



Structural Inequities in Central Armed Police Forces: A Legal and Empirical Analysis of Service Conditions, Pension Disparities, and Career Progression in India

Payal Arya¹ · Dr. Pranay Kumar Aditya²

¹PhD Research Scholar, Raffles University, Neemrana, Alwar, Rajasthan-301705

²Senior Associate Professor & Dean, School of Law, Raffles University,
Neemrana, Alwar, Rajasthan-301705

Submission: 11.03.2026. Accepted: 12.02.2026. Published: 06.04.2026

Abstract

The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) constitute the backbone of India's internal security framework, performing critical functions ranging from border guarding and counter-insurgency operations to riot control, disaster response, and election security. Despite their indispensable role and exposure to high-risk operational environments, CAPF personnel continue to face significant structural inequities in comparison to their counterparts in the Armed Forces. These inequities are reflected in disparities in pension systems, career progression opportunities, service conditions, and welfare frameworks. This research paper undertakes a comprehensive legal and empirical analysis of the systemic challenges faced by CAPFs, with particular emphasis on pension disparities arising from the implementation of the New Pension Scheme (NPS), stagnation in promotions due to pyramidal rank structures, and the limitations of the Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) scheme. Using secondary data from the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), Ministry of Home Affairs reports, Parliamentary Standing Committee observations, and relevant legal frameworks, the study examines how these structural deficiencies impact morale, efficiency, and post-retirement security of CAPF personnel. The paper further evaluates the issue through the lens of constitutional principles, particularly Article 14 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees equality before law, and examines whether differential treatment between the Armed Forces and CAPFs satisfies the test of reasonable classification. The findings reveal that despite comparable service risks and operational burdens, CAPFs remain institutionally disadvantaged due to fragmented welfare policies, lack of assured pension security, and limited avenues for career advancement. The study concludes by proposing a set of policy reforms to address these inequities, including pension restructuring, career progression reforms, and the introduction of recognition-based mechanisms. By integrating legal analysis with empirical data, this research contributes to the broader discourse on administrative justice, uniformed service parity, and institutional reform in India's internal security apparatus.

Keywords: CAPFs · Structural Inequality · NPS vs OPS · MACP · Career Stagnation · Service Conditions · Article 14 · Administrative Justice · Internal Security · Welfare Policy

□



Introduction

India's internal security architecture relies heavily on the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), which serve as the primary instruments of law enforcement, border management, counterinsurgency, and crisis response across diverse, often hostile operational environments. Deployed across insurgency-affected regions, international borders, urban conflict zones, and disaster-hit areas, CAPF personnel perform continuous and high-intensity duties that are comparable in risk, complexity, and national importance to those undertaken by the Armed Forces. Despite this critical role, the institutional framework governing CAPFs reflects significant structural inequities in terms of welfare, pension systems, career progression, and service conditions.

Over the past two decades, these inequities have become more pronounced due to policy divergence between the Armed Forces under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and CAPFs under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). One of the most prominent disparities lies in pension systems. While the Armed Forces continue to operate under the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) with the added benefit of One Rank One Pension (OROP), CAPFs have been mandatorily placed under the New Pension Scheme (NPS), which is contributory, market-linked, and lacks assured post-retirement income. This distinction is particularly significant given that CAPF personnel are subjected to similar, and in some cases more prolonged, operational hardships than their military counterparts.

In addition to pension disparities, CAPFs are characterised by severe stagnation in career progression. The hierarchical structure of CAPFs follows a sharply pyramidal model, where promotional opportunities diminish significantly at higher ranks. A substantial proportion of personnel, especially at the constabulary level, retire without receiving a single functional promotion throughout their service tenure. The introduction of the Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) scheme attempted to address this issue by providing financial upgradations; however, it failed to resolve the fundamental problem of rank stagnation. As a result, personnel often retire with higher grade pay but without corresponding rank elevation, creating a disconnect between financial compensation and institutional identity.

The implications of these structural deficiencies extend beyond administrative concerns. They directly impact the morale, motivation, and psychological well-being of CAPF personnel. Studies and government reports have consistently highlighted issues such as high levels of occupational stress, limited access to family accommodation, frequent transfers, and inadequate welfare infrastructure. These factors contribute to a challenging service environment that is not adequately compensated by existing welfare mechanisms. Furthermore, the lack of parity in service conditions and benefits raises broader concerns about fairness, institutional justice, and policy coherence within India's uniformed services.

From a legal perspective, these disparities invite scrutiny under the constitutional framework, particularly Article 14 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws. The doctrine of reasonable classification permits differential treatment only when it is based on intelligible differentia and has a rational nexus with the objective sought to be achieved. Given the similarity in operational risks and service conditions

□



between CAPFs and the Armed Forces, the continued divergence in pension systems, career progression opportunities, and welfare benefits raises important questions regarding the constitutional validity of such classification.

