

POLITICAL DYNASTIES AND BUREAUCRATIC POLITICIZATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIA AND THE PHILIPPINES

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Abstract :

This article analyzes the persistence of bureaucratic patronage in the context of decentralized democracies through a comparative study of Indonesia and the Philippines. Although democratization and merit-based reform are normatively expected to strengthen bureaucratic professionalism, empirical evidence demonstrates that these processes have instead opened opportunities for the consolidation of political dynasty power at the local level. By integrating the framework of neo-patrimonialism and principal-agent theory, this research argues that the primary problem lies in the structural distortion of delegation relationships: bureaucrats formally act as agents of the state and the public, but in practice function as de facto agents of political dynasties that control local executive authority. This study employs a qualitative comparative approach based on secondary data, policy documents, and previous empirical studies to identify key mechanisms of bureaucratic co-optation, including manipulation of recruitment and promotion, post-election mass transfers, and exploitation of legal loopholes in the merit system. Despite differences in institutional design particularly the constitutional position of the Civil Service Commission in the Philippines compared to the State Civil Apparatus Commission in Indonesia both countries exhibit similar patterns of bureaucratic neutrality erosion. To explain this convergence, this article proposes the Archipelagic Patronage Model, which emphasizes the interaction between geographical fragmentation, decentralization, weak horizontal accountability, and the informalization of formal rules in reinforcing political dynasty dominance over local bureaucracy.

Keywords: bureaucratic patronage; political dynasties; merit system; decentralization; neo-patrimonialism; Indonesia; Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The democratic transitions in Indonesia and the Philippines in the late 20th century brought expectations for the establishment of more accountable governance and a professional, neutral bureaucracy. Indonesia ended the New Order regime in 1998, while the Philippines freed itself from Marcos authoritarianism through the People Power Revolution in 1986. In the post-transition phase, both countries adopted extensive decentralization agendas. Indonesia implemented this through Law Number 22 of 1999 on Regional Government, subsequently revised to Law Number 32 of 2004 and Law Number 23 of 2014. Meanwhile, the Philippines strengthened the Local Government Code of 1991, which granted substantial autonomy to local government units (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Decentralization was projected as an instrument to bring the state closer to citizens, enhance



accountability, and strengthen public administration professionalism at the local level.

However, in practice, decentralization has produced paradoxical dynamics. Rather than weakening old power patterns, increasingly open electoral competition at the local level has often strengthened deeply rooted patronage networks. Sidel (2014) refers to this phenomenon as the *democratization of clientelism*, a situation where electoral democratic mechanisms actually contribute to the reproduction of patron-client relationships in a more competitive and institutionalized format. In Indonesia, studies by Buehler (2013) and Aspinall and Berenschot (2019) demonstrate the emergence of post-Suharto political dynasties that successfully consolidated power at provincial and district/city levels. Data from the Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem) recorded that in the 2020 Regional Head Elections, approximately 34% of candidates had family relationships with incumbents or former regional heads (Muhtadi, 2020). In the Philippines, this pattern is even more entrenched; Mendoza et al. (2016) show that approximately 70% of Congress members in the 2013-2016 period came from political clans that, in some cases, maintained cross-generational dominance.

The dominance of political dynasties does not stop at the electoral arena but also extends into administrative bureaucratic structures. In the Philippines, Cruz et al. (2017) found that regions controlled by political dynasties tend to have lower quality public services and higher poverty rates. In Indonesia, reports from the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN) recorded 2,219 violations of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) neutrality in political contests throughout 2019, most of which were related to bureaucratic mobilization by incumbent regional heads, including those from political dynasty networks (State Civil Apparatus Commission [KASN], 2019). These findings indicate that political dynasties function not only as electoral actors but also as forces that operationalize power through bureaucracy, thereby blurring the boundaries between public administration and family political interests.

Although studies on political dynasties in Southeast Asia have developed rapidly over the past decade, most literature still focuses on electoral dimensions, such as resource control, vote-buying practices, and the use of political violence in maintaining power (Querubin, 2013; Mendoza et al., 2016; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). The contribution of this literature is important for understanding how dynasties reproduce power through elections. However, relatively few studies systematically examine how these electoral victories are converted into administrative control over public bureaucracy, particularly through institutional mechanisms that appear formal and legal (McCoy, 2014; Bautista et al., 2022).

Several studies have touched on issues of bureaucratic politicization and nepotism partially. Thompson (2016), for instance, analyzes nepotism practices in local official appointments in the Philippines, while Prasojo et al. (2019) document ASN politicization in post-reform Indonesia. However, these studies are generally descriptive and have not developed comparative analysis

explaining the institutional mechanisms that enable political dynasties to manipulate the merit system sustainably. Comparative studies of Indonesia-Philippines are also relatively limited, despite both countries having similar characteristics as archipelagic nations with extensive decentralization and strong tendencies toward local elite power consolidation (Hadiz, 2010; Sidel, 2014).

Furthermore, the bureaucratic reform literature in Southeast Asia tends to be dominated by normative-technocratic approaches that assume strengthening merit-based regulations will automatically reduce political patronage (Painter, 2014; Schröter, 2018). This approach is inadequate in explaining political-administrative realities where local political actors have the capacity to co-opt formal regulations and exploit structural gaps in institutional design. As explained in neo-patrimonialism literature, formal rules and informal practices often operate simultaneously, enabling political elites to navigate and strategically exploit both realms (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; von Soest, 2010).

