

## Parkinson Bureaucracy: An Analysis of Administrative Structure in Current Indonesia Cabinet System

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### ABSTRACT

*Leadership style has a significant impact on the development of Indonesia bureaucratic structure. In 2024, under the administration of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming, the number of ministers and deputy ministers increased significantly compared to previous administrations. This phenomenon is in line with Parkinson Bureaucracy theory, stating that a bureaucratic structure extends beyond practical necessity, resulting in inefficiency and possibly ineffectiveness, contrary to the principles of good governance. Bureaucratic growth often leads to unnecessary expenditures and budgetary waste due to overlapping responsibilities, preventing effective governance and service delivery. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the development of Parkinson Bureaucracy in the cabinet of Indonesia and analyze the effects on efficiency, reform in governance, and public service delivery. A systematic literature review method was used to analyze previous studies, policy analyses, and relevant data with a focus on determining the extent to which administrative structure are consistent with governance principles. The results showed that the enlarged cabinet structure contributed to increased inefficiencies and, concomitantly, greater coordination challenges and higher administrative overhead costs, limiting funds for public welfare investments. These structural inefficiencies underscore the urgent need for rightsizing and reforms aimed at optimizing roles, minimizing redundancies, and fostering accountability as well as transparency. Simplifying bureaucratic structure is important to improve responsiveness, decision-making processes, and efficiency outcomes in governance. Therefore, under the ideals of good governance, Indonesia must place priorities on reforms that increase the efficiency of public service orientation and structural complexity. This study emphasizes the urgent need for actions towards Parkinson bureaucracy.*

**Keywords:** *Parkinson Bureaucracy; Indonesia cabinet system; Administrative inefficiency; Bureaucratic reform; Governance principles.*

### ABSTRAK

Setiap gaya kepemimpinan memiliki dampak krusial terhadap perkembangan struktur birokrasi Indonesia. Pada tahun 2024, di bawah pemerintahan Prabowo Subianto dan Gibran Rakabuming, jumlah menteri dan wakil menteri meningkat sangat banyak jika dibandingkan dengan sebelumnya. Fenomena ini sesuai dengan prinsip-prinsip yang ditetapkan oleh teori Birokrasi Parkinson di mana, struktur birokrasi tidak hanya terlalu luas, tetapi mengarah pada inefisiensi dan mungkin juga inefektif, bertentangan dengan prinsip-prinsip tata kelola pemerintahan yang baik. Pertumbuhan birokrasi biasanya menghabiskan jatah dan membuang-buang anggaran untuk fungsi-fungsi yang tidak lagi perlu dilakukan karena tanggung jawab yang tumpang tindih, sehingga mencegah tata kelola dan pemberian layanan yang efektif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis munculnya Birokrasi Parkinson dalam kabinet Indonesia dan menganalisis dampaknya terhadap efisiensi, reformasi dalam tata kelola pemerintahan, dan pemberian layanan publik. Penelitian ini menggunakan tinjauan pustaka sistematis untuk melihat studi sebelumnya, analisis kebijakan, dan data relevan untuk memeriksa sejauh mana struktur administratif konsisten dengan prinsip-prinsip tata kelola. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa struktur kabinet yang diperluas berkontribusi pada peningkatan inefisiensi dan, bersamaan dengan itu, meningkatkan tantangan koordinasi dan dengan demikian menimbulkan peningkatan biaya overhead administratif yang seharusnya digunakan untuk investasi kesejahteraan publik. Inefisiensi struktural ini memerlukan penyesuaian ukuran dan reformasi yang bertujuan untuk mengoptimalkan peran, meminimalkan redundansi, dan mendorong akuntabilitas dan transparansi. Penyederhanaan struktur birokrasi sangat penting untuk meningkatkan daya tanggap, membuat proses pengambilan keputusan lebih sederhana, dan hasil efisiensi dalam tata kelola. Oleh karena itu, berdasarkan cita-cita tata kelola yang baik, Indonesia harus memprioritaskan reformasi yang meningkatkan efisiensi orientasi layanan publik dan kompleksitas struktural.

