

Politicization of bureaucracy : A framework for measurement

by R.B. JAIN,

Reader in Political Science
University of Delhi
Delhi (India)

★

I

The emergence of the bureaucratic type of organization in modern governments has laid the formation for a body of civil servants who work for the government as a lifetime career. The very presence of such a professional body of trained men is expected to exert a « rational » influence on the entire decision-making processes. Consequently the element of « rationality » has thus come to be recognised and emphasised as the characteristic working approach, and is regarded as an outstanding contribution of the modern governmental organisation (1), no matter whether the State is liberal or totalitarian.

As a form of organization « bureaucracy » as we all know indicates sophistication in both design and operating methods. It is designed to increase efficiency of performance, and this by the application of reason to the resolution or proportion of every conflict or policy. Governed to a considerable degree by professional standards and likely to value a reasoned approach, the modern career service, under favourable

(1) Max Weber, a veritable pioneer, considered rational bureaucracy as a major element in the rationalization of the modern world, and further regarded it as the most important factor in modern social development. However, the concept of bureaucratic rationality has come in for criticism in recent times. There are some who think that existing theories of bureaucratic rationality in public administration literature do not adequately and properly define the concept, therefore, suggest an alternate concept of « bureaucratic rationality » which they call « projected rationality ». See for example Sami G. HAJJAR, « Towards Understanding the Concept of Bureaucratic Rationality » in *Indian Journal of Public Administration* (New Delhi), vol. 19 (April-June 1973), pp. 148-162. Also see Martin ALBROW, *Bureaucracy* (London, Pall Mall, 1970), pp. 87-91.

conditions, by and large functions as a significant support of rational consideration in public policies and their administration (2).

However, despite the superiority that so called « rationality » imparts to a bureaucratic organization, its constant obsession with it seems to have a negative effect, especially when it attempts to stimulate self-sufficiency. Rationality is not only linked to methodological analysis but also to an objective point of view. « Objectivity, in examining issues, as an occupational habit », observed by Professor Marx, « puts *value* on a retreat from active partisanship ». Indeed, in the realm of public administration the career bureaucracy serves as a permanent instrument of government under conditions of changing party control only by acknowledging and adopting neutrality. Such neutrality is the working premise for the loyal support of any lawful government — whatever be its ideological stance. On the other hand, it may and does foster a personal disengagement from any kind of political choice, including the difference between constitutional or unconstitutional means or ends in the actions of the government of the day » (3).

The tradition of the « neutrality » of the career service, in contrast to the American practice of what came to be known as the « spoils system » (ended by the Pendleton Act 1883) has often been hailed as the secret of the success of the career-service in Great Britain. Indeed, the concept of « neutrality » coupled with « impartiality », « anonymity » and « obscurity » have not only become synonymous with the operation of the British Civil Service but are also regarded as « one of the strongest bulwark of democracy » (4) essential to the system of parliamentary democracy where the political complexion of the ruling party is subject to periodic, if not frequent changes.

In recent times, especially after World War II, however, the concept of a neutral bureaucracy has been subjected to vehement criticism in quite a few democracies in the West who had adopted it as a permanent feature of their governmental system. Even the British have become sceptical about the continued utility or validity of the neutral career-service in its ability to implementing the objectives and goals of a welfare state. Ever since the Crichton Down Affair (1954), the British Civil Services came in for a good deal of criticism for its failure to meet the growing demands of a complex welfare state, and for a variety

(2) Fritz Morstein MARX, *The Administrative State : An Introduction to Bureaucracy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 25.

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) Earl ATTLEE, « Civil Servants, Ministers, Parliament and the Public » in W.A. Robson (edit.), *The British Civil Service in Britain and France* (London, The Hogarth Press, 1956), p. 16.

of reasons, (a) its amateurism, rigidity and inefficiency, and more often than not, and quite often for its obstructionists posture especially in the way of the implementation of « progressive » (mainly due to its being supposedly neutral) policies. Similar criticism are also being heard in the context of many Commonwealth and continental countries which had been influenced by the tradition of a « neutral » bureaucracy. This is particularly true in the Indian situation today, where the bureaucracy was under the stern criticism from the ruling party for not being able to effect the social transformation, which was envisaged in the Plans and the numerous welfare of progressive legislation. The bureaucracy in India with its background, education and training has isolated itself totally from the masses and thus is unable to keep pace with the rapidly changing socio-economic scene nor is able to feel their ambitions or hopes in its veins. Only a « committed » bureaucracy in place of the old indolent, passive and apathetic and an apolitical one can possibly bring about the desired changes, is now the widely held opinion regarding its role (5).

The idea of « bureaucracy » as a neutral instrument in the conduct of public affairs thus stands refuted — and with it also its « rational » basis of superiority. The new thinking considers that in any system of government, the bureaucracy must be wholly in sympathy with the basic social philosophy of the party in power. In other words « bureaucracy » is now regarded not a « value-free » but a « value-laden » instrument of political power. In short, the bureaucracy is being « politicised ».

The basic question thus arises in which particular direction do the bureaucracies need « commitment » in the modern time? To what extent « politicization » of bureaucracy is « feasible » and/or « desirable »? Can « rationalism » and « professionalism » of bureaucracy be retained along with the hope of commitment sought towards political or social goals? These and many other questions have been raised and attempted to be answered in different ways by scholars, reformers and politicians in the context of their differing systems of government. It is not the purpose of this paper to try to open such discussion and to repeat the arguments all over again, which have already been ably covered (6).

(5) This was the main contention of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, when she advocated the substitution of old bureaucracy in India through the so-called « committed » bureaucracy. Not only did she express her dissatisfaction with the performance of bureaucracy, she expressed doubt about the relevance of the basic assumptions underlying the Indian bureaucracy — that of neutrality, impartiality, anonymity etc., and she alleged that the bureaucrats lacked in « commitment ». See *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 1 December 1969.

