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How to cite this publication

Please cite the final published version:

Andersen, D. D. E., & Møller, J. (2019). The Transhistorical Tension between Bureaucratic Autonomy and Political Control. *Political Studies Review*, 17(3), 284-295.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929918798495>

Publication metadata

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Title: | The Transhistorical Tension between Bureaucratic Autonomy and Political Control |
| Author(s): | David Delfs Erbo Andersen & Jørgen Møller |
| Journal: | <i>Political Studies Review</i> , 17(3), 284-295 |
| DOI/Link: | https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929918798495 |
| Document version: | Accepted manuscript (post-print) |

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Review Article: The Transhistorical Tension between Bureaucratic Autonomy and Political Control

Abstract:

Political decision-makers experience a constant tension between bureaucratic autonomy on the one hand and political control on the other. Extant scholarship rarely analyzes this tension beyond the context of modern states. However, three new books show that it has a transhistorical relevance. Francis Fukuyama's two books, *The Origins of Political Order* and *Political Order and Political Decay*, analyze the various ways the tension has been addressed in the period before and after the French Revolution. In *Democracy's Slaves*, Paulin Ismard documents that the tension was relevant even in the context of the direct democracy of Athens in the Classical period. Taking these three books as the point of departure, we point out how politicians have attempted to solve this tension across time and space in patrimonial, meritocratic, politicization, and neo-patrimonial types of administration.

Fukuyama, Francis (2012). *The Origins of Political Order (Vol I)*. London: Profile books.

Fukuyama, Francis (2014). *Political Order and Political Decay (Vol II)*. London: Profile books.

Ismard, Paulin (2017). *Democracy's Slaves: A Political History of Ancient Greece*, Cambridge:
Harvard University Press.

Introduction

A large body of research has argued that modern states face a persistent tension between bureaucratic autonomy and political control. Modern politicians need to balance these two concerns (Weber 1978: 973; Simon 1976; Etzioni-Halevey 1985: Chs. 1-2; Tilly 1992: Ch. 3; Silberman 1993: Ch. 4-5; Aberbach and Rockman 1994; Peters 2010; Mann 2012: Chs. 8, 13). In *The Origins of Political Order and Political Order and Political Decay*, Francis Fukuyama (2014) emphasizes that this tension is a more general problem – indeed, something of a Gordian knot – of modern political development. According to Fukuyama, a key challenge of successful modernization is how to ensure that “democratic electorates grant their governments an appropriate degree of discretion and yet remain in firm control of the policies and goals that bureaucracies are meant to serve?” (2014: 519). In other words, how to avoid that well-educated public officials promote their own agendas at the expense of the policies favored by the government?

Political Order and Political Decay probes this tension in several ways. The book dedicates a chapter to the concept of bureaucracy, it contains a thorough analysis of how Prussia built its bureaucracy, it analyzes how other 19th century European and American state builders tried to rationalize bureaucracy in the context of a latent or direct pressure for democratization, and it emphasizes that issues of corruption, patronage, clientelism, and stalled administrative reforms are recurring everywhere in today’s world. Moreover, in *The Origins of Political Order – Political Order and Political Decay* is the sequel volume – Fukuyama shows that the tension was also relevant in Ancient China (Fukuyama 2012: Ch. 6), the Ottoman Empire (Fukuyama 2012: Ch. 13), and Egypt (Fukuyama 2012: Ch. 14). For instance, the Ottomans used eunuchs as governors to recruit civil administrators among Christian youths in the Balkan Provinces. The young recruits received physical and educational training, were raised as Turkish-speaking Muslims from the age of two to eight, and were finally inspected with the prospect of serving the sultan in Istanbul. This institution of military slavery made sure, for some time at least, that the sultan was equipped with a relatively incorruptible and competent administration (Fukuyama 2012: 189-191).

A new book on the political history of Ancient Greece, *Democracy’s Slaves* by the historian Paulin Ismard (2017), further underlines the transhistorical relevance of the tension between bureaucratic autonomy and political control. The democracy of ancient Greece is normally defined by its direct exercise of power by citizens, shorn of any bureaucratic apparatus. Yet, Ismard shows that in the city-state of Athens public slaves were stable forces in a bureaucracy of surprising proportions. The use of slaves as public servants was deliberate as slaves, being excluded from

citizenship and thus democratic participation, could receive lifelong education in serving public administration while being relatively incorruptible and apolitical. This model provided a ‘professional’ corps of administrators who would loyally do the bidding of the Athenian city-state.