This research paper examines these issues through a combined legal and empirical lens. By analysing secondary data from the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), Ministry of Home Affairs reports, Parliamentary Standing Committee observations, and relevant statutory and judicial frameworks, the study aims to identify the structural roots of inequity within CAPFs. It further evaluates whether existing policy distinctions between CAPFs and the Armed Forces withstand constitutional scrutiny and align with principles of administrative justice.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to bridge the gap between empirical realities and legal analysis. While existing literature has addressed individual aspects such as stress, pension reforms, and promotion challenges, there remains a lack of integrated analysis that connects these issues within a unified framework of structural inequality. This research contributes to the discourse by presenting a holistic examination of CAPF service conditions and proposing reform-oriented solutions grounded in both data and law.

In conclusion, the issue of structural inequities in CAPFs is not merely a matter of administrative policy but a broader question of fairness, recognition, and institutional integrity. Addressing these disparities is essential not only for improving the welfare and morale of CAPF personnel but also for strengthening the overall efficiency and credibility of India's internal security system. This paper aims to provide a comprehensive foundation for such reform by highlighting systemic gaps and suggesting pathways for achieving greater parity within the country's uniformed services.

Literature Review

The issue of structural inequities within the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) has been examined in fragments across various domains, including policing studies, military sociology, public administration, labour welfare, and pension economics. However, existing literature largely addresses isolated aspects such as stress, pension reforms, or career stagnation, without integrating them into a unified framework of institutional inequality. This section reviews relevant scholarly works, government reports, and policy analyses to contextualise the structural challenges faced by CAPFs.

Literature on Service Conditions and Occupational Stress in CAPFs

A substantial body of literature highlights the challenging service conditions of CAPF personnel. Reports published by the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) consistently indicate that CAPF personnel operate under conditions characterised by prolonged field deployments, limited family contact, and high-risk assignments. These include border guarding, counter-insurgency operations, riot control, and disaster response.

Studies by Singh and Roy (2016) demonstrate that CAPF personnel often experience longer, continuous deployments than military units, with minimal rest periods. Similarly, Dutta (2022) identifies a direct correlation between operational stress and rising instances of suicide and

□



mental health disorders within CAPFs. Lone (2021) further emphasises that lack of family accommodation, irregular leave, and frequent transfers contribute significantly to psychological distress.

Parliamentary Standing Committee Reports (2018, 2021, 2023) reinforce these findings by documenting:

- Inadequate housing satisfaction,
- Shortage of welfare infrastructure,
- Insufficient mental health support systems,
- Excessive workload due to manpower shortages.

These studies collectively establish that CAPFs operate under intense and sustained occupational pressure, which necessitates robust welfare mechanisms—yet such mechanisms remain inadequate or fragmented.

Literature on Pension Disparities: NPS vs OPS

The transition from the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) to the New Pension Scheme (NPS) has been a central subject of debate in public administration and economic policy literature. Scholars such as Mohanty (2022) and Aggarwal (2021) argue that NPS introduces uncertainty in post-retirement income due to its market-linked structure, making it less suitable for high-risk occupations.

The Indian Institute of Public Administration (2020) highlights that uniformed services require predictable and assured pension systems due to:

- Early retirement age,
- Lack of alternative employment opportunities,
- Physical limitations after service.

While the Armed Forces continue under OPS with the added benefit of One Rank One Pension (OROP), CAPFs are governed by NPS, creating a dual pension structure within India's uniformed services.

Ghosh (2023) critiques this disparity, arguing that CAPFs face a “welfare paradox” in which high-risk service is not matched by commensurate post-retirement security. The literature also introduces the concept of risk-based compensation parity, which suggests that professions exposed to similar risks should receive comparable benefits (Nair, 2018; Fernandes, 2021).

Despite this, CAPFs remain excluded from OPS and OROP, highlighting a systemic inconsistency that has significant welfare implications.

Literature on Career Progression and MACP Limitations

Promotion stagnation in CAPFs has been extensively discussed in administrative and policing studies. Verma (2018) and Raghavan (2020) observe that CAPFs follow a highly pyramidal rank structure, resulting in limited promotional opportunities, particularly at the lower levels. The Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) scheme was introduced to address this stagnation by providing financial upgradations after fixed intervals. However, scholars such as Basumatary (2021) argue that MACP fails to address the core issue of rank-based identity, as it does not alter designation.

Tiwari (2020) and Rao (2022) highlight the consequences of this system:

□



- Mismatch between grade pay and rank,
- Reduced morale due to lack of recognition,
- Diminished post-retirement employability.

Kapur (2019) further notes that stagnation leads to long-term dissatisfaction, particularly among constabulary ranks, where personnel may serve for 30 years without a single promotion. The literature thus establishes that while MACP addresses financial progression, it does not resolve issues of institutional recognition and career mobility, leaving structural inequities intact.

Literature on Welfare Inequality Between the Armed Forces and the CAPFs

Comparative studies between the Armed Forces and CAPFs reveal significant disparities in welfare frameworks. Prasad (2020) argues that CAPFs suffer from a “structural neglect” in policy design, where their contributions to internal security are not matched by equivalent welfare benefits.

