Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Global Politics and Socio-Humanities
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

The Proper Relationship Between Politicians and Officials: A Comparative Study of Britain and Japan

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Abstract. In a parliamentary democracy, government cannot function without both political authority and administrative expertise. Politicians should set direction and take democratic responsibility, while officials should provide professional advice, preserve institutional memory, and have the capacity for implementation. This paper asks what the proper relationship between politicians and officials should be. It addresses this question by qualitatively comparing the Whitehall model in Britain with the Un-Westminster system in Japan. Britain illustrates the principle of a permanent and neutral civil service, which ensures administrative continuity despite changes in ministers. Japan presents a different case, where policy capacity was frequently clustered in ministries and party-bureaucratic networks, making political control and democratic accountability less clear. The comparison also takes into account Blair's reforms in Britain and the DPJ government's efforts to introduce politician-led government in Japan. The main argument is that neither bureaucratic domination nor absolute political command provides a satisfactory relationship. An institutional balance is required for effective government: politicians should lead and be held accountable for results, while officials should have sufficient professional autonomy to advise, warn, and implement.

Keywords: politicians, officials, bureaucracy, Whitehall model, Un-Westminster system

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Modern parliamentary democracy depends on a difficult balance between political authority and administrative expertise. Political leaders are supposed to make decisions, represent the public's preferences, and be responsible for the results of policies. By contrast, officials are expected to provide professional counsel, maintain institutional memory, and carry out decisions through the state's administrative apparatus. The separation of politicians from officials, as Max Weber has pointed out, is helpful because it reveals that a democratic government is not exclusively dependent on elected leaders or on the expertise of officials [1]. Politicians give direction and responsibility, while officials give knowledge and continuity.

This relationship is especially important during periods of government change. Democratic politics demands that political leaders can be replaced through elections, party competition, or

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DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

parliamentary procedures. However, the state cannot lose its administrative capacity every time a minister, prime minister, or governing party changes. Even a new government requires departments to be familiar with the current policies, legal frameworks, budgets, and issues of implementation. Thus, the modern government must have a balance between political change and administrative continuity.

This paper studies the problem in Britain and Japan. The Whitehall model of Britain is linked with the concepts of ministerial responsibility, civil service impartiality, and continuity of officials irrespective of the political complexion of the government. In this model, ministers make the decisions and are held publicly accountable for the policy of their departments, and career officials advise and implement. By contrast, Japan is sometimes called an Un-Westminster system, as the formal cabinet authority has long been coupled with strong ministries, long party dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and party-bureaucratic policymaking networks. Both these cases are parliamentary democracies with professional bureaucracies, but they structure the relationship between politicians and officials differently and thus offer useful contrasts.

The comparison is also significant because both countries have been under pressure to strengthen political control. The Blair government in Britain attempted to address the issue of Whitehall responsiveness through special advisers, central co-ordination, and delivery reforms. The DPJ government after 2009 tried to create a government in which politicians had greater influence than the bureaucracy. The issue is not simply a question of the relative power of politicians and officials, as the reform efforts demonstrate. The more difficult issue is how to reconcile democratic authority with administrative competence without one undermining the other.

1.2. Literature review

1.2.1. Political–administrative relationship

The first set of literature is related to the general political-administrative relationship. The Weberian separation of politicians and officials is the theoretical point of departure. Politicians are linked to political struggle, public responsibility, and leadership; officials to expertise, hierarchy, and administration. But later public administration studies show that in practice the division is never entirely clear [2]. Officials are not just implementers of orders; they also shape policy through advice, information, and control over implementation. Meanwhile, political leaders cannot govern effectively without professional administrative capacity [3].

The notion of policy capacity is also relevant. Political leaders can have formal power, but that power does not necessarily mean they have the capacity to design, coordinate, and implement policy. Peters argues that administrative and policy capacities are needed, not simply electoral legitimacy [3]. Hustedt and Salomonsen also reveal that there are many politicization mechanisms that governments implement to make bureaucracy politically responsive. These mechanisms can enhance responsiveness, but if taken too far, they can also compromise neutrality and trust [4]. Thus, the literature indicates that the question is not whether it is possible to have a perfect separation of politics and administration, but how to institutionally manage the relationship.

