

# The Political Economy of Public Bureaucracy: The Emergence of Modern Administrative Organizations

(Working Paper\*)

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## Abstract

How can we explain the significant variation in the organization and performance of public bureaucracies across countries? Considering the high level of path dependence in bureaucratic organization, this article explains variation in the institutions of public administrations through a historical analysis of the political conflicts between socio-economic groups. When modern bureaucracies emerged in the 19th and early 20th centuries, three social classes—the landed elites, the middle classes, and the urban working class—had fundamentally different interests in the organization of the state apparatus. Thus, their relative political influence was a key factor that determined the organization of public bureaucracies. After a theoretical analysis of group preferences based on their socio-economic position, several case studies are conducted to examine the theory's validity in a wide variety of settings.

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# 1 Introduction

Public bureaucracies are essential for the functioning of states—they are the primary tool for implementing policies and thus crucial for governing (Geddes, 1994, 138; Ingraham, 1995, xxii; Vogler, 2019a).<sup>1</sup> Despite the bureaucracy's importance for the stability of political systems and the capacity of rulers to govern, its organization and performance vary markedly across countries (Dahlström, Teorell, Dahlberg, Hartmann, Lindberg and Nistotskaya, 2015; Dahlström and Lapuente, 2017; Peters, 2001).<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, this significant variation in institutional structures is contrary to Max Weber's prediction of a relatively uniform rationalization process based on the principles of specialization, hierarchy, and meritocracy. While most countries are converging on a bureaucratic structure that shows high levels of vertical and horizontal administrative differentiation, vast differences remain in their functioning. In particular, variation can be observed in internal procedures, recruitment patterns, levels of centralization, and executive-bureaucracy relations. Following Weber's work, however, we might expect the public administrations of advanced industrialized countries to be more institutionally homogeneous than they are, especially in terms of merit recruitment (Olsen, 2006; Olsen, 2008; Silberman, 1993, ix; Weber, 1978, Ch. 11). What explains the observed variation in bureaucratic organization?

Scholars of political science, history, and public administration have found that bureaucracies are characterized by a high level of path dependence. Institutions that were locked in historically often persist well into the present. The 19th and early 20th centuries are widely

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<sup>1</sup>Furthermore, for the independent influence of bureaucrats and bureaucracies on the policy-making process, see Workman (2015).

<sup>2</sup>For a cross-country overview of the occurrence of patronage, including in the public sector, see also Kopecký, Mair and Spirova (2012).

considered the critical time period for the emergence of modern bureaucracies and persisting differences between them (Mann, 1993, Ch. 11-14; Raadschelders and Rutgers, 1996; Raphael, 2000, 34-35; Silberman, 1993).<sup>3</sup> Considering the intensity of political conflicts at this time, it is puzzling that almost no scholars in political science have put social groups at the center of their analysis of how different bureaucracies emerged.

Yet there is evidence that social groups have had significant influence on state structures. For example, Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) and Ansell and Samuels (2014) show that the relative strength of social groups had decisive influence on the design of political institutions. Similarly, Korpi (2006) argues that social groups have shaped the welfare state. Therefore, the main questions addressed here are: What explains variation in bureaucratic institutions and characteristics across countries, specifically with respect to the meritocracy in recruitment and the level of political control? How did social groups historically shape those aspects of the public administration and is their influence still visible in the present day?

The argument presented in this study is that three groups had a major impact on the design of bureaucratic systems: The landed elites, the middle class, and the working class each had unique interests in the organization of the state and their relative power is crucial for explaining cross-national divergence in administrative institutions. The traditional or landed elites wanted to maintain their privileged status in and access to the public administration. Thus, they were aiming for high levels of social selectivity and political control through non-

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<sup>3</sup>See also Goetz (2011, 47), Wunder (1986, Ch. 4), North, Wallis and Weingast (2009, 220), Tocqueville (2011), and Becker, Boeckh, Hainz and Woessmann (2016). For the period prior to the 19th century, the literature on the early formation of states offers important insights. For example, Tilly (1990) explores the military drivers of state building, differentiating between capital-based and coercion-based state development. Ertman (1997) considers the *timing* of state development and claims that late developers had advantages in building a proto-modern bureaucracy.

democratic institutions. The middle classes were the strongest force for recruitment based on educational qualifications as they expected to succeed in such a merit-based system. Based on their historical experience with political control through the nobility and fearing future working-class domination, the middle classes wanted to shield the administration from political influence. Finally, the working class aimed for high levels of political control through democratic institutions. When political power was concentrated in a single group, it would implement institutions in full accordance with its preferences. When two or more groups shared political power, they often had to make compromises with respect to the institutional design of the public administration.

This study is structured as follows. First, two important dimensions of bureaucratic organization—political control and meritocracy in recruitment—are identified. Then, their complex interaction is discussed. After a brief literature review, a theory based on the historical influence of social groups is introduced. To validate the theoretical claims about social-group preferences and influence, six case studies—covering a wide range of different settings and socio-economic constellations—are presented. Subsequently, a cross-sectional empirical analysis assesses if the articulated hypotheses can be confirmed for a larger set of countries. After the conclusion, I present additional empirical results in the appendix (section 7).

## 2 Puzzle and Literature Review

Cross-national variation in two important dimensions of bureaucratic organization cannot be fully explained by the current literature. One of these dimensions is the level of ‘meritocracy in recruitment,’ which can be defined as the selection of candidates based on their qualifications and education, i.e. their preparedness for the job, rather than other aspects. This is an important factor of bureaucratic organization because meritocracy reduces corruption and increases both business entry and economic growth rates (Dahlström and Lapuente, 2017; Dahlström, Lapuente and Teorell, 2012; Evans and Rauch, 1999; Nistotskaya and Cingolani, 2016).<sup>4</sup> A meritocratic system can be undermined through (1) social selectivity or (2) patronage.

Moreover, various contributions to the literature deal with the level of political control that bureaucracies are subject to—a factor that is relevant for both normative and empirical reasons. The means for political control include budget constraints, administrative law, and passing highly specific bills. These mechanisms and the principal-agent problem in general have been investigated in much detail (Calvert, McCubbins and Weingast, 1989; Clinton, Lewis and Selin, 2014; Epstein and O’Halloran, 1994; Gailmard and Patty, 2007; Gailmard and Patty, 2012; Huber and Shipan, 2002; McCubbins, Noll and Weingast, 1987; McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984; McCubbins, Noll and Weingast, 1989; Tullock, 2005; Van der Meer, 2009).<sup>5</sup> However, the most direct way in which politicians can control bureaucracies is through political appointments and dismissals (Wood and Waterman, 1991), which

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<sup>4</sup>As touched upon in the case studies (section 4), the potential impact of meritocracy in terms of reducing corruption was already suspected/known in the 19th century and contributed to bureaucratic reforms.

<sup>5</sup>There are disagreements about the precise effect of political control on bureaucratic efficiency, but there is a general agreement that it matters. See, for instance, Krause, Lewis and Douglas (2006).

potentially also enable patronage and could undermine bureaucratic competence (Gallo and Lewis, 2012; Gilmour and Lewis, 2006; Hollibaugh, Horton and Lewis, 2014; Lewis, 2009). Thus, here I define ‘political control’ as the extent to which political principals can hire and fire the occupants of (higher) civil service offices.

The level of meritocracy and the degree of political control are not the only characteristics of bureaucratic organization that have an impact on administrative performance. Yet both these dimensions have received significant attention by scholars of public bureaucracies and they are related to each other. Therefore, remarkable cross-national variation in both characteristics is an important phenomenon demanding an explanation.

Specifically, there is an interaction between the extent of appointments and the meritocracy in recruitment, as patronage—potentially enabled by appointments—can undermine meritocracy (Geddes, 1994, Ch. 6). However, there is not a perfect linearity between these dimensions. Hybrid systems exist, combining many appointments with high meritocracy in recruitment at *different levels* of the administration. An example of such a system would be the United States (Peters, 2004, 126). Moreover, even with the same number of political appointments and dismissals, bureaucracies can potentially have very different educational requirements, difficulty of examinations, and levels of social selectivity. Thus, while there is a relationship between meritocracy and political control, it is not a perfectly linear one. The fact that these two characteristics *interact* but are simultaneously *not perfectly aligned* (as also shown in [Figure 1](#) below) makes it necessary to treat them jointly instead of lumping them together in a single dimension or ignoring one of them.

Accordingly, two issues in bureaucratic organization are at the center of my theory. First, the extent of political appointments and dismissals, especially at higher levels. Second, the

level of meritocracy in recruitment for the remaining civil servants. The analysis will focus on central government institutions but also take other developments into account.<sup>6</sup>

The organization of bureaucracies in each dimension varies significantly (Dahlström, 2009; Dahlström, Lapuente and Teorell, 2012). Figure 1 shows estimates from expert surveys conducted by the Quality of Government (QoG) Institute for variation in both factors across a total of 27 countries that enjoyed domestic political autonomy in the early 20th century (Dahlström et al., 2015).<sup>7</sup> Countries that did not enjoy domestic political autonomy at this time cannot be considered in this study as external factors may have a significant impact on their bureaucratic organization. Even though most countries formally have meritocratic recruitment systems, factual variation in meritocracy is significant, making the expert estimates a more reliable measurement than an exclusive analysis of formal institutions (cf. Dahlström and Lapuente, 2017, 14). Data by the QoG Institute generally correspond with other classifications of public administrations (Kopecký, Mair and Spirova, 2012; Müller, 2000; Müller, 2006).

The graph is based on expert estimates of two statements. With respect to the level of meritocracy, experts were asked to rate the frequency/likelihood of the following statements: “When recruiting public sector employees, the skills and merits of the applicants decide who gets the job.” With respect to the level of political control, they were asked to rate the following: “The top political leadership hires and fires senior public officials” (Dahlström et al., 2015, 8-9). As the measurements of meritocracy and political control are continuous, defining scope conditions for categories is somewhat arbitrary. However, while acknowledging

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<sup>6</sup>The organization of the central government bureaucracy often heavily influences decentralized structures (Raphael, 2000, 76-77).

<sup>7</sup>The labels are based on ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 codes.

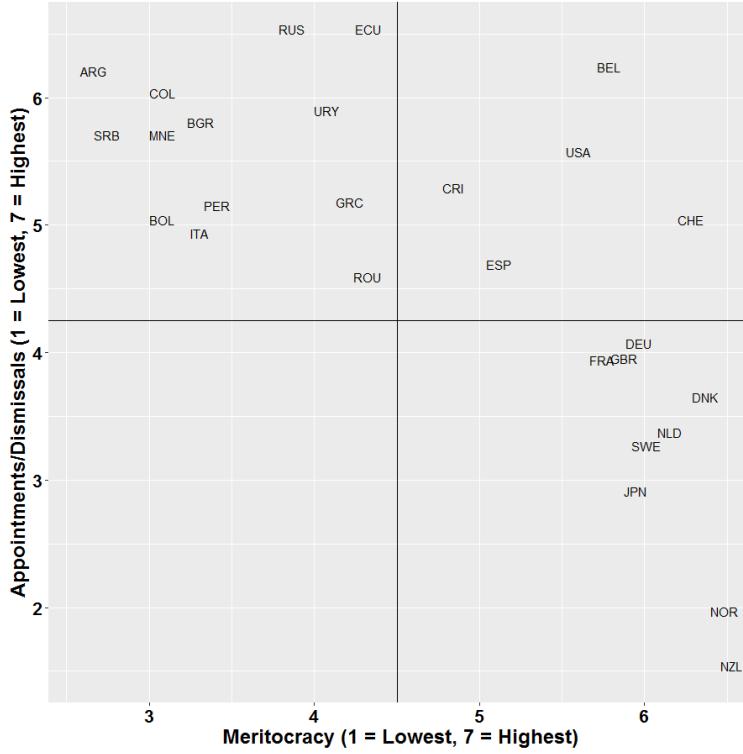


Figure 1: Scatterplot: Meritocracy and Political Control

that there are further nuances, we can generally differentiate three types of administrative systems in Figure 1: (1) low-meritocracy, high-control systems in the upper left corner; (2) high-meritocracy, high-control systems in the upper right corner; and (3) high-meritocracy, low-control systems in the lower right corner.

While the current literature on the emergence of modern bureaucracies includes many excellent studies, it has three weak spots with respect to explaining the above variation. First and most importantly, many studies do not pay attention to either meritocracy, political control, or the interaction of those dimensions by ignoring one or both. For example, Silberman (1993) presents a rigorous cross-country study of public bureaucracies, differentiating between organizational and professional systems. In this classification scheme, organizational bureaucracies have strict hierarchies, well-defined career paths, and more coherent organiza-

tional cultures while professional bureaucracies have more horizontal structures, less strong organizational cultures, and rely more on external expertise. He identifies uncertainty about leadership succession as the key explanatory factor. However, his scheme does not distinguish between different levels of meritocracy as it can be high or low under both systems.<sup>8</sup>

Second, despite overwhelming evidence that social groups shaped public institutions (Acmoglu and Robinson, 2005; Ansell and Samuels, 2014; Korpi, 2006), with some notable exceptions (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983), most existing studies do not explicitly theorize about the *active and significant role* social groups played in terms of bureaucratic reform. For example, Hollyer (2011) argues that governments introduce meritocratic recruitment when the opportunity costs of not doing so increase due to a rising number of highly educated citizens.<sup>9</sup> This explanation treats highly educated citizens as passive actors while there is a large body of historical evidence showing that the professional middle class often was a driving force in reforming bureaucracies (see section 4).<sup>10</sup>

Third, there are many excellent studies on the long-term impact of historical developments on public bureaucracies, but they are often focused on a single case. This limits their potential for explaining cross-country variation (Carpenter, 2001; Skowronek, 1982). For example, political competition between the executive and the legislative branch of government in the US may have affected the speed and extent of the removal of patronage policies (Johnson and Libecap, 1994). However, this explanation is restricted to presidential political systems with a substantial institutional independence between legislative and executive

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<sup>8</sup>This is also true for Hollyer (2011) because he uses a relatively simple dichotomous variable to measure meritocracy in recruitment.

<sup>9</sup>It is important to note that, although their numbers were going up, citizens with a university degree remained a tiny fraction of the overall population in most cases.

<sup>10</sup>Also, Gorski (2003) explains some aspects of the modern bureaucratic state through the long-term impact of the Reformation, arguing against a focus on military developments and political revolutions.

branch. Moreover, Tolbert and Zucker (1983) investigate the determinants of civil service reform in American cities and discuss the potential impact of the strength of the migrant working-class and the middle classes on reform speed. Yet their analysis is limited to American cities and therefore does not speak to national-level institutions or dynamics in other countries. Similarly, the analyses of Grindle (2012) and Kurtz (2013) are focused on Latin America, and some aspects of their theoretical contributions are focused on the period when Latin American states gained independence, which does not apply to autonomous European countries.