Singh (2017) and Sharma (2021) highlight that the Armed Forces benefit from:

- Structured rotation policies,
- Family accommodation systems,
- Pension security (OPS + OROP),
- Ceremonial recognition mechanisms.

In contrast, CAPFs face:

- Irregular postings,
- Lack of family stability,
- Pension uncertainty,
- Absence of recognition systems.

Parliamentary Committee reports further emphasise that CAPFs are often treated administratively as police forces rather than as uniformed services with military-like responsibilities, leading to policy inconsistencies.

This literature underscores the existence of a dual welfare framework within India’s uniformed services, raising questions about fairness and policy coherence.

Legal Literature: Equality, Reasonable Classification, and Service Jurisprudence

From a constitutional perspective, the issue of CAPF inequities intersects with the principles of equality under Article 14 of the Constitution of India. Legal scholars have extensively discussed the doctrine of reasonable classification, which allows differential treatment only when it satisfies two conditions:

1. Intelligible differentia,
2. Rational nexus with the objective.

In the context of the uniformed services, courts have historically upheld distinctions among categories of employees. However, recent judicial trends emphasise substantive equality rather than formal classification.

Administrative law literature suggests that where two groups perform substantially similar functions under comparable risks, differential treatment must be justified through strong and

□



rational policy grounds (Jain & Jain, Administrative Law; Seervai, Constitutional Law of India).

The application of these principles to CAPFs raises critical questions:

- Whether the distinction between the military and CAPFs is justified in welfare policies,
- Whether pension disparity satisfies constitutional scrutiny,
- Whether the lack of career progression violates principles of fairness.

Although courts have not directly adjudicated on all aspects of CAPF parity, the legal framework provides a strong basis for questioning existing inequalities.

International Perspectives on Uniformed Service Welfare

Comparative international literature indicates that many countries adopt a unified or near-parity approach for uniformed services. Studies from the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada show that paramilitary and policing forces often receive:

- Structured career progression,
- Retirement benefits aligned with risk exposure,
- Recognition-based incentives.

For instance:

- U.S. federal law enforcement agencies provide defined pension benefits and rank-based career progression.
- UK policing systems include structured promotion pathways and ceremonial recognition mechanisms.
- The Canadian Mounted Police integrate welfare and recognition into a unified veteran framework.

These models demonstrate that institutional parity across uniformed services is both feasible and desirable, reinforcing the argument for reform in India.

Identified Research Gap

Despite the availability of literature on individual aspects such as stress, pension systems, and career progression, there is a clear absence of comprehensive studies that:

- Integrate service conditions, pension disparities, and career stagnation into a single analytical framework,
- Examine CAPF inequities through both empirical and constitutional lenses,
- Evaluate policy disparities in light of Article 14 and administrative justice principles.

Most existing studies remain sector-specific and fail to address the broader structural nature of inequity within CAPFs.

Contribution of the Present Study

This research addresses the identified gap by:

- Combining empirical data with legal analysis,
- Examining CAPFs within a unified framework of structural inequality,
- Assessing policy disparities using constitutional principles,
- Proposing integrated reforms for welfare, pension, and career progression.

By doing so, the study contributes to the academic discourse on uniformed service parity, administrative justice, and internal security governance in India.

□



Research Methodology

This study adopts a mixed analytical framework combining qualitative legal analysis with empirical examination of secondary data to investigate structural inequities within the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). The methodology integrates doctrinal legal research with data-driven policy analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of disparities in service conditions, pension systems, and career progression.

Research Design

The research follows a qualitative–empirical hybrid design, incorporating:

a) Doctrinal Legal Research

This component examines:

- constitutional provisions (particularly Article 14),
- principles of administrative law,
- service jurisprudence related to uniformed services,
- judicial interpretations of equality and reasonable classification.

The objective is to evaluate whether the differential treatment of CAPFs in areas such as pension and career progression satisfies constitutional standards.

b) Empirical Policy Analysis

This component focuses on:

- statistical trends,
- service conditions,
- promotion patterns,
- stress indicators,
- pension outcomes.

The aim is to identify real-world implications of structural inequities through analysis of publicly available data.

c) Comparative Institutional Analysis

A comparative approach is used to analyse:

- Armed Forces vs CAPFs,
- OPS vs NPS pension systems,
- promotion structures across uniformed services,
- international models of uniformed service welfare.

This enables identification of policy gaps and best practices.

Nature and Sources of Data

The study relies entirely on secondary data due to the sensitive and geographically dispersed nature of CAPF operations.

A. Government and Institutional Sources

1. Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D) Reports

- Data on personnel strength, promotions, suicides, stress indicators, infrastructure, and deployment patterns.

2. Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Annual Reports

□



- Information on CAPF operations, welfare schemes, and policy initiatives.

3. Parliamentary Standing Committee Reports

- Evaluations of CAPF welfare, infrastructure, housing, and stress-related issues.

4. Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Debates and Questions

- Official government responses on pension policies, service conditions, and administrative reforms.