(6) Many of such arguments have been summarised by civil servants, politicians and scholars in an issue of *Indian Political Science Review* (Delhi), vol. 5 (October 1970)

The purpose of this paper is very limited. Assuming that conditions in modern societies do not favour a rigid application of the concept of a « neutral » or « depoliticized » bureaucracy (7), and that public bureaucracies are unlikely to retain their neutral and strictly professional colour for long and further that pressures for politicization are bound to increase in all governmental systems irrespective of their ideologies (since the fortunes of political leaders are more likely to be intertwined with the bureaucratic performance), is it possible to construct and operationalize certain indices, which make an attempt towards a comparative measurement of the extent of « politicization » in different bureaucracies ?

In other words, recognising the inevitable trend towards « politicized » bureaucracies in modern political systems, could bureaucracies be classified into certain « identifiable » and « meaningful » categories to denote the extent of their « politicization » ?

The concept of « neutrality » :

But first, how does one define « politicization » ? A historian's interpretation in this respect clearly brings out the dichotomy between a « politicized » and a « non-politicized » or more appropriately a « de-politicized » bureaucracy. Their concept of a « politicized » bureaucracy is of « one that sacrifices its « professional » moorings for some « political » party consideration ». Obviously, such a definition presupposes the existence of an environment where it was possible for the civil servants to maintain an indifferent attitude to the politics of the day. Such a notion is based upon the experience of the civil service in Britain where the civil service personnel were trained to adopt a neutral posture in their relation to the ruling parties. This worked well enough during the latter part of the nineteenth, and during the first quarter of the twentieth century. In the British context of the power being shared by two major parties (both of which were not only equally committed to the principles of « democracy, nationalism and imperialism » but also shared similar views on government's social responsibility), the theory and practice of such a concept was never put to any great strain. In such

March 1971). Also see « A Committed Civil Service », *Seminar* (New Delhi), August 1973. The Bibliography on pp. 34-39 is quite comprehensive for further literature in this context.

(7) For an account of the conditions in which a depoliticized bureaucracy has been most effective, see Gerald E. CAIDEN, *The Dynamics of Public Administration : Guidelines to Current Transformations in Theory and Practice* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1971), p. 93.

historical ethos it was easy for the « bureaucracy » to pass from one regime to another, and serve both parties with equal devotion and sincerity, unmindful of their own political views or biases. The concept came to be so widely accepted that even the United Nations Handbook of Public Administration, as late as 1965, could affirm « that Political Neutrality is an essential complement to the merit system, for it guarantees that the career officials... will give the Government whatever its political makeup — absolutely impartial advice, criticism and assistance in any matter which concerns it » (8). Political neutrality not only meant the absence of political activity or bias on the part of individual member of the bureaucracy but also that the bureaucracy would respond to the will of the government, no matter what its political complexion be.

Breakdown of the « neutrality » concept :

This concept has, however, run into difficulties in the last two decades or so and the demand for a « politicized » bureaucracy has grown on the grounds that, the British « concept » has become outmoded and outdated. The so-called « neutrality » is really a myth and the neutrality of bureaucracy cannot be beyond criticism when the divergence of views between the ruling parties ceases to be narrow, especially when the traditional division of functions between the political masters and civil servants in term of policy and its implementation is really more imaginary than real. And since both functionaries are concerned with policy as well as implementation ; it is impossible for any enlightened individual capable of judging problems « pragmatically » to maintain intellectual neutrality. Further it now appears essential that thinking on the functioning of bureaucratic power, particularly in the exercise of discretions, and recommendations should be governed by the national policy objectives.

Causes for the breakdown of « neutrality » :

The break-down of the classical theory of « neutrality » has come about because *a*) the processes of policy decision-making are no longer confined to the political executive : they percolate over the entire fabric of government resulting in inescapable items of delegation and zones of such policy where the political executive does not come into the picture at all and yet the decisions reflect the ethos of the party in power, *b*) the leadership role of public bureaucracy is explicit in all

(8) United Nations, *Handbook of Public Administration* (United Nations, 1965), p. 36.

political systems, but is more pronounced in the setting of developing countries. In the context of a large-scale welfare scheme programme — neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. A certain commitment to the goals and objectives of the State is inescapable; neutrality cannot be allowed to degenerate into disinterestedness, political sterilization ought not to become political desensitization, *c*) in the sphere of policy advice and execution, modern bureaucracy cannot remain aloof without involving itself in the prevalent politics, and many times « practical and political considerations are indistinguishable ». In the legislative sphere particularly, the area of demarcation between what is political and what is non-political becomes extremely tenuous, *d*) at the top levels, even the performance appraisal of public bureaucracy is done by political heads and an element of political assessment is bound to creep into such a rating and *e*) finally, as a human being, no civil servant can be psychologically neutral on issues and problems which confront him; he is a child of his own upbringing and a certain subjective element from his judgements cannot be eradicated (9).

Thus, the basic assumptions behind the concept of bureaucratic neutrality *a*) that it is the product of « merit » system and therefore seeks to reflect it in those systems where this concept is recognized in the behaviour of the bureaucrat, and *b*) that the advantages of permanency, continuity, reliability, and professionalism, which are supposed to obtain in a neutral bureaucracy far outweigh the disadvantages viz. conservatism, reluctance to a departure from routine, and the preference for incremental change obstructing public policy making in a turbulent environment (10); — have all come to be virtually refuted in the modern times in practically all political systems — including those western democracies where such ideals seemed to be deeply entrenched.

Dimensions for the measurement of the « neutrality »:

The above discussion in brief centres around a basic postulate of a depoliticized bureaucracy around which many dimensions could be constructed for indicating its character. The postulate is that the public bureaucracy, by training and tradition could be brought up to be an « apolitical » institution, which would implement public policies laid down without allowing such implementation to be influenced by political views of their own. In practice, however, such a postulate is hardly

(9) See Mrigendra K. CHATURVEDI, « Commitment in Civil Service », *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 17 (January-March 1971), pp. 41-42.

