption, highlighting its role in weakening state institutions and promoting socio-economic disparity. The study introduces a comparative theoretical model that can be applied to other Muslim-majority countries to evaluate how patronage systems align or conflict with Islamic values. It encourages further research on integrating Islamic principles into modern governance theories, fostering a deeper understanding of how religious values can inform public administration.

4.3 Policy Framework for Governance Reforms

The study proposes theoretical insights into governance reforms by advocating for merit-based appointments, transparent recruitment practices, and accountability mechanisms. These implications are relevant for policymakers aiming to transition from patronage-dominated systems to effective, meritocratic governance structures. It underscores the importance of capacity-building measures and institutional checks and balances, providing a conceptual basis for designing reform-oriented policies.

4.4 Practical Implications

This study provides actionable insights for policymakers, governance institutions, and civil society to address the systemic issue of political patronage in Pakistan. The practical implications include: The study highlights the urgent need for transparent and merit-based recruitment policies in public institutions. Implementation of rigorous hiring and promotion standards can ensure that positions are awarded based on qualifications and competence, rather than political affiliations. Institutional restructuring and civil service reforms should focus on depoliticizing public offices by creating

independent commissions for appointments and promotions. Establishing stronger anti-corruption bodies and revitalizing existing ones, such as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), can mitigate patronage and corruption. Regular performance evaluations of public officials and institutions, linked to clear accountability frameworks, can discourage patronage-based appointments. Expanding RTI frameworks to ensure public access to data on appointments, promotions, and decision-making processes. The implementation of existing anti-corruption and merit laws, such as the Prevention of Corruption Acts, must be enforced rigorously. Empowering judicial institutions to actively oversee cases of nepotism and patronage through special tribunals or ombudsperson systems. The quota system must be restructured to ensure it benefits genuinely underprivileged groups rather than serving as a tool for political patronage. Incorporating Islamic principles of justice, meritocracy, and accountability into leadership and administrative training programs for public officials. Public education campaigns highlighting Islamic values against favoritism and promoting collective responsibility. Civil society organizations can play a vital role in advocating for reforms, monitoring public institutions, and exposing cases of political patronage. Encouraging media houses to investigate and report on patronage-related corruption to raise public awareness and pressure the government to act. Reducing patronage in public institutions will enhance the efficiency and productivity of governance, leading to better resource allocation and service delivery. Merit-based governance can attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and boost entrepreneurial confidence by reducing unpredictability and corruption. Ensuring merit-based appointments in education and healthcare institutions can improve the quality of these essential services. Setting up independent boards to oversee recruitment and operations in these sectors to avoid patronage. Eliminating discretionary funds and appointment powers of ministers and high-ranking officials to minimize opportunities for patronage. Regulating political donations and expenditures to reduce the influence of political donors on governance. Offering competitive salaries in the public sector to reduce reliance on patronage as a means of securing financial stability for appointees. Clear career paths and incentives for public employees based on merit and performance. Learning from successful governance models in countries like Malaysia and Turkey to implement merit-based systems while addressing the socio-political realities of Pakistan. Collaborating with international organizations for technical assistance and capacity building in governance reforms.

5 Conclusion

Politics of patronage is a longstanding fact that is not exclusive to one state but reigns everywhere. Nonetheless, it has grim consequences on a country's economy and its people ranging from wastefulness of public state functionaries to the inadequacy of quality public services. This form of corruption is a socio-political nuisance that must be uprooted by making stringent efforts to exterminate the mushrooming menace. It is time we questioned the reality of poverty of Pakistan; a country rich in talent, manpower and expensive natural resources still lags behind due to corruption and patronage – a pity condition. However, it is time we stopped pitying Pakistan's past failures and corrosive practices. It is time to rectify the past and present evils and devils. Time is ripened that radical measures must be adopted to rid society of the torrent of patronage through parliamentary and practicable strategies that has, undoubtedly, torn the socio-economic fabric. Nevertheless, the policy of merit can efficiently rejuvenate political and administrative offices.

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