1.2.2. Britain: Whitehall model

The second set of literature has to do with Britain's Whitehall model. Scholars of Whitehall have pointed out the public service bargain between ministers and civil servants [5]. Ministers are democratically accountable and responsible to the public, and officials give politically impartial and

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

anonymous advice. Wilson and Barker talk about the need for permanent officials to give policy advice and implement the policies [6]. The "Holy Trinity" of ministerial responsibility, official anonymity, and permanent appointment is described by Van Dorpe and Horton [5]. Richards and Smith emphasize that the traditional relationship was symbiotic, that is, ministers and officials relied on one another [7]. This literature shows that the strength of Whitehall lies in its ability to maintain administrative continuity while maintaining formal ministerial accountability.

1.2.3. Japan: Un-Westminster system

The third group of literature is about Japan's Un-Westminster system. Mulgan also explains that Japan cannot be analysed only in terms of a Westminster model, as policy-making has frequently been a joint process between the Cabinet, the LDP, and the central ministries. The technical knowledge and drafting capacity of the bureaucrats, coupled with the party institutions and ministerial connections of LDP politicians, helped to craft policy [8]. In addition, Nyblade's research on the issue of Japanese prime ministerial instability demonstrates that institutional limitations on Japanese leadership have existed, even when formal institutions have made the prime minister's office more powerful [9]. Shinoda's analysis of the DPJ government is particularly valuable for understanding the challenges of building politician-led government in the absence of alternative policy capacity [10].

1.3. Research question and argument

The question of this paper is: What is the proper relationship between officials and politicians? It also raises three supporting questions. First, how are democratic authority, bureaucratic expertise, administrative continuity, and political control distributed in Britain and Japan? Second, why have Japanese political leaders been more likely to be constrained by the bureaucracy and institutions than British political leaders? Thirdly, what do the Blair reforms and the DPJ's politician-led government tell us about the dangers of excessive or insufficient political control?

The point is that the right balance between politicians and officials is not the one in which the officials dominate, nor the one in which the politicians have an absolute command. Politicians should provide policy direction and have final democratic accountability. Professional advice, institutional memory, and implementation capacity should be provided by officials. Political control is required as bureaucracy cannot take the place of democratic control. But if political control undermines expertise, continuity, and the government's ability to act, then it becomes harmful. The ideal compromise is thus an institutional balance in which politicians can direct and challenge the bureaucracy, while officials retain enough professional autonomy to give candid advice and implement policy effectively.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research method

This paper adopts a qualitative approach based on case study and literature review. It is not an attempt to create a statistical model but rather to make comparisons between the organization of the relationship between politicians and officials in two parliamentary systems. The main focus is on institutions and policy capacity and the ability, or inability, to transform political power into administrative power.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

The analysis is carried out with the same set of questions for both country cases. It explores the bases of democratic power, the locus of administrative competence, the devices of administrative continuity and the character of political control. Hence, one can compare Britain and Japan and not say that they are the same system. The approach is therefore largely interpretive and comparative. It is based on the existing academic literature and outlines the institutional patterns and then contrasts the effect of institutional patterns on the balance between politicians and officials.

2.2. Case selection

Britain and Japan are selected as cases to compare because they are alike in some ways, but different in interesting ways. They are both parliamentary democracies, and they both have professional bureaucracies. Politicians in both countries wield democratic power in a formal sense, while officials wield administrative power and expertise. This renders the two cases applicable to the same general problem, that of the relationship between elected political leaders and a permanent administrative system.

The two countries also differ in institutional arrangements. The Whitehall model is illustrated with the case of Britain. It works in a traditional system, one that relies on the principle of ministerial responsibility, civil service neutrality, permanence of appointments, and the public service bargain between the minister and the officials. Japan is used as the case of the Un-Westminster system. Japan is a parliamentary cabinet system, but policy formation under the long rule of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was frequently shared among the Cabinet, the LDP, the ministries, and related policy networks.

A comparison of the reform attempts in both countries is also included in the paper. This debate in Britain is about Blair's reforms and how he has tried to make Whitehall more politically responsive through the use of special advisers, central co-ordination and delivery mechanisms. The DPJ government after 2009 is analyzed in the context of the DPJ's attempt to create a politician-led government and curtail the authority of the bureaucracy. The two reform cases illustrate the risks of increased political control under two institutional arrangements.

