





Examining the impact of political patronage on the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate

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ABSTRACT

Political interference has been one of the leading factors in inhibiting state-owned entities reach their mandates. Through political patronage, political elites are the gateway to the SOE's thus impacting the efficacy of most state-owned entities. In this regard, South African Airways (SAA) is also one of the entities in the grip of corruption due to political patronage. Therefore, this political patronage has been the difference between the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate. SAA has been taking center stage due to corruption, maladministration, and failure to execute its mandate as a result of political interference as well as patronage. This paper reviews existing literature on the effect of political patronage on the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate. In doing so, the paper employed qualitative techniques. Document analysis was utilized to understand the effect of political patronage on SAA's ability to execute its mandate. Eventually, the paper discovered that political patronage affects the ability of SAA to execute its mandate. The paper then closes by making recommending mechanisms for inhibiting political interference in SOE most specifically SAA.

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Introduction

Patronage can be understood as having the right and authority to appoint individuals to an office (Hollibaugh Jr, Horton, and Lewis, 2014). In particular public offices, political heads/elites use their power to appoint individuals of their choice to public office, and this is mainly common in South Africa as a result of political affiliation and/or deployment (Mamogale, 2017). Political patronage seems to be the most important component in the agenda of fighting corruption and rebuilding the confidence of legitimate job appointments at SOEs and levels of government (Gray, 2018). Meaning that for one to deal with corruption one needs to deal with the root cause of this cancerous discourse (Driscoll, 2018).

Gray (2018) agrees with Driscoll (2018) that political patronage is limiting the idea to deal with corruption. In addition, Driscoll (2018) has explained how this patronage is increasing and spreading to all levels of government. Thus, patronage is the newly arising discourse within African states (Green, 2010). Political appointments are the leading cause of the high rate of corruption, mismanagement of funds in certain instances, and also hiring of incompetent public servants who in retrospect have been the difference in the thriving and the fall of the SOE (Lodge, 1998). Hence, scholars such as Driscoll (2018); Green (2010), and Grey (2018) have afforded scholarly attention to the discourse of patronage and how it affects the efficiency of government administrations or SOEs. Similarly, even in the case of SAA as an SOE, it has also been under the helm of maladministration and corruption as a result of political patronage.

To that extent, this has led to the inability of SAA to efficiently perform over the years. Hence the paper sought to explore the impact of political patronage on the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate. Networking amongst common politically affiliated individuals

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has been a way that defines political patronage, which brews corruption and cripples the efficient functioning of states' services (Olver, 2018). Be that as it may, it is apparent that many scholars focus on the impact of political patronage within the levels of government and not so much on its impact relating to destabilization and the collapse of SOEs with specific reference to SAA.

Labuschagne, (2017) has argued that the core function of the state has been degraded by political patronage and state capture especially during resource allocation, hence affecting the delivery of government services. While Olver, (2018) focused on the Nelson Mandela metropolitan area, has alluded to how patronage has crippled the efficiency of services at this government. On the other hand, focusing on the Kosovo post-war Tadić, and Elbasani, (2018) have depicted how political networks and parties have limited state-building by having political patronage infiltrating the bureaucracies of the state. Kungu, (2020) has given scholarly attention to the patron-client relationship and documented the discourse of it as a hindrance to good governance at the local level of government.

In essence, Labuschagne, (2017); Olver, (2018); Tadić, and Elbasani, (2018); Kungu, (2020) have given enough scholarly attention to the impact of political patronage at three levels of governance. In addition, Gaboilwe (1998); Perkins, Fedderke, and Luiz (2005), and Chilenga (2016) have only focused their attention on the policy analysis of SAA and its importance. Therefore, much as there is an existing scholarly contribution to political patronage, there are few insights if none at all literature on the role of political patronage in SOEs. In addition, there is a little contribution in academic discourse on the possible effects of political patronage on the efficacy of SOEs. In addition, in both scholarly and policy imperatives there is also a need to examine the impact of political patronage in limiting the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate.

