

## UNCOVERS THE DYNAMICS OF THE STATE CIVIL APPARATUS IN INDONESIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY

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### Abstract

This study scrutinised the dynamics of the state civil apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) in Indonesia, paying specific attention to governance and institutional quality issues. The research aims to comprehend how political-administrative marginalisation affects the SCA's professionalism, integrity, and neutrality from 2023 to 2024 due to the regulation of the central government's intervention. In addition, the study applied a qualitative descriptive method assisted by an argumentative review. It was based on published secondary data and open, valid sources and focused on analysing recent developments from 2023 to 2024, particularly concerning regulatory changes and political influence. The findings reveal implications of the marginalisation process for governance and institutional quality. These distort the fundamental principles, which are based on the tools of political power, and display inefficiency, misuse of power, and corruption while reducing public trust in government institutions. Interestingly, the urgency of the executive and legislative commitment from the dynamic only prioritises the interests of groups behind the political agenda designed to affect the (SCA or Civil Servant) performance. Moreover, this study's implications affirm that weakening institutional integrity poses serious governance and bureaucratic reform barriers. Without a firm commitment from executive and legislative bodies to safeguard neutrality and accountability, the function of the (SCA or Civil Servant) risks further erosion. Overall, the originality of this study offers a timely and focused assessment of the (SCA or Civil Servant) within the political context of 2023-2024, emphasising the consequences of unchecked political interference and the regulatory implications for institutional performance.

**Keywords:** State Civil Apparatus, Governance, Institutional Quality.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the primary purposes of a civil servant in government bodies is responsibility, professionalism, and neutrality. This process must comply with regulations and be based on a merit system to achieve the ideal goal of good governance. Moreover, many scholars and practitioners around the globe elucidate the importance of a professional, neutral, and merit-based civil service in securing good governance. But, in the Indonesian context, the civil servant has a problem since the 2023-2024 regulation has affected broadly, mainly the oversight authority, and this basis also highlights the critical point of the quality of governance and institutional quality to preserve the responsibility, professionalism, and neutrality. To assist this justification, some empirical research is provided as follows:

First, Tzagkarakis et al. (2021) conveyed that the public sector should provide access freely, and for the outcomes served, they must collect feedback from citizens. In line with that, Budi Santoso (2024; 2025); Grossman & Slough (2022) states that the organization (government entities) and the employees inside are the elements that run the wheel of the government, must perform collectively, and must not be reluctant to face tension from citizens due to the services. Links with the point, I conclude that the pattern in both of them is trying to tighten the core concept of the government in terms of the wheel process, which should consider the eligible from internal and external to perceive what they call "good governance" (Bovaird & Löffler, 2023; Kjaer, 2023; Werang et al., 2025). Next, in democratic systems like

Indonesia, the civil service is hoped to be authorized as a stable and impartial apparatus that effectively implements policies, irrespective of the political leadership in power (Pierskalla, 2022). Later, from a government perspective, ensuring that public servants are recruited and promoted based on merit rather than political loyalty or patronage is fundamental to both bureaucratic integrity and public trust in state institutions (Ryu & Virindra, 2023). From here, the correlation concepts are explained academically by the dynamics of the democratic system, and to learn how to prevent some issues, they need to learn how to ignore and be immune to political effects during the election to maintain the civil servant's responsibility, professionalism, and neutrality. Admittedly, in the Indonesian context, constructing and maintaining a professional civil service has been complex due to the legacy of centralized governance under the New Order regime and the rapid transition to a decentralized democratic system (Tidey, 2022; Turner et al., 2022).

Further comments by Santoso (1995) are also acknowledged in the Suharto regime; several critics support the claim from both scholars. First, he confirms the bureaucratic structure is hugely centralized under executive control (President Soeharto), making the bureaucracy a tool of power, not a public service. Second, personal connections and political loyalties terminate bureaucratic positions more than (e.i, competence, reinforcing a patron-client culture).