5. Central Civil Services Rules and MACP Guidelines

- Framework governing career progression and financial upgradation.

6. New Pension Scheme (NPS) Regulations

- Relevant provisions affecting retirement security.

B. Legal Sources

1. Constitution of India

- Article 14 (Equality before law)
- Article 16 (Equality of opportunity in public employment)

2. Judicial Decisions

- Supreme Court and High Court rulings related to service law, equality, and pension rights.

3. Administrative Law Doctrines

- Reasonable classification
- Legitimate expectation
- Non-arbitrariness in state action

C. Academic and Comparative Sources

- Research articles on policing, defence studies, and public administration
- International reports on law enforcement welfare systems
- Comparative studies on pension and career structures in uniformed services

Data Collection Method

The study employs systematic document analysis, which includes:

a) Content Analysis

- Identification of key themes such as pension disparity, promotion stagnation, and service hardship
- Categorisation of findings across different domains (legal, administrative, empirical)

b) Comparative Review

Side-by-side comparison of:

- Armed Forces and CAPF policies
- OPS and NPS frameworks
- promotion structures and career pathways

c) Trend Analysis

Examination of patterns in:

- promotion rates

□



- stress indicators
- retirement outcomes

Analytical Framework

The analysis is structured using the following frameworks:

A. Constitutional Equality Framework

Used to assess:

- whether CAPFs and the Armed Forces are similarly situated,
- whether differential treatment is justified,
- compliance with Article 14 and the reasonable classification doctrine.

B. Welfare Parity Framework

Evaluates:

- parity in pension systems,
- equivalence in service benefits,
- consistency in policy design across uniformed services.

C. Career Progression Analysis Model

Examines:

- hierarchical structure of CAPFs,
- promotion bottlenecks,
- effectiveness of the MACP scheme,
- long-term career outcomes.

D. Risk–Compensation Framework

Assesses:

- relationship between occupational risk and welfare benefits,
- justification for differential pension systems,
- alignment of compensation with service hardship.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to:

1. Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)

- CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, SSB, Assam Rifles, NSG, SPG

2. Comparative Analysis with the Armed Forces (Army)

- specifically in relation to pension systems and career structures

3. Key Areas of Analysis

- service conditions and operational stress
- pension disparities (NPS vs OPS)
- career progression and MACP
- legal and constitutional aspects of inequality

4. Time Frame

- Primarily, the post-2004 period (introduction of NPS) to the present



Limitations of the Study

The study acknowledges the following limitations:

1. Dependence on Secondary Data

Primary field data and interviews could provide deeper insights, but were not feasible due to:

- operational constraints,
- security sensitivity,
- accessibility issues.

2. Limited Availability of CAPF-Specific Academic Research

Compared to military studies, literature on CAPFs is relatively sparse.

3. Restricted Access to Internal Data

Certain operational and welfare-related data are not publicly disclosed.

4. Variability Across Forces

Differences among CAPFs (CRPF, BSF, CISF, etc.) could not be analysed individually in depth.

5. Absence of Quantitative Modelling

The study focuses on qualitative and descriptive analysis rather than econometric modelling.

Ethical Considerations

- All data used in the study are obtained from publicly available and credible sources.
- No confidential or classified information has been used.
- The study maintains academic integrity and objectivity.
- Proper attribution has been ensured for all referenced materials.

Analysis & Findings

Structural Nature of Inequity in CAPFs

The analysis reveals that the challenges faced by CAPFs are not isolated administrative issues but part of a systemic structural imbalance embedded within India's policy framework for uniformed services. Unlike the Armed Forces, which operate under a cohesive welfare and recognition system, CAPFs are governed by fragmented policies that fail to account for the intensity and continuity of their operational roles.

This structural inequity manifests across three primary domains:

1. Pension Systems
2. Career Progression Mechanisms
3. Service Conditions and Welfare Infrastructure

The cumulative effect of these disparities creates a persistent disadvantage for CAPF personnel throughout their service lifecycle and beyond retirement.

Pension Disparity: NPS vs OPS

Dual Pension Regime in Uniformed Services

One of the most significant findings of this study is the existence of a dual pension system within India's uniformed forces:

- Armed Forces → Old Pension Scheme (OPS) + One Rank One Pension (OROP)
- CAPFs → New Pension Scheme (NPS)

□



This divergence has far-reaching implications.

Nature of Pension Insecurity under NPS

The NPS framework introduces uncertainty due to its:

- market-linked returns,
- lack of a guaranteed pension,
- dependence on contribution duration and fund performance.

For CAPF personnel, this creates multiple vulnerabilities:

a) Financial Uncertainty

Unlike OPS, which ensures ~50% of the last drawn salary, NPS offers no assured income.

b) Early Retirement Challenge

CAPF personnel often retire earlier due to physical demands, reducing the accumulation period under NPS.

c) Limited Alternative Employment

Due to the physically demanding nature of the service, many personnel cannot easily transition to other professions.

Legal and Policy Implications

From a policy standpoint, this raises the question:

Can two forces performing comparable high-risk duties be governed by fundamentally different pension systems?