Literature Review

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Patronage, Corruption, and Execution of Mandate of SOEs

As politics evolves and matures, the level of competition increases making it difficult for politicians to stay relevant then they start looting state coffers to earn political favors (Driscoll, 2018). For instance, a study conducted by Fraser, Zhang, and Derashid (2006) on the state of Malaysia and Baum, Caglayan, Schäfer, and Talavera (2008) utilizing the banking sector of Ukraine, they have agreed that corruption has always been an emanating factor. Moreover, scholars such as Verde (2021) have also concurred with the above-mentioned scholars, while focusing on the state of Angola, the scholar has also noted that corruption is a factual illuminating factor.

This further depicts that political patronage is noted to be a challenging factor across the globe, perpetuating corruption and political alliance through patriotic networks. Karp and Banducci (2008) argue about the dominance of the ANC, the scholars have agreed with Mamogale (2017) signaling the dominance of the ruling party in the polls and later at the administrative duties level. Meaning their dominance at the polls gives them the ability to largely occupy public offices and SOEs without any hindrance. Another keynote that makes the phenomenon of patronage so significant in South Africa due to dominance of the ANC in the country's political landscape (Ndaba, 2021).

Since the twenty-seven (27) years of democracy, the ANC has successfully been winning national and eight out of nine provincial elections and attaining the majority in parliament and eight provincial legislatures (Karp and Banducci, 2008). Hence Karp and Banducci (2008): Mamogale (2017) and Ndaba (2021) have agreed that members of the ANC have had ample time and opportunity to occupy strategic roles in the levels of government as well as key institutions of the government.

In the years spent in office by the ruling party, service delivery has been slow going into debris, yet patriotic networks expanding and cutting across the public sector. Some scholars such as Alexander (2010) and Birago, Mensah, and Sharma (2017) have recently documented and agreed that patronage which brews corruption is one of the factors to blame for poor service delivery and underdevelopment. Similarly, while analyzing the SOEs of China, Cai and Li (2006) have agreed that corruption is one of the causes and the prevention of SOEs effectively execute their mandate.

In addition, Myeza, Nkhi, and Maroun (2021) focusing on South African SOEs have noted that political mandates are some contributors to corruption, and as such this results in limiting the efficiency of executing the mandates of these entities. Although these scholars focused on different SOEs from both developed and underdeveloped states, they have agreed that corruption hinders with development and execution of these SOEs mandates (Cai and Li, 2006; Myeza *et al.*, 2021). Particularly in developing states, governments are failing to deliver services to society and one of the reasons at the center of this discourse is patronage and thus causing underdevelopment.

Tshishonga (2014) and Amusan (2016) have argued that cadre deployment and political patronage are some of the challenges to service delivery and execution of state mandates, brewing corruption within the state organs. Brierley (2021) continued by questioning why are that political elites particularly those occupying governmental offices prefer deploying cadres into state offices instead of applying meritocracy and hiring skilled public workers. This is because skilled individuals will enhance the governmental office and ensure development (Brierly, 2021).

This discourse has raised the concern of probing whether the issue of patronage in the state or party-level politics is contributing to the rise of the downfall of these entities respectively (Brierly, 2021). Durant and Legge (2002) have noted the intervention of politics within the France SOEs, has resulted in the privatization and downfall of some of the entities. Similarly, Hung (2019) has agreed

with the above-cited scholars by documenting how factionalism and patronage are dividing as well as shrinking the efficacy of political parties. Furthermore, this creates factions that will start to affect the administration which affects the performance of SOEs.

For instance, having a divided ANC has weakened state organs due inability of these organs to pull in one direction (Twala, 2014). For instance, Ndaba (2021) has stated that having a faction that is against corruption and wants to foresee the step-aside resolution of the ANC is dividing the party. Similarly, having a faction that will not accept the "step aside" resolution perpetuates the violation of states' resources and continue with the deployment of cadres to state entities (Ndaba, 2021). This will increase the patriotic networks on either side of the ruling party yet make the party vulnerable and weak, then will spring to the SOEs such as SAA to allow looting and corruption to take place (Twala, 2014).