2.3. Data sources

Academic research on public administration, the Whitehall model of public administration, politicization of public administration, the Japanese civil service, and reform of political leadership are the primary sources of evidence. The two cases are explained in theoretical terms and concerning their institutional context by using these sources. It also discusses government-related documents, such as materials related to Blair's delivery reform and the DPJ's politician-led government, which help to explain particular reforms.

WVS data may be used as supplemental evidence, but is not required [11]. Although it can help explain public trust in political or administrative systems, it cannot establish a direct causal relationship between any political-administrative system and public trust. That's why WVS evidence is not considered the main evidence of the paper. Comparative institutional analysis and literature are the backbone of the main argument.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

3. Britain: the relationship between politicians and officials

3.1. Britain: the traditional Whitehall model

The traditional Whitehall model should be understood as an ideal type rather than a complete description of every minister–official relationship. Its central claim was that democratic authority belonged to political ministers, while administrative expertise was supplied by permanent officials. Political ministers possessed the authority to decide the direction of government and were formally accountable to Parliament for the conduct and decisions of their departments. By contrast, career civil servants were expected to be politically neutral, to give professional advice, and to carry out the policy decisions chosen by ministers. The Haldane convention held that a minister and his officials were an "indivisible" governing body, and that officials could advise ministers freely and critically, while responsibility for decisions lay with the ministers, who would bear public responsibility. Richards and Smith thus define the traditional relationship as symbiotic, meaning that neither political leadership nor administrative expertise can govern effectively without the other [7].

This division of roles gave British civil servants significant policy influence without granting them independent democratic authority. Senior officials were experienced in running the machinery of government, knew past policies, and had access to information that was not always available to newly appointed ministers. Wilson and Barker note that British ministers traditionally relied heavily on permanent officials for both policy advice and implementation. Civil servants, however, were permanent, and, in contrast to political appointees, continued to hold office when governments changed and were expected to serve governments of different political persuasions. This meant that a new government could start work on its programme right away and avoid wasting months setting up a new administration [6]. Political control passed following an election, but the administrative capacity to assert that control remained.

Administrative continuity depended on the permanence and neutrality of the civil service. Under the traditional public service bargain, ministers generally accepted conventions that limited personal appointments and dismissals, as well as the public attribution of blame to individual officials. In return, civil servants gave up open partisanship and provided loyal service to successive governments. Van Dorpe and Horton label the "Holy Trinity" of the Whitehall model as ministerial responsibility, official anonymity, and permanent appointment [5]. The advantage of this compromise was that it safeguarded institutional memory and enabled officials to offer counsel that ministers may not have wanted. It also lessened the state's reliance on the experience or competence of any one minister. A prime minister or departmental minister might step down without the administrative structure he or she headed being dissolved.

Yet the same characteristics that fostered continuity also restricted direct ministerial control. Ministers relied on officials who often knew far more about the subject and had a better understanding of administrative procedures than their temporary political superiors. The boundary between bureaucratic advice and political decision-making could therefore become blurred. Too much bureaucratic influence could weaken democratic control, while too little bureaucratic input could reduce access to criticism and policy knowledge. Whitehall's contribution was not that it eliminated the tension between authority and expertise, but that it managed this tension through an established partnership. Yet the ambiguity between advice and control later encouraged British governments, particularly under Blair, to strengthen political direction over Whitehall [7, 12].

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

3.2. Reform and politicization

The traditional Whitehall model was based on the principles of ministerial responsibility, civil service neutrality, and permanent appointment, which ensured a balance between political authority and the expertise of the civil service. But by the end of the twentieth century, British governments became concerned that this traditional partnership gave officials excessive influence in the process of policy advice and implementation. Ministers desired a civil service that was neutral and competent, but also more responsive to the political priorities of the elected government. This pressure was particularly evident during the Blair era [7, 12].

Blair's changes were not a rejection of the Whitehall model, but an alteration in the relationship between politicians and officials. An important change was the greater use and influence of special advisers. Special advisers were not permanent civil servants. They were political appointments who could assist ministers in interpreting policy problems through the government's political priorities. They were important because ministers frequently lacked the time, information, and technical knowledge to challenge departmental advice. Special advisers thus provided ministers with a second source of policy capacity beyond the permanent bureaucracy [4, 12].