The work of Shefter (1994) comes closest to my approach. He presents a study of political mobilization strategies and differentiates between externally and internally mobilized parties. The strategy chosen depends on the sequence of bureaucratization versus democratization. Despite the importance of his work and his partial focus on the middle classes as an important force for bureaucratic autonomy, Shefter concentrates on party strategies (which may vary between parties in the same system) and he does not primarily address the institutional framework that governs meritocracy and political control.

The perspective of Kurtz (2009) on the effects of intra-elite competition on state capacity should also be mentioned here: He explores the impact of elite configurations on state capacity. His work differs from mine in two crucial ways. First, he places most emphasis on agrarian elites and does not treat the industrial and professional middle classes as key actors in the state-building process. Second, his dependent variable is the overall strength and centralization of coercive authority, which is different from my focus on two specific dimensions of bureaucratic organization.

In addition to research on modern bureaucracies, we might also consider accounts of

early state formation in Europe and beyond. The work by Tilly (1990) on different modes of state building—based on coercion or capital—is of great importance for understanding the centrality of military rivalry to the emergence of the territorial state.<sup>11</sup> In which ways does my account differ from Tilly’s? He primarily focuses on military rivalries as a driver of state building. Yet the time period with the greatest advancements in the formation of modern bureaucracies (1815-1914) was characterized by the *relative* absence of inter-state armed conflict among European powers (which were the first to develop modern bureaucracies). Additionally, Tilly’s perspective is centered on the actions of the ruler, not on social groups as the key actors behind administrative reforms.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Ertman (1997) provides important insights into early state formation. While he suggests that the representation of social group interests had a decisive impact on the *form of government* (absolute versus constitutional monarchy), he does not consider it the key determinant when it comes to the development of patrimonial versus proto-modern bureaucratic states.<sup>13</sup> He primarily attributes changes in the latter dimension to temporal factors, with late developers being more likely to develop proto-modern institutions due to changing conditions (in education and finance) and ‘latecomer advantages.’ Even though he attributes some importance to representative assemblies, he does not theoretically differentiate further which groups may be represented in such assemblies and how each of them specifically impacts the state formation process.

To summarize, while it consists of many excellent contributions, the existing literature

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<sup>11</sup>See also further contributions on this issue by Tilly (1975) and Saylor and Wheeler (2017).

<sup>12</sup>However, within his ruler-centered approach, Tilly (1990) does indeed show that different bargains with subjects may be struck based on local socio-economic conditions.

<sup>13</sup>With the term ‘proto-modern bureaucracy,’ Ertman (1997, 9) refers to an administrative system that has “hierarchically organized infrastructures manned by highly educated officials without any proprietary claims to their positions...”

on the emergence of public bureaucracies cannot fully account for the variation and complex interaction of meritocracy and political control discussed above. Many studies only consider one of the two dimensions and thereby ignore their non-linear relationship. Furthermore, several accounts disregard the active role that social groups played in the formation of the state apparatus. A large number of contributions primarily refer to the American historical context and often have reduced explanatory power when applied to systems with fundamentally different institutional characteristics. Finally, the literature on early state building has a strong focus on military conflict, which can hardly explain the massive expansion of state apparatuses in the period from 1815 to 1914 that was characterized by the relative absence of inter-state armed conflict in Europe. Existing studies also either do not attribute an active role to social groups or do not differentiate further between various groups and their distinct interests.

### 3 Theory

Even though early modern bureaucracies<sup>14</sup> already emerged in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in Prussia and Austria, they were (1) focused on the military domain, (2) geographically limited, and (3) far from the endpoint of the critical emergence period.<sup>15</sup> In most countries, massive qualitative and quantitative transformations in the 19th and early 20th centuries shaped the administrative state far more than any preceding developments (Doyle, 1992, Ch. 11; Fischer and Lundgreen, 1975, 462; Hintze, 1975; Mann, 1993, Ch. 13; Raadschelders and Rutgers, 1996). Indeed, modern bureaucracies were sharply different from previous types of administrations, which means prior developments are relatively negligible for this analysis (Raphael, 2000, 12).

It is widely accepted in the literature on administrative history that bureaucracies exhibit high levels of path dependence in their institutional characteristics. Accordingly, we need to understand their origins to explain differences in their present-day organization (Carpenter, 2001; Painter and Peters, 2010b; Raadschelders and Rutgers, 1996; Silberman, 1993).<sup>16</sup> There is a large body of literature investigating path dependence in bureaucracies and other social institutions (David, 1994; Greif, 1998, 2006; Mahoney, 2000; Raadschelders, 1998). Based on the literature as well as the detailed discussion of the drivers of inter-temporal stability below, I will make the *assumption* of path dependence but also critically assess this assumption in each of the case studies.

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<sup>14</sup>The term ‘early modern bureaucracy’ implies that these administrative systems had some features that resembled modern bureaucracies, such as the separation of office and officeholder. However, many aspects of their institutional organization remained recognizably different from the ideal type laid out by Weber (1978, Ch. 11), which means that they cannot be considered ‘full’ modern bureaucracies yet.

<sup>15</sup>For an analysis of this earlier time period (1780-1820), see Raadschelders (2015).

<sup>16</sup>For similar approaches, see studies by Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson (2001) and Nunn (2008).

The period of interest was one of intense conflict between different socio-economic groups (Ansell and Samuels, 2014; Mommsen, 1969). A rising middle class fought for a liberal political-economic order, landed elites defended their traditional privileges, and the working class aimed for capturing and reshaping state institutions. Using three groups is a simplification, but it is analytically useful and appropriate for a time when these groups were more homogeneous than at any time afterwards.<sup>17</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson (2005, 16) justify this simplification through *Occam's Razor*, which requires reduction to analytically essential categories. Even though there was internal disagreement within these groups, the intensity of external conflict typically overshadowed it. The three groups also indirectly incorporate several social movements of the time, such as the labor movement. However, the scheme cannot account for all case-specific deviations—a disadvantage that must be accepted when developing a general theory applicable to a large number of countries.

Finally, it is important to note that civil servants themselves may be associated with any of these three groups. Even after they become bureaucrats, their respective socio-economic backgrounds and networks likely still shape their preferences regarding the public administration (cf. Vogler, 2019a).<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, civil servants cannot be associated with any particular class per se—their socio-economic association must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

### 3.1 Traditional and Landed Elites

The traditional elites, i.e. citizens who either had birthright privileges and/or largely

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<sup>17</sup>Similar approaches are often used in political economy (Iversen and Soskice, 2006). Moore (1974) also uses the same classification scheme for social groups.

<sup>18</sup>This can be observed in some of the case studies ([section 4](#)).

derived their income from agriculture, typically were the most advantaged group in society. They often used their privileges to slow down socio-economic changes, which they anticipated would erode their economic base (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006). A slow but steady decline in income and status throughout much of the 19th century (Moore, 1974, 31-32; Wehler, 1994, 14) made many land owners interested in alternative occupations in the state apparatus (Gillis, 1968, 111; Mooers, 1991, 121; Shefter, 1994, 52-53). Additionally, their younger sons, who often did not inherit any land, also needed a source of income (Bendix, 1978, 237). Thus, the key interest of traditional elites was the maintenance of a bureaucracy that largely excluded other groups, meaning the highest possible level of social selectivity and low levels of meritocracy.<sup>19</sup> When forced to make a compromise, they would try to achieve the highest level of social selectivity possible in a *formally* meritocratic system.

Moreover, the landed elites were also interested in high levels of political control through non-democratic institutions, which they dominated, and attempted to shield the bureaucracy from parliamentary and democratic influence (Klimó, 1997, 16-17).

Based on this discussion and the assumption of path dependence, we can derive two hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 1:** In countries where the traditional/landed elites historically had more political influence, we expect lower present-day levels of meritocracy.

**Hypothesis 2:** In countries where the traditional/landed elites historically had more political influence, we expect higher present-day levels of political appointments and dismissals.

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<sup>19</sup>For an example of the nobility's preferential access to positions in the administrative state, see Wehler (1994, 88-89).

## 3.2 The Middle Class(es)

The middle classes, consisting of professionals and entrepreneurs, were interested in administrative reform for multiple reasons. As economic and social climbers, they were no longer willing to accept a low level of representation in the state apparatus. Furthermore, the bureaucracy was often seen as a tool of other groups, working against their interests (Kingsley, 1944; Rürup, 1992, 159-160). The *professional* middle class wanted competitive entry for two reasons. First, as the best-educated members of society, they would have the greatest chances of success. Second, both professional and entrepreneurial middle-class members often had to rely on state services for their occupational activities and thus suffered if public servants were incompetent (Skowronek, 1982, 51-52).

Similarly, the *entrepreneurial* middle class, fearing rising taxes through bureaucratic incompetence, corruption, and inefficiency, also had a strong interest in meritocracy. In the 19th century, states typically generated most of their income from tariffs, but they often imposed additional taxes on the population (Dincecco, 2009; Justman and Gradstein, 1999, 119; Webber and Wildavsky, 1986). The middle classes opposed high tax rates, which may be seen as an indirect form of expropriation if caused by inefficient or corrupt bureaucracies (Ansell and Samuels, 2014, 39-41; Chan, 2001, 98-99). Accordingly, the highest priority for them in terms of bureaucratic organization was a meritocratic recruitment system.

Furthermore, both the historical experience of control by the landed elites and the anticipation of possible (democratic) control by the working class—likely associated with the implementation of economic policies against middle-class interests—made the middle classes invested in achieving bureaucratic impartiality. When political actors anticipate that other

groups may gain power, they will create a system that prevents future partisan use (Moe, 1989, 274). Although there is no direct linear relationship (see section 2), high levels of meritocracy generally put some limits on political control. For both reasons, the middle classes generally pushed for a system with the lowest possible level of control.

Based on this discussion and the assumption of path dependence, we can derive two hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 3:** In countries where the middle classes historically had more political influence, we expect higher present-day levels of meritocracy.

**Hypothesis 4:** In countries where the middle classes historically had more political influence, we expect lower present-day levels of political appointments and dismissals.

### 3.3 The Urban Working Class

The working-class ideology of socialism called for state interventions in the economy and ultimately the capturing and reshaping of political institutions (often referred to as the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’) to enable the redistribution of capital and other key policy goals of the working class (Hattam, 1992, 158; Schumpeter, 2006, Ch. 20; Torstendahl, 1991, 107; Wright, 1982, 340).<sup>20</sup> To achieve this goal, the working class primarily needed a high level of political control of the bureaucracy through democratic institutions. Its representatives would seek such control even when some non-democratic institutions existed in parallel.

Additionally, as many workers faced poor working conditions in private industries, the working class was in favor of an open recruitment system with no mechanisms of social

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<sup>20</sup>See also Przeworski (1977, 349-350).

selectivity, potentially increasing meritocracy. However, due to their generally low formal education and difficult socio-economic conditions (Smelser, 1991; Wehler, 1994, 88-89), many working-class members were also interested in low educational requirements and the removal of barriers to entry (Hoffmann, 1972, Ch. 1). Accordingly, there was some ambiguity in working-class interests—they wanted both lower educational requirements, reducing meritocracy, and open recruitment, increasing meritocracy. This means that the effect of working-class influence on meritocracy is ambiguous.

Based on this discussion and the assumption of path dependence, we can derive one hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 5:** In countries where the working class historically had more political influence, we expect higher present-day levels of political appointments and dismissals.

### 3.4 Mechanisms of Influence and Single-Group Dominance versus Political Compromises

How do these preferences translate into the design of administrative institutions? Considering the different visions the three groups had for the administrative state, their respective *political influence* was a key factor in shaping the modern bureaucracy.<sup>21</sup> Political influence is defined here as the *ability to alter policies via formal and informal channels*. For instance, both the occupation of formal political offices and the ability to informally put pressure on elected officials through money or threats of violence would be channels of influence. Given the goal of generalizability, this theory is not limited to any particular form of promoting political interests. For example, if I only considered a specific mechanism of political

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<sup>21</sup>A comparable argument about how the organization of Eastern European states is influenced by the relative strength of parties has been made by Grzymala-Busse (2007).

influence—such as formal party organizations—I would likely reduce the theory’s explanatory power to political systems with a high degree of party institutionalization. While the theory is not restricted to any specific causal mechanism, the case studies explore and analyze concrete mechanisms of political influence.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as the theory does not account for external factors such as colonization or empires, it can only be applied to countries which historically enjoyed domestic political autonomy.

When a single group dominates in terms of political influence, I expect this group to create a public bureaucracy in full accordance with its preferences. However, there is also the possibility that two social groups are forced to make a political compromise (Moe, 1989, 273; Przeworski and Wallerstein, 1982; Wright, 2000). In any such compromise, the respective classes would seek to achieve their primary interest but also be willing to accommodate the other group’s interests to some extent. As such, hybrid systems with high levels of political control and high levels of meritocracy represent historical political compromises in which the interest of at least two groups were represented. The case studies that follow below illustrate such compromises.

It is important to note that the working class had only marginal political influence in most countries during the period when modern bureaucracies emerged (1815-1914), meaning that many public administrations were primarily influenced by the two other socio-economic groups. Why do I account for the preferences of the working class nevertheless? First, one of the most important cases—both for the theory and in terms of its broader political relevance—is the US public administration. Due to its electoral system, which allowed for

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<sup>22</sup>To preview one empirical finding of the case studies: Groups that were successful at shaping the administrative state in accordance with their interests often had some type of formal/informal organization that effectively allowed them to formulate their interests and exercise collective influence to push for their implementation. Several different types of organization will be described in detail in section 4.

mass participation in politics much earlier than other countries, working-class influence on politics was already high in the 19th century.<sup>23</sup> Second, in some other cases that are not explicitly discussed in the study, such as Belgium, the working class also enjoyed significant political power when the modern bureaucracy emerged. Finally, although this theory is focused on states that were not subject to foreign rule, many former colonies began to develop modern bureaucracies under different conditions and expanded state capacity much later, including when mass political parties and working-class parties were already present (Slater, 2008). Therefore, some theoretical insights about class preferences that are gained here could be relevant in other contexts.

### 3.5 Path Dependence in Bureaucratic Organization

As indicated above, a large number of contributions to the disciplines of political science and public administration contain the argument that bureaucracies are highly path-dependent in their organizational characteristics (Becker et al., 2016; Goetz, 2011, 47; Mann, 1993, Ch. 11-14; North, Wallis and Weingast, 2009, 220; Raadschelders and Rutgers, 1996; Raphael, 2000, 34-35; Silberman, 1993; Tocqueville, 2011; Wunder, 1986, Ch. 4). But what are the specific underlying mechanisms that can account for this high level of path dependence? I suggest that there are at least four primary mechanisms constituting persistence in administrative organization:

1. Creating a modern public administration means creating employment on a large scale—a substantial proportion of the population is typically employed by modern bureaucracies.

