

UPSC CSE MAINS · OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Public Administration

Optional · Paper I

Part A · Administrative Theory, Units 1 to 5

Complete notes on Introduction, Administrative Thought, Administrative Behaviour, Organisations, and Accountability and Control, with diagrams, Indian examples and topic-wise previous year questions.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

5

SYLLABUS UNITS

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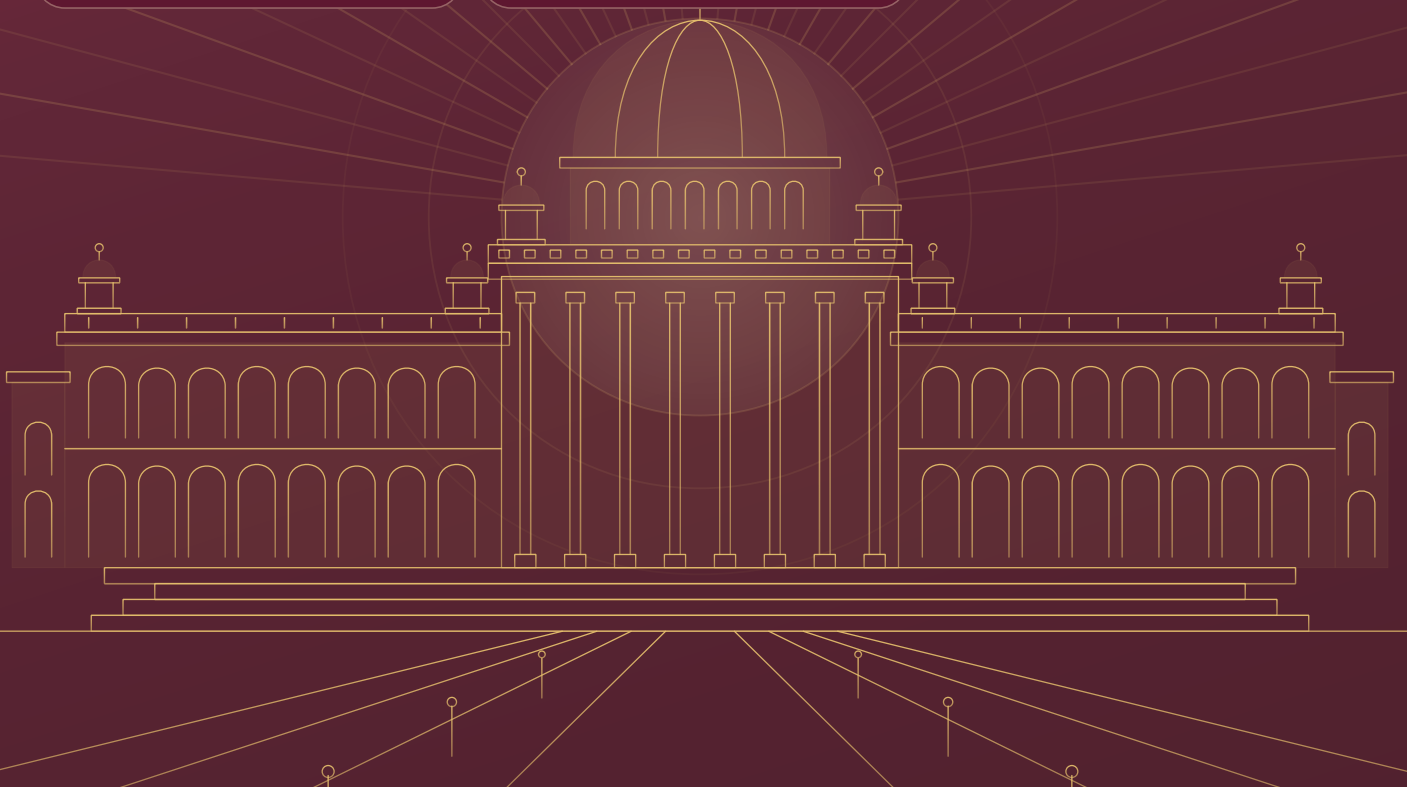
CHAPTERS

595

PYQS 1987-2026

134

DIAGRAMS

01 Introduction**02** Administrative Thought**03** Administrative Behaviour**04** Organisations**05** Accountability and Control



Public Administration Optional — Paper I

Part A: Administrative Theory, Units 1 to 5

Mains 2027 Edition · Compiled October 2026

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UNIT 01

5 CHAPTERS

110 PYQS

Introduction

Meaning, scope and significance of Public Administration; Wilson's vision of Public Administration; Evolution of the discipline and its present status; New Public Administration; Public Choice approach; Challenges of liberalization, Privatisation, Globalisation; Good Governance: concept and application; New Public Management.

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL

PAPER I · PART A

Meaning, Scope and Significance of Public Administration: Nature, Approaches, Public vs Private

Public administration is the part of government that ordinary people actually meet: the ration shop, the police station, the passport office, the school, the vaccination camp. Laws and policies are only words until an organised body of officials turns them into services, permits, payments and protection. As a **discipline**, public administration studies how that machinery is organised, how it works, whom it serves and how it is held to account.

SYLLABUS Introduction: Meaning, scope and significance of Public Administration; Wilson's vision of Public Administration; Evolution of the discipline and its present status; New Public Administration; Public Choice approach; Challenges of liberalization, Privatisation, Globalisation; Good Governance: concept and application; New Public Management.

THIS CHAPTER Meaning, scope and significance of Public Administration, with its nature (integral and managerial views, art or science), the public-private distinction, its ties with politics and the other social sciences, and why its importance keeps growing.

CONTENTS

01	What "Administration" Means	02	What Makes Administration "Public"
03	The Nature of Public Administration	04	Scope of Public Administration
05	Public and Private Administration	06	Politics and Administration: A Reciprocal Relationship
07	Significance of Public Administration	08	Key Terms
09	Commissions, Committees and Judgments	10	Contemporary Developments
11	Revision Grid	12	Previous Year Questions

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · INTRODUCTION

Topic map

Meaning, Scope and Significance

Eight questions that together define the subject

1 · Meaning

Administration = **co-operative effort** + **common purpose**

2 · What is "public"?

Branch, policy, purpose, **tax money**; ownership, funding, control

3 · Nature

Integral or **managerial**; art and science

8 · Identity debate

Locus and focus; **contextual**, always reinvented

Public Administration
Government in action

4 · Scope

POSDCORB + subject matter: the two blades

7 · Significance

Basis of government, development, **crisis manager**

6 · Politics link

Reciprocal: politics made **real** for citizens

5 · Public vs private

Shared techniques, **different values**

In simple words: what it is, what it covers, how it differs and why it matters.

Public Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Parliament can pass a law giving every child a free school place, but the child gets a seat only when a district officer counts the children, a department hires the teachers, a treasury releases the money and a headteacher opens the gate. All of that "making it happen" is public administration.

01 What "Administration" Means

IN SIMPLE WORDS

To administer is to look after something on someone else's behalf and get it done. Whenever people work together towards a common goal, someone has to plan, divide the work, arrange the money and check the results. That activity is administration, whether it happens in a firm, a hospital or a ministry.

1.1 The word and the idea

- **Origin of the word:** *administer* comes from the Latin **ad + ministrare**, "to serve" or "to manage". The root idea is **service**: managing affairs for others, not for oneself.
- **E.N. Gladden**, the British writer on public administration, called it "a long and slightly pompous word" with a humble meaning: **to care for or look after people and to manage affairs**.
- **Two elements** run through every definition:
 - a **co-operative effort** (more than one person is involved), and
 - a **common purpose** (the effort is directed at a known goal).
- **Administration is universal.** It is found in every organised setting: a business firm, a university, a hospital, a temple trust, a government department. This is why administration is often called the **genus**, with public and private administration as two **species** of it.
- **Many meanings at once.** The British scholar **Andrew Dunsire**, in *Administration: The Word and the Science* (1973), listed **fifteen** distinct meanings of the word in English, from "help or service" to "the government of the day" to "clerical record-keeping". The word is slippery because it is used for an **activity**, a **set of people**, a **process** and an **academic subject**.

1.2 Classic definitions of administration

The definitions below differ in emphasis, but together they show what the activity involves.

THINKER	DEFINITION (CORE IDEA)	WHAT IT STRESSES
Luther Gulick	Administration "has to do with getting things done; with the accomplishment of defined objectives"	Results
Herbert Simon	The activities of groups co-operating to accomplish common goals	Co-operation
Felix A. Nigro	The organisation and use of men and materials to accomplish a purpose	Resources
L.D. White	The art of administration is the direction, co-ordination and control of many persons to achieve some purpose	Control of people
J.M. Pfiffner	The organisation and direction of human and material resources to achieve desired ends	Organising resources
Dwight Waldo	"A type of co-operative human effort that has a high degree of rationality "	Rational co-operation
Henri Fayol	Administration is one of six activities in a firm (technical, commercial, financial, security, accounting, administrative); it must not be confused with government , which steers all six	Administration as a function

Read together, these definitions show that administration is **purposive** (it serves a goal), **collective** (it involves many people), **rational** (it chooses means to fit ends) and **continuous** (it does not stop once a decision is made).

1.3 Administration, organisation and management

Three words are often used as if they meant the same thing. Early writers separated them carefully.

- **Oliver Sheldon**, the British manager-philosopher, in *The Philosophy of Management* (1923):
 - **Administration** decides the **policy** and the broad objectives.
 - **Management** carries out that policy within the limits administration sets.
 - **Organisation** is the **machine** (the structure of people and tasks) through which management works.
 - In his words, administration determines the organisation; management uses it.
- **William Schulze** made the same split: administration is the force that **lays down the object**; organisation is the **combination** of people, tools and space brought together for it; management **leads and guides** the organisation towards it.
- **The medical image: organisation is anatomy** (the structure) and **management is physiology** (how the structure works). **Waldo** said organisation and management are “merely convenient categories of analysis... One is **static and seeks pattern**; the other is **dynamic and follows movement**.”

COMMON CONFUSION

Is “administration” higher or lower than “management”? It depends on the tradition. In the older British usage (Sheldon, Schulze), **administration** is the higher, policy-setting function and **management** executes it. In American business usage, **management** is often the broader word and “administration” means routine office work. In public administration, “administration” is used in the wide sense: the whole process of carrying out public policy, including its management. When a question uses the terms, define them first.

02 What Makes Administration “Public”

IN SIMPLE WORDS

A shop and a government hospital both have managers, staff and budgets. The hospital is “public” because it runs on tax money, works under laws made by elected representatives, must treat everyone equally and can be questioned in the legislature and the courts. “Public” is about who owns it, who pays for it, whose interest it serves and who can hold it to account.

2.1 Four ways of defining public administration

Scholars have defined public administration from four starting points. Each captures something real, and each has a weakness.

Four Ways to Define Public Administration

Each starting point captures something real and misses something

By branch of government

Executive only (**Simon, Gulick**) or all three branches (**Nigro**)
Misses: committees, courts, contractors

By public law and policy

Execution of public law (**Wilson**); enforcing public policy (**White**)
Misses: the gap between law and practice

By purpose

Public interest, justice, the **good life (White)**
Misses: it is an ideal, not a fact

By money

Anything **financed by the taxpayer**
Misses: private bodies with public impact



Dimensions of "public" (Henry)

Agency

Interest

Access

Publicness by degree (Bozeman)

Ownership

Funding

Control

In simple words: "public" is about who acts, who pays, who gains and who controls.

Public Administration

(a) By the branch of government it belongs to

- **Broad view (all three branches):** public administration covers the work of the **legislature, executive and judiciary** and their inter-relationships.
 - **W.F. Willoughby**, the early American scholar of budgeting, gave two senses: "In its **broadest** sense, it denotes the work involved in the actual conduct of governmental affairs, regardless of the particular branch of government concerned... In its **narrowest** sense, it denotes the operations of the **administrative branch only**." He himself preferred the narrow sense and even called administration a "**fourth branch**" of government.
 - **Nigro and Nigro** (*Modern Public Administration*) take the broad view: public administration "covers all three branches".
- **Narrow view (executive only):** **Simon** ("the activities of the executive branches of the national, state and local governments"), **Gulick, Gladden, Fritz Morstein Marx** and **Ordway Tead** limit it to the executive.
- **Weakness:** the branch test is formal. Parliamentary committees (the **Public Accounts Committee**, the **Estimates Committee**) and court administration are clearly administrative work, so the narrow view leaves gaps; the broad view makes the field vague.

(b) By public policy and law

- **Woodrow Wilson**, in *The Study of Administration* (1887): public administration is "detailed and systematic **execution of public law**. Every particular application of general law is an act of administration." It is "**government in action**", "the most obvious part of government".

- **L.D. White**, in *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration* (1926), the first textbook of the field: public administration "consists of all those **operations having for their purpose the fulfilment or enforcement of public policy.**"
- **John A. Vieg**: it embraces every area and activity governed by public policy.
- **Weakness**: stated policy and real practice can differ. A law may forbid bribery while practice makes it routine; many laws on the statute book are never enforced. A definition built only on formal policy is **formalistic**, and especially misleading in developing societies where actual behaviour departs from the legal script. This gap is what **Fred Riggs** later called **formalism** (see the chapter on comparative public administration).

(c) By purpose: the public interest and the good life

- **White** described the ends of administration as "the maintenance of peace and order, the progressive achievement of justice, the instruction of the young, protection against disease and insecurity, the adjustment and compromise of conflicting groups and interests, in short, the **attainment of the good life**".
- **Fritz Morstein Marx** wanted public administration to re-affirm its role as "an agency of **unity and justice**".
- **Weakness**: this is **normative** (it says what administration ought to be). A dictatorship's administration does not pursue the good life, and even in a democracy citizens sometimes experience administration as harassment.

(d) By money and control: anything financed by the taxpayer

- Public administration covers all activities **financed wholly or substantially by the taxpayer**, whoever carries them out.
- This brings in **government companies, public corporations, aided institutions and contractors** delivering public schemes.
- **Weakness**: it does not explain why a privately owned electricity utility, which serves the whole city and is closely regulated, also raises "public" questions. Some writers therefore include any administration with a **considerable impact on the public**.

Composite definitions try to combine these angles:

- **Nigro and Nigro's five features**: public administration (i) is a **co-operative group effort in a public setting**; (ii) covers **all three branches** and their inter-relationships; (iii) has an important role in **formulating public policy** and is thus part of the political process; (iv) is **different in significant ways from private administration**; and (v) is closely associated with **numerous private groups and individuals** in providing services.
- **David Rosenbloom**: public administration is "the use of **managerial, political and legal theories and processes** to fulfil legislative, executive and judicial governmental mandates for the provision of **regulatory and service functions** for the society as a whole or for some segments of it."
- **Nicholas Henry**: "a broad-ranging and amorphous combination of **theory and practice**", whose purpose is to promote a superior understanding of government and its relationship with society, to encourage policies more responsive to social needs, and to institute managerial practices attuned to effectiveness, efficiency and the deeper human requirements of citizens.
- **Donald Kettl and James Fesler**, in *The Politics of the Administrative Process*: public administration is "the **translation of politics into reality that citizens see every day**". They organise the whole field around three

themes: **politics** (every administrative detail allocates values), **performance** (getting things done well and cheaply) and **accountability** (answerability to whom, for what).

“The immediate effect of all one-sentence or one-paragraph definitions of public administration is mental paralysis rather than enlightenment and stimulation.” — Dwight Waldo

- **Frederick Mosher** went further: “Perhaps it is best that it **not be defined**. It is more an **area of interest** than a discipline, more a **focus** than a separate science... It is necessarily **cross-disciplinary**.” The overlapping, vague boundaries, he argued, should be seen as a **resource**, not a defect.

2.2 The meaning of “public”

The word “public” itself has been unpacked in two influential ways.

Henry’s three dimensions of publicness (drawing on the political theorists Bann and Gaus):

DIMENSION	QUESTION IT ASKS	PUBLIC END	PRIVATE END
Agency	On whose behalf does the actor act?	An official acting for the community	An individual acting for herself
Interest	Who gains and who loses?	Every member of the community	The owners and members only
Access	How open are its spaces, meetings, information and resources?	Open to all	Closed to outsiders

Three ways of locating “public” in the history of the discipline (Henry):

- **Institutional definition:** “public” means **government agencies** on the official organisation chart. This dominated early thinking (about 70 per cent of books on public organisations took this view). Privatisation and NGOs made it inadequate.
- **Philosophic (normative) definition:** “public” means whatever affects the **public interest**. So the defence ministry’s contract with a private aircraft maker is a public administration subject. Its weakness is vagueness: one person’s public interest is not another’s.
- **Organisational definition:** research from the late 1970s showed the decisive difference is how strongly the **outside environment** (citizens, legislators, interest groups, courts, media) penetrates and shapes the organisation’s resources, processes and mission. That pressure is far greater in public organisations.
- The three definitions are **mutually reinforcing**, not rivals.

Barry Bozeman, in *All Organizations Are Public* (1987), argued that publicness is a matter of **degree**, measured on three dimensions: **ownership**, **funding** and **control**. Because **political authority** affects some behaviour of every organisation (through regulation, taxes, licences), all organisations are public to some

extent. A government department is high on all three; a regulated private airline is low on ownership but high on control.

Whose interest is the “public interest”? Because public administration claims to serve the public interest, it needs a way to decide what that interest is in a conflict. Henry summarised four philosophical answers:

APPROACH	HOW IT DECIDES THE PUBLIC INTEREST	WEAKNESS
Intuitionism	The administrator chooses what feels right in the circumstances	Gives no guideline; tends to justify the status quo
Perfectionism	Spend public resources so that excellence is promoted, even if the best-off gain most	Elitist and anti-egalitarian
Utilitarianism (Bentham, Mill)	Choose what produces the greatest net social satisfaction , even if a few lose	Can sacrifice minorities to the majority
Justice as fairness (John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i>, 1971)	Equal basic liberties for all; inequalities allowed only if they benefit everyone and offices are open to all	Demanding, but Henry saw it as the most workable guide for administrators

The idea of “publicness” as the **ultimate value** of public administration rests here: in a democracy, administration is legitimate only when its decisions can be defended as serving all citizens fairly, not officials’ convenience or powerful groups.

