# Civil Administration in New States Under Military Rule: The Bangladesh Experience

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*This is an analysis of the Bangladesh experience of civil administration under the military governments of Zia and Ershad. It shows how the civil administration was militarized by the military governments and how and why a "marriage of convenience" between the military and civil bureaucracies emerged. Furthermore, the article reveals that Zia's efforts to reform the inherited colonial administrative system could not bring about any substantial change in the administration, and Ershad's decentralization program could not make the newly created Upazila Parishad autonomous in the administration and development affairs. The article concludes that the military rulers who project themselves as reformers are at best cautious who are reluctant to go beyond a certain limit.*

## Introduction

Military intervention in politics is a common phenomenon among new states. Their frequent seizure of state power indicates the emergence of the military as a formidable political actor in these states. Overthrowing a legitimately constituted government has become such an easy task that Ruth First (1970:4) describes it as follows: "Get the keys of the armory; turn out the barracks; take the radio station, the post office and the airport; arrest the person of the President, and you arrest the state." In Ghana, a "dominant-party mobilization system" established by Nkrumah was toppled by 500 soldiers in collaboration with few hundred policemen. Martial law was proclaimed in Pakistan (1958 and 1970) and Bangladesh (1982) without any incidence of bloodshed and even without a shot being fired. Colonel Mobutu overthrew the civilian regime of Congo (now Zaire) in 1969 with the help of only 200 soldiers. The increasing propensity of the military to intervene in the politics of new states cannot be viewed as "simply a transitory phase of political evolution that will shortly be succeeded by a period of political control" (Fidel 1975:2).

Four different perspectives can be discerned from the literature related to the performance of military regimes. The first depicts the military as agent of modernization and development. They argue that the modernization of military institutions and increasing sophistication of weaponry have engendered a determination among the military officers that their society should also be modernized like their own institutions. When the military leaders rule a country, they "can hardly avoid being aware of the need

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for substantial changes in their own societies" (Pye 1962:78). The modernized army would constitute "a radical criticism of the existing political system" (Halpern 1962:286), and is very unlikely "to become the natural allies of feudal or other vested interests" (Pauker 1959:340). It has been argued that a major mistake of the present century is that the impact of military rule "on the process of modernization is generally taken to be peripheral at best" (Levy 1966:605). The second perspective suggests that military rulers are antithetical to development or they can at best, be defenders of the *status quo*. Mazrui (1977) treats the African armies as agents of "militarized ethnicity" and "retraditionalization." The military establishments which the African countries inherited from their colonial masters are undoubtedly scientific in technology and logical in the system of coordination. But the primordial beliefs and traditionalist tendencies are deeply-rooted in the individual men in uniform. So when the armed forces assume power, these beliefs and tendencies have great impact on the policies they frame (Mazrui 1977:251). Lieuwen (1964) views the military as a force that attaches much value to the preservation of status quo. In Latin America, he points out, the military leaders' "ardor for reform generally cools rapidly in the aftermath of victory, slowing any program of social development" (Lieuwen 1964:77). More often than not, military regimes stops the normal process of constitutional evolution and assume despotism in the name of democracy. Basic democracy of Ayub Khan, presidential democracy of Nasser, guided democracy of Sukarno, and organic democracy of Franco are some of the notable examples (Finer 1962:242).

The third perspective suggests that the level of sociopolitical development determines whether the military is likely to play a modernizing role or it will act as conservative guardian of the existing order. Nordlinger's cross-national aggregate study concludes that "the consequences of military rule—vary according to alteration in a country's social and political contours overtime" (1970:1147). The fourth perspective argues that military regimes are not very different from their civilian counterparts. The most blatant exposition of this view is Zolberg's comment: "Beneath their uniforms, the Gowons, Lamizanas, Bokassas, and Mobutus are men with the same range of virtues and vices, wisdom and foolishness as the Balewas, Olympios, Yamegos, and Nkrumahs they replaced" (1973:319).