Based on these analytical gaps, this research poses the main question: how do political dynasties in Indonesia and the Philippines institutionalize patronage in public bureaucracy despite merit-based regulations? This question is elaborated into three sub-questions. First, what formal and informal mechanisms do political dynasties use to intervene in bureaucratic recruitment and promotion processes? Second, why do merit oversight institutions, such as KASN in Indonesia and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) in the Philippines, experience difficulties in enforcing bureaucratic neutrality principles? Third, what are the implications of bureaucratic politicization on public service quality in regions controlled by political dynasties?

This research argues that political dynasties in both countries institutionalize patronage through two complementary strategies: regulatory co-optation and structural gap exploitation. Regulatory co-optation refers to the ability of dynasty actors to influence the interpretation and implementation of formal rules, for instance through manipulation of competency criteria or utilization of non-career positions as patronage entry points. Structural gap exploitation refers to the exploitation of institutional design weaknesses, such as limited oversight capacity, low merit institution independence, and ambiguity of authority between central and regional governments.

To read these dynamics, this research employs the Archipelagic Patronage Model, an analytical framework emphasizing how archipelagic geographical conditions and territorial fragmentation strengthen local elite control over bureaucracy. This model helps explain why decentralization in Indonesia and the Philippines, despite expanding political participation, also produces "patronage pockets" relatively difficult to reach by central oversight or horizontal accountability mechanisms. In this context, the principal-agent relationship in bureaucracy undergoes a shift, where local bureaucrats tend to function as agents of political clan interests rather than as executors of public interests.

This research makes several contributions. Theoretically, this study enriches discussions on neo-patrimonialism by showing how patrimonial practices can adapt within the framework of electoral democracy and formal

institutions. Empirically, systematic comparison between Indonesia and the Philippines fills gaps in Southeast Asian studies regarding the interaction between political dynasties and public bureaucracy. Methodologically, the use of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) enables the identification of relationship patterns among institutional factors not easily captured through single case studies.

The relevance of this research becomes more prominent in the context of contemporary public administration reform in Indonesia and the Philippines. As both countries strive to enhance bureaucratic professionalism through various regulations, such as Law Number 5 of 2014 on State Civil Apparatus in Indonesia and Republic Act No. 11032 on Ease of Doing Business in the Philippines, understanding how these reforms are responded to and modified by local elites becomes crucial. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to academic discourse while serving as reflective material for policymakers and practitioners concerned with democratization, decentralization, and public governance issues in Southeast Asia.

The structure of this article is organized as follows. The second section explains the research methodology and data sources used. The third section presents results and discussion integrating literature review, comparative analysis, and implications for public administration. The fourth section concludes with main findings and discusses policy implications and future research agendas.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative comparative approach utilizing Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as the main analytical tool. This approach was chosen because it enables systematic reading of relationship patterns among various institutional, political, and geographical factors contributing to patronage institutionalization in public bureaucracy (Ragin, 1987; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). In political and public administration studies in developing countries, power relations are rarely determined by a single factor. Conversely, patronage practices tend to emerge as results of mutually reinforcing condition combinations. Therefore, QCA is used in this research to identify condition configurations consistently related to the level of bureaucratic politicization at the local level.

The use of QCA in this research is not intended to produce statistical generalization or linear causal hypothesis testing. Instead, this approach is used as an analytical aid to understand how various structural and institutional conditions interact in the specific contexts of Indonesia and the Philippines. Thus, the analytical focus is directed toward searching for recurring and stable relationship patterns among conditions, not on estimating the strength of influence of each variable separately.

The research design employed is a most similar systems design (MSSD), comparing two countries with significant structural similarities but showing variation in the dynamics of relationships between political dynasties and

bureaucracy. Indonesia and the Philippines are both archipelagic nations with high geographical fragmentation levels, experiencing transitions from authoritarian regimes to electoral democracies, and implementing extensive government decentralization. Both also have deeply rooted political patronage histories and have adopted merit-based bureaucratic reforms in the past two decades. These similarities provide a strong basis for comparative analysis by enabling researchers to minimize irrelevant structural variation (Przeworski & Teune, 1970).

Simultaneously, Indonesia and the Philippines show important differences in institutional and political configurations, particularly regarding the strength of merit oversight institutions and political party system structures. In Indonesia, merit system oversight institutions like the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN) have relatively limited sanction enforcement authority, while in the Philippines the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has a stronger constitutional position. This difference creates relevant context variation for understanding how institutional design affects state capacity in limiting political intervention in bureaucracy.

The main unit of analysis in this research is regional governments or Local Government Units (LGUs), encompassing provinces and districts/cities in Indonesia and provinces, cities, and municipalities in the Philippines. The focus on local government levels is based on the consideration that political dynasty power consolidation occurs most intensively at this level. Regional heads have direct authority over the appointment, promotion, and transfer of bureaucratic officials, thus opening wide opportunities for political intervention in civil service human resource management (Hutchcroft, 2014; Buehler & Tan, 2007). By making LGUs the unit of analysis, this research can capture variations in patronage practices often invisible when analysis is conducted only at the national level.

