

From Generalist and Specialist to Specialized Generalist

**A Reform Agenda for the
Senior Civil Services of India**

PRAVEEN KISHORE



Asian Development Research Institute

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

One of the neglected areas of reforms of India's organized senior civil services relates to rationalization of its branching structure, the underlying debate of generalist vs. specialist services and their respective roles and responsibilities. The present structure, being a confusing hodgepodge of specialist and generalist branches, at different layers of federal and state governments, in different ministries, departments and institutions, as well as in functional domains, has largely given rise to inter-branch rivalries, dissatisfaction, demoralization and dysfunctional organizational structure and design. This has adversely affected the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the senior management cadre, policy formulation as well as governance and administration of the country.

This research study is focused on deeply and minutely analyzing this important problem and related reform agenda. The objective of this study has been not only to conduct a theoretical and analytical study, but also to examine and analyze the empirical world of individual service branches, their structure, their domain and justification or otherwise of their existence, as well as the issue of their redesign and reconstitution within the overall theoretical framework. In this sense, the present study is an attempt towards conducting an empirical and theoretical research with actionable recommendations for strategic structural reforms of senior Indian bureaucracy.

The study, thus, contains concrete recommendations, laying out a new branching structure within the framework of 'broad domain' based service branches – which will be manned by 'specialized generalist' civil servants – and thus identifies broad domains and corresponding service branches. Such a reform will also lead to fair, equitable and interest-skill mapped services where all branches will have near ideal structure and will offer promising career as well as satisfying and challenging assignments to officers.

In true sense, I have been working on this topic for many years. My long years of experience working with federal as well as state governments, with officers from different services and in different organizations have given me many deeper insights. This coupled with my international exposure, research interest and discussion with various officers has motivated me to think about and analyze issues related to service branching structure of

Indian civil services. A smaller essay based on my initial research on this issue was published in Economic and Political Weekly in 2018 with the title “Grappling with Foxes and Hedgehogs of India's Senior Civil Services”. Subsequently, I got the opportunity to further work upon and expand this study during my visiting fellowship at Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, and for this I am thankful to Centre for Public Policy at IIM, Bangalore. I am also thankful to Dr. Shaibal Gupta, Member Secretary, ADRI for all his support, encouragement and guidance in this and many other endeavours of mine.

I am hopeful that this study will help in highlighting the importance of the question being raised here and will also stimulate a healthy and open discussion about the urgency and possible road to reforms needed in our organized civil services structure.

Praveen Kishore
Patna
June, 2019

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Praveen Kishore is a civil servant by profession and a development economist by training and passion, a keen researcher who has also handled variety of public administration, management and policy assignments with governments since 2000. He has extensively worked in public health, nutrition and human development sector as well as in areas of governance, organizational reforms and public financial management.

He has been working in the state of Bihar since 2011, mostly in public healthcare sector, and has held positions of director of child development department and managing director of state medical corporation of Government of Bihar. Earlier, with Ministry of Finance at federal government level, he was instrumental in planning and designing a comprehensive restructuring, redesign and business process reengineering package for the field revenue department at pan-India level. Even after joining civil services, he has continued learning and updating himself. During 2009-11, he was selected as World Bank Fellow and pursued master's degree in international development from Harvard University, USA. He has also obtained PGPPM degree from IIM, Bangalore on Government of India scholarship. In addition, he has degrees in economics, mathematics and management before joining civil services.

A bibliophile and voracious reader, he is also engaged in research, writing and in sharing of ideas and discussion in public forums. He has published many articles and research papers in reputed journals like Economic and Political Weekly, Harvard Kennedy School Review and Journal of Applied Economic Research and has also delivered talks at Harvard University, IIMs, ADRI, ISID and other places. His main research interests are social and human development, public health and nutrition, political economy and society, and governance challenges and administrative reforms. Many of his research work and writings are available on his website <http://pkishore.me>. He is available on Twitter @PraveenKishore_ and can be contacted at praveenkish@gmail.com and at praveen.kishore@gov.in. He is a visiting scholar at Centre for Public Policy, IIM Bangalore. He is soon joining University of Rochester, USA to pursue PhD in public health sciences.

UNDERSTANDING THE INDIAN BUREAUCRACY

1.1 Bureaucracies in the Modern World

Governments have been one of the most important institutions of our society ever since the human civilizations organized themselves in recognizable and manageable groups. In today's time, the role and responsibilities of government is immense for organizing and managing a society on mutually agreed principles of humanity and a civilized society bound by principle of freedom, justice and liberty to individuals and groups. With such responsibilities, national, sub-national and regional governments in different countries are often gigantic organizations, largest employer, and are usually organized into different ministries, line departments, and executive agencies carrying out the myriad functions of national administration and security, maintenance of law and order, raising of revenues and provisioning of public goods with varying level of involvement in economic and social development efforts and in facilitating and regulating the markets, industry, trade and commerce. Whether the scope for state activities are large or small, which often depend on historical, social, cultural, economic and political factors, modern nation states need public institutions, administrative structure and bureaucracy to carry out even the minimal functions of governance.

However, the word 'bureaucracy' has, over time, come to possess a somewhat negative connotation, and is often used as a pejorative slogan. Johan Oslen typically notes the prevailing view that the government institutions are bureaucratic, which are often characterized as ill-suited to cope with its task and purposes - as they are too big, powerful, hierarchical, rule-bound, indifferent to results, inefficient, lazy, incompetent, wasteful, inflexible, unaccountable¹, and what not! However, this perception often fails to see the fundamental difference between a public and private organization - the most crucial of them perhaps being the accountability to the public at large and public service nature of administration. Further, bureaucracies have been reinventing themselves, and despite such strong criticism, they have not only survived but also have grown and evolved in

¹ Oslen Johan, "The Ups and Downs of Bureaucratic Organization", *The Annual Review of Political Science*, no. 11 (2008): 13-37

many respects.² And bureaucracies have been reinventing and restructuring themselves, almost continuously, in many countries of the world, and certainly they are in that sense, at the world level, a dynamic institution, not an ossified and archaic structure. Contrasting bureaucratic organizations from what he calls network organizations and market organization forms, Oslen highlights the continued relevance and importance of bureaucracies due to modern developments like human rights, increased diversity, lack of common overriding goals, renewed demands for public accountability, juridification of many spheres of society and its positive relation to substantive outcomes that are valued in contemporary democracies.³

1.2 Organized Senior Bureaucracy in India

'Steel Frame of India' is the phrase often used to describe the organized senior bureaucracy of India and presumably was first used much before independence. Though it was a British legacy and the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, was sceptical of it in the beginning, he came to appreciate that a highly qualified, professional and meritocratic civil service institution would, perhaps, be an important factor in making a successful transition of India from a backward nation to a prosperous country. As it turned out, though the transition may not yet have been achieved even after seven decades of independence, the civil services, as a professionally managed cadre of bureaucrats has evolved as one of the pivotal institutions of the democratic India. Ramchandra Guha has even identified it as one of the important factors behind the deepening of democracy and consolidation of the idea of India.⁴ And there are many who would agree to this view. In the parliamentary democracy of India, where the political executives come and go through regular general elections, the executive civil service is permanent providing much needed continuity, knowledge pool, expertise and professionalism to better manage a vast and diverse country. Though responsible and answerable to political executive, the administrative and institutional structure of civil service is not dependent on the whims and fancies of the political class, thus providing a fine example of check and balances, together with independent judiciary and free press. The top tier of executive wing of the government in India (Prime Minister and council of Ministers) is drawn from legislative

² Simon Herbert, *Administrative Behaviour - A Study of Decision-Making Process in Administrative Organizations*, 4th Ed, (New York: The Free Press, 1997), Ch. 1,2 and Comments on Ch.1, 2

³ Oslen Johan, "Maybe It is Time to Rediscover Bureaucracy", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, January (2005): 18-19

⁴ Guha Ramchandra, *Indian After Gandhi - A History of World's Largest Democracy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), 755

representative following the Westminster system. It is unlike American system, where, as per Article II of the Constitution, the executive head (President) is independent of legislature, is permanent, and although she chooses her subordinate high-level executive branch appointee with the 'advise and consent' of Senate, she can dismiss those executives unilaterally at her will.⁵ On the contrary, Constitution of India makes express provisions (Part XIV, Articles 308 to 313) about establishment of permanent senior executive (civil services), and also provides for their proper safeguards from motivated and vindictive actions of political executives.⁶ This further highlights the importance of permanency and career-based structure of senior-level executive branch (civil services) in the parliamentary governance structure of India.

India is a large country, and complex too in many ways. For the uninitiated, it can prove to the true proverbial anecdote from Jatakas tales of the four blind's man attempt to understand what an elephant is.⁷ The same simile can be extended for the organization, structure and functioning of the bureaucracy in India. It is large, with more than three million permanent employees with the union government and around seven million employees with all the state governments put together. To add to that, the structure and design of bureaucracy is too complex and a cursory attempt to delve into its intricacies can leave one flummoxed and confused. Without going into further detail here, three appendices at the end of this essay tries to throw more light and provide a simplified background material for understanding of Indian bureaucracy. The first one takes a quick overview to place the structure, organization and size of the bureaucracy in perspective. The second appendix then explains the topmost layer of organized civil service (called group A civil services), with which we are concerned in this policy research paper, and the third appendix then delves into the complex structure of hierarchies and fixed tenure-based career paths in these superior group A civil services. Those readers who have very sketchy idea of the labyrinthine Indian civil service structure are advised to have a look at these appendices.

1.3 Aims, Objectives and Structure of This Study

This policy research paper, though placed within the larger framework of bureaucratic reforms, is focused exclusively on analyzing the often-ignored issues arising out of the

⁵ Amar Akhil Reed, *America's Constitution – A Biography* (New York: Random House Inc., 2005), 186, 193

⁶ Basu Durga Das, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, 22nd Ed (New Delhi: Lexis Nexis, 2015), Part XIV

⁷ Eraly Abraham, *The Gem in the Lotus – Seeding of Indian Civilization* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2000), 83-84

peculiar branching structure of organized elite civil services of India (known popularly as IAS, IPS and many other branches not so widely known), analyzes the underlying debate of generalist vs. specialist, and also develops a framework for reform and a way forward. This essay is thus about the structural reform needed in this tiny group of organized 'civil servant' cadre which, in terms of numbers, forms less than 1% of the total employees of the government. Despite its small fraction, this leadership group is the most important because the national and state governance, administration, policy, program and projects and all other actions are often initiated, and certainly coordinated, managed, directed and controlled by this small group of executive managers. Reform of this group is required first and the foremost also because in the complex social, cultural, historical and institutional setup of India, the long term democratic and people's centric governance and reform can be ensured only with the leadership and initiative of the citizen elite.⁸ The bureaucratic elites are certainly part of India's citizen elite, and indeed, are an important part.

One of the most important institutional reform in senior civil services relates to addressing the question of generalist vs. specialist and making the service more professional, focused, efficient and effective through restructuring and realignment of different branches. This issue is the focus of the present study, and therefore, many other important issues in civil services reforms, like method and mode of recruitment and selection, promotion and performance evaluation, tenure and stability, job security and time bound promotion, lateral entry and equal opportunity etc, are not being addressed in detail here. This discussion on reorganization of service branches and the recommendations for reforms which follows, also presumes that the broader structure of the higher civil services would largely retain its career based permanent civil service character, consisting of officers recruited through open, fair competitive examination, who then work for almost all of their working life in the service as permanent bureaucrats.

There are five more chapters to this policy paper. Chapter 2 is concerned with outlining and analyzing the various strands of policy issues arising out of generalist vs specialist debate, including fairness and equality in treatment, empirics of inter-service rivalries, power politics and service parity, and in the process also delineating a broad framework within which to approach this question. Chapter 3 then moves to the enumeration of reform ideal, i.e., the idea of 'specialized generalist' branches, and to the examination of

⁸ Gupta Dipankar, *Revolution from Above – India's Future and the Citizen Elite* (New Delhi: Rainlight by Rupa Publications, 2013), ch 2 and 4. These two chapters discuss the main theme of this book which argues that various social and political reform in the present India has to initiate and come from the citizen elites.

deeper philosophical idea of justice, equality and best-fit underlying such a reform and redesign approach and of approaching this question from the first principals. The next chapter, Chapter 4, then goes into empirical world of different Individual service branches, examining and analyzing them from different axes, their roles, responsibilities, their justification or otherwise, and in the process trying to find a fit for them within the reformed structure. Chapter 5 then brings together all the analysis, findings and proposal together by enumerating the alternative, reformed branching design for the senior civil services. The last part, Chapter 6 concludes the essay by highlighting the overall philosophy of reform approach and the idea of looking at the study from different perspectives but reaching at the same conclusions.

THE EMPIRICAL WORLD OF FOXES AND HEDGEHOGS, AND THEIR POLITICS

It will be instructive here to briefly clarify a peculiar sense in which the word 'service' is used in Indian bureaucracy and has thus also been used in this study. 'Service' in Indian governance system is used to describe an organized cadre of senior (what is called group A) 'officers' who are not coterminous with any specific department or organization. Thus, the whole senior bureaucratic corps of officers is divided into many branches, each given its unique identity/name as a 'service' (for example IPS – Indian Police Service). These branches are organized as closed groups and form a cadre of permanent civil servants, who perform and work in some particular functional area, are organized in hierarchical fashion, move up in the hierarchy and get promotion largely on the basis of seniority and do not generally work outside their specialized domains. Department of Personnel and Training (hereafter DoPT), Government of India defines 'service' as group of posts belonging to a distinct functional area arranged in a hierarchical order representing different grades or levels of responsibility. All the posts in the service carry the same function involving specific skills. They are thus 'unifunctional'.⁹ This description by government seems to be describing a group of many highly specialized civil service branches. But in actuality it is not the case. DoPT definition itself is fundamentally confusing. In fact, the organization of cadre based civil services in India is a muddled mix of narrowly specialized branches - which may be loosely identified as unifunctional, some broader domain branches and one fully generalist branch - the latter two categories hardly having unifunctional domains. The most prominent and important service branch is not unifunctional at all. IAS is the true generalist service and there is nothing which can be identified as unifunctional in IAS. Appendix – 2 may be referred to for a detailed description of this structure.

2.1 Restructuring and Realignment of Branches

The larger issue of the overall structural reorganization of different branches is perhaps the most important issue which has not been getting the attention it requires. There is an

⁹ DoPT - Government of India, The Services Concept (New Delhi: Government of India – Department of Personnel and Training, 2000) available at <http://www.persmin.nic.in/DOPT/CSWing/CRDivision/2.1.2.html>

institutional mandate and prescribed procedures for standalone restructuring of different service/branches periodically, to be carried out under the overall guidance and supervision of DoPT. Though it is not what I mean by a comprehensive overall re-look at the organization and structure of various branches of civil services, it still gives an opportunity for individual branches to reform and reorganize in light of changing needs and circumstances. However, this has rarely been done. These periodic restructuring of individual branches have hardly done anything objective and with a long-term reform focus. Essentially, these exercises have been reduced to the rigmarole of inter-service comparison and then trying to ensure career/promotion prospects vis-a-vis other branches, often resulting in increasing the overall size of the service branch and creating redundant structure and superfluous posts, especially at the senior management level. The result has hardly been anything meaningful and rational, what to talk of visionary change.

Further, as all these services have a theoretical parity with IAS, the very different reality which actually prevails has a further dampening effect. A recent study organized and conducted by Government of India itself among all the organized group A service officers has identified that at the national level, the issue of IAS officers occupying most of the senior management level posts is a cause of deep concern and resentment among other branches.¹⁰ For example, more than 91% of survey respondents from non-IAS branches very strongly/strongly stated that senior position should be open to all civil service branches based on objective process.¹¹ To contrast the issue further, on the question of fair representation of different services in central government deputations, whereas 71% of IAS officers said it was fair, the percentage for non-IAS officers agreeing to this view was less than 21%.¹² This only highlight the seriousness of the issue where a large number of officers from various central group A services (mostly non-IAS) forming as much as 80% of total group A civil servants are dissatisfied, frustrated and demotivated. This indeed is a very serious organizational problem, often ignored and deliberately overlooked. Many of the officers from smaller and lesser known service branches are demotivated and frustrated, as they have lesser opportunity, limited exposure and poorer career prospects, which is often accentuated by exercises of standalone cadre restructuring.

¹⁰ DARPG – Government of India, Civil Services Survey – A Report (New Delhi: Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India, 2010), Various chapters of this study capture the dissatisfaction, cynicism and sense of injustice prevailing among many branches of senior civil servants.

¹¹ Ibid, 35, 37

¹² Ibid, 78

Another important issue is that of neglect of 'technical service branches' (both at central as well as at state levels) which manages many of the public service delivery and infrastructure provisions. Most of these departments are again staffed by IAS officers at the top – like education, public engineering, roads transports and public infrastructure, public health and medical services as well as energy, minerals and metals, shipping and transports, education, public healthcare etc, both at central/union as well as state government's levels - with very little opportunity for bright technical specialist at the top, breeding significant resentment and dissatisfaction. This is not a desirable situation at all and requires urgent steps. A structure where competent, professional, and suitable officers are given due recognition and responsibilities is the need of the hour. Though I will be discussing these issues in reference to civil services mostly, the ideas and suggestions will equally be applicable to technical services too.

All such questions become more and more important in this era of highly dynamic social and economic challenges of our country and also in light of the fact that these challenges are no less humongous and complex then they were at the time of independence. It becomes important more so as the structure of higher bureaucracy has hardly changed and reformed since independence, and it is a fair claim that perhaps the present structure of civil services and its branches does not represent the realities of India, and is poorly equipped to handle and face the complex challenges of modern India.

The present organization of civil service makes it instantly clear that it is a hotchpotch of one generalist branch and various kinds of specialist branches – from very narrow specialist function to broader domain specialist branches – and an all-purpose generalist branch. Though all of these branches are, as per rules and in theory, treated at par in terms of career prospects, salary and perquisites and opportunity for growth etc, the reality is quite different, leading to further inter-service rivalries, competition, power politics and exploitation, resulting into all kinds of bureaucratization and inefficiencies. In light of above, the crucial question is how to, and in what fashion we need to reorganize and reform the existing senior civil services branches. Thus, the question is how such a division or demarcation of branches should be done? What are the problems and issues with the present division/distribution? And how this realignment restructuring can be done in a more effective, efficient and productive way? Or, thinking from the first principles, should we also consider not dividing the higher bureaucracy into branches at all, and keep all of them as one perfect generalist group.

2.2 Do We Need Various Branches?

Why do we need to have different branches for senior management levels? Especially when we have a generalist branch (IAS) which occupies most important leadership positions in diverse functional domains. Why not then abolish these equivalent specialized branches, and have only IAS manning all such posts?

This idea of keeping every group A civil servant as a generalist may seem radical, naïve and even impractical. However, it will have one important benefit – it will end the inter-service rivalry and resulting discontent and frustration. In effect, everyone recruited will be IAS, and then they can be assigned to different posts, departments and functional domain over the course of their service career. If we look at the present structure of IAS, it is more or less what is being proposed here, with the distinction that some important functional domain like policing, revenue (to some extent), accounting etc, have specialized service branches. Otherwise, IAS officers do indeed hold leadership positions in all other functional domain across the country, both at central and state government levels. So why leave these few remaining domains outside, wherein by creating equivalent specialized service branches the government has given rise to such intractable issues which have a detrimental effect on bureaucratic performance. Therefore, the argument goes, let us have only one service, identified with whatever name we want to give it (IAS would be good option – the old one ICS also comes to my mind), and let them manage all the senior position across all functional areas, from police to health, from tax to rural development, and at all levels in federal India, from central government to state, and to local and municipal government. For proposing thus, I may be charged as naïve and puerile, looking at halcyon days of ICS in this modern world of highly complex society and institution where the problems facing government need very different – and specialized – treatment from experts.

Nevertheless, to me this appears to be an attractive idea and perhaps a feasible option. However, the issues need to be considered in more depth and with a nuanced understanding of various facets involved. This brings us to the fundamental question involved in these reform questions – that old datable of generalist vs. specialist, and examine its underlying logic and philosophy. And to begin this, let me start with the powerful imagery of Foxes and Hedgehogs.

2.3 Foxes and Hedgehogs of India's Civil Services

One of the great philosophers of twentieth century, Sir Isaiah Berlin, in his famous essay titled 'The Hedgehog and the Fox' says: *"There is a line among the fragments of the Greek poet Archilochus which says: 'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing'. Scholars have differed about the correct interpretation of these dark words, which may mean no more than that the fox, for all his cunning, is defeated by the hedgehog's one defence. But, taken figuratively, the words can be made to yield a sense in which they mark one of the deepest differences which divide writers and thinkers, and, it may be, human beings in general."*¹³

Berlin analyzed and interpreted this idea in broader and philosophical terms wherein the Hedgehogs were seen as approaching the world through a single defining idea and having a central vision and focus, while the Foxes were perceived as those who draw upon wide experience and are flexible and open to ideas. At a general level it is quite tempting to see the resemblance of foxes and hedgehogs with the more prosaic organizational ideas of generalist and specialist. However, at a deeper level there are nuanced distinctions. But for our purposes, a broad equivalence between distinction of fox and hedgehog to that of generalist and specialist branches respectively does make sense.