None of the four perspectives specifically addresses the issue of civil administration under military rule. This article is a case study of civil administration under military rule in Bangladesh. The first military intervention in the politics of Bangladesh occurred in 1975 when some mid-level officers in collaboration with few hundred soldiers killed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib) and ushered in an era of military rule. For most of the period between August 1975 and December 1990, Bangladesh had been directly or indirectly ruled by the military. Indirectly when the military was the main support base of the rulers who headed an institutionalized civilian facade. The two generals who ruled the country during most of this period was Ziaur Rahman (Zia) who emerged as the "strongman" of Bangladesh after the assassination of Mujib, and H.M. Ershad, who in a bloodless coup in March 1982, took over state power from the octogenarian President, Justice Abdus Sattar.

## A Common Experience of Many New States

Soon after achieving independence from colonial rule, the new states run into serious problems. The government confronts the difficult task of state-building and nation-building. The different ethnic, religious, and regional forces that once joined hands for the common aim of achieving independence begin to unfold their separate identities. The nationalist leaders who gave leadership to the independence movement are dismayed to discover that their society is not at all homogenous. It is rather a conglomeration of diverse and conflicting interests, loyalties, and identities (Wriggins 1961:313-20). Most of the new states experience quite a few imbalances. The movement for independence raised the expectation of the populace to a very high level that once the country is independent, the rulers find it almost impossible to live up to their promises with the meager resources at their disposal. "The revolution of rising expectation," therefore, gradually turns into "the revolution of rising frustration." Another imbalance evident in many postcolonial countries is a result of the politicization of the people engendered by the movement for independence. In the movement, the rate of political participation is high, but the rate of institutionalization of participation is low in the postcolonial situation. The consequences in most cases are, turbulence, instability, and tendency to resort to violence (Huntington 1965:386-430). The rulers become intolerant of political opposition and prefer to rely mainly on coercion to keep the society under their effective control. The euphoria over the promised socioeconomic development with which the rulers start to rule eventually evaporates. An effective control over the polity becomes their main concern.

Another imbalance in the new states is between the "political policymaking institutions and bureaucratic policy- implementing structures." This is the direct consequence of "premature or too rapid expansion of the bureaucracy when the political system lags behind" (Riggs 1963:126). The situation leads to the usurpation of considerable political functions by the bureaucrats.

During the preindependence period, the nationalist leaders condemn the colonial administrative system for its authoritarian and elitist bias. They commit themselves to overhaul the colonial pattern of administration once independence is achieved. The need for an action-oriented, responsive, and democratic administrative system is emphasized. Once independence is attained, reform commissions are set up to examine the existing system and to recommend a comprehensive design for administrative reorganization. By the time the reform commission submits its report, the political environment of the new state becomes extremely volatile and a deep sense of betrayal and utter cynicism among the people at large put the regime in acute effectiveness crisis. To maintain its control on the society, the regime becomes increasingly dependent on the once-ridiculed law-and-order oriented administration. The colonial administrative system, thus, reproduces itself in the new states.

Within a few years of independence, the armed forces of a great majority of the new states reveal their praetorian character by overthrowing the civilian regimes on the pretext of eradicating corruption, lawlessness, economic mismanagement, and in some

instances, the failure to maintain an honorable external relation. The military rulers promise to hand over political power to the elected representatives of the people in the near future and go back to barracks. With the passage of time, political opposition to the regime starts to grow and the rulers seek to make themselves acceptable to the people. The mandate of the electorate is sought by holding elections ostensibly to civilianize the military rule, but aimed basically at ensuring their continuation in power. Very often, the mandate is rigged in favor of the rulers who with the help of civilian administration manipulate the election results. Military leaders, thus, turn themselves into politicians.

Immediately after coming to power, the military leaders take a harsh attitude towards the civil bureaucracy. They vow to streamline the administration by eradicating corruption and instituting massive administrative reorganization. Stiff penalties are enforced for corruption and some top-level bureaucrats are sacked or suspended by raising corruption charges against them. But this attitude of the rulers toward administrators is soon revised for few reasons. First, the inexperience of the military in performing the system maintenance functions necessitates a partnership of convenience between the military and civil bureaucracies. Second, in the absence of a civilian support base, the military rulers seek to use the bureaucracy, the most organized group of the civil society, as their initial civilian support base. Finally, the legitimacy crisis resulting from the unconstitutional seizure of power dictates that the rulers should keep the bureaucracy satisfied to use it in maintaining their control on the society. Consequently, the enthusiasm for administrative reform does not last long and the changes that are instituted are only "cosmetic" in nature.