This research relies on secondary data obtained from various institutional sources, policy documents, oversight reports, and academic publications. This approach was chosen considering limited access to systematic cross-country primary data collection and the sensitivity of bureaucratic patronage issues often difficult to reveal through open interviews or surveys. Additionally, official institutional data provides relatively consistent information comparable across regions and time, thus suitable for pattern-based comparative analysis needs. Within the QCA framework, the use of aggregate institutional data is also considered adequate because analytical focus lies on relationships among structural conditions, not on individual apparatus behavior (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

Indonesia Data Sources

Indonesian data were obtained from several main sources. First, State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN) reports for the period 2016-2023, particularly oversight reports on State Civil Apparatus (ASN) neutrality in regional head elections and KASN annual reports, were used to identify bureaucratic politicization patterns and merit system violations (KASN, 2019,

2021). Second, Indonesian Ombudsman annual reports for the period 2015-2023 were utilized to track public complaints related to maladministration and alleged political intervention in public services (Indonesian Ombudsman, 2020). Third, State Personnel Agency (BKN) data, including statistics on transfers and structural official appointments, were used to identify post-election apparatus promotion and demotion trends potentially related to political leadership changes (BKN, 2022). Fourth, academic publications and reports from research institutions and civil society organizations, such as CSIS Indonesia, The Habibie Center, and the Association for Elections and Democracy (Perludem), were used to enrich empirical context and assist in findings triangulation (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Buehler, 2013).

Philippines Data Sources

For the Philippines, this research uses Civil Service Commission (CSC) reports for the period 2015-2023, particularly those related to disciplinary cases, Code of Conduct violations, and civil service integrity audits (CSC, 2020, 2022). Additional data were obtained from Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) publications, especially Discussion Papers examining political family power concentration and its impact on local governance (Mendoza et al., 2016; Cruz et al., 2017). Additionally, Commission on Audit (COA) reports were utilized to identify deviations in personnel budget management and non-procedural administrative practices (COA, 2021). Academic studies from journals and books on Philippine politics were used to complete understanding of the country's political-administrative context (McCoy, 2014; Thompson, 2016).

For comparative analysis purposes, several key concepts were operationalized into conditions codable within the QCA framework. The dependent variable in this research is patronage institutionalization in bureaucracy, measured through indicators such as bureaucrat neutrality violation levels, proportion of position appointments without open selection, frequency of post-election mass transfers, and disciplinary cases related to nepotism and favoritism. Independent variables include political dynasty dominance, merit oversight institution strength, decentralization design, geographical isolation level, and merit-based regulation quality. Variable operationalization was carefully conducted considering each country's institutional context so coding results remain comparable.

Data collection was conducted through systematic document review of institutional reports, policy documents, and academic publications for the period 2015-2024. This period was chosen because it covers the full implementation phase of the State Civil Apparatus Law in Indonesia and the period of civil service ethics standard strengthening in the Philippines. Compiled data were then codified to identify relationship patterns among conditions with assistance from QCA software such as fsQCA. The analysis process focused on identifying condition configurations consistently related to the studied outcome, not on testing single linear causal relationships.

Several research limitations should be noted. Dependence on secondary data limits exploration of informal and closed micro-patronage mechanisms.

Additionally, the limited number of cases potentially produces limited empirical variation. Nevertheless, the use of various data sources and triangulation approaches enables this research to minimize bias and provide a sufficiently robust picture of bureaucratic politicization dynamics under political dynasty dominance in Indonesia and the Philippines.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Political Dynasties and Principal-Agent Relationship Distortion in Local Bureaucracy

To understand patronage persistence in democratic bureaucracy, this research integrates two complementary theoretical frameworks: neo-patrimonialism and principal-agent theory. Neo-patrimonialism, as developed by Eisenstadt (1973), Médard (1982), and Bratton and van de Walle (1997), refers to political systems where patrimonial logic of personal relationships, loyalty, and patronage exchange operates alongside modern legal-rational institutions. Unlike traditional patrimonialism which is hereditary, neo-patrimonialism adopts modern formal attributes such as constitutions, elections, and bureaucracy, but remains controlled through informal patron-client networks (von Soest, 2010; Bach, 2011).

In the Southeast Asian context, Sidel (1999) and Hutchcroft (2014) demonstrate that neo-patrimonialism does not disappear with democratization, but adapts to electoral and administrative institutions. In Indonesia and the Philippines, decentralization actually creates an opportunity structure for local elites to monopolize resources and power at the regional level, utilizing formal institutions as façades for informal practices (Hadiz, 2010; McCoy, 2014). Political dynasties, in this perspective, are contemporary manifestations of neo-patrimonialism, where elite families use electoral mechanisms to legitimize power while operationalizing it through patronage networks penetrating bureaucracy.

However, neo-patrimonialism alone is insufficient to explain specific mechanisms of bureaucratic co-optation. Here principal-agent theory offers a more precise analytical lens. Developed in political economy and public administration (Moe, 1984; Waterman & Meier, 1998), this theory highlights delegation problems when the principal—the public or central government—delegates authority to agents, namely local bureaucrats, who have different information and preferences. When monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are weak, agency loss emerges, the tendency of agents to act in their own interests (Pollack, 2003; Gailmard, 2014).

In the context of political dynasties, the principal-agent relationship undergoes fundamental distortion. Formally, bureaucrats are agents of the state and the public as principal. However, political dynasties take over the principal position *de facto* through control over bureaucratic career incentives—promotions, transfers, and sanctions. Bureaucrats are then faced with a dilemma between serving public interests or dynasty interests for career security. When formal monitoring is weak and dynasty reward-punishment mechanisms strong,

bureaucrats tend to transform into political clients (Grindle, 2012; Evans & Rauch, 1999).