This reform led to greater political responsiveness. Traditionally, a minister relied on the permanent officials of the department for advice and implementation. During Blair's tenure, political staff, policy units, and central coordination became more important to ministers and the Prime Minister's office for moving priorities across departments. This meant that Whitehall was no longer just a neutral administrative machine advising ministers within departments. It was also under greater political pressure from the centre of government [12].

The second key aspect was the reinforcement of No. 10 and central policy coordination. Blair desired a more delivery-focused and strategic government. This was partly due to the issue of departments being slow, disjointed, or reluctant to change when political leaders wanted quick policy change. Central coordination enabled the Prime Minister to track whether departments were indeed implementing key priorities. It also diminished the capacity of individual departments to exercise control over policy agendas through their own in-house expertise.

The Prime Minister's Delivery Unit was particularly important. It was designed to track progress against key public service targets and make sure that the government's priorities were met by the departments. This altered the dynamics of political leadership and administrative execution. The centre of government attempted to measure, monitor, and pressure departments for results rather than simply assuming that they would implement ministerial decisions. In this regard, Blair's reforms sought to transform political authority into greater administrative control [12].

There were obvious benefits to these reforms. They helped ministers challenge bureaucratic advice, made departments more responsive to elected priorities, and raised the level of attention on implementation. They also identified a genuine shortcoming in the traditional Whitehall system: formal ministerial responsibility is not sufficient when ministers are not able to make policy independently. If officials control information and implementation, political leaders may be formally accountable without being fully in control.

But Blair's changes also posed dangers. Firstly, more powerful political advisers and central units could undermine the relationship between ministers and civil servants. The old deal was based on the notion that officials could offer candid advice without being regarded as political opponents. The quality of advice might deteriorate if officials thought that only advice aligned with the government's political agenda was valued [4, 12]. Second, centralization could narrow policymaking to the Prime Minister and a few of his advisers. This could lead to greater political control; however,

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

it may also reduce the range of professional criticism available to government. Third, greater politicization could blur the distinction between neutral expertise and partisan loyalty.

As the Blair case demonstrates, therefore, there is a need to reinforce political control, but also a risk. Ministers need tools to guide, challenge, and oversee bureaucracy. In the absence of such tools, democratic authority can turn out to be symbolic. But when politicization becomes excessive, it can harm the professional independence and institutional memory that make bureaucracy useful. Blair's reforms did not demonstrate the superiority of political control over bureaucratic expertise. Rather, they demonstrated that the Whitehall bargain needed to be recalibrated when traditional neutrality was no longer deemed sufficiently responsive to elected priorities [7, 12].

3.3. Discussion

The British example demonstrates that the interaction between politicians and officials works best when authority and expertise are institutionally linked. The traditional Whitehall model meant that ministers were formally responsible and officials were professionally autonomous. This enabled administrative continuity, as permanent officials remained in office even when governments changed. It also enabled officials to provide guidance from institutional experience and expertise.

At the same time, the British experience also demonstrates that administrative continuity can constrain political control. Ministers rely on the very officials they are supposed to lead. Advice can be hard to distinguish from decision-making when officials control policy knowledge and implementation details. This explains the efforts of later reforms, particularly those under Blair, to reinforce political responsiveness.

The British experience thus does not support either bureaucratic dominance or complete politicization. Whitehall's strength was that it formed a stable partnership. Its weakness was that this partnership could make political control indirect and dependent on bureaucratic cooperation. Blair's reforms were an attempt to address this issue by providing more political direction, while also creating new risks to neutrality and trust. The British experience indicates that the right balance requires permanent expertise and effective political direction.

4. Japan: the relationship between politicians and officials

4.1. Japan: traditional party-bureaucratic dominance under LDP rule

Traditional bureaucratic dominance should likewise be understood as a recurring institutional pattern rather than a claim that officials controlled every policy decision. Formally, Japan was a parliamentary democracy in which executive power was vested in the Cabinet, headed by the prime minister, and the Cabinet was collectively responsible to the Diet. In daily practice, however, the power to make policy decisions was shared among the Cabinet, the Liberal Democratic Party, and the central ministries. This system, as Mulgan calls it, was an "Un-Westminster" system because the Cabinet did not consistently function as the authoritative center of policy formation. Political leaders were formally in charge, but they also had to engage with institutions that held both policy expertise and key veto points [8].