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<sup>23</sup>The political power of the working class was also strengthened by the process of unionization. Unions provided an organizational basis for the articulation of working-class interests, both with respect to employers and in the political arena more broadly.

cracies. Since the income and prestige of this organization's employees depend on its continued existence and the gained skills are often non-transferable, civil servants are likely to develop a significant interest in the maintenance (and growth) of administrative structures and institutions (Diaz, 2006, 227; Downs, 1967, esp. 8-10, 17, 22-23). In this regard, Asatryan, Heinemann and Pitlik (2017) show that even when facing severe crises (of state finances), public administrations can often use their political power to shield themselves against reforms. Additionally, due to their power over the supply of public services, civil servants and their interest organizations are able to retaliate against political actors that aim at reforming bureaucracies against their interests (Yazaki, 2018).

2. As indicated previously, governments critically depend on public bureaucracies to implement policies and govern effectively (Geddes, 1994, 138; Ingraham, 1995, xxii). Major reforms of public administration can cause disturbances in the ability of those organizations to function properly and to deliver public goods and services. Even revolutionary governments may choose not to abandon existing structures because they need to consolidate political power.<sup>24</sup> Major reforms of public administrations in times of uncertainty could exacerbate the social conflicts and economic shortages associated with political revolutions.

3. In addition to formal structures, organizational culture in public administrations ('administrative culture') often exhibits high levels of persistence and likely affects administrative procedures and the performance of bureaucracies (cf. Vogler, 2019a).<sup>25</sup> In this respect, it is important to note that different historical traditions in public administration, which are associated with distinct administrative institutions and cultures, still affect variation in

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<sup>24</sup>See, for instance, Fenske (1985, 26-27), describing continuity in the German bureaucracy after the November Revolution of 1918.

<sup>25</sup>For a more detailed justification and investigation of these claims, see Vogler (2019b) and Vogler (2020).

the present-day organization and performance of bureaucratic systems (Painter and Peters, 2010b).

4. There likely is an equilibrium between citizens' expectations towards bureaucrats and the latter's real behavior.<sup>26</sup> Knowing the expectations of citizens, bureaucrats may adjust their behavior accordingly (Chamlee-Wright and Storr, 2010; Vogler, 2019a). For example, when there is formal anti-corruption legislation, but there is no practical enforcement of these laws (potentially because that would contradict other socio-cultural values) (LaPalombara, 1994, 329-332), citizens might expect civil servants to be corrupt. Under such circumstances, public employees likely perceive the costs of engaging in corrupt practices as low. However, there could also be a social expectation of bureaucratic incorruptibility. In such a situation, deviating from regular behavioral patterns (by demanding bribes) becomes difficult because non-fulfillment of expectations possibly results in severe social or economic punishments. Furthermore, positive perceptions of and expectations towards the public administration can be self-reinforcing because they may lead to the self-selection of more and more highly qualified applicants into public administration jobs. This more positive type of equilibrium means that higher levels of efficiency/effectiveness in the provision of public services can be maintained in the long run.<sup>27</sup>

The four mechanisms elaborated above are the main drivers of inter-temporal stability in bureaucratic organization. Even though not every single mechanism may apply in all of the cases, each one by itself constitutes an important reason for the relatively high level of path dependence in bureaucratic organization. The persistence in administrative organization—

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<sup>26</sup>For a theoretical perspective on how mutually consistent expectations can create a social equilibrium, see David (1994). Furthermore, for an illustration and empirical test of similar (long-term) equilibria in clientelism, see Bustikova and Corduneanu-Huci (2017).

<sup>27</sup>For a more detailed justification and investigation of these claims, see Vogler (2019b) and Vogler (2020).

as a specific type of institution—also connects to the inter-temporal stability that scholars have found for a vast array of social, political, and economic institutions (David, 1994; Greif, 1998, 2006; Mahoney, 2000; Raadschelders, 1998).

It is important to note at this point that, while I provide some evidence for path dependence, my case studies focus on the historical impact of groups and cannot provide an exhaustive analysis of these individual mechanisms of inter-temporal stability. Such an in-depth study must be left to future contributions.

### 3.6 The Centralization of Political Authority

How does the centralization versus decentralization of political authority affect the theory? Some degree of central authority is required to create a modern bureaucracy (Kurtz, 2009). Indeed, all states considered here, i.e. those that enjoyed domestic political autonomy, needed to have a minimal level of political centralization, especially to mobilize military power and combat external threats. Otherwise, they could not have maintained their autonomous status (Gibler, 2010; Kennedy, 1988; Tilly, 1990).

Facing rising levels of social mobility, economic complexity, and potential military threats, all states experienced pressures to develop a central public administration—even Russia, which was generally seen as the most backward country with very little central control of local political-administrative affairs (Raphael, 2000, 67-75). Thus, while some degree of centralization in political authority is a necessary prerequisite to develop an early modern bureaucracy, all countries I am considering here met the minimum standards in this respect.

Beyond that, it is important to note that the interests of all three social groups in terms of institutional design apply regardless of levels of centralization:

1. Landed elites may prefer a more decentralized political-administrative system, but regardless of centralization, they prefer patronage recruitment and high levels of control through non-democratic institutions. At all levels of political centralization, the realization of those preferences would be preferable to the alternatives.
2. The interest of the professional and entrepreneurial middle classes in meritocratic recruitment and low levels of political control apply to all bureaucratic institutions, whether in a centralized or in a decentralized political system. At all levels of political centralization, the realization of those preferences would be preferable to the alternatives.
3. The working class may prefer a more centralized political-administrative system, but in all cases they would prefer the removal of educational requirements, less social selectivity in recruitment, and political control through democratic institutions. At all levels of political centralization, the realization of those preferences would be preferable to the alternatives.

In short, while the degree of central authority is linked to whether or not a modern bureaucracy can emerge in the first place, the level of centralization or decentralization in political authority does not substantively modify the three groups' institutional preferences. Once a minimum of centralization is present, the interests of the three groups are orthogonal to the centralization or decentralization of political authority. In the following section, I consider country cases with vastly different levels of centralization in political power and show that the preferences suggested above can be observed in all of these systems.

## 4 Case Studies

Did social groups have a decisive influence on the design of public bureaucracies? Which means did they use to influence the nascent administrative state? The following case studies are meant to (1) validate the theoretical claims about group preferences, (2) examine whether social groups were the driving force behind the design of public administrations, and (3) identify causal mechanisms of social-group influence. Accordingly, I use the case-study method to explore specific instances of bureaucratic development in detail and elaborate on concrete causal mechanisms through which socio-economic classes realized their interests (Gerring, 2006). Since the theory is intentionally not limited to a single type of political influence (e.g., formal party organizations), the identification of causal mechanisms is of particular importance to this analysis.

The primary goal of the case selection was to achieve variation in explanatory factors and to cover the most important bureaucratic systems. I conduct case studies with different historical social constellations, ranging from dominance by the landed elites (Italy) or the middle classes (the Netherlands) to compromises between the middle classes and the urban working class (US).<sup>28</sup> Because of its hybrid bureaucracy, the US represents a crucial case for assessing the explanatory power of the theory. I also include Germany and the UK because both countries are well-known for the intensity of social conflicts they experienced in the 19th century, which makes them typical cases. Understanding the precise causal mechanisms of social-group influence under these conditions would be an important contribution to the

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<sup>28</sup>Considering the complex interaction of the two dimensions that was discussed in section 2, these three cases are a good match because they are representative of three broad outcome scenarios. For example, Italy has a high-control, low-meritocracy bureaucratic system, the Netherlands has a low-control, high-meritocracy civil service, and the United States scores highly on both dimensions.

theory. Moreover, the comparison between Germany and the UK is interesting because, despite vast differences in their political systems, both were characterized by a compromise between the aristocracy and the middle classes (with differences in the relative power of the two groups).

The cases broadly cover both situations of single-group dominance<sup>29</sup> (Italy, Netherlands) as well as compromises between two social groups (Germany, the US, and the UK). Finally, Russia is a special (and extreme) case because, after the 1917 revolution, there were no politically influential social groups left. Accordingly, this case is included to understand the consequences of such a situation, meaning that the case study is hypothesis-*generating* rather than hypothesis-testing in character.

## 4.1 Extensive Case Study: Prussia/Germany (1805-1914)

Fueled by military rivalries, especially conflicts with Austria, Prussia developed early modern bureaucratic structures beginning in the 18th century (Raphael, 2000, 53-57; Wunder, 1986, 21-22). Military defeats during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) and the following crisis of state finances triggered a further professionalization in the years 1806 to 1820 (Nipperdey, 1996, 21; Raphael, 2000, 54; Unruh, 1977, 26-28). Even though these two public administrations were far from the ideal type described by Weber (1978, Ch. 11), they already had some of its characteristics, including the separation of office and officeholder as well as long-term career tracks. Thus, they were closer to rational bureaucracies than

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<sup>29</sup>The label ‘single-group dominance’ is a simplification insofar as there were internal nuances within these groups. For example, in the case of Italy, there were differences between the northern and southern landed elites. Similarly, in the case of the Netherlands, there were differences between the Protestant and the Catholic members of the middle class. However, since the theory is primarily a classification along socio-economic lines, the case studies also focus on distinctions along this dimension.

the administrations of most other countries (Mooers, 1991, 117-118, 121-122; Vries, 2002, 106-107).

As the political power of the monarchy was weakened through the decisive military defeats at Jena and Auerstedt, the bureaucracy was strongly influenced by the landed elites and the middle classes. Members of both social groups already dominated public offices and used their formal and informal power to influence reforms in the design of the public administration. However, the nobility remained dominant at the upper levels of the internal bureaucratic hierarchy (Bleek, 1972, esp. 18, 26; Henning, 1984; Koselleck, 1967; Nolte, 1990; Rosenberg, 1958). During the reform period, the middle classes pushed for meritocratic recruitment; yet the landed elites rejected this because they wanted to preserve their preferential access. The conflict was settled through a compromise in which the noblemen accepted higher educational requirements—such as the necessity of a university degree—but maintained their position and the exclusion of the lower classes (Bleek, 1972, 39-40; Mann, 1993, 450; Raphael, 2000, 53-54; Wunder, 1986, 66-67).

In reforming the institutions of the state, the key actors Karl Freiherr vom und zum Stein and Karl August von Hardenberg were influenced not only by the philosophy of enlightenment but also by liberalism—the ideology of the middle classes. Amongst others, it proposed a more meritocratic state apparatus and a new relationship of economy and state that would lead to a stronger and emancipated bourgeoisie (Bleek, 1972, 85-87, 95-96; Nipperdey, 1996, 21-22; Nolte, 1990, 33, 36). The crucial period between 1806 and 1820, in which the fundamental institutions of the nascent Prussian bureaucracy emerged, was the time when these reform forces and the middle classes within the bureaucracy were seen as having the strongest influence (Bleek, 1972, 28-29; Nipperdey, 1996, 21-23). However,

after the reform, between 1820 and 1848, the middle classes lost ground in terms of their share of positions (Bleek, 1972, 157; Rürup, 1992, 160; Wunder, 1986, 54). Regardless of their share of positions, middle class preferences with respect to the bureaucracy remained constant. Many entrepreneurs thought of the bureaucracy as inefficient, restrictive, and inflexible (with potential negative effects on economic policies, such as the *German Customs Union*), resulting in a desire to strengthen meritocratic recruitment (Bleek, 1972, 27-36; Hattenhauer, 1993, 236-237).

Increasing the level of meritocracy in recruitment was also in the immediate interests of the professional middle classes who had the best education among all social groups (Bleek, 1972, 38-40, 44). For them, employment in the bureaucracy offered an opportunity for “economic and social advancement” based on merit instead of birthright (Mooers, 1991, 121). In a German periodical, the interest of the middle classes was described as turning the bureaucracy into an “open aristocracy of talent and knowledge” (quoted in: Bleek, 1972, 39).<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, to its members it was particularly important that the aristocracy could not monopolize the public administration, which would have allowed the nobility to use it as a tool to further its interests by inhibiting liberal economic and social policies. Accordingly, fear of state intervention on behalf of aristocratic interests was a key reason for the middle classes to protect the bureaucracy from political control (Bleek, 1972, 27, 30-36).

The conflict of interest over the bureaucracy had been fueled by a crisis of agricultural production, including a reduction in profits, meaning that many noblemen were in a situation of relative economic decline. As the economic foundation of their social and political privileges was threatened, their goal became to find an alternative source of income—and

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<sup>30</sup>Translated by the author (J.P.V.).

the state was seen as a promising option (Gillis, 1968, 111; Koselleck, 1967, 80-82). Because they depended on the state as their employer but often did not have a university degree, the aristocracy was strongly against further increases in educational requirements (Bleek, 1972, 42-44; Nolte, 1990, Ch. 1, esp. 39-42).

The 1848 revolution was important insofar as it led to the institutionalization of ‘political civil servants’—a step that was originally meant to protect the revolution against reactionary bureaucrats. Initially a creation of the middle classes against the landed elites in the unique situation of the revolution, it was soon adopted by conservative forces. When they returned to power, they made it a part of their own agenda and subsequently used it to exert control over the civil service by removing or threatening the removal of politically disobedient bureaucrats (Hartung, 1961, 252-253; Ule, 1964, 294). In addition to this institution, which was readily adopted by the traditional elites, the Prussian constitution, which was an outcome of the revolution led by the middle classes, included two articles reflecting middle-class interests. Article 4 asserted that entry to the civil service should be open to every citizen. Article 98 asserted that there should be protection from arbitrary dismissal. However, these successes remained nominal because, when the revolution failed, the landed elites regained the upper hand and never implemented these articles in practice (Fenske, 1973, 340).

Comparable to Prussia, the German Empire founded in 1871 was characterized by a compromise of aristocracy and middle classes (Eley, 1984; Rogowski, 1987, 1125; Rosenhaft and Lee, 1994, 16). Initially, Reich Chancellor Otto von Bismarck governed with the latter’s representative, the National Liberal Party (Craig, 1978, 62-64; Wehler, 1994, 80-83). Even though aristocratic forces controlled the executive, they needed the approval of the liberal parliamentary majority—which existed in the first decade of the new state—in the *Reichstag*

to pass any legislation. The leaders of the industrial elite also enjoyed informal access to high-ranking members of the executive, giving them additional opportunities to influence government policy (Augustine, 1991, 58).