INDIAN CONNECT — WHAT COUNTS AS “PUBLIC” IN INDIAN LAW

- **Article 12** of the Constitution defines “**the State**” for Fundamental Rights. In **Ajay Hasia v. Khalid Mujib Sehravardi (1981)** the Supreme Court held that a society or corporation that is an **instrumentality or agency** of government is “State”, using tests such as government share capital, financial assistance, deep and pervasive control and public functions.
- In **Pradeep Kumar Biswas v. Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (2002)** a seven-judge bench refined this into a single question: is the body **financially, functionally and administratively dominated** by government?
- The **Right to Information Act, 2005** (Section 2(h)) covers a “**public authority**”, including bodies **owned, controlled or substantially financed** by government. In **Thalappalam Service Co-operative Bank v. State of Kerala (2013)** the Court held that a co-operative society is not covered merely because it is regulated; control or financing must be substantial.
- These tests are Bozeman’s dimensions (ownership, funding, control) in legal form: Indian courts decide “publicness” case by case and by degree.

The Nature of Public Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

"Nature" asks what kind of activity public administration is. Is it everyone's work in a department, or only the bosses' work? Is it a science with laws, an art learnt by practice, or both? Is it only about how things are done, or also about what ought to be done?

3.1 Integral view and managerial view

BASIS	INTEGRAL VIEW	MANAGERIAL VIEW
Whose work is administration?	The sum total of all activities : managerial, technical, clerical and manual, from the top officer to the peon	Only the managerial work of those who plan, organise, direct, co-ordinate and control
Same everywhere?	No: it differs by subject matter (administering a hospital is unlike administering a mint)	Yes: managerial techniques are common to all fields
Key thinkers	L.D. White, Marshall Dimock	Luther Gulick, Herbert Simon, Donald Smithburg and Victor Thompson
Strength	Shows that output depends on every level	Isolates the distinctive skill of administering
Weakness	Too broad to be studied as one skill	Ignores the subject matter and the people who do the actual work

- **Simon, Smithburg and Thompson** stated the managerial view precisely: the term "administration" is also used in a narrower sense "to refer to those **patterns of behaviour that are common to many kinds of co-operating groups** and that do not depend upon either the specific goals towards which they are co-operating or the specific technological methods used to reach these goals."
- **Which view fits India?** The Indian file system makes the integral view realistic. Under the **Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure**, a case usually begins with a **noting by the dealing hand** (the clerical level) and moves up the hierarchy; the quality of that first note shapes the final decision. The popular image of the "**babu**" as the real decision-maker reflects this. Today **e-Office** has digitised the same flow without changing its logic.
- **Synthesis**: the two views describe different layers of the same activity. The managerial view tells us what is **distinctive** about administering; the integral view tells us what **produces results**.

3.2 Art, science or both?

Administration as an art

Integral View and Managerial View

Whose work counts as administration?

Integral view

All activities, top to bottom

Top officers

Middle managers

Clerical staff

Technical and manual staff

White · Dimock

Differs by subject matter

Managerial view

Only the managing at the top

Top officers

Middle managers

Clerical staff

Technical and manual staff

Gulick · Simon

Same in every field

In simple words: one view counts everyone's work, the other only the bosses'.

Public Administration

- An art is a skill learnt through practice, judgement and experience, not reducible to rules.
- **Ordway Tead** spoke of "the art of administration"; **White** called it "the **art** of directing, co-ordinating and controlling many persons".
- Administrators handle unique situations: a riot, a flood, a strike, a political crisis. Here **judgement, tact and leadership** matter more than formulas.

Administration as a science

- A science has **exactness, universal validity and predictability**, built through observation, hypothesis and verification. (Aristotle's distinction: **art is to do, science is to know**.)
- **Wilson** called for a "**science of administration**" (1887); **Gulick and Urwick** titled their 1937 collection *Papers on the Science of Administration*; the classical writers believed in **universal principles**.
- **Fritz Morstein Marx** described what a science of administration would require: "a body of formal statements describing **invariant relationships between measurable objects, units, or elements**", while noting that administrative research has produced definite precepts and hypotheses applicable to concrete situations.
- **Simon** wanted a **pure science** of administration grounded in social psychology, separating **facts** (testable) from **values** (not testable).

Why it is not a science in the strict sense

- **Robert Dahl**, in *The Science of Public Administration: Three Problems* (1947), named three obstacles:
 - **Values:** administration cannot exclude normative questions; efficiency itself must serve some end.
 - **Human behaviour:** administration involves the whole psychological person, not a machine.

- **Social setting:** principles drawn from one country cannot be universal. "As long as the study of public administration is **not comparative**, claims for a 'science of public administration' sound rather hollow."
- **Simon** showed that the classical "principles" came in **contradictory pairs**, like proverbs (see the chapter on Simon).

The balanced view

- **Waldo** defined public administration as "the **art and science** of management as applied to the affairs of state" (*The Study of Public Administration*, 1955).
- It is best seen as an **applied social science and a profession**: it uses scientific methods where it can (data, evaluation, experiments, behavioural insights) and judgement where it must.
- It is both **positive** (describing what administration **is**) and **normative** (prescribing what it **ought to be**).
- Contemporary theory has tilted towards the **art** side in one sense: **New Public Administration, New Public Service** and the **public value** writers stress judgement, values and citizenship over universal rules.

INDIAN CONNECT — THE BRITISH TRADITION: SCIENCE JOINED TO ETHICS

- **Oliver Sheldon** (*The Philosophy of Management*, 1923) argued that however scientific management becomes, its **primary responsibility is social and communal**: its efficiency must be judged "not only by scientific standards but also by the supreme standard of **communal well-being**". He called this the doctrine of **service**.
- The **Haldane Committee on the Machinery of Government (1918)** applied the same rational spirit to government, recommending that departments be organised by **function** and that thinking and research be built into the machine.
- The British civil service tradition (the **Northcote–Trevelyan Report, 1854**, merit entry, political neutrality, anonymity) joined **rational organisation** to an **ethic of public service**. India inherited this model: the Indian civil service code of conduct and the ideal of a **neutral, merit-based service** are its direct descendants.

3.3 Process and substance

- **The process view:** administration is a set of **processes** (planning, organising, staffing, budgeting) that are the same whatever the field.
- **The substantive view:** administration is about the **content** of what is administered: health, police, agriculture, defence. Each has its own problems, laws and technical knowledge.
- **The public policy movement** (from the 1960s) obliged the discipline to study the **content** of policies, not only their machinery. Today public administration studies **both**.
- **Policy-making is part of administration**, not outside it:
 - civil servants **advise ministers**, and their expertise often prevails;
 - while implementing, they frame **subsidiary policies** at many levels;
 - they make rules under **delegated legislation**.
- In the real world, the line separating politics and administration is **thin, blurred, sometimes non-existent** (see Section 6 and the chapter on Wilson and the evolution of the discipline).

3.4 Approaches: law or management, and the place of efficiency

Scholars have studied administration through several lenses. The main ones:

APPROACH	WHAT IT STUDIES	EXAMPLES
Philosophical (oldest)	What administration ought to be; its ideals and duties	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Locke, Hobbes, the <i>Shanti Parva</i> of the <i>Mahabharata</i>
Legal (juridical)	Constitutional and legal structure, powers and limits of public authorities	Strong in France, Germany and Belgium; Frank Goodnow in the USA
Historical	How institutions developed over time	White's four volumes on US federal administration; studies of Mauryan, Mughal and British administration
Case method	Detailed accounts of real decisions	Inter-University Case Program (USA); case studies of the Indian Institute of Public Administration and the LBS National Academy of Administration
Managerial / behavioural / systems / ecological	Techniques, behaviour, the organisation as a system, administration in its environment	Gulick, Simon, Barnard, Riggs
Public choice	Administration through economic reasoning	Ostrom, Niskanen (see the chapter on public choice)

- **Law or management as the starting point?** The continental European tradition treated public administration as a branch of **administrative law**. **White** (1926) broke with it: the study of administration, he argued, should **start from the base of management rather than the foundation of law**. His reasons: law tells officials what they **may** do, but not how to do it **well**; the urgent problem of the modern state was competence, economy and organisation. The legal approach still matters (every public act needs legal authority), but the managerial approach gave the discipline its own identity. Today the two are combined: **Rosenbloom** treats managerial, political and legal approaches as three equal lenses.
- **Is efficiency the basic "good"?** **Gulick** wrote that "in the science of administration, whether public or private, the basic 'good' is **efficiency**." From Wilson to Simon, most writers took efficiency (getting the most output for the least input) as the central objective.
 - **Waldo** objected that efficiency is **not value-free**: one must always ask "efficient **for what?**" Efficiency in a democracy can clash with participation, fairness and due process.
 - **Dahl** said ends must be clarified before means can be called efficient.
 - **New Public Administration** (1968) added **social equity** as a third goal beside efficiency and economy.
 - **Simon** kept efficiency as a criterion of choice, but only **within** values set by others.
 - In public administration, efficiency is therefore a necessary value but not the only one; **equity, legality, responsiveness and accountability** stand beside it.

3.5 An interdisciplinary field

Public administration grew out of other disciplines and still draws on them. **Waldo** described it as an **umbrella** field; Mosher saw its overlapping boundaries as a resource.

DISCIPLINE	WHAT IT LENDS TO PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	EXAMPLE
Political science (the “mother discipline”)	Theory of the state, power, democracy, accountability, policy	Ministerial responsibility, legislative control
Law	Constitutional limits, administrative law, rule of law, natural justice	Ultra vires, judicial review, tribunals
Economics	Scarcity, cost–benefit analysis, public finance, public choice	Budgeting, regulation, user charges
Sociology	Social structure, groups, caste and class, bureaucracy (Weber)	Representative bureaucracy, social audit
Psychology	Motivation, leadership, behaviour in groups	Training, morale, performance appraisal
Management (the “alter ego”)	Techniques of organisation, finance and personnel	O&M, project management, HR systems
History	How institutions evolved	Kautilya’s <i>Arthashastra</i> , Mughal and British legacies
Data science and technology	Digital platforms, evidence and algorithms	Dashboards, digital public infrastructure

- **Why silos fail:** real problems cross departmental and disciplinary lines. Malnutrition is at once a health, food, water, sanitation, gender and income problem. Climate adaptation needs engineers, economists, ecologists, local institutions and social scientists. A purely managerial or purely legal lens misreads such problems.
- **Current practice:** governments now bring several disciplines together through **behavioural insights units** (applying psychology to policy design), **evaluation offices**, **inter-ministerial missions** and **integrated platforms** (India’s **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan**, 2021, joins infrastructure ministries on one geospatial platform).

Scope of Public Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Scope means “what does public administration cover?” One answer lists the jobs every manager does (planning, staffing, budgeting). Another says it covers whatever government does: health, roads, police, schools. The sensible answer is both: the common techniques and the special subject in which they are used.

4.1 The POSDCORB view

- **Luther Gulick**, adviser to the US President’s Committee on Administrative Management (the **Brownlow Committee**, 1937), summed up the work of the chief executive in the acronym **POSDCORB**:
 - **P — Planning**: working out in broad outline what needs to be done and how.
 - **O — Organising**: establishing the formal structure of authority through which work is arranged, defined and co-ordinated.
 - **S — Staffing**: the whole personnel function of recruiting and training staff and maintaining good conditions of work.
 - **D — Directing**: making decisions, embodying them in orders and instructions, and leading the enterprise.
 - **CO — Co-ordinating**: inter-relating the various parts of the work.
 - **R — Reporting**: keeping superiors and the public informed through records, research and inspection.
 - **B — Budgeting**: fiscal planning, accounting and control.
- **Strengths**: it identified the **common core** of all administration, made the field teachable, and shaped reforms of the machinery of government.
- **Criticism**:
 - It is **technique-oriented**, not subject-oriented: it ignores the substantive knowledge each agency needs.
 - It treats all agencies as if they had the **same problems**, whatever their function.
 - It covers only the **top executive**; it says nothing about policy, values, citizens or the environment of administration.
 - It is **static**: it lists functions but not how decisions are actually made (Simon’s objection).

4.2 The subject-matter view and the synthesis

- The **subject-matter view** says the real core of administration is the **services** it delivers (defence, health, agriculture, education, social security), each with its own techniques that POSDCORB does not cover.
- The two are **complementary**, not rival:

“Public administration is an instrument with two blades like a pair of scissors. One blade may be a knowledge of the fields covered by POSDCORB, the other blade is knowledge of the subject matter in which these techniques are applied. Both blades must be good to make an effective tool.” — Lewis Meriam

- **Marshall Dimock** made the same point: administration is concerned with the **“what”** (the subject matter, the technical knowledge of a field) and the **“how”** (the techniques of management) of government. “Each is indispensable; together they form the synthesis called administration.”

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · SCOPE

Meriam's scissors

The Two Blades of Public Administration

Techniques and subject knowledge must work together

Blade 1 · Techniques (POSDCORB)

The **“how”** (Gulick)

P Planning

O Organising

S Staffing

D Directing

CO Co-ordinating

R Reporting

B Budgeting



Blade 2 · Subject matter

The **“what”** (Dimock)

Health

Police

Education

Defence

Agriculture

Revenue

Each field has its own laws, problems and expertise

Effective administration

Both blades sharp: technique without knowledge fails, and so does knowledge without technique

In simple words: knowing how to manage and knowing what you manage.

Public Administration

COMMON CONFUSION

Is “scope” the same as “nature”? No. **Nature** asks what kind of activity public administration is (integral or managerial; art or science; process or substance). **Scope** asks what it covers (POSDCORB functions, subject-matter fields, branches of government, non-state actors). The integral and managerial views describe its **nature**; POSDCORB and the subject-matter view describe its **scope**.

4.3 Scope as an academic discipline

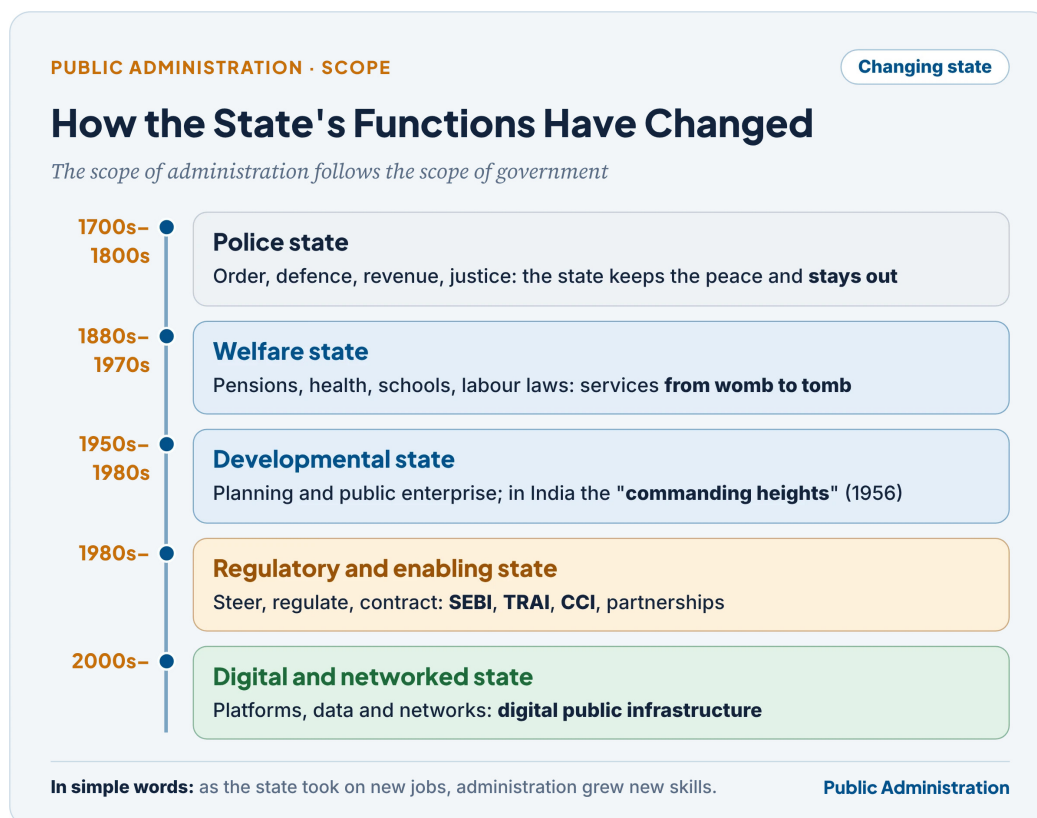
As a field of study, public administration covers several recognised sub-fields:

- **Organisation theory and behaviour:** structures, decision-making, motivation, leadership, communication.
- **Public personnel administration:** recruitment, training, promotion, discipline, ethics.
- **Public financial administration:** budgeting, accounts, audit, public debt.
- **Comparative and development administration:** administrative systems across countries and their role in development.
- **Public policy analysis:** how policies are made, implemented and evaluated.
- **Administrative law and accountability:** delegated legislation, tribunals, judicial and legislative control, citizens' rights.
- **Local, urban and rural administration, e-governance, regulation and disaster management** have been added more recently.

Mohit Bhattacharya groups the basic concerns of the discipline into four: **structures** of public organisations, **processes** (communication, control, decision-making), **bureaucratic behaviour** (interpersonal and group relationships) and **organisation–environment interactions** (the ecology of administration).