That the balance between bureaucratic autonomy and political control has a broader historical relevance is hardly surprising. Principal-agent theory tells us that agents (such as bureaucrats) and principals (such as the political superiors) have differing goals, that information asymmetries normally favor the agent, and that this in turn creates the risk of moral hazard. Bureaucrats have an incentive to slack and shirk, and, if interests collide, to sabotage the policy intentions of the politicians, thereby creating a challenge of selecting and controlling the bureaucrat (Mitnick 1975; Bendor et al. 2001). It follows that the balance is relevant across different political regime types and across historical contexts.

However, most applications of principal-agent theory to political problems have limited the analysis to modern-day states (see the empirical catalogue in Laffont and Martimort 2002). Likewise, analyses of the tension are limited to the period after the French Revolution in 1789 and typically include only representative democracies (e.g. Simon 1976; Etzioni-Halevey 1985: Chs. 1-2; Aberbach and Rockman 1994; Peters 2010) or modern-type authoritarian regimes (e.g. Silberman 1993; Huber and McCarty 2004; Egorov and Sonin 2011; Zakharov 2016).¹ Fukuyama’s and Ismard’s work reminds us that these are simply some among many settings where the tension is to be encountered. That said, none of these two books engages in systematic comparisons between how the tension has manifested itself in different historical contexts and different historical regime forms. In this review article, we use the two books as a stepping-stone for carrying out such a historical mapping, necessarily in a somewhat tentative way. First, we review Ismard’s evidence from Ancient Athens showing that the tension, *pace* the conventional wisdom on the character of the direct democracy of Antiquity, was already relevant in Greece in the Classical period. Second, we take Fukuyama’s books as the point of departure for mapping other prominent instances of the tension, inside and outside the West before and after the French Revolution. What this mapping indicates is that the tension takes different forms in different contexts. This reflects the variety of mechanisms through which politicians have attempted to solve the tension.

¹ Weber’s (1978) analysis of Prussia is a partial exception as it includes pre-1789 years under monarchical rule. However, most of it is concerned with the bureaucratic-authoritarian period in the 19th century. Grindle (2012) compares patrimonialism in Medieval Europe with the use of patronage in contemporary Latin America.

Athenian direct democracy and the use of public slaves

There is a fundamental dissimilarity between modern, representative democracy and the direct democracy that we find in Greece in the Classical Period – or more exactly in 5th and 4th century B.C. Athens, on which the bulk of our knowledge of Antique democracy is based (Hansen 1999). Most scholarship singles out the difference between having the full body of citizens assembling to legislate – directly, as it were – and the indirect legislation that is produced by representative institutions in modern democracies.

However, an even more consequential difference had to do with the appointment of magistrates. In modern democracies, the equivalents of magistrates, i.e. presidents and governments in parliamentary systems, are appointed either directly or indirectly via elections. The Athenians of the Classical period used a very different principle, namely lot or sortition (Hansen 1999; Manin 1997). Magistrates were appointed by lot for delimited periods, normally a year, and their tenure was customarily nonrenewable. The magistrates in a sense made up both the government and the administration, that is, they were both politicians and administrators. In modern, representative democracy, by contrast, there is a sharp divide between the government and the administration. Government officials are politicians but they are not administrators, rather they command an administrative apparatus. This, of course, is exactly what creates the tension between bureaucratic autonomy and political control.

Seen from this vantage point, the Athenians seem to have disposed of this very tension. However, matters are not so simple. There were a number of both relatively complex and very menial public tasks that had to be carried out to make the Athenian body politics work. In fact, many administrative tasks demanded specialized competences. One of Ismard's examples is the role as guarantors of the coins. This task was carried out by controllers in Athens itself and in the port of Piraeus, using a touchstone or *basanos* to confiscate coins where cobber or bronze had been used to dilute the silver content. Coin control required expertise and long training. If left to a magistrate, it would have been difficult to use lot for appointment, as only a few citizens would have been able to take charge of this task in an effective way. Hence, in this area – and there were many others – citizen appointment would have “violated the principle of the egalitarian distribution of the *archè* within the political community” (Ismard 2017: 85).