A very common phenomenon of military rule is militarization of civilian administration. Many military officers are inducted in strategic positions in the administration to enhance the rulers' control over the system and keep the defense forces satisfied. A recent trend of military rule in the new states is administrative decentralization ostensibly designed to accelerate the pace of rural development, but aimed basically at creating regime defenders among the rural influentials.

## Militarization of Civil Administration

Like the military rulers elsewhere, the immediate concern of the military rulers of Bangladesh was to restore the chain of command in the military hierarchy. Both Zia and Ershad defended and promoted the corporate interests of the armed forces. To pursue this, Zia's government increased the military's personnel status and benefits, e.g., promotion, pay raises, subsidized ration, improved housing, etc. (Khan 1984:233). While the defense budget constituted seven percent of total expenditures in 1974-75 (Islam 1988:59), it was raised to 32 percent of the total revenue budget in 1975-76 (Hasanuzzaman 1986:36). The total amount of the defense budget was further raised by the military government of Ershad. The total strength of the armed forces was substantially increased by Zia by adding five new divisions to their existing strength. Both Zia and Ershad tried to keep the armed forces well satisfied by issuing the officers highly

profitable business licenses and permits and by allotting them plots in the rich neighborhoods of the big cities of the country.

A process of militarization of the Council of Ministers started during Zia's rule and it was pushed to its extreme by the military regime of Ershad. In 1975, seven military bureaucrats were included in a Council of Advisers of ten members. Out of 24 full ministers in the Cabinet in 1981, 6 were from the armed forces (Islam 1988:123). In Ershad's every Council of Ministers the military bureaucrats were inducted in large numbers. The process of militarization of the Council of Ministers reached its peak in 1985 when all the seven members in Ershad's Cabinet were from the military bureaucracy (Hasanuzzaman 1991:85).

Since the military's assumption of state power in 1975, infiltration of the members of the armed services in civil administration started. They occupied many important and strategic decisionmaking positions in the secretariat, police administration, and state-managed corporations. Furthermore, a large number of positions in the diplomatic missions abroad were filled by senior military officers. The career bureaucrats and diplomats viewed these appointments as undesirable intrusion of "outsiders" in their exclusive professional domain. But probably the fear of repression prevented them from challenging it. The infiltration of military personnel in the civil administration and diplomatic missions served quite a few purposes. First, it strengthened the military rulers' control over the state apparatus. Second, it was a means of removing the potential conspirators in the armed forces from active military services. Finally, it enabled the rulers to build a solid core of regime defenders in the civil sector. To many military officers, a position in the civil administration is highly attractive for few reasons. First, it provides an opportunity of public relations which is very limited in the active military service. Second, it relieves the officers from the hard routine of soldiers' life. Third, many positions in the civil administration are well-known for their scope of fortune-building through illegal means.

However, the most notable move to militarize the state apparatus, was Ershad's insistence for a constitutionally entrenched role of the military in the national policymaking process. He viewed it as the only means to ensure stability of a democratic political system. Even before his assumption of power in 1982, Ershad exerted tremendous pressure on the government for a place of the armed forces in the national power structure to resist coups, countercoups, and assassinations (Islam 1989:154- 64). As the President of the country, Ershad attempted to formally include representation from the military in the Zila Parishad, a local council entrusted with administrative and developmental tasks within a district. But ultimately he had to drop the idea of institutionalizing the military in the Zila Parishad as the attempt caused an adverse public reaction (Huque and Akhter 1989:173).

The Warrant of Precedence declared by Ershad in September 1986 accorded the Major Generals an equal status with the Chairmen of Public Service Commission and University Grants Commission, and the Secretaries of different ministries. The same warrant also put three chiefs of the armed forces above the Secretaries, including the

Defense Secretary. As a result, the military bureaucrats took ascendance over the civil bureaucrats.