4.4 Scope is set by what government does

- "The **scope of administration is determined by the scope of government functions**, which is decided **politically**." The boundaries of public administration move with the boundaries of the state.
- **The historical movement has been from regulation to service and welfare**, then towards an enabling and regulating role:



PHASE	ROLE OF THE STATE	WHAT ADMINISTRATION MAINLY DOES
Police state (<i>laissez-faire</i> , 18th–19th century)	Order, defence, revenue, justice	Collect taxes, keep peace, run courts
Welfare state (late 19th century onward, especially after 1945)	Social security, health, education, labour protection	Deliver services “from womb to tomb”
Developmental / positive state (post-colonial countries, mid-20th century)	Planning, public enterprise, land reform	Run industries, plan, build infrastructure
Regulatory and enabling state (from the 1980s)	Steer, regulate, partner, contract	Regulators, PPPs, contracts, standards
Digital and networked state (21st century)	Platforms, data, partnerships	Digital public infrastructure, network management

- **The administrative state and the bureaucratic state.** When government’s main job was **regulation** (setting rules and enforcing them), the core of administration was rule-application: the **administrative state**, a term made famous by **Waldo’s** *The Administrative State* (1948). When government began **operating businesses and services directly** (railways, power, banks, steel), administration became large-scale **bureaucratic production**: the **bureaucratic state**. India’s **Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956**, which reserved the “commanding heights” for the public sector, is the clearest example of this shift. After **1991**, the tide partly reversed: government withdrew from many businesses and built **independent regulators** (**SEBI** 1992, **TRAI** 1997, **CCI** 2003), moving back towards a regulatory role.
- **Is the scope boundaryless?** It can look so, because government touches almost everything. But it has real boundaries:
 - the **constitutional mandate** (what the state may lawfully do; the **Seventh Schedule** divides it between Union and States);
 - the **public character** of the activity (public money, public authority, public accountability);
 - **political choices** about what the state should do, which can **contract** the scope (privatisation, deregulation) as well as expand it.
- The scope is therefore **elastic, not boundaryless**: it expands and contracts with political decisions, technology and public expectations.

The Indian Constitution sets the administrative agenda:

- **Article 38** directs the State to secure a **social order** based on justice, social, economic and political.
- **Article 39** lists goals such as adequate means of livelihood and preventing concentration of wealth; **Article 46** directs special care for the **educational and economic interests of the weaker sections**, especially Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Articles 243G and 243W** (the **73rd and 74th Amendments**, 1992) extend administrative tasks to **panchayats and municipalities** (Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules).
- Each such directive enlarges the scope of public administration: the Directive Principles are, in effect, the **job description** of Indian administration.

4.5 Expanding horizons

Why the scope of public administration keeps widening:

- **Industrialisation and urbanisation:** large-scale organisations, factories, cities and their problems.
- **The welfare state** replacing the police state; **economic planning** in developing countries.
- **Population growth:** slums, food, transport, health and housing needs.
- **Science and technology:** new fields to regulate (telecom, data, biotechnology, artificial intelligence) and new tools to govern with.
- **Modern warfare and internal security:** mobilising people and resources, counter-terrorism, cyber security.
- **Disasters and climate change:** floods, cyclones, heatwaves and pandemics demand crisis management at scale.
- **Social conflict:** communal, ethnic and class tensions add crisis-management tasks.
- **Globalisation:** trade rules, cross-border data, migration and global public goods (climate, health) bring international dimensions into domestic administration.

What a modern scope must include (concerns stressed in academic writing on the field):

- **Publicness:** absorbing democratic values, power-sharing and openness into everyday administration.
- **Policy sensitivity:** timely and innovative policy formulation in fast-changing conditions.
- **Implementation capability:** clear goals, step-by-step programme and project management; the legitimacy of government increasingly depends on delivery.
- **Shared understanding of social reality:** building decisions on the views of top officials, middle managers, front-line staff and citizens, not on an insular centre.
- **Administration as learning:** turning bureaucracy into a **learning organisation** that adapts and innovates.

COMMON CONFUSION

What is “under-administration”? It is the opposite problem to “too much bureaucracy”: the state has **too little administrative capacity** for the tasks it has taken on. Laws and schemes exist, but there are not enough trained staff, systems or field presence to implement them, so what happens on the ground departs from what is written. **Lant Pritchett** (*Is India a Flailing State?*, 2009) described India’s version: a capable “**head**” (elite national institutions that design good policies) that is “no longer reliably connected via nerves and sinews to its own **limbs**” (the teachers, police, health workers and engineers in the field). Under-administration shows up as absenteeism, delays and gaps between **de jure** and **de facto** reality. Its remedies are capacity building, field staffing, digital monitoring and better accountability, not simply more rules.

4.6 The identity debate

- Because public administration overlaps with so many fields, its **identity** has been questioned repeatedly.
- **Morstein Marx** feared, as Waldo reported, that public administration had grown so broad that it stood “**in danger of disappearing completely as a recognizable focus of study**”.

- **Locus and focus:** **Robert Golembiewski** and **Nicholas Henry** explained the discipline's history through its **locus** (the institutional "where", such as the government bureaucracy) and its **focus** (the specialised "what", such as the principles of administration). When one was sharply defined, the other was neglected (see the chapter on Wilson and the evolution of the discipline for Henry's paradigms).
- **"Constantly reinvented because it is contextual."** Public administration changes as its context changes: the reform era produced the dichotomy, the Depression and war produced the principles and then their critique, the 1960s unrest produced New Public Administration, fiscal crisis produced New Public Management, and the digital era is producing networked and platform governance. Its **contextual** nature is a source of renewal, not only of instability.
- **Its distinctive strength** lies in exploring the **complexities and nuances of policy-making and implementation**: how a decision travels from a cabinet note to a village, what bends it on the way, and how it can be made to work. No other discipline studies this full chain.

05 Public and Private Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

A government hospital and a private hospital both hire doctors, buy medicines and keep accounts, so they share many techniques. But the government hospital cannot turn away a poor patient, cannot charge whatever it likes, must follow rules for every purchase, and can be questioned in the assembly. Same tools, different rules of the game.

5.1 Where they are alike

- **Same genus:** both are co-operative efforts to achieve goals with people, money and materials; both use **POSDCORB** functions.
- **Shared theories:** classical organisation theory (Taylor, Fayol) and the **human relations** approach (Mayo) were born in private industry and then applied to government.
- **Movement of people and practices:** managers move between sectors; performance management, project management and information systems travel both ways.
- **Hybrid forms:** **public corporations** were designed as a halfway house between a government department and a commercial company; **public-private partnerships** blend the two.
- **Common training:** the **Administrative Staff College of India**, Hyderabad (1956), trains managers from both government and business.
- **Generic management writers** (Fayol, Urwick, Gulick) argued that the principles of administration apply to **all** organisations.

5.2 Where they differ

BASIS	PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	PRIVATE ADMINISTRATION
Purpose	Public interest , general welfare, citizen satisfaction	Profit for owners; survival depends on it
Legal basis	Can do only what law permits (an act beyond powers is <i>ultra vires</i>)	Can do anything the law does not forbid
Accountability	Many masters: legislature, courts, audit, media, citizens (external, multiple)	Mainly to owners or shareholders
Equity	Must treat like cases alike; partiality provokes censure	Discrimination is normal (price tiers, chosen customers)
Political direction	Works under elected leaders; politics is at its core	Largely insulated from party politics
Scope and complexity	Vast, varied, unrelated tasks; decisions involve many departments	Narrower, more single-minded
Measuring efficiency	No single yardstick; outcomes are hard to measure	Profit is a clear, accepted yardstick
Market exposure	Often a legal monopoly ; prices set by budget or law	Faces competitors and prices directly
Coercive power	Backed by the sovereign power of the state (it can tax, license, arrest)	No coercive power of its own
Publicity	Works in a glass house ; one mistake makes headlines	Much less exposed

- **Paul Appleby**, a senior New Deal administrator and later adviser to the Government of India, in *Big Democracy* (1945), in a chapter titled "**Government Is Different**", identified three features that set government apart:
 - **breadth of scope, impact and consideration**: government must weigh the effect of every action on the whole society;
 - **public accountability**: every action can be questioned publicly;
 - **political character**: administration must respond to public sentiment, which makes it political in the best sense.
- **Rosenbloom** stressed **law**: "Every element of their being — their structure, staffing, budget and purpose — is the product of legal authority. Every action taken by a public administrator ultimately must be traceable to a legal grant of authority."

Public and Private Administration

Shared techniques, different rules of the game

Public

- **Public interest** as goal
- Acts only as **law permits**
- Many masters: legislature, courts, audit, media
- **Equal treatment** for all
- Political direction
- Backed by sovereign power

Shared

- Planning, staffing, budgeting
- Classical and human relations theory
- Project and performance management
- Hybrids: public corporations, **PPPs**

Private

- **Profit** as goal
- Does all that law **does not forbid**
- Mainly answers to owners
- Free to **discriminate** in price and customers
- Market competition
- No coercive power

In simple words: "alike in all unimportant respects" (Sayre).

Public Administration

- **Equity and fairness** are central values in public administration; **profit, cost-benefit and speed** in private administration. Public administration is therefore closer to **political science and law**; private administration to **business management**.
- **Efficiency is harder to judge in government.** Without a balance sheet, "public interest" is a vague substitute for profit; this can produce **laxity, over-staffing and weak cost-consciousness**, which is one reason reformers later borrowed business tools (see the chapter on New Public Management).

5.3 The debate: are they fundamentally different?

- **Sayre's law:** **Wallace Sayre** quipped that public and private management are "**fundamentally alike in all unimportant respects**".
- **Graham Allison**, in *Public and Private Management: Are They Fundamentally Alike in All Unimportant Respects?* (1980), compared the general functions of managers (setting **strategy**, managing **internal components**, managing **external constituencies**) and found that public managers face shorter time horizons, harder-to-measure goals, more constraints on personnel, more public processes and more media scrutiny. He concluded that the idea that business practices can simply be transferred to government is wrong.
- **George Boyne** (2002) tested thirteen "publicness" hypotheses against 34 empirical studies. Only three were supported by most studies: public organisations are **more bureaucratic**, and public managers are **less materialistic** and have **weaker organisational commitment**. The evidence for a sharp divide is thinner than theory claims.
- **Bozeman:** publicness is a **continuum**, not a dichotomy (Section 2.2).
- **The lines are blurring:** government is more business-like (agencies, contracts, user charges, performance pay); business is more public (regulation, **corporate social responsibility** under **Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013**, environmental and data-protection duties). A large share of government work is **contracted out**: what scholars call **third-party government** and the **hollow state**.

CRITICISM — CRITICS OF A SEPARATE “PUBLIC” ADMINISTRATION

- Administration is **generic**: planning, organising, budgeting and motivating people work the same way everywhere (Fayol, Urwick, Gulick).
- Business has developed better tools for **efficiency, customer service and innovation**; government should borrow them.
- Empirical studies find **fewer differences** than theory predicts (Boyne).
- Publicness is a matter of **degree** (Bozeman); many private firms do public work and many public bodies act commercially.
- Insisting on difference can become an **excuse for inefficiency**.

DEFENCE — DEFENDERS OF THE PUBLIC DIFFERENCE

- Government rests on **law and sovereign power**; every act must be traceable to legal authority (Rosenbloom).
- Its goals are **multiple, conflicting and value-laden** (equity, rights, security), not a single profit number.
- It answers to **many masters** through political, legal and public accountability (Appleby).
- It must serve **everyone equally**, including those who cannot pay; markets serve those who can.
- Techniques can be borrowed, but **values cannot be transplanted**; treating citizens as customers can erode rights and equity (the New Public Service critique).

INDIAN CONNECT — PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN INDIAN PRACTICE

- **Article 14** forbids arbitrary state action (**E.P. Royappa v. State of Tamil Nadu, 1974**: “equality is antithetic to arbitrariness”); a private firm faces no such constitutional duty.
- **Article 311** protects civil servants from dismissal without inquiry; private employment has no equivalent constitutional guarantee.
- The **Comptroller and Auditor General** (Article 148), parliamentary committees, the **Central Vigilance Commission** and the **RTI Act** subject public bodies to scrutiny that private firms do not face.
- When **Air India** was sold to the Tata group (handed over in **January 2022**), it moved out of CAG audit, RTI and parliamentary questioning: ownership changes the rules of accountability, not only the balance sheet.
- **Does ownership change improve performance?** The evidence suggests that **competition and good regulation** matter at least as much as ownership (a point made in the classic economic study of privatisation by **John Vickers and George Yarrow, 1988**). A private monopoly can perform as badly as a public one (see the chapter on liberalisation, privatisation and good governance).

Politics and Administration: A Reciprocal Relationship

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Politicians decide what should be done; administrators decide how. But the “how” often changes the “what”, and administrators also advise on the “what”. At the same time, the kind of political system a country has (democratic or not, federal or not) shapes the kind of administration it gets. Each keeps shaping the other.

- **Administration translates politics.** For **Kettl and Fesler**, no political decision has any value except in the way it is implemented; which neighbourhood gets extra policing or which road is cleared first is a detail “richly wrapped in politics”.
- **The political system creates the administrative system.**
 - A **parliamentary** system produces ministerial responsibility, a permanent and neutral civil service, and anonymity of officials (India: **Articles 74, 75 and 77**).
 - A **federal** system produces two or more layers of administration and all-India services that bind them (**Article 312**).
 - A **presidential** system produces political appointees at the top of departments (the United States).
- **The administrative system shapes politics.**
 - Senior officials **draft cabinet notes and bills**, frame **rules under delegated legislation**, and offer the expertise ministers rely on.
 - Implementation decides how policies are experienced, and therefore how governments are judged at elections.
 - In developing countries, bureaucracy has often been the **dominant institution**, shaping the political agenda itself (Riggs; see the chapter on comparative public administration).
- **John Gaus** (1950): “A theory of public administration means in our time a **theory of politics** also.” **Appleby** saw administration as a **political process**: policy is made continuously as decisions move up and down the hierarchy, and political involvement checks arbitrary bureaucratic power.
- **Appleby** also saw the **art of administration** in the management of the flow of work **upward and downward within hierarchies and between them**: a matter is pushed up to the level where the right range of considerations, including political ones, can be weighed, and decisions flow back down as instructions. Hierarchy, in this view, is a device for bringing **public and political judgement** to bear on technical work.
- **The post-war definitions of White and Pfiffner** moved in the same direction: administration came to be seen as part of the **policy process**, not a neutral technical sequel to it.

The old puzzle: strong enough to work, not strong enough to threaten

- Traditional public administration had to “resolve a **fundamentally irresolvable problem**: creating an administration **strong enough to be effective** but **not so strong** as to endanger **accountability**” (a formulation associated with **Donald Kettl**).

- **Its solution:**

- **Hierarchy:** authority flows from the elected top down a chain of command, so every official is answerable to a superior and finally to a minister.
 - **The politics–administration dichotomy:** elected leaders decide; neutral experts execute (Wilson, Goodnow).
 - **Rules and merit:** a **Weberian** rule-bound bureaucracy recruited on merit and bound by procedure limits personal discretion.
- **Why the solution came under strain:** delegated legislation, technical complexity and the scale of the modern state gave officials real discretion; hierarchy slowed responsiveness; and contracting out moved work beyond the chain of command. Each later school (New Public Administration, New Public Management, governance) is partly a new answer to Kettl's puzzle.

Legitimacy

- If administrators exercise discretion, on what basis is their power **legitimate**? Elected officials have votes; officials have only expertise and law.
- The **Blacksburg Manifesto** (1983; expanded in *Refounding Public Administration*, 1990, by **Gary Wamsley, Charles Goodsell, John Rohr** and others) argued that public administration is a **legitimate constitutional actor** in its own right, deriving authority from its oath to the constitution and its duty to the public interest. **John Rohr's** *To Run a Constitution* (1986) made the same case.
- To play this legitimising role in a complex society, public administration needs a **fuller conceptual basis** than the old dichotomy: grounded in constitutional values, ethics and citizenship, not only efficiency.

INDIAN CONNECT – THE INTERFACE IN INDIA

- In **T.S.R. Subramanian v. Union of India (2013)** the Supreme Court asked governments to give civil servants a **minimum fixed tenure**, set up **Civil Services Boards** to decide transfers and postings, and have officers **record oral instructions** from political superiors. It is a judicial attempt to rebalance the politics–administration relationship.
- The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** (2005–09) in its report on refurbishing personnel administration called for a civil service committed to **constitutional values**, not to a party.
- The debate on a “**committed bureaucracy**” in the late 1960s and 1970s turned on the same question: committed to the ruling party's programme, or to the Constitution's goals?

The debate is alive elsewhere too. In the United States, the Supreme Court in **Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo (28 June 2024)** overruled the forty-year-old **Chevron** doctrine, so courts no longer defer to agencies' readings of ambiguous statutes; and the **Office of Personnel Management's** final rule creating **Schedule Policy/Career** (February 2026, effective 9 March 2026) made policy-influencing career posts **at-will**. Both changes redraw the line between elected control, expert discretion and judicial review that public administration has argued about since Wilson.

Significance of Public Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Without administration, a constitution is a document, a budget is a number and a law is a wish. Elections, vaccinations, pensions, exams, disaster relief and roads all happen because an administrative machine exists. That is why many thinkers say that civilisation itself depends on good administration.

7.1 What thinkers have said

- **W.B. Donham**, dean of the Harvard Business School: "If our civilisation fails, it will be mainly because of a **breakdown of administration**."
- **Charles A. Beard**, the American historian: "There is no subject more important than this subject of administration. The **future of civilised government**, and even, I think, of **civilisation itself**, rests upon our ability to develop a science and a philosophy and a practice of administration competent to discharge the public functions of civilised society."
- **L.D. White**: administration has become "the **heart of the problem of modern government**". He contrasted three stages of popular expectation: once people expected nothing but **oppression** from the state, later only to be **let alone**; now they expect a wide variety of **services and protection**.
- **Henri Fayol**: the administrative process is **universal**, found in practically every enterprise and occupation.
- **Brooks Adams**, the American historian, called administration "the capacity of co-ordinating many, and often conflicting, social energies in a single organism, so adroitly that they shall operate as a unity".