(10) CAIDEN, n. 7, p. 95. See also his discussion on this aspect, pp. 93-102.

tenable. To presume that throughout his career, a public bureaucrat would maintain politically neutral capable of judging problems « pragmatically » or « on merits » is to attribute him with an intellectual vacuum, unthinkable of an educated, knowledgeable individual. Political neutrality can at best mean absence of formal adherence to a political or party ideology. It cannot mean complete neutrality.

Consequently, if one were to measure the « neutrality » concept along its various dimensions viz. *a*) degree of influence in the decision-making process, *b*) the degree of segregation of the political executive from the bureaucracy, *c*) the extent of political interference in public servant's work, *d*) the degree of its involvement in politics and *e*) the extent of confidence which the bureaucracy enjoys with the public, the score of a depoliticized bureaucracy, one would reckon in the first four cases should be at the « zero » lever while in the last case it should be at the « optimum » stage.

Such a score is impossible to be achieved in practice. Even if these were to be taken in the heydays of the « neutrality » of the British Civil Service, such a score, to say the least, would have been an absurd proposition. In theory perhaps one could argue for such a score, for it seems to be possible for an individual to act as a cog in the bureaucratic machine. However, even the British Civil Service has not been totally « neutral » or « apolitical ». In its functioning, the British bureaucracy, while retaining its right to give advice without taint of any « ism » has adjusted itself to the differing party programmes of the three political parties and to the policies of the changing party leadership. It is thus well nigh impossible for any individual to remain unbiased in his thought and actions, especially in respect of policy formulation in changing social, economic and political environment.

II

The « politicized » bureaucracy :

The concept of a « politicized » bureaucracy needs to be analysed further. For the purposes of this paper the concept is not defined in absolute terms. We have to treat it in relative term, for only then it may be possible to discern the degree of politicization in different bureaucracies. Politicization of bureaucracy may be discussed in the context of « autonomy » of bureaucratic functioning. For example, in the totalitarian systems, the machinery of government and its sphere of action have been greatly extended with the simultaneous removal of the legal

in the traditionalist states. In order to bring about desired changes in and prescriptive checks to which the bureaucracy has been generally subject the societies around them, the Nazis, the Fascists, and the Communists have sought to limit the autonomy of the bureaucratic apparatus *vis-a-vis* themselves as policy makers, and cut down on the « empediments » of legality : *due process* and all such safeguards that would in any way hamper the effectiveness, speed, or thoroughness in the implementation of their measures. While in liberal democracies, bureaucracy functions with all such limitation which leave for it an autonomus area to operate.

The phenomenon of politicization of bureaucracy is based on the assumption that public officials have always been more than influential in public policy and decision-making process — they could even influence decisions and public actions by altering recommendations and distorting advice. As observed by Caiden, « political leaders could not tell to what extent they were exercising political power without extensive feedback, ranging from personal spy systems to airing public grievances. Citizens approached public officials to intercede on their behalf before the political leaders and to seek an exercise of discretion in their favor. Public officials have never been seen as mere catalysts, ciphers, or instruments whatever image they are expected to be political actors. Political leaders use them for personal and party interests. Qualification for public office depends on compatibility with political leaders. In short, the public bureaucracy is politicized » (11).

Thus the vision of a politicized bureaucracy is one that is universal and that persuades every type of political system, whether open or closed. Of course, there may be variations in the nature of politicization, but to certain extent every bureaucratic system is politicized. For the purpose of further analysis and construction of the indices for its measurement, it is assumed in this paper that the concept of a « politicized » bureaucracy is *one which is involved or influences or is influenced to any degree, consciously or unconsciously, by overt or by implicit actions in the stream of the politics of the day whether of the party in power or of the party/parties in opposition. Such an involvement may mean the bureaucratic promotion of special interests of political party at the expense of national objectives. In a more extended form it may also be regarded as a type of bureaucracy which uses political parties in furtherance of their collective or individual objectives or which is used by political parties in the achievement of party objectives.* It is thus an entirely different phenomenon, than the one, that might be acceptable to those

(11) *Ibid.*, p. 82.

who somehow still retain their faith in the existence of an « impartial » and « neutral » functioning of bureaucracy.

Indices for measurement of « politicization » :

If the above definition of politicization is accepted, a number of indices could be constructed and attempt be made to measure its extent in a comparative fashion, with reference to a variety of political systems. The possible general and common dimensions of politicization with small variations in particular political systems, it is suggested, may include four different variables : *a*) the degree of influence that the bureaucracy exercises in the decision-making process and the nature of relationship between the political and the permanent Wing of the Executive and the extent of their interaction, *b*) the degree of the involvement of bureaucracy in politics and party activities, *c*) the extent of political and party interference in the work of the bureaucracy and *d*) the popular image of the public services.

A. The bureaucratic influence in the decision-making process.

Five key parameters of policy and decision making within the Executive have often been described. First and foremost is the basic function of anticipating the policy needs. At times this may very well mean the need to « discover » the policy requirements of the country. Secondly, the bureaucracy has to develop systematically the various alternatives or choices which are indicated by the value premises and an assessment of what is possible ; in particular, to identify the different manners in which the political and the policy needs of the country can be met. Thirdly, the bureaucracy is expected to suggest a specific choice of alternatives or alternative depending upon its assessment of what is the course of action that would yield the maximum achievement of the objectives. Fourthly, as the expert group and the directly concerned party, the bureaucracy is expected to decide upon the instruments of implementation, and lastly, the bureaucracy has to apply the general policy to specific instances, that is to say decision-making in individual cases (12).