Third, bureaucracy is interpreted by a rigid hierarchical culture, inhibiting lower-level initiatives and reinforcing a culture of "please the boss" (ABS). Fourth, many institutions were formed without clear functions, creating a fat, inefficient bureaucracy and conflicts of interest. And lastly, the bureaucratic structure makes room for corruption from top to bottom, and confessionally, the corruption is not an aberration, but part of the system. So, these empirical cases underline the shift that created chances for political interference in civil service appointments, undermining the ideals of neutrality and meritocracy.

Nevertheless, the case above also connects with the Indonesian enacted Law No. 5 of 2014 on the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) to address these concerns, and of course, marks a significant turning point in the country's bureaucratic reform agenda. One of the key outcomes of the regulation is to serve as an independent oversight body charged with safeguarding the principles of meritocracy, professionalism, and neutrality within the state bureaucracy. Its function is to monitor recruitment and promotion practices, investigate complaints of civil service violations, and intervene in cases of political interference. In addition, since the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) was established, it has been responsible for checking against the politicisation of civil service, especially at the regional level, where such obstruction was most noticeable.

Regardless, even though the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) performs its mandate based on the regulation, the situation does not look promising since 2023-2024, the central government justifies scaling down the SCA's authorities (Pujianti, 2024), and, from my perspective, it will affect the regulation vacuum that SCA has a risk of politicization and nepotism then will reduce the institutional quality. Nonetheless, the potential gaps reveal institutional fallout with other connections, such as deconstruction by state-led oversight mechanisms, and the long-term effects of institutional quality.

Based on the description above, the study tried to fill the rift with an argumentative review, where the researcher critically scrutinised selected literature to assist or refute notable points or the research question (RQ) offered. Leftover, the paper's research question (RQ) examines the political and administrative processes that led to marginalisation and seeks the broader consequences of dismantling for public sector integrity, quality, and governance reform.

Notwithstanding, the study's novelty contributes to civil service reform discourse, notably in governance and bureaucratic reform scope, by elucidating how institutional integrity and quality can be compromised when oversight functions are subjected to political expediency rather than guarded as core elements of governance reform. Finally, the paper structure is split as follows: Section I presents the background, gap, rq, and novelty. Section II covers the literature review of the study. Section III explains the methods of the study. Section IV yields the results and findings. And the last part provides the conclusion and implications of the study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The progressive shift from many scholars in public administration, governance studies, or bureaucratic reform, especially those obsessed with oversight institutions, merit systems, and democratic administration, has been going on and provides a meaningful perspective to the scientific world. Moreover, in this section, the researcher attempts to serve an argumentative review to strengthen the foundation on critical literature that affirms the importance of independent oversight and neutrality (supporters) vis-à-vis research footing to institutional weaknesses and politicisation (critics), to locate a gap in the degradation of oversight since 2023-2024 by the national government about the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) in Indonesia. But before diving into the fundamental issues of this, I provide the grand theory of Rothstein (2024), which explains that the body of government has a lot of instruments or elements to achieve its outcomes, which include governance and institutionalised, that was a core to serve the progress of government activities through their resources, namely civil servants, from his perspective all of this must be appropriated functioned and put the professionalism, responsibility and neutrality outside of the political power. From this, it could be a benchmark for effectively operating government activities. To simplify, the empirical results show this correlation and make an interconnection to gain a comprehensive overview as follows:

Formerly, Ryu and Virindra (2023) stated that the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) is part of government bodies responsible for taking the administrative function and serves as a monitoring mechanism, grounded in principles of professionalism, neutrality, merit-based recruitment, and accountability. By Law No. 5 of 2014, these institutions were also established in Indonesia to monitor meritocratic practices and safeguard neutrality against political intervention. On the other hand, skepticism remains about these mechanisms' efficacy, notably at the regional level where politicization often faces (Aminah et al., 2021; Atmojo et al., 2023). To assist in the correlation of the complexity above, let's dive into several critiques by an argumentative review to investigate, comprehend, and scrutinize the core of the dynamics above. The baseline of these is linked with bureaucratic neutrality.