Contrary to the popular scholarly narrative that patronage affects the performance of SOEs resulting in them being ineffective, scholars such as Saeed, Belghitar, and Clark (2019) have disagreed with this narrative. Saeed *et al.*, (2019) while studying public entities in Pakistan concluded that political networking does not affect the efficiency of such entities. Thus, according to Saeed *et al.*, (2019) patronage has no effect on the efficacy of SOEs executing their mandate.

There is a vast scholarship on patronage, SOEs, and corruption. For instance, Baum Hackney, Medas, and Sy (2019) have investigated the nexus between SOEs and corruption within a wide range of categories such as transportation, natural resources, and utilities. Their focus was generalized and not specific toward the SAA. Henceforth, the paper takes notice that scholars such as Baum *et al.*, (2019), Reinsberg, Stubbs, Kentikelenis, and King (2020), and Katemena (2020) who have paid sufficient attention to the role of corruption in SOEs across the globe.

However, these scholars are yet to succinctly and specifically examine how patronage as well as corruption affect SOEs in executing their mandate. The focus of the previous scholars as noted in the literature excludes the understanding of how patronage and corruption affect the effective functioning of SOEs.

Mandonsela (2018) has highlighted the Zuma-Gupta relationship as some of those perpetuating patriotic networks, although the Zuma-Gupta network was at the center of this network. Madonsela (2018) further depicts the relations of political elites such as Malusi Gigaba, Brian Molefe, Mosebenzi Zwane, and Anoj Singh; the entrepreneurs or brokers, Eric Wood, Salim Essa, Ashok Narayan, and Iqbal Sharma; and the dealers as political networks creating political patronage (Swilling, 2017). The above-mentioned statement shows some of the close political networks seen within the ruling party and how they create a web of political connections, resulting in its political patronage.

Conceptual Framework on Patronage

The paper employs a conceptual framework of patronage. Amongst the major practitioners and proponents of patronage were Andrew Jackson who served as the seventh president of the United States. Jackson operationalized was known as "Jacksonian Democracy" (Patronage) in which he sought to bring the government closer to the people by awarding faithful partisans with employment in his administration. He further argued that for any government that aspires to fully serve the people (Motswaledi and Maseng, 2023). It will appoint and rotate its staff instead of creating a permanent bureaucratic system in which civil servants hold their position as property.

Besides Andrew Jackson as the proponent of patronage, there are adequate scholarly contributions concerning operationalization. For instance, scholars such as Kenny (2017); Quaresima (2019); Pelletier (2019); Pierskalla and Sacks (2020) conceptualize patronage as the power to support, and control appointments of individuals to an office. Henceforth, patronage assumes that political elites use their influence to sway opportunities for their preferred candidates (Panizza *et al.*, 2018). In studying the administrations of Argentina and Uruguay, Panizza *et al.*, (2018) found that the administration of Mauricio Macri belonging to the Republican proposal party had used his political power to deploy cadres from his party to occupy strategic sectors of government in Argentina.

While in Uruguay during his presidential term, Tabaré Ramón Vázquez Rosas of the Socialist Party had also deployed members of the latter party to serve in public service. In addition, a study conducted by Olver (2018) found that the ANC used its political power to deploy its members to occupy administrative posts at the Nelson Mandela Metro Municipality. Similarly, Panizza *et al.*, (2018) agree with Jiang and Zhang, (2020) that political elites such as Mauricio Macri and Tabaré Ramón Vázquez Rosas used their power to gain business opportunities that arose from public offices occupied by their appointees.

It is through these assumption(s) that the paper adopts and employs the conceptual framework of patronage as it relates to the paper. Therefore, for this paper, this concept was employed to support or edify and/or contribute to expanding the meaning of patronage and its impact on the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate.

Research and Methodology

This section presents the design, method, collection techniques, and search engines used for this paper.