The actual role of bureaucracy in the decision-making process, and policy formulation may thus vary in different governmental systems. While the formal and official position in most countries is that the bureaucracy

(12) V.A. PAI PANANDIKAR, « Bureaucracy and Policy-Making », a paper read at a Seminar on Public Services and Social Responsibility held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 6-11 October 1973.

is an agent of the decision-makers, « not an autonomous brain in its own right but rather the neutral executor of plans made by others » (13), this may well be a pure myth in other systems. In any realistic description in all countries the bureaucracy is one of the important actors in the making of governmental decisions, in some they are actually leading actors. In most contemporary systems, their power as decision-makers would seem to be increasing. The crucial thing to be evaluated in a comparative study of the role of bureaucracy in the decision-making is to analyse whether bureaucracy takes initiative in policy proposals or merely waits upon the proposals of others. Is the bureaucracy the protagonist of the policies, or merely an adviser in respect of policy proposals ? Is it to be an innovator and source of energy for policies, or as guardian of continuity and stability ?

A second aspect that needs to be considered flows from the answer to the first aspect. If the bureaucracy takes initiative in decision-making and policy proposal, then its environmental and background situation, values and aptitudes through which its personnel have grown and in which they operate are to be properly examined. They are influenced by their class origin in the same way as the rest of the community. Their outlook and values as individuals reflects the prevailing multiplicity of political beliefs. The civil servant is not, so to say, a social or political eunuch. However, the important thing to be examined in this context would be the degree to which their decisions or the policy postures which they propose are in practice influenced by party ideologies, goals, or commitments — either through overt and open channels ; or through subtle and latent means. The degrees of politicization would depend upon the extent to which the civil servants are able to be influenced by the party leaders.

Yet another and the most important aspect would be for us to examine closely the relationship between the political executive at the top of the administrative pyramid and the career officials subordinate to them. The interaction between the two is fundamental to the determination of bureaucratic influence in policy-processes. In a democratic state the political executive usually represents the political party which has been victorious at the polls. In non-democratic societies he represents the ruling group that presides over the destinies of the state. And in both democratic states, the task of preserving a stable balance between political

(13) Wallace S. SAYRE, « Bureaucracies : Some Contrasts in Systems » in *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 10 (April-June 1964), p. 224.

and career officials is a continuing source of difficulty in framing governmental policy (14).

In all systems, according to Professor Self, there are certain typical forms of interaction which result from the distinctive style and interests of the two groups of participants. Important areas of interaction include policy-making, the arbitration of interests, the treatment of individual and localised claims, and the balance between political accountability and administrative discretion. In the first two cases, politicians possess formal responsibility, but administrators supply the missing elements of political decisions. In the third case, administrators defend their distinctive methods or uniformity and impartiality against politicians' frequent interest in influencing particular decisions. The fourth case represents an inevitable point of conflict between the needs and interests of two groups (15).

In some systems like that of Britain, the political administrative division of the two groups of participants is marked most clearly and rigidly, and associated with a definite and well understood differentiation of roles. However, as contented by Lord Redcliffe Maud, the heart of the job of a senior civil servant is « to have a common mind with his minister, which may require long hours of conversation between the two, in which the subject could be excluded, however, politically controversial. To help your minister make up his mind you cannot confine yourself to the so-called technical or administrative questions; you have to enter as fully as possible into the Minister's political thinking, including his relations to the Prime Minister and his other colleagues in the Government » (16). It is thus quite clear that the bureaucracy cannot remain uninfluenced by the political leadership. In the French system such political — administrative dividing line has been pushed upwards in favour of the career bureaucracy, so much so that political posts themselves have been progressively bureaucratized. In contrast to Britain, « marginal politicisation », as observed by Professor Self; « for example the ability of politicians to extract specific favours and expressions from the administration, is definitely more marked ». The officials themselves

(14) Francis E. ROURKE, *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Public Policy* (Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1969), p. 91.

(15) Peter SELF, *Administrative Theories and Politics: An Inquiry into the Structure and Processes of Modern Government* (London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972), p. 153.

(16) Sir John MAUD, « Government in Theory and Practice », *Political Studies*, vol. 13 (February 1955), pp. 15-21, as quoted by Self, n. 15, p. 165. « The Senior administrator in Britain plays something of a chameleon role, not only in relation to successive political loyalties, but also in relation to successive departmental ones. Indubitably, he puts his full energies into pleading his department's case at joint meetings, but he is also trained to recognise the diversity of factors which constitute the « public interest », the need for frequent compromises and the merits of smooth coordination ». *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

often play political roles (17). Although one may take it with reservation, but nowhere the politico-administrative differentiation is as confused as in the United States. The American Government produces neither a clear differentiation of politics and administration, nor a cohesive pair of political and administrative elites (18).

The Indian bureaucracy, modelled on the British pattern, where the politico-administrative differentiation should have been as distinct as in Britain, presents a somewhat confused picture. The consensus of opinion in post-independent India, reflected in the accepted policies of successive governments in the country, is that the Indian society should be built up on the socialist pattern on the basis of democracy, secularism and social justice. Such policies need the existence of a higher civil service which is intellectually in sympathy with the policy objectives of government. Clearly there seems to be no place in the civil service hierarchy for those who believe in maintaining the status quo. It is possible for an individual to subjugate his personal wishes and to carry out the categorical imperatives of a superior authority, but « where the thought process has to be invoked, where an element of discretion is involved, it is contrary to human nature to expect that he will be able to substitute his own thinking by that of the rulers and exercise the discretion fully consistent with all the nuances of the original policy objectives. But, for a civil servant functioning at the higher levels, such an exercise of discretion is essential, for no policy directive can cover all the circumstances which may arise from day to day on the basis of which numerous decisions have to be taken » (19).