Hence, multiple studies elucidate the prevalence of neutrality violations among the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) in competitive elections. In the 2020 regional elections, Aminah et al. (2021) described widespread non-neutral behavior influenced by socio-cultural ties, ambiguous regulations, and weak enforcement, notably in local government. Equivalently, Atmojo et al. (2023) reported 694 ASN involved in 2020 election violations, confirming how the patron-client system erodes neutrality despite legal mandates that do not comply. So, this underlies how the state weakens the deconstruction of the oversight mechanism. Second, institutional oversight and enforcement still overlap in the practice. Here, the reveal was echoed by Malik & Rafiuddarajat (2024); most of those involved in the regional heads are cadres of political parties and heads of regional government. Conditions like this become vulnerable to conflicts of interest and abuse of authority. It justifies weaknesses in enforcement and institutional assistance.

Henceforth, Wendy Wiraganti et al. (2025) argue that politicization stimulates eroding neutrality due to insufficient control and intervention at local bureaucracies concerning public sector integrity, quality, and good governance reform. Third, meritocracy is ignored by other groups linked to political effects, which is also delivered by Sari & Subekti (2024), who said there are significant curtails of State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) authority, raising concerns about reprisals to meritocratic oversight. They argue that the revocation of oversight powers interrupts institutional capacity to preserve neutrality and professionalism in civil service appointments. Consequently, this confirms that political and administrative processes led to marginalization and have broader consequences of dismantling for public sector integrity, quality, and governance reform.

According to the description above, the literature associated with the grand theory of governance emphasized the urgent component to maintain professionalism, neutrality, and integrity to serve the best interest of institutional quality to drive the wheel of government effectively, and has a positive effect on government activities. To conclude, several argumentative reviews of these studies demonstrate that over the past decade, meritocratic oversight has consistently emphasized the essentials of meritocratic

oversight for civil servant integrity. It is proven by empirical findings stressing persistent neutrality violations and normative studies concerning the need for reform.

However, cumulatively, no research has addressed new dynamics, focusing on the implications for governance and institutional quality, critically exploring the political-administrative processes behind the marginalization of oversight, and examining its effect on public sector integrity, quality, and governance reform for the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) authority.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The study applied a qualitative descriptive approach with an argumentative review to scrutinise “Uncovers the dynamics of the state civil apparatus in Indonesia: Implications for governance and institutional quality.” In addition, the study has a reason to choose an argumentative review as a baseline for a comprehensive analysis. This flow will allow the researcher to provide the critical academic debates with an argumentative review, exploit the hidden message, and effectively generate a new insight into the research theme based on scientific results and prevent an unbiased interpretation of the research outcomes. Pertinent to Creswell & Báez (2020), the methods of the qualitative descriptive approach try to engage the researcher in inspections of the phenomena that make it of interest to reveal systematically based on description and interpretation collectively and proactively; in this way, the researcher will gain the information in line with the purpose of the study like investigate, comprehend and analyze the research theme.

Next, the data collection is conducted through scientific literature based on a database (e.i, Google Scholar, Scopus, WoS, News and Government Documents) with links to the research theme. To simplify the keywords associated with the research theme, the researcher breaks down the research theme into several parts, namely “State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant), Governance, Institutional Quality,” and “Marginalisation of Political-Administrative, Integrity, Bureaucracy Reform”. With these keywords, the researcher ensures the research’s objectivity, relevance, validity, and coherence.

On the other hand, the study also presents an argumentative review that quotes Wentzel (2017), who argues that argumentative review also tightens and assists the critique of the researcher’s perspective to display the correlation of the research question (RQ), whether to agree or refute. This basis would examine the existence of the research findings and implications from the researcher’s perspective. Lastly, the data analysis technique of the study was supported by the Creswell & Poth (2016) cycle with five strategies as follows:

