The Confluence between Politics and Administration in Contemporary Systems: Empirical Evidence from Nigeria

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Abstract: *The relationship between politics and administration is a longstanding debate in public administration. This paper examines the confluence of politics and administration in contemporary governance and how the increasing role of political staff in contemporary democratic systems has reshaped governance, explicitly focusing on Nigeria's federal and devolved systems. While early theorists advocated for a strict separation, contemporary scholars recognize the inevitable interaction between political decision-making and administrative execution. This study employs a qualitative analysis of Nigerian political institutions and relevant empirical studies to highlight the dual function of political staff as facilitators and disruptors within democratic governance and the confluence between politics and administration in Nigeria. The study also examines the role of political staff in devolved governments and their impact on governance outcomes. Using empirical data, the study evaluates how political decisions shape administrative processes and the role of political staff in decentralized governance structures. The findings suggest that while political influences enhance policy and governance efficiency in some cases, they also contribute to administrative inefficiencies due to patronage, politicization, and capacity challenges and that Nigeria's political-administrative nexus is particularly complex due to the nation's federal structure and devolved governance systems. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for strengthening governance through institutional reforms and administrative professionalism.*

Key words: *Politics, Administration, Nigeria, Governance, Devolution, Political Staff.*

1. Introduction

The evolution of political staff in democratic systems has significantly altered the balance between politics and administration. Political staff, distinct from career bureaucrats, serve as intermediaries between elected officials and the public administration, often ensuring the implementation of party agendas (Peters & Pierre, 2019). However, their role raises concerns about administrative neutrality, institutional stability, and potential disruption in governance (Eichbaum & Shaw, 2020). This paper analyzes the growing significance of political staff in Nigeria, a country with a complex history of party evolution and administrative challenges.

Background of the Study
The interaction between politics and administration has been a central debate in public administration since Woodrow Wilson's (1887) assertion of a strict dichotomy between the two. However, contemporary governance recognizes that political decisions shape administrative processes, and administrative expertise influences political decision-making (Peters, 2001). This relationship is particularly significant in Nigeria due to its federal system, which devolves responsibilities to subnational governments while maintaining central political control.

Problem Statement

Nigeria's governance system faces persistent challenges due to the overlapping roles of political and administrative actors. Political appointments often compromise bureaucratic neutrality, leading to inefficiency, corruption, and policy inconsistencies (Agbodike et al., 2015). Additionally, political staff in devolved governments play crucial roles in policy implementation but often lack the professional expertise required for effective governance. This study investigates these dynamics to provide empirical insights into how politics and administration interact in contemporary Nigeria.

Research Objectives
This paper aims to:
Examine the theoretical and empirical basis of the politics-administration confluence.
Analyze political influences on administrative processes in Nigeria.
Evaluate the role of political staff in Nigeria's devolved governance structure.
Propose recommendations for improving governance through institutional reforms.

Research Questions
1. How does politics influence administrative decision-making in Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities in the interaction between politics and administration?
3. What role do political staff play in devolved governments?
4. How can governance efficiency be improved through institutional reforms?

Significance of the Study
Understanding the intersection between politics and administration is critical for strengthening governance. This study provides empirical insights for policymakers, scholars, and public administrators seeking to enhance bureaucratic efficiency while maintaining political responsiveness. The research contributes to the broader discourse on governance in developing countries by focusing on Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework

Wilsonian Dichotomy and Its Criticism
Woodrow Wilson (1887) proposed separating politics and administration, arguing that politicians should set policies while administrators execute them objectively. Woodrow was among the first scholars to conceptualize a distinction between politics and administration. He hinged his proposal on:
1. Politics involves formulating policies and decision-making processes led by elected officials.
2. Administration focuses on executing policies neutrally and professionally, carried out by bureaucrats.
Wilson's dichotomy aimed to ensure bureaucratic efficiency, professionalize public administration, and insulate it from political interference. However, scholars such as Frank Goodnow (1900) and Dwight Waldo (1948) challenged this strict separation, arguing that political and administrative functions inevitably overlap. Their argument posits that politics and administration are inherently interconnected, as policy decisions influence administration and vice versa. It was further argued that bureaucrats engage in policymaking through their advisory roles and implementation discretion; hence, the reality of governance makes it impossible to separate political influence from administrative functions completely.

In Nigeria, Wilson's dichotomy is difficult to maintain due to the deep intertwining of political and administrative processes. Political appointees often hold administrative positions, and civil servants influence policy formulation through advisory roles.