As Ismard describes in his new book, Athenians devised a solution based on the economic organization of the day: slave society. So-called public slaves (*dèmosioi*) were stable forces in an administration of surprising proportions that existed on a regular basis and which had the

technical competences needed to deal with relatively complex administrative problems (Ismard 2017: 33). The numbers themselves are astounding: one to two thousand public slaves serviced the 30 to 40 thousand Athenian citizens (Ismard 2017: 2). Among other tasks, public slaves assisted judges, handled public records, worked as public accountants, took charge of policing, guaranteed coins, weights, and measures, monitored the work of magistrates, organized assembly sessions, and helped tally votes (Ismard 2017: 37-45). The public slaves were purchased on the slave market, typically as youths (Ismard 2017: 51), and they could be educated – e.g. by being apprenticed to older public slaves – in order to achieve competences needed to carry out administrative tasks. In fact, by being barred from citizenship and thus democratic participation they could receive lifelong education in serving public administration.

Another advantage was that public slaves could take care of the same task for years (Ismard 2017: 52-53). This ensured that “the civic administration would continue to function despite the regular rotation of magistrates” (Ismard 2017: 106). By using persons with no political rights as public administrators, the citizens could have their cake and eat it: that is, they could avoid an independent state apparatus while retaining its functions. The public slaves therefore provided the core of an administrative body in a direct democracy “that claimed not to have one” (Ismard 2017: 106).

Public slaves were also relatively incorruptible and apolitical. One very prosaic reason for this was that they had everything to lose: sanctions against misdemeanor by public slaves were harsh. They could be flogged and tortured, sanctions that could not be used against citizens (Ismard 2017: 60). Moreover, the public slaves had important privileges compared with other slaves, which corrupt behavior would jeopardize. They could hold property, including private slaves, and their sons could become free men (Ismard 2017: 62-73).² There was also an ideological dimension to the depoliticization of public slaves. Being slaves, they could not legitimate their own power in a way that threatened the body politics (Ismard 2017: 3). As Ismard (2017: 13) puts it, the public slaves served as “third-party guarantor of the civic order”.

The use of public slaves was therefore entirely in line with the guiding principle of Athenian direct democracy: to avoid professionals taking power. The worry here was that professionals would invariably transform democracy into an oligarchy or aristocracy (Hansen 1999: 236, 308). By outsourcing tasks that required specific competencies to slaves, the Athenians avoided

² However, their children would not inherit their offices, and they would normally not be apprenticed to them either (Ismard 2017: 79).

a situation where an individual's expertise would give him public power (Ismard 2017: 81). Hence, the use of public slaves involved – and secured – “the deliberate exclusion of expert knowledge from the political arena” (Ismard 2017: 88). The *dèmosioi* were thus an intrinsic part of Athenian direct democracy.

Ismard to some extent exaggerates the role of the public slaves in the Athenian city-state in order to give his book a sharper edge. After all, the *dèmosioi* mainly undertook menial tasks such as policing and other public works rather than the complicated tasks that Ismard mostly focuses on. Furthermore, all genuine magistrates (*archai*) in Athens were citizens and their secretaries were generally also citizens. Not until the third rung on the ladder – undersecretaries – do we occasionally find public slaves (as well as free non-citizens, the so-called metics). Finally, some citizens would actually hold the same position as magistrates for years on (Hansen 1999: 123-24, 244-45).

One should therefore be careful not to overemphasize the importance of public slaves in Athens, a city-state and direct democracy with a very limited suffrage confined to male citizens where government was relatively simple and limited in scope. That said, Ismard's book shows that even in this context the tension between bureaucratic autonomy and political control did rear its head – and that Athenians took steps to balance the two concerns. This clearly shows that the tension is relevant beyond modern states, notably representative democracies.

Mechanisms to solve the tension across time and space

There is a huge time gap between Ancient Athens and modern-day states. This gap can be bridged by considering how the tension plays out in different historical types of administration. Here, Fukuyama's books come in handy. He describes a number of different administrations, some of them primarily in the first volume. This includes pre-modern forms of human organization such as kinship-based bands and families, which, according to Fukuyama (2012: Ch. 3), is the default order. It also includes early modern European estate-based patrimonialism and a variety of modern state administrations including the European, clientelist offsprings in Latin America, the US spoils system, the neo-patrimonialism in African ex-colonies, and “Weberian” bureaucracy (Fukuyama 2012: Chs. 8, 24; Fukuyama 2014: Chs. 4, 9-10, 14).