A recent study on the Indian bureaucracy during the post-independence period has pointed out that the « Indian bureaucracy has been involved in politics and political activity in a number of ways ». They were « not neutral in politics, they exercised more powers in reality than the law permits. Many times Ministers were found wanting in effectively controlling their departmental bureaucracy » (20).

Another similar study about the relations between politicians and administrators at the District Level in India points out « that the conventional notion of a clear-cut and clean division of functions between administrators and political leaders does not obtain in practice » (21).

(17) *Ibid.*, p. 169.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 173.

(19) R.C. DUTT, *Committed Civil Service : The Problem*, in *Seminar* (New Delhi), no. 168 (August 1973), p. 13.

(20) C.P. BHAMBRI, *Bureaucracy and Politics in India* (Delhi, Vikas, 1971), p. 267.

(21) Shanti KOTHARI and Ramashray ROY, *Relations Between Politicians and Administrators at the District Level* (New Delhi, Indian Institute of Public Administration and the Centre for Applied Politics, 1969), p. 160.

This is also the contention of a senior civil servant, who maintains that the « classical doctrine of the neutrality of the civil service has broken down in the modern times and especially in the Indian situation ». The only connotation in which this doctrine can exist further is an idea of non-partisanship and impartiality ; impartiality in the sense that where the civil servants are excepting a corpus of statutory laws and regulations, they shall act impartially and will not import into these operations any political considerations which are not contemplated in the statutory law. However, for the large bulk of their activity that is non-statutory, a new doctrine ought to be propounded to suit the modern times. In the absence of a better phraseology one may say that in place of the doctrine of neutrality, what should shape the attitudes of the civil servants now should be a doctrine of political responsiveness which may have the generic name of commitment (22).

The foregoing description of bureaucracy in differing contexts is indicative of the type of its role in the policy processes of various political systems. The extent of the influence that the bureaucrats have in the policy-formulation and decision-making process, in the measurement of the extent of politicization of bureaucracy can thus be possibly operationalized by conducting case-studies of important policy-decisions on an empirical basis, and by analyzing important points of conflict and co-operation between the political executive and the career-executive in different systems. A careful examination of controversial policy-decisions in a particular political context and the way these have been arrived at would invariably reveal certain pattern of politician-executive interaction, which will lead to the determination of the exact impact of the bureaucracy in decision-making process.

B. *The degree of involvement of bureaucracy in politics :*

This dimension of the behaviour of bureaucracy is easier to be measured. There are a number of different considerations on which variations in many bureaucratic systems could be studied. Starting from the assumption that a fully depoliticized bureaucracy would deny all public political activities (which itself is questionable), the bureaucratic systems may vary in accordance with the type of political rights available to the civil service, e.g. the right of voting, their capacity to influence election results at the polls, their liaison with political leadership, the extent of their participation in public party meetings, their membership of the political organizations, the degree of participation in party

(22) CHATURVEDI, n. 9, pp. 44-45.

activities, and full political activities including standing for elections and holding of public offices simultaneous with party offices.

The fundamental question in this context, as Professor V. Merikoski observes, would be to find the extent of « reconciliation of a public office holder's dual roles of citizen and official » (23). The citizen's freedom of political activity is one of the cornerstones of Western liberal democracies, but the holding of public offices imposes on an official certain obligations which an ordinary citizen does not have and which can restrict his general civil rights. The greater the freedom of political activity is available to an official, the greater the chances of his being more politicized. Thus the restrictions on political activities of public officials can conveniently be examined within the following three divisions : 1) eligibility on the national and municipal level for political representative bodies and membership in them, 2) the right to vote in national and municipal elections, and 3) participation in other ways (than as a member of a political representative body or voter) in political party activities (24). While the right to vote is generally granted today without restrictions to public officials everywhere, the numerous restrictions have been in respect of their participation in party programmes and eligibility for political offices. Although the position of a public official in some countries has sought to be regulated through special statutes and rules, the restrictions on participation have often been allowed to a considerable extent to depend on general attitudes which develop into practice, and on the requirements of civil service ethics.

Following certain basic traditions of the British Civil Service, the Indian bureaucracy is supposed to be neutral in politics. The Central Services Conduct Rules forbid government servants to be a member of or be otherwise associated with any political party or any organisation and in fact is required to prevent every member of his family from taking part in, subscribing in aid of, or assisting in any other manner in movement or activity which is directly or indirectly deemed to be subversive of the government. The Rules also prohibit the civil servant to participate or canvass on behalf of any political party in its election campaign, but the civil servant can vote in the elections *without giving any indication of the manner in which he proposes to vote*. Although the aforesaid restrictions in respect of political activity do not operate after their retirement, however, the fact many civil servants in India formed a political party after their retirement and became its active

(23) V. MERIKOSKI, « The Politicization of Public Administration », *International Review of Administrative Science* (Brussels), vol. 39 (1973), p. 213.

(24) *Ibid.*

members, has given rise to the contention that during the post-independence period the Indian bureaucracy has been involved in politics (25). Similarly it is also argued that the Indian bureaucracy during Congress Party rule (1947 - till today) was in collusion with Congress party leaders, even factional leaders and actively worked for the personal or party interests of the Congress leaders. This was done in return for the benefits of promotion and better prospects. Further, it is also stated that the Indian bureaucrats — civil and military — both maintained great liaison with political leaders. Dissatisfied officials, even supplied facts to the opposition party leaders in Parliament to criticize various policies (26).

However, the British practice has been sufficiently liberalised after the Masterman Committee Report which has clubbed the British Civil Servants into three groups : the politically free group, the intermediate group, and the politically restricted group. The politically free group which is entirely free to engage in political activities is made up of all « the industrial staff and non-industrial staff in the minor and manipulative grades ». The intermediate group is eligible to engage in most of the defined activities with the permission of the Department and subject to certain conditions. This group includes, typists, clerical assistants and clerical officers, and similar officers in grades roughly of the same status.