**Keywords:** *Birokrasi Parkinson; Sistem kabinet Indonesia; Inefisiensi administrasi; Reformasi birokrasi; Prinsip-prinsip tata kelola.*

### INTRODUCTION

The role of bureaucracy in shaping governance is a matter of critical importance in developing countries such as Indonesia, where a strong public administration system is essential to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs). Historically, bureaucracy has been viewed as an administrative instrument for implementing

policies, but can lead to inefficiency and ineffectiveness, particularly under conditions of structural complexity or poor organizational design. When structured and managed properly, bureaucracy can enhance improvements in efficiency and stable effectiveness. In Indonesia, the evolution of bureaucratic structure in recent years has drawn heightened scrutiny. As the

administrative structure proliferates, serious concerns have been raised about good governance. Political leadership has changed indefinitely due to the expansion of Indonesia bureaucratic framework. Furthermore, indicators of progress are spread over various aspects of bureaucracy, including a sharp increase in the number of deputy ministers and ministries. Although the expansion improved efficiency in the execution of government programs, it also raised serious concerns over overlapping authority, wastage of resources, and overall administration inefficiency. This is consistent with Parkinson Bureaucracy theory, stating that the development in bureaucratic institutions is traditionally associated with increasing inefficiencies in management and activity shifts in the cost burden, contradicting the principles of good governance (Lestari, 2018; Astara, 2015).

Public perception reflects the structural challenges embedded in Indonesia evolving bureaucratic landscape. A national opinion poll by Litbang Kompas found that 45.1% of respondents believe a cabinet with more than 34 ministries would produce inefficiency, while many also expressed concern about the risks of political patronage, corruption, overlapping authority, and fiscal waste. These anxieties are rooted in a longstanding tension between the normative ideals of bureaucracy and its empirical performance. Historically, bureaucracy was introduced in 18th-century Western Europe as a rational-legal instrument designed to achieve state objectives through standardized procedures (Lestari, 2018). However, the Indonesian bureaucratic tradition developed under significantly different conditions, shaped by

centralized authority, recurrent inefficiency, corruption, and the entrenchment of discretionary power (Nuraini, 2017).

The systemic issues have been worsened by Parkinsonian Bureaucracy, a structural tendency in which organizations expand not only due to workload, but because institutional actors benefit from additional subordinates, hierarchy, and administrative layers (Astara, 2015). Parkinson principle shows how increased staffing often produces more internal coordination demands, administrative routines, and ultimately red tape, characterized by procedural delays, elongated decision pathways, and declining responsiveness (Bozeman, 2000).

Based on public perception, historical evolution, and theoretical diagnosis, the oversized bureaucracy in Indonesia is both a cause and a consequence of inefficiency. The expansion of ministries and administrative units, absent functional justification, reinforces public skepticism about the state capacity to deliver effective governance. In this context, Kompas survey operates not merely as an opinion snapshot but a reflection of deeper structural concerns about the consistency of Indonesia bureaucratic apparatus with the principles of good governance.

Bureaucracy has frequently stirred up debates within academia about the role in governance. Some scholars view bureaucracy as an institution that provides stability, while others criticize the concept for the rigidity and inefficiency (Mai, 2016). However, there is a broad consensus that an effective bureaucracy must be transparent, accountable, and responsive to public needs.

The principles of accountability, transparency, and effectiveness are critical to gaining the trust of citizens toward the government (Srivastava, 2009). The bureaucratic structure presently in Indonesia does not reflect these principles, making it imperative to examine the implications for governance.

The changes within the cabinet raise many fundamental questions concerning the alignment of administrative structure with governance objectives. Proponents believe that the new positions help accelerate the implementation of government programs. However, for public perception, both survey data and public sentiment do not support this view. Concerns about inefficiency, resource wastage, and political patronage, which exist on top of the primary purpose, affect the outcome of expansions (Rahman, 2017). The resulting costs are substantial, as maintaining an excessively large bureaucracy diverts resources from crucial sectors, including education, health, and infrastructure. This dynamic is consistent with Parkinson Bureaucracy, where structural growth often occurs in contradiction to efficiency and effectiveness (Lukman et al., 2016).

Parkinson Bureaucracy is not unique to Indonesia. Similar challenges arise elsewhere and often reflect political trade-offs rather than functional imperatives. A significant part of bureaucratic expansion is driven by patronage politics, rewarding political allies with administrative positions (Chalid, 2017). These practices worsen inefficiencies and further erode public trust in the current cabinet structure in Indonesia (Philip, 2024).