With respect to the bureaucracy, the first few years of the Empire were crucial as this was when the legal framework for the civil service was developed. Comparable to other conservative political forces (Pollmann, 1985, 340), during the creation of the Reich Civil Service Law (1871-1873), Bismarck tried to further increase the extent of political dismissals. Bismarck's desire to increase political control over the public administration was partially motivated by his deep skepticism regarding an autonomous public administration. Amongst others, he was afraid of political decisions having “the tint of theory and the bureau” if they were made by those who “do not possess [wealth], non-industrialists, non-farmers in the ministerial arena” (quoted in: Wunder, 1987, 294).<sup>31</sup> His deep suspicion of bureaucratic autonomy derived in part from his experience with the 1848-49 revolution, after which he claimed that the bureaucracy can be seen as the “carrier of the revolutionary spirit in general” (quoted in: Wunder, 1987, 293).<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, based on his previous experiences, including the participation of civil servants in the revolution, Bismarck's view was that civil servants *had to* represent the interests of the monarchy, both in terms of voting behavior and even if they were elected representatives in parliament (Hartung, 1961, 260-261; Rejewski, 1973, 62-68). Minister of the Interior Friedrich Albrecht Graf zu Eulenburg expressed the following position of Bismarck's government: “Royal civil servants must not abuse the reputation they gain through their

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<sup>31</sup>Translated by the author (J.P.V.).

<sup>32</sup>Translated by the author (J.P.V.).

employment to further political ambitions that run counter to the will of the government” (quoted in: Rejewski, 1973, 63).<sup>33</sup> These beliefs, which were widely shared among the nobility, are also clearly visible in another 1863 decree. In this decree, Eulenburg states that some members of the civil service may have joined the political opposition and intend to vote for its parties in the upcoming elections of September 24, 1863. He then denounces membership in the political opposition and demands that members of the civil service cast their votes for conservative parties that are aligned with the landed elites (Hartung, 1961, 261; Rejewski, 1973, 64; MBPr, 1863, 190-191).

Bismarck’s position regarding the necessity of political loyalty remained unchanged throughout later years, too. For instance, in 1882, he convinced the King of Prussia (who was also the Emperor of Germany) to issue a royal decree in which the King—following a familiar pattern—demanded that bureaucrats should see it as their duty to vote for parties that were supportive of the aristocratic government (Hartung, 1961, 264-266).

Despite Bismarck’s strong desire to control the behavior of bureaucrats, his attempt to increase the political control of the (aristocratic) executive—through an increased number of dismissals (in the *Reich Civil Service Law*)—failed due to middle-class resistance in parliament. In particular, the National Liberal Party did not accept an increased number of political dismissals in the civil service. Consequently, political control through the executive, which was dominated by the nobility, remained at an intermediary level (Hartung, 1961, 255; Kugele, 1978, 14; Morsey, 1972, 103; Stoltenberg, 1955, 115-122).

In addition to the number of appointments, disagreements were strongest over the requirement of political loyalty from civil servants. In particular, the original version of para-

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<sup>33</sup>Translated by the author (J.P.V.).

graph 10 of the law was seen as problematic by the liberal middle-class representatives. In its original version, it stated that there was a “duty to loyalty” in terms of “the Constitution, the laws, and other orders.”<sup>34</sup> To restrict possibilities of abuse, liberal politicians in parliament first pushed for changing this to “the Reich Constitution, the laws, and professional orders issued by superiors *within their office’s responsibility*” [emphasis added, J.P.V.].<sup>35</sup> Later, this paragraph was modified in such a way that it only demanded adherence to the Reich Constitution and the laws, which clearly reduced the formal powers of the aristocratic executive and was a victory of the liberal forces in parliament ([Stoltenberg, 1955, 117-121](#)). Bismarck’s failure at increasing the number of appointments and the ultimate change in the law’s language were clear indications that the middle classes, afraid of an abuse of executive power, were willing to use their influence in parliament to put limits on the political control of the bureaucracy.

Recruitment in the German Empire remained decentralized. Thus, in Prussia—the most important state of the Empire—there was another important compromise between the aristocracy (which controlled the Prussian government and the House of Lords) and the middle classes (which dominated the Prussian House of Representatives). In 1879, a law was passed that prescribed meritocratic recruitment procedures, including the requirement of a law degree and multiple examinations through an independent commission ([Bleek, 1972, 175-179](#)).

The origins of this law can be found in the efforts of Eugen Richter, a liberal member of the Prussian house of representatives, to reform the recruitment of civil servants. But Richter and his party were not the only people that pushed for reform. Additionally, Rudolf

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<sup>34</sup>Translated by the author (J.P.V.).

<sup>35</sup>Translated by the author (J.P.V.).

von Gneist and Otto von Gierke—two professors—criticized the existing system for a disproportionately long trial service (an aspect that made the system more socially selective but did not necessarily contribute to the practical qualifications of the civil servants). Furthermore, as many critics pointed out, the meritocracy of the system was weakened because it had higher de jure than de facto requirements (Bleek, 1972, 164-170, 184). However, despite the criticism of the previous law, the high educational requirements in new law still excluded the lower classes from the civil service.

What were the interests of these “lower classes?” There was a plurality of opinions among working-class members with respect to the civil service, but many in the working class argued that the bureaucracy should be subject to democratic control. Additionally, working class representatives demanded more open recruitment and advancement without educational restrictions (Hoffmann, 1972, Ch. 1).

How can the above analysis help us understand Germany’s present-day bureaucracy, especially with respect to recruitment and political appointments? The German Empire’s bureaucratic organization is still highly relevant today. Since the early 19th century, civil servants have constituted a powerful interest group, which has used its political power—as well as the practical necessity of a maintenance of public order—to protect the civil service from fundamental interventions. Interestingly, both after 1918 and after 1945, the German bureaucracy was comprehensively restored, maintaining many of its original characteristics (Ellwein, 1987, 21-22; Ellwein and Hesse, 2009, 316-319; Fenske, 1985, 26-27; Rieckhoff, 1993, 20; Wunder, 1986, Ch. 3-4). In fact, the West German constitution, named Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), included the following provisions in article 33, paragraph 5: “The law governing the public service shall be regulated and developed with due regard to the

traditional principles of the professional civil service” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2012, 35).<sup>36</sup>

Some new elements were introduced to civil service legislation after 1948/49. For example, the obligation for civil servants to strictly work within the parameters of the democratic system was a consequence of the historical developments in Nazi Germany. Despite some inter-temporal changes, generally high levels of continuity can be observed with respect to bureaucratic recruitment and career paths (Bleek, 1972; Derlien, 1991, 385-387; Wunder, 1977, 374-375) and with respect to the institutions of “political civil servants” in particular (Echtler, 1973, 42-47; Kugele, 1978, 9-11). These high levels of continuity with respect to institutions of recruitment and political control highlight the relevance of a historical analysis.<sup>37</sup>

To summarize, the German bureaucracy was characterized by a compromise between landed elites and the middle classes, with a strong position of the former. The landed elites exerted influence through direct control of the executive, while the middle classes participated in political decision-making primarily through party organizations in the legislature.<sup>38</sup> The strong formal and informal representation of aristocratic and landed elite interests left little space for the working class to implement their vision of the administrative state.

In short, the historical events described here are still relevant for the present day because “[t]he German civil service achieved its final shape, which is decisive until this day, during

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<sup>36</sup> According to Günther (2007, 367), this clearly refers to the Reich Civil Service Law of 1873 which has been investigated extensively above. Additionally, the organization of recruitment (as initially regulated in the Prussian laws of 1879 and 1906) is one of the core pillars of these traditional principles (Bleek, 1972, esp. 12).

<sup>37</sup> Note that some aspects of the *training* of civil servants have changed over time, but these changes are minor compared to the extent to which past developments have shaped the civil service. For details on this issue, see Derlien (1991, 389).

<sup>38</sup> As elaborated above, the industrial elite also enjoyed informal channels of influence (Augustine, 1991).

the period of the German Empire”<sup>39</sup> (Wunder, 1986, 106). To a large extent, this continuity impacts both the organization of recruitment and training (Bleek, 1972, 12; Derlien, 1991; Wunder, 1977) as well as the level of political control (Echtler, 1973, 42-47; Kugele, 1978, 9-11). Until the present day, the German bureaucracy has relatively high meritocracy, elements of social selectivity, and an intermediary level of political control.<sup>40</sup>

## 4.2 Short Case Study: Italy (1861-1914)

Prior to 1861, Italy was politically fragmented and consisted of a large number of independent states. As the Kingdom of Sardinia (Piedmont) was the actor behind national unification, its bureaucracy expanded to the other regions (Cardoza, 2002, 72; Lewanski and Toth, 2011, 219). Therefore, the Piedmontese public administration is of special importance for understanding the nascent national bureaucracy. At first glance, Italy appears like a deviant case. It is often seen as a historically liberal state with a strong entrepreneurial middle class. However, its present-day bureaucracy is characterized by high levels of political control and low meritocracy (Di Mascio, 2012; Golden, 2003; Müller, 2000; Müller, 2006). How can these apparent inconsistencies be explained?

First, there was no coherent (middle-class) party organization in 19th-century Italy. The parliament merely consisted of loose coalitions that had no permanent organizational structures. In other countries, such party organizations often served as key tools of the middle and working classes against the great (informal) political power of the aristocracy.<sup>41</sup> Second,

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<sup>39</sup>Translated by the author (J.P.V.).

<sup>40</sup>In 2007 there were 10 political appointments per German minister and 160 in total (Dahlström, 2009, 15).

<sup>41</sup>For instance, in Germany, the Social Democrats developed an extremely strong party apparatus, which allowed them to take over control of the government after World War One (Walter, 2009).

in addition to the influence that the traditional elites had on the *initial* state institutions, they also maintained disproportionately high political power through various informal mechanisms, as will be elaborated in more detail below. Third, in part due to late industrialization, the distinction and conflict between the (entrepreneurial) middle class and the aristocracy was weaker than in many other countries. Members of the middle class often aspired to own land in order to move closer to the nobility and increase their social status. As a result, the middle class did not develop a strong class identity distinct from the traditional elites. These circumstances meant that middle-class interests did not have as strong an impact on the organization of the state as might be assumed (Cardoza, 2002; Klimó, 1997, 18; Meriggi, 1988; Pilbeam, 1990).

The landed elites (of Piedmont) had significant influence on the early structures of the bureaucracy. Therefore, hierarchy became the main organizational principle. The bureaucracy was meant to strictly and mechanically follow the directives of political decision makers, indicating high levels of political control (Lewanski and Toth, 2011, 219; Mattarella, 2016, 17-18). Additionally, high levels of influence by the nobility were ensured through a patronage system that was created and maintained by aristocrats in government positions. Through their extensive political connections, the traditional elites were able to maintain access to a disproportionate share of government offices. The combination of their informal influence on the monarchy and the occupation of public offices allowed for the establishment and maintenance of a patronage system in the broader state apparatus for decades after 1861 (Cardoza, 2002, 71-73, 83-88). Even though the northern landed elites dominated the state, the interests of different regional groups of the aristocracy complemented each other in this respect (Shefter, 1994, 52-53). The practice of direct political influence was also clearly

visible in the relationship of parliament and bureaucracy (Klimó, 1997, 52; Meriggi, 1988, 148-149).

Even though the social composition of the Italian administration became increasingly more diverse in the 19th century, meaning that civil servants were now recruited from more regions and social groups (Lewanski and Toth, 2011, 221, 229-230), the system did not become much more meritocratic. Instead, personal connections still played a significant role in hiring and firing. As Cardoza (2002, 86) writes, “blue-blooded patrons intervened on behalf of their local clients [...] who needed help in matters of hiring, transfers, and promotions within the state administration.” Although the nobility was unable to maintain its high level of informal political power in the long run (Cardoza, 2002; Lewanski and Toth, 2011, 225-230), the trajectory that the bureaucracy had been put on meant that high levels of political control and low levels of meritocracy prevailed.

Starting in the 1900s, administrative law also played a role in maintaining influence over the bureaucracy (Lewanski and Toth, 2011, 221). This meant that procedures became more institutionalized and the degree of political discretion was somewhat reduced. However, Klimó (1997, 54-56, 74) points out that the law was only weakly defined for most of the previous period. Uncertainty about legal proceedings had increased the importance of maintaining good relationships to patrons.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, given the high levels of political control, positions in the bureaucracy were unsteady and often subject to changing political majorities (Meriggi, 1988, 148).

To summarize, due to the absence of strong party organizations, Italy’s landed elites were able to exert disproportionately high influence on the emerging bureaucracy through informal

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<sup>42</sup>See also Mattarella (2016, 18-19).

channels, including direct connections to the monarchy. They used their informal political networks to promote patronage recruitment and high levels of political control. Many formal and informal institutions of the early public administration have endured (Painter and Peters, 2010a, 22). Thus, even though some aspects of the Italian bureaucracy have changed (such as the level of regionalization), many historical problems remain (Ongaro, 2010).

Continuity in administrative practices also affects recruitment and appointments. For instance, “local notables are in many respects still part of the landscape in Greece and Italy, notwithstanding attempts at taming this patronage” (Ongaro, 2010, 176). Additionally, Italy still has one of the highest levels of appointments in Western countries with 34.6 per ministry and 900 in total (in 2007) (Dahlström, 2009, 15). Even though there were ups and downs in bureaucratic organization and the number of appointments over time, these changes are small compared to cross-national variation. Thus, the present-day Italian bureaucracy is largely plagued by the same problems as in the 19th century (Cassese, 1999; Golden, 2003; Lewanski and Toth, 2011, 224, 228; Müller, 2000; Müller, 2006).

### 4.3 Short Case Study: the United States (1865-1925)

The American bureaucracy before 1883 was often referred to as a “spoils system” and characterized by high levels of political control and low levels of meritocracy. Positions in the state apparatus were awarded primarily based on political alignments and electoral support (Ingraham, 1995, 20-25; Shefter, 1994, Ch. 3; Silberman, 1993, 243-249; Van Riper, 1958, Ch. 3). The entrepreneurial and professional middle classes, including some civil servants, were very dissatisfied with this situation (Anagnoson, 2011, 127; Mann, 1993, 471; Skowronek, 1982, 42-52; Sproat, 1968, Ch. 9). For example, the American

Manufacturers' Association argued that it is "indispensable that public affairs be conducted on business principles, and that the dangerous custom of giving public posts to political paupers and partisan servants ... should be discontinued, as such custom absorbs a large share of the public revenue" (quoted in: Nelson, 1982, 120).<sup>43</sup> For the professional middle class, merit recruitment would make it easier to occupy public leadership roles (Skowronek, 1982, 54). Accordingly, the existing patronage system worked against the interests of both the entrepreneurial and professional middle classes.

Beginning in the 1860s, Republican congressman Thomas Jenckes was one of the strongest advocates of reform. In his endeavor to reform the civil service, he sought the support of businessmen who he knew to be strongly interested in increased government efficiency (Hoogenboom, 1961, 640; Hoogenboom, 1968, 28; Köttgen, 1928, 198-199; Skowronek, 1982, 47-51). This becomes evident in an article he published in the *Nation*, suggesting "prompt action and agitation by merchants, manufacturers, tradesmen, capitalists, railroad and other corporations" (quoted in: Hoogenboom, 1961, 640).<sup>44</sup> The significant middle-class interest in meritocracy was also visible in the membership of the *National Civil Service Reform League* (1881)—initially it consisted mostly of professionals, later many entrepreneurs joined (Hoogenboom, 1960; Hoogenboom, 1968; Stewart, 1929).<sup>45</sup> Influenced by liberalism—including laissez-faire economics—the reformers wanted to introduce middle-class morality and economic efficiency to the administration (Van Riper, 1958, 82-87; Skowronek, 1982, 51). Thus, this non-governmental organization and its members lobbied for civil service

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<sup>43</sup>See also Hoogenboom (1968, 42-43).