The Canadian practice is different from that of the United States, where the political activity of the civil service is regulated through the Hatch Act. Having a deep belief in the fact that freedom to participate in politics is the root cause of perpetuating the « spoils » system, the Canadian practice provides that no civil servant should engage in any

(25) For example, C.C. Desai, N. Dandekar, H.M. Patel, Lobo Prabhu were all active members of Swatantra Party. Mr. V. Shankar, ICS (member of the Indian Civil Service) who worked with Sardar Patel (the then Home Minister) in the integration of Princely States, has joined the princes in their fight against the policy of the government. Bhambri contents that they had been as a matter of fact itching to join a party after retirement. The political man in them could not have waited so long. Their political attitude must have conditioned their official duties. Political neutrality pre-supposes that a civil servant is one who exercises his right to vote, and keeps his political views to himself. These are the characteristics of apolitical man, who even after retirement will behave in the same apolitical manner. But in India, the civil servants after retirement have been contesting elections, the selling particular political opinions openly. It is impossible to believe that this wisdom dawned upon them only after retirement. See BHAMBRI, n. 20, p. 266.

The recent opinion tendered to the Government of Kerala (a constituent state in Indian Federation), by a Committee to the effect that the civil servants can take part in politics has been criticised as being « fraught with dangers ». See Satish C. SETH, « Civil Servants and Politics », *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 29 October 1973, p. 5. Also see Editorial, « Concerning Civil Servant and Politics » in *Indian Administrative and Management Review* (New Delhi), vol. 5, no. 4 (October-December 1973), pp. ix-xi.

(26) BHAMBRI, n. 20, p. 266.

activity which has the effect of forwarding the interest of any political party, or work in connection with any federal or provincial election, or contribute, receive or deal with any money for any party funds. Yet he has the right to vote in any election if under the laws governing the said election he has such a right. He is also given freedom to be candidate in civic or municipal election.

Whatever may be prescribed in the code of conduct or various regulations which govern the political activities of civil servants in different political systems, their actual involvement in politics would have to be determined in an empirical way. The extent of their involvement in politics could thus be measured by giving appropriate comparative weightage in respect of their membership of the political party, their freedom to political activity and their actual collusion with the political party in power. The last is perhaps the most difficult to measure. However, a careful analysis of the career-history of various civil servants who worked closely with the politicians should enable us to operationalize this dimension.

C. Political and party interference in public official's work :

This dimension of bureaucratic behaviour is the most crucial for an examination of the extent of politicization in a bureaucracy. In a depoliticized bureaucracy, it may be assumed that there is no political interference in any aspect of bureaucratic functioning, least of all in relation to their appointments, promotions, transfers, disciplinary actions or in other service matters. This is, however, a very idealistic situation. In actual reality one may find a good deal of political interference in all these personnel matters. It is true that in many systems political leaders do occasionally bring to administrators various types of demands — reasonable, unreasonable, legal, extra-legal — and apply pressures on them to get these demands fulfilled. Many a time public officials acquiesce, in what political leaders unreasonably expect of them.

In almost all countries there have been and are likely to be a number of cases that persons who were not necessarily the most suitable or competent have been appointed to manage public affairs. « It is also doubtful if », as Merikoski puts it, « even with the best of intentions any legislative or administrative arrangements could completely forestall the influence of subjective motives in filling appointments » (27). Such a kind of personal favouritism, if develops into a large-scale system may impede the potential effectiveness of administrative processes. And

(27) MERIKOSKI, n. 23, p. 212.

if such favouritism is based upon the party politics, i.e. the fact that an applicant who is considered by outsiders to be objectively better qualified and more suitable is set aside for another candidate whose appointment is regarded by a certain political party as more important to its interests. In the extreme case of politicization, this will be synonymous with the «spoils» system in a democracy and in totalitarian systems, with the recruitment of bureaucracy from party cadres. «Such type of interference would be notable in all appointments in which political views and evaluations influence the choice of person in a positive or negative direction. There is room for such variety between these extremes. It may also include agreements about distributing appointments along political parties» (28).

Even remoter motives which nevertheless serve party interests can influence public appointments. Thus for example, an «uncomfortable» person can be removed by offering him an attractive official position. A well-known procedure for recruiting new party supporters is to make the membership of the party a condition for obtaining some appointment. Especially in order to enlist young people into active party work, a political party often aims to show by obtaining political appointments that it can and is willing to support its own members, even each member personally, and to help them forward (29).

Such political and party interference may also manifest in many other directions. Thus for example, the political leaders may be able to harass public officials in their functioning through the issue of such directions which may cut across the prescribed lines of command. On the other hand many administrators may use political influence to influence decisions in service matters in their favour. In the context of Indian bureaucracy, many public officials have been only too willing to exploit the weakness of the political masters for their own personal advantage (30).

Government servants, who are not obliging enough, soon find themselves in trouble. The simplest way is to record an adverse report in the confidential dossier of the government servant. The power of transfer may be used to harass an officer. Frequent transfers can cause considerable harassment, as they involve uprooting of the whole family. More dangerous method and yet frequently adopted — promote direct indiscipline. The power of posting may be used to thwart a superior officer's control over his office and extend the minister's influence in the field where his legal power may not stand him in good stead (31).

(28) *Ibid.*

(29) *Ibid.*, pp. 212-213.

(30) P.V.R. RAO, *Red Tape and White Cap* (New Delhi, Orient Longmans, 1970), p. 125.