Based on the description above, this study aims to examine how Parkinsonian

Bureaucracy develops within Indonesia current cabinet structure and the implications for governance performance. Although existing literature has extensively discussed bureaucratic theory and Parkinson's Law in abstract terms, there remains a gap in applying the concepts to the contemporary political-administrative landscape, particularly the unprecedented expansion of ministries and deputy ministerial posts under the current administration. To address this gap, the study formulates three guiding questions, namely (1) How does cabinet enlargement in Indonesia reflect the mechanisms described in Parkinson's Law? (2) In what ways do political patronage and structural fragmentation reinforce bureaucratic overgrowth? (3) What administrative and fiscal consequences arise from this expansion for governance effectiveness and public accountability? This study contributes to ongoing debates on administrative reform and good governance by synthesizing theoretical insights with documented empirical developments. The results underscore the need for merit-based appointments, clearer institutional mandates, streamlined structure, and stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure that Indonesia bureaucratic growth is consistent with functional logic and reforms necessary for achieving credible and responsive governance.

Parkinson Law, presented by Cyril Northcote Parkinson, remains a very important, critical perspective concerning organizational bureaucratization. The law states that "work expands to fill the time available for the completion," and the

number of administrators within any organization tends over time to increase, independent of the work burden (Jochimsen, 2009; Sebestyen, 2022). These principles are especially relevant when examining bureaucracy within government and all other sectors not disciplined by market mechanisms, where efficiency often diminishes due to an increasingly top-heavy administrative structure.

A first principle of Parkinson Law is the phenomenon of work expansion, where tasks are modified in a way that leads to significant consumption of the time allotted for completion. These tendencies contribute to inefficiencies in bureaucratic processes as deadlines and time frames are artificially elongated without a corresponding justifiable increase in complexity or workload (Jochimsen, 2009). For example, in vehicle registration offices in Germany, studies showed that an increase in staff numbers per case did not lead to improved service quality. Breaking down the service procedure into smaller sub-services worsened inefficiencies, indicating that task expansion did not correlate with better outcomes (Jochimsen, 2009). This reflects a broader pattern in bureaucratic systems, where organizational efficiency suffers due to the over-expenditure of time and resources on routine duties.

The second principle of Parkinson Law is that bureaucratic structure tends to expand over time, leading to a rise in the number of administrators, without the workload correspondingly increasing. According to Parkinson, this increase in personnel occurs very often without regard for the real functional requirements of the organization, creating overly inflated

administrative systems that adversely affect efficiency (Jochimsen, 2009). A common example is the motor vehicle registration offices in Germany, where the number of personnel was shown to be a convex function of the number of clients served. When the workload did not increase proportionally, this expansion only worsened inefficiencies (Jochimsen, 2009).

The implications of Parkinson Law for Government and Public Sector Organizations are far-reaching, particularly concerning efficiency and productivity. Increasing staff or extending the target dates does not necessarily improve performance but rather worsens inefficiency at work and contributes to highly inflated bureaucracy. For instance, poor time management practices have been associated with job dissatisfaction and low productivity in the health sector. Therefore, there is a need for proper strategies to manage time and resources effectively. Terefe et al (2023) stated that addressing these inefficiencies will help organizations improve service delivery and increase employee satisfaction.

From an organizational perspective, Parkinson Law underscores the potential for bureaucratic systems to become bloated and inefficient over time. This structural inefficiency often manifests in higher administrative costs and slower decision-making processes, which are antithetical to the principles of good governance (Jochimsen, 2009). Administrative law studies emphasize the need for mechanisms to control bureaucratic power and ensure accountability. Barak-Erez & Perez (2015) stated that adopting accountability frameworks and streamlining administrative

processes can help maintain efficiency and effectiveness in bureaucratic organizations.

The practical applications of Parkinson Law extend to policy and management, where interventions are necessary due to the inefficiencies associated with bureaucratic growth. Effective management strategies include setting clear goals, improving time management practices, and ensuring that staff increases are justified by actual workload demands (Zyoud, 2023). In the public health centers, for instance, some predictors such as planning, low procrastination, and satisfaction with organizational policies contribute to better time management practices, thereby affecting productivity and service delivery (Terefe et al., 2023). Policymakers and administrators are concerned with allocating and structuring bureaucratic procedures to ensure consistency between the growth of the organization and functional requirements.

Parkinson Law offers a useful framework for understanding and addressing inefficiencies in bureaucratic systems within the government and public sector. By demonstrating the inherent tendency toward work expansion and unnecessary administrative growth, the law shows fundamental challenges in public administration. Efforts to overcome these inefficiencies must be multidimensional, addressing effective management practices, accountability frameworks, and policy intervention for organizational restructuring and resource use. Therefore, policymakers and administrators should be more active in addressing the negative effects of Parkinson Law to create more efficient and effective bureaucratic systems.