The paper relied on qualitative methods in its construction and development. According to Bhandari (2020) qualitative method of research is noted to be the method that includes collecting and analysing non-numerical data to gather an in-depth analysis of an idea or theory. It can also be utilized to understand concepts, experiences, and/or opinions that can generate new research ideas. In addition, the study has since employed a case study research design. This design was identified by researchers due to its ability to describe, compare, evaluate, and understand different aspects of a search problem. Thus, it was chosen due to its ability to describe SOEs while focusing on a particular case study being SAA. Thus, the qualitative method was deemed relevant to offer scholarly descriptions in narrative format on the effects of political patronage on the efficacy of SOEs being SAA in this case. Thus, unlike the quantitative research method, which offers numerical explanations, the study used qualitative explanations because the method was able to provide narrative-based explanations on how political patronage affects the mandate execution of SOE's while focusing on SAA.

Data Collection Technique

The paper has employed a document analysis as a technique of data collection due to its reliance on readily available documents online such as books, journal articles, official reports, and other relevant documents on SAA, SOE's, and patronage (Motswaledi and Maseng, 2023).

Search Engine for Documents

The study also used the North West University (NWU) Library Online Catalogue and Google Scholar to search for books, journal articles, official reports, and other relevant documents able to provide scientific evidence of the impact of political patronage on the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate. In employing the above-mentioned search engines, key words such as Efficacy, mandate, South African Airways, state-owned entities, and patronage assisted the researchers in obtaining relevant material on political patronage and its effects on the efficacy of SAA executing its mandate.

Findings and Discussions

The paper has established that due to corruption that brews as a result of political patronage within state own entities, there has been a great impact on the performance of these entities. SAA continues to suffer in the hands of comrades who operate under the flag of cadre deployment and now is not able to reach its mandate as this patronage hinders SAA's performance particularly in executing its mandate (Motswaledi and Maseng, 2023). The paper further depicted that patronage is the biggest enemy of state entity growth.

Henceforth, there are factors such as corruption and maladministration that prevails as encouraged by these patriotic relationships that sought to inhibit SAA to execute and reach its mandate. Therefore, the paper can deduct that failure to deal with patronage and allowing it to emerge at the state entities level will continue to pose a threat to these organizations' performance leading them to not being able to execute their mandates.

Through the scholarly work of Driscoll (2018) where the scholar documented the spreading of political patronage within the levels of government. The paper was able to gain insight as to how this patronage inhibits performance within the levels of government. Political patronage starting to emerge at the levels of government, and it also allows the rise and thriving of corruption and maladministration at the governmental level. Lodge (1998) then concurred with the paper as the scholar referred to the arising of political patronage in retrospect being the biggest contributor to the fall of SOEs. Through Lodge (1998) assertions, the paper was able to establish how political patronage contributed to the thriving of corruption and maladministration.

Although patronage has been long thriving within the levels of government, the paper has established that it is also thriving within the state-owned entities. In the study of corruption, collusion, and nepotism in the Indonesian government, scholar Robertson-Snape (1999) noted how corruption was thriving within the state's offices such that, the government has to resort to combating this corruption. Robertson-Snape's (1999) study further concurs with the paper that once corruption is within the level of government, it will start to spread to other parts of the SOEs, and eventually, it has an effect on the performance of the office executing its mandate.

In the study of Mamogale (2017) where scholars explain that political patronage and cadre deployment is a common practice, particularly in a political system there is a dominant party such as the ANC. The paper concurs with the paper that the main issues within state organizations begin with political affiliations which leads to political deployments, particularly in state-owned entities. Furthermore, the paper further cemented that political heads use their influence, affliction, and status to influence such key decisions, particularly in South Africa as Mamogale (2017) has alluded. Hollibaugh Jr *et al.*, (2014) agrees with the scholars by documenting that political elites use this opportunity of political patronage as an authority and a right to appoint their candidates to state organs.