Bureaucratic and Governance Theories
Confluence Between Politics and Administration

Max Weber's (1946) bureaucratic model emphasizes administrative neutrality, whereas Carl Friedrich and Herman Finer's debate on responsibility highlights the tension between bureaucratic discretion and political control (Peters, 2021). In Nigeria, the intersection between politics and administration has been influenced by neopatrimonialism, where personal networks and party loyalty overshadow institutional efficiency (Eze, 2020).

The politics-administration relationship has been debated for over a century, shaping governance structures worldwide. Theoretical perspectives on this relationship provide valuable insights into how political decisions influence administrative processes. This section explores classical and contemporary theories that explain the confluence between politics and administration, emphasizing their applicability to the Nigerian context.

This model emphasizes hierarchical structures, formal rules, and merit-based appointments. Max Weber (1947) introduced the concept of bureaucracy as an ideal organizational structure characterized by:

Hierarchical authority structures
Clearly defined rules and regulations
Merit-based appointments
Impersonality in decision-making

Weber's model was designed to create a professional and efficient civil service insulated from political interference. However, in Nigeria, bureaucratic neutrality is often compromised by political patronage.
Patronage Appointments: Political leaders appoint loyalists rather than qualified individuals.
Ethnic and Regional Influences: Political considerations often override merit in administrative recruitment.
Weak Institutional Autonomy: Administrative agencies are susceptible to political manipulation.
Despite these challenges, Weber's model remains relevant in Nigeria's civil service reforms, particularly in promoting merit-based recruitment and professionalization.

New Public Management (NPM)
New Public Management (NPM) emerged in the late 20th century as a reform movement emphasizing efficiency, performance measurement, and market-driven approaches in public administration. It advocates for efficiency and market-based governance (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Some Nigerian reforms have attempted to introduce NPM principles, though political interference remains challenging. Key principles include:
Decentralization of authority
Performance-based accountability
Competition and privatization of public services
Citizen-centric governance.
Nigeria has attempted to implement NPM principles through various reforms, such as:
Public Service Reforms: Initiatives aimed at improving bureaucratic efficiency and accountability.
Privatization and Deregulation: Efforts to reduce government involvement in economic activities.
However, political influences often undermine these reforms. Bureaucratic agencies remain subject to political control, limiting the effectiveness of NPM strategies.

Governance Theory
Governance theory shifts focus from traditional hierarchical government structures to a more networked and participatory approach. This theory focuses on the interaction between political leaders, bureaucrats, and civil society in policymaking (Rhodes, 1997), emphasizing:

The role of multiple stakeholders (e.g., civil society, private sector) in governance.

Collaborative decision-making between politicians, administrators, and non-state actors.

Greater transparency and public engagement in policymaking.

In Nigeria, governance theory is relevant in understanding the challenges of political-administrative interactions, particularly in:

Devolved Governments: The role of state and local governments in service delivery.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Collaborations aimed at improving infrastructure and social services.

Anti-Corruption Initiatives: Efforts to enhance transparency and accountability in public administration.

Evidence suggests that the governance theory offers a more inclusive approach to policymaking; weak institutional frameworks, political interference, and corruption limit its application in Nigeria.

Institutionalism and Political-Administrative Relations Theories:

These theories focus on how rules, norms, and structures shape political and administrative interactions. Three key relevant perspectives include:

Rational Choice Institutionalism

This approach argues that political and administrative actors make decisions based on rational calculations to maximize their interests.

In Nigeria, politicians seek to expand their influence through patronage and political appointments. Bureaucrats align with political interests to secure career advancement.

Institutional reforms are often resisted when they threaten entrenched power structures.

Historical Institutionalism

This perspective emphasizes the role of historical legacies in shaping political and administrative relationships.

In Nigeria, the colonial legacy of centralized governance continues to influence bureaucratic structures, just as military rule (1966–1999) reinforced authoritarian administrative practices that persist today. It is implied that past governance failures create resistance to reform efforts.

Sociological Institutionalism

This approach highlights the role of cultural norms and values in shaping governance.

Informal networks (e.g., political godfatherism) and traditional authority structures coexist with formal governance institutions to shape administrative decisions.

The theoretical perspectives highlighted have challenges of historical and cultural factors and political interference, which undermines bureaucratic professionalism, leading to weak institutional autonomy that limits administrative efficiency and contributes to governance inefficiencies.

Despite the challenges, the theories have provided opportunities to implement merit-based administrative reforms that enhance efficiency, strengthen institutional frameworks that can reduce political manipulation, promote public participation in governance, and improve accountability. These theoretical insights have been critical in addressing governance challenges, providing a deeper analysis of Nigeria's politics-administration nexus.