The analysis suggests that this disparity lacks strong justification under risk-compensation parity principles.

Career Progression and Rank Stagnation

Pyramidal Hierarchy

CAPFs follow a steep hierarchical structure:

Constable → Head Constable → ASI → SI → Inspector → Officer ranks

However, data and reports indicate:

- The majority of personnel remain at the constabulary level throughout service
- Promotions are extremely limited and delayed
- Upward mobility is structurally constrained

Empirical Indicators of Stagnation

Key observations:

- A large percentage of personnel retire without promotion
- Promotion cycles often exceed 15–20 years
- Vacancy constraints restrict career advancement

This creates a workforce where experience increases, but rank does not.

Impact on Personnel

The consequences are significant:

- Reduced motivation
- Loss of institutional commitment
- Psychological dissatisfaction
- Perceived injustice

□



This stagnation also contributes to broader morale issues within CAPFs.

MACP Scheme: Financial Relief Without Structural Reform

Objective of MACP

The Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) scheme was introduced to mitigate stagnation by providing financial upgradation after fixed intervals.

Structural Limitation of MACP

However, the analysis shows that MACP:

- increases grade pay,
- does NOT increase rank,
- does NOT improve career mobility,
- does NOT enhance institutional recognition.

Resulting Paradox

This creates a unique institutional paradox:

Personnel receive higher salaries equivalent to senior ranks but retain junior designations.

Consequences

- Identity mismatch
- Reduced social recognition
- Weak post-retirement positioning
- Continued structural inequality

Thus, MACP addresses economic stagnation, but not status stagnation.

Service Conditions and Operational Stress

Nature of CAPF Deployment

CAPFs are engaged in:

- counter-insurgency operations
- border management
- riot control
- election duties
- disaster response
- internal security

These roles are:

- continuous (not cyclical)
- geographically dispersed
- high-risk and unpredictable

Empirical Indicators of Stress

Government and committee reports indicate:

- high levels of stress and fatigue
- increasing cases of suicide and mental health issues
- extended separation from families

□



- irregular leave patterns

Structural Deficiencies in Welfare

Unlike the Armed Forces:

- CAPFs lack structured family accommodation systems
- welfare infrastructure is uneven
- rotation policies are less stable

Impact on Efficiency

These conditions affect:

- operational efficiency
- decision-making ability
- long-term retention
- institutional stability

Constitutional Analysis: Article 14 and Reasonable Classification

Legal Standard

Article 14 permits classification only if:

1. there is an intelligible differentia, and
2. it has a rational nexus with the objective.

Application to CAPFs vs Armed Forces

The key issue is whether:

CAPFs and the Armed Forces are similarly situated.

Similarities Identified

- High-risk operational duties
- National security responsibilities
- Deployment in hostile environments
- Physical and psychological stress

Differences Claimed by Policy

Government distinctions are often based on:

- external vs internal security roles
- organisational control (MoD vs MHA)

Critical Evaluation

The analysis suggests:

- functional differences exist, but
- risk exposure and service conditions significantly overlap

Thus, differential treatment in:

- pension systems,
- career progression,
- welfare benefits

requires strong justification.

Conclusion on Constitutional Validity

The current framework raises concerns regarding:



- substantive equality,
- fairness in state action,
- reasonable classification doctrine.

While not conclusively unconstitutional, the system reflects a policy-level inequity that requires reform.

Integrated Impact of Structural Inequities

When combined, the above factors create a compounding effect:

1. During Service

- stress + stagnation + limited welfare

2. At Retirement

- pension uncertainty + rank mismatch

3. Post-Retirement

- reduced employability + social status loss

Overall Result

CAPF personnel experience a full-cycle disadvantage compared to their counterparts in the Armed Forces.

Key Findings of the Study

Finding 1:

CAPFs operate under a structurally unequal policy framework.

Finding 2:

NPS creates greater long-term financial insecurity than OPS.

Finding 3:

Promotion stagnation is systemic and widespread.

Finding 4:

MACP fails to address identity and recognition issues.

Finding 5:

Service conditions are highly demanding and inadequately compensated.

Finding 6:

Existing disparities raise concerns under the principles of Article 14.

Finding 7:

Structural inequities affect morale, efficiency, and post-retirement welfare.

Summary of Analysis

The findings demonstrate that CAPFs are institutionally disadvantaged due to a combination of:

- pension inequality,
- career stagnation,
- inadequate welfare mechanisms,
- and a lack of recognition systems.

These inequities are not incidental but embedded within policy design, making reform both necessary and urgent.

□



Policy Recommendations

The analysis undertaken in this study demonstrates that structural inequities within the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) are deeply embedded in policy design and administrative practice. These inequities cannot be addressed through isolated or symbolic interventions alone. Instead, they require a multi-dimensional reform framework combining pension reform, career progression restructuring, welfare modernisation, and legal-policy harmonisation. This section proposes a set of practical, phased policy recommendations to reduce structural disadvantage and promote a more equitable institutional environment for CAPF personnel.