As of now, different services are structured and organized accordingly to functions. However, in a modern society and complex federal democracy of India - it is difficult to have a neat functional division and this produces concomitant issues. Whereas all other services can more or less be identified with functional domains, and often with departments; IAS is not. In fact, due to its generalist nature, colonial history and traditional influence, it has been the most visible, most powerful, influential and most sought-after branch.

2nd Administrative Reform Commission (ARC) has recommended that IAS too need to be a specialized service.¹⁴ Various Commissions have come up with recommendations for domain specialization of IAS officers, some of the common domains identified has been Public Finance and Taxation, Financial Management, Industry and Trade, Domestic Affairs and Defence, Housing and Urban Affairs, Agriculture and Rural Development, Social Sectors, Energy, Natural Resource Management and Environment etc¹⁵ and has

¹³ Berlin Isaiah, *The Proper Study of Mankind – An Anthology of Essays* (London: Vintage Books – Random House, 1953), *The Fox and the Hedgehog*, 436-437

¹⁴ DARPG – Government of India, 10th Report of 2nd Administrative Reform Commission: *Refurbishing of Personnel Administration - Scaling New Heights*, (New Delhi: Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India, 2009), ch. 4, 8 and 9, various pages

¹⁵ Ibid

emphasized assignment of officers on the basis of knowledge and experience in these domain areas. However, these recommendations have not yet been implemented, as many other similar reform measures. Further, it must be noted that these domain specializations are recommended for IAS. The report does not talk much about other service branches. When there are already specialized services for, for example – police and revenue, why IAS officers need to have a specialization in that domain, and to take the argument further, why IAS officers need to be at the top in revenue departments or for that matter in police departments? This leads us to the question of the desirability or otherwise of a generalist sitting at the top of a specialist? There is also a tendency to reduce this debate of generalist and specialist in bureaucracy/civil service to the question or desirability that IAS officers need to specialize in certain domains, conveniently ignoring and forgetting that there are already specialized branches and that the whole question need a comprehensive treatment.

The debate of generalist vs. specialist is an old one, and an issue which have been contested at various levels, in different wakes of public sphere including in business, profession and of course in civil services and governance. Identifying a Generalist as someone who knows 'nothing about everything' and a Specialist as someone who knows 'everything about nothing' are striking and interesting way of highlighting the key issue of the debate. I am not entering into that debate here. Suffice would be to say that there may not be a need for looking only for a binary solution. Even in the context of foxes and hedgehogs, Isaiah Berlin says that like all over-simple classifications of this type, the dichotomy becomes, if pressed, artificial, scholastic and ultimately absurd. Like all distinctions which embody any degree of truth, it offers a point of view from which to look and compare, a starting point for genuine investigation.¹⁶

Let me also say that in a sense, the debate is superfluous, and skips the most important point, as most often, instead of really analyzing the deeper organizational and institutional ideas ingrained in this issue, the emphasis has been reduced to the question of who, a generalist or a specialist, should have the final control/ ultimate decision-making authority at the highest level of an organization or institution.

The modern organizational and strategic management theories often identify specialist as those who develop core competencies which allows them to outperform generalist in their

¹⁶ Berlin, The Proper Study of Mankind – An Anthology of Essays, 437

niche. On the other hand generalist can often outcompete specialist when there is considerable uncertainty in the environment and when resources are changing so that niches emerge and disappear continually.¹⁷ So, it has been identified that specialist and generalist normally coexist in many environments because generalist create the conditions that allow specialist to operate successfully.¹⁸ Therefore, in any organization, with well-defined aims, objectives and responsibilities, and especially in a government bureaucracy, both generalist and specialist are required. The important question then is: where and how they should be placed, how and in what manner their roles, responsibilities and functions should be decided and distributed so that the objective and goals of various organizations can be achieved with utmost effectiveness and efficiency.

2.4 Specialized Generalist

In the Indian context, Ministers (who are political executives), at state level or central government level, being the highest level of executive authority, are ultimate generalist as they are public representatives (Members of Parliament or Members of Legislative Assemblies) and their qualifications, profession and other experiences often have no bearing on the ministry/portfolio they are assigned to. They are expected to make decisions on the basis of their innate broad generalist outlook and understanding, of course aided and supported by a set of domain expert bureaucrats with vast experience and with institutional memory of the organization.

Therefore, in practical terms, comes the crucial question: do we also need next one or two level below the Minister to be a generalist? This is the most important question for us and on its answer underpins the role being played by IAS vs other service branches at various levels and in various departments.

By applying the principles and practices of organizational design and theories, it can be seen that senior executives need to be broader based in their thinking, approach and strategy. In the Indian case, the level one or two steps below that of the Minister (which may be called senior management or senior executive level) is often the position of head of department (variously called Secretary, Principal Secretary, Director, District Magistrate etc, in state government departments, and Secretary, Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary, Director in central government ministries). And therefore, such positions should be

¹⁷ Jones Gareth, Mathew Mary, *Organizational Theory, Design and Change*, 7th Ed (New Delhi: Pearson India, 2018), 322

¹⁸ Carroll G. R., "Concentration and Specialization: Dynamics of Niche Width in Populations of Organizations", *American Journal of Sociology*, no. 90 (1985), 1262-1283, (quote in *Ibid*, 322)

manned by civil servants who are more generalist than specialist. These levels are fairly senior ones, where the responsibilities are more in the nature of providing broad leadership, dealing with uncertainties, formulating and supervising longer term vision, mission and related goals of the organization, conceiving, formulating and supervising public policy issues, coordinating with diverse agencies and institutions across various levels and types of organizations and governments, and often thinking and communicating across boundaries of domain knowledge and expertise. Concomitantly, these very senior managers need not have very deep and in-depth knowledge of the relevant specialized field of function/domain. Such inputs can be and are generally provided by the specialized personnel at middle and junior management levels of the organizations. The overarching idea that generalist create the conditions that allow specialist to operate successfully¹⁹ nicely fits in this analysis.

What I am saying is that the higher the level of responsibility and position of a civil servant in an organization, the more generalized she should be in her leadership style and approach. Let me also quickly add that I am not at all in favour of doing away with the specialization. Specialization of domain is very important, even crucial. But as we move higher up in an organization, the broader outlook, leadership qualities, strategic thinking and ability to handle uncertain environment etc. becomes relatively more important than pure domain expertise. These qualities are more of a generalized nature, though certainly enriched and sharpened by specialized experience and knowledge.

Therefore, ideally, I would like the senior civil servants to be what I would call 'Specialized Generalists'. At a superficial level, it may look what the 2nd ARC recommended when it talked about domain specialization, but the conception and contention here is very different. 2nd ARC talked mostly about IAS, and need for their specialization in different domain areas, and completely ignored other large number of specialized services, and issues related to them. I am emphasizing that a generalist conception superimposed on the specialized knowledge and experience is what would likely to be the best for leadership roles in various organizations, and both the generalist as well as specialist service branches in India need to be restructured and redesigned on these lines. It may also be noted that I am preferring to call the domains as 'Specialized Generalist' instead of 'Generalized Specialist', and through this I am making a subtle distinction of emphasis. So, the specialized generalist would be slightly tilted in favour of generalized outlook and

¹⁹ Ibid

conception, and therefore, the specialized nature of his managerial and leadership approach would be required to defer to the generalized approach, if the need so arise.

I would like to add that, accordingly, we need to constitute/structure different service branches itself in consonance with 'specialized generalist' domains, and the need is to restructure and redesign the present services branches in this fashion. Let me examine some other related strands of organizational design and structure issues of Indian senior bureaucracy having a bearing on this discussion.

2.5 Central Government, State Governments – Only One or Both?

Looking at the organization and different branches of group A services, as they have developed over the years and exist today, it can be noticed that most of the services other than IAS and IPS have been created to man one particular department (or even a sub-department) of the central government. Further, there are only few service branches except IAS and IPS which function beyond narrow confines of a department. So, IRS-IT is responsible for manning top level posts in the Income Tax Department (it is actually not a department, but a sub-department, called Central Board of Direct Taxes, under Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance). Similarly, IRS-CE officers are responsible for running Customs and Central Excise (now GST) function (again not a department, but a sub-department, Central Board of Indirect taxes and Customs - CBIC, under Department of Revenue). The recent case of introduction of GST and related fiscal reform is an excellent example of how inter-service rivalries, turf-war and power politics between IRS-CE and IAS can largely result in derailing and damaging the implementation of an important and historical tax reform in the nation, though it may not be totally fair to single out this rivalry as the reason for all the present troubles. In any case, I will not discuss the GST problem in more detail here as it is beyond the scope of this essay.

Similarly, branches like Indian Information Service, Indian Postal Service, Indian Post and Telegraph Account and Finance Service, Indian Trade Service, Indian Defence Estate Service, Indian Defence Account Service, three 'civil' services of the Railways – IRTS, IRPS, IRAS, fall in this category of department specific branches. Some accounting services, straddle the functional domain and department specificity. Thus, Indian Audit and Account Service officers are part of Indian Audit and Account Department (popularly known as CAG), but are responsible for the broad function of auditing of all central and state government organizations, and are responsible for some accounting function too at

state level. India Civil Accounts Service is again a functional service which is responsible for accounting function of central government organizations/ departments, and therefore spans many departments. However, it operates in a world where there are other accounting services like IDAS, IPTAFS, IRAS which are limited to a department. This is clearly not a very efficient and rational way of organizing and doing things.

Thus, what we have is a hodgepodge of organized group A services, sometimes created for some administrative functional domain, like accounting of government, whereas in most other cases, created to be part of a department only, to perform its own specialized function. And this creation of service has often been done without much thought and planning. A recent example of a decision to create another group A service in January 2017 without much thought for its use, function, logic, structure and future is in Ministry of Skill Development, titled Indian Skill Development Service.²⁰ Though it may not strictly be called a 'civil service', as its recruitment is to be carried out through Engineering Services Examination, it is an example of how these services are created, without much thought about the cadre planning, career prospects, roles and functionality in the long run. There are abundant examples where many 'services' so created in the past at central government level have lost both their relevance and functionality and are now textbook cases of inefficiencies, redundancy, frustration and demotivation, bureaucratic apathy and red tape.

From this perspective, IAS, IPS (and to some extent IFoS too) vs. almost all the other services make an interesting contrast. IAS and IPS are mostly responsible for running the state government and state level bureaucracies. IAS are generalist, they are responsible for running all the department and domains, from agriculture to healthcare, from education to urban development, and even revenue (and in many cases supervising law and order too – as Secretaries of Home Department). In the same vein, IPS, a service which appears to be more like a specialized generalist service branch, are responsible for policing, internal security and law and order functions.

On the other hand, most of the central service branches are created and confined to one department and functional area, and that too with central government. They hardly work with state governments. This is a crucial difference with very profound and deep effects.

²⁰ Press Information Bureau – Government of India, Press Note Dated 4 January 2017 (New Delhi: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2017)

2.6 Life Cycle of a Service Branch and Reorganization

Societies are dynamic entities, and so are governments and organizations. Apropos, the organs of the state and government structures also need to change, reform, transform and reinvent themselves. In case of service branches, its importance cannot be overemphasized. Nevertheless, there could be situation where even the most vigorous of reformation and reinvention may not be able to salvage the relevancy and utility of a service branch. And there is nothing wrong about it. In such cases, the service should naturally die, having completed its life cycle. There is a vast literature in management on organizational life cycle, generally identifying four stages in life of any organization, namely – birth, growth, decline and death.²¹ And civil service branches are naturally organizations and need to be seen through such analytical lens. Thus, the theoretical models and insights of institutional environment, organizational growth through creativity, direction, collaboration, coordination, generalist and specialist strategies, organizational inertia²² etc. can be gainfully applied in the case of services, though that is not our primary purpose here.

However, examining branches through this prism thrown some issues. One of them is whether it is possible to think of a service as dying, especially in Indian system of permanent civil service, where employment is mostly for life, and especially where there is a cadre-based employment, recruitment is made every year and officers get promoted, mostly without much regard to their performance but on the basis of years they have spent working with the government? How easy or difficult would it be to deal with such organized group of senior civil servants? What will happen to them? Also, these kind of organized service branches develops entrenched lobbies, forms vested interest groups, exert pressure and influence from legitimate as well as illegitimate means, and often do everything possible to perpetuate their existence. Therefore, any talk of abolishing a service branch is easier said than done, and may sound like a wishful thinking.

Nevertheless, despite the difficulties, the perpetuation of such a situation should not be allowed, and a genuine periodic exercise must be carried out to evaluate and assess the relevance, roles and responsibilities, required reform etc of a service branch. Perhaps, the idea of a periodic cadre review, as I mentioned earlier, was the same, though in practice it has largely been reduced to an exercise of increasing the size of the service. Let me add here

²¹ Jones Gareth, Mathew Mary, *Organizational Theory, Design and Change*, 7th Ed, 316

²² *Ibid*, 316-338

that it may not always be necessary to abolish a service branch – and compulsorily retire the officers. It could be possible to retrain, reutilize and absorb such officers in some other organization, service branch or functional domain – while abolishing the branch which has outlived its purpose and function.

So, are there service branches which have outlived themselves? Yes, there are! Two service branches readily come to my mind – Indian Information Service (IIS) and Indian Trade Service (ITS) – as these have hardly much to do in this age of independent media and liberalized and globalized economies. There could be few others too. Individual services will be discussed in detail in coming paragraphs.

2.7. Organizational Design and Change: Parkinson's Law and Mintzberg's Hierarchies

Recalling some organizational theory and design ideas and linking them to Indian bureaucracy would be beneficial here. Parkinson, a former British civil servant argued that the growth in the number of managers and hierarchical levels is controlled by two principles: (1) An official wants to multiply subordinates, not rivals, (2) Officials make work for one another.²³ Thus, managers value their rank, grade or status in the hierarchy. The fewer managers at their hierarchy level and the greater the number of managers below them, the larger is their empire and the higher their status.²⁴ There seems to be a clear application of this principle in IAS vs other services, where the attempt by the IAS is to keep the other branches subordinate to them. We also need to consider two related ideas about hierarchical levels here: size of top management and chain of command. According to the principal of minimum chain of command, an organization should choose the minimum number of hierarchical levels consistent with its goals and the environment in which it operates.²⁵ In terms of hierarchies, it says that an organization should be as flat as possible, not tall, and a taller structure is required when an organization needs a higher level of direct control and personal supervision over subordinates. However, things become complicated quickly in larger organizations. Further, the widespread understanding of a standard organization structure propounded by Mintzberg identifies existence of higher management/strategic apex in most organizations which set strategies,

²³ Parkinson C.A., Parkinson's Law (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 17

²⁴ Jones Gareth, Mathew Mary, Organizational Theory, Design and Change, 7th Ed, 134

²⁵ Ibid, 134

policies and goals and provides directions to the entire organization.²⁶ The five-level model of organizational design of Mintzberg is highly popular in terms of giving a very useful framework for analyzing and understanding various types of organizations.²⁷ World over, across public and private organization, this strategic core has to be very small (in terms of size) compared to the total number of people working in the organization. Though there might be variations on the basis of type of organization and nature of function, it is estimated that the strategic apex should not be, and mostly is not, more than 0.5% of the total size of the organization.

Understanding and analyzing these ideas with respect to Indian senior bureaucracy, especially in case of IAS and IPS, which are mostly not a department/organization specific cadre of top managers poses some difficulty. However, in respect of most other department/functional service branches, we can apply these principles to have a deeper insight. It can be observed that the double whammy of being department specific and meant only to serve the central government, is responsible for giving rise to the widespread problem in all central group A service branches – their having top-heavy and very tall structure, in clear contradiction of what Mintzberg and Parkinson has propounded. It is becoming common to have the strategic apex (which is equivalent to group A posts – being around 1% of total government employees overall) being much more than 1% in case of some department specific service branches. To ensure promotion and career progression, these group A services have, over a period of time, increased the senior level posts, mostly Directors (Selection Grade) and above levels. However, since these service officers are confined to one department only, and that too with central government, there is very limited option of having large number of senior management level posts in any pyramidal hierarchical department, leading thereby to a tall structure with very heavy apex – and not much meaningful work for those top-level officers. Most of the central services suffer from this problem. Even if we take only the very senior posts of Joint Secretary level (Senior Administrative Grade), large number of service branches have excessively heavy apex. Cases needing special mention here are IRS-IT and IRS-CE, wherein the service constitute as much as 6% of the size of the organization where they work. The intensity and severity of the problems differs from service to service, and those few services who have been able to depute their officers to other central government

²⁶ Mintzberg Henry, *The Structuring of Organizations*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1979), 215-297

²⁷ Mintzberg Henry, "Organizational Design – Fashion or Fit?", *Harvard Business Review* no. 59, January – February (1981), 103-116

organizations in large numbers have been able to somewhat resist this problem, and IAAS needs to be mentioned here.

It would also be instructive to point out that this top-heavy organizational structure is found in states too – especially with IFoS, and to a lesser extent with IPS too. The reasons remain the same. Whenever domain of a service is restricted to a department, this problem has to arise, sooner or later, due to creation of senior management level posts to ensure career progression. In case of IFoS, who are confined to Forest and Environment department in states, similar tall and top-heavy structure results, though the situation is ameliorated by the fact that at senior level IFoS also move to work at central government departments and ministries. Similarly, but to a much lesser extent, IPS officers have same problem, though policing is a much broader and larger functional domain, and the opportunities for policing function at the central government are also very large.

IAS officers are largely immune to such issues, though there are few senior posts in each state, like in Revenue Boards or in State Planning Boards, which are often used for sidelining officers not in favour of the political dispensation. The generalist nature of IAS officers whereby they function mostly as head of districts (DM) during initial half of their career and then as head of a department/organization/units in state headquarters during latter half of their career, as well as the opportunity to move to central government ministries and departments in large numbers at senior levels, mostly takes care of such problems.

This top-heavy structure is further confounded by the complex hierarchical and tenure-based promotional structure of organized services. Appendix – 3 gives a highly stylistic representation of this system. To some extent, a taller structure in ministries, especially union government ministries, which are primarily concerned with policy making, may be justified as policy decisions need inputs, analysis, feedback and opinion from varied levels, units and hierarchies. However, a very tall structure in executing and implementing agencies only creates more inefficiencies and coordination problems. The tall structure in central government executing agencies is a typical problem, which again is not so rampant in state government agencies. This again stem from the fact that central government executing department (like Income Tax, Post etc) have to be organized at national scale, with the executive head as well as political head being at Delhi. Despite the attempts to have decentralized structure, due to span of control and hierarchical issues pointed above, invariably, the regional/state level units of central government departments are not

independent in the true sense. This becomes patently clear if they are compared with any state level administrative department/agency, where not only administrative head (Secretary) is available at state capital, but legislative and political leadership is also available at state level. In this sense, state level organizations are prone to be, and actually are, more flexible, dynamic and efficient by design. Yet, it need not be the case always.

In terms of civil servants manning these organizations and departments, the result of all this is often a situation where officers near their retirement, after putting in 30 or more years of service, are clogging the strategic apex of the bureaucracy at union level, greatly contributing to the slowing down of decision making, increasing inefficiencies, indulging in inter-service, inter-personal and other types of rivalries, fighting for who is senior to whom and who should report to whom! It is quite common to see Special secretary level officers from one service reporting to Special secretary/Secretary level officer from same or some other service (this distinction of designation is also only technical – both of them get paid the same salary), often with lot of grievances, disgruntlement and complaints within. Such a situation at the highest level of policy and decision making is hardly desirable, to say the least. Only one example suffices here – IPS officers as DG of CRPF or CISF (in Apex Scale of pay) report to IAS Home Secretary (in the same scale of pay), who is often junior to them in seniority and batch. This is a source of lot of resentment and cynicism among IPS officers.

2.8 Group A or Group B?

We also need to examine the specialized, department-based creation of service branches from another perspective. From this perspective, there are close parallels between what Central government does by creation/institutions of civil service branches and what state governments also do in their respective states. All the states in India also constitute and recruit civil servants under different branches who are generally and collectively called state/provincial civil service officers, most numerous for administration, police and finance/revenue/treasury functions and then in smaller number for many other departmental functions. These are designated group B services, though officers from these state civil services also hold managerial positions (mostly at middle management level), and subsequently, through promotion get inducted into IAS and IPS. It should also be noted that there are few states where some of these state civil services posts are even designated group A from the start, though they remain part of state services, and not

inducted in to IAS or IPS. These state service branches are again mostly organized in the form of department specific services with specialized functional domains.