3. Nigeria's Political-Administrative Context

Federal vs. Devolved Governance in Nigeria

Nigeria operates a federal system with three levels of government: federal, state, and local. While states and local governments have administrative responsibilities, political control from the center often limits their autonomy (Arowolo, 2010).

Constitutional and Institutional Framework
1999 Constitution of Nigeria as Amended
Defines the roles of political and administrative actors.

Civil Service Reforms
Due to entrenched political interests, efforts to improve bureaucratic efficiency have faced resistance (Olaopa, 2018).
Civil service reforms in Nigeria have been a recurring theme in governance, aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Since independence in 1960, several reform efforts have been introduced to improve public administration and service delivery. These reforms have been driven by economic challenges, political transitions, and demands for better governance. Examining civil service reforms in Nigeria, their impact, and their challenges will add value to this study.

Pre-Independence Reforms
The colonial civil service was structured to serve British interests rather than national development. The Hugh Clifford Constitution of 1922 introduced elective representation, but the British primarily controlled the civil service. The Harragin Commission of 1945 was among the first reform efforts addressing wage disparities between expatriates and Nigerians (Olaopa, 2014).

Post-Independence Reforms
After independence, various commissions were set up to restructure the civil service:
Morgan Commission (1963). Focused on wage disparities and recommended better remuneration for civil servants.
Adebo Commission (1971). Addressed bureaucracy, corruption, and inefficiency issues, recommending better personnel management.
Udoji Commission (1974). This commission introduced performance management systems and adopted the Project Management Approach, emphasizing result-oriented administration (Adegoroye, 2006).

Contemporary Reforms
Recent reforms have focused on professionalization, digitalization, and improved governance. Key initiatives include:
1999-2007 Reforms under Obasanjo: The introduction of the Public Service Reform Program (PSRP) and SERVICOM (2004) aimed to improve service delivery and citizens' engagement.
The Pension Reforms Act (2004) introduced the contributory pension scheme to address corruption and inefficiencies in pension administration (Balogun, 2018).
Yar'Adua and Jonathan's Reforms (2007-2015): Focused on civil service restructuring, training programs, and using technology in governance.
Buhari's Reforms (2015-2023): Emphasized digital transformation, payroll verification (through the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System, IPPIS), and tackling ghost workers.

Challenges of Civil Service Reforms in Nigeria
1. Corruption: Rent-seeking behavior, bribery, and inefficiencies hinder reform implementation (Arowolo & Lawal, 2020).
2. Bureaucratic Resistance: Civil servants often resist reforms because they fear losing their jobs or privileges.
3. Political Interference: Reforms are sometimes abandoned or altered due to political interests.
4. Inadequate Funding: Many reform initiatives lack sustained financial support.
5. Technological Gaps: Limited digital infrastructure affects e-governance reforms.

Impact of Reforms
Some positive outcomes include:
Improved transparency through IPPIS, reducing ghost workers.
Increased efficiency in service delivery through SERVICOM.
Pension sector stabilization through the Contributory Pension Scheme.

Conclusion and Recommendations
Civil service reforms in Nigeria have evolved from colonial administrative structures to modern digital governance initiatives. While some reforms have yielded positive results, corruption, political interference, and bureaucratic resistance remain significant obstacles.
To enhance the effectiveness of future reforms, the government should:
1. Strengthen anti-corruption measures within the civil service.
2. Increase investment in digital infrastructure for e-governance.
3. Promote a culture of accountability and performance-based management.
4. Ensure continuity of reforms beyond political transitions.

4. Empirical Findings in the Nigerian System
Fiscal Administration and Politics
Abdulrasheed (2017) indicated that political decisions directly influence fiscal administration. The research utilized annual time series data from 1986 to 2015 with an ex-post-facto design. The findings showed a bidirectional causality between government revenue and expenditure, suggesting that political decisions significantly influence administrative and financial management and vice versa. This underscores the intertwined nature of politics and administration in Nigeria's fiscal policies.

Women's Participation in Politics and Administration
Despite constitutional guarantees, women remain underrepresented in political and administrative positions, affecting policy inclusivity. Arowolo (2010) examined women's political participation in Nigeria and reported that despite legal and constitutional guarantees, women's political involvement remains low due to persistent patriarchal structures. This has implications for administrative practices, as the underrepresentation of women in political positions affects policy formulation and implementation within administrative frameworks.