(31) *Ibid.*

Similarly the Indian system prescribes procedure for an aggrieved government servant to seek relief. In particular, the procedure forbids attempts to influence final decisions through outside channels including members of legislatures. This rule, as P.V.R. Rao observes, is more frequently broken than observed, and is a major cause for the deterioration of discipline and efficiency. When a minister himself intervenes in breach of a rule, or connives at it by pressing the request made by a member of the legislature, it is difficult to initiate action against the government servant, who is guilty of breach of discipline. Such interventions erode the authority of the immediate superiors of the government servant concerned. As normally, the government servant in whose favour there has been intervention will be working in the constituency of member of the legislature, that government servant will have compromised his capacity for impartial action (32).

Another civil servant, recently retired from the Indian Administrative Service, has thus to comment about political bureaucratization in India : In a major breakthrough, politicians are moved by a determination not to allow officials to stand between them and the exploitation of even the details of administration for political cum personal ends. In the war of benefits and concessions for clients, the dividing line between the policy making and field administration has been eroded. The bureaucratic fort has given way and officials are adjusting themselves to new ways even to the extent of doing and saying what might please the political masters. This abdication is leading to blurred roles of the two wings. The one abets the other's corruption (33).

There is no doubt that in all administrative systems there are frequent political interferences by politicians with the processes of administration through a very convenient device of being over-critical and adoption of fault-finding postures. This may render the task of the public officials more uncomfortable and in disgust he may either become susceptible to the political pressures for sheer survival or may devise attitudes and strategies of self-defence. In both cases he cannot remain neutral and has to act as a « *political man* ».

The above discussion shows various instances of politician's undue interferences in the bureaucratic processes. The politicization of bureaucracy would depend upon the extent to which the bureaucrats succumb to such undesirable pressures and are willing to play into the hands of politicians — whatever be their motives. Such phenomenon should not present unsurmountable difficulties for study. The kind of survey-

(32) *Ibid.*

(33) R.S. VARMA, *Bureaucracy in India* (Bhopal, Progress Publishers, 1973), p. 63.

research methodology followed in a recent study conducted in an Indian district (34), should be able to furnish a framework for measurement of this dimension.

D. The image of the public service :

Yet another index of politicization of public services is the image that the public holds of its bureaucracy. The image of the public service, to a large extent is dependent upon the way it functions in the context of a political system and the manner in which it tries to fulfill the obligations of the society and to what extent it is successful in its endeavours. In a « depoliticized » bureaucratic system, existing in a society with no radical policy goals, it may be assumed that the public services will carry an image of a « selected » band of professionals, having the reputation of integrity, impartiality and apathetic in the discharge of their functions and responsibilities. This image of bureaucracy will be different if it has the inclination or orientation towards any political party or preference of the goals of one party or the other. In a system ridden by multiple-party and party-factionalism, having no basic consensus on the national goals or political structure, bureaucracy is bound to exercise a greater power in respect of determining policy objectives and influencing the political executives who should at best be frequently changing. In such an atmosphere the public image may also view bureaucracy usurping more powers in attempting to perpetuate itself and serving its own interests rather than of the nation.

It can, however, be argued whether « with the increased state involvement directly in bringing about changes, in the value structures of the society and the outlooks of the citizen-clientele, how can the bureaucracy as a key instrument of the state afford to take a stand-offish « impersonal » attitude » (35). Unless the political system makes a careful attempt to restate the principle in terms of certain areas of administration where perhaps impersonality may still be valid, but in several new areas, where it would not be so, the popular image of the bureaucracy would not present a very bright picture. If the bureaucracy commits itself to any party ideology overtly or subtly, there is every likelihood of its being viewed as a corrupt one in the public eyes. In the ultimate state of politicization, the public image of bureaucracy would present as serving the interest of the political party — a position very much in evidence in totalitarian or authoritarian regimes.

(34) KOTHARI and ROY, n. 21.

(35) PANANDIKAR, n. 12, p. 11.

Many variables can be considered for the measurement of politicization. For example, the public image is dependent upon the regard that the public services have as an ideal career for the youngsters. Similarly its administrator's perception of the politicians and vice versa could also be used as variables for understanding this aspect. The administrators distrust of politicians and the latter's perception of them as a threat to their position and policies because of their incompetence, and the administrators tendency of expanding departments and increasing procedures and bureaucratic structures instead of solving concrete problems are bound to create an impression over the public according to how such relationships obtain in practice. If on the other hand, the administrators are seen as mainly concerned with improving their own prospects, or partial to particular groups or classes, or moved by specific considerations of material gains, the image presented would be of a highly politicized character. It is with reference to such factors that the public image of bureaucracy could be judged which is a sure index for measuring the degree of politicization.

The public image of bureaucracy could also be measured in accordance with the esteem in which it is held by the student-groups in the community. One of the reasons why most student-groups are likely to offer a career in the public service may be the esteem that it carries in the public eye. However, it should be remembered that the prestigious image of a public service with the students do not always carry an image of an efficient, professional and integrate bureaucracy. The Indian bureaucracy is still the first preference among the outgoing university graduates in terms of career-preference, although it has lost its character of prestige and integrity. This particular aspect of image perception is not very difficult to measure. Working on certain « hypothetical » questions, research studies could possibly be conducted to know the how the bureaucracy is held in the public eye (36).

III

A suggested « model » for measurement :

The preceding discussion of the different indices which have a bearing on the degree of politicization, may lead us towards the construction

(36) See for example such a study conducted in the United States of America. Franklin P. KILPATRICK (*et al*), *The Image of the Federal Service* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institutions, 1964. For the framework of analysis and research in particular refer to the accompanying volume *The Source Book of a Study of Occupational Values and the Image of the Federal Service* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1964).