## METHODS

This study adopted a narrative literature review method, which emphasized interpretative synthesis rather than systematic procedural steps (Creswell, 2012; Snyder, 2019). The approach is appropriate because the objective is to integrate theoretical debates, empirical observations, and policy discussions on Parkinsonian Bureaucracy, governance, and administrative reform rather than to catalogue all available studies. A narrative review allows for breadth and depth in examining how different strands of investigation conceptualize bureaucratic expansion, political patronage, inefficiency, and red tape both within Indonesia and beyond.

The choice of a literature-based method is also grounded in the nature of the study problem. Cabinet restructuring under the current administration remains a recent and evolving phenomenon, suggesting primary data collection through interviews or institutional audits is not feasible. Extensive secondary scholarship on bureaucracy and governance has also provided a rich conceptual foundation for analyzing Indonesia cabinet structure. Therefore, a literature review offers a timely and analytically efficient means of identifying conceptual patterns, diagnosing structural tendencies, and situating Indonesian case within broader administrative theories.

The analytical process proceeded through three interpretive stages. First, relevant sources, including academic journals, books, policy papers, government documents, and reputable news articles, were identified. Second, these materials were examined to extract recurring ideas, including bureaucratic expansion, patronage-



driven appointments, hierarchical layering, and inefficiency. Third, the insights were consolidated through conceptual synthesis, linking theoretical constructs from Parkinson Law with empirical observations about Indonesia administrative configuration. This process facilitated a coherent understanding of how governance practices relate to bureaucratic structure and presents practical implications for reform.

Through the narrative synthesis, this study integrates theoretical and empirical perspectives to illuminate patterns of inefficiency, particularly those associated with red tape and administrative redundancy. It also contributes to ongoing debates about public administration reform and the pursuit of more effective, coherent, and accountable governance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Parkinsonian Bureaucracy in Current Cabinet

Bureaucracy plays an important role in government due to the specific functions that make it politically strong. The authority of bureaucracy stems from control over resources and the special position, not easily replaceable by other social and community organizations. Therefore, bureaucracy is considered the most authoritative agency in political systems, especially in governance. Political science believes that there are four major models of governance, one of which is Parkinsonian bureaucracy. This model hypothesises that bureaucratic personnel tend to increase over time regardless of workload or performance, thereby contributing directly to inefficiency and dysfunction.

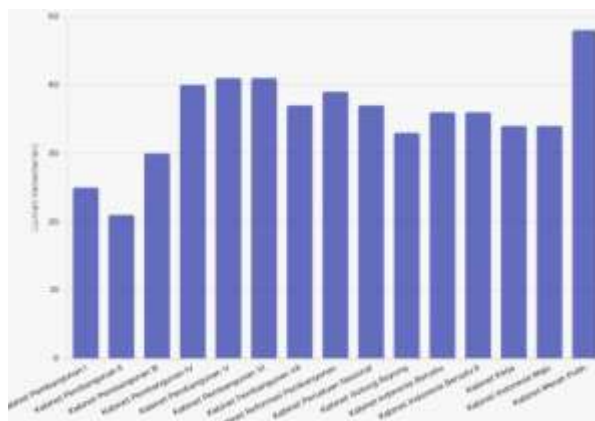
Cyril Northcote Parkinson model has been widely criticized for depicting bureaucracy as inherently inefficient and incapable of functioning effectively. As bureaucracy grows and expands, it becomes more complicated, conflicting, and difficult to maintain. According to Fatah (1998), as cited in the book *Birokrasi and Pelayanan Publik* (Prabowo, 2022), although Parkinsonian bureaucracy is considered pathological, it responds to certain organizational needs. This concept serves the dual purpose of increasing the individual capabilities in the system while also addressing the problems of an aging workforce.

In Indonesia, the expansion of bureaucratic structure has often taken place without a corresponding performance improvement. This is most evident in the current cabinet system, which has become a major source of concern for the government due to the size and the complexity of the administrative structure, as shown in Figure 1. The current cabinet consists of 48 ministries and 56 deputy ministers (Ali, 2024). This large structure raises concerns regarding the efficiency of the decision-making process and interministerial coordination. Generally, a leaner bureaucracy should function more efficiently since policies and programs are more easily and efficiently circulated. On the other hand, large bureaucracy tend to face problems of coordination and duplication in roles, leading to less efficiency.