<sup>44</sup>As there was strong political resistance, no reforms were passed in the 1860s and 1870s. However, the movement was gaining momentum (Sproat, 1968, 260).

<sup>45</sup>However, some of the reformers had an anti-monopoly point of view, and entrepreneurs did not form the leadership but just had a strong supportive role (Skowronek, 1982, 52).

reform, meaning in particular the introduction of standardized and education-based recruitment procedures.

In January 1883, the *Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act* was passed by Congress, with the strongest support from liberal middle-class Republicans. It introduced meritocratic recruitment, though initially just for a small proportion of civil servants. Resistance against it primarily came from Democrats, which represented a coalition of northern workers and southern traditional elites (Stewart, 1929, 33-34; Theriault, 2003, 59-60; Van Riper, 1958, Ch. 5). Senator Pendleton, who was the sponsor of the bill, later acknowledged the critical influence that the *National Civil Service Reform League*, which was led by the middle classes, had on the bill:

I desire to make my acknowledgment of obligation. I was groping in the dark with Jenckes bill of the olden time. Some gentlemen in New York ... being conscious of the errors which had been committed .... without consultation with me drafted a bill, and sent it for my examination. I shall not easily forget the morning on which a gentleman whom I had never seen before, Mr. Dorman B. Eaton [a reform leader in New York], explained to me the defects of the Jenckes bill and the provisions of the New York Bill, and left it for my consideration (quoted in: Stewart, 1929, 25).

The voting patterns in Congress as well as the influence of the *National Civil Service Reform League* show how the interests of the middle classes clashed with those of the landed elites and the working class. Even though the latter never reached full political strength in the US, workers' interests were always represented to some extent due to the complex system of checks and balances. The working class controlled politics in major cities (through so-called 'political machines') and had influence on federal elections as well (Banfield and Wilson, 1965, Ch. 9). Workers distrusted the institutions of an impersonal, expert-led bureaucracy with high levels of discretion and believed it should either be pushed back or—

if de-bureaucratization was impossible—brought under democratic control (Sanders, 1999, Ch. 11).

Even though the liberal reformers wanted to *minimize* political control, the Pendleton Act also reaffirmed political appointments at the *higher* bureaucratic levels (Silberman, 1993, 259; Van Riper, 1958, 99-109; Van Riper, 1971, 127-128)—a decision that still shapes the American civil service until this day (Derlien, 1991, 392; Peters, 2004, 126). Why could political control not be abandoned entirely? The reasons were in part the advent of mass political participation in the early 19th century and the ideal of a ‘democratically controlled bureaucracy,’ influenced by Jacksonian ideas, to which many politicians still subscribed. However, the middle classes were open to a compromise in which some political control would be maintained because, for them, the *dispersion of political control among multiple government agencies* was an alternative to the reduction of appointments. The new recruitment system also put much less emphasis on academic achievements than the English one and was more open to lower social groups. For all of the above reasons, the Pendleton Act might be described as a compromise between the interests of different groups, specifically the urban working class and the middle classes (Ingraham, 1995, 20-29; Peters, 1995, 28-32; Van Riper, 1958, 63, 105-109).

The Pendleton Act had created a dynamic that lasted for at least four decades. Several presidents from both parties gradually extended the number of classified civil servants between 1883 and 1923 (Ingraham, 1995, Ch. 3). Theodore Roosevelt, in particular, is seen as a president who governed based on the understanding of a labor-capital compromise. As a former member of the US Civil Services Commission, he had a strong interest in the expansion of meritocracy but never came close to fully removing political control (Silberman,

1993, 271-277; White Jr., 2003). The reform of the civil service on the federal level also fueled the introduction of meritocracy in the American states (Ruhil and Camões, 2003).

The development of the modern bureaucracy was finalized through several reform acts: the 1920 Civil Service Retirement Act, the 1921 Budget and Accounting Act, and the 1923 Personnel Classification Act. The Budget and Accounting Act entailed a unification and codification of budgetary control mechanisms of the bureaucracy. It reflected the desire of entrepreneurs and the Republican party for limited government. The other acts created a pension system and standardized wages across agencies, with the goal of greater bureaucratic efficiency. A broad coalition of the middle classes and their political representatives were key forces favoring these reforms (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991, 170-174; Shefter, 1994, 76-81; Silberman, 1993, 277-282; Van Riper, 1958, 296-304; Van Riper, 1971, 132).

To summarize, we observe a historical compromise between middle-class and working-class political interests in the US. The high level of political control results from the alignment of middle-class interests to disperse political power and working-class interests to achieve control through democratic institutions. Other than in the Italian case (where we historically observe the absence of permanent party organizations), in the US, parties—especially the liberal wing of the Republican Party—were crucial forces for civil service reform (and, in the case of the Democratic Party, also against it). The US case study also shows how social groups can use non-governmental organizations, such as the *National Civil Service Reform League*, to promote their interests.<sup>46</sup> Even though there have been ups and downs in the number of political appointments since the 1920s (Lewis, 2011), the present-day bureaucracy

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<sup>46</sup>Prior to the formation of this federal organization in 1881, there had been local and regional groups with the goal of civil service reform.

still has an extraordinarily high number (Ingraham, 1995, Ch. 1-2; Peters, 1995, 22-23; Peters, 2004, 126).<sup>47</sup> The historical analysis of American bureaucratic structures is relevant because many of them have persisted until the present day (Ingraham, 1995, xxii; Silberman, 1993, 227).

#### 4.4 Short Case Study: the United Kingdom (1854-1918)

England's public administration in the 18th and early 19th centuries was, to a considerable extent, a patronage system under the control of the landed elites (Bendix, 1978, 237; Cohen, 1965; Jennings, 1971, 24-25; Kingsley, 1944, Ch. 2; MacDonagh, 1977, 197-203).<sup>48</sup> However, throughout the 19th century, the middle classes gained more power and were able to push through reforms. The entire political system as of 1832 represented a compromise between two social groups. The upper chamber of the parliament, the House of Lords, was dominated by the aristocracy, and the lower chamber, the House of Commons, was dominated by the middle classes (Moore, 1974, Ch. 1; Perkin, 2002, 261). As the approval of both chambers was required to pass legislation, neither group could completely ignore the interests of the other when it came to fundamental changes to the public administration.

The middle classes opposed the existing administrative system because of corruption and inefficiency. They wanted to end the dominance of the landed elites and introduce meritocratic recruitment (Helsby, 1956, 36; Kingsley, 1944, Ch. 3; MacDonagh, 1977, 202-207; Perkin, 2002, Ch. 8). Strong public interest in the topic was activated by the

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<sup>47</sup>This number is extraordinarily high in comparison with other countries at a similar level of development, especially the European civil service systems.

<sup>48</sup>According to O'Gorman (2001, 58), the extent of patronage is sometimes overestimated; yet even in his own judgment it was "considerable."

Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1853/54, which was highly critical of political appointments and instead recommended recruitment based on competitive examinations, conducted by an independent commission (Campbell, 1955, 25-29). Highlighting the benefits of meritocracy to the well-educated middle classes, one of the report's authors, Trevelyan, stated in a letter that introducing meritocracy would mean that "the highly educated sons of our upper & middle classes would pass through the examinations" (quoted in: Greenaway, 1985, 163-164).

In 1855, as a response to the report, the *Administrative Reform Association*, a civil-society organization, meant to exert pressure on political representatives, was founded. It primarily consisted of professionals and entrepreneurs and advocated for reforms of the state apparatus. Even though reforms of the bureaucracy were not its only goal, it spoke out against aristocratic mismanagement in both government and administration and lobbied for competitive examinations (Anderson, 1965; Shefter, 1994, 46-47). It achieved its first success in 1857, when a resolution for open competition in the recruitment of civil servants was brought into the House of Commons. However, at this time, the legislation faced great resistance, especially by conservative forces ("protectionists") who wanted to maintain the existing patronage system (MacDonagh, 1977, 209).

Particularly the traditional elites were interested in maintaining the existing administrative system and excluding the lower classes (Black, 1970, 261; Campbell, 1955, 31; Cohen, 1965, 107). Accordingly, the leading conservative politician Benjamin Disraeli—whose party represented landed-elite interests—spoke out against competitive examinations. At the other end of the political spectrum, the liberal politician William Gladstone was in favor of introducing meritocracy (Cohen, 1965, 113-115; MacDonagh, 1977, 202-204). He had also originally asked Northcote and Trevelyan to assess the state of the administration

which reflected the dissatisfaction of middle-class representatives with the administrative system (Köttgen, 1928, 171). As theoretically suggested, we can observe the conviction that the introduction of a meritocratic system would benefit the classes which possess a superior education in the words of William Gladstone: “[O]ne of the greatest recommendations of the change [of civil service reform] in my eyes would be its tendency to strengthen ... the ties between the higher classes and the possession of administrative power” (quoted in: Morley, 1903, 649).<sup>49</sup>

The middle-class representatives achieved a partial victory, when an independent commission, checking the qualifications of prospective civil servants, was established in 1855. Yet many ways to circumvent meritocracy remained, for example discretion regarding the pool of applicants that would sit for an interview (Campbell, 1955, 32-35; Cohen, 1965, 111; Kingsley, 1944, 72; Köttgen, 1928, 171-172).

More than a decade later, liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer Robert Lowe asked Prime Minister Palmerston to address the issue more comprehensively. Considering the strong resistance against civil service legislation by the representatives of the landed elites, the initiation of reforms by representatives of the middle classes was not surprising. Consequently, in 1870, open competitive examinations were finally adopted (Campbell, 1955, 38; Cohen, 1965, 121-122; Kingsley, 1944, 75-76). Nevertheless, the traditional elites were able to maintain high social selectivity because recruitment was mostly limited to graduates from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Also, the higher ranks of the British civil service remained primarily occupied by men of privilege, and there were almost no opportunities to rise from the lower ranks of the bureaucracy. Thus, the system clearly was a compromise,

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<sup>49</sup> Also quoted in: Greenaway (1985, 162).

partially reflecting the interests of the traditional elites (Cohen, 1965, 130; Kelsall, 1956, 155-156; Kingsley, 1944, Ch. 3-4; Mann, 1993, 470; Raphael, 2000, 171-172; Shefter, 1994, 47-48; Silberman, 1993, 287).

Similar to Germany, the British case was a compromise between the middle classes and the landed elites. However, due to the relative weakness of non-democratic institutions (such as the monarchy), there was increasingly little space for the landed elites to maintain patronage control. Additionally, due to the growing political strength of the middle classes—primarily through the Liberal Party, but even within the Conservative Party—the landed elites finally agreed to end patronage and reduce appointments (Shefter, 1994, 48-51).<sup>50</sup>

The organization of the British bureaucracy is highly path-dependent, meaning that historical events still shape its structures (Richards, 2003; Silberman, 1993, 291-292). This is particularly true with respect to the recruitment patterns to its higher ranks, which “still reflect the principles of the Northcote-Trevelyan reforms of 1854 which specified the recruitment of the kind of candidate for senior office that Oxford and Cambridge have overwhelmingly supplied ever since” (Page and Wright, 1999, 1). Furthermore, with an average of just 3.5 appointments per minister and a total of 80 appointments (in 2007), political control is comparatively low and patronage uncommon (Dahlström, 2009, 15; Müller, 2000; Müller, 2006). Accordingly, the historical structures that were a compromise between the middle classes and the nobility still shape the organization of the British bureaucracy in the present day.

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<sup>50</sup>Köttgen (1928, 186, Fn. 2) reports that in 1914, there were about 300 civil servants who were not career bureaucrats and that this number was lower in 1928, probably closer to 60-70 as suggested by Kingsley (1944, 9) for the year 1944.

## 4.5 Short Case Study: the Netherlands (1848-1918)

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the Dutch administration was characterized by patronage. Recruitment based on meritocratic principles was the exception rather than the norm (Randeraad and Wolffram, 2001, 103-104). Moreover, well into the 19th century, personal connections often remained more important than academic or occupational qualifications (Van der Meer, Kerkhoff and van Osch, 2014, 6; Dijkstra and Van der Meer, 2011, 151). However, this changed in the late 19th century. Why did this change occur? During this time period, there were almost no countries which had a stronger political influence of the middle classes than the Netherlands (Dincecco, 2009, 54; Dijkstra and Van der Meer, 2011, 151-152). The middle classes were the driving force behind changes in the Dutch administrative state.

How did the liberal elites shape administrative structures? Throughout the liberal era, there was a movement towards higher educational requirements and competitive examinations (Van der Meer, Kerkhoff and van Osch, 2014, 7-8). “Patronage on the basis of family, religious or political ties slowly but surely diminished after the 1880s, [and] merit became the dominant principle” (Van der Meer, Dijkstra and Kerkhoff, 2016, 144). The introduction of competitive examinations was motivated by ensuring a higher competence and efficiency of the civil service (Van der Meer, Raadschelders, Roborgh and Toonen, 1991, 204-205). Additionally, the middle classes gave up their political control because “their social and economic status was not at risk” (Randeraad and Wolffram, 2001, 108).

Furthermore, a new administrative culture, considering the civil service as a non-partisan force prioritizing the “national interest,” developed during the liberal era. Recruitment

into the bureaucracy based on qualification coincided with the interest of the nation as well. For the middle classes, it was a convenient circumstance that they were the most highly educated subset of Dutch society. Therefore, their desire to increase meritocracy in recruitment coincided with their self-interest. Thus, not unexpectedly, middle-class members dominated the public administration in terms of personnel (Randeraad and Wolffram, 2001, 114-115).<sup>51</sup> Additionally, the extensions of the franchise between 1887 and 1919 led to further reductions in the incentives for clientelistic exchange (Randeraad and Wolffram, 2001, 108-119).

Accordingly, the middle classes—who were firmly in charge of the Dutch state in the 19th century—institutionalized meritocratic recruitment procedures and limited government control to shield the bureaucracy from future political influence. In short, the origins of the modern Dutch civil service were (1) the new political culture of the liberal era and (2) the reforms initiated by liberal governments in the 19th and early 20th centuries. These reforms consist of movements towards competitive examinations, high educational requirements, and low political control. Until this day, past developments play an important role for bureaucratic organization, specifically also with respect to the training and education of civil servants (Van der Meer, Kerkhoff and van Osch, 2014). Even though merit recruitment remained a persistent principle of the Dutch bureaucracy after the 1880s, the specific criteria of merit evolved together with the functions of the state (Van der Meer, Dijkstra and Kerkhoff, 2016).