Policy expertise in the LDP system was not located only inside the Cabinet. The long-term LDP government created a policy apparatus that operated not under, but in parallel with, the Cabinet. Major proposals were typically studied by the LDP's Policy Affairs Research Council and Executive Council before being considered by the Diet. Meanwhile, ministry staff drafted legislation, collected technical data, developed policy specifics, and cultivated ties with organized interests. There were

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

also direct links between individual LDP politicians and the bureaucrats for the benefit of their constituencies and supporting groups. These lateral connections might undermine any vertical line of command from the prime minister to ministers to officials [8]. Thus, Japanese decision-making was not entirely bureaucratic, but rather created by an interdependent party-bureaucratic structure.

This party-bureaucratic arrangement also created administrative continuity. Career officials built expertise within their ministries and were able to keep policy programs running through the turnover of prime ministers and cabinet members. However, because much of this capacity was institutionally concentrated within the ministries, political leaders depended on the very organizations they were formally expected to direct. Prime ministers frequently came to office without their own policy-analysis capacity large enough to rival that of the ministries. Ministers could become closely identified with the institutional interests and established policy positions of the ministries they formally supervised. As a result, cabinet ministers did not always function as agents of a unified prime-ministerial program. This meant that the prime minister often functioned less as a commanding executive than as a coordinator of compromises already hammered out among party factions, policy experts, and bureaucratic bodies. Leaders who tried to circumvent these mechanisms by creating advisory councils or appealing to the general public with policy aspirations often achieved only mixed success, since they still depended on ministries to translate political will into viable policy [8].

The cost of this continuity was a weaker and less transparent form of political control. While the Whitehall model positioned bureaucratic expertise within an accepted minister–official partnership, the Japanese model diffused authority among multiple semi-autonomous centers. The diffusion of authority made it more difficult for voters to identify who was responsible for policy outcomes, while electoral victory alone did not guarantee effective administrative control. However, it would be too simplistic to describe this arrangement as bureaucratic rule. LDP politicians took advantage of bureaucratic capacity and used relationships with ministries to advance their electoral interests and the interests of allied sectors or organized groups. The challenge was thus not so much the lack of expertise but the absence of a clear institutional structure linking bureaucratic expertise to democratic responsibility. In the absence of such a structure, political authority could remain formal, while practical control could be exercised through less visible party-bureaucratic negotiations. These structural limits later encouraged the DPJ to pursue politician-led government after 2009, but its attempt to weaken bureaucratic influence also exposed the risks of reducing reliance on officials before developing an alternative source of policy capacity [10].

4.2. Political leadership reform

In this regard, the DPJ's victory in 2009 was significant, because it marked the end of the long-term domination of the LDP and opened the possibility of a new dynamic between politicians and officials. The DPJ criticized the old party-bureaucratic system, in which ministries and LDP policy networks had a major influence over the policymaking process. It called for "politician-led government", meaning that elected politicians rather than bureaucrats would be the centre of the policy-making process and restore clearer democratic control over the policy-making process [10].

DPJ's reform was well-intentioned. The traditional LDP system was defined by ministries that had well-developed technical expertise, legislative drafting capacity and longstanding relationships with organised interests. LDP politicians also negotiated policy via party institutions before Cabinet decisions. So the Cabinet and prime minister were not necessarily the obvious focus of executive decision-making. The DPJ sought to alter this by elevating political figures over bureaucrats, and by limiting the role of ministries in setting policy agendas [8].

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

One attempt by the DPJ to do this was to limit the role of the bureaucracy in policymaking. The party wanted to empower ministers and high-ranking political appointees more in policymaking. It was also intended to review budgets and question programmes in a new way, via new institutions and processes. The changes were meant to show that the priorities of the nation would be set by elected politicians and not by ministry officials. In theory, this would have made elected politicians more accountable to the people, since voters would have had a better opportunity to link the outcomes of policies with the politicians who made them.