## A "Marriage of Convenience" Between Military and Civil Bureaucracies

Colonial Indian subcontinent was ruled by the civil bureaucracy with minimum control from the metropolitan center. This bureaucracy was a perfect example of Merle Fainsod's category of "ruling bureaucracies" (1963:35). For most of the period between 1947 and 1971, Pakistan was ruled by the military bureaucracy in active collaboration with the civil bureaucracy. After the emergence of Bangladesh, the civil bureaucracy lost much of its strength when the Mujib's Awami League firmly established itself in the state apparatus. But the military take over in 1975 revived the civil bureaucracy's pre-1971 role. A marriage of convenience between the military and civil bureaucracy became the base of the policy-formulation implementation process and the power structure. This was evident during Zia's and Ershad's rule. Such marriage was contacted by the military rulers because the civil bureaucracy was needed for three reasons: to perform the system maintenance functions; to support the rulers as an organized groups; and to exercise effective control over the society in the absence of mass support.

In the pre-coup era, public officials did not have security of tenure. The President's Order No. 9 of 1972 made it possible to suspend or dismiss any public servant without any reason or giving the victim the opportunity to appeal in any court "in the interest of the People's Republic of Bangladesh." To win over the support of the public officials, the Zia government scrapped the Order. Moreover, those who lost their jobs under this order were allowed to appeal their cases. Because security of tenure was restored by Zia, the civil and military bureaucracies were brought closer together. Some senior officers who were removed from their services by the civilian regime were reinstated and a number of them were given the highly strategic and influential positions. Both the Zia and Ershad governments raised the salary of public officials. Under the military governments, large number of crucial positions in the state-apparatus were shared by the military and civil bureaucracies. Thus, following the pre-1971 tradition, Bangladesh was ruled by the military and civil bureaucracies in the post-1975 period.

## Administrative Reform Efforts

Between 1947 and 1971 (when Bangladesh was the eastern wing of Pakistan), several attempts had been made to reform the inherited colonial administrative system of Pakistan. The aim was to make it capable of carrying out the herculean task of socioeconomic development. But these administrative reform efforts did not lead to any substantial change in the administrative system as most of the major recommendations of the reform commissions remained unimplemented (Braibanti 1966; Khan 1980). Only those recommendations that did not pose any potential threat to the status, power, and

privileges of the dominant cadre of administrators were implemented. The consequence was the continuation of an administrative system designed by the British colonial power. When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, the Mujib government attempted to overhaul the colonial administrative system but its result was disappointing. A comprehensive report containing well-conceived recommendations for reform was shelved. The concern for administrative reform that began with the independence of Pakistan thus remained alive even after the military take over in 1975.

In February 1976, the military government of Zia appointed the Pay and Services Commission (PSC) under the chairmanship of A. Rashid, a retired civilian bureaucrat. The members of the PSC were drawn from various professional groups including civil servants, doctors, engineers, journalists, and accountants. The terms of reference of the PSC included: (1) a suitable service structure for the civil services along with their methods of recruitment, training, and deployment; and (2) rational and simple principles for the amalgamation of the employees of the erstwhile central and provincial governments performing similar duties and functions (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh [PRB] 1976).

To ascertain the views and opinions of those affected by the proposed reorganization, the Commission elicited written memoranda and oral representation from 154 service associations and unions. Commission members also toured different parts of the country to consult various categories of personnel and a number of leading personalities from different walks of life. The reports of reform commissions in India and Britain were reviewed, and Commission members made trips to a number of Asian and European countries to study the service structure and other features of the civil services of those countries.

On 27 May 1977, the PSC submitted its report which encompassed almost all crucial aspects of administration. It also made elaborate comments on said aspects and was highly critical of the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP). As the lineal descendant of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), the CSP was the most influential, powerful, and elitist of all the services in Pakistan. Almost all prestigious and powerful positions in the Pakistan bureaucracy were virtually reserved for the generalist cadres of CSP. The dominant position of the CSP remained in independent Bangladesh. The PSC condemned "the organization of the CSP as exact parallel with the ICS ignoring the social changes as anarchronism" (Government of PRB 1977:41). The "closed shop" policy of the CSP and by reserving large number of policymaking and strategic posts for its members "produced complacence and encouraged them to take things easy and remain content with mediocre performance" (Government of PRB 1977:40). The PSC pointed out:

> Contrasted with the situation of the late nineteenth century, when functional services were non-existent, the need for technocrats of various kinds at all levels--has become paramount. The center of gravity of bureaucratic organization has shifted with these changes and it is inevitable that the new class of technocrats whom the society needs urgently should have proper and appropriate measure of participation in the decision-making process (Government of PRB 1977:41).