In accordance with the historical path it was put on a century ago, the present-day

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<sup>51</sup>It is important to note that, while the middle classes were dominant, there still was a substantial number of aristocrats in the administration. Although their presence was declining, it remained especially visible at the upper levels of the internal hierarchy (Van der Meer and Raadschelders, 2014, 774-775; Raadschelders and Van der Meer, 1998, 238).

Dutch civil service recruitment system remains highly competitive and egalitarian (Van Thiel, 2012, 253). Despite some decentralization of administrative recruitment, high levels of egalitarianism can be observed across different departments (Van der Meer, 1997, 58; Van der Meer, Kerkhoff and van Osch, 2014, 4; Dijkstra and Van der Meer, 2011, 154-155). Furthermore, the civil service still has a low level of political appointments (Dahlström, 2009, 15; Kopecký and Scherlis, 2008, 365), which means fewer opportunities for patronage than in high-appointment cases like, for instance, Italy (Müller, 2000; Müller, 2006).<sup>52</sup>

#### 4.6 Short Case Study: (Soviet) Russia (1917-1925)

In the 19th century, Russia attempted to modernize its public administration, which was complicated by the size of the country, its low population density, and poor infrastructure. Due to the political power of the aristocracy and the weakness of the state infrastructure, many administrative powers were delegated to local landed elites. As the Russian state was mainly supported by “a declining landowning nobility” (Hough and Fainsod, 1979, 5), there was a strong element of social selectivity and patronage in the comparatively small central bureaucracy. However, members of the professional middle class were not entirely excluded (Baberowski, 2014, 17-25; Davies, 2005, 70-71; Raphael, 2000, 41, 68-70).

The Russian Revolution and its aftermath were crucial for the development of the country’s modern bureaucracy. The Bolsheviks, who seized power in 1917, were extremely aggressive in their fight against any form of political resistance. As there was no primary social group on which the regime could rely, and the rulers feared the counter-revolution, the Bolsheviks murdered many members of the landed elites and the middle classes or forced

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<sup>52</sup>However, some voices are more skeptical about the absence of patronage. See Van Thiel (2012) and Van der Meer and Raadschelders (1999).

them to emigrate. Even after the Bolsheviks' victory in the civil war, uncertainty about the stability of the regime persisted. This increased the desire of the Communist party elites to be in full control of the machinery of the state, which they could then use to suppress political and social resistance. As a response, bureaucratic organization was comparatively hierarchical (Baberowski, 2014; Kenez, 2006, Ch. 2; Fainsod, 1963, Ch. 4-5).

Lenin wanted to destroy the old bureaucracy, which he believed to represent bourgeois interest and be a threat to the proletarian revolution (Wright, 1974), and replace it with a bureaucracy under full control of the working class (and recruited from the ranks of its members). This desire is clearly visible in the following statement he makes in *State and Revolution* (1917):

The workers, after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its very foundations, and raze it to the ground; they will replace it with a new one consisting of the very same workers and other employees, against whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels... (Lenin, 2014, 150-151)<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, the Soviet leadership under Lenin developed a “mania for checking and control” (Sternheimer, 1980, 321). Accordingly, the absence of direct support by a social group can increase the desire of political rulers to maximize their influence on the state apparatus.

Since many bureaucrats were ideologically opposed to the new ruling party, the Bolsheviks faced many difficulties in subordinating the machinery of the state to their will. Direct sabotage of their work by civil servants was commonplace. These circumstances initially resulted in a large number of arrests and later the creation of an *Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Speculation, and Sabotage* (Cheka). This secret-police

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<sup>53</sup>Also quoted in: Wright (1974, 87).

organization used terror and intimidation, including torture, prison camps, and executions, to identify and destroy opposition inside and outside of the state. Control of the bureaucracy was subsequently maximized through various institutions, especially the Communist Party apparatus (Fainsod, 1963, 389, 425-427; Gladden, 1972, 341-344; Rigby, 1972).

There was a high level of persistence in bureaucratic organization, with entry continuously based on connections/loyalty and comparatively high levels of political control. This consistently contributed to the image of an overly large and inefficient Soviet bureaucracy (Fainsod, 1963, Ch. 4-6, 12; Gladden, 1972, 343-348; Obolonsky, 1999, 574).<sup>54</sup> The level of control was pushed to its limits under Stalin, when members of the party and administration that he perceived as not loyal were not only removed from their offices but often executed. In the judgment of many historians, Stalin's behavior, too, was driven by the perceived fragility of his regime (Baberowski, 2012; Baberowski, 2014; Hough and Fainsod, 1979, 170-178). Thus, fear of uprisings and counter-revolution shaped the political behavior of Soviet leaders, ensuring a continued interest in a maximum of political control of and through the state apparatus.

To summarize, after gaining political power, unchecked and unsupported by any strong social group, the Bolsheviks were able and incentivized to create a bureaucracy fully dominated by the Communist Party. They did not only use their formal political power but also terror and intimidation to achieve this goal. In many ways, the bureaucracy of present-day Russia is a direct successor of the Soviet administrative state. For example, in terms of personnel, there was significant continuity: Gimpelson found in 2003 that 50 percent of all

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<sup>54</sup>Deviating from Fainsod (1963), Jerry Hough developed a more pluralistic perspective on the Soviet system in Hough and Fainsod (1979). However, from a comparative standpoint, i.e. relative to other countries, the relationship between state and bureaucracy was always very hierarchical.

civil servants at federal-level agencies had been there since the time of Brezhnev (1964-1982) (Gimpel'son, 2003, 71, 76). Persistence of administrative culture and institutions can also be observed (Obolonsky, 1999). Thus, meritocracy remains low and political control high. As in the other cases discussed above, the organization of the present-day Russian bureaucracy cannot be explained without reference to its historical origins.

## 4.7 Summary of the Case Studies

The case studies have shown that social groups historically had considerable influence on the institutional design of bureaucracies. The middle classes generally were the strongest force for meritocracy and the reduction of political influence. On the other hand, the landed elites and the working class shared a strong interest in political control—through non-democratic versus democratic institutions, respectively. Also, while the landed elites sought high social selectivity, the working classes favored open recruitment and low educational requirements. The case of Russia presents an interesting deviation from this pattern because the absence of social-group dominance led to a bureaucracy under full control of Communist Party elites.

There is a wide range of mechanisms through which social groups pushed for their interests. (1) In Germany, the aristocracy and middle classes passed formal legislation to shape the modern bureaucracy; (2) the absence of strong party organizations allowed the Italian landed elites to exert high levels of informal political influence and establish a patronage system in the broader state apparatus; (3) in both the US and the UK, non-governmental

organizations<sup>55</sup> (lobby groups) and parties were crucial to civil service reform; (4) in the Netherlands, direct control of the state by the middle classes made the institutionalization of meritocracy possible; and (5) in (Soviet) Russia, the Bolsheviks used both formal political power as well as terror to create a bureaucracy under full political domination. Thus, the case studies demonstrate that this investigation cannot be limited to a specific causal mechanism.

However, while there is no single mechanism of social-group influence, the case studies also make it clear that the classes that were successful at shaping the nascent bureaucracy always did have some form of coherent informal or formal organization. These structures allowed large parts or smaller subsets of these classes to come together, formulate clear interests with respect to bureaucratic organization, and then engage in collective action to shape the nascent administrative state.

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<sup>55</sup>Such non-governmental organizations can be found in other cases as well. However, in the US and the UK, their influence was most significant.

Figure 2: Summary of the Case Studies

**Differences in Bureaucratic Organization – Results of the Case Studies:**

Country	Time Period of Bureaucratic Emergence	Dominant Social Groups	Resulting Bureaucratic System
Prussia/ Germany	1805-1914	Compromise of: (1) Landed elites (2) Middle classes	Intermediary level of control by non-democratic institutions through political appointments, meritocratic recruitment system with high social selectivity
Italy	1861-1914	Landed elites	High level of control through political appointments, patronage recruitment system
United States	1865-1925	Compromise of: (1) Middle classes (2) Urban working class	High level of control through political appointments, dispersed among multiple agencies, meritocratic recruitment system
Netherlands	1848-1918	Middle classes	Low level of political control, meritocratic recruitment system with relatively high degree of egalitarianism
United Kingdom	1854-1918	Compromise of: (1) Middle classes (2) Landed elites	Low level of control through political appointments, meritocratic recruitment system with high social selectivity
(Soviet) Russia	1917-1925	No social group dominance → state dominance	Very high level of control through political appointments, patronage recruitment system

## 5 Cross-National Analysis

In addition to the case studies, I conduct a cross-national statistical analysis. Two caveats need to be noted from the outset. First, there are many limitations to cross-country regressions (Levine and Zervos, 1993), including the possibility of finding only spurious correlations. Thus, the results of the statistical analysis have to be viewed as complements to the case studies, which demonstrate that social groups did in fact shape public institutions in accordance with the hypothesized interests (see section 4). Second, as the theory does not speak to issues of colonialism and imperialism, the sample has been restricted to countries that enjoyed domestic political autonomy in the early 20th century.<sup>56</sup>

The key challenge is measuring the historical political power of social groups. For instance, we could use the seat share of parties in parliament as a proxy for the relative strength of social groups, but this and comparable measurements are associated with a variety of problems. (1) The power of parliamentary coalitions heavily depends on many other institutions (e.g., parliamentary versus presidential systems of government). (2) Most possible measurements do not account for informal power channels. Fortunately, as discussed below, a good measurement of the political power of traditional elites at the beginning of the 20th century exists, which allows me to test hypotheses 1 and 2 here.

Additionally, an empirical test of hypotheses 3 and 4 is presented in the appendix (sub-section 7.2). Due to the ambiguous interests of the working class with respect to meritocracy, I do not include a statistical analysis of their historical influence, but I discuss their interests

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<sup>56</sup>Ethiopia was excluded from the analysis as the historical social and economic conditions in the country do not fit the scope of this study.

and impact in the case study section ([section 4](#)).

## 5.1 Key Dependent and Independent Variables

The QoG Institute provides a dataset based on expert surveys (in 2014) that includes estimates of (1) the meritocracy of recruitment and (2) the level of appointments/dismissals for many countries on a continuous 1-7 scale ([Dahlström et al., 2015](#)). [Figure 1](#) already showed the distribution of those variables. Since the empirical test is restricted to domestically autonomous countries (i.e., autonomous in the early 20th century), approximately 30 units are included. Given the bounds of the dependent variable, Tobit regression models will be used.

To measure the level of traditional/landed elite influence, I use the *inverse* of the “range of consultation variable” by the *Varieties of Democracy (VoD) Project*. This variable is based on expert answers to the following question: “When important policy changes are being considered, how wide is the range of consultation at elite levels?” The possible answers show that it measures the extent to which the traditional elites consult with the leading members of other social groups, specifically and explicitly business and labor leaders, before they make important decisions.

In the historical period under consideration, political systems, in which neither the interests of business nor labor were taken into account, were dominated by the landed elites. Thus, the *inverse* of this variable shows the extent to which the traditional elites can make important policy decisions unilaterally and without consulting other social groups. The variable is converted to an interval scale by the VoD Project ([Coppedge, Gerring, Lindberg, Skaaning, Teorell, Altman, Bernhard, Fish, Glynn, Hicken, Knutsen, Marquardt, McMann, Miri, Paxton, Pemstein, Staton, Tzelgov, Wang and Zimmerman, 2016](#)). Due to its focus

on the elite level and the absence of factors such as the extent of suffrage or the system of government, this measurement should not be confused with measurements of democracy.

The analysis will be conducted for the year 1913 as, for most countries in this study, the pre-World War One period marks the climax of the emergence of modern bureaucracies (Raadschelders and Rutgers, 1996). Accordingly, the strength of social groups at this moment in time is crucial for their final shape. However, as the year in which the test is conducted is to some extent arbitrary, analyses for all years between 1910 and 1925 were conducted. With the exception of the war years (1914-1918/1919), almost all analyses produce statistically significant results. Detailed results are provided in the appendix (subsection 7.1).

## 5.2 Covariates

I need to account for additional variables, including both historical factors and more recent developments.<sup>57</sup> I control for more recent developments because their relevance is highlighted in the literature on public bureaucracies, but this could lead to post-treatment bias. Due to the possibility of post-treatment bias, I always present results both with and without controls and readers are advised to be cautious when interpreting the results of models with controls. Fortunately, the results hold regardless of specification.

Due to the very small number of observations, which is 30 or less in most cases—meaning a very low number of degrees of freedom—I introduce at most two explanatory variables simultaneously. In the following paragraphs, I elaborate on the different covariates:

**Divided Party Control of Government:** If the government is controlled by multiple par-

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<sup>57</sup>I do not include covariates for GDP or level of democratization because those measurements would be highly correlated with the political power of the middle classes and the urban working class, respectively. As such, their inclusion would lead to high multicollinearity with measurements of social-group power.

ties, there is greater likelihood of policy conflict, which could increase the degree of political control (Huber and Shipan, 2002). Alternatively, political competition among the branches of government controlled by different parties could also reduce the ability or incentives of politicians to control the bureaucracy (Johnson and Libecap, 1994; Lewis, 2003; Wood and Bohte, 2004). The variable represents the country-specific average as of 1990 (Coppedge et al., 2016).

**Legislative Party Cohesion:** How cohesively party members vote for policies could serve as a proxy for the organizational coherence of parties. A high level could indicate ability for political control. The variable represents the country-specific average as of 1990 (Coppedge et al., 2016).

**Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) Count:** Military conflicts could push countries to modernize their bureaucracies (Ertman, 1997; Tilly, 1990). Therefore, the number of militarized interstate disputes a state was involved in (1863-1913) is included (Jones, Bremer and Singer, 1996).

**University Students:** Historically high levels of educated citizens could change the incentives of governments to introduce meritocratic recruitment (Hollyer, 2011). Similar incentives could also apply in the present (Hollyer, 2009). Therefore, two different covariates capturing the number of university students per 100,000 people are included. The first one refers to the historical level in 1913, the second one to the average after 1990 (Coppedge et al., 2016; Vanhanen, 2003).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: Empirical Analysis

<b>Variable</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>q<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>̄x</b>	<b>̃x</b>	<b>q<sub>3</sub></b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>IQR</b>
Meritocracy	27	2.58	3.29	4.67	4.78	5.88	6.46	2.59
Political Control	27	1.50	3.91	4.73	5.00	5.72	6.50	1.81
Inv. of Elite Consult. (1913)	29	-1.67	-0.71	0.03	-0.08	0.91	2.24	1.62
Div. Party Ctrl. (Avg.)	28	-1.02	-0.21	0.18	0.24	0.59	1.39	0.80
Leg. Party Coh. (Avg.)	28	-2.14	0.17	0.76	1.05	1.47	2.46	1.30
MID Count (1863-1913)	21	1.00	2.00	21.81	18.00	29.00	75.00	27.00
Univ. Students (1913)	25	1.00	4.00	7.10	6.50	8.50	34.50	4.50
Univ. Students (Avg.)	28	1.00	35.46	45.30	47.42	55.64	100.00	20.17

### 5.3 Results

The results show that the inverse of the range of elite consultation in 1913—as a proxy for the political power of the traditional elites—is strongly negatively associated with the present-day level of meritocracy in recruitment and strongly positively related to the present-day level of political appointments. These results provide substantial complementary evidence in support of the theory introduced here. Further details can be found in [Figure 3](#), [Figure 4](#), [Table 2](#), and [Table 3](#). As mentioned earlier, additional analyses were conducted for a large number of years and detailed results are included in the appendix ([subsection 7.1](#)).