However, the DPJ was soon faced with a central conundrum: a decrease in the influence of bureaucrats did not automatically result in the development of alternative policy-making capacities. Political leaders need information, drafting capacity, coordination mechanisms and implementation expertise, although they may have formal authority. Many DPJ politicians were inexperienced at governing after many years of LDP rule. They were able to challenge the role of the bureaucracy, but did not always have sufficient independent policy expertise to replace the ministries in the day-to-day process of policymaking.

This was particularly the case since the ministries traditionally possessed administrative expertise in Japan. Officials were familiar with budgets, legal processes, policy formulation, and handling organized interests. But if political leaders distrusted or alienated the bureaucrats too much, they would lose the very expertise that they needed to govern. Politician-led government was thus challenging, because political leadership needed more than just an electoral mandate; it needed administrative backing [10].

The DPJ was also hit by political turmoil and external pressure. Government leadership changed, the party was divided, and parliamentary restrictions remained important. The 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear disaster ushered in another crisis of government. These should not be viewed as distinct from the political-administrative relationship. They compounded the requirement for coordination, expertise, and swift action at a time when the DPJ wanted to decrease the role of the bureaucracy.

The DPJ's fall should not, therefore, only be described as a "counterattack" against the DPJ by the bureaucracy. The primary problem was institutional capacity, although there was some evidence of bureaucratic resistance. The DPJ wanted to increase democratic control but had not put in place another system for policy analysis and coordination. This strengthened political authority in theory, but restricted it in practice. The case illustrates that politicians can't govern effectively by simply weakening bureaucrats. They also have to develop the capacity to use, challenge, and incorporate bureaucratic expertise [10].

The DPJ case is therefore an example of the other side of the risk in the British situation. The difficulty in Britain was that permanent officials might come to have too strong a position in an accepted partnership. The DPJ demonstrated the risks of attempting to exert political control in the absence of administrative and policy capacity. It was designed to bring back democratic control, but it also showed that the expertise of the bureaucracy cannot simply be ignored in the policymaking process without undermining the effectiveness of government [10].

4.3. Discussion

Political control is not necessarily the same as formal political authority, as the Japanese case illustrates. While policy-making was formally in the hands of the prime minister and Cabinet, in reality it was shared among ministries, LDP party institutions, and organized interests. This posed an accountability issue, as it was not straightforward for voters to observe the responsibility of the different actors for policy outcomes [8].

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

DPJ tried to address this issue through "politician-led government." It, however, underestimated the importance of bureaucratic expertise and policy capacity. The party may contest the powers of the bureaucracy but could not replace the administrative expertise that had been built up in the ministries overnight. This at times diminished the government's ability to coordinate and implement policy because of efforts to reduce the bureaucracy's influence [10].

Japan thus proves that democratic control is not synonymous with electoral victory. Politicians require independent policy capacity, stable leadership, and institutions which link political priorities with bureaucratic implementation. Officials should not be given a dominant role in policymaking in a way that undermines democratic accountability. But officials are not to be viewed solely as a brake on political leadership. The challenge is to build a system that enables political leadership and accountability while preserving the continuity and expertise of the officials needed to make decisions work [10].

5. Comparative analysis

5.1. Comparing Britain and Japan

Britain and Japan are two examples of two types of imbalance between politicians and officials. The traditional Whitehall model in Britain resulted in a close relationship between ministers and permanent officials. Ministers were formally democratically accountable and accountable to the public, and officials gave advice and implemented it. This system provided administrative continuity, with career officials remaining in office when political leaders changed. The most serious risk was that of ministers relying on officials who frequently had control over policy information and administrative procedures [6, 7].

Another imbalance was generated by the traditional system in Japan. Political leaders had formal power via the Cabinet and the prime minister, but policy-making was a collaborative process among central ministries, LDP party institutions, and organized interests. The minister-official partnership was not the only source of bureaucratic expertise. In Japan, bureaucratic expertise was embedded in a wider party-bureaucratic network. This resulted in highly developed administrative powers, at the cost of democratic accountability. Although voters might have the opportunity to choose new leaders, other, less obvious institutional mechanisms might fragment the control over policy [8].