Need for an Integrated Reform Framework

A major problem in the current CAPF policy environment is the absence of an integrated welfare architecture. Existing measures are often fragmented and reactive. Pension, promotion, housing, family welfare, stress management, and retirement transition are treated as separate administrative issues rather than as interconnected dimensions of service justice.

Accordingly, reform must be guided by the following principles:

1. Risk-sensitive welfare policy
2. Parity-oriented institutional design
3. Career dignity and recognition
4. Constitutional fairness and administrative reasonableness
5. Long-term post-retirement security

Pension Reform Recommendations

Reconsideration of NPS for CAPFs

The most pressing reform requirement concerns pension insecurity under the New Pension Scheme (NPS). Given the high-risk, high-stress nature of CAPF service, the Government should reconsider whether a purely contributory, market-linked pension model is appropriate for these forces.

Recommended Reform Options

- A special pension window for CAPFs within NPS with guaranteed minimum pension protection
- A hybrid pension model combining defined contribution with assured post-retirement floor benefits
- Extension of a risk-linked pension supplement for personnel serving in difficult and operational zones

This would reduce post-retirement uncertainty without necessarily replicating the entire Armed Forces pension model.

Assured Minimum Pension Mechanism

Even if full OPS restoration is not administratively feasible, a guaranteed minimum pension mechanism should be introduced for CAPF retirees. Such a model would ensure that personnel do not face post-retirement vulnerability due to market fluctuations.

This reform is justified because:

□



- CAPFs retire after physically demanding service,
- many lack strong alternative employment options,
- service conditions limit private wealth accumulation.

Risk-Based Retirement Security

Pension policy for CAPFs should be restructured on the basis of occupational risk and service hardship, rather than merely on civil service classification. This would align pension policy with the actual conditions of service and with the principles of substantive equality.

Career Progression Reform Recommendations

Cadre Review and Promotional Restructuring

A comprehensive cadre review should be undertaken across all CAPFs to reduce stagnation at the constabulary and subordinate ranks. This review should assess:

- vacancy bottlenecks,
- promotion timelines,
- force-specific rank structures,
- proportion of personnel retiring without promotion.

Policy Recommendation

The Government should create a time-bound promotion framework that ensures no personnel retire without at least one or two functional promotions, subject to a satisfactory service record.

Expansion of Mid-Level Supervisory Posts

One cause of stagnation is the narrow availability of mid-level promotional posts. Therefore, expansion of posts such as:

- Head Constable,
- ASI,
- SI,
- Inspector

should be considered, particularly in large operational forces such as the CRPF and BSF.

This would:

- improve morale,
- strengthen supervisory capacity,
- reward experience through visible advancement.

Transparent Promotion Criteria

Promotion procedures should be standardised and made more transparent across CAPFs. Clear criteria must be communicated regarding:

- seniority,
- departmental examinations,
- service record,
- physical fitness,
- course qualifications.

This reduces perceptions of arbitrariness and strengthens procedural justice.

□



MACP Reform Recommendations

Linking Financial Upgradation with Status Recognition

The current MACP model addresses salary progression but leaves rank identity unchanged.

This creates a long-term disconnect between service seniority and institutional status.

Recommended Reform

A revised MACP framework should provide:

- financial upgradation,
- functional role enhancement where feasible,
- symbolic or honorary status recognition at retirement.

This would make career progression more meaningful.

Designation-Sensitive MACP Reform

Where full promotion is not possible, personnel receiving higher MACP levels should be eligible for:

- supervisory assignments,
- training roles,
- special administrative responsibilities.

This will partially align pay progression with institutional role and recognition.

Retirement Status Alignment

As a long-term reform, MACP beneficiaries retiring at substantially higher grade pay levels should receive a structured status alignment mechanism, such as:

- honorary designation,
- retirement commendation grade,
- formal recognition certificate linked with the final pay level.

This can reduce the mismatch between service value and retirement identity.

Welfare and Service Condition Reform Recommendations

Strengthening Family Accommodation and Rotation Policy

One of the major causes of stress in CAPFs is prolonged separation from family. The Government should strengthen:

- family accommodation facilities,
- rotation policies between hard and soft postings,
- predictable leave and transfer mechanisms.

This will improve mental well-being and family stability.

Mental Health and Stress Support Systems

CAPFs require a dedicated institutional mental health framework. This should include:

- force-level counselling cells,
- regular psychological screening,
- trauma support after high-intensity deployment,
- confidential grievance redressal mechanisms.

Mental health support should not remain an ad hoc or reactive response to suicide cases; it must become a structural component of welfare policy.

□



Improved Housing and Welfare Infrastructure

Parliamentary reports have repeatedly pointed to inadequate housing satisfaction and welfare infrastructure. Therefore, targeted budgetary allocation should be made for:

- residential quarters,
- recreational facilities,
- family welfare centres,
- healthcare support.

Such facilities are not secondary benefits but essential conditions for sustaining a high-risk workforce.