Corruption and Political Patronage
Corruption is the abuse of public office for personal gain, undermining institutional integrity and governance efficiency (Rose-Ackerman, 2016). Political patronage refers to distributing public resources and appointments based on political loyalty rather than competence (Arowolo & Aluko, 2020). These two concepts are interlinked, as patronage networks often facilitate Corruption and shield public officials from accountability. Corruption and political patronage have long been entrenched in Nigeria's political and governance structures, impacting economic development, public administration, and democratic consolidation. Empirical studies highlight the adverse effects of political patronage on bureaucratic efficiency, especially regarding civil service appointments (Suleiman, 2019). Corruption manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, electoral fraud, and nepotism, while political patronage ensures the allocation of government positions and resources based on loyalty rather than merit.

Causes of Corruption and Political Patronage in Nigeria

1. Weak Institutional Frameworks
Public institutions lack the independence and capacity to enforce anti-corruption laws (Olu-Adeyemi, 2019) effectively. Agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) often face political interference.

2. Rent-Seeking and Clientelism
The Nigerian political system relies on patronage, whereby political elites distribute state resources to loyalists in exchange for support (Arowolo & Aluko, 2020). Political leaders depend on corrupt practices, such as contract inflation and fund diversion, to maintain patronage networks.

3. Electoral Corruption
Vote buying, rigging, and manipulating electoral processes are rampant, ensuring that political elites remain in power and continue patronage practices (Omotola, 2018). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has faced criticisms for being influenced by political actors.

4. Lack of Transparency and Accountability
Weak enforcement of anti-corruption policies allows politicians and bureaucrats to act with impunity (Ojo, 2021). Public procurement and budget allocations often lack transparency, enabling embezzlement of funds.

5. Ethno-Religious Politics
Political patronage is often distributed along ethnic and religious lines, fostering nepotism and exclusion of competent individuals (Obiyan & Amuwo, 2017). Ethnic-based appointments in government institutions undermine meritocracy and governance efficiency.

6. Weak Judicial System
The judiciary, which should serve as a check on corruption, is often compromised through bribery and political influence (Ogundiya, 2019). High-profile corruption cases involving politicians are frequently delayed or dismissed.

Impacts of Corruption and Political Patronage in Nigeria
1. Economic Underdevelopment
Mismanagement of public funds diverts resources from critical sectors like health, education, and infrastructure (Rose-Ackerman, 2016). Investors perceive Nigeria as a high-risk environment due to corruption, leading to reduced foreign direct investment (Arowolo & Aluko, 2020).

2. Institutional Weakness
Political patronage ensures loyalists are placed in strategic positions, making institutions subservient to ruling elites (Arowolo & Aluko, 2020). Corrupt practices within institutions prevent them from enforcing laws and policies impartially

Excessive Political Interference
Excessive political interference is a significant challenge in Nigeria's governance and public administration. It undermines institutional independence, weakens bureaucratic efficiency, and fosters corruption. Political influence affects various sectors, including the civil service, judiciary, security agencies, and economic institutions. This paper examines the causes, impact, and possible solutions to excessive political interference in Nigeria.

Political interference occurs when political actors unduly influence decision-making processes in governance, administration, and independent institutions. In democratic systems, some political oversight is expected; however, excessive interference disrupts institutional autonomy and professionalism (Obiyan & Amuwo, 2017).

Causes of Political Interference in Nigeria
1. Weak Institutional Frameworks
Many Nigerian institutions lack autonomy due to constitutional loopholes and weak enforcement mechanisms (Olu-Adeyemi, 2019). Political appointees often override the professional decisions of civil servants and technocrats.

2. Patronage and Clientelism
The Nigerian political system is heavily influenced by patronage, where appointments and contracts are awarded based on political loyalty rather than merit (Arowolo & Aluko, 2020).
This weakens institutional efficiency and promotes favoritism.

3. Lack of Separation of Powers
Although Nigeria operates a presidential system, the executive branch is frequently encroached on the judiciary and legislature.
The appointment and removal of judges, heads of security agencies, and electoral officers are often politically motivated (Ogundiya, 2019).

4. Corruption and Rent-Seeking Behavior
Politicians use public institutions for personal gain, diverting funds for development projects (Ojo, 2021). The lack of transparency in public procurement encourages undue political influence.

5. Electoral Manipulations
Political leaders often interfere in electoral processes by influencing the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and security agencies (Omotola, 2018). This undermines democratic consolidation and public trust in governance.

Impact of Excessive Political Interference
1. Weak Governance and Institutional Decay
When political considerations override merit, governance structures become ineffective (Olu-Adeyemi, 2019). Key agencies, such as the police and civil service, struggle to function professionally.

2. Judicial Compromise and Erosion of Rule of Law
Politicians often manipulate court rulings in high-profile cases, leading to selective justice (Ogundiya, 2019). This erodes public confidence in the judicial system.