Then, isn't central government doing the same thing by creating different central services for its own departmental functions, though inducting them at group A level? And if these group A officers have to function mostly at junior and middle management level and also under IAS officers as state level group B civil servants, then why not make these central services also group B services? In fact, even now, certain group B service officers are recruited through the common civil services examination, notably administrative and police service officers for union territories (DANICS and DANIPS) and for central secretariat service (CSS). Further, some of the present group A service were originally group B service (IRS is one example), and over time, through pushing and lobbying for higher status and posts, they have been able to get group A status, in whatever lame way. The whole idea may find strength from the fact that the middle management level needs to be more specialized in nature whereas the top management level needs to be what I call specialized generalist. Why then civil servants working with central government department and as a specialized cadre should be assigned group A status when their state counterpart have not been? Shouldn't then all the specialized cadre officers be categorized as group B officers, whether they are with central government or state governments?

It seems the group A status (and attached promises of significant roles and responsibilities, as well as career progression prospects) and the common recruitment process for these central branches and IAS is largely responsible for generating all the resentments, heartburn and frustration among large number of officers vis-à-vis IAS. It will make lot of sense, if from the beginning; other officers will know their status and subordinate group B position compared to IAS or IPS. It is really unjust and correctly conveys a message of hypocrisy, sham and discrimination when equal status and opportunities are promised but are then not provided. In any organized and permanent bureaucracy, well defined, fair and logical structures, hierarchies and career progression plans are important for smooth functioning and efficient performance. The present situation makes this precisely absent in respect of different branches of senior civil service.

And let us not forget about cost and financing of maintaining group A service cadres. Obviously, senior level posts are provided with higher salaries, more perquisites and better facilities. All this does not come free. Thus, assigning a higher-level group A posts to some function when the same work can be done by a lower level group B officer is wastage

of precious government resource. Therefore, if services are constituted by the central government as group A service to carry out the middle management level functions in different organizations/department of the central government, which in case of state government departments, are being performed by group B level service cadre, then it clearly is wastage of money in terms of granting more pay and perquisite to central government employees for the same type/nature/level of work which their state counterparts are doing. As per rough estimate, assigning group B status to many such central group A services would lead to a substantial reduction in the financial burden of government which may be in the range of 25 to 50 percent of the present cost.

2.9 Casteism in Civil Services: Hegemony of IAS

Characterizing Indians as 'Homo Hierarchicus' for their penchant for hierarchy and caste – Louis Dumont made this term famous through his book of the same title.²⁸ Proving Dumont right yet again, this penchant for hierarchy and restrictive caste like structure finds an uncanny reflection in civil services branching structure. Here, IAS are brahmins of services, who, once born (selected) in to that high caste (branch), remains there throughout their life. So is the case for all other castes (branches), who are permanently tied to their castes (branches) which have developed in to a hierarchy. This hierarchy is further strengthened by grading the functions/domains assigned to different castes (branches) as high or low, broad or narrow, sought after or not so sought after, and desirable or not so desirable. As a result, successful candidates in civil services examination do not choose a service branch on the basis of their inherent talent and motivation for a particular type of domain or functional area, but choose from a largely pre-existing hierarchy of services branches in which IAS is at the top, followed by IPS, IFS and others.

This hierarchizing is accomplished through various subtle and not so subtle means. To start, all service officers are selected through the same process and are theoretically treated as equivalent, with similar pay and emoluments. Please note that I did not use the term 'same', but instead used 'similar' because it is not 'same' – there are some hidden benefits which IAS officers arrogate to themselves – one example being getting two extra salary increments at the time of each promotion. Another example is differentia treatment of other services in promotions at different level. For example, the crucial promotion at SAG level (Secretary in state government/Joint Secretary in Central government – please see

²⁸ Dumont Louis, *The Caste System and Its Implications*, Rev. Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)

Appendix 3) is tenure (time) based for IAS, whereas it is vacancy (availability) based for most other services. Thus, all IAS officers are promoted as soon as they are eligible for promotion, i.e., as soon as they complete the required time in a particular grade, irrespective of vacancy in the next higher-level posts. On the other hand, most other group A service officers have to wait for vacancies for promotion, i.e, movement of the whole cadre upward in the hierarchy and gradual retirement of people at the top so that vacancies are created, even when they have become eligible for the next promotion as per the rules. This is not all! There is further fine print distinction in how calculation of eligibility service tenure is to be done. In case of IAS officer, it is done from the 1st January of the year they joined IAS, (joining is generally in September every year for all service officers after declaration of results of civil service examination by UPSC) whereas in case of most other services, it is calculated from the 1st January following their joining (meaning completed years). Thus, whereas all IAS officers are eligible for promotion at SAG level in the beginning of 16th year of their service (i.e., after 15 years of service), other service officers are not eligible for SAG promotion till the beginning of 17th year. And in cases of some services, there is one more extra year before they are eligible, because in these cases, eligibility has been kept at 17 completed years, years start counting following the January after joining, thus giving IAS officers an edge of 2 years in eligibility itself. These all shenanigans are carried out by DoPT as the apex department for personnel management which, of course, is dominated by IAS officers at the highest decision-making levels. No doubt, it all correctly conveys a biased, unfair, unjust and unethical regime and structure, and thus create a very strong sense of discrimination, injustice, dissatisfaction, cynicism and resentment in these service cadres.

This is also because, in principal and in theory, the structure, organization, career progression and prospects are similar for all the services. However, the realities in terms of career prospects, domain and span of control and of responsibilities, type of works performed and broader career potential are vastly different. This is the result of various factors that have been highlighted in previous paragraphs. This discrimination and hierarchical structure results not only in resentment and dissatisfaction, but is also reflected in various other forms, some of which are very detrimental for the overall health of the senior bureaucracy and governance structure.

Sometimes, it is claimed by IAS officers that they are superior to others because they are 'All India Service' – and are service branches found specifically mentioned in the

Constitution of India (in Article 312). Though it is a fact, it needs to be noted that Articles 308 to 313, constituting Part I of Chapter XIV of the Constitution of India is about 'Services Under Union and States', and talks about three types of services, namely 'civil service of the Union', 'civil service of a State' and 'All India Service'.²⁹ In Article 312, there is express provisions for creation of one or more All India Service, common to Union and States, and are followed by deeming provision that the existing two services, IAS and IPS, would be considered All India Services created by Parliament. It should also be noted that Parliament subsequently created another All India Service, namely Indian Forest Service (IFoS) in 1966. Thus, any claim of superiority of IAS does not hold ground on this constitutional basis because within the category 'All India Service' itself, there is discrimination between IAS and IPS and even more between IAS and IFoS. What is more, the Constitution is not talking only about All India Services, but also about civil service of the Union and States. In any case, such claims are unjust, to say the least, because the question here is about the discriminatory and unfair practices in superior bureaucratic branches through unjustified means and practices.

To impress the seriousness and centrality of the justice, equality and fairness issue further, it would be pertinent to note the contrasting situation at senior level in central government secretariat/ministries where this differential treatment is starkly visible. As per norms and rules of DoPT, all services are (largely) treated equally while selecting them for manning middle management level (Deputy Secretary, Director and equivalent posts) and senior management level (Joint Secretary, Additional Secretary, Secretary and equivalents) positions in central government departments, ministries and organizations. This process is called Central Staffing Scheme (CSS), in which all organized group A services (including technical services) participate. However, it is a well-known fact that through various subtle and not so subtle machinations, IAS officers are able to garner most of the senior management level posts.

It has been a matter of record that as many as 75-85% of the Joint Secretary (SAG) and Additional Secretary (HAG) posts in the central government ministry are occupied by IAS officers, and all the other services are thus limited to meagre 15-20% of such posts. This is in contrast to the respective strength (size) of these services where the IAS cadre forms only around 12% of the total size of group A civil service officers. The situation is even worse in the case of Secretary positions, where IAS officers arrogate more than 90% of these posts for

²⁹ Ministry of Law and Justice – Government of India, The Constitution of India – As on 1st July 2018 (New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, 2018), available online at <http://www.legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/COI-updated-as-31072018.pdf>

themselves.³⁰ Another evidence need to be produced here. The Civil Services Survey has itself noted that IAS has a clear domination of the central staffing scheme posts. It occupies 69 of total 89 Secretary level posts (being 78%), and 44 out of 68 Secretary equivalent posts (being 65%). At the AS and JS level as well, IAS has clear supremacy with 94% and 75% of total posts.³¹

This is despite the fact that all other services had and have been trying through various means to highlight this anomaly to political bosses, and also been trying to remedy the situation. Their largely failed attempts are ample testimony that it is the IAS officers, as a lobby, group and organization, who command real influence in government decision making. A classic example of who will judge the judges! Or how difficult it becomes to institute reform measures when it is going to adversely affect the self-interests of those very groups who are responsible to carry out the reforms!

As regards middle management level posts, we see a much higher proportion of officers from central group A branches manning these posts. However, it is not due to the fact that for appointment at middle management levels, the system is less discriminatory or more equitable. It is simply explained by the fact that at this level, most of the IAS officers themselves are not interested in joining the central government since they are serving mostly as District Magistrate in their respective states. Further, few of the IAS officers who are with central government at these levels are mostly from those 'not so good' state cadres like North East, Jammu and Kashmir (and even Kerala), or those few who have been allocated state cadre distant from their home state (for example, someone from Bihar allotted to Tamil Nadu cadre) being not of their choice; and therefore, are more than willing to come to Delhi.

Let me highlight one more thing, which points towards generalist vs specialist issues, and may be taken as further evidence in support of Specialized Generalist. All the specialized services do take part in CSS process and are then allocated to different ministries and departments, and in many cases, to such domains which are not their specialization. In a way, it is only the recognition that at higher (and middle) management level, which is the leadership, policy and strategy level, generalist approach becomes more important. This whole design of Central Staffing Scheme is what can be termed as generalizing some of the specialists and specializing some of the generalists.

³⁰ Times of India, Report by Pradeep Thakur on May 3, 2015 (New Delhi: Times of India, 2015), available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/IPS-IRS-want-end-to-IAS-raj-in-secretary-posts-see-pay-hike/articleshow/47135624.cms>

³¹ DARPG -Government of India, Civil Services Survey – A Report (New Delhi: Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India, 2010), 78

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, THE PHILOSOPHY AND THE REFORMING IDEA

The previous chapters have examined the issue of structure, organization, branching and grouping of senior organized civil service in India on various axes including on the guiding framework of generalist vs specialist organizing principles. It also examined the resulting inter-service rivalries, petty politics, unfair practices and cynicism which has a very detrimental effect on the whole institution architecture and performance of civil services. These all facets are not only interrelated and interdependent but also entangled and interacting, thereby giving rise to the present paradigm for understanding and resulting discourse for organizational design and redesign of civil service branches.

But how to do that?

There could be many, largely though not fully, independent reform and re-organizational approaches which can be taken in an attempt to tackle this complex situation. While discussing the issues along various axes, the previous discussion has latent framework for the following approaches:

- First option, let there be no branches. All senior civil servants should be considered part of one homogenous group, and be assigned to different responsibilities and functional domain from time to time, as well as can move seamlessly between different levels of government, i.e., federal, state and local. It is quite similar to what would be the case if we have only IAS, and no other service. The true-blue generalist at the top!
- Second option, let the informal, but actually visible, distinction among IAS (and perhaps IPS too) vs other service branches become formal, wherein IAS (and IPS) have a separate and distinct identity and clear demarcation assigning them superiority as 'service'. However, if it is done without required changes in the present design and structure, it will only be an acceptance and formalization of an unfair, unjust, and exploitative existing structure. Therefore, if it is to be done, it should perhaps be done through institution of a separate examination/selection process for IAS (and IPS). Further, it would also be desirable to designate the present central services as group B service, responsible mainly for middle management functions, confined to their functional department, and supervised at the top by IAS officers.

- Third option, the obverse of the second, is to strictly ensure the promised equality of service branches in terms of status and identity, career prospects, equal opportunity to perform and excel, and also ensuring equal and fair chance in all appointment/assignment and responsibilities. Perhaps, it will also require making IAS a specialized service. A hotchpotch, a hypocritical and unfair situation where the reality is very different from what is being stated and promised has already created serious organizational issues in the whole bureaucracy and in the efficient management of cadre based higher civil services.

However, any of the above is easier said than done!

3.1 The Idea of Broader-Domain Based 'Specialized Generalist' Branches

Despite the difficulties apparent in the implementation of aforementioned three alternatives, in themselves, these alternatives do not carry much weight. They are basically in the nature of bringing change within the existing structure to ensure equality, justice and fair play among the different branches. It would not, at the deeper level, address the core issue related with the idea of synthesizing the generalist and specialist strength in the organized senior bureaucracy in India. And achieving that objective along with reforming the present unjust and unfair system will require a totally new approach towards designing 'service' architecture, an approach which takes up the challenge from the first principles itself.

This architecture will have separate 'service' branches for what may be called 'broad domains'. It is largely in consonance with what have been outlined in previous paragraphs as service constitution to have 'specialized generalist' officers. A civil service cadre, organized into feasible and worthwhile branches in accordance with 'large domain areas' could have significant advantages over the three alternative structures proposed above, and certainly would be a huge improvement over the existing organization. The following could be its salient features and related benefits:

- Service branches would be organized as per broad domain/functional areas. They should not be organized or created for any specific department or for similar other narrow purposes. The underlying principle is to have a cadre of 'specialized generalist' officers who are capable, competent and exposed enough to shoulder responsibilities of Mintzberg strategic apex, providing leadership and strategic direction in public management.

- This will help in not only creating feasible service branches, with robust, well planned career prospects, but will also take care of problems of very small, overspecialized services branches. Obviously, there will not be many branches as is the case now (between 25 to 30), but may be, anywhere between five to ten branches. The idea to have branches which would be reasonably small in number is also coming from giving slightly more weight to the 'generalist' conception compared to 'specialist' component in the term 'specialized generalist'.
- It will also have the appropriate mix of specialization and generalized exposure, with good scope for reorganization and cross agency experience, leading to greater flexibility. This exposure to specialized as well as generalized domain within a broad function, where transferable skill sets learnt can then be used over a larger, diverse domain will lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness.
- Service cadre, organized on the basis of large domain areas should also be designed in a way to make the movement of officers across the level of government e.g., between central and state government, or even local government institutions, natural and effortless. It should be something like the case is now for IAS and IPS.
- Of course, all these services should be treated equally, as group A service, in practice. Once we have robust service branches based on larger domains, doing more meaningful and diverse work, with ample opportunity for growth, exposure and experience in broader areas, the satisfaction and motivation will naturally enhance, and the present situation of rivalries, frustration and demotivation will certainly be significantly reduced.
- Such a scheme will be compatible with reforms in other areas of civil services, like lateral entry, open and fair opportunity for important assignment, internal competition and recognition of excellence and efforts, revamped performance management system etc.

3.2 Where and How to Find 'Broad Domain Areas'

How to identify and define these broad domain areas and then create service branches for them? One approach could be to identify the areas where modern government operates and then group them in to broader categories, thereby coming out with feasible and operational domains for constituting service branches. In this exercise, evaluation of the existing branches, their role, functions and relevance would also be useful, and

possibilities of merger, splitting and merger, abolition etc. should be taken recourse to, while also matching and aligning them with the functional identification of government operations. Further, the distribution of power/functions between central and state government through the Constitution of India into union, state and concurrent list could also be useful in guiding us in this exercise.

Three broad types of function have generally been identified, which a modern state needs to perform, and is also expected to be performing in the coming decades. In the specific context of India these can be categorized as:

- i. Sovereign functions: Law and Order, Internal Security, Foreign Relations, Fiscal and Revenue Management, Defence, Ensuring justice and fairness.
- ii. Provision of Public Goods: Development administration, Education, Public Healthcare and sanitation, Human development, Promoting general welfare, Carrying out distributive transfers, Land management, Protecting property rights and enforcement of contracts for operation of markets.
- iii. Economic and Social Management: Infrastructure development and management, Economic and financial regulation and control, Habitat-urban and rural and Environment, Natural resource management, Power and energy, Agricultural, Trade, Commercial and Industrial management, Communication and Transport.

Another way of classifying government responsibility could be into four categories wherein the last two categories as above are divided into three, namely, Welfare function, Regulatory function and Economic function. However, it does not make much of a difference for our purpose here. Further, for the purpose of identifying broad domain areas, affinity and similarity of various 'functional domains' may have a more practical application than relying purely on the classification system based on type of function.

In a loose sense, the importance of these function decreases as we move down from Sovereign function to Provision of Public Goods to Economic and Social Management. The sovereign function should (and hopefully, would) always be performed by state. Most of the public goods, due to the externalities inherent in them, and also due to their non-rival and non-excludable character, have to be provided by public authorities (government organizations), financed through taxation. In case of provision of economic and social goods, service delivery, regulation and control; market mechanism may be applied, but it also depends upon the nature and level of development of market as well as public

institutions. Some form of government management and intervention will, nevertheless, be required in our country in the foreseeable future.

3.3 Questions of Fairness, Equality and Opportunity: From Rawls to Sen

In addition to operational logic and conception detailed above, I have drawn philosophical motivations and inspiration for identifying, grouping and reorganizing the civil service functions in to broad domains from distinctly ethical goals of justice and fairness, and therefore, it is imperative to elaborate them at some length here. The fundamental bedrock of any just system and institution is fairness and equality, as has amply been emphasized by various political and social philosophers, and the same should apply in any approach of distribution of organizational functions and redesign of institutional structure for civil service branches in our country. Accordingly, my attempt has also been to approach the whole exercise of identifying broad domains and reconstituting service branches from what John Rawls calls an *original position* and with a *veil of ignorance*³² – principles which are intuitive test of fairness. Rawls developed a framework of principles for assessing the justice of political arrangements and a set of institutional and distributive arrangements which he claimed to be superior to the going alternatives. Through the experiment of veil of ignorance, he asked to imagine what principles of governance people would choose if kept in ignorance of particular facts about themselves such as their race, gender, intelligence, disabilities or lack of them, and all other facts about their aspirations and circumstances.³³ It is like playing a game before you know whether they will work to your advantage.

Thus, following the Rawls principles and applying it to the question of designing a civil services branching structure, the underlying approach has been as if someone is designing it from an original position with a veil of ignorance, i.e., from a position where she does not know what would be her position and status in the branching structure being designed and how and where she would be placed in that structure, ie, which branch she will be getting into. She may end up being given any of these branches. With this process, by removing sources of bias and requiring unanimity, Rawls analysis hoped to find a solution that would be acceptable to everyone from a position of equality, and that is the attempt in our case too. This approach is called 'maximin' strategy where one's objective is to

³² Rawls John, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), ch 3

³³ Shapiro Ian, *The Moral Foundations of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 116, 133

maximize what one would get if she wound up in the minimum or worst position³⁴ This principal about distribution (of income/wealth/power etc) is also called the 'difference principle' though it, at the core, is a re-christened version of the old welfare economics idea of 'maximin' – i.e., maximize the minimum share.³⁵ Without further elaborating the Rawlsian theories, let me point out that the redesign strategy and approach here has inherently followed these principles and has come up with the new design, which has been based on the foundations of Rawls theory and principles for designing a just and equitable structure.³⁶

Another motivation along with the principle of Rawls, has been that of equality. I cannot emphasize enough the adverse impact of inequality of capabilities and powers, even in perception, on individual well-being and performance. Amartya Sen has rightly pointed out that *an inequality that can be understood in terms of differences in capabilities and powers that different people end up having ... is best understood in terms of its efficiency advantages.*³⁷ And therefore, an equitable service branching structure with commensurate capabilities, functional domains, power and responsibilities has the potential to make the services much more effective and efficient. Within the given scope of designing a branching structure for civil services, the principles of equality of opportunity which can enable civil servants to make the best of such powers and responsibilities as they possess assumes deep significance. The other conception of equality - the equality of outcomes - though important is many social and human development context, does not have much to recommend here. As has rightly been pointed out by Atkinson, equality of opportunity is an ex ante concept – everyone should have equal starting point - whereas equality of outcomes is an ex post ideal.³⁸ In our present quest of designing a fair and equitable branching structure, the fundamental criteria should be to have branches which are as equal as possible to start with (ex-ante) in terms of domains, span of control, work profile and responsibilities etc, and the idea of equality of outcome does not have much role to play here. By ensuring equality of opportunity, it will be ensured that 'circumstances' does not play a role in performance and different service branches will have a level playing field to showcase their best. And accordingly, this principle has been the other underlying inspiration behind the new structure proposed in the coming paragraphs. Thus, these two

³⁴ Kymlicka Will, Contemporary Political Philosophy (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 61, 62, 65

³⁵ Shapiro, The Moral Foundations of Politics, 133

³⁶ Rawls John, Justice as Fairness – A Restatement (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2001), 80-84, 85-88, 140-45

³⁷ Sen Amartya, Inequality Reexamined (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 146

³⁸ Atkinson Anthony, Inequality – What Can be Done? (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 9-11

ethical principles have been the bedrock upon which the new design approach has been built and the empirical analysis of different existing service branches have been carried out in the coming paragraphs.