According to Fukuyama, there is a general tension inherent in the building of state administrations between what he terms “autonomy” and “subordination”. Subordination is of obvious importance to a political leader since principals seek to control agents' behavior. Thus, bureaucratic autonomy, or what is conceived as discretion in decision-making, may be excessively strong. On the

other hand, political moves to subordinate administrators may lead to micro-management that hampers technical competence and creates red-tape bureaucracy. Therefore, the political leader faces the complex task of trying to strike a balance between autonomy and subordination (Fukuyama 2014: 514-517).³ However, Fukuyama is not explicitly concerned with how the different administrative systems strike this balance.

In the following, we therefore analyze four different types of administration as they have emerged over time: patrimonialism, meritocracy, politicization, and neo-patrimonialism. Classic work on bureaucracy from Weber (1978) to Eisenstadt (1958) and more recent studies from Ertman (1997) and the Quality of Government Institute (e.g. Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012) tease out these types based on how administrators have been recruited. Patrimonial administrations base the distribution of administrative offices on inheritance or, more generally, social and personal connections; meritocracies recruit administrators on their educational background, experience, and knowledge of the subject matter; politicized administrations recruit party loyalists or ideologically like-minded; and neo-patrimonial systems combine de facto patrimonialism with mostly ineffective legal rules of meritocratic recruitment.

Despite their basic conceptual differences, these administrative types have rarely existed in pure form, nor have they been mutually exclusive. Rather, one type has typically co-existed with one or more of the other types. Nevertheless, our analysis focuses on the specific mechanisms that each type of administration has attempted historically to mitigate the tension between bureaucratic autonomy and political control.

Patrimonialism characterized most polities, constitutional as well as absolutist, in medieval and early modern Europe. The backdrop is to be found in the 9th and 10th century collapse of state power, which transformed West European kingdoms into what Bisson (2009: 34) terms “a fabric of lordships.”⁴ The absence of state power created a political and administrative vacuum that strong estate groups such as the clergy and nobles could enter and colonize. Over centuries, elites thus managed to transform administrative offices into their own private property that passed on from father to son (Ertman 1997: 8; Oakley 2010: 192-193). Usually, the office gave access to rents as it

³ To achieve good governance more generally, Fukuyama argues countries need to achieve high levels on a second dimension of state capacity (Fukuyama 2014: 509).

⁴ Traditionally, this context has been described with the concept of “feudalism.” However, following what has been termed “the revolt against feudalism” that began in the 1970s, medieval historians have avoided this concept (see Reynolds 1994; Bisson 2009).

privatized certain hitherto public functions. In the area of tax extraction – a core public function – the king or prince could typically only demand a small share of the taxes that the officeholder extracted, while the officeholder often acquired tax payments illegally (Braun 1975: 251-252).

The patrimonial system consisted of politicians (kings or princes) and administrators (proprietary officeholders) whose interests often collided. The proprietary officeholders wanted to secure their private goods and family prominence. The kings or princes sought to raise more money from taxes in a time of mounting governmental pressures, most notably the defense of the realm. However, they were highly dependent on the extractive efforts of parliaments and diets and so had to constantly bargain their way to please elite-groups such as the nobility, the clergy, and townsmen (Tilly 1992: 71-79). Tax grants functioned as bargaining power that allowed these elites to demand socioeconomic and political concessions from the monarchs (Braun 1975: 253). Meanwhile, the nobility possessed exclusive knowledge of the local agriculture, which in many areas was the main source of tax revenue. On top of that, years of privilege and power grabbing had institutionalized the principle of hereditary offices and thus shielded the elite-groups from royal firing and interference. More often than not, royal reliance on noble tax extraction led to financial drains and war losses. Otherwise, the crown would need to raise an army against the estate groups (Schulze 1996: 29). As Hagen Schulze (1996: 48) notes, “the power struggle between the monarchs and their estates” was one source of “profound uncertainty” that characterized medieval and early modern Europe.

Bureaucratic organizations, consisting of specialized and hierarchically organized offices, accelerated after the peace treaties in Osnabrück and Münster in 1648, which also marked the coming of absolutism across much of Europe (Schulze 1996: 48). Thomas Ertman’s *Birth of the Leviathan* takes stock of this development, showing how most of Eastern and Latin Europe (Spain, Portugal, France, and the Italian Principalities) only partly reformed if at all, while a country such as Prussia developed a more clean system of meritocracy.