Recent developments reinforce the challenges explained above. First, Wijaya (2025) reported that the addition of 22 new ministries, bringing the total to 48 ministries and 56 deputy ministers, has created substantial fiscal pressures. This is because

each new unit requires a minister, a deputy minister, a secretary general, a directorate general, and expert staff, all of which significantly increase permanent staff spending. Moreover, the structural expansion has forced efficiency cuts that ultimately impact local governments and risk reducing the quality of public services. A second illustration comes from Suara.com (Tanjung & Hutasuhut, 2025), which documents how the appointment of several special staff at the Ministry of Defense, including key figures with limited policy expertise, has resulted in additional routine expenditures at a time when other ministries are facing budget cuts (Tanjung & Hutasuhut, 2025). These empirical cases demonstrate how Parkinsonian bureaucracy manifests through administrative growth that increases costs without improving performance, worsening inefficiencies across central and local government.

**Figure 1.** Number of Ministries in Indonesia Since the New Order Era



Sumber: Goodstats, 2024

The Indonesian Constitution, through Article 4(1) of the 1945 Constitution, mandates the President to govern the

country based on the principle of constitutional government. This covers the appointment of the cabinet as an extension of the executive authority. The structure of the current cabinet stands in stark contrast to that of previous administrations. For example, the President Joko Widodo government operated with 34 ministries as stipulated by Law No. 39 of 2008 (Putri et al., 2022). Despite conducting cabinet reshuffles multiple times, the administration maintained a relatively smaller cabinet size, reflecting a more streamlined approach to governance. In contrast, the size of the current cabinet has raised concerns about the potential inefficiencies and the complexity of operations.

The legal provisions constrain the prerogative rights of the President in appointing ministers and establishing ministries. The establishment of certain ministries and institutions by law complicates efforts to reform or streamline bureaucratic structure. According to Alfath et al. (2019), the 46 administrative functions of the Indonesian government are listed in Law No. 39 of 2008, stating that the number of ministries should not be more than 34. This is indicative of the tension between constitutional prerogatives and legal constraints that complicate efforts to create a more efficient and accountable bureaucracy.

The current cabinet structure is not only cumbersome but also highly susceptible to functional overlapping and duplication of responsibilities. These functional overlaps usually lead to inefficiencies and conflicts in the system. Establishment of new ministries or positions without a clear mandate further worsens the issues, leading to duplication of



efforts and unnecessary administrative layers. This trend corresponds to the observation of Parkinson that bureaucracy grows with time, often at the expense of effectiveness and efficiency.

Another factor contributing to the expansion of administrative structure is the political dynamics of the current system. The growth of administrative structure is led by the perceptions that larger cabinets signal stronger governments because it suggests more subordinates who add to power and greater command over administration. However, these are rarely accompanied by informed analysis about the capability of additional staff to meet professional standards or make any relevant contribution to the achievement of organizational objectives. The growth rather reflects a system based on patronage in which political considerations take precedence over efficiency and effectiveness.

In the opinion of Winanti (2020), patronage is one of the reasons for the prevalence of Parkinsonian bureaucracy in Indonesia. Scott (1972) defined patronage, according to Chalid (2017), as a reciprocal relationship in which persons of higher status and wealth, called patrons, extend protection or other benefits to individuals of lower status (clients) in exchange for loyalty and support. This translates into the form of overappointments and the creation of redundant positions in the current cabinet. Therefore, the practice is against the principles of good governance to support the inefficiency of Parkinsonian bureaucracy.

Institutional reform efforts in Indonesia also face resistance from political elites and senior officials who seek to maintain positions and influence. According

to Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007), endorsement of reforms at the level of the societal leaders is superficial and pays lip service to the reformist imperatives but eschews concrete steps that may jeopardize positions and popularity. Financial and political incentives for large bureaucratic organizations further promote resistance to change. Fukuoka (2012) reported that the political priority of incentives often overshadows the pursuit of efficiency and has created administrative structure more oriented toward consolidation of power than functional goals.

The implications of Parkinsonian bureaucracy in the current cabinet system are significant. Overlapping functions and responsibilities only hinder coordination and accomplish the inverse, which is inefficient use of the resources. For instance, the formation of new institutions for the same mandates as those of other previously created ones creates duplication of work and a general feeling of waste in terms of expenditure. These practices, as stated by Maulidia et al. (2019), weaken the ability of the government to effectively deliver public services and erode public trust in the institutions. Moreover, unclear roles and responsibilities pose challenges and make it difficult for the government to respond effectively to rising issues.

Evidence of functional overlap in the current cabinet is visible from two developments reported by major media. BBC News Indonesia (2024) mentioned that the splitting of several ministries into two or even three new institutions, such as the divisions of Education, Law and Human Rights, PUPR, and Forestry–Environment, has raised expert concerns over unclear task boundaries.