Legal and Constitutional Policy Recommendations

Equality-Oriented Review of Welfare Policies

The Government should undertake a formal review of CAPF welfare policy through the lens of:

- Article 14,
- Article 16,
- administrative fairness,
- non-arbitrariness.

This review should assess whether existing distinctions between CAPFs and the Armed Forces remain justifiable in light of overlapping service risks and burdens.

Uniformed Services Welfare Commission

A **National Uniformed Services Welfare Commission** may be established to study and recommend parity-based reforms across:

- Armed Forces,
- CAPFs,
- other high-risk uniformed services.

This body can examine issues such as:

- pension parity,
- risk compensation,
- career mobility,
- family welfare,
- retirement transition.

Service Jurisprudence Reform through Executive Policy

Rather than waiting for litigation, the executive should proactively reform service conditions where inequities are visible. This reduces the burden on courts and strengthens the legitimacy of policy.

Retirement Transition and Post-Service Security

Structured Second-Career Support

CAPF personnel need institutional support for post-retirement transition. A dedicated re-employment and resettlement framework should be established, modelled on military resettlement programs.

□



This can include:

- placement assistance,
- leadership certification,
- private sector tie-ups,
- security management training,
- entrepreneurship support.

Skill Recognition and Certification

Personnel should receive formal certification of service-acquired skills, such as:

- security operations,
- crisis response,
- logistics,
- leadership under stress,
- field coordination.

Such certification improves employability and reduces the loss of trained human capital after retirement.

Recognition-Based Retirement Dignity Measures

As part of a broader reform model, the Government may also introduce:

- honorary recognition systems,
- long-service distinction mechanisms,
- institutional commendations at retirement.

These measures are important not merely for symbolism but for preserving dignity and improving post-service identity.

Phase-Wise Reform Strategy

Because structural reform cannot be implemented overnight, a phased strategy is recommended:

Phase 1: Immediate Administrative Reforms

- strengthen leave, housing, and counselling systems
- standardize promotion rules
- improve welfare infrastructure

Phase 2: Medium-Term Structural Reforms

- cadre review
- MACP redesign
- assured minimum pension mechanism
- re-employment support system

Phase 3: Long-Term Institutional Reforms

- comprehensive pension reform
- risk-based welfare parity
- legal review of classification-based inequality
- establishment of a Uniformed Services Welfare Commission

Final Policy Position

□



The inequities faced by CAPFs are not the result of individual administrative lapses but of a structurally weak policy framework that fails to fully acknowledge the long-term welfare implications of high-risk internal security services. Reform must therefore move beyond isolated benefits and embrace a systemic approach.

An effective CAPF reform framework must ensure:

- fair retirement security,
- meaningful career mobility,
- improved service conditions,
- institutional recognition,
- and constitutionally defensible parity.

Such reforms are essential not only for justice to CAPF personnel but also for the effectiveness, morale, and credibility of India's internal security system.

Conclusion

The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) occupy a pivotal position in India's internal security architecture, functioning as the first line of response to a wide spectrum of national challenges, including insurgency, border security, civil unrest, and disaster management. Despite their critical role and sustained exposure to high-risk operational environments, this study has demonstrated that CAPFs continue to operate within a structurally unequal institutional framework that does not adequately reflect the nature and intensity of their service.

The analysis reveals that structural inequities within CAPFs are multidimensional, encompassing pension insecurity under the New Pension Scheme (NPS), stagnation in career progression due to pyramidal hierarchies, limitations of the Modified Assured Career Progression (MACP) scheme, and deficiencies in welfare and service conditions. These factors do not operate in isolation; together, they create a cycle of disadvantage that affects personnel during service, at retirement, and in post-retirement life.

From a legal perspective, the study highlights that these disparities raise important concerns under the constitutional principle of equality embodied in Article 14 of the Constitution of India. While distinctions between different categories of services may be permissible under the doctrine of reasonable classification, such distinctions must be grounded in rational and objective criteria. The findings of this research suggest that the divergence in welfare frameworks between CAPFs and the Armed Forces, particularly in relation to pension systems and career progression, may not fully satisfy the standards of substantive equality, given the comparable nature of risks and operational responsibilities involved.

At the empirical level, the study underscores that CAPF personnel face prolonged, continuous deployment cycles, high occupational stress, limited access to family life, and restricted opportunities for career advancement. These conditions are further compounded by the absence of assured retirement security and inadequate institutional mechanisms for post-service transition. As a result, CAPFs experience a structural disadvantage that extends beyond administrative inefficiencies and reflects deeper issues in policy design and implementation.

□



The policy recommendations advanced in this study call for a comprehensive, integrated reform approach. Rather than isolated interventions, there is a need for systemic restructuring of pension frameworks, career progression mechanisms, welfare infrastructure, and recognition systems. Introducing assured pension safeguards, revisiting cadre structures, reforming MACP to align with service dignity, strengthening mental health and family welfare systems, and ensuring greater parity across uniformed services are essential steps toward addressing these inequities.