3. Economic Instability
Political interference in economic policies discourages investment and promotes policy inconsistency (Arowolo & Aluko, 2020). Public enterprises often fail due to mismanagement and politically motivated appointments.

4. Security Challenges
The politicization of security agencies undermines their effectiveness in addressing terrorism, banditry, and other security threats (Ojo, 2021). Security personnel are used.

Weak Institutional Autonomy

Institutional autonomy is a fundamental governance pillar that ensures institutions operate independently of undue political, economic, and external influences. In Nigeria, weak institutional autonomy has been a persistent issue, affecting the efficiency of governance, economic development, and the rule of law. Institutional autonomy refers to the ability of institutions such as the judiciary, legislature, civil service, electoral bodies, and anti-corruption agencies to function without undue external interference (Obiyan & Amuwo, 2017). Strong institutions enhance governance by ensuring accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Conversely, weak institutional autonomy leads to inefficiencies, corruption, and governance failures.

Causes of Weak Institutional Autonomy in Nigeria

1. Political Interference

Political leaders often influence the decisions and operations of institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the judiciary (Ogundiya, 2019). Appointments and removals of key officials are often politically motivated, undermining meritocracy and institutional independence (Ojo, 2021).

2. Constitutional and Legal Ambiguities

Nigeria's Constitution grants autonomy to certain institutions but also provides loopholes that enable executive interference. While the judiciary is theoretically independent, the executive controls its budgetary allocations (Olu-Adeyemi, 2019). The president also has the power to appoint the heads of security agencies, electoral bodies, and anti-corruption commissions, reducing their operational independence.

5. The Influence of Political Staff in Nigeria

Political staff in Nigerian state and local governments play advisory roles, facilitate policy implementation, and serve as intermediaries between elected officials and career administrators. The dominance of political staff in Nigeria's governance structure has significantly weakened accountability mechanisms. Political interference, a patronage-driven culture, and compromised oversight institutions contribute to a system where inefficiency and corruption thrive. Strengthening institutional autonomy, enforcing anti-corruption laws, and promoting merit-based appointments are crucial to improving accountability in Nigeria's public administration. As shown below, they have an enormous influence on the system.

Policy Formulation and Implementation

Political staff influence policy agendas by aligning government decisions with party manifestos. In Nigeria, presidential aides and ministers play key roles in shaping policy priorities, often bypassing bureaucratic structures (Arowolo & Aluko, 2021). This enhances policy responsiveness but also weakens institutional continuity.

Policy Inconsistency and Bureaucratic Instability

Political staff turnover disrupts administrative continuity. Each new political administration often replaces experienced professionals with political appointees, leading to frequent shifts in policies and programs (Adebayo, 2021). This instability hinders long-term planning and weakens institutional memory, reducing the effectiveness of government agencies.

Patronage and Political Loyalty

Nigeria's political landscape is characterized by patronage networks, where political staff are gatekeepers to political appointments and resources (Ikelegbe, 2016). This practice strengthens party cohesion but also leads to administrative inefficiencies and corruption.

Political staff play a crucial role in institutionalizing political parties. They act as strategists, policy advisors, and enforcers of party loyalty (Kopecký et al., 2012). In Nigeria, where party switching and patronage politics are prevalent, political staff often mediate between elected officials and party structures, influencing policymaking and governance outcomes (Ogundiya, 2019).

Disruption of Bureaucratic Neutrality

Political staff often interfere with bureaucratic processes, undermining merit-based governance. In Nigeria, civil servants frequently face political pressures, affecting policy consistency and service delivery (Olaopa, 2020).

Politicization of Administrative Roles in Civil Service.

The appointment of political aides with partisan affiliations erodes bureaucratic impartiality. Studies indicate that Nigerian civil servants experience pressure to align with ruling party interests, leading to frequent policy reversals (Adeyemi & Ismail, 2019).

Weakening of Institutional Stability

Frequent changes in political appointments disrupt long-term policy implementation. The high turnover of political staff in Nigeria has contributed to policy inconsistency and institutional inefficiency (Ojo, 2022).

Party Fragmentation and Governance Crisis

While strengthening party structures, political staff can also contribute to intra-party conflicts. Disputes over political appointments and advisory roles in Nigeria have led to factionalism and governance paralysis (Akinyemi, 2023).