Let us recall again what Berlin said about foxes and hedgehogs, quoted in the beginning of this paper. Further, quoting Berlin, Gordon Wood, the famous American historian, said “On one side of the chasm are the foxes, who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some de facto way, for psychological or physiological cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle. On the other side are the hedgehogs, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel – a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance.”³⁹

With these insightful observations of Wood on distinction between generalist and specialist types, it is useful to note that we have proposed reorganization (and creation) of service branches in accordance with 'broad domain areas'. Thus, service branches should be organized or created not for any specific department/ministry/ organization, but for broad functional domains, to have a professional cadre of 'specialized generalist' officers who will be commanding the leadership positions in governmental organizations. Thus, the whole idea is to have a structure which have senior leaders with characteristics of both Foxes and Hedgehogs – a new 'hybrid' species of foxes with spine⁴⁰ of hedgehogs, or for that matter, hedgehogs with snout of foxes – if I may be allowed to extend the simile of Archilochus! Further, the crucial question is not whether any organization (including government bureaucracy) needs specialists or generalists, i.e., hedgehogs or foxes, but which type of animal is suitable at what level and under what situations. Hedgehogs are appropriate at lower levels and as one moves up in a hierarchy, more and more generalized, coordinating and strategic skills are required, necessitating more and more qualities of a fox in Archilochus' terminology.

3.4 The Organizational Philosophy for Reconstitution

A three-pronged approach consisting of analysis and examination of the existing branching structure, identification of natural affinities among various 'functional domains' and sieving these through three types of functions would be helpful in

³⁹ Wood Gordon, *The Idea of America – Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 1-2

⁴⁰ 'Spine' of hedgehogs is spiky hollow hairs on its body made stiff with Keratin

identification and crystallization of a more rational, meaningful and functionally effective organization of civil service branches into broad domain areas. This all needs to be approached from the first principles and with the fundamental design framework of equality, fairness and veil of ignorance, as detailed above. However, despite this exercise, it may not be easy to arrive at a very neat and precise classification – and perhaps that is not even required. The whole idea of having 'broad domain' bases branches is to have a broad and clear, yet flexible, fluid and permeable grouping which will guide in constituting service branches concomitant to those domains. Identification of domains as watertight and mutually exclusive jurisdictions are neither required nor feasible, and it may further be emphasized, not even advisable.

Here, it needs to be reemphasized that government bureaucracies, especially the senior levels, have a very important role to play in the development of a country like India, and therefore, the quality, efficiency and capabilities of civil servants are too important to be ignored. In developed countries of the west, a popular conception has been built over years that government bureaucracies are slow, inefficient and are often a hurdle, and that they should play the minimum possible role. This conception is, to a large extent a myth even for the western nations, which has very effectively been tackled by citing evidences of government active role in entrepreneurial activities, adoption of innovation, technologies and green revolution, promotion of research and new developments, and openness towards risk taking by government institutions, organizations and bureaucracies.⁴¹ This analysis also emphasizes that unless we challenge the numerous 'myths' of economic development and abandon conventional views of the State's role in it, we cannot hope to address the structural challenges of the twenty first century or produce the technological and organizational change we need for long term sustainable and equitable growth.⁴² And therefore, the institutional importance of this rethinking exercise for India's bureaucracy becomes all the more significant.

The recommendation of reconstitution of the present civil service branches on the basis of broad domain areas has been made on various grounds, not least of them being operational and functional improvements as well as ending of the present hodgepodge of generalist and specialist branches, where one generalist branch has an unjustified hegemonic position leading to all kind of organizational rivalries, exploitation and demotivation of higher bureaucracy. The realization that the present hodgepodge of

⁴¹ Mazzucato Mariana, *The Entrepreneurial State – Debunking Public vs. Private Sector Myths* (New Delhi: Penguin Random House India, 2015), 1-16

⁴² *Ibid*, 19-20

service branches is detrimental to the efficient management, policy formulation, implementation, innovation and governance in the modern world is dawning fast even in government think tanks. The recent report of Niti Aayog titled Strategy for New India @75 talks about reducing the huge number of more than sixty civil service branches through rationalization and harmonization, cultivate and nurture specialization based on the education and early skill-exposure while also ensuring cross-sector mobility for civil servants.⁴³ Though the report has been quite brief on these issues, without going any further in elaborating how these can be achieved (perhaps it was not within the domain of the study, which is more like a broad-brush strategic vision statement), it needs to be pointed out that the reconstitution framework being considered here incorporates all these objectives in its approach.

In fact, the logic, ideas and dialectics of the earlier paragraphs, within the philosophical and operational framework of the present discussion, defines the approach and narrative of the whole new redesigned architecture. Thus, in the process of rethinking a new alternative structure which is also just, fair and equitable, an attempt has been made to apply John Rawls' principles of original position and veil of ignorance. However, the whole attempt has been to place the empirical analysis within a theoretical and philosophical framework and thereby derive some guiding ideas. In other words, this whole exercise can also be termed as an exploration of 'ideas' - implementable ideas - for alternative modes of organizing and structuring the institution of bureaucracy. Indeed, this exploration is completely in line with what John M. Keynes said about primacy of 'ideas': "the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly supposed. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else".⁴⁴ The importance of ideas in the historical evolution of modern world has also been identified by Peter Gay who, while analyzing the eighteenth-century enlightenment in Europe talks about not only philosophers – those first-tier producers of ideas, but also second and third ranks of minor philosopher-associates, who were consumers and distributors of ideas, rather than producers.⁴⁵ And in Peter Gay's sense, another aim of this paper is to reach to the consumers and distributors of idea of civil services reform!

The next stage is to move from the guiding ideas towards a holistically and organically derived practical and implementable new design and structure. To this, we now turn.

⁴³ Niti Aayog – Government of India, Strategy for New India @75 (New Delhi: Niti Aayog, Government of India, 2018), 184

⁴⁴ Skidelsky Robert, Keynes – The Return of the Master (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2010), 28

⁴⁵ Gay Peter, The Enlightenment – The Rise of the Modern Paganism (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1966), 19

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Moving forward, we will now analyze different services branches - one by one and see what their domain, functions, justification is and how they can be redesigned, restructured and reformed to conform the ideal framework. It should also be pointed out that not 'every' group A service has been considered here. 2nd ARC Report list as many as 58 organized group A service.⁴⁶ Here, I have been able to touch upon around twenty-five of them, which form the bulk and most significant of them. In any case, the principles and framework of analysis can be and has been extended to the broader question of institutional reorganization, and the later part of the essay builds upon these, to come up with a comprehensive, integrated and alternative organizational and institutional architecture, which will be much more efficient, effective, fair and non-discriminatory, and would be able to develop, channel and utilize the immense talent and potential of Indian senior civil servants.

4.1 The Near Ideal Fox with Spine of Hedgehog: Indian Police Service (IPS)

IPS appears to be the one service which, as on date, does closely resemble to what I have conceived as a specialized generalist service for an important domain area – law and order, and policing – and thus is not confined to narrow departmentalism. The IPS is, therefore, quite near to what can be identified as a specialized generalist service.

IPS officers, as a service branch, are at the forefront in maintaining law and order across the nation, for ensuring internal security, investigation of civil and criminal matters, law enforcement and all allied security matters. They function at the state level as well as at central government level. In that sense, IPS is a service which caters to the broad domain of 'Policing', a sovereign function, and almost fulfils my idea of an ideal service branch.

However, there are few important issues in case of IPS too, which needs consideration. First and the foremost is their subservient position to IAS District Magistrates (DM) when

⁴⁶ DARPG – Government of India, 10th Report of 2nd Administrative Reform Commission: Refurbishing of Personnel Administration - Scaling New Heights, 56-59

they serve as Superintendent of Police (SP) in districts across country. IPS officers have long been pressing for change in the present structure in districts (and especially in urban districts), and asking it to be changed to Commissionerate structure, with functionally independent police districts, that gives them not only magistrate power (and responsibilities too) but also a modern and responsive organizational structure. Such a system is already in place, most notably in Delhi, and also in many urban centres and cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai, and in as many as around fifty other urban districts. This is a desired reform, often termed as long pending Police Reform and its largely chequered history with little success is, rightly, blamed on the IAS officers who do not want to let go their preeminent position in districts as DM. One of the reasons cited for keeping SPs under overall control of DMs is that police need to be under a civilian authority. However, there is not much merit in this argument, as it is trying to conflate police with military, and also forgetting that there is always a civilian and political control on police or other state officials through elected ministers and public representatives. Further, the experience of policing in Commissionerate structure in the cities where it is operational for many years, only support the argument that such a structure is successful and desirable.

Another area of concern in terms of service structure is the dominance of IPS officers in para-military organizations, like CRPF, ITBP, CISF etc. and also in central level investigating agencies, like CBI, NIA, RAW etc., at the cost of in-house cadre of police officers of these organizations, who have been complaining for long about their step-motherly and unfair treatment in promotion, career progression and in terms of available opportunities. This is a genuine grievance, and mirrors that of the position of IAS vs. other central group A service. The remedy perhaps lies in the same basic approach which I have outlined – if these organizations have officers who have been recruited as theoretically equivalent to IPS – they need to be given due recognition and roles. Otherwise, if IPS has to command a superior position (which I am inclined to propose), then in-house officers in these organizations have to have a different career structure, and apropos, should be recruited at appropriate level, being group B.

In terms of size, IPS cadre strength of around five thousand officers' forms less than 0.25% of total of states police force, being around 22.8 lakhs personnel,⁴⁷ thus being well within the ratio mentioned in relation to heavy apex in organizations. This figure does not include

⁴⁷ Chaturvedi Anviti, *Police Reforms in India* (New Delhi: PRS Legislative Research, 2017), 4

the personnel in para-military forces, where too, IPS officers are in commanding positions. In sum, IPS seems to be very close to the idea of a 'broad domain based' civil service branch, and it needs hardly any change in its structure within the reformed framework proposed here.

4.2 Small Seems Beautiful: Indian Foreign Service (IFS)

This is a specialized service, with not a very big cadre (around seven hundred officers). However, the importance of foreign relation, diplomacy and related domain has kept this service in good stead and I am of the opinion that in terms of restructuring, not much is required to be done for IFS. The service branch is doing fine and has produced some notable experts and stalwarts of foreign relations and international diplomacy. Though in a recent article, Shashi Tharoor has expressed some concern over the lessening of attraction of IFS compared to service branches like IRS, I do not think there are sufficient reasons to express such concerns.

The IFS is still one of the most coveted branches, and its unique and specialized nature of job with exposure to international relations and diplomacy has much to recommend for it. The cadre is also well managed with timely promotions, variety of responsibilities within the diplomatic domain, and a well-recognized identity in society. However, there have been opinions from some quarters that the size of Indian diplomats needs to be increased in the modern globalized world of interconnection, much higher international activities and fast changing and evolving role of a diplomat. A related question could be the issue of whether and how talent of non-cadre based diplomats and experts can be utilized more and more along with IFS cadre. Within the present IFS structure, another thing in terms of reforms which comes to my mind is to think of something – some assignments – which can increase the exposure of IFS officers in India itself, by giving them responsibility of some domain which is closely related to foreign relations and diplomacy (obviously in addition to Ministry of External Affairs). May be some assignments in state governments for coordinating and managing foreign investments and relation with multilateral organizations!

4.3 Do We Really Have A True Indian Revenue Service (IRS)?

In fact, there is not one, but two Indian Revenue Service. And this perhaps signifies the crux of the problem of IRS. Even these two separate service branches, called IRS-IT and

IRS-CE (earlier it was called ICCES – Indian Custom and Central Excise Service), which are responsible for direct taxes and indirect taxes of central government respectively, together do not cover the full arena of 'revenue' function. As we all know, a huge amount of revenue (tax) is collected by state governments, and the IRS has not role to play in state revenue structure. Thus, IRS is a revenue service only in name. The situation has become more complex and complicated with the advent of GST – merging central indirect taxes and state level indirect/sales taxes - and the resulting turf was between IAS and IRS-CE. The end result is the present dual structure of CGST and SGST, with two departments in each state – one central, other state – a very inefficient situation indeed. I would not go into this issue in detail here – it has been discussed in one of my essays published earlier.⁴⁸

What is needed here is to point out that these two branches combined together forms the largest central government service, having more than nine thousand group A officers, which is as much as 50% larger than the whole IAS cadre size. There has recently been some valid question on the utility and functional justification of such huge cadre of senior officers in the government of India just for collecting taxes. It assumed significance in light of the fact that only around a hundred IAS officers are deployed to collect all indirect taxes across all the states (through erstwhile Commercial Taxes or VAT departments, now state GST department) in the country. It may be noted that three major components of revenue in India: Income tax (direct tax by central government), excise and customs (indirect taxes by central government) and state VAT (indirect tax by state government, now state GST) contribute roughly equal share – one third each – in total tax revenue collections of the country. The huge overstaffing in both IRS is also highlighted by the fact that these services form as much as around 6% of total size of the two departments which they manage (total strength of around 1.60 lakhs employees in Income Tax and Central Excise & Customs (now CGST) department). This institutional design is not only a huge drain on government resources, but is like a continuing overstaffing and wastage of resources, and needs urgent reforms and restructuring.

The present dual GST is rightly putting a question mark on the cadre structure and justification of large number of IRS-CE officers. And the situation of IRS-IT is also not different, with strength of five thousand officers; it is a huge, bloated and inefficient service branch, leading to all kind of internal problems of career progression, organizational

⁴⁸ Kishore Praveen, "Administering Goods and Services Tax in India – Reforming the Institutional Architecture and Redesigning Revenue Agencies", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVII No. 17 (2012), 84-91

control, functional remapping and related issues. Like the IFoS in states, but to a more severe extent, over the year through repeated expansion of the cadre, both the services have made themselves top heavy where most of the senior officers are without much meaningful work. To compound, IRS-IT is a muddled mixture of civil and judicial functions, where a large number of officers have been deployed to work as judges as well as investigators both, thereby undermining the whole judicial process itself. What is urgently required is to have a separation of these two functions, and deploy civil servants to administrative and executive domains only. The service branches have not been able to reform and restructure themselves in an appropriate way, and the strains are now for everyone to see.

What is to be done? The most immediate step is a drastic downsizing of IRS. Next, IRS is required to transform itself to become more like IPS. The specialized generalist domain – 'Revenue' has the potential and justification to demand a separate service branch for this function. Therefore, to start with, instead of two, there should be a single IRS – by merging the two branches. Further, in terms of broad domain area, the service cannot be confined to any one department, but should be responsible for leadership and managerial roles in all revenue departments, at all levels of governments. So, all revenue and tax departments of central, state and local governments should have IRS officers at senior management level, and also those organizations which have revenue and fiscal implication. In any case, the advent of GST has made it amply clear that there is no need of having two separate administrative machinery, and certainly, no need of having different branches of civil services to man them. And along with this, the hiving off of judicial function need to be carried out, in accordance with separation of power and judicial principles.

The above operation will require some tough decisions, massive downsizing of IRS will be required to be clubbed with various structural changes, but without that the desired result cannot be achieved. Only with these reforms and functional reorganization, IRS could be transformed to a broad domain-based service branch.

4.4 Services Galore: Accounting and Finance Services

The plethora of accounting services has never stopped to amaze and puzzle me. And I always wonder why we need so many different branches – almost one each for each of the important ministry of the central government. The multiplicity of these services are the most glaring example of the carelessness and thoughtlessness by which new, small, stand-alone service branches have been created. Clearly these have been created over time,

without much thought and certainly without much coordination at higher levels. And of course, the basic consideration of thinking over a cadre structure, career progression etc; have not been given their due. The result is for all of us to see. In most of the cases, there are issues of functional justification, existential question and the resulting attempts to somehow justify and expand the service cadre, leading to inefficiencies and bureaucratization.

The most important of accounting services is **Indian Audit and Account Service (IAAS)**, being senior managers of Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). IAAS in many senses is a domain-based service, not confined to a department, and therefore are different from other accounting/finance services. They are relatively small in size with around eight hundred officers. The CAG is a constitutional authority, responsible for independent audit and examination of government accounting and expenditure. Further, Audit and Account Department also operates at both central and state government level. The constitutional provision related to CAG gives the organization a special place in Indian public policy, though the service (IAAS) has not been assigned such a place. The service cadre of IAAS is well managed and this service is known for timely promotion and some good career opportunities to its officers. The major function of the IAAS officers is to audit the government expenditure in different departments/organizations, and they command a certain reputation for their work. Further, IAAS officers are also responsible for accounting and finance function of states (in some states, specified and limited) and in this role, they are doing the same what other accounting services are doing for the central government departments. Then, there is another small service branch – **Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS)** – the officers of which work in various identified ministries in areas of accounting, costing, financial control etc.

There are then other accounting and finance services, totalling to more than three thousand officers, created specifically for managing accounting and finance function of different departments. In this sense, they are not only super specialized service, but also are restricted and limited in their approach and worldview due to their smaller size and limited exposure. Thus, we have **Indian Post and Telegraph Accounts and Finance Service (IPTAFS)** – for department of Post and Telegraphs, **Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS)** – for Ministry of Defence, **Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS)** – for Railways, **Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS)** – for all other civilian department of central government.

By nature, accounting is not a domain function, like revenue or policing or healthcare. It is an administrative function, and an important one, which is required for every department. Naturally, then it should be one of the service branch organized on the basis of this administrative requirement – something like an Indian Accounts and Finance Service – the officers of which would then work in different departments of government, changing their department from time to time, thus benefiting from cross learning and wider exposure and experience which, as I have already pointed out, is much more needed at senior level. In that sense, what we need is a specialized generalist service for Accounting and Finance function.

The easiest way to achieve this is by merging all the existing accounting services. Let me also say that merging IAAS with all these services (or for the sake of semantics – merging all these accounting services into IAAS) is a good option. I must make a distinction clear here, which we may sometimes lose track of. What I am talking here is merging of service branches, not of departments. The domain mapped service branches, which will not be confined to a department, will naturally need to exist outside and beyond these departments. In this particular case, the officers of this merged IAAS will carry out functions of audit as well as accounting and finance in all government departments, central as well as states. Even now, IAAS officers are not confined to audit function, but are involved in accounting of state governments. In fact, 2nd ARC has also noted the fact that perhaps such a step is desirable.⁴⁹ Therefore, a unified service for the administrative domain of audit and accounting is the need of the hour, which will result in to a more justified, rational and 'broad domain' based service branch.

4.5 Promise of A New Synthesis: Single Service for Revenue, Finance and Audit

What actually is revenue domain? What is finance and accounting function? What is an audit function? How are they different? And to what extent they are similar? If we can classify finance and accounting as an administrative function, and not strictly as a functional domain, what about the revenue function – is it a functional domain? Perhaps yes, but its functional closeness and affinity with finance and accounting function is striking. If we start looking at this issue with a open mind, without being bogged down by

⁴⁹ DARPG – Government of India, 10th Report of 2nd Administrative Reform Commission: Refurbishing of Personnel Administration - Scaling New Heights, 63

pre-existing structure and separate services for these functions, we would be struck by the strong similarity in the fundamental nature of these domains.

Revenue function is basically a public finance function – concerned mainly with various types of fiscal policies, revenue and taxes, treasury operations and then about revenue administration – being largely about determining the correct liability of taxes payable by various authorities – private and public, and collection of taxes. This involves skills and expertise in public finance, accounting, financial management, inquiry-investigation and legal acumen, and of course man management skills. On the other hand, finance and accounting – for the service branches – is about financial management, accounting, expenditure management and control function of government organizations. Further, the audit function of IAAS is another kind of financial control which is done independently, and is a kind of post-mortem, after the completion of activities, projects and programs. In fact, often this audit function extends beyond the mere financial examination, to the activity of review of policies, program and projects too. Similarly, an important part of public finance function of IRS is, again audit function – a post-mortem of activities, projects and programs of organizations, both public and private, although with a view to ensure their compliance to revenue laws. Thus, the similarities in revenue, finance, accounting and audit functions becomes palpable and visible if we make a deeper analysis.

Here, the nuanced distinction of 'finance' being an operative function like 'administration' and not a 'functional domain' in the natural sense of the term, like 'revenue' and further like 'agriculture', 'public health' or 'education' is not actually relevant. As I will discuss in the next part, while examining the functional and other aspects of IAS, in terms of 'administration' being an operative function, i.e., a general management function; the identification of broad domain area for creating service branches need not strictly adhere to these general management function. Because, if I adopt that approach, perhaps I will have to propose only one service – IAS; the most generalized– which will do all senior management function; and then I have to next recommend that, within this IAS, there should be further domain-based specialization. Instead of all this, what I am proposing is creation of service branches on the basis of broad domains itself, which will then be responsible for general administration, strategic management, policies and program at senior and leadership levels in those broad domain areas across ministries and department, levels of government and different organizations. Therefore, in this present instance, revenue-finance-audit-accounting, all are essentially a broad domain for the

purpose of creation of one single service, and that is what is being proposed here. Another long overdue reform in government accounting process, i.e., shifting to double-entry system (accrual accounting) from the present single-entry system (cash-based accounting), can also be undertaken and accomplished in this process, though we are not discussing this topic here.⁵⁰

Thus, if I may be allowed to generalize– and for our current question of identifying 'broad domains', it is imperative too to generalize– the core of revenue and finance function is the same. It is public finance and public financial management and control. And therefore, it makes perfect sense to have one service for this 'broad domain area' of public financial management. May I propose a name for that – **Indian Revenue and Finance Service (IRFS)**.