Public policy analyst Lina Mifthahul Jannah stated that many of these restructuring decisions were not based on proper evaluations and risk “memperpanjang dan memperumit alur birokrasi, serta memicu tumpang tindih kewenangan.” Another example is the Presidential Communication Office (PCO). According to Amara (2025), the appointment of the Minister of State Secretariat as an additional presidential spokesperson indicates overlapping functions between the Mensesneg and PCO, reinforcing perceptions of institutional redundancy. These cases illustrate how Parkinsonian Bureaucracy materializes not only through expansion in numbers but also via unclear functional differentiation that complicates coordination.

The broad-based nature of the existing cabinet fuel is an obstacle in the path of good governance. Klimek, Hanel, and Thurner (2009) found that good governance comprises the principles of transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and equity. These principles cannot be implemented due to the very inefficiencies accompanying Parkinsonian bureaucracy, such as slow decision-making and misallocation of resources, influencing the effectiveness of public services and ultimately governance.

This Parkinsonian model, self-sustaining with inefficiency and dysfunction, runs further against Weber ideal model of bureaucracy based on efficiency, rationality, and professionalism. Weber model serves as a normative standard for evaluating bureaucratic systems, emphasizing the importance of clearly defined roles, adherence to rules, and merit-based appointments.

The current cabinet system conflicts with these principles, indicating the need for comprehensive reform that addresses structural and functional deficiencies within the bureaucracy. Therefore, Parkinsonian bureaucracy is a challenge to effective and efficient management of Indonesian governance. It could be contextualized through the present cabinet system, whose expansive structure, overlapping of responsibilities, and patronage-driven appointments run contrary to effective performance. The current situation demands reorientation from political preoccupation toward good governance practices based on efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness. Without restructuring the bureaucracy to align with functional requirements and eliminate inefficiencies rooted in Parkinsonian tendencies, Indonesia will struggle to establish a credible, modern administrative system capable of meeting governance demands.

## **B. Root Causes and Implications of Parkinsonian Bureaucracy**

The presence Parkinsonian bureaucracy in the current Indonesian cabinet can be attributed to organizational and systemic factors, especially the complexity within the bureaucratic systems. Bureaucracy always tends to expand with more duties, functions performed over time, without critically assessing whether such growth is necessary or consistent with organizational needs. This leads to inefficiency of operations and duplication of functions alongside lesser accountability. An example is the completely unnecessary ministries or positions created by the current cabinet system, indicating a trend toward

proliferation that prioritizes quantity over quality outcomes.

Internal factors within the bureaucratic institutions also contribute to the persistence of Parkinsonian trends. Siagian (1999) identified five critical features of bureaucratic pathology, including perception and styles of management by the officials, ignorance and incompetence of the staff, illegal acts by the bureaucrats, pathological behaviors, and internal organizational problems. Among these factors, the most prominent are the internal challenges faced by government institutions in Indonesia and differences in perspectives on how to achieve policy goals, and the predominance of political interests over administrative efficiency. This is further worsened by the political patronage focus of the present system, in which appointments and promotions are given out not on considerations of merit and capability but out of loyalty and connection.

Patronage is a systemic problem with deep historical and political roots in Indonesia. According to Winanti (2020), the patron-client relationship, in which individuals in power grant benefits and protection to subordinates in exchange for loyalty, has been one of the defining characteristics of the country political topography. Scott (1972), as cited in Chalid (2017), defines patronage as the mutual relationship that sustains an existing power structure at the expense of institutional integrity. In the current cabinet, this concept is evident in the appointment of various officials with ill-defined mandates and accountability, thereby diluting the potency of governance and only creating a breeding ground for inefficiencies. External factors also

contribute to the persistence of Parkinsonian bureaucracy. One major obstacle to change is resistance to reform among political elites and senior officials. Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) stated that leaders in society often provide superficial support for reforms, which serve as a smokescreen to retain positions and influence. In Indonesia, this is worsened by the financial and political incentives associated with keeping large bureaucratic structure in place. Fukuoka (2012) mentioned that these incentives are often designed with short-term political gains in mind rather than long-term administrative efficiency. This results in a system more focused on consolidating power than on achieving functional objectives.