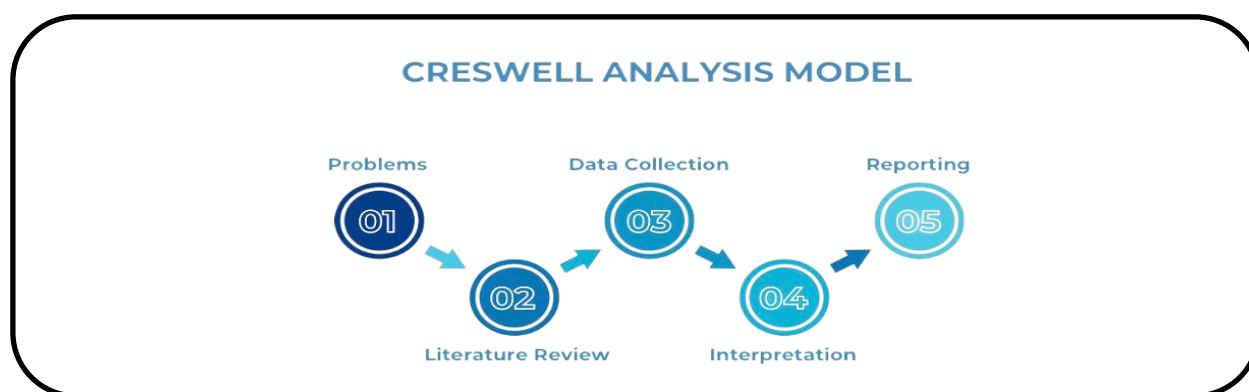


Figure 1. Creswell Analysis Model (2016)

Source: Author Visualization, 2025

First, the problems should be focused on this basis, which elucidates the problem that raises the researchers’ interest in exploring the phenomena of the research undertaken more deeply to reveal a rift in the lack of concern analysis. This could be fundamental to lead the research interest and demonstrate that the regulation, since 2023-2024, allegedly weakens the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant)



issues. Second, the literature review focuses on synthesising the essential inspection of the study and deconstructing the perspective to guide the analysis based on the resources collected or used, notably scientific papers. A scientific paper will anchor this flow to support and strongly serve the critical elements, guide analysis, and present new scientific correlations to provide an option to resolve the research theme's problems academically.

Third, yields on data collection enable the researcher to comprehend the relevant data to ensure the scope analysis links with objectivity, relevance, validity, and coherence. From here, the researcher will operate on the data based on the selected criteria (e.g., Google Scholar, Scopus, WoS, News, and Government Documents). With this, the researcher will use all the material to present the analysis issues collectively and prove them effectively.

Fourth, attention was paid to interpretation, where the researcher delivered insight into the research findings based on the research question (RQ) and data collected systematically and then provided the essential information. Nonetheless, this flow will guide the researcher using logical thinking and academic debates based on the background of the study, theory, and data to provide a comprehensive analysis framework. From this, the new insight will serve systematically. Fifth, links to the reporting, where the researcher reports the conclusion and implications of the result, and suggests the study's recommendations for future research. This stage focuses on how the researcher gives a new insight from the comprehensive analysis and attempts to provide the scientific implications of the research theme in public discourses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Marginalization of the Political-Administrative Process

The first argument in this case is the weakening of the oversight function, specifically of the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant), following substantial changes to Law No. 5 of 2014, indicating a reduction in their authority by the central government with the reason of streamlining control and monitoring processes, as also noted by Pujianti (2024). In line with these, I underline that attempts to enact the law initially symbolised a regulatory and institutional response to longstanding bureaucratic distortions, such as patronage, political interference, and opaque promotions.

Hence, something different has happened from 2023 to 2024, revealing a systematic dilution of this authority. These also correlated with Nadzirin et al. (2025) observations on the central government's recalibration of institutional roles and acting arbitrarily, it also aligns with Dairani & Fadlail (2023) from the election of 2024, most of the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) are potentially involved in the political-administrative process. The findings confirm that scaling down the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) authority demonstrates a lack of political commitment to civil service reform and opens institutional space for renewed clientelism (person in political party), objectively at the sub-national level.