Lack of professional expertise

The presence of political staff in Nigeria's public administration has contributed to a decline in professional expertise due to patronage-based appointments, inadequate qualifications, and frequent policy discontinuities. Political staff, often appointed based on loyalty rather than merit, frequently lack the technical skills necessary for efficient governance. This phenomenon weakens bureaucratic institutions, leading to inefficiencies in service delivery and policy implementation. The lack of professional expertise among political staff in Nigeria is a significant challenge to governance. The over-reliance on political patronage, frequent policy shifts, and disregard for merit-based appointments undermine bureaucratic competence. Strengthening civil service reforms and emphasizing professional appointment qualifications are crucial for improving governance efficiency.

Patronage and Nepotism in Appointments

Nigeria's political environment is characterized by a patron-client system, where political appointments reward loyalists rather than recruit competent professionals. This practice undermines meritocracy and results in appointing individuals who lack the requisite expertise for effective administration (Olaopa, 2020). Consequently, critical sectors such as health, education, and urban planning suffer from poor decision-making and inefficiencies.

Impact on Public Service Efficiency

The dominance of political appointees in strategic positions affects public service efficiency. Many political staff lack the technical training to develop and execute policies effectively, leading to suboptimal outcomes (Eze & Uchenna, 2019). Moreover, civil servants, who are supposed to provide expertise, are often sidelined in decision-making processes, further exacerbating the issue.

Limited accountability mechanisms
The presence of political staff in Nigeria's governance structure has weakened accountability mechanisms, primarily due to excessive political interference, weak institutional checks, and a culture of impunity. Political appointees, often selected based on loyalty rather than competence, are rarely held accountable for administrative failures, leading to corruption, inefficiency, and poor service delivery.

Political Interference and Weak Oversight
Political staff in Nigeria frequently obstruct institutional oversight mechanisms. Many appointees wield significant influence over bureaucratic processes, shielding themselves and their associates from scrutiny (Ameh & Adegbite, 2021). This situation undermines anti-corruption agencies and weakens the enforcement of ethical standards in public administration.

Patronage System and Culture of Impunity
The patron-client relationship in Nigerian politics fosters a culture where political appointees prioritize the interests of their benefactors over public accountability (Olawale, 2020). This dynamic discourages transparency, as appointees are more inclined to serve political elites than adhere to institutional regulations. As a result, accountability structures, such as legislative oversight and audit reports, are often ignored or manipulated.

Ineffective Institutional Checks and Balance
Despite Nigeria's legal framework for accountability, enforcement remains weak. Political staff often control key regulatory agencies, limiting their ability to function independently (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2019). For example, government audit reports and procurement processes are frequently compromised due to political influence, reducing their effectiveness in holding officials accountable.

6. Case Studies

Budget Process in Rivers State
Political executives exert significant influence over budget formulation, often sidelining administrative expertise. The budget process involves several stages, including executive proposal, legislative approval, and multi-arm implementation. Examining the procedural framework highlights key features of recent budgets and associated challenges.

Budget Proposal and Presentation
The budget process begins with the executive branch formulating a financial plan for the upcoming fiscal year. The Governor presents this budget proposal to the Rivers State House of Assembly.

Legislative Approval
Following the presentation, the House of Assembly reviews the budget proposal. This review includes debates, committee assessments, and possible amendments before approval. The legislative scrutiny ensures that the budget aligns with the state's development priorities and fiscal policies.

Implementation and Oversight
The executive branch implements the budget upon legislative approval, allocating funds to various ministries and agencies. The implementation phase requires strict adherence to the approved allocations to achieve the desired developmental outcomes. Oversight mechanisms, including audits and performance evaluations, are essential to ensure transparency and accountability.

Key Features of Recent Budgets
Recent budgets in Rivers State have emphasized infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and security. For example, the 2017 "Golden Jubilee Budget for Accelerated Development" allocated significant funds to these sectors, reflecting the government's commitment to comprehensive development (Wikipedia, 2017).

Challenges in the Budget Process
Despite a structured budget process, Rivers State faces challenges such as:

Rapid Budget Approval
The swift passage of budgets has raised concerns about the adequacy of legislative scrutiny. The 2024 and 25 budgets' quick approval by a three-member factional assembly loyal to the Governor led to criticisms regarding the thoroughness of the review process.

Transparency and Public Participation
Limited public involvement in the budget formulation process can affect the perceived legitimacy and responsiveness of the budget to citizens' needs. However, this has been lacking in the Rivers State budget in the last two years. The state's political crisis is responsible for this lacuna. The judiciary has not helped matters, as the long delay in dispensing cases arising from the crisis has made the budget nonsense.