Therefore, what is required to be done is to merge two IRS, IAAS, and all other finance/accounts services together, into one IRFS. This service will then be responsible for leadership positions in all revenue and finance function, including economic and financial regulation, audits, financial markets and financial control and would play an important and essential role in central, states and local governments.

4.6 How to Restructure Indian Administrative Service (IAS)?

I have already said enough in earlier paragraphs about hegemonic position of IAS (with cadre size of around six thousand officers) and how this has created an anomalous situation and widespread resentment among other service branches. Let us now examine how IAS can be restructured.

In terms of principles, if every service has to be a specialist service, then there should not be IAS. And if there is a completely generalist service like the present IAS, where an officer works in public healthcare one day, and goes to energy department next day, and then to tax department next, then there is no need of specialist services for tax, health or other domains which are equivalent to IAS. This is one of the reasons which have brought me to the framework under which I am proposing a 'broad domain based' service branches.

Therefore, IAS too, needs to be remodelled and restructured on these lines. How to do that? To start with, the 2nd ARC has accepted that the domain specialization should be made part

⁵⁰ Interested readers may refer to a study: Bhattacharjee Govind, "Reforms in Government Accounting – Public Accounts of Central and State Governments" Government Accounting Reforms – An Overview, Institute of Chartered Accounts of India, New Delhi; February, 2015

of career planning and progression of IAS. The 2nd ARC Report, in its 10th Report on Refurbishing Personnel Administration, mentions 12 domain specializations.⁵¹ It also discusses 8 domains earlier identified by 1st ARC. The 12 domains are: General Administration, Urban Development, Security, Rural Development, Financial Management, Infrastructure, HRD Social Empowerment, Economic Administration, Tax Administration, Agricultural Development, Natural Resource Administration, and Health Management.⁵² To start with, it should be noted that these 12 domains are not actually domains, the identification of General Management and Financial Management as domains is clearly coming from failure to realize the distinction between a 'functional domain' and 'administrative function' (this has been discussed in earlier paragraphs related to revenue function).

Though, 2nd ARC in this part of the report seems to be talking about all branches, the above classification has been recommended for IAS, especially when they are with union government at middle and higher management levels. The Report further lists some specializations for IPS officers in the next paragraph.⁵³, but again it talks about IPS officers posted with union government under Ministry of Home. Though, it may appear that the Report is envisaging domain specialization for different services, domain recommendations for other services are conspicuous by their absence. The whole chapter 8 and 9 of this report⁵⁴ thus is almost exclusively for IAS cadre management and the need for their domain specialization. Ironically and as a matter of fact too, it is not possible to identify domains for other services because these services are themselves domains or even partial domains, and no further meaningful domain specification is possible within that. What is more, the Report also talks about mapping of different posts in various central ministries in line with these specializations and talks of assigning (IAS) officers to these posts as per their domain specialization.⁵⁵ In fact, to be frank, the Report is not at all clear about what and how these ideas and schemes can be implemented and surely, whatever is envisaged is highly IAS centric, with hardly any talk about other services. This is again a classic example of IAS hegemony where, though there is apparently discussion about all the services, the actual emphasis and recommendations are only for IAS.

⁵¹ DARPG – Government of India, 10th Report of 2nd Administrative Reform Commission: Refurbishing of Personnel Administration - Scaling New Heights, 180-183

⁵² Ibid, 177

⁵³ Ibid, 182

⁵⁴ Ibid, Ch 8 and 9

⁵⁵ Ibid, Ch 8 and 9

Even if we look at policy papers and other literatures on civil services reforms largely coming from government sources or civil servants themselves, we will find lack of awareness and ignorance, perhaps often deliberate, of the issues concerning services other than IAS. In fact, it would be quite common to find that the discussion and analysis is limited only to IAS while other services have just been noted in passing or have not even been mentioned. Thus, to cite an example, in a short essay discussing the need for specialization for IAS officers, the author, himself a retired IAS officer of repute, while emphasizing this need for IAS officers, did not even mention about the existence of large number of equivalent specialized civil service branches.⁵⁶ In another long chapter on institution of civil service in India - its challenges and reforms in an edited book, the two authors – both existing IAS officers - chose again to deal with reforms and changes required for IAS branch only, as if IAS is the only civil service, completely ignoring the other branches.⁵⁷ They did not even bother to broach the topic of reforms involving other branches of the civil service institutions in this broad ranging essay, and as a result, their analysis remained partial, parochial and partisan. All this only shows the extent of hegemony and control IAS officers have over institutions of governance and over other branches too – through which IAS branch has mostly been able to scuttle many wide-ranging reforms of higher civil services. This reflects the hypocrisy and condescension too, which has the result of severely hampering the overall morale and performance of other service branches. Without citing more instances, let me now examine what and how the IAS can and should be reformed in the present schema.

If we need service branches on the basis of even 'very broad domain', IAS does not qualify to be a single service; it needs to be broken down into parts – to correspond with those broad domains. However, it does not appear to be an easy option due to the dominance of IAS in every institutional setup. Nevertheless, this should not be a reason to make us shy away from recommending the best possible solution. There could be one other alternative, where instead of breaking down the IAS, there could be two or three broad domains within IAS itself, wherein IAS officers will specialize in one of these domains during their career and built and develop their professional expertise therein. At one level, it then becomes an exercise in semantics, wherein two or three separate broad domain-based services are given a common name – IAS – as a compromise. Though the approach in this research

⁵⁶ Saxena Naresh Chandra, "Has the IAS Failed the Nation", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 53, No. 25, 23 June (2018)

⁵⁷ Kapur Devesh, Mehta Pratap Bhanu, Vaishnav Milan Eds., *Rethinking Public Institutions in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017), Ch. 9 – The Civil Services by K.P. Krishnan and T.V. Somanathan, 339-413

paper has been to come out with a reform schema which is practical and implementable, retaining the name/identity of IAS and creating subdivisions within them is not being recommended, just for the sake of its practicality and implementability. It also goes against the fundamental principle of identifying (and not only creating) service branches on the basis of broad domains. Therefore, I am recommending division of IAS as per broad domains and then naming the resulting service branches appropriately.

Here, the 2nd ARC report is helpful in identifying domains. In my framework, and in a scheme where I am considering separate services for broad domains, obviously eight or twelve domains for IAS, as identified by 2nd ARC, appears to be too much. There does not appear to be any objective mechanism which can guide us as to how many and what should these broad domains be, and therefore, subjective judgements cannot be avoided. The guiding force in our approach here is the nature and level of aggregation which is being attempted in identifying other broad domains while tackling various central services, and the case of 'policing and internal security' as a good example of the level at which a broad domain can be identified. Following that line, it seems useful to identify two broad domains for IAS. The first one, to be called 'Economy and Industry' could have all economic and industrial development functions, including energy, infrastructure, transport, communication, commerce, trade and markets, urban development etc. The second one, to be called 'Human Development' could have all welfare, public goods and human development functions, including public health, hygiene and sanitation, social security, public welfare policies and programs, poverty alleviation and rural development, primary, secondary and higher education etc. Clearly, this assignment of functions to the domain list is indicative only, and not exhaustive. Further, it may also be possible to have a threefold division too. What should be noted here is the fact that these are not watertight divisions, and certain overlap among these domains and the assignment of functions within them would be natural. What is imperative is to have identification of broad domains in which an officer should specialize. Some of the functions which IAS perform now, especially at state level, will naturally go to other broad domain-based service branches as being proposed here, for example, IRFS will be responsible for managing state level finance and revenue departments. Thus, in the overall schema, it seems quite rational and logical to identify aforementioned two broad domains while analyzing IAS redesign strategy.

A very important issue needs to be addressed here. That is about the institution of District

Magistrate (DM) or Deputy Commissioner (DC) – who are the manager of districts in India – and these posts are for IAS officers only. Any reform and restructuring of a service cadre has to take care of the career-based progression and functional responsibilities the officers are expected to undertake over the years. In the present structure, IAS officers, during the initial half of their career – i.e., around first 15 years of their career, are given responsibility of DM, and once they are promoted to the level of SAG, they then mostly are made Secretary or equivalent in state governments, responsible for policies and program of one department/organization. Obviously, I am generalizing the career path of IAS officers and this is not the case in every instance. But it is true enough for our purposes. Thus, for the first fifteen years, IAS officers are generalist manager in particular districts, taking care of all domains in a particular district, and after that they are in charge of one specific function/department, generally for the whole of the state. It is a beautifully designed structure from a service branch point of view. Do we need to change it? And what about the new proposed broad domain-based services? How their cadre structure and responsibilities will be designed vis-a-vis this structure of IAS? And more importantly, are there trends that the institution of DM is changing or the role of DM is diminishing due to advent of Panchayati Raj institutions? And how is it going to affect the whole dialectic?

Quite clearly, there does not seem to be any dilution in the roles and functions of DM in the coming future due to advent of Panchayati Raj institutions or other factors. The reasons are many. India is a federal democracy, with a two-tier structure – central government and state governments. Despite the introduction of Panchayati Raj institution and other local government representative institutions – purporting to be forming the third layer of democratic structure – the basic mechanism of the state and governance remains the same, and in all probability, would remain more or less the same. It is not very probable that state governments would devolve substantial autonomy and power – legislative, administrative and financial – to elected representatives at the local level, and therefore, the career executive-bureaucrat, as representative of the state government, would remain the most important executive and administrative authority in a district. Even if there is good amount of devolution of power to the elected representatives at local level in future, a situation like USA – where city/county Mayors or similar authorities, who are elected by people and are executive administrators of that jurisdiction - and who can roughly be considered equivalent to our DMs – is not going to develop in India, at least not in the next few decades. And therefore, DM or DC would remain the most important and a vital functionary in the foreseeable future. He is rightly been identified as the most important

functionary/representative of the government in a district, the counterpart of Prime Minister (PM) and Chief Minister (CM) in a district (aptly captured in oft heard anecdote about three most powerful authorities in India, being PM, CM and DM). Further, the still underdeveloped nature of our country and society, where even the basic necessities of life and human existence are not available to large number of people, and where there are still huge challenges of basic education, healthcare and livelihood, the dismantling of institution of DM without having comparable alternative structure may not even be a good idea. The 2nd ARC also highlighted the crucial role of DM/DC in the overall administrative structure of India, and have suggested various measures to further strengthen, modernize and reform it.⁵⁸ It rightly classified myriad of functions of DM in fifteen broad categories, and also listed, as an illustrative example from Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh, 50 district committees of which DM is the chairman.⁵⁹

Here, let me also point out that on many occasions, the blame for the underdevelopment and the failure of government to ensure welfare of people at large has been placed on these institutions and IAS officers, and in all fairness, they need to take a good amount of blame for such failures. Nevertheless, there are many other factors which need to be examined and analyzed for a deeper and nuanced understanding of failures, which, though, is not my aim here in this essay. Without going further, it can be mentioned that the experience of handing over the responsibility of providing some public services to private sector operators, like healthcare, in selected pockets of the country has also not been very promising, and has given rise to its own set of problems and issues. And let us also note that wide variation in performance and efficiency of state governments, from Bihar to Tamil Nadu, from West Bengal to Karnataka, with the same set/quality of IAS officers, do point out that there are many other factors too, which contribute towards development and underdevelopment, and performance or otherwise of government institutions.

Thus, within the framework of broad domain-based services, IAS as a 'panacea' service does not fit in. In fact, the existence of IAS as a super generalist appears to be the impediment blocking the movement towards the goal of broad domain-based services. It is the huge iceberg with potential to sink the reform ship midway! As I said earlier too, strictly speaking, if IAS has to be there, then there is no need for most other services as specialized services at par with IAS, and if other services have to exist as equivalent to IAS,

⁵⁸ DARPG – Government of India, 15th Report of the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission – State and District Administration (New Delhi: Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, 2010), 60-92

⁵⁹ Ibid, 68-70

IAS itself needs to move towards some broad specializations. Thus, in light of the strategic framework adopted here, where the ideal structure has to evolve into an organic institutional design with specialized generalist cadre of senior civil servant officers, IAS will have to be split into component broader domains. And therefore, it appears most natural to split IAS into two independent service branches, as suggested earlier, one for each of the broader domains of 'economic development' and 'human-social development' sectors. Therefore, two broad domain-based services instead of one single IAS is being recommended, which may be called '**Indian Human Development Service (IHDS)**' and '**Indian Economic Development Service (IEDS)**'. It must be pointed out that the present domain of IAS is not covered fully by these two broad domains. But the present schema is not only about IAS, but is about various other services too, and thus in the proposed reorganization, some of the present domains which have been preserve of IAS would be shifting to other services. It will be clearer once we have analyzed all the services and reached to the final schema. The important issue about the district management and the responsibility of DM, and how this can be reorganized is taken up in another paragraph.

4.7 Environment and Natural Resource: Indian Forest Service (IFoS)

For those who would like to define civil service strictly in terms of those branches which are recruited through UPSC civil service examination, IFoS will not quality as a civil service, as the recruitment is done through a separate examination by UPSC. Nevertheless, they are a civil service branch for all practical purposes and should be counted as such. In fact, IFoS is one of the 'All India Services' created in 1966. Its cadre size is of around two thousand eight hundred officers. This being a relatively old service with a British legacy also of a predecessor Imperial Forest Service, the roles and responsibilities has changed with the changing times. However, the change is more visible at the central government level, where the profile and responsibilities of IFoS officers have improved due to increased awareness and emphasis on environmental protection, sustainable natural resources management, ecology and related issues in public policy decision making. In states, their situation is not that good, and this is a cause of frustration and resentment among the officers. In districts, IFoS officers, as District Forest Officers, though independent, work under institutional supervision of DM and even at the state level, the Forest/Environment Department is always headed by an IAS officer. The frustration of IFoS officers have been noted even by the Government of India in its survey in 2010, where it was reported that IFoS officers complained that forest department is treated like PWD or

Irrigation department, and that they are not treated on par with other All India Services (IAS and IPS).⁶⁰ Further, the state level cadre is often beset with the problem of top-heavy pyramid, with many posts at senior levels created solely for the purpose of ensuring promotion of the officers. The situation is not very different from what prevails in the IRS. In fact, it would not be wrong to conclude that the top-heavy pyramidal structure is a widespread problem with large number of services. Only IAS, to a large extent, has been able to stave off this issue, largely by occupying most of the senior level posts at central government level, by strictly controlling unnecessary expansion of their cadre, and by exclusive claim over the post of DM.

What is the future of IFoS? And where does it fit in the framework of broad domain-based service? I see IFoS as an important branch, and a branch which has been unfairly neglected. Many of their issues listed above can be taken care of if the service is redesigned by identifying its extended 'natural domain' – and giving it jurisdiction over this natural domain. And this extended natural domain is also a large domain, broad and deep enough to require a separate service branch under the present schema.

The natural broad domain corresponding to what IFoS officers are doing now, is what I would term 'Environment and Resources', which will include environment, ecology, forest, flora and fauna, natural resources (meaning thereby minerals, metals, petroleum and every other natural resource) and their management, and then agricultural and animal husbandry too, including food and food related domains. Perhaps 'energy' should also be part of this domain. Therefore, officers of this branch should be managing leadership roles in all organizations, department and ministries, at central and state government levels, which deals with the above identified domains and functions.

Accordingly, the branch should be reconstituted on the above line, and I propose to rename this service as **Indian Environment and Resource Service (IERS)**. The recruitment should also be done through civil services examination.

4.8 What to Do with Railway Services?

Various railway services are a unique case. Strictly speaking, it consists of three specialized civil services: **Indian Railway Accounting Service (IRAS)**, **Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS)** and **Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS)** – their functions are

⁶⁰ DARPG – Government of India, Civil Services Survey – A Report (New Delhi: Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India, 2010), 114

obvious from their names – with a total size of around three thousand officers. In addition, Indian railways also have six-seven more services, what are called 'technical' group A services – most of them recruited through Indian Engineering Services Examinations. Some of them being Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE), Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers (IRSME) and Indian Railway Stores Service (IRSS).

For Indian Railways, being one of the largest single employer organizations in the world, with as many as 1.5 million employees and a huge transportation infrastructure and land assets, it is understandable to have various specialized branches of senior management personnel. However, organization of these branches in the form of permanent cadre-based service has also given rise to various types of inter-cadre and inter-departmental rivalries and politics, leading to some serious problems.

What is to be done in the sense of restructuring of the civil services branches of Indian Railway? There has been an idea of merging all the three civil services of Railways into one, and concomitantly all the technical services into another branch. Of late, there has also been talk of having two merged services for railways – Indian Railway Technical Services and Indian Railway Logistical Service and one superior service to these – Indian Railway Management Service.⁶¹ All such proposals of merger and harmonization may have those benefits which I have already pointed out in various other contexts. However, all these proposals are within the boundaries of keeping civil service structure from railway alive. I would propose something different here. Railway officers should not be part of 'civil service', and therefore, they should not be recruited like other civil servants. Railway is a commercial organization, essentially a transportation service company, though with a huge public service burden and significant positive externalities of its services. Nevertheless, it needs to be run more like a transportation/commercial organization, and the present civil service cadre of IRTS, IRPS, and IRAS should be abolished with the freedom given to Railways to manage their own affairs, employees and managers in the changing circumstances. The proposed three way classification of higher management level post, as noted above, may be a way forward, but again, none of them should form part of the 'civil service'.

Abolition does not mean that the people presently working have to be fired, what I mean is that IRPS, IRTS etc. need not be identified as civil service branches. Railways need to be run

⁶¹ As reported in First Post, January 14, 2018. Accessed at <https://www.firstpost.com/india/indias-railways-reforms-despite-progress-elsewhere-restructure-of-bureaucratic-architecture-remains-pending-4258401.html>

like a transportation company with full freedom and autonomy to operate its business. It may not be an easy decision to make for the government, but it is the best possible course of action, in the short as well as long run. There are many other ways of keeping an eye on and ensuring overall supervision of the functioning of the railways, in light of public service nature of its function, which should be taken recourse to by the government.

4.9 Glorious Past But...? Indian Postal Service (IPoS)

Indian Postal Service officers, totalling around six hundred, obviously run the postal department of government of India. This formidable organization has a glorious history since the British time. Even today, Department of posts boasts of as many as 1.5 lakh posts offices across the country, thus being one of the few central government departments to have reached almost every corner of the country. However, during the past two-three decades, especially with the widespread use of electronic communication in far flung areas of the country, the relevance of letter and posts has significantly reduced. There are valid questions about the roles, functions and continued existence of department of posts, and by implication of IPoS. The organization has also tried to enter more and more into banking and small saving services, but still the prospects does not look good. The small saving and banking function has been with the Postal department since long, though its importance is also reducing with increasing reach of banking and other financial services organizations, both from public and private sectors, in rural and semi urban areas.

Some of the IPoS officers give example of reinvention and revitalization of US Post, and talk of similar transformation for India, but any concrete attempts and results are yet to be seen. As a group A civil service, IPoS officers running a postal department is not very convincing picture to me. I feel it's a case more like that of Railways, and therefore, India post should be run like a commercial organization. In light of above, I would say IPoS is a branch which has almost lost its relevance today and the best course of action would be to abolish it. Again, abolishing a service branch does not mean firing the people employed. They can always be absorbed in to some other service branch or organization. But yes, the IPoS has completed its life cycle and should go!

4.10 Those Who Were Not So Lucky: Civil Service Branches Which Are Hardly Visible

Every year, lakhs of aspirants to the civil service examinations appear in the gruelling three stage examination process to compete for few hundred of posts, and those lucky enough to

be successful have mostly a bright and secured future before them. However, for most of the aspirants, IAS is their service of preference. And depending upon their rank in the examination and their stated preference, successful candidates are allocated to different branches, with only the top rankers getting into IAS.

For the general public at large, IAS, IPS and IFS are most well-known and recognized services. However, as we know, there are more than two dozen civil services/branches most of which are little known to the larger public. Those successful candidates who are not so lucky are allocated to lesser known and very specialized service branches. Some of these are not even group A service, they are group B services. It should also be noted that most of these services have very small cadre size - in most cases not more than five hundred officers - leading to various kinds of cadre management issues. Which are these services? Let me list out some of these with their functions, and discuss their issues in brief.

Indian Information Service (IIS) officers used to run Akashvani and Doordarshan for Indian government. They still do so. But in their case too, as in the case of IPoS, the changing times are fast making their function obsolete and redundant. In today's world of free, independent and commercial media, it might be claimed that there is a need for a communication medium which is government owned and controlled, though the arguments in support of such a point of view are very weak. Even if we assume it to be a desirable proposition, this does not lead us to the requirement of having a specialized civil service as IIS.