Most research around the globe affirms that if the policy were dismantled by political interest, it would reveal special attention on democratic backsliding. Still, the effects continue on three interconnections (i.e., the selection of policy was desired on group interest, accommodating the bureaucratic personnel to run their interests, they want oversight of bureaucratic activities to focus on escalating their agenda, and the last point is that the process also considers opportunities for groups to become free riders) (Milhorance, 2022). These conditions tremendously affect the spirit of good governance and the role of institutional quality across the public sector, which neglects the integrity, quality, professionalism, and neutrality of the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant), which protects and defends these issues.

In addition, the second theme continues on the politicisation of meritocratic mechanisms, stressing a regressive pattern in regional bureaucratic structures. Santoso (1995) and Tidey (2022) conveyed this premise, portraying a continuation of the deeply entrenched "patron-client" culture under the Suharto regime. Even though decentralisation and reform were expected to democratise the civil

service, the facts show a return to informal political practices, such as favouritism in recruitment and promotion, with weakened institutional counterweights.

Moreover, through case illustrations, notably in regional bureaucracies, the findings recommend that political actors actively seek to wield civil service institutions, sidelining merit in favour of loyalty and political allegiance. Next, these conditions reflect what I call the process of governance, with the role of institutional quality in this case remaining the paradox that is not completely mitigated by the commitment from the government and parliament side at the top tier level for inventing the regulation, then, as a reminder, if these are not managed by the executive and legislative side the distortion always still exist in the long term and will effect downgrade the public trust comprehensively in the public sector.

Nonetheless, my argument points to a broader institutional decay, where informal political pressures consistently undermine formal mechanisms of bureaucratic neutrality. It's further characterised by the weakness of oversight institutions such as the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant), which has created a regulatory vacuum. On the one hand, this irritates variations in the quality of civil servants across regions and distorts bureaucrats' vulnerability to political cycles. Furthermore, withal, the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) is envisioned as a technocratic buffer against political intervention; research findings suggest its marginalisation reflects a broader shift in Indonesia's political-administrative landscape, where executive interests increasingly override reform commitments.

In short, this phenomenon undermines the principles of neutrality, professionalism, and meritocracy at the heart of good governance. The scientific findings also strengthen the study by (Peters et al., 2022) on administrative politicisation, where blurred lines between political leadership and bureaucratic machinery erode public sector impartiality massively, and they also display that the situation is truly perilous for government officials who will do a job that is not aligned with their purpose and scope of functions. Finally, the meaningful insight of this is when the political agenda tries to influence the administrative activities; these elements inside the process cannot be appropriately actualised and will downgrade the essence of the administrative process itself.

Similarly, Cooper (2025) framework on bureaucratic integrity provides an analytical perspective for interpreting the consequences of politicisation. This framework continues the politicisation of bureaucratic appointments and politicians' disrespect for bureaucratic expertise, which is associated with deteriorating attitudes and motivation of civil servants in the workplace. So, the Indonesian case illustrates how weakening oversight structures enable a return to prebendalism and informal governance patterns, thus echoing Kjaer (2023) argument that state capacity cannot be separated from the integrity of the bureaucratic institutions. The current curve also reaffirms Lev (2021) that civil service reform cannot sustain momentum without consistent institutional insulation from political interference.

Conversely, the Indonesian case aligns with Kostadinova (2024) distinction between state capacity and the rule of law. In this scope, elucidate when legal frameworks exist, the presence of enforcement, and the susceptibility of institutions to executive encroachment indicate a widening gap between formal rules and actual practice. Affectively, the marginalisation of oversight bodies displays a broader obstacle in transitioning democracies and embedding bureaucratic norms immune to short-term political incentives.