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Principal-Agent Relationship Distortion in Political Dynasty Context



Source: Adapted from Gailmard (2014) and Hutchcroft (2014)

This model explains why normatively strong merit reforms often fail in implementation. These reforms assume that strengthening formal rules will automatically change agent behavior, without considering that the effective principal has shifted from the public to political dynasties. Thus, the governance problem is not merely a matter of formal institutional design, but rather who effectively controls these institutions (Moe, 2012; Rothstein, 2011).

Anatomy of Political Dynasties: Comparison of Indonesia and the Philippines

Although Indonesia and the Philippines both experienced political dynasty proliferation post-democratic transition, there are significant differences in dynasty genealogy and structure. In the Philippines, political dynasties have been rooted since the colonial era and are multi-generational. Elite families such as Marcos, Aquino, Cojuangco, Arroyo, and regional clans like Ampatuan and Singson have dominated politics across generations (McCoy, 2009; Teehankee, 2013). Philippine dynasty structures are hierarchical and vertical, with family members simultaneously occupying elective positions at various levels (Querubin, 2013). Mendoza et al. (2016) show that in 2013, approximately 70 percent of congress members came from political clans, with some districts controlled by one family for more than two decades.

Mendoza et al. (2016) distinguish between thin dynasties and fat dynasties, finding that fat dynasties correlate negatively with local economic development. Regions controlled by fat dynasties show higher poverty rates and lower per capita public expenditure, indicating low accountability and political competition.

In Indonesia, political dynasties are a post-1998 phenomenon that strengthened after direct regional head elections in 2005 (Buehler, 2013; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019). Indonesian dynasties are generally horizontal and contractual, depending on coalitions with entrepreneurs, political brokers, and party machines. Perludem data show that the proportion of dynasty-controlled regions increased from 21 percent in the 2015 Regional Elections to

approximately 34 percent in the 2020 Regional Elections (Muhtadi, 2020). Unlike the Philippines, Indonesian dynasties rely more on vote buying and party networks than direct coercive control (Aspinall & Sukmajati, 2016; Schaffer, 2007).

Table 1. Comparison of Political Dynasty Characteristics in Indonesia and the Philippines

Dimension	Indonesia	Philippines
Historicity	Post-1998 phenomenon, majority new dynasties	Rooted since colonial era, multi-generational
Power Structure	Horizontal-coalitional, dependent on brokers	Hierarchical-vertical, direct resource control
Electoral Mechanisms	Vote buying, party machine mobilization	Coercive apparatus control, intimidation, traditional patron-client
Economic Integration	Coalitions with local entrepreneurs	Direct ownership of economic assets (land, business)
Prevalence	34% of regions (2020 Elections)	70% of congress members from clans (2013-2016)
Dominant Type	Thin-to-medium dynasties	Fat dynasties with multiple office holders
Legitimacy Base	Populism, infrastructure development	Tradition, long-term patronage
Bureaucracy Control	Through senior official appointments and transfers	Contract appointments and direct nepotism

Source: Synthesized from Buehler (2013), Aspinall & Berenschot (2019), Mendoza et al. (2016), and McCoy (2014)

These differences impact bureaucratic co-optation strategies. Philippine dynasties tend to practice open nepotism, while Indonesian dynasties rely more on formal merit procedure manipulation. However, the substance is the same: bureaucracy is subordinated to dynasty interests.

Bureaucratic Meritocracy and Implementation Challenges in Southeast Asia

The Weberian bureaucratic model emphasizes political neutrality, merit-based recruitment, and impersonality (Weber, 1922/1978). This model serves as a reference for bureaucratic reform in Indonesia and the Philippines with the assumption that bureaucratic professionalization improves governance quality (Evans & Rauch, 1999; Dahlström et al., 2012). However, the gap between formal rules and actual practice remains large, especially in the context of decentralization and political patronage (Painter, 2014; Schröter, 2018).

In Indonesia, Law No. 5 of 2014 on ASN introduced a merit system and established the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN) as an oversight institution. Nevertheless, KASN lacks direct enforcement authority, so its recommendations are often ignored by regional heads (Prasojo et al., 2019; KASN, 2019). In the Philippines, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has a

stronger constitutional basis, but capacity limitations and local elite resistance continue to hinder its effectiveness (Laking, 2009; Thompson, 2016).

Table 2. Comparison of Merit System Regulations in Indonesia and the Philippines

Aspect	Indonesia (ASN Law 2014)	Philippines (Constitution 1987 & CSC Laws)
Legal Basis	Law No. 5/2014, PP No. 11/2017	Constitution Art. IX-B, RA 7430, RA 6713
Oversight Institution	KASN (non-constitutional body)	CSC (constitutional commission)
Oversight Legal Status	Independent institution based on law	Constitutional body with full independence
Enforcement Authority	Recommendations without direct sanctions	Adjudicative power, can issue final decisions
Oversight Scope	Civil servants and PPPK (ASN)	Career service and non-career appointive positions
Nepotism Prohibition	Implicit in merit principles	Explicit: prohibition up to 4th degree kinship
Violation Sanctions	Administrative: warning to dismissal	Criminal liability (3 mos-5 years imprisonment)
Structural Gaps	Senior leadership positions appointed by regional heads	"Confidential" and "highly technical" positions excluded
Recruitment Mechanism	Open selection + assessment center	Competitive examination + performance-based
Audit & Monitoring	Periodic review by KASN	Annual integrity audit by CSC regional offices

Source: Law No. 5/2014; Philippine Constitution 1987; Prasojo et al. (2019); Thompson (2016); CSC (2022)

Mechanisms of Bureaucratic Co-optation by Political Dynasties

This section analyzes head-to-head the specific mechanisms used by political dynasties in Indonesia and the Philippines to intervene in the merit system and institutionalize patronage in bureaucracy.