In any statistical analysis that relies on observational data, there is the danger of finding a spurious correlation. This danger is also present here. Furthermore, I cannot perfectly identify causality through the regressions above. Thus, we need to combine the empirical analysis with additional evidence from the case studies to provide stronger support for the theory.

Figure 3: Meritocracy of Recruitment (2014) and the Inverse of the Range of Consultation (1913) from Empirical Min. to Max. (90% Conf. Int.)

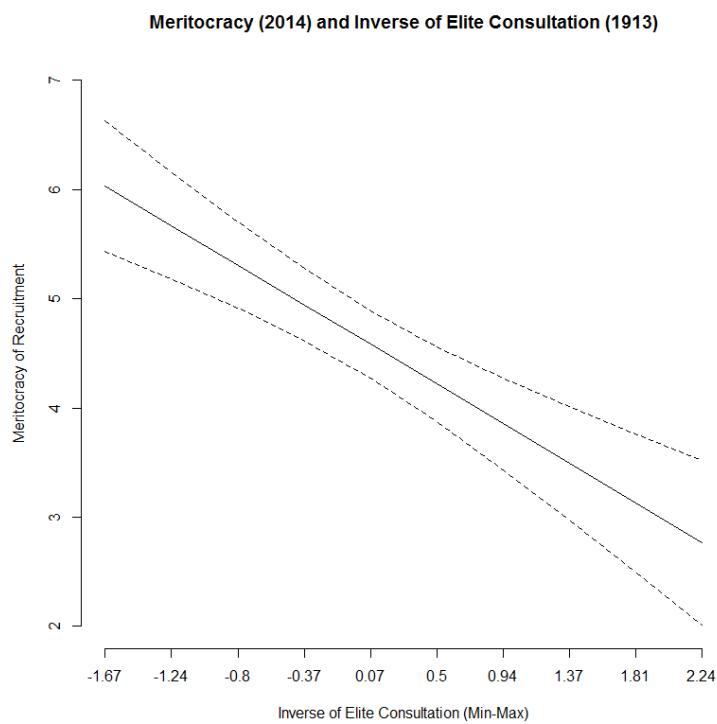


Figure 4: Political Appointments (2014) and the Inverse of the Range of Consultation (1913) from Empirical Min. to Max. (90% Conf. Int.)

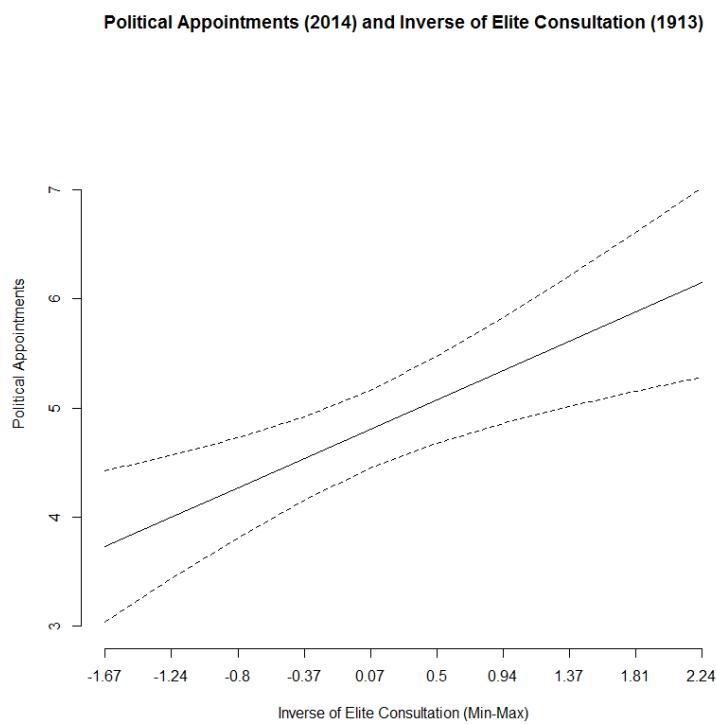


Table 2: Merit Recruitment (2014) and the Inverse of the Range of Consultation (1913)

	Dependent variable:					
	Merit Recruitment (QOG)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Inv. of the Range of Consult. 1913	-0.835*** (0.186)	-0.811*** (0.197)	-0.745*** (0.189)	-0.836*** (0.235)	-0.766*** (0.234)	-0.710*** (0.192)
Div. Party Ctrl. Avg. 1990–		0.049 (0.351)				
Leg. Party Coh. Avg. 1990–		0.267 (0.188)				
MID Count 1863–1913			0.005 (0.010)			
University Students 1990–				0.023 (0.034)		
Constant	4.637*** (0.188)	4.656*** (0.206)	4.445*** (0.243)	4.451*** (0.311)	4.534*** (0.305)	4.534*** (0.516)
Observations	28	27	27	21	25	27
Log Likelihood	-39.551	-38.309	-37.353	-29.929	-35.181	-37.067

Note: Tobit Regression \* p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01

Table 3: Political Appointments (2014) and the Inverse of the Range of Consultation (1913)

	Dependent variable:					
	Political Appointments (QOG)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)*	(5)	(6)
Inv. of the Range of Consult. 1913	0.616*** (0.215)	0.598*** (0.230)	0.515** (0.215)	0.538** (0.246)	0.709** (0.283)	0.584** (0.234)
Div. Party Ctrl. Avg. 1990–		0.058 (0.409)				
Leg. Party Coh. Avg. 1990–			-0.410* (0.213)			
MID Count 1863–1913				0.002 (0.010)		
University Students 1913					0.029 (0.041)	-0.004 (0.013)
University Students Avg. 1990–						
Constant	4.765*** (0.217)	4.743*** (0.240)	5.096*** (0.275)	4.690*** (0.325)	4.564*** (0.368)	4.936*** (0.629)
Observations	28	27	27	21	25	27
Log Likelihood	-43.552	-42.451	-40.729	-30.881	-39.927	-42.414

\* p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01

Note: Tobit Regression

## 6 Conclusion

This study presents and tests a novel theory of how social constellations in the 19th and early 20th centuries have an impact on present-day bureaucracies. The middle classes historically were the strongest force for meritocracy and low political control. On the other hand, the working class and the traditional elites typically pushed for high control through democratic and non-democratic institutions, respectively. While the landed elites generally aimed for high social selectivity, the working class had more ambiguous interests—simultaneously seeking lower educational requirements and more open recruitment. The case studies have demonstrated that many different mechanisms, ranging from formal party organizations to terror and intimidation, were used to shape bureaucratic organization. Due to high levels of path dependence in public administrations, the historical outcomes still largely determine variations we observe today.

I conducted this study in response to several gaps and weak spots in the existing literature. First, many previous studies treat political control and meritocracy as two sides of the same concept. However, as discussed in detail above, there is a more complex interaction between them. In order to understand this interaction, we need to develop a theory that can account for more than just two outcomes. Second, while several contributions have indirectly touched upon social groups, the explicit interests that they have with respect to bureaucratic institutions remained under-theorized. Furthermore, even though there are many excellent studies on American bureaucratic history, the limited scope of these studies often reduces their comparative explanatory power. This study addresses all of the points above by considering the complex interaction of bureaucratic institutions, explicitly theorizing about the

interests of social groups, and analyzing multiple cases from a comparative perspective. A cross-sectional empirical test complements the case studies.

What are the implications of these results? Most importantly, other aspects of the modern state, including educational systems and military institutions, may be subject to similar historical dynamics. Future investigations could look at these and other aspects of the modern state and examine the extent to which they were shaped by social groups. Additionally, the insights from this study may be of special relevance to political actors in developing countries, especially in places that currently suffer from low meritocracy and bureaucratic inefficiency. Identifying the social groups that have the greatest interest in bureaucratic reforms could open political opportunities for administrative reform.

In addition to the extraordinary path of bureaucratic development in the Soviet Union, there are a few additional outliers that could be looked at in future investigations. The case of Belgium does not fully meet the scope conditions of this study insofar as the country developed a modern bureaucracy somewhat later than other states—in the 1920s and 1930s (Thijs and Van de Walle, 2005). At this time, the landed elites had already been marginalized as a political force and the working class had become a central actor in the political system (Witte, Craeybeckx and Meynen, 2009, esp. 97, 100-101). Accordingly, Belgium would be an interesting case to look at if the preferences of workers change when the overall configuration of social groups changes. Similarly, bureaucratic modernization taking place in other world regions in the present day could be subject to greater influence by workers and their political representatives.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, these are appropriate cases for future analyses.

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<sup>58</sup>In particular, consider the work by Slater (2008) on the influence of competitive elections and mass parties (which may include parties supported by previously marginalized populations, such as working-class parties) on state building.

Some critics might argue that my approach neglects the many reforms that bureaucracies experienced later, such as a general trend of “politicization” (Peters and Pierre, 2004). This criticism is valid. However, cross-country variation in terms of meritocracy and political control is so remarkable that within-country changes over time are comparatively small. Additionally, even if there are general trends that affect many bureaucracies, the *point of departure* still matters. The case studies have illustrated these points in detail. Nevertheless, future research could explore the interaction of initial configurations and subsequent reforms more directly. Such an assessment could be part of a deeper investigation of path dependence based on the mechanisms outlined above. Similarly, the long-term effects that the World Wars had on public administrations would be a worthwhile additional area of investigation.<sup>59</sup> Finally, my previous analysis cannot account for regional differences in bureaucratic characteristics (Charron, Dahlström and Lapuente, 2016; Folke, Hirano and Snyder, 2011; Krause, Lewis and Douglas, 2006). However, this leaves many avenues for future contributions.

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<sup>59</sup>A good point of departure for such an endeavor might be the edited volume by Rugge (2000).

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## 7 Appendix

This appendix includes additional empirical evidence and further discussions of claims that were made in the paper. In subsection 7.1, I show that the results of the statistical analyses are robust when choosing different years for measuring the key explanatory variable. In subsection 7.2, I test the hypotheses that are related to the historical influence of the middle classes.

### 7.1 Additional Empirical Analysis: the Years 1910-1925

Table 4 and Table 5 show that the results that I have obtained in section 5 are statistically significant for a large number of years. The table shows the coefficient and p-values of the elite consultation variable for different models (M1-M6) for all years between 1910 and 1925. While the years 1914-18 yield some results that are less statistically significant, World War One causes short-term changes in the relevant variables that reflect unique developments during the war years. Therefore, we can discount those outliers.

Year	$\beta_1$ (M1)	$\beta_1$ (M2)	$\beta_1$ (M3)	$\beta_1$ (M4)	$\beta_1$ (M5)	$\beta_1$ (M6)	$p$ (M1)	$p$ (M2)	$p$ (M3)	$p$ (M4)	$p$ (M5)	$p$ (M6)
1	1910	-0.807	-0.783	-0.713	-0.803	-0.717	-0.684	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.002	0.000
2	1911	-0.795	-0.770	-0.700	-0.787	-0.699	-0.672	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.003	0.000
3	1912	-0.835	-0.811	-0.744	-0.838	-0.758	-0.713	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000
4	1913	-0.835	-0.811	-0.745	-0.836	-0.766	-0.710	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000
5	1914	-0.834	-0.799	-0.737	-0.842	-0.760	-0.714	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000
6	1915	-0.763	-0.741	-0.663	-0.804	-0.719	-0.654	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.002	0.001
7	1916	-0.681	-0.691	-0.607	-0.744	-0.652	-0.604	0.001	0.001	0.003	0.008	0.003
8	1917	-0.675	-0.678	-0.595	-0.775	-0.652	-0.575	0.002	0.002	0.006	0.002	0.011
9	1918	-0.653	-0.658	-0.584	-0.868	-0.611	-0.575	0.001	0.001	0.006	0.000	0.009
10	1919	-0.667	-0.657	-0.614	-0.830	-0.614	-0.581	0.000	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.003
11	1920	-0.702	-0.696	-0.653	-0.804	-0.670	-0.609	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.001
12	1921	-0.707	-0.704	-0.662	-0.807	-0.683	-0.619	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
13	1922	-0.722	-0.717	-0.678	-0.835	-0.702	-0.637	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
14	1923	-0.668	-0.678	-0.626	-0.719	-0.644	-0.567	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001
15	1924	-0.689	-0.704	-0.652	-0.745	-0.665	-0.569	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
16	1925	-0.630	-0.666	-0.604	-0.659	-0.603	-0.517	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Table 4: Meritocracy and the Inverse of the Range of Consultation: Robustness Checks for the Years 1910-1925

	Year	$\beta_1$ (M1)	$\beta_1$ (M2)	$\beta_1$ (M3)	$\beta_1$ (M4)	$\beta_1$ (M5)	$\beta_1$ (M6)	p (M1)	p (M2)	p (M3)	p (M4)	p (M5)	p (M6)
1	1910	0.617	0.601	0.512	0.538	0.674	0.581	0.004	0.010	0.018	0.031	0.016	0.012
2	1911	0.604	0.587	0.499	0.519	0.654	0.567	0.005	0.011	0.021	0.037	0.019	0.014
3	1912	0.634	0.617	0.531	0.561	0.705	0.600	0.003	0.007	0.014	0.023	0.011	0.009
4	1913	0.616	0.598	0.515	0.538	0.709	0.584	0.004	0.009	0.016	0.029	0.012	0.012
5	1914	0.636	0.613	0.514	0.536	0.705	0.603	0.003	0.008	0.014	0.033	0.013	0.010
6	1915	0.592	0.573	0.468	0.498	0.656	0.558	0.007	0.015	0.029	0.045	0.018	0.018
7	1916	0.545	0.539	0.428	0.458	0.611	0.520	0.021	0.026	0.055	0.078	0.034	0.035
8	1917	0.512	0.519	0.381	0.491	0.570	0.463	0.033	0.031	0.097	0.060	0.049	0.070
9	1918	0.508	0.515	0.355	0.552	0.596	0.486	0.025	0.024	0.120	0.037	0.014	0.052
10	1919	0.561	0.552	0.437	0.524	0.630	0.562	0.007	0.009	0.039	0.036	0.006	0.011
11	1920	0.574	0.573	0.495	0.499	0.601	0.586	0.005	0.006	0.019	0.044	0.009	0.009
12	1921	0.585	0.582	0.514	0.511	0.610	0.594	0.004	0.004	0.011	0.035	0.008	0.006
13	1922	0.588	0.586	0.517	0.512	0.619	0.596	0.003	0.003	0.011	0.034	0.007	0.005
14	1923	0.459	0.455	0.395	0.420	0.472	0.423	0.021	0.023	0.047	0.054	0.036	0.045
15	1924	0.493	0.489	0.444	0.465	0.515	0.451	0.008	0.009	0.016	0.018	0.015	0.024
16	1925	0.451	0.455	0.423	0.415	0.456	0.414	0.008	0.009	0.011	0.019	0.018	0.025

Table 5: Political Control and the Inverse of the Range of Consultation: Robustness Checks for the Years 1910-1925

## 7.2 Additional Empirical Analysis: the Middle Class(es)

### 7.2.1 Measuring Historical Middle-Class Influence

In this section, I test hypotheses 3 and 4 on the historical influence of the middle classes. Finding an independent variable poses a challenge as it needs to be highly correlated with historical middle-class influence.