The various issues have deep consequences for governance in a Parkinsonian bureaucracy. Among the most visible consequences is the duplication of functions and responsibilities that affect coordination, resulting in resource wastage. Maulidia et al. (2019) explained that the creation of new institutions with unclear and overlapping mandates undermines the potential of government service delivery to citizens. This lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities further undermines inefficiencies, making it difficult for the government to respond to rising challenges in a timely and effective manner. Another important implication is that of loss of public confidence in governmental institutions. Inefficiencies related to Parkinsonian bureaucracy, such as delays in decision-making, misallocation of resources, and lack of accountability, undermine the credibility of the government in delivering the principles of good governance. Klimek, Hanel, and Thurner (2009) stated that good governance

requires transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and equity. The failure to ensure these principles in the existing cabinet system raises an urgent concern for reform to restore public trust and improve governance effectiveness.

The continuance of Parkinson Bureaucracy has wider socio-economic implications. Inefficient bureaucratic systems pose a great challenge to public resources, diverting money from development projects that are actually in need. This not only increases administrative costs due to duplication of functions and responsibilities but also decreases the potential capability of the government to respond to important social issues, including poverty, education, and health. The misallocation of resources underscores the need for a more streamlined and efficient bureaucratic structure that prioritizes functional objectives over political considerations. Therefore, the underlying causes of Parkinsonian bureaucracy in Indonesia current cabinet extend beyond both the internal dynamics of the bureaucratic institution and the broader political system. These tendencies have far-reaching implications, not only for the efficiency and effectiveness of governance but also the socio-economic welfare of the country. The situation requires a holistic approach to address the structural and systemic factors responsible for bureaucratic inefficiencies. Only through comprehensive reforms can Indonesia overcome Parkinsonian tendencies and establish a merit-based system that enhances accountability, strengthens administrative efficiency, and supports a more effective and responsive governance system.

The fiscal implications of Parkinsonian Bureaucracy become visible when examining the 2024–2029 cabinet expansion. Empirical data from public finance watchdogs and media monitoring indicate that structural enlargement has immediate consequences for operational spending. Tempo (2025) reported that even as the government issued a nationwide budget efficiency directive targeting savings of up to Rp 306.6 trillion, many newly formed ministries simultaneously appointed multiple special staff (*staf khusus*) with remuneration equivalent to Eselon 1B positions. This contradiction demonstrates a classic Parkinsonian dynamic, in which bureaucratic units expand internally through new posts and supporting structure, even under conditions of declared austerity.

Another layer of fiscal pressure arises from the growth in ministerial leadership positions. FITRA estimated that the expanded cabinet, consisting of 48 ministries and 109 ministers and vice-ministers, may increase central government personnel expenditure by 20–30 percent compared to initial APBN 2025 projections, calculated under the assumption of only 34 ministries (FITRA, 2024). This inflation stems from additional eselon 1–3 posts, new organizational units, as well as the multiplication of allowances, operational facilities, and routine expenditures. Roy Salam of the Indonesia Budget Center further calculated that ministerial and vice-ministerial remuneration alone could reach Rp 400–500 billion per year, or roughly Rp 2 trillion over a five-year term (FITRA, 2024).

The numbers illustrate how Parkinson Bureaucracy manifests materially through escalating fixed costs that reduce fiscal space

for development expenditure. As personnel spending expands to accommodate institutional proliferation, the composition of public expenditure shifts from public-facing programs, such as subsidies, social protection, and infrastructure, toward internal administrative maintenance. This pattern is consistent with Parkinson prediction that bureaucratic growth absorbs resources disproportionately to functional output, and with the common-pool resource dilemma, where each additional administrative unit increases aggregate spending while dispersing accountability.

### **C. Strategies for Bureaucratic Reform in the Current Indonesian Cabinet Administration**

Any reform in the bureaucratic system of the current Indonesian cabinet administration must be holistic and multi-dimensional. To overcome the persistence of Parkinsonian bureaucracy, marked by inefficiencies, overlapping functions, and an overreliance on political patronage, strategies that address both the structural and systemic challenges are needed. These reforms must be based on the principles of good governance, comprising transparency, accountability, efficiency, and responsiveness, to build an effective administrative framework. Another strategy is the rationalization of the bureaucratic structure. Rationalization includes streamlining the administrative layers to achieve coordination among the ministries and agencies. The process should begin with a comprehensive audit of existing functions and responsibilities to identify areas suitable for consolidation, thereby reducing hierarchical complexity and enhancing

organizational efficiency. Wulf (2012) explained that delayering, introduced in many parts of the world in the 1990s, moved structural positions into functional roles and made organizations much more agile and responsive. The same approach can be used in Indonesia to cut down the bureaucratic burden and make the decision-making processes significantly leaner.