Centralized state power and a pool of university-educated jurists enabled the successful implementation of meritocracy as a principle of recruitment to the state administration, including the royal household. The former made it affordable to undermine the system of proprietary officeholding; the latter provided a plausible, administrative alternative. However, meritocracy was only successfully implemented where wars (internal or external) stripped the estate officeholders of sociopolitical and economic resources to the extent that monarchs could credibly demand the acquisition of revenues from the officeholders and people within the territory.

The most clear-cut example of meritocracy emerged in an unexpected place, namely the hitherto backward Prussia. The Hohenzollern kings in Prussia established a strong royal authority vis-à-vis the *Junker* estates following the Thirty Years War (Fischer and Lundgreen 1975: 510-517; Gorski 2003) by effectively rooted out patrimonial tendencies at the central levels of administration. Instead, they began recruiting on merit, which tended to disqualify uneducated *Junker* sons (Ertman 1997: 248, 253-254). Merit recruitment was a means of eroding the local powers of a recalcitrant aristocracy and instead bringing in independent men of the higher bourgeoisie. However, the success of merit recruitment caused new problems for the Prussian monarchs. Over a few decades in the late 18th century, an autonomous bureaucracy emerged that had outgrown the king's General Directory and become a diversified, professional group with a corporate identity based on recruitment of university candidates. Due to its expertise, the bureaucracy achieved considerable influence on politics, limiting the king's *de facto* ability to determine the direction and pace of Prussia's political development (Dorn 1931: 405, 414; Sheehan 1989: 142). This was the essence of the bureaucratic authoritarianism that dominated Prussia's political system during the 19th century under monarchs and chancellors alike (Rosenberg 1958: Ch. 9). The dilemma between granting autonomy to the bureaucracy and making it loyal to a certain political course was never definitively solved in Prussia and remained an essential part of political conflict in Weimar and Nazi Germany (Mommsen 1991: 79, 83-86, 90, 100, 111-112).

The Prussian meritocracy was not entirely new at the time but resembled – and was partly inspired by – the administrative system found in Ancient China. As early modern Europe's most prominent 'other', the states of the Warring States Period (481-221 B.C.) had to a surprisingly large extent recruited on abilities rather than status (Lewis 1999; Hui 2005; Fukuyama 2012: 113). Through wars between the competing states, extraordinary state building began in what is today Northern China, including the growth of bureaucracies to extract taxes and organize armies. Even more so than in Prussia, this process destroyed noble privileges and replaced them with administrative subunits ruled directly by an appointed official and subordinate to the rule of the center (Lewis 1999: 602-3; Hui 2004: 194; von Falkenhausen 2006). However, this Chinese model where meritocracy served as the handmaiden of an absolutist ruler came with its own deficits. The most important was that the bureaucracy had no autonomy to check royal policies. This had some dire consequences. In one famous instance, albeit more than a millennium downstream, the Ming Emperors without much reasoning suddenly prohibited ocean-going shipping (Hall 1985: 50).

Slave administrations such as the *demosioi* in the Athenian city-state or Egypt's Mamluks in the Middle Ages bear some resemblance to meritocracy, although of course the use of slaves takes the quest for bureaucratic autonomy and political control to an extreme that we do not find elsewhere. These are two different models where slaves were educated and used as administrators in much the same way (see Fukuyama 2012: Ch. 13; Ismard 2017: 79).

Major developments in administrative systems took place after the French Revolution signaled to the rest of Europe that the people itself could decisively dispose of old aristocratic privileges. However, although the pace of bureaucratic reform across most of Europe heightened substantially after 1789, meritocracy only materialized slowly and selectively during much of the 19th century. Where patrimonial privileges had survived through fusion with parliamentary powers such as in the Swedish Riksdag or the English House of Lords, the battle for establishing an autonomous bureaucracy was solved peacefully but in a prolonged process mired in uncertainties that revolved around the issue of creating a less corrupt and more impartial but also politically responsive administration (Silberman 1993: 297, 350; Teorell and Rothstein 2015).

We find a different route in many of the colonial offshoots. The USA and the Southern Cone countries of Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile all formed independent states based on the legitimate model of the 18th century, that is constitutional, representative government. They very quickly faced pressure for mass suffrage forming from an institutional rock bottom. Accordingly, political parties organized before the push for bureaucracy came from Europe, with the typical consequence that administrative offices were staffed by party officials. Such an administrative system of politicization became most pronounced where parties could operate from center to periphery by organizing national-level parties and their local branches, swaying voters, and controlling competing patrons. Machine politics, creating a mix of permanent staffs loyal to certain parties and temporary staffs coming in with a new government, was one result of this process (Silberman 1993: Ch. 8; Kurtz 2013: Chs. 3-4). In other words, politicization became most systematic and widespread where the push for mass suffrage extensions preceded bureaucratization (see Shefter 1977), and where state power was relatively centralized.