7.2 Significance as an activity

ROLE	WHAT IT MEANS	EXAMPLE
Basis of government	Every form of government, democratic or not, needs administration	Revenue, police, courts exist under every regime
Instrument of law and policy	Turns laws and programmes into action	Implementing the Right to Education Act, 2009
Stabilising force	Provides continuity through elections, changes of government, even coups	Services continue while governments change
Service provider	Delivers education, health, water, transport, social security	Public hospitals, schools, pensions
Instrument of development	Leads planned development where markets are weak	Irrigation, electrification, credit

ROLE	WHAT IT MEANS	EXAMPLE
Agent of social change	Promotes equality and protects weaker sections	Reservation, land reform, tribal welfare
Nation-builder	Integrates diverse regions and groups	All-India services, national programmes
Regulator	Sets rules for markets, environment and technology	SEBI, TRAI, CCI , pollution control boards
Crisis manager	Responds to disasters, epidemics and security threats	NDMA , pandemic response
Shaper of public opinion and policy	Informs debate, advises ministers, frames options	Expert committees, white papers

Gerald Caiden, in *The Dynamics of Public Administration* (1971), listed the crucial roles of public administration in modern society: **preservation of the polity, maintenance of stability and order, institutionalisation of socio-economic change, management of large-scale commercial services, ensuring growth and economic development, protection of the weaker sections, formation of public opinion, and influencing public policies and political trends.**

7.3 Significance as a discipline

The academic study of public administration contributes in five ways:

- **Epistemological:** it builds systematic knowledge about how government actually works.
- **Technical:** it applies that knowledge to solve practical problems (organisation design, budgeting, evaluation).
- **Ombudsmanic:** by studying grievances, red tape and corruption, and publishing the findings, it informs citizens, the press and the legislature, playing a watchdog-like role.
- **Liberal-educational:** it spreads **administrative literacy**, so citizens understand how government works and can claim their rights.
- **Professional:** it trains civil servants and public managers through institutes and schools of public administration and policy.

7.4 Significance in developed and developing societies

BASIS	DEVELOPED SOCIETIES	DEVELOPING SOCIETIES
Main task	Regulation, service delivery, maintenance	Development: building the economy and society

BASIS	DEVELOPED SOCIETIES	DEVELOPING SOCIETIES
Bureaucracy's position	One institution among many strong ones	Often the strongest institution
Structure	Differentiated, specialised (Riggs: "diffracted")	Mixture of modern forms and traditional practice (Riggs: " prismatic ")
Law and practice	Close fit	Gap between rules and behaviour (formalism)
Resources	Relatively abundant	Scarce; capacity constraints
Legacy	Home-grown institutions	Often colonial institutions adapted

- In developing countries public administration has a **pivotal** role, because development has been **government-led**. This gave rise to the sub-field of **development administration**.
- **Can it modernise traditional political culture?** Partly: through education, elections, rule-based services, land reform and digital delivery, administration spreads universalistic norms. But it is itself shaped by the surrounding culture (caste, patronage, kinship), so it can also **reproduce** the traditional order. Modernisation succeeds when administrative reform goes together with social and political change (see the articles on comparative public administration and development dynamics).

7.5 Significance in a democracy, and under "roll-back"

- In a democracy, administration is **where citizens experience the state**; its performance shapes trust and legitimacy.
- The **"roll-back of the state"** since the 1980s changed the **role** of public administration (from doing to steering, regulating and partnering) but did **not reduce its central place**: privatised sectors need regulators, contracts need managers, partnerships need oversight, and crises (financial in 2008, the pandemic from 2020) brought the state back to the centre.

INDIAN CONNECT — THE SCALE OF INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

- The **2024 Lok Sabha election** was administered for about **98 crore electors** at more than **10.5 lakh polling stations** by the **Election Commission of India**: the largest administrative exercise of its kind in the world.
- India's **COVID-19 vaccination drive** administered **over 220 crore doses**, scheduled and certified through the **CoWIN** digital platform.
- The **Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)** received about **22.8 lakh grievances in 2025**; central ministries disposed of them in an average of **15 days**, against a timeline cut from 30 to **21 days** by guidelines of August 2024.

- **Mission Karmayogi** (2020), the national programme for civil service capacity building, has over **1.7 crore** officials registered on the **iGOT Karmayogi** platform (August 2026). Each example shows administration as the bridge between a decision at the top and an outcome for a citizen.

Public administration is not the tail of politics but the place where politics becomes real for citizens.

08 Key Terms

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Administration	Co-operative effort of a group to achieve a common goal; from Latin "to serve"
Public administration	Administration in a governmental or public setting: carrying out public law and policy
Publicness	The degree to which an organisation is public: by ownership, funding and political control (Bozeman)
Integral view	Administration is the sum of all activities (managerial, technical, clerical, manual) in pursuit of a goal
Managerial view	Administration is only the managerial work of planning, organising, directing and controlling
POSDCORB	Gulick's acronym for the executive's functions: planning, organising, staffing, directing, co-ordinating, reporting, budgeting
Subject-matter view	The core of administration is the substantive service delivered (health, defence, education)
Two blades	Meriam's image: techniques (POSDCORB) and subject knowledge together make administration effective
Locus and focus	The institutional "where" and the specialised "what" of the discipline
Administrative state	A state in which much governing is done by administrative agencies through rules and discretion
Third-party government	Government programmes delivered through contractors, NGOs, other governments or partnerships
Hollow state	A government that has contracted out so much that it mostly manages contracts rather than delivering services

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Ultra vires	"Beyond powers": an act a public body has no legal authority to do, and therefore void
Formalism	A gap between what laws and rules prescribe and what actually happens
Under-administration	Too little administrative capacity for the tasks the state has taken on
Flailing state	Pritchett's term for a state with a capable centre but weak control over its field agents
Sayre's law	Public and private management are "fundamentally alike in all unimportant respects"
Administrative literacy	Citizens' knowledge of how government and administration work
Delegated legislation	Rules made by the executive under powers given by a law
Regulatory state	A state that governs mainly by setting and enforcing rules for markets and society rather than by producing goods itself

09

Commissions, Committees and Judgments

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Northcote–Trevelyan Report (UK)	1854	Merit-based, permanent, neutral civil service
Haldane Committee on the Machinery of Government (UK)	1918	Departments organised by function; research and thinking built into government
President's Committee on Administrative Management (Brownlow Committee) (USA)	1937	"The President needs help"; Gulick's POSDCORB papers prepared for it
Administrative Reforms Commission (India)	1966	First comprehensive review of Indian administration for development
E.P. Royappa v. State of Tamil Nadu	1974	Equality is antithetic to arbitrariness: state action must be non-arbitrary
Ajay Hasia v. Khalid Mujib Sehravardi	1981	Instrumentalities and agencies of government are "State" under Article 12
Pradeep Kumar Biswas v. Indian Institute of Chemical Biology	2002	"State" if financially, functionally and administratively dominated by government

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Second Administrative Reforms Commission	2005–09	Civil service anchored in constitutional values; citizen-centric administration
Thalappalam Service Co-operative Bank v. State of Kerala	2013	A body is a “public authority” under RTI only if substantially financed or controlled by government
T.S.R. Subramanian v. Union of India	2013	Fixed tenure, Civil Services Boards, recording of oral instructions
Loper Bright Enterprises v. Raimondo (USA)	2024	Chevron deference overruled: courts, not agencies, finally interpret statutes

10 Contemporary Developments

- **August 2024:** the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances issued comprehensive guidelines cutting the grievance redressal timeline on **CPGRAMS** from 30 to **21 days**; in **2025** central ministries averaged **15 days**, with **82.1 per cent** of grievances disposed of within the timeline.
- **28 June 2024:** the US Supreme Court overruled the **Chevron** doctrine in **Loper Bright**, shifting interpretive power from administrative agencies to courts and reopening debate on the “administrative state”.
- **13–14 November 2025:** the **Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025** were notified, with an **18-month** phased rollout, adding data protection to the duties of every public and private body handling personal data.
- **February–June 2026:** the US **Schedule Policy/Career** rule (final February 2026; positions designated by executive order in June 2026) made policy-influencing career posts **at-will**, a sharp shift in the politics–administration balance.
- **From reporting year 2025–26:** completion of mandatory **iGOT Karmayogi** courses is recorded in the **Annual Performance Appraisal Reports** of central government employees and All India Services officers, linking capacity building to career management; the platform crossed **1.7 crore** users with over **5,600** courses (August 2026).
- **December 2025:** the **Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore** campaign (19–25 December) took grievance redressal and service delivery to districts and villages during Good Governance Week.

11 Revision Grid

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Woodrow Wilson	<i>The Study of Administration</i> (1887)	Detailed and systematic execution of public law; government in action

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
L.D. White	<i>Introduction to the Study of Public Administration</i> (1926)	Operations to fulfil or enforce public policy; heart of modern government
W.F. Willoughby	<i>Principles of Public Administration</i> (1927)	Broad and narrow senses; administration as a fourth branch
Oliver Sheldon	<i>The Philosophy of Management</i> (1923)	Administration sets policy, management executes; science joined to social ethics
Luther Gulick	<i>Papers on the Science of Administration</i> (1937, with Urwick)	POSDCORB; administration as getting things done
Paul Appleby	<i>Big Democracy</i> (1945)	"Government is different": breadth, accountability, political character
Robert Dahl	<i>The Science of Public Administration: Three Problems</i> (1947)	Values, human behaviour and social setting block a universal science
Dwight Waldo	<i>The Administrative State</i> (1948); <i>The Study of Public Administration</i> (1955)	Art and science of management applied to the state; beware one-line definitions
John Gaus	Essay (1950)	A theory of public administration is also a theory of politics
Frederick Mosher	Article in <i>Public Administration Review</i> (1956)	Best not defined; an area of interest, not a separate science
Lewis Meriam	Writings on public administration	Two blades: POSDCORB and subject matter
Marshall Dimock	<i>Public Administration</i>	The "what" and the "how" of government
Wallace Sayre	Sayre's law (1950s)	Alike in all unimportant respects
Gerald Caiden	<i>The Dynamics of Public Administration</i> (1971)	Eight roles of public administration in modern society
Graham Allison	<i>Public and Private Management</i> (1980)	Public and private management differ in fundamental ways
Barry Bozeman	<i>All Organizations Are Public</i> (1987)	Publicness by degree: ownership, funding, control
Wamsley, Goodsell, Rohr and others	Blacksburg Manifesto (1983); <i>Refounding Public Administration</i> (1990)	Public administration as a legitimate constitutional actor

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Kettl and Fesler	<i>The Politics of the Administrative Process</i>	Translation of politics into reality citizens see; politics, performance, accountability
George Boyne	Review of 34 studies (2002)	Only three publicness differences well supported
Lant Pritchett	<i>Is India a Flailing State?</i> (2009)	Strong head, weak limbs: implementation gap



Previous Year Questions 31 QUESTIONS



2026

"There is an urgent need to incorporate the contribution of **other disciplines** into debates and analyses about **governance**, not the prevalence of disciplinary silos." **Comment.**

10 MARKS

2023

Public administration horizons have been expanding to cater to the complex needs of the citizens in the globalised era. **Explain.**

10 MARKS

2020

"The **strength of Public Administration** is in its exploration of the complexities and nuances of public policy making and implementation." **Discuss.**

10 MARKS

2019

"Public Administration is constantly being **reinvented because it is contextual.**" **Elaborate.**

10 MARKS

2018

"The **scope of the discipline** of Public Administration is determined by what an administrative system does." Does it mean that the scope of this discipline is **boundaryless**? **Explain.**

10 MARKS

2018

"**Political and administrative systems** have reciprocal relationship." **Discuss.**

15 MARKS

2016

"Public Administration is the **translation of politics into reality** that citizens see everyday." (Donald F. Kettl and James W. Fesler) **Explain.**

10 MARKS

2014

"**British philosophy of Administration** is based on a unification of science of Administration with ethics." **Analyze.**

- 2013 How did **traditional public administration** "resolve a fundamentally irresolvable problem-creating an administration strong enough to be effective but not so strong enough to endanger accountability"?
- 2010 "The study of administration should start from the **base of management rather than the foundation of law.**" **Explain.**
- 2007 "**Public and Private Administrations** are two species of the same genus, but they also have special values and techniques of their own." **Comment.**
- 2006 "If public administration is to play a major **legitimising role** in governing our complex society, it needs to be more fully conceptualised." **Discuss.**
- 2002 "Though there are certain points of similarity between **public and private administration** yet no private organisation can ever be exactly the same as a public one." –**Examine.**
- 2001 "**publicness**" of public Administration in an ideal democratic government remains the ultimate value in theory and practice.' **Elucidate.**
- 2000 "A **science of administration** would be a body of formal statements describing invariant relationships between measurable objects, units, or elements. Unquestionably, administrative research has produced definite precepts and hypotheses that are applicable to concrete situation."- (Fritz Morstein Marx) **Comment.**
- 1999 "What do you understand by the term **under administration**? What are the issues involved in it?"
- 1998 "As long as the study of public administration is not **comparative**, claim for a '**science of public administration** 'sounds rather hollow" **Explain.**
- 1998 "The **scope of administration** is determined by the scope of government functions which is decided politically". **Comment.**
- 1997 "In the science of administration, whether public or private, the basic 'good' is **efficiency.**" **Comment.**
- 1996 How far is it true to state that the **bureaucratic state** began to displace the **administrative state**; when the predominant function of the government changed from regulation to operation of business?
- 1996 "The **scope of public Administration** is ever expanding." **Comment.**

1995 A **theory of public administration** means in our time a **theory of politics** also. **Comment.**

1994 "The postwar formulations of **White and Pfiffner** reflect the new 'public policy' orientation- the conception of **administration as a political process.**" **Comment.**

1993 How dose public administration differ in the **developed and developing societies**? How far can it **modernise the traditional political culture** of developing countries?

1993 **Waldo** speaks of the fears of F.M. Mark that Public administration has grown so broad, and so much is involved at its periphery that it stands "In danger of **disappearing completely as a recognizable focus of study.**" **Comment.**

1991 'The **identity and scope** of public Administration both as an academic discipline and government in operation, have always been matters of continuing debate and controversy.' **Discuss.**

1991 'Public Administration consists of all those operations having for their purpose the **fulfilment or enforcement of Public Policy.**' **Comment.**

1990 the development, if not **survival of civilisation** depends on the science and practice of administration.' **Comment.**

1989 "Popular belief is that **ownership change from public to private** brings about improved performance." **Comment.**

1989 **Management of the flow of work** upward & downward within human hierarchies and between human hierarchies is the **art of administration.** (Appleby). **Comment.**

1988 Do you think that contemporary Administrative Theory supports the '**art**' of **public administration** and generally tends to place less emphasis on the '**science**' of public administration?

02

UNIT 02

8 CHAPTERS

142 PYQS

Administrative Thought

Scientific Management and Scientific Management movement; Classical Theory; Weber's bureaucratic model – its critique and post-Weberian Developments; Dynamic Administration (Mary Parker Follett); Human Relations School (Elton Mayo and others); Functions of the Executive (C.I. Barnard); Simon's decision-making theory; Participative Management (R. Likert, C. Argyris, D. McGregor).

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL

PAPER I · PART A

Weber's Bureaucratic Model: Authority, Ideal Type, Critique and Post-Weberian Developments

Bureaucracy is the most studied, most criticised and most durable form of organisation in the modern world. The German sociologist **Max Weber** (1864–1920) gave it its classic analysis: bureaucracy is the administrative apparatus of **legal-rational authority**, an organisation of appointed, trained, salaried officials working within a **hierarchy** under **written rules**, without favour or hatred. For Weber it was technically the **most efficient** form of administration ever devised, and also, potentially, an **“iron cage”** that could trap human freedom and overpower democratic politics.

SYLLABUS Administrative Thought: Scientific Management and Scientific Management movement; Classical Theory; Weber's bureaucratic model – its critique and post-Weberian Developments; Dynamic Administration (Mary Parker Follett); Human Relations School (Elton Mayo and others); Functions of the Executive (C.I. Barnard); Simon's decision-making theory; Participative Management (R. Likert, C. Argyris, D. McGregor).

THIS CHAPTER Weber's theory of authority and the ideal-type bureaucracy; Marx's view of bureaucracy; the critique of Weber; post-Weberian developments (Merton, Selznick, Gouldner, Blau, Crozier, Thompson, Presthus, Bennis, Riggs, the Rudolphs, Offe, feminist critiques); bureaucracy and democracy; the persistence of bureaucracy; the Neo-Weberian State.

CONTENTS

01 Bureaucracy: The Term and its Meanings	02 Weber's Theory of Authority
03 The Ideal-Type Bureaucracy	04 Weber's Fear: Bureaucratic Power and the Iron Cage
05 Marx on Bureaucracy	06 The Critique of Weber's Model
07 Post-Weberian Developments	08 Bureaucracy and Democracy
09 The Persistence of Bureaucracy and the Neo-Weberian State	10 Key Terms
11 Commissions, Committees and Judgments	12 Contemporary Developments

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · ADMINISTRATIVE THOUGHT

Topic map

Weber's Bureaucracy and After

From the ideal type to its critics and its revival

Legal-rational authority · rules · hierarchy · merit · files

1 · The term

De Gournay (c. 1745); Albrow's **seven meanings**; Laski's fear

2 · Authority

Traditional, charismatic, **legal-rational**; routinising charisma

3 · Ideal type

Structural and behavioural features; **technical superiority**

4 · Weber's fear

Official secret, **staatsraison**, iron cage, parliament as check

5 · Marx

Imaginary state; instrument of class; Paris Commune

6 · Critique

Expertise vs hierarchy; **emotional validity**; bureaupathology

7 · Post-Weberians

Merton, Selznick, **Gouldner**, Blau, Crozier, Bennis, Riggs

8–9 · Democracy and today

Strong vs weak bureaucracy; **Neo-Weberian State**

Attacked for a century, bureaucracy has changed its clothes, not its skeleton.

In simple words: the rule-bound office that makes equal treatment possible.