The generalist-specialist controversy, the PSC argued, was an articulation of the need for a functional approach to the staffing of government positions. The Commission believed that the services of talented people were equally important in all the functional areas of the government of which general administration was only one. Thus, it opposed the creation of a privileged elite cadres and in the allocation of key positions for them using only the results of single examination at the point of entry as a basis (Government of PRB 1977:44). In keeping with the above observations, the PSC recommended that the Civil Service of Bangladesh should be structured broadly as follows:

(1) The nomenclature "Civil Service" should include all employees of the government from the highest to the lowest not being a military personnel;

(2) Functional service cadres, wherever viable, should be constituted at the Administrative and Executive levels with identical scales of pay and equitable prospects of promotion;

(3) Secretariat posts, particularly those from the level of Deputy Secretary and above, should not be reserved in favor of any of the Services;

(4) There should be enough scope of promotion for employees at all levels so that they may go up the ladder subject, of course, to their having acquired the minimum prescribed qualifications for the next higher level;

(5) The barriers between the CSP and other technical and nontechnical senior services should be removed by the introduction of equal starting salary, retirement and pension rules---;

(6) The status and pay of specialist functional groups should be raised so that, an environment of cooperation and meaningful dialogue between the administrators and the specialist is created; and

(7) A Superior Policy Pool consisting of posts requiring all-around experience--should be designed. The Superior Policy Pool would thus constitute an apex cadre of senior officers of proven quality drawn from all branches of the Civil Service on the basis of merit and ability to be tested in a suitable manner (Government of PRB 1977:41-3).

Because the recommendations of the PSC threatened the status and authority of the privileged cadres of CSP, they did not wholeheartedly welcome these. It has been revealed that:

A senior CSP went to the extent of manipulating the recommendations of the PSC. As the member-secretary of the commission, he altered many parts of the draft reports .pertaining to recommendations that attempted to curtail the power and position of the CSPs in the proposed pay and service structure. The move was detected in time by the other members of the commission, and the matter was brought to the notice of the president, who replaced him (Khan and Zafarullah 1982a:148).

The military government of Zia accepted in principle, some of the major recommendations of the PSC. A number of cabinet committees was appointed to examine the different aspects of the report and to determine the details of implementation. The most important outcome of the PSC report was the creation of a "classless" civil service called the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) which contained 28 services under 14 cadres. Equality of status was assured to all the cadres. All designations were made functional

and pay scale became the only index of determining the positions and privileges of the government functionaries. Although the previous civilian regime was highly critical of the artificial walls built around the services, it failed to bring any change in the existing service structure. On the basis of the PSC report, the military government converted a caste-like structure of the public service into a "classless" structure. It was, no doubt, a big accomplishment. The military government, in this regard, projected itself as committed to administrative reform in order to meet the challenges of quick development. But it is clear that although the outmoded bureaucratic structure was changed, its contents remained virtually unaltered.

A Senior Services Pool (SSP) was formed in accordance with the recommendation of the PSC. The SSP had 523 officers, only three of whom were professional of varying background. The rest of the members were the generalists and a great majority of them were members of the CSP (Khan and Zafarullah 1982b:171). Because the SSP members were recruited without being tested, a large number of generalist officers were included. This defeated the objective behind the formation of the SSP. To the specialists, the SSP was a recharged apparatus which protects the dominance of the generalist officials. It later became evident that the formation of the SSP in no way reduced the frustration and anger of the professionals; rather, it became a cause of renewed agitation. Based on this, it can be argued that the military regime was highly cautious about administrative reform and was reluctant to antagonize the elite cadre of generalists on which it was heavily dependent to maintain.