As it is seen in the comparison, there is no equivalence between political power and administrative power. Political leaders in Britain were more formally responsible, but they also needed officials to give them expertise and to carry out their decisions. There were also formal powers for political leaders in Japan, but the party-bureaucratic networks made it more difficult for the Cabinet to be the focus of policy direction. In both instances, officials played a crucial role as they possessed information, continuity, and implementation capacity. What was different was that Britain institutionalized this dependence, whereas Japan often diffused it in the party-bureaucratic policymaking process [8].

There are also conflicting threats in the reform attempts. Blair's reforms involved greater political control over Whitehall via special advisers, central co-ordination and delivery mechanisms. The reforms were a reaction to a genuine issue: Ministers needed more authority to question and monitor the bureaucracy. But the changes may also have led to a loss of trust, neutrality and the ability to give honest advice [4, 7, 12].

The DPJ's reforms were the other way round. The DPJ tried to diminish the influence of the bureaucracy and establish a government led by politicians. This was in response to actual accountability problems in Japan, but the party did not have enough alternative policy capacity. So

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

at times, reducing the role of bureaucracy did not result in a more effective democratic government [10].

5.2. Proper relationship between politicians and officials

The proper relationship between politicians and officials should therefore not go too far in either direction. The one extreme is excessive bureaucratic power. Democratic accountability is undermined by officials' control over advising, drafting, and implementing without clear political direction. Citizens have the power to vote for political change, but unelected officials or obscure networks can still influence policy. This was most pronounced in the traditional party-bureaucratic system in Japan [8].

The other extreme is too much political control. If the politicians treat the officials as tools or hindrances, they may damage the skills and continuity of effective government. Political leaders can be elected, and priorities can be set, but professional knowledge, legal drafting, administrative coordination and implementation capacity are still required. This is the risk revealed by the DPJ's effort to cut back on the influence of the bureaucracy before it had built up enough policy capacity [10]. It's also a risk in Britain, where politicisation could result in a loss of neutrality and candid advice in the civil service [4, 7, 12].

This implies that in a democratic government, there has to be an institutional balance. Politicians should be the ones to determine the overall policy orientation since they are linked to public choice and democratic responsibility. They also need to have sufficient independent policy capacity to contest, rather than simply follow, the advice of the bureaucracy. But officials must be given space to exercise professional judgment, because this is what allows them to use expertise, preserve institutional memory, and warn politicians of dangers [2, 3].

This equilibrium does not imply that politicians and officials should be totally divorced. In real government, they have to cooperate. The question is how to organize that cooperation. Britain is a good example of the need for a stable partnership to ensure continuity, and for political steering. Japan is a case in point of the dangers of diffused party-bureaucratic power, as well as the danger of trying to substitute political will for bureaucratic expertise [8, 10].

The right mix is therefore good political leadership and a competent and professionally independent administrative system. Politicians should be responsible for setting the agenda, prioritization, and accountability for results. Officials should provide advice, preserve continuity, and implement decisions. Political control should be sufficiently robust to ensure that government is not dominated by bureaucracy, but not so robust that it undermines the expertise and neutrality that are essential to effective government [2, 3].

6. Conclusion

This paper examines the proper balance between politicians and officials by comparing Japan's Un-Westminster system with Britain's Whitehall system. The issue came down to the balance of democratic authority, bureaucratic expertise, administrative continuity, and political control in a parliamentary system.

The British case shows the value of the institutionalised relationship between ministers and permanent officials. The Whitehall model ensured administrative continuity and allowed officials to provide professional advice, while ministers remained formally responsible. It also showed that ministers still needed bureaucratic expertise, which later encouraged Blair's reforms toward greater political control.

DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2026.35880

Japan presents a different case. Under long-term LDP rule, policy capacity was concentrated in ministries and party-bureaucratic networks. This weakened the practical effect of formal political power and made democratic accountability less clear. This was what the DPJ sought to fix through politician-led government, but without building alternative policy capacity, reducing bureaucratic influence could undermine governance.

The central conclusion is that neither bureaucratic domination nor absolute political power is enough to create a proper relationship. Politicians must set direction and be democratically responsible for their actions. Expertise, institutional memory, and implementation capacity should be provided by officials. Thus, the right balance is institutional: strong political leadership is needed to direct the bureaucracy, but not so strong that it makes the bureaucracy unable to act independently and competently.

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