Public Administration

- **Why it matters:** every government ministry, district office, police force, hospital and large company is organised, at least in part, on Weber's lines. India's civil services, from UPSC recruitment to Article 311 protection, are a Weberian design.
- **Why it is controversial:** sociologists after Weber (Merton, Selznick, Gouldner, Blau, Crozier) showed that the same features that make bureaucracy efficient also make it **rigid, self-serving and inefficient** in practice; scholars of developing countries questioned whether it suits non-Western societies; reformers from New Public Management onwards tried to replace it.
- **Why it persists:** despite a century of attack, bureaucracy has not disappeared. The **Neo-Weberian State** and the "rediscovery of bureaucracy" show why rule of law, merit, continuity and impartiality remain indispensable.

IN SIMPLE WORDS

When you apply for a passport, you do not need to know the officer, bribe anyone or belong to the right caste. You fill a standard form, attach documents, and an official who has passed an examination checks them against written rules; if refused, you can appeal to a higher officer. That impersonal, rule-based, appealable process is Weber's bureaucracy at its best. When the same officer refuses because one form field is in the wrong ink, that is bureaucracy at its worst.

01

Bureaucracy: The Term and its Meanings

IN SIMPLE WORDS

"Bureaucracy" began as a sneer: rule by desks. Over time it came to mean several different things: the civil service, rule by officials, any big organisation, or an efficient rational system. Knowing which meaning a writer uses avoids confusion.

1.1 Origin of the term

- The word was coined around **1745** by the French economist **Vincent de Gournay** (1712–1759), joining *bureau* (desk, office) and the Greek *kratos* (rule). He complained of "an illness in France" called *bureaumania*. As **Fritz Morstein Marx** noted, it spread to Germany as *Bürokratie* in the nineteenth century and then into English; Thomas Carlyle called it "the continental nuisance".
- Earlier writers** treated it as rule by officials: **J.S. Mill** contrasted bureaucracy with representative government; **Gaetano Mosca** (*Elementi di scienza politica*, 1896; *The Ruling Class*, 1939) classified all political systems as either **feudal or bureaucratic**; **Robert Michels** (*Political Parties*, 1911) formulated the **iron law of oligarchy**: every large organisation, even a democratic socialist party, develops a bureaucratic structure in which a few leaders control the many.
- Max Weber** freed the term from its purely pejorative sense and made it a tool of sociological analysis.

1.2 Seven meanings of bureaucracy (Martin Albrow)

Martin Albrow (*Bureaucracy*, 1970) identified seven modern concepts:

MEANING	SENSE	TYPICAL USER
Rational organisation	An efficient organisation based on rules and expertise	Weber, Blau
Organisational inefficiency	Red tape, rigidity, delay	Merton, popular usage
Rule by officials	Officials hold political power	Mosca, Laski, Mill

MEANING	SENSE	TYPICAL USER
Public administration	The civil service of the state	Common in public administration
Administration by officials	Any organisation run by salaried officials	Parsons
The organisation	Any large-scale organisation	Blau and Scott
Modern society	A society dominated by large organisations	Critics of mass society

1.3 Types of bureaucracy (Morstein Marx)

Fritz Morstein Marx (*The Administrative State*, 1957) classified historical bureaucracies into four types:

- **Guardian bureaucracy:** officials selected for learning and moral character, custodians of the public interest (Confucian China; Plato's guardians). Tends to become conservative and aloof.
- **Caste bureaucracy:** recruitment from one class or caste; qualifications linked to class (ancient India, aristocratic England, pre-war Japan).
- **Patronage bureaucracy:** jobs distributed as political favours (the American **spoils system**; Britain before the Northcote–Trevelyan reforms of 1854).
- **Merit bureaucracy:** recruitment and promotion by **objective qualifications**, with security of tenure and political control (modern civil services).

1.4 Laski: bureaucracy as a threat to liberty

Harold Laski defined bureaucracy as "a system of government the control of which is so completely in the hands of officials that their power jeopardizes the liberties of ordinary citizens."

- **The fear:** officials who are permanent, expert and unelected accumulate power through control of information, discretion and the drafting of rules; elected leaders become dependent on them; citizens face an unaccountable apparatus.
- **Its sources:** routine, secrecy, delegated legislation, the expertise gap between ministers and officials, and the weakness of legislatures in overseeing administration.
- **Limits of the definition:** it describes a **pathology**, not bureaucracy as such. Merit bureaucracies under democratic control (parliamentary oversight, courts, RTI, ombudsmen) protect liberty by applying law **equally**; arbitrary rule by persons is the greater danger.

Weber's Theory of Authority

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Why do people obey? Some obey because "it has always been so" (a king, a village elder). Some obey a remarkable person they believe in (a prophet, a freedom-fighter). Modern people mostly obey the law and the office, not the person. Weber built his theory of bureaucracy on this third kind of obedience.

2.1 Power, authority and legitimacy

- **Power** (*Macht*): "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will **despite resistance**."
- **Authority / domination** (*Herrschaft*): "the probability that a **command** with a given specific content will be **obeyed** by a given group of persons." Authority is power accepted as **legitimate**: obedience is voluntary because the ruled believe the command is rightful.
- "**All administration means domination**": for Weber, administration is the exercise of authority, not merely service.
- **Five components of authority** (as summarised by Reinhard Bendix): a ruler or rulers; the ruled; the will of the rulers to influence the conduct of the ruled, expressed as commands; evidence of influence in the objective degree of compliance; and evidence of the **subjective acceptance** with which the ruled obey.
- **Legitimacy** decides the type of obedience, the kind of administrative staff and the way authority is exercised.

2.2 The three pure types of legitimate authority

BASIS	TRADITIONAL	CHARISMATIC	LEGAL-RATIONAL
Source of legitimacy	Sanctity of immemorial traditions and of the status of those who rule by them	Devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of a person	Belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those appointed under them to command
Obedience owed to	The person of the chief, within tradition	The person of the leader and his revelation	The impersonal legal order and the office
Administrative staff	Personal retainers, household officials, relatives, favourites (patrimonial); or feudal vassals (feudal)	Disciples and followers chosen for devotion and charisma	Bureaucracy : appointed, qualified, salaried officials
Character	Customary plus personal arbitrariness	Revolutionary, unstable, anti-routine	Continuous, rule-bound, calculable

BASIS	TRADITIONAL	CHARISMATIC	LEGAL-RATIONAL
Example	Monarchy, patriarchy, feudal estate	Prophets, Gandhi, Napoleon, founders of movements	Modern state, army, corporation

- **Pure types are rarely found pure:** real systems combine elements; one type tends over time to acquire features of another.
- **Weber preferred** legal-rational authority as the type suited to modern government because of its rationality.

2.3 The routinisation of charisma

- Pure charisma is **revolutionary** ("It is written..., but I say unto you...") and **unstable**: it depends on the leader proving his gifts and lasts only while followers believe. It breaks down when the leader dies or fails.
- To survive, charisma must be **routinised** (*Veralltäglicung*): transformed into **traditional** authority (hereditary succession, a dynasty) or **legal-rational** authority (an office, a party organisation, elections), in either an authoritarian or a democratic direction.
- **Charisma's anti-economic character:** pure charisma is "**foreign to economic considerations**": the leader and disciples live on gifts, booty or voluntary support and despise regular, methodical earning. For charisma to become a **permanent routine structure**, this anti-economic character must be altered: the followers need **regular income** (benefices, fees, salaries, taxes), property and rules of succession. In other words, a lasting organisation needs an **economic base and an administrative staff**, which is exactly what bureaucratisation supplies.
- **Example:** a national movement led by a charismatic leader becomes, after independence, a party with paid functionaries, membership dues and a constitution; a religious founder's community becomes a church with priests, endowments and hierarchy.

2.4 The beliefs that underpin legal-rational authority

Martin Albrow summarised five beliefs on which legal authority rests:

- a **legal code** can be established that claims obedience from members;
- law is a system of **abstract rules** applied to particular cases; administration pursues the organisation's interests **within the limits of law**;
- the person exercising authority **also obeys** this impersonal order;
- members obey the law **only as members** (*qua* member), not as persons;
- obedience is owed **not to the person** holding authority but to the impersonal order that appointed him.

Bureaucracy: the purest, but not the only, form of legal authority.

- Weber called bureaucratic administration "the **purest type** of legal authority": a staff of appointed, qualified officials applying rules is where legal-rational domination is most fully realised.
- But legal authority is **not exercised only through bureaucracy**. It also works through elected heads of government, collegial bodies (cabinets, boards), parliaments, courts and honorary officials. Weber himself noted that "at the top of a bureaucratic organisation there is necessarily an element which is at least **not**

purely bureaucratic": the minister or president who holds office by election, succession or appointment from outside the career ladder.

- **Implication:** bureaucracy is a means of legal domination, not its whole content; the political head supplies goals and legitimacy, and the bureaucracy supplies continuous, expert execution. That division is the root of the politics–administration relationship (and of Weber's demand for strong political leadership, Section 4.5).

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · MAX WEBER

Economy and Society, 1922

Three Types of Legitimate Authority

Why people obey decides what kind of staff rules them

Traditional

LEGITIMACY

Sanctity of custom and inherited status

OBEY

The person of the chief

STAFF

Retainers, relatives, vassals
(**patrimonial**)

EXAMPLE

Monarchy, feudal estate

Charismatic

LEGITIMACY

Faith in a leader's extraordinary gifts

OBEY

The leader and his mission

STAFF

Disciples chosen for devotion

EXAMPLE

Prophets, founders of movements

Legal-rational

LEGITIMACY

Belief in lawfully enacted rules

OBEY

The impersonal order and the office

STAFF

Appointed, qualified, salaried
(**bureaucracy**)

EXAMPLE

Modern state, army, company

← **routinised into tradition**

Charisma is unstable: it needs income, rules of succession and staff

routinised into law →

In simple words: custom, a hero, or the law; modern states run on the law.

Public Administration

03

The Ideal-Type Bureaucracy

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Weber did not describe any real office. He built a "pure model" by exaggerating the features that make modern administration rational, so that real offices could be measured against it, the way a perfect circle helps you see how round a real wheel is.

3.1 The ideal type as a method

- An **ideal type** is a **mental construct**, formed by “one-sided accentuation” of certain features of reality into a logically consistent picture. “**Ideal**” means **pure** or logically complete, not morally desirable.
- It is **not a description** of any real bureaucracy, nor a hypothesis, nor an average; it is a **yardstick** for comparison, classification and causal analysis (“it is not a description of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description”).
- Weber used ideal types to solve the problem of **objectivity** in the social sciences: they let researchers compare different societies and periods systematically.
- **Carl Friedrich** complained that “ideal” and “type” cancel each other; defenders reply that Weber’s meaning is purely methodological.

3.2 The structural features

Weber’s account in *Economy and Society* (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, published posthumously in 1922; English translations 1947 and 1968) can be grouped as follows.

The organisation of offices

- **Continuous, rule-bound conduct** of official business.
- **Fixed jurisdictional areas** (spheres of competence): each office has defined duties, the authority to carry them out, and strictly limited means of compulsion.
- **Hierarchy** (*Amtshierarchie*): each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one, with a **right of appeal**.
- **Rules**, technical or legal, whose application requires **trained** officials.
- **Separation of office and person**: officials do not own the means of administration; official property and private property, office and home, are strictly separated.
- **No appropriation of office**: the post cannot be sold or inherited.
- **Written documents (files)**: acts, decisions and rules are recorded in writing even when discussion is oral; files plus continuous operation constitute the “**bureau**”.

The position of the official

- **Personally free**, subject to authority only in official obligations.
- **Appointed, not elected**, through a free **contract**.
- **Selected for technical qualifications**, ideally tested by **examination** or certified by diploma.
- Paid a **fixed salary in money**, usually with **pension**, graded by rank.
- The office is his **sole or primary occupation**.
- A **career**: promotion by **seniority or achievement**, or both, on the judgement of superiors.
- Subject to **strict and systematic discipline** and control.

Martin Albrow counted ten features as Weber’s “ideal, pure or most rational type of bureaucracy”.

3.3 Structural and behavioural characteristics

Mohit Bhattacharya distinguishes two sets of properties in the Weberian model:

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS	BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS
Division of work (specialisation)	Rationality (calculable means to ends)
Hierarchy	Impersonality (<i>sine ira et studio</i>)
System of rules	Rule orientation
Role specificity	Neutrality

- **Sine ira et studio** ("without hatred or passion"): "Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is 'dehumanised', the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation. This is the specific nature of bureaucracy, and it is appraised as its special virtue."
- **Three ways of reading Weber**: structurally (division of work, hierarchy), behaviourally (impersonality, rule-following), and instrumentally (Peter Blau: "an organisation that **maximises efficiency** in administration"). Critics usually attack one reading and ignore the others.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · MAX WEBER

Ideal type

The Ideal-Type Bureaucracy

A pure model to measure real offices against, not a description of any one

Structural features

Division of work: fixed spheres of competence

Hierarchy: each office supervised, right of appeal

System of rules: written, general, learnable

Role specificity: office separate from person; files

Behavioural features

Rationality: calculable means to ends

Impersonality: *sine ira et studio*

Rule orientation: cases decided by rules

Neutrality: serves any lawful master

Calculability: results predictable for rulers and the ruled

The official

Personally free · **appointed** by contract · selected by **qualification** · fixed money **salary** and pension · office is main job · **career** by seniority or merit · under discipline

Result: precision, speed, continuity, calculability: "the machine" of administration

In simple words: the right person, in a fixed post, applying rules to all alike.

Public Administration

3.4 Why bureaucracy is superior: rationality and efficiency

- **Technical superiority:** "The decisive reason for the advance of bureaucratic organisation has always been its purely **technical superiority** over any other form of organisation. The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organisations exactly as does the **machine with the non-mechanical modes of production**."
- **Its virtues:** "Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs: these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration, and especially in its **monocratic** form."
- **Calculability:** bureaucracy makes possible "a high degree of **calculability** of results for the heads of the organisation and for those acting in relation to it".
- **Indispensability:** "For the needs of mass administration today, it is completely indispensable. **The choice is only that between bureaucracy and dilettantism** in the field of administration."

Rationality and efficiency intertwined. Weber's bureaucracy is "rational" in a specific sense, **formal or instrumental rationality** (*Zweckrationalität*): the systematic, calculable choice of means to given ends through rules and expertise. Its efficiency follows from this rationality:

- **Rules** make decisions predictable and consistent: calculable efficiency.
- **Expertise** (selection by qualification, specialisation, training, files) gives technical competence: knowledge-based efficiency.
- **Hierarchy and discipline** coordinate effort and reduce friction.
- **Impersonality** removes favouritism and emotion, so that cases are decided on objective grounds.
- **Continuity** (files, careers) preserves institutional memory.

But the two concepts are **not identical**:

- Weber's German term was *Rationalität*; English readers translated his claims into "**efficiency**", a word he did not use in the modern managerial sense (Albrow). His claim was **comparative**: bureaucracy is more rational than patrimonial or charismatic administration, not maximally efficient in every case.
- **Formal rationality can produce substantive irrationality:** rules followed for their own sake (Merton), procedures that defeat purposes, "rational" systems that serve inhuman ends.
- So rationality and efficiency are **intertwined** (one produces the other in routine, stable tasks) but can **diverge** (in novel, changing or human-service situations).

3.5 Hierarchy, rules and depersonalisation

- **Hierarchy** fixes who commands and who obeys, so that authority attaches to the **office**, not the person; **rules** fix how authority is exercised. Together they ensure **depersonalisation**: the official treats every citizen as a case under a rule, and the citizen obeys the office, not the individual.
- Depersonalisation produces **equality before the law** (no favours), **predictability** and **efficiency** in mass administration.
- **The counter-argument:** depersonalisation also produces **alienation**, indifference to individual needs, "trained incapacity" and rigidity; hierarchy produces **mutual suspicion** and blocked upward communication (Section 6).

3.6 The historical conditions of bureaucratisation

Weber traced the rise of bureaucracy to:

- **A developed money economy:** "The development of the **money economy**, in so far as a pecuniary compensation of the officials is concerned, is a presupposition of bureaucracy." Officials must be paid regular salaries.
- **A stable system of taxation:** "a precondition for the permanent existence of bureaucratic administration".
- **The growth of administrative tasks** in size and complexity: large territories, standing armies, public works (canal administration in ancient Egypt), modern communications.
- **Capitalism:** "Today it is primarily the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of the administration be discharged **precisely, unambiguously, continuously, and with as much speed as possible**." Large capitalist enterprises are "unequalled models of strict bureaucratic organisation".
- **Mass democracy:** "Bureaucracy inevitably accompanies modern mass democracy", because democracy demands **equality before the law** and rejects privilege and doing business "from case to case". Bureaucracy has a **levelling** effect on social classes.
- **Rationalisation of culture:** the **Protestant ethic** (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1904–05) encouraged methodical, disciplined, calculating conduct.
- **Critics:** **Peter Blau** noted bureaucracies paid in kind (Egypt, Rome, China), so a money economy is not absolutely necessary; **H.G. Creel** showed that many Weberian features existed in **China** by about 200 BC.

04

Weber's Fear: Bureaucratic Power and the Iron Cage

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Weber admired bureaucracy as a machine but feared what it might do to people and to democracy. A machine that knows everything, keeps secrets and never dies can end up ruling those it was built to serve.

4.1 Beetham's three aspects of Weber's theory

David Beetham (*Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*, 1974) showed that Weber's view was more complex than the ideal type:

- **Bureaucracy as a technically efficient instrument** (*Economy and Society*): the familiar view of a neutral tool.
- **Bureaucracy as a power group:** it has an inherent tendency to **exceed its instrumental function**, become a separate status group and **usurp the goal-setting role** of politicians. Weber's political writings concentrate on this negative side: what bureaucracy **cannot** do (lead, take political responsibility, set values).
- **Bureaucracy as reflecting class:** it cannot free itself from the outlook of the classes from which it is recruited and with which it is allied.