Implementation Gaps
Discrepancies between budgetary allocations and actual expenditures have been observed, leading to questions about the efficiency of budget execution. The budget process is designed to facilitate structured financial planning and resource allocation. However, to enhance its effectiveness, there is a need for improved legislative scrutiny, greater transparency, increased public participation, and stringent adherence to budgetary provisions during implementation.

Local Government Autonomy in Lagos
Despite legal provisions for autonomy, local government administrations remain dependent on state political directives. Local government autonomy in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos State, is a complex issue shaped by constitutional provisions, political dynamics, and administrative practices. While the creation of LGAs and LCDAs in Lagos State aims to enhance local governance, the limited autonomy granted to these entities poses significant challenges. To improve governance at the grassroots level, there is a need to revisit the constitutional and administrative frameworks governing local governments, ensuring they have the necessary authority and resources to function effectively.

Constitutional and Legal Framework
The 1999 Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution establishes local governments as the third tier of government, with specific functions and responsibilities. However, the degree of autonomy granted to local governments is limited. The constitution allows state governments to exert significant control over local councils, particularly in funding, administrative oversight, and legislative authority (Agboola, 2016).

Administrative Structure in Lagos State
Lagos State comprises 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and 37 Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs). The creation of LCDAs by the Lagos State government was intended to bring governance closer to the people and enhance administrative efficiency. However, these LCDAs are not recognized

by the federal constitution, leading to debates about their legitimacy and the extent of their autonomy (Wikipedia, 2023).

Challenges to Local Government Autonomy
1. Financial Dependence
Lagos State's local governments rely heavily on federal and state government allocations. This financial dependence limits their ability to execute projects independently and undermines their fiscal autonomy (Agboola, 2016).

2. State Government Control
The state government controls local governments through various mechanisms, including appointing key officials and establishing state agencies that oversee local government activities. This control often leads to conflicts and diminishes the decision-making power of local councils (Agboola, 2016).

3. Limited Legislative Authority: Local governments have restricted powers to enact and enforce by-laws. The state government often has the final say in legislative matters, further constraining the autonomy of local councils (Agboola, 2016).

Implications for Governance
Reduced Efficiency
Dependence on higher government levels for funding and decision-making can lead to project implementation delays and reduced responsiveness to local needs.

Accountability Issues
When local governments lack autonomy, holding them accountable for service delivery becomes challenging, as they can attribute failures to constraints imposed by state authorities.

Public Discontent
The inability of local governments to address local issues effectively can lead to public dissatisfaction and erode trust in government institutions.

Comparative Analysis of Kenya and South Africa.
The interaction between politics and administration remains fundamental in public administration discourse. In contemporary democracies, the extent to which political influences shape administrative decisions determines the effectiveness of governance. Kenya and South Africa, both leading African democracies, present interesting cases of how politics and administration interact within governance frameworks. While both nations embrace democratic principles, their historical, constitutional, and bureaucratic structures influence their political-administrative relationships. This paper explores the confluence of politics and administration in Kenya and South Africa, highlighting similarities, differences, and their implications for governance.

Kenya: A Decentralized Bureaucracy
Kenya operates under a devolved system of government introduced by the 2010 Constitution. The structure comprises national and 47 county governments, each with an elected governor and a professional county executive team. The separation of powers is clear on paper, but political influences deeply penetrate administrative decisions (Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis, 2021). Political appointees often interfere with bureaucratic processes, leading to instances of corruption, patronage, and inefficiency.

South Africa: A Centralized-Provincial Hybrid

Under the 1996 Constitution, South Africa has a three-tier system comprising national, provincial, and local governments. The Public Service Act (1994) and subsequent reforms ensure administrative professionalism, but political patronage remains challenging (Cameron, 2010). Unlike in Kenya, where governors hold executive powers, South African provincial premiers are accountable to the ruling party, often leading to political interference in bureaucratic appointments and decision-making.

In both countries, political interference undermines bureaucratic efficiency. In Kenya, county governments often suffer from resource mismanagement and nepotism (Hope, 2014). In South Africa, administrative decisions sometimes align with ruling party interests rather than public needs, affecting service delivery, especially in municipalities (Madumo, 2015).

Corruption and Political Patronage

Political patronage affects both countries, though in different ways. Kenya's devolution has created new centers of corruption at the county level, where political elites manipulate procurement and appointments (Githongo, 2016). In South Africa, state capture, as exposed in the Zondo Commission Report (2022), demonstrates how high-level politics influences administration, particularly in state-owned enterprises.

Institutional Resilience

South Africa benefits from stronger institutional frameworks such as the Public Protector's Office, which provides oversight against administrative abuses (Cameron, 2010). Kenya's Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) plays a similar role but struggles with enforcement due to political interference.