What will they do? They used to be special correspondents, Editors and managers in Doordarshan and Akashvani, used to publish magazines and newspapers, and used to man various posts in Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Now what? Do we still need a group A service to man few posts in Ministry of Information and Broadcasting? What will happen to their cadre structure and career prospects? All this point towards the inevitable conclusion that IIS has completed its life.

Central Secretariat Service (CSS) is a group B service, the officers forms junior and middle management level in central government ministries. They are a secretariat service and are expected to make important contribution to policy planning and program management at the central government level. In many senses, they are counterpart of state level civil services, who are also group B. CSS is an important branch and have a good presence and strength in all central government ministries and organizations. They need to continue. However, some kind of domain specialization may also be introduced for them so that

officers have professional exposure, understanding and acumen to hold important and responsible positions. Despite being a group B service, many of the officers rise to the level of Joint Secretary (SAG) in later part of their career, and as such they form an important institutional and organizational support in the functioning of government of India.

Indian Trade Service (ITS) forms part of Ministry of Commerce, and were supposed to play a catalyst role in promoting trade and industry. Their relevance in today's liberalized world is again under question. The service has no future, and needs to be abolished.

Railway Protection Force Group A Service (RPF) forms part of Ministry of Railways and a specialized cadre for protecting Railways properties. Their separate existence from IPS does not seem logical, especially when regular state police force under IPS officers is also responsible for security of Railway and travellers. Their birth and existence are due to a colonial distinction between protecting railway property vs. protecting people travelling on trains. I do not see any reason for retaining a group A service within railways, for protection and security. It should be responsibility of police, and should be supervised by IPS officers. The service should therefore be abolished, and officers can be inducted into IPS.

Indian Defence Estate Service (IDES) again is a small branch under Ministry of Defence, responsible for taking care of defence lands, property and estates. Whatever they do can be taken care of by junior level officers supervised by other senior group A services or officers of Armed forces. **Indian Ordnance Factories Service (IOFS)**, as the name suggest, is another small, specialized service branch under Ministry of Defence, responsible for running defence production and related activities. In my view, there is no justification for maintaining a service like IOFS, that too, as a civil service. **Armed Forces Headquarter Civil Service (Group B)** is another junior civil service working at headquarters. Defence is in itself a huge domain, with large number of organizations for various specialized kind of functions, including research and development, production, operations, engineering etc. In such a scenario, the justification of having a service for Ordnance Factories, for Headquarters (and also for Defence Estate) seems quaint and illogical. If at all, an umbrella civil service for defence sector may be conceived to maintain a civilian control over different functions of armed forces. In any case, to some extent this already is the case in Defence Ministry where good number of CSS, IAS and some other central service officers are working at all levels, from Under Secretary to Secretary, Defence.

Indian Corporate Law Service (ICLS) being part of Ministry of Corporate Affairs are

relatively new service responsible for managing and regulating affairs related to companies. In fact, it used to be classified as a technical group A service earlier, and in 2008, was renamed as ICLS and recruitment was started through Civil Services Examination. Again, they are a good example of a small department specific service, created without much thought and broader vision, and their function can be integrated into some other larger domain-based service, most suitably with proposed IRFS. As a standalone group A service, they need not be retained.

I must also mention four group B services, specifically for Delhi and Andaman Nicobar, and for Pondicherry, being **Delhi and Andaman Nicobar Civil Service (Group B)**, **Delhi and Andaman Nicobar Police Service (Group B)**, **Pondicherry Civil Service (Group B)**, **Pondicherry Police Service (Group B)**. As the name clarifies, these are civil service and police service for these union territories. Why only these territories, and why not for others, is beyond understanding. These are equivalent to state level/provincial civil and police services, and perhaps are being maintained for these Union Territories because these are not full state, lacking any of the institutional structure of state level public service commission and other institution. But keeping them together with group A civil services examination does not seem appropriate. It has perhaps been done mainly for convenience, to save the extra burden to UPSC. However, being recruited through the same examination, the officers in these services expect certain level of parity and this ultimately led to various issues. I should also point out that despite being a group B service, DANICS and DANIPS have been popular with candidates, and quite a few have opted for them in preference to many group A services. This is understandable, as these services has the attraction of being based in Delhi, and also of working as a junior IAS or IPS officers in Delhi.

The characteristics features of all these 'not so well known' service branches are their small size, very specialized nature of job responsibility and confinement to one particular department. Officers working in these services often are not very happy with service condition and career prospects, as mostly these are not very good. The small size and type of work they are expected to perform many times lead to further alienation, demotivation and frustration with the overall condition. Such a situation for a senior officer, who is supposed to be leader and manager, is not at all desirable, and can have very detrimental effect in the long run. Added to this is the fact that in most cases, the Secretary or senior most officers in these services cadres/ministries is an IAS officer. In effect, most of these

services are, for all practical purposes; function as a group B service. This anomaly further leads to frustration and feeling of discrimination. Perhaps those negative impacts are already affecting the performance of various branches of governments staffed by these services. This problem is often ignored, or taken very lightly, not being paid due attention which it demands, and this further escalates the negativity and overall environment of lassitude and apathy.

I recommend abolition of most of these services, as they are very small and they do not qualify to be given the status of group A services. Another approach could be to designate them as group B service, and also merge many of them with Central Secretariat Service – the generalist branch of central government group B service.

4.11 Economics and Statistics Branches

Two services, namely **Indian Economic Service (IES)**, and **Indian Statistical Service (ISS)**, are not truly civil services as the recruitment is done through a specialized examination by UPSC. However, they are a domain based specialized group A service, with presence in most of the ministries and departments of the central government and hardly any presence at state level organizations.

They are organized cadre of service less well known than most others and have small cadre size of slightly more than one thousand officers combined. Many senior IES officers today occupy the position of Economic Advisor (at the level of Joint Secretary or above) in different department of central government. However, their real contribution is often limited to providing advice only, which is rarely heard, and perhaps never implemented. This is a sad state of affairs, to say the least, because the insight, expertise and specialized knowledge of economics (and statistics too) which can be provided by IES/ISS officers is a valuable input. ISS officers are mostly found in Statistics and Program Implementation department, National Sample Survey organization and similar other places. Again, it is a technical and specialized nature of work.

Despite the importance of economic and statistical analysis and advice in the government, I found the question of service as a unique case. IES and ISS are technical service, and the domain of their specialized expertise have a limited, though important role. In my overall framework, I find it difficult to incorporate them somewhere, and it appears that they have to remain a specialized service branch, with meagre presence in various ministries. IES and ISS also used to have a good presence in Yojana Aayog, but with it's restructuring as Niti

Aayog, and with the trend of employing economist and statistician directly from academia, research institutions and think tanks with short term contract, the future of IES and ISS is really a question which needs to be deliberated.

The idea of employing economist and statisticians directly from academia and research institution can continue. In fact, this approach and initiative can be extended for appointment of economist and statisticians in various line ministries too, and can be institutionalized. Further, it has in a way been formalized too at Niti Aayog, with the new recruitment rules for appointment of Consultants/Sr. Consultants etc, as well as for Advisors and Sr. Advisors too (being senior posts at Joint/ Additional Secretary level) - though it is for specialists of various domains, and not only for economists and statisticians.⁶² To me, this appears to be an attractive and desirable approach - especially in light of fact that such positions would always be limited in number and would therefore may not be ideal to exist as a fully-fledged group A senior service branch of their own. In such a scenario, IES and ISS perhaps also need not exist in its present form. However, statistician needs to be there is those specialized agencies of the government responsible for collection of data, sample surveys, its analysis and various related work. However, whether such work will require an organized group A 'civil' service is still a question. Perhaps yes, perhaps no! From another perspective, agencies doing such work also need to be independent and autonomous of the government control, (something like RBI) which should have a bearing on constituting a service branch for them. In many senses, statistics and data analysis seems to more like a technical function, which should be kept separate (and independent) of civil servants, and in that sense, the analysis of next paragraphs would be applicable to the question of ISS, and also to the IES. Thus, to me, the question of future of these two services is wide open for discussion and deliberation.

4.12 Technical Service Branches: Where Do They Fit?

Existence of large number of technical group A services may also be considered as another example of the hodgepodge in the design and structure of India's governance institutions. Technical services, as they are called, are not treated as 'civil services' and truly so. Recruitment to most of these services are made through a separate examination conducted by UPSC, called Engineering Service Examination and as the name suggest, only graduates with engineering degrees (from relevant branches) are eligible to appear. They

⁶² Niti Aayog – Government of India, Niti Aayog Adviser Recruitment (Flexi Pool) Rules, 2017 (New Delhi: Niti Aayog, Government of India, 2017), No. A-12018/1/2016-Admn.I(B)

are therefore not 'civil servant' as such. Some of the most prominent technical services are Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE), Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineer (IRSME), Indian Telecom Service (ITS), Central Engineering (Civil) Service, Central Engineering (Electrical) Service, Central Engineering (Road) Service, Central Power Engineering Service, Central Health Services (CHS), and Military Engineering Service. But the problem and confusion arise as many of their grievances are almost the same as that of group A central civil services. It may be noted that like other specialized civil services, these are also often created for a department, are not domain based in true sense, and have many similar issues to that of central civil services. For example, there are serious questions about roles, relevance and existence of ITS with the advent of private telecom operators and resulting changes in telecommunication paradigm. However, the nature and character of discontent in these service cadres are not quite similar to those of the civil services since the officers were not recruited as civil servants, were recruited through a different examination process altogether, and were not under any presumption of parity with civil services (especially IAS) in terms of roles, responsibilities and career prospects. Despite these differences, it might be a good idea to examine whether there is a scope and usefulness of 'broad domain' based services in 'technical' sphere too, for example in civil engineering field, or in electronics engineering field, and so on.

Though some of the ideas and approaches discussed in this essay would apply to technical services too, their detailed analysis and any schema for their reform are not being taken up here as they are beyond the scope of this policy research. Having said that, I would like to mention that in addition to these technical services, there are other scientific/technical organizations too which have their own specialized cadre of scientists/engineers and technical managers. Some examples are Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space Research etc. At a broader policy level, I would recommend that such highly technical and scientific knowledge based organizations and institutions be kept out of the domain of 'civil servants', as is presently the case, and accordingly they should have a structure where officers from broad domain based civil services have almost no role to play in these organizations, and all senior management level posts in such organizations should be manned by these technical/scientifically trained personnel.

Interestingly, extending this argument, some of the technical service officers (like civil engineers from CPWD) may like to group them with these scientific departments and

argue that they should also have the same structure where they are not supervised by generalist 'civil servant' at the top. In such cases, a decision should carefully be made on case to case basis, after examining the nature of work, organizational characteristics, scope of responsibilities and similar other features of the relevant department and function to decide whether that department can be classified as existing and operating largely in the 'civil' sphere or in the 'technical, scientific or research' spheres. In case of functions and departments considered as civil, the specialized generalist civil servants should have a crucial role in policy, administration and senior management level.

MAKING SENSE OF NEW INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

The previous paragraphs, where I have taken up existing services branches and analyzed their structure, jurisdictions and functions, and then tried to map them into natural broad functional domains, have also made it possible to arrive at what I would call a six-fold classification for constituting broad domain-based service branches. In fact, these six broad domains have, in a sense, evolved and took shape in a natural and organic way in the process of analyzing existing service branches, the affinities and cohesiveness of domains and their placement in the overall schema, while keeping the organizing philosophy of 'specialized generalist' always in context. As has often been said that facts have a way of not going away, the factual and empirical examination of existing service branches has proved to be quite helpful in not only isolating the salient features and issues with each branch and domains, but also in naturally arriving towards the alternative design architecture of specialized generalist, which is also fair, professional and meritocratic.

5.1 The New Structure: The Six Broad Domains...

The new branching design, conceived on the aforementioned principles, has already been identified and discussed above individually. Let me collect them together and place them within the framework of analysis I am constructing. The whole gamut of governmental civil functions, at federal, state and local levels has been, in the course of our elaboration, brought together and grouped in six broad types of domains, which is summarized below:



A mapping of the six broad domains to the type of functions and the ministries, department and agencies of different level of government is given in the table below. The mapping is again, not exhaustive, but only illustrative.

Broad Domain	Type of Function	Illustrative domains, departments, areas
Police and Internal Security	Sovereign, Public Goods	Police, Internal security, Law and Order, Intelligence Investigation, Crime control,
Human Development	Public Goods, Economic and Social Management	Public Health and well-being, Hygiene, Social welfare, School education, Higher education, Rural development, Social security, Poverty alleviation,
Economy and Industry	Public Goods, Economic and Social Management	Industry, Infrastructure, Commerce, Trade and markets, Energy and power, Transport, Communication, Industrial management, Urban development,
Revenue and Finance	Sovereign, Economic Management	Public finance and treasury, Revenue and taxes, Financial management and control, Accounting, Audit, Economic and financial regulation, Financial markets
Environment and Resources	Public Goods, Economic and Social Management	Environment, Forests, Ecology, Flora and fauna, Agriculture, Food, Animal husbandry, Natural resources, Minerals, Petroleum and natural gas
Foreign Relations and Diplomacy	Sovereign	Foreign relations, Diplomacy, Multilateral negotiation, Country's representation at international organizations

It might be noted that the above classification scheme is neither watertight nor is an attempt to group domains and functions into mutually exclusive classes. In any case, arriving at some mutually exclusive classes and from there to corresponding service branches has not been the underlying objective. The fundamental attempt, as has earlier been said, is to arrive at a broad and clear, yet flexible, fluid and permeable grouping which can then help in constituting service branches in terms of broad domains. That is precisely what has been achieved as shown in the table above. Thus, for example, a function like agro-based industrial development can be classified into either 'Economy and Industry' or into 'Environment and Resource' domains, and both are equally justified. Similarly, a function like regulation of stock exchanges will in the first instance, appear to be belonging to 'Revenue and Finance' domain, but may also be included in 'Economy and Industry' domain by slightly stretching the argument.

Accordingly, it might appear that the issue of assignment of responsibility of domain or functional areas to a particular service branch may result into some difficulty or may also lead to some competition, rivalries and even disputes. But we need to appreciate that to some extent, healthy competition and rivalries may even be desirable, as it will only lead to improvement in efficiency and effectiveness of officers. However, if it starts leading to disputes and unhealthy rivalries, it will certainly be something which will require attention and corrective policy steps. In any case, the basic premise for broad domain-based service is also to have enough flexibility within the specialization itself, to help the government choose best person for any particular responsibility, and therefore, attempting a classification system which is too rigid, inflexible and restrictive of movement is not desirable. In fact, in the present scheme, movement of officers across these broad domain areas should also be possible and in fact would not be taken as unusual.

5.2 ...And The Corresponding Civil Service Branches

With the above classification scheme for new institutional design, identification of corresponding six broad-domain based specialized generalist service branches is the natural next step. These service branches to be so constituted have also been identified while analyzing existing branches in the previous paragraphs. The table below lists these six broad domain areas, the corresponding six proposed services, and also maps the proposed services with the existing service branches:

Broad Domain Areas	Proposed Service for the Broad Domain	Corresponding Mapping With Existing Branches
Police and Internal Security	Indian Police Service (IPS)	IPS, RPF (?)
Human Development	Indian Human Development Service (IHDS)	IAS, IRPS (?)
Economy and Industry	Indian Economic Development Service (IEDS)	IAS, IPoS (?), ITS (?) IIS (?)
Revenue and Finance	Indian Revenue and Finance Service (IRFS)	IRS-IT, IRS-CE, IAAS, ICAS, IDAS, IRAS, IPTAFS, ICLS (?)
Environment and Resources	Indian Environment and Resource Service (IERS)	IFoS
Foreign Relations and Diplomacy	Indian Foreign Service (IFS)	IFS

Thus, in the new institutional schema, there would be six broad domain-based service branches, which will provide leadership to all functional areas divided into six broad domains as in table above. The corresponding mapping of proposed services with the existing ones is an indicator of possibilities. This has mainly been done with a view to absorb and merge the existing branches in to the proposed branches where they would most naturally fit and adjust in terms of their present functional domains. Again, this list is not exhaustive as in many cases of service branches that need to be abolished, I have not been able to reach to a conclusion as to where officers from these services should be shifted to or merged with, and this remains an open question. Further, the new names for proposed six services are indicative only. The idea is the make an illustrative and demonstrative explanation.

It is also expected that with the aforementioned six-fold division of services, each service will have a cadre size of anywhere between three thousand to five thousand officers, except in the case of IFS, which would be small in comparison – with perhaps around one thousand officers. However, the present work in not attempting to derive or calculate as to what could be or would be a reasonable size of each cadre of these six broad domain services. In such an exercise, various principles of organizational theories, rational design

as well as imperatives of a professionally managed bureaucratic structure will have to be paramount while deciding and dynamically managing the size of each of these branches.

We often tend to underestimate the importance of names and identities, and therefore, I would like to provide brief comments on the naming of the proposed service classification. Except of existing IPS and IFS, the names of the new services are proposed to be changed, and in the first reading, they do not sound so impressive – IRFS, IHDS, IEDS and IERS. Certainly, they do not sound as impressive as IAS, perhaps not as good as even IRS. It may also be due to the reason of our long familiarity with acronyms like IAS etc, and the pan India recognition of these names. It is not difficult to suggest a feasible alternative solution. These four services (except IPS and IFS) can all be called IAS (or Indian Civil Service – ICS) and the four-fold broad domain classification would work within that. In fact, they would be four different services but would all be called by same name – IAS or ICS.

5.3 Institutionalizing the Redesigned Branches

In terms of structure, operations and process, the following points further clarify as to how this new institutional structure can be made to function smoothly:

- With the aforementioned structure of five services, there will be, for all practical purpose, real parity among service branches. This will mainly result from formation of significant broad service branches, which would not be confined and limited to one department, restricted function or small jurisdiction. Each service branch will have significant functional domain and wide area to manage and administer. With this structure, the feeling of neglect, partiality, exploitation and jealousy will largely be gone, and officers will be positively motivated and healthily competing. As pointed out already in respective sections, most of the smaller and outdated service branches will have to be abolished.
- Obviously and naturally, then, the highest-level posts in the respective domain areas, department and organization will be manned by officers of the corresponding branch. For example, the Home Secretary in central government as well as in all the state governments would be an IPS officer, not an IAS. Similarly, in the new scheme, an Agricultural secretary, in state or in central government, would be an IERS officer. And again, Secretary, Finance in state governments as well as in central government would be an IRFS officer, not an IAS or IHDS. But yes, for domains assigned to IHDS (erstwhile IAS) officers, the secretary would obviously be an IHDS officer – for

departments like Rural development, Public Health, School education, etc. Similarly, with the IEDS.

- All these services, with the possible exception of IFS, would be working with state as well as central government, more or less like what happens presently in the case of IAS, IPS and IFoS. In technical parlance, presently these three services are called All Indian Services, whereas other services like IFS, IRS, IAAS etc are called Central Services. This distinction is without any basis and would certainly lose any justification in the new scheme, where all services would be working both in states and in central government. Thus, in the new structure, officers would spend part of their time with state government and part with central government.
- Along with this, it will also require that the cadre control of these six services is not vested with any particular department/ministry, but with some other organization. Presently, IAS officers' cadre management is handled by DoPT and the same organization can be asked to handle cadre management for other services too. Alternatively, a Civil Services Board can also be set up with required autonomy and independent to take care of cadre management of these service branches and other responsibilities related to service management. This institutional change, in any case, has its own independent justification in terms of administrative reforms of civil services.
- If there is a felt need to have an organized civil service for any particular ministry/department of the central government, such service should be created invariably as subordinate service to the respective broad domain-based service, i.e., as a group B service – for that particular ministry/department. This is the practice followed in the states and the same should be followed at the central government level too. There is no reason why someone should have a higher status only because she is working in a central government department. Status and parity have to be based on the type, nature and level of work being performed and the responsibilities being managed, and not on the basis of the fact that central government employees should, by default, be considered senior to their state government counterparts, even when they are carrying out the same level of responsibility.
- It would be desirable also to have some flexibility in allocating service branches to different officers. It is advisable that the service branch allocation may not be done immediately after the joining of service, but may be done once an officer has spent few

initial years in the field working in some sector, and has a better appreciation of her own liking, strength, weakness, suitability and passion for a particular domain area. It might be a good idea to assign the services once an officer is promoted to STS scale, by which time she would have completed around one and a half year of training and around the same time working in an actual field assignment. That will also be the time when officers from these services would be ready to be posted as DMs/SPs (more on this in the next section).

- There are many functional domains and areas which are very technical in nature, and where a generalist – even if he is a specialized generalist, a fox with spine of hedgehog – would not be appropriate at senior management level. This principle must be recognized and accepted. These areas should be out of bound for generalist civil servants – the ones I am dealing here. In such organizations and departments, technical specialists should be given all the control and they can have their own cadre, structure and system. In some cases, this is already being followed – like in Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space etc. This further needs to be extended in appropriate technical domain functions.