Another important measure would be to introduce meritocracy in appointments and promotions. The current patronage-based system in the country undermines the professionalism and effectiveness of the bureaucracy. By emphasizing merit-based recruitment and promotion, the government would ensure that offices are held by able and competent persons capable of measuring up to the challenges of posts. This shift needs strong performance and potential evaluation mechanisms, as well as safeguards against political interference in personnel decisions. Astara (2015) calls for "reinventing government," stating that bureaucracy should focus on public service and adhere to entrepreneurial principles to achieve effective results. This also includes the need to restructure ministerial and institutional mandates in line with national priorities. In many cases, a mismatch exists between the legal framework and administrative practices, resulting in inefficiencies and conflicts. For example, the legal limit of 34 ministries provided for by Law No. 39 of 2008 is in contrast with the bloated structure of the current cabinet of 48 ministries and 56 deputy ministers (Alfath et al., 2019; Ali, 2024). This discrepancy underlines the need for rational alignment of institutional mandates, where the functions of each ministry are clearly defined and contribute to

overarching governance goals. Similarly, it enhances accountability by reducing the scope for power struggles and inefficiencies within the administrative framework. Increased efficiency and transparency through technology-driven solutions could further advance bureaucratic reforms (Sajida, 2024). The elements of digital transformation, such as e-government, have facilitated the flow of communication and coordination across ministries, with reduced avenues for corruption and mismanagement. These will also push data-informed policy decisions to ensure accurate and timely information. International examples demonstrate how the use of technology in administration has contributed to less red tape and improved public services. Therefore, Indonesia would learn from experience and transform such into efforts of modernizing bureaucracy and enhancing operating efficiency.

Another critical issue of bureaucratic restructuring is the ability to overcome reform resistance. In most cases, institutional intransience and opposition from political elites create formidable obstacles to change. Therefore, the reform process should be consensus-oriented and supported by the most influential stakeholders. According to Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007), the framing of reforms as opportunities for progress, rather than threats to established power structure, is very important. This can be effected through stakeholders participation in the reform process, and communicating the benefits. Incentives should also be given to enforce adherence to new policies and procedures. The government is recommended to invest in capacity-building programs for bureaucratic personnel to make

reforms sustainable. Training programs can be pursued in the development of skills, knowledge, and ethical standards for a professional and accountable civil service. These training programs should be complemented by performance-based evaluation systems that reward excellence and underperformance. Equally important, the training is to be complemented by the culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Finally, institutionalizing mechanisms of accountability is essential to safeguarding the integrity of bureaucratic processes. Strengthening oversight bodies, such as anti-corruption commissions and ombudsmen offices, is essential to ensure that practices are in line with legal and ethical standards of bureaucracy. Similarly, transparent reporting and monitoring systems build public confidence by showing government commitment to accountability and good governance. Maulidia et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of optimizing existing institutions functions before creating new ones, demonstrating the need to maximize the effectiveness of current resources before expanding administrative structure. Reforms in the bureaucratic system in the current Indonesian cabinet administration must be holistic and strategic. The government should be able to rationalize structure, foster meritocracy, align institutional mandates, use technology, handle resistance, develop capacity, and institutionalize accountability to solve inefficiencies and dysfunctions related to Parkinsonian bureaucracy. These reforms will enhance administrative efficiency and build public confidence in governance toward



better responsiveness and effectiveness of the bureaucratic system.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study shows several formidable challenges posed by Parkinsonian bureaucracy to the current cabinet system of Indonesia. The results indicate that exorbitant bureaucratic expansion typified by duplication of functions, inefficiency, and resource wastage contradicts good governance principles such as transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Structural inefficiencies promote not only coordination difficulty but also erode public trust, hamper service delivery, underscoring the urgent need for reform. Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader debate on administrative reform by reaffirming meritocracy, streamlined structure, and alignment of institutional functions with governance priorities. By addressing these issues, Indonesia will be able to develop a more efficient and effective administrative framework that ensures resources are used for the welfare of the people, not lost in bureaucratic overheads. The results also show a critical interplay between political dynamics and bureaucratic growth as a means of making the patronage system persistent in terms of inefficiency in government. Despite the significant findings, this study also has limitations. Reliance on secondary data through literature reviews limits the possibility of presenting empirical data related to the Indonesian cabinet system. Further studies are needed to confirm and extend these results using qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as interviewing policymakers or

analyzing performance metrics of the cabinet. Case studies from other countries where successful overcoming of Parkinsonian bureaucracy has taken place could provide useful lessons for Indonesia in the reform process. The results will overcome the limitations and build on the insights developed to better understand how bureaucratic structure can be optimized in realizing the principles of good governance.

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