Manipulation of Recruitment and Promotion Processes

Indonesia: The "Position Auction" Phenomenon

One of the most prevalent modes in post-reform Indonesia is the practice of "buying and selling positions" or popularly called "position auctions," where ASN members pay sums of money to regional heads or brokers to obtain promotions to strategic positions (echelon II and III) (Prasojo et al., 2019; KASN, 2021). The 2018 Klaten Regent (Central Java) case became a landmark case: Sri Hartini was proven to have sold 56 structural positions with total transactions of Rp. 2.4 billion and sentenced to 8 years in prison by the KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission, 2018).

KASN (2019) reports recorded that of 2,219 ASN neutrality violations detected during the 2015-2019 period, approximately 37 percent involved

regional head intervention in position appointments and transfers not following procedures. This mechanism works as follows: (1) regional heads announce available position formations; (2) interested ASN must "pay" brokers or directly to the regional head's inner circle; (3) selection committees (which should be independent) have already received instructions to pass certain candidates; (4) the assessment center process is merely a formality because decisions have already been predetermined (KASN, 2021: 45-47).

Interestingly, this practice is often packaged in formal procedures that appear legitimate: selections are still conducted, requirement documents are complete, even assessment centers are held, but the results are already predetermined. This is a classic example of regulatory capture where formal rules are co-opted to legitimize actually political or corrupt decisions (Prasojo et al., 2019; Buehler, 2013).

Philippines: "Coterminous" and "Contractual" Appointments

In the Philippines, dynasties use non-regular employee categories to bypass the merit system. The Local Government Code (RA 7160) allows local chief executives to appoint employees in categories: (1) coterminous: employees whose tenure coincides with the appointing official, automatically ending when that official no longer serves; (2) casual/contractual: employees with short-term contracts (3-12 months) renewable without competitive processes (Laking, 2009; Bautista et al., 2022).

CSC (2020) data show that in 2019, approximately 26 percent of the total 1.8 million local government employees were non-regular employees (coterminous, casual, contractual). In regions controlled by fat dynasties, the proportion reaches 40-50 percent (Cruz et al., 2017: 893). Mass appointments occur immediately after local elections: for example, after the 2019 Ilocos Sur Elections, Governor Luis "Chavit" Singson (from a dynasty ruling since the 1960s) appointed 387 contractual employees in the first 2 months, the majority being campaign workers and extended family members (Thompson, 2016; CSC Report, 2020).

This mechanism is effective because: (1) non-regular employees are not protected by security of tenure; (2) their loyalty is to patrons, not institutions; (3) they can be mobilized for political interests without severe disciplinary consequences; (4) they do not require CSC examination or competitive processes (Bautista et al., 2022: 112).

Mass Transfers as a Spoils System

In both Indonesia and the Philippines, post-election mass transfers are a primary instrument for disciplining bureaucrats and instilling loyalty.

In Indonesia: The Indonesian Ombudsman (2020) reports recorded a significant spike in complaints related to improper transfers post-regional elections: in election years (2015, 2017, 2018, 2020), the number of transfer reports increased 60-80 percent compared to non-election years. The general pattern is: (1) losing incumbent regional heads conduct "revenge transfers" against ASN considered unsupportive; (2) new regional heads conduct "consolidation transfers" by appointing loyalists to strategic positions and moving ASN from

the old regime to marginal positions (KASN, 2019; Ombudsman RI, 2020).

The 2018 Cirebon District (West Java) case is illustrative: after the new Regent was inaugurated, 104 echelon III and IV officials were transferred within 2 months, including department heads and sub-district heads considered politically unaligned. KASN provided cancellation recommendations, but the Regent ignored them citing "organizational efficiency" and "bureaucratic refreshment" (KASN, 2019: 89).

In the Philippines: Similar phenomena occur but more intensely due to the "substitution" system: local chief executives can replace almost all coterminous employees without substantive justification (Laking, 2009). A study by Bautista et al. (2022) shows that on average 35 percent of local senior employees (department heads, division chiefs) are replaced within the first 6 months of new administrations in dynasty regions. More problematically, replacements are often not based on competence but on family ties or personal loyalty: genealogical analysis of 50 fat dynasty LGUs shows that 23 percent of appointees are family members up to third-degree kinship or compadres (godparents/close associates) (Bautista et al., 2022: 118).

Table 3. Comparison of Dynasty Intervention Mechanisms in Bureaucracy

Mechanism	Indonesia	Philippines
Recruitment & Promotion	"Position auctions": paying for echelon II-III positions; formal processes co-opted	Coterminous/contractual appointments without exam; exploitation of "confidential positions" loophole
Case Frequency	37% KASN violations related to promotion intervention (2015-2019)	26% local employees non-regular, rising to 40-50% in dynasty regions (2019)
Mass Transfers	60-80% spike in reports during election years; "revenge" and "loyalty consolidation"	Average 35% senior officials replaced within 6 months of new administration
Nepotism	Implicit through brokers and patronage, rarely overt	Explicit: 23% appointees are family/compadres in fat dynasty regions
Formal Legitimation	Selection procedures still conducted but results predetermined	Using legal exceptions (coterminous, highly technical)
Oversight Institution Response	KASN provides recommendations, often ignored	CSC conducts audits, hindered by limited enforcement capacity

Source: KASN (2019, 2021); Ombudsman RI (2020); CSC (2020, 2022); Bautista et al. (2022)

Limitations of Merit Oversight Institutions: KASN and Civil Service Commission

An interesting paradox is that although the Philippine CSC is

constitutionally far stronger than Indonesian KASN, both institutions equally face significant difficulties in enforcing the merit system, especially in regions controlled by strong dynasties.