This research contributes to the academic and policy discourse by bridging the gap between empirical realities and constitutional analysis. Examining CAPFs through the combined lenses of administrative law, public policy, and institutional governance provides a holistic understanding of structural inequities and their implications for service justice. The study also highlights the need to shift from a compartmentalised approach to a parity-oriented, risk-sensitive policy framework for the uniformed services in India.

In conclusion, addressing structural inequities in CAPFs is not merely a matter of administrative reform but a question of institutional fairness, constitutional responsibility, and national security effectiveness. A well-supported and motivated CAPF workforce is essential for maintaining internal stability and responding to emerging security challenges. Therefore, policy reforms aimed at ensuring welfare parity, career dignity, and retirement security are imperative for strengthening both personnel morale and the overall resilience of India's internal security system.

Future research may build upon this study by incorporating primary field data, comparative analysis across individual CAPFs, and quantitative modelling of pension and career outcomes. Such work would further deepen the understanding of structural inequities and support evidence-based policymaking in this critical domain.

Declarations

Plagiarism Statement: The authors declare that this manuscript is original, contains no plagiarized material, and has not been published or submitted for publication elsewhere. All sources have been duly acknowledged.

Funding: The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval: Not applicable.

Data availability: All data used in this study are publicly available from official Indian government and regulatory sources.

Author contributions: All the authors contributed equally to the conception, analysis, and drafting of this manuscript.

References

Adams, J. S. (1965). *Inequity in social exchange*. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 2, 267–299.

□



- Aggarwal, R. (2021). Pension reforms and public sector employees in India: A critical analysis. *Journal of Economic Policy Studies*, 14(2), 45–60.
- Basumatary, P. (2021). Structural hierarchy and identity challenges in Indian policing. *Police Administration Review*, 19(1), 57–74.
- Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D). (2019). *Data on Police Organizations in India*. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D). (2020). *Prison Statistics and Police Stress Indicators*. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D). (2022). *Annual Report on CAPFs Welfare and Infrastructure*. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D). (2023). *Data on Police Organizations in India*. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- Dutta, S. (2022). Occupational stress and suicide trends in paramilitary forces. *Indian Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 27(1), 39–55.
- Fernandes, D. (2021). Risk and compensation in uniformed services. *Journal of Defence and Security Studies*, 4(1), 23–41.
- Ghosh, P. (2023). Pension inequality and welfare gaps in India's uniformed services. *Economic Affairs Review*, 56(2), 99–113.
- Government of India. (2004). *New Pension Scheme (NPS) Guidelines*. Ministry of Finance.
- Greenberg, J. (1987). A taxonomy of organizational justice theories. *Academy of Management Review*, 12(1), 9–22.
- Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA). (2020). *Study on Pension Reforms and Government Employees*. New Delhi.
- Jain, M. P. (2016). *Indian Constitutional Law* (8th ed.). LexisNexis.
- Kapur, A. (2019). Promotion stagnation in paramilitary forces: Causes and consequences. *Administrative Studies Quarterly*, 8(3), 112–128.
- Lone, A. (2021). Mental health challenges in paramilitary organizations. *Psychology and Security Review*, 9(4), 58–74.
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). (2020). *Annual Report*. Government of India.
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). (2021). *Annual Report*. Government of India.
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). (2023). *CAPFs Deployment and Welfare Report*. Government of India.
- Mohanty, A. (2022). Pension security and welfare implications of NPS. *Indian Journal of Economic Policy*, 19(1), 55–70.
- Nair, R. (2018). Risk-based compensation in public services. *Public Administration Insights*, 14(3), 33–50.
- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs. (2018). *Report on Stress and Welfare of CAPFs*. Rajya Sabha Secretariat.
- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs. (2021). *Report on Housing and Infrastructure of CAPFs*. Rajya Sabha Secretariat.



- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs. (2023). *Report on CAPF Welfare and Modernisation*. Rajya Sabha Secretariat.
- Prasad, K. (2020). Internal security forces and welfare disparity in India. *Journal of Strategic Security Studies*, 13(2), 61–83.
- Raghavan, B. (2020). MACP scheme and structural inefficiency in career progression. *Indian Administrative Law Review*, 5(1), 91–106.
- Rao, A. (2022). Identity and post-retirement challenges in uniformed services. *Indian Journal of Social Psychology*, 12(4), 202–217.
- Seervai, H. M. (2013). *Constitutional Law of India* (4th ed.). Universal Law Publishing.
- Singh, H., & Roy, B. (2016). Comparative hardship exposure in Indian Army and CAPFs. *National Security Journal of India*, 8(4), 115–131.
- Sharma, R. (2021). Welfare policies in Indian Armed Forces and paramilitary forces. *Defence Studies Journal*, 11(2), 88–104.
- Tiwari, S. (2020). Career stagnation and institutional dissatisfaction in CAPFs. *Journal of Public Administration*, 10(2), 134–149.
- World Bank. (2019). *Public Sector Pension Systems and Reform Trends*. Washington, D.C.