This is very problematic; in the case of SAA this has been the issue that led to the low performance by the entity, and it has not been able to meet its mandate. In addition, the study of Barasa (2014) clearly shows how political involvement has a negative impact on state entities' performance and this supports the paper in the case of SAA. The paper has established that as a state entity, the SAA has been an interest of the political elites, furthermore, this entity has been suffering at the hand of political influence and control for

years. The SAA as a national carrier was supposed to be at the front row leading the way into the market of airline and aviation in South Africa. The paper has since established that due to this political patronage the national carrier is lacking behind, and political patronage is inhibiting this entity to be able to fully executing its mandate.

Driscoll (2018) has explained how this patronage over the years was slow, paving its way into government, particularly at the levels of government. This meant that political patronage has an impact on the management and smooth running of governmental offices at large, and this was starting to overlap further into state entities. Hollibaugh Jr *et al.*, (2014) by noting that political patronage gave the political elites a sense of entitlement towards appointing state workers concurs with the statement above that through political patronage there was starting to be a political influence at the state-owned entities level.

This agrees with what Driscoll (2018) noted that political patronage is largely influenced by same-party-affiliated individuals as they look to gain political or personal favors from one another by deploying and awarding each other states' resources. As such the SAA also has not been left from this, it has also suffered at the hands of most political elites, and this has led to the issues of the national carrier not being able to fully carry out its mandate.

On the same note, Lodge (1998) has explained how the deployment of political cadres has been the major cause of the fall of state-owned entities. Lodge (1998) goes further to explain that the deployment of competent and incompetent workers to state-owned entities has in oftentimes been the difference and the decider as to whether an SOE will survive or not. Yet, the dominance of political elites in state entities makes inhibiting and stopping this patronage difficult, Karp and Banducci (2008) while noting the dominance of the ANC within the levels of government through the electoral polls. They have noted how this dominance allows the ruling the liberty to send their desired politicians to serve in the strategic sectors of the economy and the SAA being one of those (Motswaledi and Maseng, 2023).

In essence, the ANC having dominance in government they get deploys its leaders to the SOEs such as the SAA, and they will only loot the resources of these organizations and inhibit the performance of this entity and it ends up a meeting or executing its mandate. Hence scholars such as Alexander (2010) and Birago *et al.*, (2017) have agreed that political patronage is to blame for poor service delivery. Similarly, since well this phenomenon cuts across into state entities it is also to blame for these organizations not reaching their goal(s).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper has established and noted that political patronage has an impact on the efficacy of SOEs' performance in executing their mandates. Political patronage has an impact on the performance of SAA. Political patronage has always had an impact on the day-to-day running of governmental affairs, although scholars had vastly documented the impact of political patronage at the levels of government, the paper at hand as informed by the literature has concluded that political patronage has had an impact in SOE's, particularly SAA. This state entity has been running as a political bargaining chip for years.

Political deployments which inhibited the proper employee appointments and awarding of tenders within the entity to party loyalists depict the entrenchment of political affiliation at SAA as a measure to decide who gets what. Therefore, such misconducts have depicted that this entity was running or directed from the governmental offices particularly those of the ruling party the ANC. Hence, the paper concludes that political patronage has had an impact on the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate.

The paper sought to contribute to the body of knowledge by highlighting the impact of political patronage on the efficacy of SAA in executing its mandate. This is very significant as the paper has noted that SAA as an entity, should assist the government to grow the economy and play a role in the development of society. Hence, as an entity, it has its mandate that it sought to execute and reach yearly but due to the prominence of corruption and maladministration, this entity has not been productive. These factors such as corruption and maladministration are brewed by the eminence of political patronage which the paper has noted to be the center point of entities' downfall.

The paper has noted that political patronage is a huge problem in running the affairs of the state, from the levels of government and how this patronage has made it difficult to deliver services to how this cancer is now spreading within SOEs such as SAA. For years the political elites have influenced the operations of the state-owned entities, they have used SAA for their gain and the benefit of their patriotic circles.

The paper takes into full consideration that politics will have an influence, particularly with the running of SOEs looking specifically at the SAA but the deployments of these individuals should not be justified on the political affiliations. Although patronage will have an impact on the SAA due to this political intervention the paper recommends the adoption of adequate qualitative methods that employ meritocracy will limit the impact of political patronage.

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