The antagonism and rivalry between the generalists and the professionals continued and reached an unprecedented climax. In December 1985 and January 1986 when 40,000 government physicians, engineers, and agriculturists defied a martial law order and went on strike to demand an end of the "generalist bureaucrats running their (specialists) lives." The strikers demanded the reorganization of their services to make their status equal with that of the generalist bureaucrats (*The Bangladesh Observer* 23 December 1985). In June 1989, the Ershad government decided to abolish the SSP to address the longstanding grievances of a number of cadre officers who lack opportunity to ascend to top secretariat positions.

### Decentralization for Development

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world with a per capita income of Tk. 2991 (US$120). The economy of the country is highly dependent on agriculture which contributes 49.40 percent to the Gross Domestic Product. About 85 percent of the population live in the rural areas and rely directly on agriculture for livelihood (Government of PRB 1984). Half of the rural families are either landless or near landless and their number has been constantly increasing. A big percentage of the country's population is ill-fed, ill-clothed, and uneducated. The situation in the rural areas is much more shocking than in the urban centers. The importance of rural development in Bangladesh, therefore, does not need to be exaggerated.

Centralized administration was a prominent trait of the British rule in India. The colonial rulers introduced a centralized administrative system to serve the colonial purpose of effectively controlling the Indian population and efficiently collecting taxes. Rural development had no place in the priority list of the British rulers. In the pre-1971 period, the most publicized rural development effort was through the Basic Democracies of Ayub Khan, the military ruler of Pakistan from 1958 to 1969. Praising Ayub Khan for his "institutional innovation" of Basic Democracies, Huntington (1968:251) wrote:

> More than any other political leader in a modernizing country after World War II, Ayub Khan came close to filling the role of Solon or Lycurgus or "Great Legislator" on the Platonic or Rousseauian model.

But critics "looked upon it as a scantily veiled measure to perpetuate the power of the regime" (Jahan 1972:111). Ayub's approach to rural development was predominantly bureaucratic in which the elected representatives had to operate under tight official control. Since the independence of Bangladesh, successive regimes accorded high priority to rural development. But the governments of Mujib and Zia could not devise an institutional framework to reduce the magnitude of poverty, illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition, and population explosion in the rural society of Bangladesh.

Within a few weeks after coming to power, the military government of Ershad appointed the Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reform (CARR). The committee was asked to design "an effective administrative system based on the spirit of devolution and the objective of taking the administration nearer to the people" (Government of PRB 1982a: Preface). One major inadequacy of the administrative system identified by the CARR was the "reluctance on the part of the political authority to devolve power to the representative institutions at the local levels" (Government of PRB 1982a). The committee suggested to increase the viability of the local government institutions by making them elected representative bodies and by placing the local bodies under their control. To invigorate the local bodies and to eliminate the scope of government intervention, the CARR recommended the devolution of developmental, administrative, and financial powers to the *Thana*, which was later named Upazila or subdistrict. The government announced its intention of using the Thanas as the "focal point of all administrative activities" (Government of PRB 1982b).

On the basis of the recommendations of the CARR, the chairmen of 460 Upazilas were elected on the basis of universal adult franchise between 16 and 20 May 1985. The chairmen of all Union Parishads within the Upazila became the members of the Upazila Parishad. The other members of the Parishad were the chairman of Upazila Central Cooperative Association (UCCA), three nominated women, one nominated person, and officials to be nominated by the government (Government of PRB:1983a). The composition of the Parishad shows that the chairman is the only directly elected person in the Parishad. The other category of members who could claim to have a mandate from the people are the chairmen of Union Parishads. All other members are either ex-officio members representing their organizations or nominated members. Although the official members have no right to vote in the Parishad meetings, they have ample opportunity

to influence the Parishad decisions by virtue of their superior education, skill, and above all, their administrative powers as agents of government in the Upazila. It is obvious that the nominated and official members who form the majority of Parishad membership would owe their allegiance to the government--their nominating authority (Huque 1986:89). If and when the government wants, it can exercise its control over the activities of the Parishad through the nonelected members.