Alfred Diamant speaks of a **dualism** in Weber: the neutral tool of the ideal type and the power-hungry apparatus of his political experience.

4.2 Knowledge, secrecy and staatsraison

- **Power through knowledge:** "Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally domination through **knowledge**." The bureaucrat has technical expertise plus **knowledge of the files** (service knowledge), which the political master lacks: "The political master finds himself in the position of the dilettante who stands opposite the expert."
- **The official secret:** "The concept of the '**official secret**' is the specific invention of bureaucracy, and nothing is so fanatically defended by the bureaucracy as this attitude." Bureaucracy "naturally welcomes a **poorly informed and hence a powerless parliament**".
- **Staatsraison:** "In the canonisation of the abstract idea of '**staatsraison**' (reason of state) are inseparably woven the sure instincts of the bureaucracy for the conditions which preserve its own power in the State."
 - **Meaning:** officials justify secrecy, discretion and resistance to scrutiny by appealing to an abstract "interest of the state" (national security, public order, administrative necessity).
 - **The real function:** this lofty doctrine also, and inseparably, protects the **bureaucracy's own power**: secrecy shields it from parliament and public; "the needs of the state" become a reason to expand its own sphere.
 - **Example:** colonial and post-colonial secrecy laws (India's Official Secrets Act, 1923) and claims of privilege before courts; the classification of routine information.
 - **Counter-measures:** parliamentary inquiry, freedom of information laws, judicial review, a free press.

4.3 The hardest structure to destroy

- **"Once it is fully established, bureaucracy is among those social structures which are the hardest to destroy."** It is "practically unshatterable" as an instrument for "societalising" relations of power.
- **Why:** the individual official is "a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march"; the ruled depend on its continuous functioning ("the material fate of the masses depends upon the steady and correct functioning of the increasingly bureaucratic organisations"); its knowledge and files are indispensable to any new ruler; revolutions and conquests capture the apparatus rather than abolish it.
- **Evidence:** the Russian Revolution kept and expanded the bureaucracy; newly independent states, including **India**, retained colonial administrative structures; privatisation and New Public Management transferred tasks but created new regulatory bureaucracies.

4.4 The iron cage

- In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber wrote that the care for external goods, which should lie on the saint's shoulders like a light cloak, had become a *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, translated by Talcott Parsons as an **"iron cage"** (literally a "shell as hard as steel").
- In *Economy and Society* he warned that bureaucracy, with machines, is building "the **shell of bondage**" (*Gehäuse der Hörigkeit*) into which people may be forced, like the fellahs of ancient Egypt, if a technically good, rational administration becomes the only value deciding their affairs.

- **Meaning:** rationalisation could produce “**specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart**”, a world of rule-bound routine that crushes individual freedom, charisma and moral leadership.

4.5 Weber’s mechanisms to control bureaucracy

Martin Albrow identified five mechanisms in Weber’s writings:

- **Collegiality:** more than one person takes part in decisions (cabinets, boards); limits monarchy but slows decisions and blurs responsibility.
- **Separation of powers:** responsibility for the same function divided between two or more bodies (budget between crown and parliament); inherently unstable.
- **Amateur administration:** unpaid notables; no match for professionals in modern conditions.
- **Direct democracy:** short terms, rotation, election, recall, officials guided by an assembly; workable only in small units.
- **Representation:** elected parliaments with strong parties. Weber saw this as the **greatest check**: a strong, working parliament with powers of **inquiry**, training politicians “with a grasp of reality”, would supply **leadership** and **control** the officials (*Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany*, 1918). He also valued **plebiscitary leadership**, a charismatic political leader elected by the people, to counter “rule by officials” (*Beamtenherrschaft*).

INDIAN CONNECT — WEBER IN THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICES

- **Merit and career:** recruitment by the **UPSC** (Articles 315–320) through competitive examination, the **All India Services** (Article 312; All India Services Act, 1951), pay scales, pensions and promotion rules embody Weber’s official.
- **Tenure and protection:** **Article 311** protects civil servants from dismissal without inquiry, securing the independence Weber thought necessary; the **pleasure doctrine** of Article 310 keeps it subject to law.
- **Written documents:** in **T.S.R. Subramanian v. Union of India** (31 October 2013), the Supreme Court directed the setting up of **Civil Services Boards**, a minimum fixed tenure, and that civil servants should act on **written** instructions, recording oral instructions from political superiors, a direct application of Weber’s principle of files to protect neutrality.
- **The office secret and its reversal:** the **Official Secrets Act, 1923**, embodied Weber’s “official secret”; the **Right to Information Act, 2005** reversed the presumption (Section 22 gives it overriding effect over inconsistent laws, including the Official Secrets Act). The **2nd ARC’s first report** (2006) recommended repealing the Official Secrets Act.
- **Kautilya and Weber:** the *Arthashastra* already described salaried officials, departmental superintendents, written records, audit and tests of integrity, many features of Weber’s model, though in a patrimonial monarchy.

Marx on Bureaucracy

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Weber saw bureaucracy as the rational tool of the modern state. Marx saw it as the tool of the ruling class, dressed up as the guardian of the general interest. For Marx, the bureaucrat's claim to serve "the state" hides service to property and to the bureaucracy itself.

5.1 The critique of Hegel (1843)

- **Hegel** (*Philosophy of Right*, 1821) saw the civil service as the "**universal class**": a neutral bridge between the state (the general interest) and civil society (particular interests), recruited by examination and dedicated to the common good.
- **Marx**, in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (1843), rejected this:
 - "**The bureaucracy is the imaginary state alongside the real state; it is the spiritualism of the state.**"
 - **Imaginary state:** bureaucracy presents itself as the embodiment of the state's universal purpose, but this universality is an **illusion**; behind it the bureaucracy pursues its **own corporate interest** and the interests of the dominant class. It "takes itself to be the ultimate purpose of the state".
 - **Spiritualism of the state:** as a church claims to embody the spirit of religion, bureaucracy claims to embody the spirit of the state; its formalism, rituals, hierarchy and **worship of authority** make the state appear as something above society. "The general spirit of the bureaucracy is the **secret**, the **mystery**, preserved within itself by hierarchy and against the outside world by being a closed corporation."
 - **Knowledge as mystery:** "The top entrusts the understanding of particulars to the lower levels, whereas the lower levels credit the top with understanding of the universal, and so they **deceive each other.**" Hierarchy is a hierarchy of knowledge, so no one grasps the whole; competence turns into mystery, knowledge into secrecy.
 - **Careerism:** "As far as the individual bureaucrat is concerned, the end of the state becomes his private end: a **pursuit of higher posts**, the building of a career."
 - **Examinations** are a mere "**baptism of bureaucratic knowledge**", not an objective bond between individual and state.
 - **Passive obedience** to the next higher rank is the only bond between bureaucratic minds.
- **Early journalism:** in the *Rheinische Zeitung* (1842), Marx attacked press **censorship** as a bureaucratic instrument and the law on **thefts of wood** that criminalised peasants' customary rights to protect forest owners: the state as an instrument of private property.

5.2 Bureaucracy and the history of the state

Marx's view of bureaucracy changes with the **type of state** he is analysing, which is why his interpretation is "rooted in the history of the nature of the state":

- **Absolutism and the rise of capitalism:** bureaucracy arose with the **absolute monarchy** and the **nation state** (sixteenth century onwards), serving merchant capital and the king against feudal lords; it "sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy, with the decay of the feudal system, which it helped to hasten".

- **The capitalist state:** "The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole **bourgeoisie**" (*Communist Manifesto*, 1848). Bureaucracy is the **instrument of the dominant class**; its interests are linked to those of capital and the state.
- **Bonapartism and relative autonomy:** in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Marx described the French executive as "an **appalling parasitic body** which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores". Under Louis Bonaparte, when no class could rule decisively, the state and its bureaucracy appeared **independent** of all classes, though it rested on the mass of small-holding peasants. Later Marxists developed this into the **relative autonomy** of the state.
- **Factory inspectors (Capital):** Marx praised the British **factory and health inspectors** who recorded facts and pressed for regulation against employers' resistance, showing that parts of the bureaucracy can serve wider social interests under pressure from below.
- **The Paris Commune (1871):** in *The Civil War in France*, Marx saw the **abolition of the bureaucratic state**: officials **elected, recallable** at any time, paid **workmen's wages**; the standing army replaced by the armed people; executive and legislative combined.
- **The withering away of the state:** under communism, class domination ends, and with it the need for a separate bureaucracy; administration becomes the "administration of things" (Engels). **Lenin** (*The State and Revolution*, 1917) promised that every cook could govern; in practice the Soviet state built one of the largest bureaucracies in history, which **Trotsky** later denounced as a privileged caste.

5.3 Weber and Marx compared

BASIS	MARX	WEBER
Nature of bureaucracy	Instrument of class domination; a parasitic, privileged corporation	Rational instrument of legal authority; technically superior
Origin	Absolutism and capitalism; class state	Money economy, mass democracy, capitalism, rationalisation
Rationality	Rationality turned into its opposite: formalism, secrecy, mystery	Formal rationality, calculability, efficiency
Interest	Serves dominant class and its own corporate interest	Ideally neutral; in practice may become a power group
Future	Will wither away with classes (Commune model)	Permanent and indispensable; can only be checked
Remedy	Abolish class rule; elected, recallable officials	Strong parliament, political leadership
Method	Historical, dialectical, critical	Ideal type, comparative-historical

- **Convergence:** both saw bureaucracy's tendency to **secrecy, careerism** and **power**; Weber's political writings echo Marx's critique.

- **Divergence:** Weber thought socialism would mean **more** bureaucracy, not less, a prediction borne out by the Soviet experience; Marx thought bureaucracy was a feature of class society that could be abolished.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · COMPARING VIEWS

1843 and 1922

Marx and Weber on Bureaucracy

A tool of class rule, or the rational tool of legal authority

Basis	Karl Marx	Max Weber
Nature	" Imaginary state "; a parasitic, privileged corporation	Rational instrument of legal authority
Origin	Absolutism and the capitalist class state	Money economy, mass democracy, capitalism
Rationality	Turns into formalism, secrecy, mystery	Formal rationality, calculability, efficiency
Whose interest	The dominant class and itself	Neutral in theory; a power group in practice
Future	Withers away with classes	Permanent , hardest to destroy
Remedy	Commune: elected, recallable, workers' pay	Strong parliament and political leaders

Where they meet: both saw secrecy, careerism and the drive for power. Weber also predicted that socialism would bring **more** bureaucracy, not less.

In simple words: Marx asks whom it serves; Weber asks how well it works.

Public Administration

06 The Critique of Weber's Model

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Weber's critics did not say he was simply wrong. They said his model leaves out people, power, environment and culture, and that its own rules contain contradictions. Each criticism opened a new field of research.

6.1 Three grounds of criticism

Critics attacked the model on three grounds (Albrow):

- **Rationality:** the model's rationality is doubtful, both because of factors it omits (informal organisation, power, emotions) and because of **internal inconsistency**;

- **Cultural fit:** the degree of rationality depends on the **cultural context**; Western bureaucracy may not suit other societies;
- **Method:** the very basis of the ideal type is invalid (Friedrich).

6.2 Internal contradictions

- **Expertise versus hierarchy (Parsons, Gouldner):** Talcott Parsons, translator of *Economy and Society*, noted that Weber grounds authority both in **technical competence** and in **position in the hierarchy**. A superior in rank may not be superior in expertise. Then whom should the subordinate obey: the person with the right to command or the person who knows more? Alvin Gouldner found this tension between “claims of **expertise**” and “claims of **obedience**” in his empirical study.
- **Impersonal detachment versus esprit de corps (Mouzelis):** Weber wants officials to treat one another and the public with impersonal detachment, *sine ira et studio*, yet a bureaucracy also needs **loyalty, solidarity and team spirit** (esprit de corps) to function. Nicos Mouzelis argued that the two are **incompatible**: if relations among staff are governed by impersonal detachment, it is difficult to see how esprit de corps can emerge.
 - **The defence:** they operate at different levels. Detachment governs relations with **clients** and the application of rules; esprit de corps is a **professional** loyalty to the service and its ethos (the “steel frame” pride of the ICS and IAS). Professional identity can coexist with impersonal case-handling.
 - **The danger:** esprit de corps can become **group self-interest** and closed ranks against outsiders, exactly what Marx and Laski feared.
- **Seniority versus merit:** promotion by seniority conflicts with promotion by achievement.
- **Hierarchy and communication:** rigid hierarchy breeds **mutual suspicion**; subordinates conceal defects, blocking the upward flow of information (Mouzelis).

6.3 Neglect of people, informal organisation and power

- **Informal organisation (Barnard, Simon, Blau):** “informal organisations are necessary to the operation of formal organisation” (Barnard); informal relations and unofficial practices often **increase** efficiency (Blau).
- **Human behaviour:** March and Simon placed Weber with the classical “machine model” writers; Waldo said Weber over-stressed the functional side and elevated position over knowledge.
- **Power:** Selznick and others criticised Weber for neglecting the power the bureaucrat acquires, “increasingly preoccupied with his own social position”, subverting organisational goals.
- **Psychological growth:** Argyris argued that bureaucracies restrict the individual’s psychological growth and produce feelings of failure, frustration and conflict.

6.4 Lack of empirical and emotional validity in democratic administration

Lack of empirical validity:

- The model is an **ideal type**, so no real bureaucracy matches it; empirical studies (Gouldner, Blau, Crozier, Selznick) found informal norms, power games, rule-bending and goal displacement everywhere.
- **Democratic administration** differs from the model: officials work under **political direction**, public scrutiny, interest-group pressure, courts, media and citizen participation; they **make policy**, use discretion and negotiate; neutrality and impersonality are only partly achieved.

- Many Weberian features (life tenure, seniority promotion, strict hierarchy) have been modified by performance management, contracts, lateral entry and decentralisation.

Lack of “emotional validity”:

- Democratic administration requires **responsiveness, empathy and human concern** for citizens, especially the poor; Weber’s “dehumanised”, *sine ira et studio* official treats people as **cases**, producing alienation and distrust. **Ralph Hummel** (*The Bureaucratic Experience*) described how bureaucracy makes the official’s self-concept dependent on the organisation and reduces human relations to functional ones.
- Inside the organisation, impersonality ignores the **emotional needs** of employees (belonging, recognition), which the human relations school showed to be decisive.

The defence:

- Weber’s model is a **yardstick**, not a description; its “invalidity” is the point: it shows how far real administration deviates.
- **Impersonality** protects the weak against favouritism; in caste-ridden or clientelist societies, impartial treatment is itself a democratic value (Article 14 equality).
- Bureaucracy and democracy share the principle of **equality before the law**; Weber himself saw bureaucracy as accompanying mass democracy.

6.5 Unsuitability for developing societies

- **Presthus**: Weber’s assumptions about motivation are not necessarily valid in **non-Western** environments.
- **Delaney**: **patrimonial** bureaucracy may be more conducive to growth in under-developed societies than rational bureaucracy.
- **La Palombara**: a bureaucracy heavily encumbered by Weberian norms “may be a less efficacious instrument of economic change”; “in a place like India, public administrators steeped in the tradition of the Indian Civil Service may be less useful as development entrepreneurs than those who are not so rigidly tied to notions of bureaucratic status, hierarchy and impartiality.”
- **The Rudolfs** (Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, 1979): formal rationality can **alienate** and fuel power struggles; the persistence of **patrimonial** elements in bureaucratic administration can mitigate these, just as bureaucratic features in patrimonial administration (Mughal, Rajput states) raised its efficiency.
- **Development administration** demands flexibility, initiative, risk-taking and goal-orientation; Weber’s fixed spheres of competence, rules and hierarchy encourage officials to shirk responsibility and wait for clarifications.
- **Spitzer and Burin**: Weber understated the comprehensive role of officials like the French prefect and the impact of public liability and accountability doctrines on bureaucracy.

6.6 Bureaupathology: Victor Thompson

- **Victor Thompson** (*Modern Organization*, 1961) called the dysfunctional behaviour of bureaucrats **bureaupathology**.
- **The cause**: a growing **gap between authority and ability**. Modern organisations depend on **specialists**, but authority remains with **hierarchical superiors** who often lack the specialist knowledge to judge the work they supervise.

- **The result:** insecure superiors protect themselves through **excessive control, insistence on rules, resistance to change, impersonality, defensive secrecy and "drives to dominate"**; they emphasise the **rights of position** over the requirements of the task.
- **How bureaucupathology denigrates competence:**
 - **Status over skill:** rank, seniority and procedure are rewarded more than expertise and results; specialists must defer to generalist superiors who understand less.
 - **Credit and blame:** superiors claim credit for subordinates' work and blame them for failures; initiative becomes risky.
 - **Conformity over innovation:** competent people who question rules are seen as troublemakers; those who play safe rise (a link to the Peter Principle).
 - **Ritual over purpose:** competence is judged by procedural compliance, not by solving problems.
- **Remedies:** dual career ladders for specialists, team-based and matrix structures, authority based on knowledge, performance appraisal on outcomes, and leadership that is secure enough to share authority. Thompson also described **bureausis**, the client's frustration with impersonal bureaucracy.

COMMON CONFUSION

Is Weber an uncritical admirer of bureaucracy? No. In *Economy and Society* he described the **technical superiority** of the ideal type, but his political writings (especially *Parliament and Government*, 1918) are some of the sharpest criticisms of **rule by officials** ever written: bureaucracy hoards secrets, prefers a weak parliament, cannot provide political leadership, and threatens to build an "iron cage". As David Beetham showed, any assessment must take his whole work into account. Weber thought bureaucracy indispensable, not good in itself.

07 Post-Weberian Developments

IN SIMPLE WORDS

After Weber, sociologists went inside real bureaucracies (a tax office, a gypsum mine, the Tennessee Valley Authority, a French tobacco monopoly) and found that rules, hierarchy and specialisation had unintended effects. Others asked what would replace bureaucracy, and later reformers rediscovered why it is still needed.