Thus, the above institutional structure would create broad domain-based service branches. These branches would have the necessary size and structure to form a robust, feasible and well-designed cadre of organized civil service branches, taking care of the career progression, experience and exposure, and of opportunities and aspirations of individual officers. The officers of all branches will, working over years, develop a mix of specialized domain knowledge as well as general management skills – the mix which are more important at senior level where inter-agency/domain communication and coordination, strategic thinking, vision and planning, and ability to transfer and share becomes crucial. The proposed design will also help in creating a balanced and equal branching structure of services, where each branch will find that the system is fair, just, transparent and non-discriminatory; that it provides officers meaningful work and interesting professional challenges, opportunity to excel and showcase their talents; and where every branch is considered valuable and making its own meaningful contribution in national governance. This structure will thus produce an optimistic situation for everyone. There will perhaps be no inter-service rivalries, frustration and demotivation as the reality and experience of unfair practices and inequality will be a thing of the past. However, the mission will not be complete only with creation of these specialized generalist branches!

To take this institutional design to the next level of integration, if what is proposed in the following sections are also implemented, it would result in a truly professional, efficient and effective civil services cadre design. In that eventuality, the situation where one particular service is the most coveted – where every successful candidate wants to join that branch (presently the IAS), where all other who have not been able to join their top two or three choices of services always feel neglected and discriminated, and where the choice of a candidate to join IAS or IPS etc. is not determined by her inherent skills, strengths and interests – will be a thing of past. The next reform would make all services almost equally desirable, and then the successful candidate will be expressing their option and choices on the basis of their true interests, skills and motivations for working in a particular broad domain area. Thus, we will then have situations where someone would choose to join IHDS branch because she wanted to work mostly for public welfare and public healthcare sectors. Or someone will join IRFS because she wanted to work mostly in public finance and financial regulation sectors. In this way, it will be a fatal blow to the discriminatory and exploitative 'caste' system prevalent in the services. This will then be a service branching structure enshrining the ideals of equality of opportunity in real sense as is discussed in earlier paragraphs. And to reach that level of equality of service branches and the optimistic state, two more crucial pieces of reform will be required, as are being elaborated below.

5.4 The District Magistrate: For All Specialized Generalist

The question of claim over DM post is very important, and is perhaps the lynchpin over which the success or otherwise of the proposed broad domain-based service branches depends. In fact, with the constitution of specialized generalist branches, the reform and the required changes in the present institution of DM becomes, not only desirable, but natural, logical next step. In the overall mission to find out ways for improving the structure and reorganization of civil services branches, and to strive to make a proposal which has the potential to substantially enhance the governance and service delivery mechanism of Indian bureaucracy, this proposal forms an integral part of the total reform schema.

As was explained in the section related to IAS, the institution of DM is a pivotal one in our country, and rightly, it needs to be continued. IAS officers have monopoly, as of now, on this post. I have outlined in the previous sections that IAS would, and should continue to hold the position of DM/DC in districts. But post of DM could not remain an exclusive preserve of IAS (or for that matter, of IHDS and IEDS in the new structure) alone, especially

in light of the type of reorganization outlined. Officers from proposed IRFS and IERS should also be appointed as DM/DC. This will not only give officers from these services important and crucial handle in governance and policy implementation, but will also lead to establishment of true parity among services. In a structure where IHDS, IEDS, IRFS, and IERS are all made responsible for broad functional domains at central and state government levels, where these four and other services will be treated equally and fairly for all practical purposes, it makes perfect sense that the crucial post of DM is not kept reserved for erstwhile IAS alone. In some senses, this recommendation is perhaps the most important measure to be implemented along with the restructuring design proposed here, and without this, the six broad domain-based services branches would not be able to achieve the intended goal of an equal opportunity, professionalized and efficient service branch design. In sum, all the specialized generalist branches will have equal representation in and claim on the DM/DC posts.

To make the scheme even better, it may be stipulated that officers of specific domains should ideally be appointed as DM/DC of such district whose major characteristics have closer affinity with those specific domains. For example, a mostly agricultural district or a district with huge iron-ore mines can have a DM from IERS. A trading and urban district, with lots of business activity can have a DM from IRFS. Another district with manufacturing or with many poor people or with low public healthcare indices should ideally have an IHDS officer as DM.

Obviously, finding out a dominant characteristic will not be a very objective or simple task, and there could be many dimensions of locating and ascertaining any such characteristics. And again, the basic premise is not to look for a very distinct and water tight compartmentalization. The underlying idea is to have a mix of officers from different service branches as DM in districts which best suits their expertise, exposure and their domain strength. Further, these characteristics identification will be a dynamic process, which can and will change over time – an agricultural district developing in to an industrial town and so on in a decade or so, and thus creating a different type of leadership role and responsibility for the DM.

What about IPS? Should not they also be appointed as DM? Perhaps in those districts which are crime prone, or near the sensitive international borders, or have internal law and order issues? This may not be required, as we already have the institution of SP in districts, which perform almost as, if not more, important function, as that of DM.

Therefore, the above exposure may not be required for IPS officers, though in principle, there should be no objection to IPS being appointed as DM. And in case of IFS, their function being totally different, this scheme again may not be very useful for them.

This reform will go a long way in bringing parity among services, in providing equal opportunity, in removing inter-service rivalries and power politics, in bringing a higher level of skill-assignment matching and professional development, and in motivating and encouraging healthy competition among officers, leading to all round improvement in governance and bureaucratic performance.

5.5 The Idea of Confining to a State Cadre: Modern or Passé

In the new structure of six broad domain based senior civil services, where officers would be largely working in their chosen and allocated domains, what should happen to the existing system of allocation to 'state' cadre? The present system of allocation of officers to state cadre is largely orthogonal to the new schema presented here, and therefore, it has no substantial bearing on the design and implementation of the new system. However, that does not mean that the cadre system cannot be reformed for the better. The logic and reason behind allocating officers of All India Service to a specific state cadre is coming from the basic premise that these three services (IAS, IPS and IFoS) are common to both Union and a state, whereas the central services are for and to be controlled by Union. It was perhaps natural to think that commonality has to exist between Union and only one specified State. And therefore, the existing structure where such officers mostly work in their allocated state cadre or with the Union government.

Over the years, the system of allocation of state cadre has also changed. Earlier, it used to be random allocation, subsequently it changed to preference and rank based system, where candidates would indicate their rank order preference of states, and based on their rank in civil services examination and availability of vacancy, they will be allocated to different state cadre. However, in all this allocation process, a formula of 'one third insider - two third outsider' was maintained whereby, one third posts in each state cadre was filled with candidates native to that state (and willing to be allocated to their home state, which is almost always the case) and two third posts were filled by candidates who were not native to that state. This has been done with the express idea of maintaining and promoting national integration. It was perhaps also done with the idea of improving impartiality of officers, by keeping them away from their social, family and native roots and networks;

though it is doubtful that this has had any significant desirable impact. The cadre allocation system has very recently been changed again whereby the states cadres have been grouped in to five regions, and candidates have to show their preferences by not selecting more than one cadre from each group.⁶³ This has again been done with the purpose to have a better spread of candidates across India and to discourage the tendency where officers always want to be allocated to their home state or as the next preference, to a state adjoining/near their home state.

The idea of national integration, or of encouraging (or more appropriately nudging) officers to work in a state different than their home state is noble and desirable. However, such policy restricts the exposure and experience of an officer to one particular state and to the central government. This is unlike Central Services where officers can be posted/assigned to anywhere in India. In many senses, this cadre free system is more attractive, as it provides a wider, more varied and diverse experience to officers. Comparing this situation to the present system of IAS or IPS officers clearly establishes a situation where these cadre confined services faces an important limitation. This is further accentuated in the modern Indian federal structure, where there are wide variations not only in different states' cultural, social, economic and geographical settings, but also significant variations in governance structure, institutional design, bureaucratic organizations, political and political economy interaction and democratic practices. And therefore, it is always desirable that officers of the elite services, those responsible for highest level of policy and decision making at state and national levels, have a truly diverse experience and exposure, which should certainly be across states. It is now well-known fact that southern states have been able to execute and implement social and public health policies and program in a much efficient and effective way than many northern/Hindi-heartland states. Therefore, for example, in the present system, an IAS officer from Bihar cadre who has worked as Director of ICDS, would be confined to a limited exposure of success stories and reform possibilities coming from working in Bihar. She will not be knowing about how ICDS sector has been organized, operationalized and its various challenges have been confronted in other states of India – many of which are doing quite well as compared to Bihar in managing ICDS program. True, there are other channel of information exchange, learning, and experience sharing, but nothing is comparable to the

⁶³ DoPT- Government of India, Office Memorandum No. 13013/2/2016-AIS-I, dated 5 September, 2017 (New Delhi: Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India, 2017)

exposure of actually working in an institutionally and organizationally different/better state as for example, in ICDS of Tamil Nadu.

And this brings out the salient benefits of having a cadre system where officers of the proposed broad domain-based service would be able to work in more than one state. It would be much better if, during their career, they have opportunity of working in at least two states, and if possible, more than two states, with wider social, geographical, cultural, economic and institutional and governance variation. It will be a further boost to the idea of 'national integration', to say the least. The learning, sharing and benefits of applying better and innovative management practices would be multiplied. True, the ingrained idea of All India Service being common to 'Union and 'a' State' has to be modified in the form of the new broad domain-based services which are common to 'Union and many states'.

From another perspective too, it seems absurd to limit the exposure and experience of senior civil servant to one state only when just for the purpose of training and capacity building, they are sent abroad - to other countries - to learn and experience the system and structure of governance there. In such a situation, there seems hardly any reason to keep the present system of a single state bound service design for senior bureaucrats.

THE URGENCY OF STRATEGIC VISION FOR BUREAUCRATIC REFORMS

6.1 Many Paths... But Same Destination

Looking from a different perspective, what I have proposed in this reorganization can be considered as a scheme where most of the branches have been given IAS like domains, by merging some of the existing branches, and also by taking away some of the domains from IAS. This indeed is the case as one of the fundamental issues identified in this study is the actual and existing inequality, disparity and discrimination among service branches despite theoretical parity. And to address this, it is imperative to bring about the parity – in function, operational domain and control – among various service branches. From yet another perspective, this scheme can be seen as a structure where the present domain of generalist IAS is being divided in to four major domains – Human development, Economy and Industry, Revenue and Finance, and Environment and Resources – whereby officers then choose one of the domains as their choice of specialization, and then spent most of their service life in that particular domain. This too, is a valid interpretation. In all fairness, the schema detailed above can, indeed, be interpreted as a four-fold division of IAS in to broad domains, wherein, the present anomalous and subordinate status of other group A services has been remedied by merging/reconstituting them into one of these broad domains. From yet another and most important perspective, the specialist and generalist debate has been settled in the present scheme at a middle ground, where a 'specialized generalist' – falling somewhere between the two extreme – has been proposed as the solution, after a thorough analysis of structure and needs of a democratic, responsible and efficient governance mechanism. Accordingly, the existing branching structure is proposed to be realigned on the principles of constituting specialized generalist service branches. Thus, whatever be the approach and methodology of addressing the problem of generalist and specialist and other related inefficiencies of senior civil services in India, the recommendations and proposed solution seems to be substantially the same!

Further, it could be argued – and has been argued also on many occasions – that IAS is a premium service and needs to be treated as such (especially in light of their Constitutional mention). As I have already dealt with these kinds of arguments earlier, it will be sufficient

to mention that such contention is devoid of any merit and does not at all justifies the present system of unfair and exploitative organizational design. What is crucial here is to have a clear policy design and then creating a structure which is not only competitive and meritocratic, but also ensure fairness, and identify best possible person-responsibility fit. Certainly, there should be no need of maintaining and claiming a theoretical parity of different service branches, of maintaining that all group A services are equal, and paying a lip service to the idea of parity, fairness and equality of treatment and opportunity. If indeed, there is a felt need of having organized civil service cadre for union government functions and departments, service branches should be constituted, but at group B level, like state governments, who would then work under overall leadership of group A specialized generalist officers of the proposed six branches.

6.2 Fundamental Reforms and Government's Strategic Move

In the final analysis, this new fundamental reorganization can be conceived as a deep strategic move along three important axes, thereby carrying out visionary reforms in the leadership cadre of Indian governance and bureaucracy. These three axes can be represented as:

i. Specialized Generalist Branches for Broad Domains

The fundamental recognition of the importance of specialist knowledge as well as the need to have a broad-based generalist leadership philosophy is appropriately reflected through what has been proposed as a six-fold branching structure on the basis of 'broad domains'. This rescues the civil services from the present hodgepodge existence of one true-blue generalist branch, one or two broad domain-based specialist services, and some very narrow specialist branches; with lots of power politics, unfair and unjust treatment of one by another, inter-service rivalries and resulting infighting, demotivation, inefficiencies and cynicism. The structure proposed takes care of most of these issues by organically reconstituting branches as equally attractive broad domain-based services.

ii. Branches Spanning Federal, States and Local Boundaries

The above structure will be further streamlined and integrated by making all the six branches span the hierarchies of federal governance structure of India. Thus, these six branches would be common to central and state government, with officers manning leadership position in bureaucracy at all levels and units of federal India – central

government, state government and local government levels. This assignment of meaningful domains and responsibilities at different levels would also be accomplished by assigning the crucial DM posts at districts level to officers from all service branches.

iii. Spatial and Geographical Integration at National Level

Another aspect of the diversity and exposure can be taken care of by suitably modifying the present state cadre allocation system into a mechanism where officers of these branches are not confined to only one state cadre, which naturally limits their learning, exposure and experience. The different branches should have the inbuilt mechanism to move and shift officers to more than one state, as well as union/central government. And all the above changes should have inbuilt flexibility and mechanism for assignment of best person to the most appropriate responsibilities, followed by recognition of talent, domain expertise, efficiency and performance.

I do not wish to claim that the schema presented here is a finished product; it obviously is not! Let me invoke Thomas Sargent here, who rightly says 'when we do research, the idea is that you don't produce a finished produce. You produce an input. You write a paper with the hope that it will be superseded... Research is a living process involving other people'.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the recommendations and the reform schema presented in this essay appear to be the best possible solution for a fair, refurbished, effective and efficient institutional design. What is more, in many senses, these proposals have been able to combine two diametrically opposing approaches – and in the process, may be able to avoid the undesirable consequences of both these approaches to a large extent. The essence of this strategic redesign scheme, therefore, is of introducing fundamental, radical, and perhaps revolutionary reforms in the branching structure. Such radical reforms are generally achieved through accompanying suddenly imposed and often forced change from above, fundamental policy and accompanying institutional and organizational disruption, and concomitant costs. However, in these proposals, such fundamental reforms are being accomplished gradually and from within - through reorganization and modification of existing branches itself and by identifying broad domains for specialized generalist branches from an original position- leading to what may be called an 'evolutionary process' achieving 'revolutionary results'.

⁶⁴ Vroey Michel-De, A History of Macroeconomics – From Keynes to Lucas and Beyond (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 202 (reported as Klammer, 19784:74)

It is often been said that brilliant theories and ideas are those which at first seem ridiculous and later seem obvious! And to the sceptics who may find the present reform schema and design illogical, impractical and even ridiculous, I can do nothing more than to cite the previous line. However, it has also been said that ideas operate within a social setting and that ideas may be less meaningful to a people in a socially stable situation. Conversely, it is perhaps only in a relatively unsettled, disorderly society, where the questions come faster than men's answers, that ideas become truly vital and creative.⁶⁵ And I think we have already been facing barrage of questions on civil services structure which our conventional ideas and institutions are unable to respond to and answer. In fact, civil services and bureaucracy is now often identified as the 'binding constraint' shackling the Indian state from reaching the next level of growth and development potential.

6.3 Foxes or Hedgehogs, and the Continuous Quest for Bureaucratic Reforms

The principle as above applies to reform all areas which ails Indian bureaucracy today. Of course, the job of senior administrative executive in India today is made more difficult by the fact of particular historical, political and social structure under which it has to operate and deliver results. In the context of India, it has been noted that the conduct of the administration by impersonal rules and the separation of the official from the private go against the grain of a society in which personal bonds predominate.⁶⁶ In this backdrop, fundamental and visionary reforms of the type elaborated above, and similar other for other facets of civil services becomes all the more important.

Before ending, I would like to point out that this research is aimed at generating actionable and concrete policy recommendations for reforming the branching structure of the organized civil services of India, and therefore, the focus has remained on empirical, operational and practical aspects of the issue. However, I would not like to claim the findings as the final word; rather I would advance them modestly, perhaps even tentatively, fully realizing the possibilities of and need for further research, discussion and debate. Let me recall that more than two centuries ago, one of the founding fathers of United States of America, Alexander Hamilton, during the period of great national discussion and framing of American constitution, very aptly warned his countrymen

⁶⁵ Wood Gordon S, *The Idea of America – Reflections on the Birth of the United States*, 46

⁶⁶ Beteille Andre, *Ideology and Social Science* (New Delhi: Penguin Random House India, 2006), 267

about the chimerical pursuit of the perfect plan, and emphasized that he never expected to see a perfect plan from imperfect man.⁶⁷ The opening sentence of the preamble of US constitution also echoes the same sentiments of a gradualism and impracticality of searching for a perfect solution when it declares that 'We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union...'. Not *the perfect* union, but only *a more perfect* union (emphasis original).⁶⁸

I am not able to resist ending this essay by quoting another vignette about foxes which has come to us from famous mathematicians. It is said that when Jacobi⁶⁹ complained that Gauss's⁷⁰ mathematical proofs appeared unmotivated and difficult to comprehend, Gauss is said to have answered, 'You build the building and remove the scaffolding'. On this, Jacobi's now famous reply was, 'Gauss is a fox who effaces his tracks in the sand with his tail.'⁷¹ Jacobi was comparing Gauss to foxes who are found to have erased their footprints with their tails while walking so that following them becomes impossible/very difficult! Obviously, I would not like the foxes of this essay (or the hybrid of fox and hedgehog which has been conceived here) to have this felicity. The specialized generalist civil servant has to be an integral and important part of the larger institution of administrative executive in our constitutional democracy, where leaving one's tracks intact would be a required and mandated thing, not only for the benefit and learning of others and for building institutional memory but also for ensuring accountability, responsibility and transparency.

⁶⁷ Madison J, Hamilton A, Jay J., The Federalist Papers (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1987; First published 1788, Penguin edition Editor – Isaac Kramnick), 484

⁶⁸ Himmelfarb Gertrude, The Roads to Modernity – The British, French and American Enlightenment (London: Vintage Books, 2008), 226

⁶⁹ Carl Gustav Jacob Jacobi (1804-1851) was a German mathematician.

⁷⁰ Carl Fredrich Gauss (1777-1855) too was a German mathematician.

⁷¹ Hubbard John H, Hubbard Barbara B, Vector Calculus, Linear Algebra and Differential Forms – A Unified Approach, 4thEd, (New York: Matrix Editions, 2009), 4

STRUCTURE AND SIZE OF INDIAN GOVERNMENT AND BUREAUCRACY

Let us have some data about the size of government in India. 'Governments' in India – I am using the plural to indicate that there are two levels of governments in India (Union or Central or Federal government and then State or provincial governments) - are the largest organized sector employer, employing as much as 10.5 million people directly as civilian employees (that means it excludes the armed forces), most of whom are permanent. This is around 1% of total population of India. It may also be noted that this number does not include teachers employed in public education system including in the higher education in public universities. Going further deeper, out of these around 10.5 million people, central government employs around 3.7 million persons. Out of this, around 1.5 million are with railways and 0.4 million are with posts alone. All 29 states governments in India together employ remaining around 6.8 million persons, in various line departments, executing agencies and other organizations.

Out of 10.5 million government employees with Central and State government, the senior management level (which may be equated with what in India is called Group A employees) forms only around 1% (around 100,000) and out of this, around 40% constitutes what is called 'senior civil services', with which we are concerned here. The remaining 60% of so constitutes what generally is called managerial/professional cadre of 'technical services' like medical doctors, scientists, engineers in roads, buildings, public health, communications, scientific and research and infrastructural departments, etc.

To be more specific, the civil service institution in India is organized on hierarchical lines with well-defined structure, with detailed process based organizations, and with specified roles and responsibilities as well as salary and perquisites. In governmental structure, four broad hierarchies of employees are defined. They are called (quite unimaginatively) group A, B, C and D level employees, with D being the lowest. The government posts are thus divided in to these groups according to rank and responsibility of its officials. Within each group, there are again hierarchies and levels. Generally, group A and B category posts are managerial level positions, and Group C and D categories provide the crucial executive and clerical support. However, recently, government of India has decided to abolish the

lowest group D (in fact this group has been merged with group C) and has also decided that it would henceforth be employing only people with at least high school education (Department of Expenditure, 2008). The decision to recruit people with only high school (10th grade) education (and outsource jobs which require lesser or no education) has been protested and criticized, on the grounds of it being iniquitous and elitist, as it leaves the less educated to the vagaries of unorganized sector and private sector employment, which is widely seen as exploitative. The argument has some merit as access to universal school education in India is still far away - and children have widely differing opportunity for access and quality of schooling which is closely correlated with their socio-economic status.