A long list of developmental and administrative functions has been given to the Parishad. But the amount of revenue generated by the Parishad from within the Upazila was not enough to effectively perform the tasks assigned to it. The consequence was the Parishad's dependence on government funds and susceptibility to government pressure. The government retained a long list of regulatory and development functions, probably assuming, that the Upazila Parishad was not competent enough to perform these functions properly. These included civil and criminal judiciary, maintenance of law and order, technical education and education above elementary level, large-scale industries, flood control, generation and distribution of electric power, and similar other functions (Government of PRB 1982b).

The government devised a large number of mechanisms through which it exercised its control over the activities of the Upazila Parishad. The rules regulating the operation of the Parishad revealed that its autonomy from the government is more in appearance than in substance. The functions transferred to the Parishad were not permanent in nature. Any institution and service maintained by a Parishad can be transferred to government control and management. The government retained the right to modify the annual budget of the Parishad and the modified budget must be treated as the sanctioned budget of the Parishad (Government of PRB 1983a). Furthermore, the government set a pattern of sectoral allocations of funds for the Annual Upazila Development Program (AUDP) indicating the minimum and maximum percentage of funds to be spent in each area of development, i.e., physical infrastructure, socioeconomic infrastructure, agriculture and irrigation, industry and so on (Government of PRB 1983b). Such tight control over the AUDP was rationalized by arguing that experience and expertise available at the Upazila level are limited. The national government retained the right to direct, control and interfere in the affairs of the Parishad if and when the government so desires. The nature of official control over the Parishad is evident in the following observation:

> The elected chairman and representative members of the Upazila Parishad in Bangladesh
> have very little to do in planning, programming and project design (PPPD). In fact in
> performing their functions in the arena of PPPD they are directed, guided, controlled,
> monitored and evaluated by the designated officials of the national government (Khan
> 1986:12).

It can therefore be argued that the democratic and autonomous appearance of the Upazila Parishad is an attempt to camouflage the fact that control by the national government persists as ever before. So some researchers argue that political interest of the rulers was the primary motive behind the creation of Upazila Parishad (Akhter 1990:39).

The declared objective of the military government was to usher in a new era in the administrative history of the country through its program of decentralization. It aims to achieve all-round rural development. But the rules and regulations governing the operations of the Upazila Parishad proved that a nonbureaucratic and tutelage-free local administration is yet to emerge in Bangladesh. An unlimited authority to interfere in the affairs of the Parishad has been retained by the central government. Critics view the military government's program of decentralization for development as a new mechanism to perpetuate the control of national government over local administration and development activities. The military government devised an institutional framework for decentralized administration and development but could not proceed beyond a certain limit to make its efforts effective and meaningful. Here again, the military rules have assumed the role of cautious reformers, who prefer reforms, but not at the cost of disrupting the status quo.

## Conclusion

Like many other new states, Bangladesh has been ruled for a longer period by military rulers than by the civilian authority. The military governments of Zia and Ershad militarized the civil administration predominantly to defend and promote the corporate interests of the armed forces and to ensure military's control over the bureaucracy. To perform the system maintenance functions, a "marriage of convenience" between the military and civil bureaucracies, as was evident in the pre-1971 military governments of Pakistan, was revived.

Zia underscored the need to reorganize the administrative system of the country that was inherited from the British colonial rule. But the changes that were introduced on the basis of the recommendations of the PSC could at best be called "cosmetic." The military government avoided the risk of disrupting the status quo and did not seriously consider doing anything detrimental to the interest of the elite cadre. This largely explains why its system of administration is not marked by imagination and adaptability and the bureaucracy is unable to play a significant role in the socioeconomic development of the society.

Ershad's program of decentralization of administration for development did not create an autonomous local government institution. Bureaucratic control from above on the policy formulation and implementation process of Upazila Parishad, the presence of a majority of nonelected members in this body, and its heavy dependence on central government for funds to undertake development works and perform the routine administrative tasks defeated the purpose of achieving greater mass participation in local administration. The military government could not break the colonial tradition of bureaucratic tutelage on local government institution. The military rulers of Bangladesh could at best be called cautious reformers, who had been unwilling to go very far with their administrative reform design.

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