7.1 Merton: trained incapacity and goal displacement

Robert K. Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality" (1940), reprinted in *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949):

- **Trained incapacity:** borrowing **Thorstein Veblen's** concept, Merton argued that the very training and skills that make an official effective in routine situations become **blind spots** when conditions change: "actions based upon training and skills which have been successfully applied in the past may result in inappropriate responses under changed conditions." (Kenneth Burke's example: chickens conditioned to come to a bell)

continue to come when the bell now calls them to slaughter.) Veblen's concept thus provides the **transition** from studying bureaucracy's efficiency to studying its **negative aspects**: the same structure produces both.

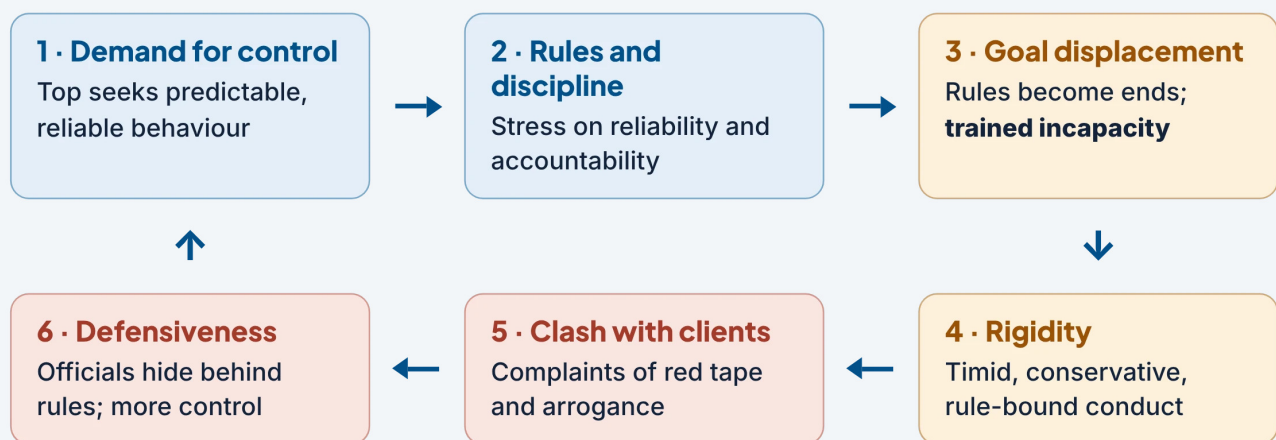
- **Displacement of goals:** "Adherence to the rules, originally conceived as a means, becomes transformed into an **end in itself**; there occurs the familiar process of displacement of goals whereby an **instrumental value becomes a terminal value**." Rules become more important than the game.
- **The bureaucratic personality:** strict discipline and career incentives produce **timidity, conservatism, technicism** and over-conformity; the "**bureaucratic virtuoso**" never forgets a single rule.
- **The vicious circle:** "the very elements which conduce toward efficiency in general produce inefficiency in specific instances": demand for **control** → emphasis on **reliability** and rules → **rigidity** and defensiveness → **difficulty with clients** → felt need to defend actions by rules → more rigidity.
- **Conflict with the public:** depersonalised treatment and esprit de corps produce **arrogance** and conflict with clients, who want personal, sympathetic treatment.
- **Other dysfunctions** listed by later writers: buck-passing, red tape, excessive impersonality, over-secretiveness, unwillingness to delegate and reluctance to use discretion.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · ROBERT MERTON, 1940

Vicious circle

How Control Produces Rigidity

The features that make bureaucracy efficient make it inefficient in specific cases



Selznick: delegation splits interests. **Gouldner:** rules set minimum effort, so supervision tightens. **Crozier:** an organisation that cannot learn from its errors.

In simple words: more rules to fix rigid rules only makes things more rigid.

Public Administration

7.2 Selznick: delegation, bifurcation and co-optation

Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots* (1949), studied the **Tennessee Valley Authority**:

- **Delegation** to sub-units creates specialised competence but also **bifurcation of interests**: sub-units develop **goals of their own** that may conflict with the organisation's goals, and members internalise these sub-goals.

- **Co-optation:** “the process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organisation as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence.”
 - **Formal co-optation:** sharing the symbols of authority (advisory committees) without real power, to gain legitimacy.
 - **Informal co-optation:** sharing **real power** with powerful local interests. The TVA’s “grass-roots democracy” partnered with local agricultural elites (land-grant colleges, farm bureaus), whose interests then shaped TVA policy, against poorer tenants.
- **Lesson:** organisations are not just instruments; they are **adaptive social systems** whose need to survive can change their goals. Selznick founded the **institutional** school (*Leadership in Administration*, 1957: organisations become “infused with value” beyond their technical function).

7.3 Gouldner: three patterns of bureaucracy

Alvin Gouldner, *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy* (1954), studied a **gypsum** plant and mine:

PATTERN	WHO MAKES THE RULES	WHO ACCEPTS THEM	RESULT
Mock bureaucracy	An outside agency (e.g. a no-smoking rule imposed by the insurer)	Neither management nor workers; ignored by both	Rules exist on paper; little conflict
Representative bureaucracy	Rules jointly made or accepted by both sides (e.g. safety rules)	Both, as technically necessary and in their interest	Cooperation; rules legitimate
Punishment-centred bureaucracy	One side imposes rules on the other, enforced by sanctions	Only the imposing side	Tension, conflict, resistance

- **Rules define minimum acceptable behaviour:** employees learn exactly how little they can do without sanction (“**acceptable apathy**”); managers respond with **closer supervision** and more rules, raising tension: the bureaucratic response produces its own reaction.
- **Formal and informal interlinked:** Gouldner argued that the “informal organisation” is a residual, “**cafeteria**” concept into which everything not formal is dumped; he showed how formal rules and informal practices **interpenetrate** (rules are used as bargaining chips; their enforcement or leniency is a currency of exchange), so neither can be understood alone.
- Weber’s model, Gouldner said, ignored the **orientation of members** towards rules, which decides whether rules produce cooperation or conflict.

7.4 Blau: the dynamics of bureaucracy

Peter Blau, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy* (1955), studied a state employment agency and a federal law-enforcement agency:

- Officials **adapted and violated** formal rules (consulting colleagues instead of supervisors, using informal statistics) to achieve the agency’s real goals; such **informal practices often increased efficiency**.

- Statistical performance records changed behaviour, sometimes towards the measure rather than the goal (an early warning about targets).
- **Efficiency** requires that officials **identify with the organisation's purposes** and adjust behaviour to changing circumstances; rigid rules cannot guarantee it. "The attainment of organisational objectives depends on perpetual change in the bureaucratic structure."
- **Blau and Scott** (*Formal Organizations*, 1962) proposed a typology by **who benefits** (*cui bono*): mutual-benefit associations (members), business concerns (owners), service organisations (clients) and **commonweal** organisations (the public at large, e.g. government agencies).

7.5 Crozier: the bureaucratic vicious circle

Michel Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (1963; English 1964), studied French state agencies:

- **A bureaucratic organisation is one that cannot correct its behaviour by learning from its errors.**
- **The vicious circle:** impersonal rules and centralisation are adopted to eliminate personal power and uncertainty; but they create rigidity and isolate strata from one another; problems are pushed up to a remote centre; dissatisfaction leads to **more** rules and centralisation.
- **Power and uncertainty:** groups that control the remaining **zones of uncertainty** (in his tobacco factory, the maintenance workers who alone could fix the machines) gain power. Power in organisations flows from control of uncertainty, not from formal position.
- **Change** comes only through periodic **crises**, not continuous adaptation; Crozier linked this to French cultural traits (fear of face-to-face relations, preference for impersonal rules).

7.6 Presthus: three types of personal accommodation

Robert Presthus, *The Organizational Society* (1962), described how individuals adapt to bureaucratic organisations:

- **Upward-mobiles:** identify with the organisation, accept its values and authority, and seek promotion; they succeed and are rewarded.
- **Indifferents:** the majority; reject the organisation's values, do the minimum, and seek satisfaction outside work (family, hobbies).
- **Ambivalents:** creative, independent-minded professionals who want the organisation's rewards but cannot accept its authority and conformity; anxious, often marginal, but a source of innovation.

7.7 The "end of bureaucracy" thesis: Bennis and Toffler

- **Warren Bennis** ("The Coming Death of Bureaucracy", 1966; *The Temporary Society*, with Philip Slater, 1968) predicted that bureaucracy would be replaced within decades because it cannot cope with **rapid change, complexity, diversity and educated professional workforces**: "it is the requirement of adaptability to the environment which leads to the predicted demise of bureaucracy."
- **The replacement:** "adaptive, problem-solving, temporary systems of diverse specialists, linked together by coordinating executives in an organic flux". Organisations would be built around **problems**, not functions; **project teams and task forces** that dissolve when the task ends; authority based on **competence**, not rank.

- **Alvin Toffler** (*Future Shock*, 1970) called such organisations **adhocracy**; Henry Mintzberg later made adhocracy one of his five organisational configurations.
- **Characteristics of the organic-adaptive organisation:** temporary, problem-centred, matrix-based; differentiation by skill rather than rank; horizontal, network-style links (Larry Hill); bottom-up authority; heavy reliance on information technology; attention to non-economic motivation, participation, quality circles and Japanese-style management.
- **Strengths of the thesis:** it anticipated **matrix, project and network** organisations, task forces, start-up cultures, agile government teams and knowledge work; it rightly stressed **adaptability**.
- **Limitations:**
 - bureaucracy did **not die**; it adapted (flatter hierarchies, e-government) and still dominates public administration;
 - temporary systems suit **innovative, non-routine** tasks, not mass, repetitive, rights-based services (pensions, licences, policing);
 - adhocracies raise problems of **accountability**, continuity, coordination and **insecurity** for members (Bennis himself noted the psychological costs);
 - they presuppose **educated, professional, trusting** workforces and stable resources;
 - Bennis later admitted that his prediction was premature.

7.8 Bureaucracy in developing and comparative settings

- **Fred Riggs:** in **prismatic** societies (formally differentiated but functionally fused), Weberian structures coexist with **formalism** (gap between rules and practice), nepotism and the **"sala"** (office mixed with household and community); bureaucrats tend to dominate weak political institutions, producing **unbalanced polities** (see the chapter on Riggsian models).
- **Weber as mentor of comparative public administration:** his **comparative-historical method** (China, India, Egypt, Rome, Europe), his **typology of authority** (adapted by Riggs into fused–prismatic–diffracted) and his **ideal type** became the starting point of comparative public administration. **Ferrel Heady** used the Weberian model to compare bureaucracies across political systems; Riggs's critique was itself framed against Weber.
- **The heuristic value of the ideal type:** it gave comparative research a **common yardstick** (degree of hierarchy, merit, rule-orientation, impersonality), generated testable questions (Does merit recruitment reduce corruption? Do Weberian bureaucracies promote growth?) and was used in empirical work such as **Evans and Rauch** (1999), who found that countries whose bureaucracies scored higher on "Weberianness" (meritocratic recruitment, predictable careers) had higher economic growth. Its limits: it carried a Western bias and encouraged studies that measured deviations rather than explaining local logics.
- **Claus Offe** (*Disorganized Capitalism*, 1985): bureaucratic **"organisational rationality"** (blind application of rules) may conflict with **"systemic rationality"** (meeting the functional needs of society) under welfare-state and rapidly changing conditions. In such conditions, "the premises of administrative action are no longer rules to be imperatively complied with, but are instead treated as **resources** which are to be weighed from the standpoint of their adequacy for specific tasks." Rule-bound bureaucracy in developing countries is therefore often incompatible with complex development tasks.

7.9 Gender and representative bureaucracy

- **The merit myth:** Weber's model claims that only technical competence counts, regardless of gender or ethnicity. Feminist scholars (**Kathy Ferguson**, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*, 1984; **Rosabeth Moss Kanter**, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, 1977) showed that the "discourse of bureaucracy" (rationality, objectivity, impersonality) was historically associated with **maleness**, while women were confined to lower ranks by an "**opportunity structure**".
- **Representative bureaucracy:** **J. Donald Kingsley** (*Representative Bureaucracy*, 1944) argued that a civil service should reflect the society it serves; Indian **reservations** for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and EWS apply this principle.

7.10 Simon and March: flesh on the Weberian skeleton

- Weber gave the **structure** (anatomy) of bureaucracy: hierarchy, rules, offices. **Herbert Simon** (*Administrative Behavior*, 1947) and **March and Simon** (*Organizations*, 1958) explained the **behaviour** inside that structure: how bounded rationality, decision premises, identification, the zone of acceptance and the "inducements–contributions" balance actually make a hierarchy work.
- In March and Simon's terms, rules, programmes and standard procedures are devices to cope with **bounded rationality**; hierarchy is a way of **factoring decisions**; specialisation reduces complexity. They thus supplied the "**muscle and flesh**" (the cognitive and motivational mechanisms) to Weber's "skeleton", "somewhat unwittingly", because their aim was a general behavioural theory of organisation, not a defence of Weber.
- They also modelled the dysfunctions found by Merton (rigidity), Selznick (sub-goal identification) and Gouldner (minimum acceptable behaviour), turning post-Weberian sociology into a systematic theory (see the chapter on Simon).

08 Bureaucracy and Democracy

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Democracy needs bureaucracy to deliver equal treatment to millions of citizens, but a strong, permanent, expert bureaucracy can quietly overpower elected leaders and citizens. The challenge is to keep the bureaucracy strong enough to work and accountable enough to serve.

8.1 The tension

- **Wilson's dichotomy:** Woodrow Wilson ("The Study of Administration", 1887) warned that "**bureaucracy can exist only where the whole service of the state is removed from the common political life of the people, its chiefs as well as its rank and file. Its motives, its objects, its policy, its standards, must be bureaucratic.**" He feared a Prussian-style official caste, cut off from public opinion, and argued that American administration must remain **sensitive to public opinion** while being businesslike and efficient. His remedy was a professional but **politically controlled** civil service.
- **Strong, not weak, bureaucracy is the concern:** a weak bureaucracy produces **inefficiency** and corruption, a problem of capacity; a **strong** bureaucracy (expert, permanent, cohesive, secretive)

threatens **democratic control**: it can shape policy, resist ministers, capture parliament's agenda and escape accountability. That is Weber's and Laski's fear. Yet a weak bureaucracy also threatens democracy, by failing to deliver rights and inviting arbitrariness; the goal is a **strong but accountable** bureaucracy.

- **The cloak of ministerial responsibility: Ramsay Muir** (*How Britain is Governed*, 1930) argued that in parliamentary democracies bureaucracy **thrives under the cloak of ministerial responsibility**: since ministers answer to parliament for everything done in their departments, officials remain **anonymous** and shielded from public criticism, while ministers, dependent on their advice and expertise, often merely front for them. Parliament holds the minister accountable, but the real decisions are made by unseen officials.
 - **Remedies**: departmental committees of parliament, public accounts committees, citizen's charters, RTI, ombudsmen (Lokpal), judicial review, social audit.
 - **Counter-view**: ministerial responsibility also **protects neutrality**: officials can advise frankly because ministers take public responsibility.

8.2 Weber's model and Barnard's acceptance theory of authority

BASIS	WEBER	BARNARD
Source of authority	Legitimacy of the legal order and the office (top-down)	Acceptance by the subordinate (bottom-up)
Nature	Objective, attached to position	Subjective, "the character of a communication" accepted
Compliance	Disciplined obedience to rules and superiors	Orders accepted within the zone of indifference if understood, consistent with purpose, compatible with personal interest, feasible
Organisation	Formal hierarchy, rules	Cooperative system; formal and informal
Role of executive	Command within rules	Communication, securing contributions, defining purpose; moral leadership
Common ground	Both stress legitimacy : Weber's authority depends on belief in legitimacy (subjective acceptance is one of Bendix's five components); Barnard's " fiction of superior authority " also needs objective, formal channels	

- **Critical examination**: Weber explains **why** organisations can command (legitimacy) and how authority is structured; Barnard explains **when** commands actually work (acceptance, communication, incentives). Weber neglects the subordinate's consent; Barnard understates sanctions and power. Simon's "zone of acceptance" combined both (see the articles on Barnard and Simon).

The Persistence of Bureaucracy and the Neo-Weberian State

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Reformers since the 1980s have tried to replace bureaucracy with markets, contracts and networks. Yet every new model still needs officials who follow law, keep records, are recruited on merit and can be held accountable. Bureaucracy changed its clothes, not its skeleton.

9.1 From bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy

- **New Public Management** (1980s–90s) attacked bureaucracy as slow, rule-bound and producer-centred: Osborne and Gaebler's *Reinventing Government* (1992), **Michael Barzelay's** *Breaking Through Bureaucracy* (1992). It promised **post-bureaucratic** organisations: results over rules, customers over procedures, flexibility over hierarchy.
- **New Public Governance** (2000s) stressed networks, partnerships and co-production (see the chapter on New Public Management and After).
- **Digital-era governance** promised to replace paper bureaucracy with platforms; critics replied that algorithms can become an even harder "**iron cage**": **Bovens and Zouridis** (2002) described a shift from "street-level" to "**screen-level**" and "**system-level**" bureaucracy, in which discretion moves into software design.
 - **E-governance as the iron cage completed:** rules hard-coded into software are applied with total consistency and no room for appeal to a human; decisions become opaque; citizens who do not fit the data fields (missing documents, failed authentication) are excluded; surveillance grows. Weber's calculability is perfected.
 - **E-governance as a way out:** the same systems cut the discretion of petty officials, expose files to the public (RTI portals, dashboards), shorten hierarchies and allow citizens to track their cases. Whether technology tightens or loosens the cage depends on transparency, grievance redress and human review built into it.