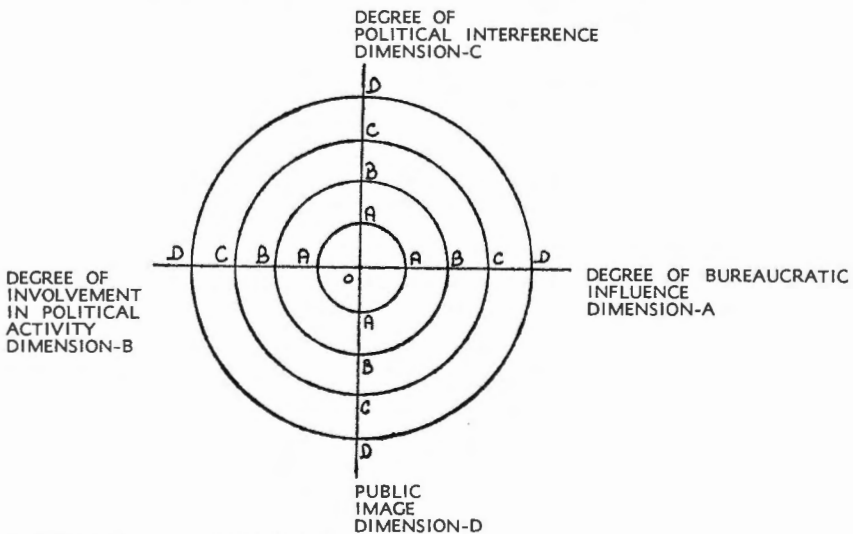
	Dimensions of analysis	I Depoliticized Bureaucracy	II Semi-Politicized Bureaucracy	III Committed Bureaucracy	IV Fully Politicized Bureaucracy
A.	Degree of bureaucratic influences in decision-making process (Relation between political executive and Bureaucracy).	Neutral Anonymous Apolitical.	Political executive dominates bureaucracy to take decision on party lines.	Bureaucracy committed to party programmes.	Bureaucracy's usurpation of political power for Party ends.
B.	Degree of involvement in political activity.	Denial of all political activity.	Right to vote and join party after resignation or retirement.	Membership of political party and participation in party meetings.	Full political activity Party and official positions interchangeable.
C.	Political interference in Civil Service work.	No interference Full operation of merit system.	Limited internal interference in personal promotion, transfer etc.	Formal interference in service matters « Spoils System ».	Bureaucracy- Recruitment from party « cadres ».
D.	Public Image.	A band of devoted impartial professionals Respect for Public Service.	Bureaucracy-tendency towards perpetuating itself. Serving their own ends. No high Esteem.	Bureaucracy toeing the party lines. Political conformity in top officials. Image of a Politically Corrupt Bureaucracy.	Bureaucracy serving the interests of ruling party and in one with party ideology.

of a typology of bureaucracy on the basis of the relative extent to which each of these indices could be operationalized by collecting empirical datas in relation to different bureaucratic systems it is not suggested that their quantification could be perfect or could give us a realistic picture of the character of bureaucracy in a particular system. Assuming that there could be four different categories of bureaucracy which are discernible in most political systems, the exact nature of bureaucracy in each of the system may be determined in terms of their derivations from these pre-defined categories on the basis of actual empirical research and operationalisation of the aforesaid indices. It would then be possible to construct a comparative model to measure the extent of politicization in bureaucracies in different systems and to analyse their relative impact on the administrative systems.

The four broad categories of bureaucracy according to the extent of their politicization are here suggested : a) depoliticised bureaucracy b) semi- politicised bureaucracy c) committed bureaucracy and d) fully politicised bureaucracy. The relative indicators under the different categories could possibly be illustrated through the chart on the preceding page.

The relationship between the four broad categories of bureaucracies as described above may be illustrated through a series of concentric circles on four axes which denote the four indices, as under :

Politicization of bureaucracy : comparative measurement



- A. DEPOLITICIZED BUREAUCRACY.
- B. SEMIPOLITICIZED BUREAUCRACY
- C. COMMITTED BUREAUCRACY
- D. FULLY POLITICIZED BUREAUCRACY.

From the above diagram it should be possible to note the exact shift of the bureaucracy from one category to another category. It may also be possible to note the desired shift towards one axis alone if the position in other three axes remains the same. This would point out the deviation of the bureaucracy from one established category without actually shifting to another category. On the basis of the available data from different bureaucratic systems, a chart could be constructed to indicate their relative positions on the graph.

It may, however, be noted in conclusion that certain practical difficulties of measurement are bound to arise when we begin to operationalise the above model. Besides the difficulties suggested by Caiden in this respect (37) certain other difficulties may have to be faced for instance the pattern of bureaucratic behaviour in many systems may defy classification in the categories of this model. Secondly, it is also possible that the exact nature of bureaucratic relationship with the political executive may not be determinable in a particular system partly because of the confidential nature of such relationship and partly because of the possible repercussions on the actual political processes if such information is revealed for public consumption. Thirdly, the public image index itself may present problem for suitable analysis. This is an exercise which itself is so complex as to warrant a comprehensive research on the issue. Despite these difficulties, however, the hypothetical model presented above may lead to a more improved model of measurement of politicization but in the initial stages it is in my opinion worth a trial.

Summary.

The idea that bureaucracy is a « rational » and « depoliticized » instrument in the conduct of public affairs, has recently come under severe criticism. Assuming the inevitable trend towards « politicization », modern bureaucracies can possibly be classified into four different categories, i.e. : « De-politicized », « Semi-politicized », « Committed » and « Fully-politicized ». Such a classification is based on the operationalization of certain indices on four different dimensions viz. a) Degree of Bureaucracy's Influence in Decision-making ; b) Degree of its Involvement in Political Activities ; c) Degree of Political Interference in its Work and d) its Image in the Public. The extent of « politicization » of any bureaucratic system and its actual deviation from the defined categories will, however, depend upon the available pattern of the cha-

(37) CAIDEN, n. 7, p. 106.

racteristic indices in that particular society. Notwithstanding certain difficulties in the operationalization of such indices, the model should be helpful in providing a framework for a comparative analysis and measurement of « politicization » of bureaucracies in different political systems.