Indonesian KASN: Limited Authority, Limited Capacity

KASN was established based on the 2014 ASN Law with 9 commissioners appointed by the President with Parliament approval for a 5-year term. KASN's structural weaknesses include:

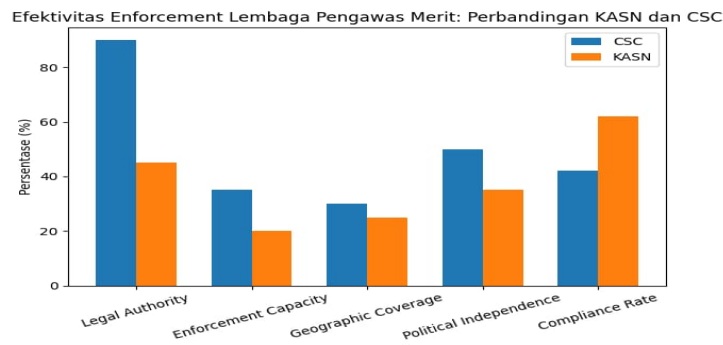
1. **No Direct Enforcement Authority:** KASN can only provide recommendations to the President, regional heads, or personnel supervisory officials. There is no legal mechanism forcing these officials to follow KASN recommendations. Data show that of 1,847 KASN recommendations for the 2015-2020 period, only 62 percent were followed up by regional governments (KASN, 2021: 23).
2. **Resource Limitations:** With only 9 commissioners and approximately 100 staff to oversee 4.3 million ASN spread across 34 provinces and 514 districts/cities, KASN is highly dependent on public reports and cannot conduct comprehensive proactive monitoring (Prasojo et al., 2019).
3. **Political Dependence:** Although called "independent," KASN commissioners are appointed by the President and can be dismissed for "certain reasons." This creates potential conflict of interest, especially when violations involve political elites close to the central government (KASN, 2019).

Philippine CSC: Constitutionally Strong, Weak in Implementation

CSC has constitutional commission status making it equal to executive, legislative, and judicial branches in terms of independence. However, this legal strength is not fully translated into effectiveness:

1. **Geographical Challenges:** With 17 regional offices and limited field personnel, CSC struggles to conduct oversight of 1,700+ LGUs scattered across thousands of islands. Thompson's (2016) study shows that the CSC auditor to LGU ratio is 1:50, making comprehensive audits nearly impossible.
2. **Local Political Resistance:** Strong local dynasties often refuse or hinder CSC investigations in various ways: delaying document submission, intimidating whistleblowers, or even using legal maneuvers to slow adjudication processes (Bautista et al., 2022; McCoy, 2014). The Ampatuan Clan case in Maguindanao is illustrative: although CSC identified 89 cases of nepotism and illegal appointments during 2008-2015, only 12 were successfully processed to sanctions due to intimidation and obstruction (Thompson, 2016: 178).
3. **Dualism of Authority:** The Local Government Code grants substantial autonomy to LGUs, including in personnel management. When conflicts arise between CSC interpretation and local chief executives regarding what constitutes "highly technical" or "confidential" positions, the process becomes a lengthy legal battle generally won by local elites with stronger legal resources (Laking, 2009; Bautista et al., 2022).

Figure 2. Enforcement Effectiveness of Merit Oversight Institutions: Comparison of KASN and CSC



Source: Synthesized from KASN Annual Reports (2019-2021), CSC Annual Reports (2018-2022), Thompson (2016), Prasajo et al. (2019)

This comparison reveals an important insight: formal legal strength does not automatically produce implementation effectiveness. The CSC, with its strong constitutional basis, actually faces more intense resistance from local dynasties because Philippine dynasties are more established and have the capacity to resist both legally and extra-legally. Conversely, Indonesian KASN, despite being legally weaker, in some high-profile cases has successfully created deterrence due to synergy with anti-corruption institutions (KPK) and more active media/civil society pressure (Prasajo et al., 2019; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019).

The Archipelagic Patronage Model as an Analytical Framework

Based on the comparative analysis above, this research identifies a specific pattern called the "Archipelagic Patronage Model" a governance configuration where the geographical characteristics of archipelagic nations interact with political decentralization to strengthen local dynasty control over bureaucracy. This model has four key elements:

1. Geographical Fragmentation and Isolation

Indonesia and the Philippines as the world's largest archipelagic nations (Indonesia: 17,000+ islands; Philippines: 7,600+ islands) experience extreme territorial fragmentation creating "isolation pockets" where central control becomes minimal (Sidel, 1999; Nordholt & Van Klinken, 2007). This isolation is not merely physical but also communicative, economic, and social. Under such conditions, local elites especially long-ruling dynasties become de facto rulers controlling nearly all aspects of public life including bureaucracy, security, economy, and local media.

Cruz et al.'s (2017) study shows that in the Philippines, regions with difficult transportation access to Manila have a 2.3 times higher probability of being controlled by dynasties compared to easily accessible regions. In Indonesia, similar phenomena are seen in Papua, Maluku, Nusa Tenggara, and outermost islands where local dynasties or traditional elites have almost absolute control (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Buehler, 2013).