The *historical level of property rights* is a good proxy for two reasons. First, the foremost economic policy goal of the middle classes was the strengthening of property rights, as a protection against attempts by either the traditional elites or the working class, or both, to increase taxes or expropriate middle class members. By measuring the extent to which they were able to achieve their goal, I capture both formal and informal influence. Second, high levels of property rights are also associated with greater economic security for the middle classes, further strengthening their position (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2005; Ansell and Samuels, 2014; Boix, 2003; Kocka, 1995; Savage, Barlow, Dickens and Fielding, 1995).

These claims are summarized in [Figure 5](#). A continuous measurement of historical property rights levels is provided by [Coppedge et al. \(2016\)](#).

An argument that may be put forward against this measurement is that strong market economies could lead to both high levels of property rights protection *and* high levels of meritocracy, a potentially complex form of endogeneity. This argument is valid but also fully compatible with the theory. Indeed, in strong market economies, we would expect a strong middle class and, as the case studies have shown, the middle classes were the *primary agents* for bureaucratic reform. Acknowledging the *importance of agency*, the middle classes must be seen as the driving force behind the institutionalization of meritocracy.

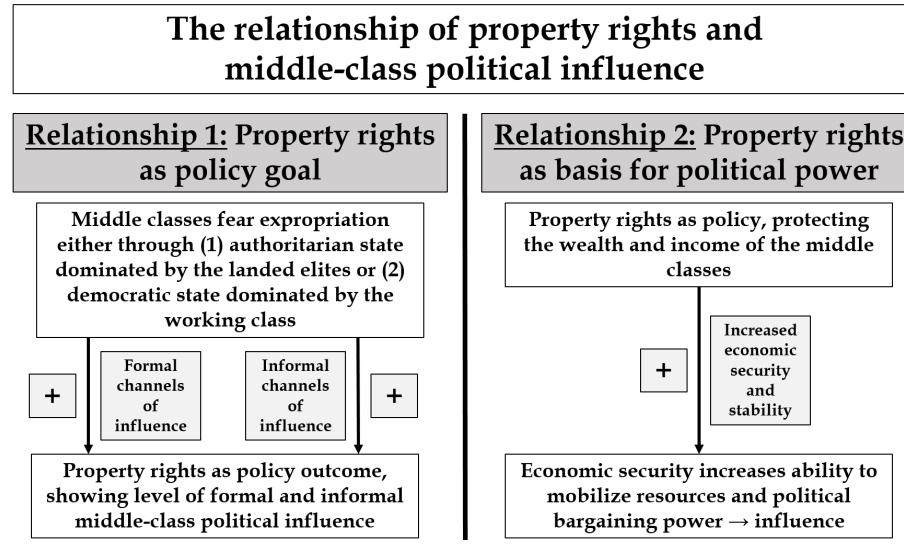


Figure 5: Property Rights and Middle-Class Political Influence

### 7.2.2 Results of the Statistical Analysis

The results show that the level of property rights protection in 1913—as a proxy for the political power of the middle classes—is strongly positively associated with the present-day level of meritocracy in recruitment and strongly negatively related to the present-day level of political appointments. These results provide strong complementary evidence in support of the theory introduced here. Further details can be found in [Figure 6](#), [Figure 7](#), [Table 6](#), and [Table 7](#).

Figure 6: Meritocracy of Recruitment (2014) and Property Rights (1913) from Empirical Min. to Max. (90% Conf. Int.)

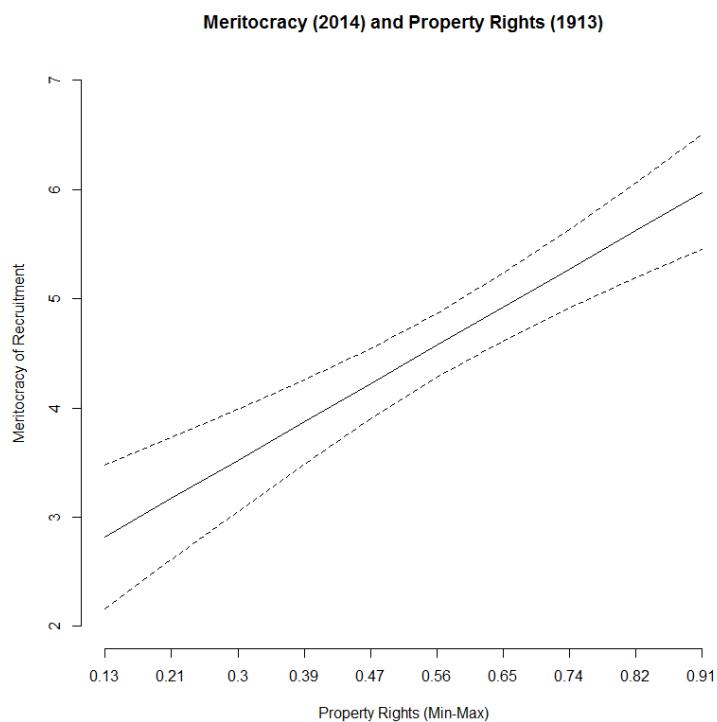


Figure 7: Political Appointments (2014) and Property Rights (1913) from Empirical Min. to Max. (90% Conf. Int.)

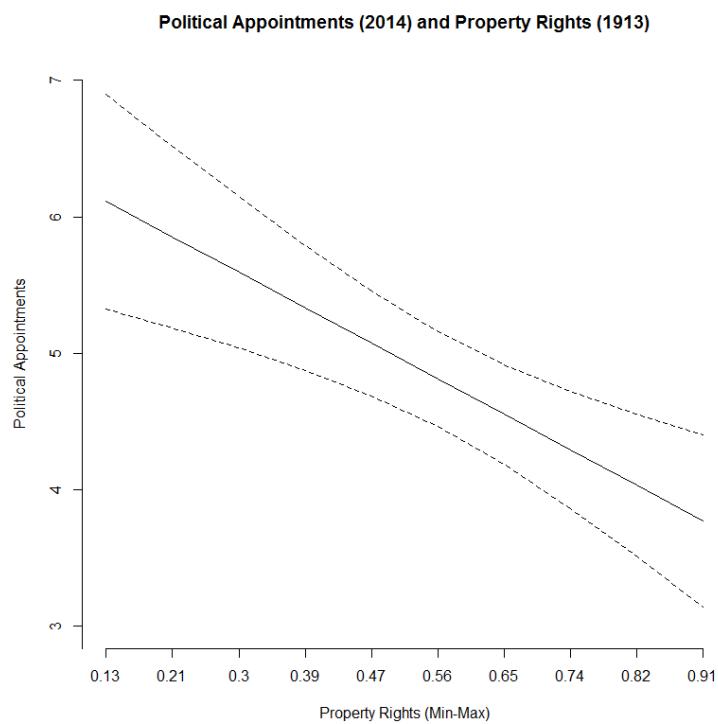


Table 6: Merit Recruitment (2014) and Property Rights (1913)

	Dependent variable:					
	Merit Recruitment (QOG)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Property Rights 1913	4.034*** (0.801)	3.974*** (0.800)	3.719*** (0.796)	3.864*** (0.988)	3.789*** (0.851)	3.591*** (0.819)
Div. Party Ctrl. <i>Avg.</i> 1990–		0.013 (0.320)				
Leg. Party Coh. <i>Avg.</i> 1990–			0.204 (0.178)			
MID Count 1863–1913				0.006 (0.009)		
University Students 1913					0.036 (0.029)	
University Students <i>Avg.</i> 1990–						0.013 (0.010)
Constant	2.307*** (0.495)	2.390*** (0.512)	2.370*** (0.476)	2.324*** (0.661)	2.272*** (0.539)	2.029*** (0.556)
Observations	28	27	27	21	25	27
Log Likelihood	-38.092	-36.111	-35.473	-29.133	-32.336	-35.340

*Note: Tobit Regression* \* p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01

Table 7: Political Appointments (2014) and Property Rights (1913)

	Dependent variable: Political Appointments (QOG)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Property Rights 1913	-2.990*** (0.952)	-2.914*** (0.982)	-2.503*** (0.950)	-2.209** (1.088)	-3.119*** (1.128)	-2.943*** (1.036)
Div. Party Ctrl. <i>Avg.</i> 1990–	0.086 (0.393)					
Leg. Party Coh. <i>Avg.</i> 1990–		-0.371* (0.213)				
MID Count 1863–1913			0.002 (0.010)			
University Students 1913				0.014 (0.038)		
University Students <i>Avg.</i> 1990–					-0.0004 (0.013)	
Constant	6.492*** (0.588)	6.404*** (0.628)	6.494*** (0.568)	5.893*** (0.727)	6.444*** (0.714)	6.459*** (0.703)
Observations	28	27	27	21	25	27
Log Likelihood	-42.935	-41.667	-40.248	-31.155	-39.395	-41.690

*Note: Tobit Regression*

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

### **7.2.3 Additional Empirical Analysis: the Years 1910-1925**

As done for the previous analysis, in order to ensure that the results of the statistical analysis are robust regardless of the choice of year, the regressions using the level of property rights as a measurement of middle-class influence were conducted for a large number of years (1910-1925).

Table 8 shows the results of multiple Tobit regressions with the level of meritocracy as the key dependent variable and property rights as the key independent variable for all years from 1910 to 1925. Models 1-6 each include the same covariates as models 1-6 in the previous subsection. As shown, the results are robust for all years.

Year	$\beta_1$ (M1)	$\beta_1$ (M2)	$\beta_1$ (M3)	$\beta_1$ (M4)	$\beta_1$ (M5)	$\beta_1$ (M6)	$p$ (M1)	$p$ (M2)	$p$ (M3)	$p$ (M4)	$p$ (M5)	$p$ (M6)
1	1910	3.993	3.930	3.683	3.832	3.741	3.557	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
2	1911	4.033	3.959	3.718	3.841	3.789	3.594	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
3	1912	4.043	3.979	3.727	3.864	3.799	3.599	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
4	1913	4.034	3.974	3.719	3.864	3.789	3.591	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
5	1914	3.940	3.857	3.580	3.780	3.658	3.500	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
6	1915	3.668	3.688	3.314	3.713	3.532	3.291	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
7	1916	3.579	3.673	3.256	3.754	3.526	3.279	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000
8	1917	3.603	3.658	3.274	3.754	3.631	3.218	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000
9	1918	3.406	3.576	3.300	4.146	3.263	3.224	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
10	1919	3.019	3.062	2.877	3.894	2.900	2.780	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
11	1920	2.995	3.044	2.840	3.951	2.849	2.725	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
12	1921	3.028	3.068	2.882	3.954	2.881	2.764	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
13	1922	3.085	3.121	2.939	3.954	2.927	2.818	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
14	1923	3.323	3.356	3.184	4.053	3.223	2.930	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
15	1924	3.052	3.087	2.885	3.550	2.775	2.599	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000
16	1925	3.144	3.181	2.989	3.601	2.871	2.692	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000

Table 8: Meritocracy and Property Rights: Robustness Checks for the Years 1910-1925

Similarly, [Table 9](#) shows the results of multiple Tobit regressions with the level of political control as the key dependent variable and property rights as the key independent variable for all years from 1910 to 1925. Models 1-6 each include the same covariates as models 1-6 in the previous subsection. In some cases, the years 1914-1918 do not reach the highest levels of statistical significance. However, we can discount those outliers as the events of World War One dramatically influenced the level of property rights in a large number of countries.

Year	$\beta_1$ (M1)	$\beta_1$ (M2)	$\beta_1$ (M3)	$\beta_1$ (M4)	$\beta_1$ (M5)	$\beta_1$ (M6)	p (M1)	p (M2)	p (M3)	p (M4)	p (M5)	p (M6)
1	1910	-2.977	-2.901	-2.509	-2.197	-3.088	-2.934	0.002	0.003	0.007	0.042	0.005
2	1911	-2.972	-2.890	-2.495	-2.204	-3.082	-2.932	0.002	0.003	0.008	0.041	0.006
3	1912	-2.987	-2.908	-2.498	-2.209	-3.112	-2.941	0.002	0.003	0.009	0.042	0.006
4	1913	-2.990	-2.914	-2.503	-2.209	-3.119	-2.943	0.002	0.003	0.008	0.042	0.006
5	1914	-3.079	-3.001	-2.474	-2.134	-3.167	-3.014	0.001	0.003	0.008	0.057	0.005
6	1915	-3.003	-2.977	-2.422	-2.096	-3.153	-2.939	0.002	0.003	0.010	0.061	0.005
7	1916	-3.035	-3.054	-2.436	-2.174	-3.272	-2.954	0.003	0.003	0.014	0.066	0.005
8	1917	-2.789	-2.865	-2.168	-2.174	-2.977	-2.610	0.008	0.007	0.035	0.066	0.014
9	1918	-2.552	-2.913	-2.175	-2.415	-2.979	-2.774	0.010	0.003	0.032	0.045	0.004
10	1919	-2.732	-2.929	-2.543	-2.287	-3.039	-2.917	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.038	0.000
11	1920	-2.692	-2.937	-2.588	-2.341	-2.890	-2.828	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.034	0.002
12	1921	-2.717	-2.945	-2.625	-2.355	-2.937	-2.855	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.032	0.001
13	1922	-2.757	-2.978	-2.665	-2.355	-2.985	-2.897	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.032	0.002
14	1923	-2.609	-2.813	-2.505	-2.364	-2.855	-2.702	0.003	0.001	0.004	0.030	0.005
15	1924	-2.418	-2.620	-2.306	-2.035	-2.483	-2.394	0.005	0.002	0.009	0.059	0.014
16	1925	-2.459	-2.661	-2.343	-2.055	-2.546	-2.436	0.004	0.002	0.008	0.052	0.011

Table 9: Political Control and Property Rights: Robustness Checks for the Years 1910-1925