In terms of numbers, as we have seen above, group A forms around 1% of total employees, and are mostly the top management level functionaries. Further, around 10% forms group B, around 55-60% are in group C and remaining 30-34% are in group D.⁷² Recruitment of group B (and some group C) federal government employees is done by another national agency called 'Staff Selection Commission' through open competitive examination process for different ministries/department. In case of state government civil services, all the states have their own 'Public Service Commissions' and 'staff selection commission' which recruits civil servants for group B and C, mostly through open competitive examinations. Recruitment of group D (as well as, in many cases, group C) employees is generally decentralized to respective departments/executive agencies in the state government.

There is a complex, though structured way of organizing and managing these different categories of employees. Direct recruitment of young people through open competition examinations is made at entry level of each group, i.e., group A, B and C. In addition, at each of these three entry levels, some proportion of recruitment is made from amongst promotion of employees belonging to immediately lower level, largely on the basis of seniority. This recruitment through promotion quota varies anywhere from 25% to 75%, with promotion quota in group A rarely going above 50%. The idea behind this is to have a mix of not only young people but also experienced people at all three/four levels of employees in the bureaucratic hierarchy. This structure coupled with permanent employment and seniority-based promotions also ensures proper career progression and promotional opportunities. It should also be noted that the present system does not have

⁷² Ministry of Labour – Government of India, Based on Census of Central Government Employees, (New Delhi: Government of India, 2003) and other documents, available at www.labour.nic.in

any structured system of lateral entry, in the sense that at none of the entry levels in group A, B or C, a person from non-governmental sector, who has worked earlier in some other private or academic or other sector, is allowed to enter. Entry for outsider at all these levels is open only to fresh (young) candidates who possess requisite educational qualifications and are less than 30 years (in most cases) of age (and thus need not have any work experience).

This essay is about the reform in the 'civil servant' part of the top 1% employees of the government which are, as explained above, called 'group A civil servants'. Despite a tiny fraction, this group is the most important as the national and state governance, administration, policy, program and projects and all other initiatives are coordinated, managed, directed and controlled by these small group of executive managers.

BRANCHING THE SENIOR BUREAUCRACY THE 'SERVICES' CONCEPT

This policy analysis is focused on the highest cohort of civil services, called group A civil services. There are many 'branches' of this group A civil services, which should not be confused with line or functional departments, as they often are responsible for a particular narrow specialized function within a department or functional domain. In other cases, like in case of policing and administration, the services transcend the narrow specialized functional areas, and are generalist in their nature and constitution. Thus, these Branches, called 'services' in India, are organized cadre of civil servants (officers, not agencies) grouped largely on the basis of functional areas. The DoPT also defines a services as a unifunctional group – being a group of posts belonging to a unique functional area.⁷³ There branches are organized as closed group and form a cadre of permanent civil servants, who perform and work in some particular functional area (often a department or sub-department), are organized in hierarchical fashion, get promotion largely on the basis of seniority, do compete among themselves, and where entry to outsiders is not allowed. It should also be mentioned that a 'service' is never coterminous with any department or agency. Even when a particular 'service' is created to take care of a very specialized function within a department, it is not coterminous with department's total staff. This is so because the 'service' is constituted only by group A employees (or the senior, managerial level employees) of that department. To illustrate, IRS-IT officers constitute around 7% of total employees' strength of Income Tax Department of Government of India which has a total strength of around seventy thousand permanent employees.

Thus, we have services named Indian Police Service (IPS), Indian Revenue Service-Income Tax (IRS-IT), etc, members of each of which generally spend most of their career in the respective functional areas in different line departments and executive agencies as well as in policy making ministries. However, the IAS does not fit this bill – it is a generalist branch and span a wide functional domain. Although, the service branches are not to be equated with a particular department of the government, many of them do spend most of their career working in one department or even a sub-department. Thus, the 'services' and resulting branching structure of Indian senior bureaucracy is a highly muddled grouping

⁷³ DoPT - Government of India, The Services Concept (New Delhi: Government of India – Department of Personnel and Training, 2000) available at <http://www.persmin.nic.in/DOPT/CSWing/CRDivision/2.1.2.html>

of officers, which ranges the full spectrum of the continuum. Thus, we have, on the one hand, highly specialized functional domains like income tax and telecommunication account represented by 'services' to more general and broader functional domains like policing and diplomacy having their own 'services', to the other extreme, where IAS stands function as the true generalist 'service' – playing the ball in all areas, whether in accounting, diplomacy or policing.

Table below gives a snapshot of the various services and their broad functions. The list is based on the latest service listing of DoPT (Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India), and it can be seen that there are around twenty-three major 'services' branches totalling to around forty thousand officers. Some of them are very small in size, created for some specialized functional requirements. IAS is the most prominent branch, being in charge of virtually all the state government functions and widely present at federal government ministries. IAS, IPS and IFoS are assigned to various state governments – called state 'cadre' - and work in that particular state's line departments in domains/areas assigned to states, other services are being managed by federal government and are performing functions assigned to federal government in accordance with division of power enshrined in Constitution of India.

As can be seen from the table below, except for few well know service branches, there are other services which have been created for specialized purpose and are confined largely to a ministry/department or specialized function. These services are not well known, not much preferred by the candidates appearing in the examination (IAS being the most preferred choice, followed by IFS, IPS and now IRS too, generally in that order). In a sense, all those candidates being allocated to less preferred services face a vastly different career prospects, responsibilities and exposure, as well as future outlook.

Table 1: Civil Service Branches and Functions

Branch/Services **	Approx. No.	Main functions/domain
Indian Administrative Service (IAS)	Six thousand	The most important and most widely known service. They are responsible for district and local administration, and State level general and developmental administration. It should be noted that in India, most of the administrative and developmental functions are performed by states, and thus IAS officers work at leadership roles in vast array of functional

		domains from healthcare to engineering to transport etc. They also work at senior position in policies, regulations and management at Central government organizations/miniseries too.
Indian Police Service (IPS)	Five thousand	IPS officers are responsible for policing, maintenance of law and order, internal security, public safety, public order and peace, crime, investigation and intelligence, supervision of para-military forces, disaster management and public safety. IPS is another high profile and very popular service, next only to IAS in terms of importance, prestige and visibility.
Indian Revenue Service-IT (IRS-IT)	Five thousand	IRS-IT is a service with large number of officers. The responsibility consists of collection of direct taxes of central government - which is mainly income tax.
Indian Revenue Service -CE (IRS-CE)	Four thousand	IRS-CE are also large in terms of numbers, and are responsible for collection of Indirect taxes of central government - customs, and central GST. It should be noted that IRS-CE do not manage state tax department (erstwhile VAT or commercial taxes, now GST departments).
Indian Forest Service (IFoS)@	Two thousand eight hundred	Environment protection, forest and management of flora and fauna, mainly at state and district governments. IFoS officers also work in good number at central government ministries, especially those concerned with environment, climate, forest, wildlife, energy etc.
Railways Services: ● Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS), ● Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS),	Three thousand	There are three 'civil' services branches responsible for running the huge Indian railways. These three services of railways are responsible for management of civil functions (as opposed to technical/ engineering) of the railway's operations;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS) 		In terms of 'service' organization, these are completely separate services, with identified posts, and independent structure, hierarchies and progression.
Accounts Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS), ● Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS), ● Indian Post and Telegraph Account and Finance Service (IPTA&FS) 	Two thousand eight hundred	Accounts, Treasury and financial management of Federal government departments; There is one department specific branch (IPTAFS) and two rather general branch (ICAS and IDAS), one each for civil and defence sectors of the government.
Indian Ordnance Factories Service (IOFS)	One and half thousand	Responsible for managing ordnance and armament manufacturing for defence forces
Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IAAS)	Nine hundred	The service to operate Controller and Auditor General of India (CAG). The service is thus, auditor of the government, both - central as well as states. In addition, IAAS are also accountants to state government (thus being accounting service for state governments)
Indian Foreign Service (IFS)	Seven hundred	Diplomatic and foreign relations, in-charge of foreign ministry, embassies, consulates etc., and responsible for protecting and advancing India's interest in the world
Indian Postal Service (IPoS)	Six hundred	In charge of India postal organization
Indian Information Service (IIS)	Five hundred	Looking after Information and Broadcasting ministry, in-charge of Doordarshan, Air India, government publications and similar other organizations

Indian Economic Service (IES) @	Six hundred	Economic advisory, economic analysis and policy, present in various federal ministries as economic advisers
Indian Statistical Service (ISS) @	Eight hundred	Data collection, analysis and dissemination. Mainly in central statistical organizations
Indian Corporate Law Service (ICLS)	Three hundred	A new civil service, since 2008, for Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
Indian Trade Service (ITS)	Two hundred	National and international trade and commerce - regulation and promotion
Indian Defence Estate Services (IDES)	Two hundred	Managing defence estate and properties
Central Secretariat Service Gp B (CSS)	Three thousand five	Group B service running all the ministries at central government, mostly below IAS hundred
Delhi and Andaman Nicobar Civil Services Gr B (DANICS)	Four hundred	Group B services akin to IAS for Union territories, including Delhi
Delhi and Andaman Nicobar Police Service Gr B (DANIPS)	Four hundred	Group B service akin to IPS for Union territories, including Delhi

Explanatory Notes

Source Compiled from Information available at Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India website, www.persmin.nic.in (2017)

@ These services are considered as civil services, truly so. However, it needs to be pointed out that the recruitment to these services is not carried out through common Civil Services Examination of UPSC, but through separate specialized examinations (though the examination is conducted by UPSC only).

** The above list is not exhaustive, and there are few more services with small cadre, which have been created by Government of India at different times. Further, the number of officers is only approximate, and the reality may be slightly different, especially in case of smaller services for which < sign has been used. The last three services in the table are Group B services, which generally are junior to IAS, though are recruited through the common Civil Services Examination.

Distinction is also made by DoPT of what is called three 'All India Service' (comprising of IAS, IPS and IFoS) vis-a-vis the "Central Services", comprising all other branches. It is coming from the Constitution of India where Chapter XIV, Articles 309 to 313 talks about three types of services, namely 'All India Service', 'civil service of the Union' and 'civil service of a State', and that the All India Service would be common to the Union and the States. Thus, the basic feature of this distinction being that All India services are allocated a particular state as cadre and work either within that state government or on deputation with central government. On the other hand, Central Services officers work exclusively (though there may be exception) with central government organizations / ministry and can be posted or shifted/rotated throughout India during their service career. This is again largely a distinction which has more often than not been used to institute various kinds of unfair and unjustified privileges to IAS.

The table below list what are called 'technical services', recruitment to which is generally done through Engineering Services Examination, and they are also termed as organized group A services – 'technical' not 'civil'. Traditionally and officially, these are not considered as a part of 'Civil Services'. They manage most of the technical function of the government, but are supervised on top mostly by IAS officers. The list is again not exhaustive, but illustrative. What should be notable from the list is the fact that many of these services have been constituted to cater to some narrow functional specialization within a particular department. Some names may be sounding as completely arcane and dead – from example, Indian Radio Regulatory Service – why the hell we need such a service?

Table 2: Technical Service Branches

Indian Railway Service of Engineers	Central Engineering Service (CPWD)
Indian Railway Service of Mech. Engineers	Central Power Engineering Service
Indian Railway Service of Elect. Engineers	Indian Supply Service
Indian Telecommunication Service	Indian Inspection Service
Indian Railway Stores Service	P&T Building and Works Service
Central Engineering Service (Roads)	Central Architect Service (CPWD)
Central Water Engineering Service	Indian Radio Regulatory Service
Indian Defence Service of Engineers	Indian Legal Service

Central Geological Service	Indian Meteorological Service
Indian Corporate Law Service	Defence Quality Assurance Service
Central Health Service	ITBP Health Service

The total cadre strength of these technical services shows even wider variations than Civil services. It is as much as nine thousand for Indian Telecommunication Service and Central Health Service, and as low as ninety for Indian Supply Service.

To further confuse and muddle itself as well as the public at large, DoPT has also used another terminology where it has called different services as 'non-technical', 'technical', 'health', and 'other' services⁷⁴ and has listed a total of 61 services under these four categories. The three 'All India services', namely IAS, IPS and IFoS has not been included in any of these categories. What is more bizarre is inclusion of certain 'organizations'/'departments' as 'service' mainly in 'other' service category. For example, Central Industrial Security Force, Indo Tibetan Boarder Police and Boarder Security Force have been included as 'services'. Thus, there is only a very limited purpose for which these classifications and distinction can be useful. More often than not, they reflect the careless, confused and unprofessional approach towards understanding organizational design and structure in the higher echelon of government machinery, and thus highlight even more starkly the need for comprehensive reform, reorganization and redesigning of branching structure of Indian civil services, among many other similar reforms.

⁷⁴ DoPT- Government of India, Office Memorandum No. I-11019/5/2017-CRD dated 3 April 2017 (New Delhi: Department of Personnel and Training, Government of India)

THE HOMO HIERARCHICUS IN CIVIL SERVICES

Separate branches of civil services act as separate 'cadre' for the purpose of service management like seniority, career progression, promotions, performance management, postings and rotation etc, though there is also an underlying structure to maintain parity among services in such matters. Promotions are mainly based on seniority, with the condition that an officer has been performing above a certain minimum benchmark - judged on the basis of her annual performance report prepared by her superior, and has not been found involved in corrupt practices or unfit due to other reasons.

To an outsider, what is remarkable is the immutable hierarchies in the structure. There are 'grades' in the hierarchy across different services with stipulation of minimum eligibility in terms of number of years of service rendered to be eligible for promotion to that level. However, the 'designation' varies depending upon the organization, ministry and the level of government (federal or state) a bureaucrat is working for. These hierarchies of career progression are functional with different levels of administrative responsibilities and it is possible to identify these with Henry Mintzberg's famous Five Component Model having levels of Junior, Middle and Higher Management levels along with Strategic Apex,⁷⁵ though the number of levels in India system are certainly too many.

It is interesting to note here French philosopher Louis Dumont's famous phrase popularized by his book titled 'Homo Hierarchicus' – describing the ingrained basic nature of Indian society and its penchant for hierarchy.⁷⁶ The reference to notorious caste system was obvious. The same penchant seems to be playing a part in the demarcation and division of different levels as 'grades' in a strictly hierarchical terms, with stipulation of eligibility criteria in terms of number of years of service, movement upward (or even downward) restricted by rigid rules etc. Further, this promotion system operates like a long queue, wherein the queue is formed the day one entered/joined the service branch, which fixes her position in the hierarchy, and then all officers move forward strictly as per their position in the queue, with no jumping allowed! What is distressing is to note that

⁷⁵ Mintzberg Henry, *The Structuring of Organizations* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1979), 215-297

⁷⁶ Dumont Louis, *Homo Hierarchicus – The Caste System and Its Implications*, Rev. Ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)

how the hierarchy has been designed as a rigid and closed structure, with not much leeway and flexibility for identifying merit, performance and talent. In some senses, there might be some benefits of an organized and structured system, protecting officers from prejudices and arbitrary actions of their bosses, but in reality, these often result into fomenting all kinds of bottlenecks and inefficiencies in the whole system. An obsession with the design and structure itself, to the detriment of its intended goals, results and delivery, is a good example of being bogged down persistently in ensuring fair 'means' without ever reaching the intended 'end'.

An attempt has been made to represent this hierarchical structure in a stylized manner in the table below. It gives a highly simplified and stylized division of grades and hierarchy in the higher civil services. It may also be noted that there are separate hierarchy for junior level civil servants (what is called Group B and C posts) too, which is not part of our discussion here, and therefore, is not shown in the Table 3 below.

Before we move to the table, some detailing and explaining is necessary. There is a standard terminology of designations for different 'grades' that the DoPT, Government of India prescribes and defines (column 1 and 2). It categorizes the hierarchies into different grades and designations, and there are as many as eight grades in group A category itself, which is supposed to be the leadership level consisting of around 1% of total civil servants/employees in Government of India. Eight hierarchical grades in the leadership levels are certainly too many, and any organization with such structure would be bound to be inefficient, excessively bureaucratic and stifling. However, the situation is not as bad as it appears, because all these eight levels are not strictly hierarchical in terms of reporting structure. So, the reporting hierarchy is generally four – which is achieved by creating non-reporting grade levels, and the promotion among these levels is called 'non-functional'. These non-functional levels generally appear alternately in hierarchy. In that sense, the promotion among these consecutive non-functional levels is largely notional, with the officers promoted continuing to do the same work, reporting to the same higher level, and supervising the same team of people. For example, in the table below, movement or promotion from Junior Administrative Grade to Selection Grade are non-functional, whereby Deputy Secretary does not report to Director, but both of them report to Joint Secretary. Further, Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary are also mostly non-functional. However, the system also allows for sufficient leeway to different organizations, department and governments. Therefore, there are cases where promotion

from JAG to SG is functional, in the sense that officer at JAG level will be reporting to an officer at SG level. Even with Government of India, there are ministries and departments (mostly large ones) where a reporting/functional hierarchy exist between Joint Secretary (SAG) and Additional Secretary (HAG). In the table below, the IPS hierarchy shows this too, wherein two or more rows of grades are merged. Similarly, in the case of IAS, the officers can be District Magistrate while being in any of the grades of STS, JAG and SG.

The lowest grade, JTS, is the entry level grade for group A civil servants, where they do not spend much time. By the 4th year, they enter into STS grade from where leadership assignments and responsibilities for them start. It should be noted that out of the four years in JTS, almost two years are spent in training at LBSNAA and various specialized national training academies for different service branches.

Column 2 shows the number of years required for an officer to reach/be promoted to that particular grade level. Thus, an officer becomes/gets promotion to SAG level after serving for 17 years. However, the actual reality is not that simple. The calculation of completed years of service is different for IAS and other services. Further, not in all cases and at all grades, promotions are time bound. In many cases of functional promotion for non-IAS services, the promotion is vacancy based. In that sense, the year scale in the table below should be taken as showing the number of years when officers become eligible for promotion to the corresponding grade. Loosely, it can be said that the non-functional promotions are mostly time bound whereas the functional ones are vacancy based for non-IAS branches.

Table 3: Stylised Grades and Levels of Senior Civil Services

Standard Grades	Standard Designations (Govt. of India)	Years Needed to Reach	Pay matrix level	State govt. designations (mostly for IAS) (##)	IPS designation (#)	IRS-CE/ IRS-IT designation (\$\$)
Apex Scale ^	Secretary/ Special Secretary	Sel.	17	Chief Secretary/ Addl. Chief Secretary	Director General	Pr. Chief Commissioner
Higher Administrative Grade + (HAG+)	Special Secretary	Sel.	16	\$	Addl. Director General (ADG)	Chief Commissioner
Higher Administrative Grade (HAG)	Additional Secretary	25	15	Principal Secretary		Principal Commissioner

Senior Administrative Grade (SAG)	Joint Secretary	17	14	Secretary/ Commissioner		Inspector General (IG)	Commissioner
Selection Grade (SG)	Director	13	13	District Magistrate @@	Special Secretary	Deputy Inspector General (DIG)@	Addl. Commissioner
Junior Administrative Grade (JAG)	Deputy Secretary	9	12		Addl. Secretary	Sr. Supdt. of Police (SSP)/ Supdt. of Police (SP)	Joint Commissioner
Senior Time Scale (STS)	Under Secretary	4	11		Joint Secretary		Deputy Commissioner
Junior Time Scale (JTS)	Asst. Secretary	0	10	Deputy Secretary/ SDO/ SDM/ADM		SDPO/Addl. SP	Asst. Commissioner

Explanatory Notes

The designations are mostly what would be found in a state ministry, thought it should be noted that there might be some variations in different states.

@@ District Magistrate (DM)/Deputy Commissioner (DC) who is in charge of running a district, will be an IAS officer from any of the grades from STS, JAG and SG.

Again, designations of IPS officers are not standard, and there may be slight variations across different states

^ There is again subtle distinction within Apex scale. While pay of the officers in this scale would be the same (pay matrix level 17), but in terms of designation and hierarchy, there will be difference, and the lower one would be called a Special Secretary level, often even reporting to the Secretary level officer. For example, IPS officers in Apex Scale as DG of CRPF report to Home Secretary (an IAS officer) who is also in the same scale.

@ To be correct, DIG is not a SG level post, but an intermediary level above SG and below SAG (pay matrix level 13A) which is unique to IPS, and in all probability created mainly to take care of promotions of IPS officers.

\$ There is no post at SAG+ level for IAS officers in states. IAS officers are directly promoted from HAG level to Apex Scale in sufficient numbers. This scale has

specially been introduced to accommodate other services, perhaps to slow them down from reaching the Apex Scale.

\$\$ The designation of IRS officers looks quite neat and clean, with a distinct designation for every grade. But this may be a result of excessive obsession with hierarchy and order and may have reduced the much-needed flexibility in the organizational design and management practices.

Sel. These levels are mostly, what is called, selection posts, where officers are not promoted just on the basis seniority. Again, this is a generalization, and there may be, and are few, exceptions.

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