2. Decentralization as Opportunity Structure

The radical decentralization implemented by both countries – Indonesia through Law 22/1999 and the Philippines through LGC 1991 transferred

substantial authority from center to regions, including in personnel management, budgeting, and local regulation (Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003; Hadiz, 2010). In democratic contexts, decentralization should enhance accountability because government is closer to the people. However, in contexts where civil society is weak and political competition is unbalanced (due to dynasty dominance), decentralization actually creates "captured democracy" where local institutions are controlled by elites (Sidel, 2014; McCoy, 2014).

Local authority in employee appointments regional heads can appoint senior leadership positions (echelon II) in Indonesia and department heads in the Philippines becomes the primary instrument for building bureaucratic clientelism: bureaucrats are appointed and promoted not based on merit but on political and personal loyalty (Hutchcroft, 2001; Buehler, 2013).

3. Weak Horizontal Accountability

In this model, horizontal accountability mechanisms—oversight by independent institutions, checks and balances among institutions—are very weak at the local level. Local legislative bodies (DPRD in Indonesia, Sangguniang Panlalawigan/Bayan in the Philippines) that should oversee local executives are often controlled by the same dynasties or their coalitions (Buehler, 2013; Querubin, 2013). Local media depend on government advertising and are vulnerable to co-optation or intimidation. Civil society organizations in remote regions are weak and lack resources for effective monitoring (Hadiz, 2010; Sidel, 1999).

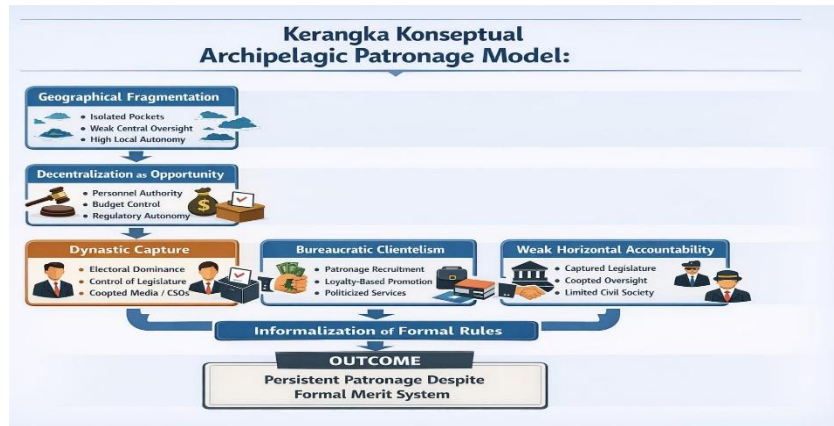
Consequently, although central oversight institutions exist (KASN, CSC), their reach is limited and enforcement depends on local elite willingness to comply—which is precisely part of the problem (Thompson, 2016; Prasojo et al., 2019).

4. Informalization of Formal Rules

The final characteristic is the coexistence and mutual reinforcement between formal rules and informal practices. Dynasties do not destroy formal institutions but co-opt them: employee selections are still conducted but results are predetermined; audits are still implemented but findings are not followed up; anti-nepotism regulations exist but are interpreted loosely or bypassed through legal loopholes (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Bautista et al., 2022).

This practice creates "legal plausibility": dynasties can claim they are following rules, while the substance of decisions is still determined by patronage logic. This is what distinguishes modern neo-patrimonialism from traditional patrimonialism: there is a façade of legality that makes political intervention more difficult to detect and prosecute legally (von Soest, 2010; Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997).

Figure 3. Archipelagic Patronage Model



Source: Synthesized from Sidel (1999), Hutchcroft (2014), Aspinall & Berenschot (2019), and Cruz et al. (2017)

Implications for Public Service Quality

Bureaucratic politicization directly impacts public service quality. In Indonesia, dynasty-controlled regions show lower health and education performance due to personnel misallocation, procurement corruption, and apparatus absenteeism (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Muhtadi, 2020). In the Philippines, fat dynasties correlate with higher mortality rates and lower educational achievement, reflecting poor basic service governance (Cruz et al., 2017; Mendoza et al., 2016).

Table 4. Impact of Political Dynasties on Public Service Indicators

Indicator	Indonesia	Philippines	Causal Mechanism
Health			
IPKM/Health Index	-12% in dynasty regions	-7 to -10% IMR in fat dynasty regions	Personnel misallocation, procurement corruption
Health Facility Access	Politicized, subtle discrimination	Quality deterioration in strong dynasty regions	Patronage-based appointments
Education			
National Exam Scores/Learning Outcomes	-8 to -11 points in high politicization regions	-9% completion rate in fat dynasty regions	Incompetent school principals, ghost teachers
Budget Allocation	Diverted to politically visible programs	Misallocation for patronage	Budget capture for electoral interests
Poverty and Development			
Poverty Rate	Data inconclusive	+5-10% in fat	Rent extraction,

	in existing studies	dynasty regions	limited public goods
Local Investment	Lower due to regulatory uncertainty	Lower due to captured regulatory environment	Disincentives for non-connected investors

Source: *Aspinall & Berenschot (2019); Muhtadi (2020); Cruz et al. (2017); Mendoza et al. (2016)*

Bureaucratic Resilience and Effective Performance Space

A critical question that emerges is: is professional bureaucracy completely impossible under dynasty dominance, or is there space for resilience and islands of excellence?