Overall, the systematic analysis above connects with the grand theory conveyed by Rothstein (2024), all the government bodies must focus on their activity and avoid the political power to serve the public interest, which confirms that this must appropriately function and put professionalism, responsibility and neutrality outside the political power. From this, it could be a benchmark for effectively operating government activities. So this justification was also revealed that since 2023-2024, State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) are weakened by the political power and admittedly was stated by the Chairman of the State Civil Service Commission (KASN), Agus Pramusinto, said that as of Tuesday (2/4), there were 264 ASN, or around 54.9 percent of the 481 ASN who were reported as having violated neutrality in the 2024 Election (Sinambela, 2024). In short, this strongly supports the findings of the scientific result that the marginalisation of the political-administrative process hits the State Civil

Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) as a governance and institutional quality issue that needs to be resolved immediately.

### Implications for Governance and Institutional Quality

After an overview of the empirical analysis above, the marginalisation of the political-administrative process raises the essential points that political effects exacerbated the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) to become a patron-client relationship. In addition, it also strengthens the dynamics. It continues to lack mitigation by the executive and legislative responsibility due to the existence of the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant). And this basis is also supported by the information from the Chairman of the State Civil Service Commission (KASN), Agus Pramusinto, who said there were 264 ASN, or around 54.9 per cent of the 481 ASN, who were reported as having violated neutrality in the 2024 Election.

Furthermore, observations indicate that quality and integrity are not consistently maintained to ensure effective, transparent, and responsive governance to citizen needs. Thus, the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) disregards the principles of professionalism, neutrality, and meritocracy, often considered the foundation of successful good governance. However, as stressed by changes to several provisions in the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) regulations since 2023, and a closer look at these dynamics, this becomes urgent given that 2024 is a political year with an explicitly political agenda.

This goal also minimises the idea of civil service reform in Indonesia, which naturally focuses on principles that threaten the integrity of political interests and political intervention to undermine the bureaucratic process. Therefore, this urgency has become a concern that has given rise to dynamics that weaken oversight mechanisms, particularly in the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) case, then sacrificing institutional integrity and weakening governance reform that has been the spirit of promoting good governance from the beginning. In consequence, this finding elucidates the broader implications for governance and institutional quality, not only discussing ideas to practice but also detecting the relationship between political dynamics, apparatus integrity, and reforms that continue to be weakened through the existence of a functioning bureaucratic system. Theoretically, good governance is closely linked to how the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) interacts with citizens, manages resources, and upholds the values of transparency and accountability. For reference, elements such as professionalism, neutrality, and meritocracy are the foundation of an effective civil service.

Next, this correlation was affirmed by Rothstein (2024), all the government bodies must focus on their activity and avoid the political power to serve the public interest, which confirms that this must appropriately function and put professionalism, responsibility and neutrality outside the political power. On the one hand, the implications of these principles for governance since regulatory changes have concretely distorted practices and outcomes on the ground. As seen in the previous section on marginalisation within the context of the Indonesian bureaucratic system, this illustrates the historical political interference in State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) appointments, which has undoubtedly posed a significant challenge. Reflecting on the New Order regime, for instance, the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) was subordinate primarily to the needs of the ruling government.

The politicisation of State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) appointments meant they were selected based on their loyalty to the regime, rather than their qualifications or abilities. It compromised the quality of governance and fostered a culture of patronage, where political connections, distorting merit, became a determining factor in career advancement within the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant). A similar trend has emerged since the weakening of this function, as demonstrated by the central government's recent efforts to reduce the authority of the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant), which has significantly weakened its ability to exercise its oversight function. This fact is a consequence of the weakening of the oversight function.

In line with this, it reinforces that such interventions undermine the spirit and ideals of governance and institutional quality as the foundation of government. This practice, unwittingly, is a subtle way to smooth political agendas through the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant).

Consequently, the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) is vulnerable to political effects and exposes a system in which loyalty to the ruling party or political figures is more important than expertise or competence. This approach undoubtedly undermines the integrity of public institutions steered by political patronage. It leads to inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of accountability, all of which ultimately undermine the quality of governance and erode citizen trust in the state.