Political Appointments

Kenya and South Africa exemplify the complexities of the politics-administration relationship in contemporary democracies. While Kenya's devolution provides a framework for localized governance, political interference weakens bureaucratic autonomy. South Africa, though institutionally stronger, faces governance challenges due to party dominance over the administration. Strengthening legal safeguards, professionalizing public service, and enhancing independent oversight mechanisms are critical to mitigating undue political influence in the administration. Below, we consider their legal frameworks, challenges, and governance implications.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Kenya

Kenya's political appointments are guided by the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the Public Service Commission (PSC) Act. The Public Service Commission (PSC) oversees recruitment, ensuring meritocracy while balancing ethnic representation. However, political considerations often influence presidential appointments for key ministries, parastatals, and county executives (Ongoya, 2020).

South Africa

South Africa is a constitutional democracy whose appointments are regulated by the Public Service Act (1994) and the Public Administration Management Act (2014). The President and premiers typically make political appointments at the national and provincial levels. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) uses South Africa's cadre deployment system, which has been criticized for promoting loyalty over competence (Chipkin & Lipietz, 2012).

Political Appointments and Meritocracy

In Kenya, political appointments must adhere to ethnic balancing mandates under Article 232 of the Constitution, which promotes diversity in public service (Ongoya, 2020). However, nepotism and political patronage remain widespread. In contrast, South Africa's ANC-led cadre deployment has led to institutional inefficiencies, as seen in state-owned enterprises like Eskom and Transnet (Chipkin & Lipietz, 2012).

Impact on Governance
Kenya
Optimistic: Some reforms have improved inclusivity, ensuring a multi-ethnic representation in the government.
Negative: Appointments are often driven by political loyalty rather than technical expertise, affecting service delivery (Muriithi & Wahome, 2018).
South Africa
Positive: Political appointments have increased the representation of historically marginalized groups.
Negative: The Zondo Commission (2022) revealed how political appointments enabled state capture, leading to corruption scandals in government institutions (Zondo, 2022).

Key Challenges in Both Countries
Kenya
Ethnic-based appointments lead to the exclusion of minority groups.
Corruption in the recruitment process for high-level government positions.
Weak enforcement of PSC regulations, allowing political interference in appointments.
South Africa
Cadre deployment undermines professionalism, leading to inefficiencies.
State capture and corruption, as evidenced in the Zondo Commission's findings on mismanagement of state resources (Zondo, 2022).
Bureaucratic inefficiency, slowing down service delivery in key sectors.

Lessons and Recommendations
Kenya
Strengthen PSC oversight to reduce political interference in appointments.
Implement stricter penalties for nepotism and corruption in hiring processes.
Increase public participation in vetting political appointees to improve accountability.
South Africa
Reduce the influence of cadre deployment in public appointments.
Improve transparency in selection criteria for top government officials.
Strengthen anti-corruption measures to prevent state capture.
While both Kenya and South Africa have legal frameworks to regulate political appointments, their effectiveness is undermined by political interference, patronage, and corruption. Kenya's system struggles with ethnic favoritism, while South Africa's cadre deployment policy prioritizes political loyalty over efficiency. Addressing these challenges requires stronger oversight mechanisms and institutional reforms to ensure professionalism in public service.

7. Conclusion
This study highlights the intricate relationship between politics and administration, emphasizing the role of political staff in governance outcomes. Nigeria's politics and administration confluence is characterized by a dynamic interplay that shapes the nation's governance outcomes. Empirical studies highlight the mutual influence between political decisions and administrative actions, particularly in fiscal management and policy implementation.

Political staff play a dual role in contemporary democratic systems, enhancing political-administrative coordination and disrupting governance. Their influence is particularly significant in Nigeria due to the dominance of patronage politics. Regulatory frameworks that balance political responsiveness and bureaucratic stability are needed to mitigate their disruptive impact. Strengthening the role of political staff in devolved governments is essential for enhancing governance effectiveness. This necessitates targeted interventions to build capacity and promote professionalism within the administrative cadre and civil service protections. Strengthening meritocratic appointment processes can help maintain institutional integrity.

Policy Recommendations
1. Establish more precise boundaries between political and administrative functions.
2. Strengthen institutional frameworks for civil service autonomy.

3. Enhance professional training for political staff in devolved governments.

4. Strengthening civil service regulations

5. Promoting merit-based appointments

6. Enhancing public sector accountability

Final Thoughts
Balancing political responsiveness with administrative efficiency is crucial for Nigeria's governance. Strengthening institutional mechanisms and promoting merit-based governance can help achieve this balance.

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