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Q7

"Institutional quality is a crucial driver of economic performance". In this context suggest reforms in Civil Service for strengthening democracy.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · GS II · 10 marks · Civil Services in a Democracy

Role of civil services in a democracy.

Core demand of the question

- "Institutional quality is a crucial driver of economic performance". In this context suggest reforms in Civil Service for strengthening democracy
- Honour the official stem. Link Weberian capacity and democratic accountability; use ARC and **lateral entry** as reform hooks
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Institutional quality - predictable rules and capable implementation - is a growth driver.

The civil service is that institution in daily Indian life.

- **Reforms:** Mission Karmayogi skills, stable tenure, modest **lateral entry**, outcome appraisal, RTI-compatible files.

A spoils system would destroy both growth and democratic neutrality.

State and municipal cadres matter as much as the All-India Services.

Introduction

Economies grow when rules are predictable, contracts are enforced, and the State can deliver without predation. That is institutional quality. The civil service is India's standing institution between the Constitution and the citizen; reforming it is therefore both an economic and a democratic task.

Body**Why institutional quality runs through the civil service**

- Poor countries with similar capital differ by whether the bureaucracy collects tax fairly, issues permits without a bribe, and implements a statute as written.
- Democracy needs the same cadre to be politically neutral, professionally competent, and answerable - otherwise elections change ministers, not outcomes.
- **Article 311** protection and All-India Services under **Article 312** were meant as a steel frame; over time they also became a rigid, generalist, transfer-vulnerable frame.

Reforms that raise quality and democracy together

- Mission Karmayogi (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building, 2020) should be a real competency grid, not a portal; domain skills in health, tax, climate and digital public goods

must count as much as the entry examination.

- Stable tenures and a transparent transfer code (**Second ARC**) reduce the political market in postings, which is the daily corruption of institutional quality.
- **Lateral entry** at a modest scale, with conflict-of-interest rules, fills specialist gaps without destroying a permanent, non-partisan core.
- Performance appraisal linked to citizen outcomes, not only ACR narratives; publish ministry delivery dashboards that Parliament can use.
- Recast the Official Secrets reflex toward RTI-compatible record-keeping so democracy can see the file.

What not to do

- Do not confuse reform with a spoils system. A politicised service would worsen both growth and democracy.
- Do not treat the IAS as the only civil service; State services and municipal cadres are where most citizens meet the State.

Flow diagram

Institutional quality -> Economic performance
Civil service reform -> Institutional quality
Civil service reform -> Democratic accountability
Karmayogi tenure lateral -> Civil service reform

Conclusion

Institutional quality drives economic performance because investors and citizens need a capable, rule-bound State. Civil-service reform - tenure, competence, lateral skill, and public appraisal - strengthens democracy by making that State answerable without making it a party instrument.

Facts & figures

Second Administrative Reforms Commission

Tenure, domain competence, ethics and local-government capacity as a reform bundle.

Mission Karmayogi, 2020

National civil-services capacity programme launched the same year as this paper.

Article 312

All-India Services; the constitutional steel frame that still needs skill and tenure reform.

Lateral entry

Union experiment to induct specialists at joint-secretary level; a quality tool if insulated from patronage.

Article 311

Safeguard against arbitrary dismissal; protects neutrality but is not a bar on performance management.

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