Thus, these findings systematically demonstrate that eliminating the authority of the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) signals a worrying trend, particularly regarding the ideas and concepts of Indonesian governance reform. Hence, by scaling down the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) authority, the government risks creating a vacuum in overseeing civil servant recruitment, promotion, and behaviour. Moreover, this poses significant risks to the governance and institutional quality, which are outlined as follows: First, the absence of strong oversight can lead to increased patronage and nepotism within the civil service, as political elites are free to prioritise loyalty over competence. It inevitably weakens meritocratic recruitment and promotion practices, leaving the bureaucracy unprepared for the increasingly complex challenges of governance. Second, the weakening of oversight mechanisms distorts accountability within the bureaucracy. In this context, State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) can freely engage in reprehensible acts to fulfil their ambitions, with minimal penalties, without adequate checks and balances for such activities, and then deliberately engage in corruption. Critically, these systemic findings confirm that the erosion of institutional integrity, minimised through oversight, will persistently affect the quality of governance.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals a significant theoretical contribution to the literature on bureaucratic reform and governance by showing how political interference undermines the institutional foundations of civil service systems. It challenges the prevailing assumption that formal legal frameworks alone are sufficient to safeguard the neutrality and professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant).

Instead, it demonstrates that reforms are vulnerable to political manipulation, especially without sustained political commitment. The weakening of the SCA's authority illustrates a broader theoretical point: bureaucratic institutions can revert to pre-reform conditions when informal political practices persist beneath formal structures. Next, this is particularly evident during election periods, where loyalty and political allegiance are prioritised over competence. Moreover, the study stresses the fragility of meritocratic systems when robust enforcement mechanisms are not in place. The findings reaffirm that bureaucratic reform is not just a technical or administrative matter but a profoundly political process shaped by the interests and incentives of those in power. Thus, this study contributes to comprehending how political actors can co-opt state institutions, ultimately transforming the public administration into an extension of partisan machinery.

In addition, from a practical standpoint, the study offers several urgent policy recommendations to restore the integrity of the civil service and reinforce governance principles. First, there is a clear need to strengthen merit system regulations. Recruitment, promotion, and career advancement must be strictly based on competence and qualifications rather than political loyalty. Regulations must be revised to include more rigorous criteria and stronger enforcement mechanisms to achieve this.

Second, protecting the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN) role and independence is crucial. As an oversight body ensuring neutrality in the civil service, KASN must be shielded from political interference. It contains securing its financial autonomy, enhancing its legal mandate, and guaranteeing the tenure and independence of its commissioners. Third, the establishment of independent monitoring institutions is essential. These bodies, potentially composed of civil society organisations, academic experts, and retired public servants, could provide oversight and report violations of merit principles.

Despite its strengths, the study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Most notably, it relies exclusively on secondary literature, including previous academic research, policy reports, and media analysis. While these sources offer valuable insights, the absence of primary data means the study lacks firsthand perspectives from key stakeholders, such as civil servants, policymakers, and local



political actors. This reliance on secondary data may also limit the ability to capture regional variations or nuances in implementation. Furthermore, without empirical evidence from fieldwork or direct observation, the study's conclusions remain largely interpretative and may not fully reflect the complexity of bureaucratic dynamics across Indonesia. There is also a risk of generalising findings across diverse local contexts, even though political interference and administrative capacity can differ significantly between regions.

Addressing these limitations through future empirical research would help validate and deepen the findings presented in this work. Several points should be explored for future research to build upon the findings and overcome current gaps. Field studies in selected regions are essential to examine how the weakening of State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) authority plays out in different political and administrative environments. Such studies could involve interviews with local officials, civil servants, and oversight bodies to recognise the contextual factors influencing reform implementation.

In short, based on the research questions (RQ), this study refutes that the dynamics of the authority of the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant), which should prioritise the principles of governance and support the quality of institutions, need to be returned to their initial function to assist the running of the wheels of government. The findings also show that the implications of the process distort the principles of governance and institutional quality, which are tools of political power. Interestingly, the urgency of the executive and legislative commitment only prioritises the interests of groups behind the political agenda designed to influence the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) performance. Finally, this study underscores that weakening the State Civil Apparatus (SCA or Civil Servant) is a bureaucratic concern and a governance issue.

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