9.2 Why bureaucratic features persist

Bureaucratic features have remained constant in organisations despite NPM and governance reforms, for several reasons:

- **Rule of law and equal treatment:** public power must be exercised under law, with written reasons and appeal; this requires rules, files and hierarchy. Courts, auditors and RTI demand records.
- **Accountability:** contracts, agencies and networks multiply the need for **monitoring, regulation and audit**, which are bureaucratic activities; NPM created new regulators and inspectorates ("audit society", Michael Power, 1997).
- **Scale and routine:** mass services (pensions, tax, licences, elections, welfare transfers) need standardisation, predictability and calculability, where bureaucracy is technically superior.

- **Probity and merit:** merit recruitment and tenure guard against **patronage and corruption**; evidence (Evans and Rauch; Dahlström and Lapuente) links Weberian features to lower corruption and better development outcomes.
- **Continuity and institutional memory:** governments change; files and career officials provide continuity.
- **Risk aversion and blame avoidance:** in politically exposed public organisations, rules protect officials and ministers from blame.
- **Path dependence and institutional inertia:** existing structures, cultures, unions and legal frameworks resist change ("the hardest structures to destroy").
- **Hybridity:** reforms were **layered** on bureaucracy rather than replacing it; NPM's performance targets themselves became **rules and rituals** (Taylorist neo-bureaucracy). **Johan Olsen** ("Maybe It Is Time to Rediscover Bureaucracy", 2006) and **Paul du Gay** (*In Praise of Bureaucracy*, 2000) argued that bureaucracy is a **valuable institution** embodying impartiality and legality, not a relic. **Charles Goodsell** (*The Case for Bureaucracy*, 1983) showed that American bureaucracies perform better than their reputation.
- **Crises:** the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic showed the need for **state capacity**, central coordination and professional administration.

9.3 The Neo-Weberian State

Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert (*Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis*, 2004; 2011) identified the **Neo-Weberian State (NWS)** as the reform model of continental European countries (Germany, France, the Nordic states), distinct from Anglo-American NPM.

"WEBERIAN" ELEMENTS RETAINED	"NEO" ELEMENTS ADDED
Reaffirmation of the state as the main facilitator of solutions to new problems	Shift from an internal orientation towards bureaucratic rules to an external orientation towards meeting citizens' needs and wishes , through a professional culture of quality and service, not market mechanisms
Reaffirmation of representative democracy as the legitimating element	Supplementing representative democracy with consultation and direct participation of citizens
Reaffirmation of administrative law, modernised, preserving equality before the law and legal security	Modernisation of law to encourage orientation to results , not only correct procedure; balance of ex-ante and ex-post controls
Preservation of a public service with a distinctive status, culture and terms and conditions	Professionalisation of the public service: the official becomes a professional manager oriented to citizens' needs, not merely a legal expert

- **How NWS changes the model of operation:** the structure remains Weberian (state, law, career service), but its **operation** changes from **rule-following to citizen-centred performance**: service standards, one-stop shops, citizen's charters, feedback and participation, simplified procedures, measured outcomes, and managers trained in quality and service.

- **Assessment:** NWS shows that bureaucracy can be **reformed from within** without marketisation; but critics find it descriptive (a label for continental practice), vague about mechanisms, and challenged by fiscal pressures and populism.

INDIAN CONNECT — NEO-WEBERIAN REFORM IN INDIA

- **Citizen orientation within the Weberian state:** **Citizen's Charters** (from 1997), **Sevottam** service-quality model, **CPGRAMS** grievance redressal and state **Right to Public Services** laws change the operation, not the structure, of the bureaucracy.
- **Professionalisation:** **Mission Karmayogi** (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building, approved in September 2020) seeks to move civil servants from "rule-based" to "**role-based**" functioning, with competency frameworks and continuous learning, a professionalisation agenda close to NWS.
- **Delaying and digitisation:** **CSMOP 2022** (delaying, delegation, e-Office) modernises procedure while keeping files and hierarchy.
- **Limits of post-bureaucratic reform:** the **lateral entry** experiment (from 2018) brought in outside specialists, but the UPSC's advertisement of **17 August 2024** for 45 posts was **cancelled on 20 August 2024** at the government's request, to review reservation provisions, showing how merit, representation and career-service norms constrain departures from the Weberian model.
- **Persistence:** Direct Benefit Transfer, Aadhaar-based delivery and digital public infrastructure have reduced discretion and leakage, but they rest on bureaucratic databases, rules and audit trails: a digital Weberianism rather than its end.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · POST-WEBERIAN REFORM

Pollitt and Bouckaert

Weberian, NPM and Neo-Weberian

Reform layered on bureaucracy rather than replacing it

Basis	Weberian bureaucracy	New Public Management	Neo-Weberian State
Core value	Legality, equal treatment	Efficiency, results	Legality plus citizen service
Citizen is	Subject of rules	Customer	Citizen with needs and voice
Main tool	Rules, hierarchy, files	Markets, contracts, targets	Modernised law, quality, participation
Official is	Legal expert	Manager on contract	Professional serving citizens
Control	Ex-ante, procedural	Ex-post, performance	A balance of both
Where	Classic civil services	UK, New Zealand, USA	Germany, France, Nordic states

India: Citizen's Charters, Sevottam, CPGRAMS and **Mission Karmayogi** change how the bureaucracy works, not its Weberian structure.

In simple words: keep the rule of law and merit; add service and voice.

Public Administration

CRITICISM – THE CASE AGAINST WEBERIAN BUREAUCRACY

- Rules become ends in themselves: goal displacement, red tape, trained incapacity (Merton).
- Hierarchy and secrecy concentrate power and evade democratic control (Weber's own fear, Marx, Laski).
- It ignores informal organisation, emotions and human growth (Barnard, Mayo, Argyris).
- It cannot adapt to rapid change and complex, non-routine tasks (Bennis, Crozier, Offe).
- Its Western, "rational" model fits poorly in developing and plural societies (Riggs, La Palombara, the Rudolfs).

DEFENCE – THE CASE FOR WEBERIAN BUREAUCRACY

- It secures **rule of law, equal treatment and impartiality**, essential values of democracy.
- **Merit and tenure** prevent patronage and corruption; Weberian states grow faster (Evans and Rauch).
- It is **technically superior** for mass, routine, rights-based administration.
- It provides **continuity, records and accountability**, on which every newer model (NPM, networks, digital government) depends.
- It can be reformed from within (Neo-Weberian State) without giving up its core values (Olsen, du Gay, Goodsell).

10

Key Terms

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Bureaucracy	Administration by appointed, trained, salaried officials working under rules and hierarchy
Herrschaft (domination)	Weber's term for authority: the probability that commands will be obeyed
Legitimacy	Belief that a command is rightful, which turns power into authority
Traditional authority	Obedience based on custom and inherited status
Charismatic authority	Obedience based on faith in a leader's extraordinary qualities
Legal-rational authority	Obedience to impersonal, lawfully enacted rules and offices
Routinisation of charisma	Turning a charismatic movement into a lasting traditional or legal structure

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Ideal type	A pure mental model built by exaggerating key features, used as a yardstick
Sine ira et studio	"Without hatred or passion": impersonal performance of duty
Monocratic bureaucracy	Bureaucracy headed by one person, which Weber thought most efficient
Iron cage	Weber's image of a rationalised world that traps human freedom
Official secret	Bureaucracy's invention for guarding its knowledge and power
Staatsraison	"Reason of state", used by bureaucracy to justify its power and secrecy
Patrimonial bureaucracy	Officials as the ruler's personal servants
Trained incapacity	Past training becomes a blind spot when conditions change
Goal displacement	Rules, meant as means, become ends in themselves
Bifurcation of interests	Sub-units pursuing their own goals instead of the organisation's
Co-optation	Absorbing outside elements into leadership to avert threats
Mock, representative, punishment-centred bureaucracy	Gouldner's three patterns, by who makes and accepts rules
Bureaupathology	Thompson's term for dysfunctional bureaucratic behaviour from insecure authority
Adhocracy	Temporary, problem-centred, flexible organisation (Toffler, Bennis)
Representative bureaucracy	A civil service that reflects the composition of society
Neo-Weberian State	Weberian state, law and career service, modernised to serve citizens' needs
Screen-level bureaucracy	Bureaucracy in which decisions are mediated by computer systems

11

Commissions, Committees and Judgments

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Northcote–Trevelyan Report (UK)	1854	Merit recruitment by open competitive examination; foundation of modern merit bureaucracy
Official Secrets Act (India)	1923	Weber's "official secret" in statute; criticised as a barrier to transparency
All India Services Act	1951	Statutory basis of the All India Services (Article 312)
Right to Information Act	2005	Reversed the presumption of secrecy; Section 22 overrides inconsistent laws
2nd ARC, 1st Report <i>Right to Information: Master Key to Good Governance</i>	2006	Recommended repeal of the Official Secrets Act
T.S.R. Subramanian v. Union of India	2013	Civil Services Boards, fixed tenure, written instructions to protect neutrality
Mission Karmayogi	2020	Shift from rule-based to role-based civil service; competency-based capacity building
US Executive Order 14171 and OPM final rule	2025–26	"Schedule Policy/Career": policy-influencing career posts made at-will, a direct challenge to Weberian tenure

12

Contemporary Developments

- **20 August 2024:** UPSC **cancelled** the lateral-entry advertisement of 17 August 2024 (45 posts of Joint Secretary, Director and Deputy Secretary) at the government's request, to review reservation in such appointments.
- **20 January 2025:** US **Executive Order 14171** revived the idea of making policy-influencing career positions at-will ("Schedule Policy/Career"); **OPM's final rule** (6 February 2026, effective 9 March 2026) authorised moving such posts out of adverse-action protections, reopening the Weberian debate on tenure, neutrality and political control.
- **2020 onwards:** **Mission Karmayogi** and the Capacity Building Commission continue to reshape the Indian civil service towards role-based, competency-driven professionalism.
- **5 August 2022:** **CSMOP 2022** introduced delayering, delegation and e-Office 7.0, modernising rather than abandoning the file-based, hierarchical system.
- **Continuing:** the use of algorithms in welfare delivery and policing has revived the "iron cage" debate, with calls for transparency and human oversight of automated administrative decisions.

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Vincent de Gournay	Coined "bureaucracy" (c. 1745)	Rule by desks
Hegel	<i>Philosophy of Right</i> (1821)	Bureaucracy as the universal class
Karl Marx	<i>Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right</i> (1843); <i>Eighteenth Brumaire</i> (1852); <i>Civil War in France</i> (1871)	Imaginary state, spiritualism of the state; instrument of class; Commune model
Woodrow Wilson	"The Study of Administration" (1887)	Bureaucracy removed from political life is dangerous
Gaetano Mosca	<i>Elementi di scienza politica</i> (1896)	Feudal or bureaucratic polities
Robert Michels	<i>Political Parties</i> (1911)	Iron law of oligarchy
Max Weber	<i>Protestant Ethic</i> (1904–05); <i>Parliament and Government</i> (1918); <i>Economy and Society</i> (1922)	Three authorities; ideal-type bureaucracy; iron cage; parliamentary control
Harold Laski	Definition of bureaucracy (1930)	Officials' power jeopardises liberty
Ramsay Muir	<i>How Britain is Governed</i> (1930)	Bureaucracy thrives under the cloak of ministerial responsibility
Robert Merton	"Bureaucratic Structure and Personality" (1940)	Trained incapacity; displacement of goals
J. Donald Kingsley	<i>Representative Bureaucracy</i> (1944)	Civil service should mirror society
Philip Selznick	<i>TVA and the Grass Roots</i> (1949)	Bifurcation of interests; co-optation
Alvin Gouldner	<i>Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy</i> (1954)	Mock, representative, punishment-centred
Peter Blau	<i>The Dynamics of Bureaucracy</i> (1955)	Informal adaptations raise efficiency
Fritz Morstein Marx	<i>The Administrative State</i> (1957)	Guardian, caste, patronage, merit bureaucracy
Victor Thompson	<i>Modern Organization</i> (1961)	Bureaupathology: authority–ability gap

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Robert Presthus	<i>The Organizational Society</i> (1962)	Upward-mobiles, indifferents, ambivalents
Michel Crozier	<i>The Bureaucratic Phenomenon</i> (1963)	Vicious circle; power from uncertainty
Warren Bennis	"The Coming Death of Bureaucracy" (1966)	Temporary, adaptive systems
Alvin Toffler	<i>Future Shock</i> (1970)	Adhocracy
Martin Albrow	<i>Bureaucracy</i> (1970)	Seven concepts; Weber's five control mechanisms
David Beetham	<i>Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics</i> (1974)	Three aspects of Weber's theory
Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph	"Authority and Power in Bureaucratic and Patrimonial Administration" (1979)	Patrimonial elements can aid effectiveness
Charles Goodsell	<i>The Case for Bureaucracy</i> (1983)	Bureaucracy performs better than its image
Kathy Ferguson	<i>The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy</i> (1984)	Gendered "discourse of bureaucracy"
Claus Offe	<i>Disorganized Capitalism</i> (1985)	Organisational vs systemic rationality
Peter Evans and James Rauch	"Bureaucracy and Growth" (1999)	Weberian features linked to growth
Paul du Gay	<i>In Praise of Bureaucracy</i> (2000)	Ethos of impartial office
Pollitt and Bouckaert	<i>Public Management Reform</i> (2004, 2011)	Neo-Weberian State
Johan Olsen	"Maybe It Is Time to Rediscover Bureaucracy" (2006)	Bureaucracy as a valuable institution



Previous Year Questions 30 QUESTIONS



2026

Bureaucratic features have remained constant in organisations despite the development of different forms under **NPM and Public Governance** approaches. **Give reasons** for the **persistence** of these bureaucratic features. **20 MARKS**

2025

Bureaucracy constitutes the imaginary state and is the **spiritualism of the State**. **Explain**. **15 MARKS**

2022

Weber's construct of bureaucracy has served a great **heuristic purpose** in furthering research in the field of **Comparative Public Administration**. Do you agree with the statement ? **Give reasons**. **10 MARKS**

2021

Neo-Weberian State involves changing the model of operation of administrative structures into a model focussed on **meeting citizens' needs**. **Discuss**. **15 MARKS**

2019

"Bureau pathology denigrates **competence** in organizations." **Explain**. **10 MARKS**

2018

In order to be development-oriented, bureaucracies need to be innovative, flexible, citizen-centric and result-oriented, but they are slow in imbibing these virtues in a democratic system. Do we need to go **beyond the traditional models of bureaucracy** and create **alternative structures**? **Elaborate**. **20 MARKS**

2018

"The concepts of **rationality and efficiency** are intertwined in the bureaucratic analysis of **Max Weber**." **Comment**. **10 MARKS**

2015

"**Weberian model** of bureaucracy lacks **emotional validity** when applied to modern democratic administration." **Comment**.

2014

"**Karl Marx's interpretation of bureaucracy** was rooted in the history of the **nature of the State**". **Evaluate**.

2014

"Adaptive, problem-solving, temporary systems of diverse specialists, linked together by coordinating executives in an organic flux-this is original form that will gradually replace bureaucracy". **Discuss**, in the light of this statement, the '**end of bureaucracy**' thesis and its strengths and limitations.

2014

"The notion of **informal organisation** is a residual or cafeteria concept of diverse and sprawling contents." How does **Gouldner** established the need for understanding the interdigitations between the formal and informal organisation?

2012

'In the canonization of this abstract idea of '**staatsraison**' are inseparably woven the sure instincts of the bureaucracy for the conditions which preserve its own power in the State' (Weber). **Explain**.

2011 **E-governance** is the final arrival of **Max Weber's 'iron cage of rationality'**. **Discuss.**

2009 Consider the statements below: "Technically, the bureaucracy represents the **purest type of legal-rational authority**."; "Bureaucracy does not represent the only type of legal authority." Identify the theoretical context and **analyse** the above statements.

2004 **Weber's ideas of impersonal detachment and esprit de corps** are incompatible. **Explain.**

2004 "**Bureaucracy can exist only where the whole service of the state is removed from the common political** of the people, its chiefs as well as rank and file. Its motives, its objectives, its policy, its standards must be bureaucratic." – **Discuss.**

2003 "**Weberian model** of bureaucracy lacks **empirical validity** when applied to modern democratic administration." **Examine.**

2001 **Critically examine** the models of **Max Weber and Chester I Barnard** with reference to '**bureaucratic authority**'.

1999 "It is not weak but **strong bureaucracy** that creates concern in **democracy**." **Comment.**

1997 "Once fully established, bureaucracy is among those social structures which are the **hardest to destroy**." **Comment.**

1996 Bureaucracy is "a system of government the control of which is so completely in the hands of officials that their power **jeopardizes the liberties** of ordinary citizens." **Comment.**

1993 "The transition to a study of the **negatives aspects of bureaucracy** is afforded by the application of **Veblen's concept of trained incapacity**." **Examine.**

1993 "Though somewhat unwittingly, **Herbert Simon and James March** have provided, the muscle and the flesh to the **Weberian (bureaucratic) skeleton**." **Comment.**

1992 'Bureaucracy thrives under the **cloak of ministerial responsibility** in a parliamentary democracy; **Comment.**

1990 **Discuss** the major conceptual approaches to the study of **Comparative Public Administration** and explain how **Max Weber** is considered to be the foremost mentor in the field.

1989 For **charisma** to be transformed into a permanent routine structure, it is necessary that its **anti-economic character** should be altered. (Weber). **Comment.**

1988

"Hierarchy of authority and the system of rules ensure depersonalization and efficiency." (Max Weber). **Comment.**

2022

Following the onset of globalisation, the **traditional bureaucratic model** appears to have lost its significance. **Comment.** **10 MARKS** **PAPER II**

2014

Supreme Court ruling on 31 st October, 2013 in respect of bureaucracy's functioning would help achieve good governance. **Analyze** this ruling and add your comments on it.

PAPER II

2009

Comment on the view that despite different contexts, administrative maxims of **Kautilya's Arthashastra** bear considerable similarity with features of **Weber's ideal bureaucratic model.** **PAPER II**

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