Literature shows the answer is not black and white. Although dynasties dominate, there is significant variation in the degree of bureaucratic politicization and governance quality (Evans, 1995; Geddes, 1994). Some dynasties have enlightened self-interest: they realize that excessively poor governance will threaten their legitimacy and power in the long term, so they maintain a minimum level of competence in bureaucracy (Slater, 2010; Kuhonta, 2011).

Cases of "Developmentalist Dynasties" in Indonesia

Several studies identify dynasty cases in Indonesia that are relatively more development-oriented. For example, the Ganjar Pranowo family dynasty in Banyumas (Central Java) and the Ridwan Kamil dynasty in Bandung (though controversial whether this is truly a dynasty) show that regional heads from political families can still maintain merit in bureaucratic recruitment for crucial technical positions (Buehler, 2013; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019).

Factors explaining this variation include: (1) education level and exposure of regional heads: dynasties led by individuals with higher education and professional experience tend to value merit more; (2) strength of civil society: in regions with active local media and strong CSOs, the cost of bureaucratic politicization is higher due to reputational damage risk; (3) higher political aspirations: regional heads with ambitions to become governors or presidents are more motivated to demonstrate good performance, including maintaining bureaucratic professionalism (Buehler, 2013; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019).

"Pockets of Effectiveness" in the Philippines

In the Philippines, studies by Grindle (2012) and Hutchcroft (2014) identify some LGUs that successfully maintained professional bureaucracy despite dynasty control. For example, Naga City in Camarines Sur led by the Robredo family since 1988: although a political dynasty, they maintained competitive recruitment and performance-based evaluation because the dynasty founder, Jesse Robredo, had a strong commitment to good governance (Hutchcroft, 2014; Grindle, 2012).

However, such cases are exceptions rather than the rule. Quantitative analysis by Cruz et al. (2017) shows that of 1,489 municipalities in the Philippines, only about 7 percent are categorized as "high dynasty, high performance"

outliers. The majority still show the "high dynasty, low performance" pattern (Cruz et al., 2017: 897).

Theoretical Implications

These findings support the "conditional neo-patrimonialism" argument (vom Hau, 2012): patrimonialism is not always incompatible with effectiveness, but such compatibility depends on the configuration of specific factors. When dynasties have long time horizons (planning to rule for generations), face competitive threats from opposition, or have legitimate aspirations for higher office, they may invest in professional bureaucracy as a long-term strategic asset (Slater, 2010; Kuhonta, 2011).

However, this does not change the fundamental fact that the default pattern is politicization and patronage, and that bureaucratic resilience is highly dependent on contingent and personal characteristics of ruling elites – not on robust and self-sustaining institutions (Grindle, 2012; Hutchcroft, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the persistence of patronage and bureaucratic politicization in Indonesia and the Philippines is not an anomaly in the democratization process, but rather a structural consequence of the interaction between political decentralization, geographical fragmentation of archipelagic nations, and political dynasty dominance at the local level. Democratization and bureaucratic reform that are normatively expected to strengthen meritocracy have actually created new spaces for local elites to consolidate power through formally legal but practically neo-patrimonial institutions.

By integrating the frameworks of neo-patrimonialism and principal-agent theory, this research finds that merit system failure is not primarily caused by weak regulations, but by fundamental distortion in delegation relationships. Local bureaucracy formally continues to function as an agent of the state and public, but *de facto* becomes an agent of political dynasties that control career incentives, job security, and administrative sanctions. Under these conditions, bureaucratic rationality shifts from compliance with impersonal rules toward calculations of personal loyalty, making agency loss chronic and systemic.

The comparison of Indonesia and the Philippines reveals that differences in institutional design and oversight institution strength do not produce substantive differences in outcomes. The Philippines, with a Civil Service Commission having constitutional basis and adjudicative authority, still experiences intense bureaucratic patronage in regions controlled by fat dynasties. Indonesia, although KASN is legally weaker, shows similar co-optation patterns through more covert and procedural mechanisms. The main difference between the two countries lies in the *modus operandi*, not in the underlying logic of power.

The Archipelagic Patronage Model concept developed in this research explains how archipelagic nation characteristics strengthen local elite dominance through territorial isolation, weak horizontal accountability, and informalization

of formal rules. This model shows that geography is not merely a background variable, but a structural factor shaping opportunity structures for political dynasties to control the local state and its bureaucracy. In this context, merit reforms focusing on strengthening central regulations without disturbing local elite control over bureaucracy tend to produce symbolic compliance, not substantive change.

The empirical implications of these findings are clearly visible in public service quality. Bureaucratic politicization correlates with declining health and education sector performance, budget misallocation, and low human development effectiveness, despite available fiscal resources. These findings confirm that bureaucratic quality is a crucial mediating variable between state capacity and development outcomes, and that dynasty dominance systematically damages this function.

This research also shows that although there are islands of effectiveness and cases of dynasties relatively oriented toward development, such patterns are contingent and depend on elite personal characteristics, civil society pressure, or long-term political aspirations, not on robust and sustainable institutions. In other words, bureaucratic resilience under dynasties is the exception, not the norm, and cannot serve as a basis for long-term institutional optimism.

Overall, this research affirms that the main problem of bureaucratic governance in decentralized archipelagic nations is not merely *how to design better rules*, but *who effectively controls the local state*. Without interventions that directly limit dynasty capacity to control local bureaucracy and shift the principal position back to the public and state, merit reforms will continue to function as administratively legal but substantively empty rituals.

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