State administrations run by political parties are cases of 'politicization from above', which is today the most used and viable alternative to meritocracy (Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012). This should come as no surprise since politicization addresses the flaws of excessive bureaucratic autonomy that cases like 19th century Prussia and Weimar Germany exemplify. The initial 19th century and later waves of politicization can in fact be seen as deliberate efforts to ensure

political control in an age when the dual demands of rule by the people and rule of law were nearly impossible to dismiss (Silberman 1993; see also Etzioni-Halevey 1985: Chs. 1-2). However, politicization, like meritocracy, is rarely completely dominating. More often than not, there are “islands of excellence” where meritocracy dominates. Conversely, administrations dominated by a meritocratic civil service system often use political appointments for the top departmental levels to smoothen the link to the government and thus increase political control.

Finally, neo-patrimonialism emerged in African and Asian countries that had typically been colonized by Europeans during the 19th century. Neo-patrimonialism combined some elements of Weberian bureaucracy with traditional patrimonialism. Although neo-patrimonialism has been prevalent more generally across countries during the initial phases of a bureaucratic build-up in a basically patrimonial system, it was particularly pronounced where colonization was indirect. Here, the colonial master relied on existing administrative structures such as chieftaincies in Sub-Saharan Africa to make extraction more effective and, in some cases, to create local allies (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001: 1370). Neo-patrimonialism thus enlisted local yet strictly subordinate expertise. After independence was granted to the colonies, neo-patrimonialism tended to consolidate, reducing meritocracy to a pure formality while rule through local chiefs became the order of the day (Bayart 2009). As a consequence of later democratization pressures, neo-patrimonialism took on some traits of politicization as clientelism became an entrenched part of politics (Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 61-65). Yet, most postcolonial states in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular have had major difficulties disseminating power throughout their territories, thus continuously hindering efforts of political leaders to build a strong and loyal party base and instead reinforcing neo-patrimonialism (Herbst 2000).

In some postcolonial countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, prolonged civil conflict broke out over the control of resources and the political-administrative means to acquire them (Evans 1995: 45) – much like in early modern Spain or France (see Fukuyama 2012: 357-365). As this and many other Sub-Saharan African examples show, neo-patrimonialism neither establishes any meaningful bureaucratic autonomy nor sustainable political control. Everything, including administrative offices, is up for grabs when governments resign or dictators are ousted.

This transhistorical analysis of administrative types reveals three mechanisms to solve the tension between bureaucratic autonomy and political control. First, patrimonial administrations work by the logic of “divide and rule.” They provide areas of local autonomy within which the administrator enjoys extensive discretion in administrative decision-making and access to rents such

as from tax extraction. In exchange, the administrator must accept political control from the center. The politician may succeed in playing local administrators against each other. Yet, the administrator usually has the upper hand because the politician is dependent on local resources for finance. The balance tips to the side of bureaucratic autonomy.

Second, meritocracy, to the extent that it manages to dominate all levels of administration, breaks with patrimonialism by occupying the administrative apparatus with professional experts. This makes the politician independent of resources from local patrons. However, it also constitutes a risk because it creates a symbolic and, most often also, legal sphere of autonomous bureaucratic decision-making. Meritocratically recruited bureaucrats may have the means and motives to circumvent the will of the politician. On the other hand, if combined with sensible performance payment and monitoring, professionally educated administrators may preserve the autonomy to make competent decisions while ultimately answering to a political task (see also Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012). In neo-patrimonial administrations, these two mechanisms coexist and often induce conflict between central and local administrative levels, thus explaining much of their weak governance records.

Third, politicized administrations like patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism organize politician-bureaucrat relations through a chain of dependencies and may therefore combine through a more general patron-client logic of governance. Nevertheless, they handle the tension between autonomy and control differently. Politicized administrations mostly rely on the political power over hiring, firing, and demotion to achieve political control and may add a measure of control through ideological congruence. The politician hires political fellows and then demands full loyalty to his political cause. As a result, bureaucratic autonomy tends to crowd out.

Conclusions

Fukuyama's (2012; 2014) and Ismard's (2017) three recent books suggest that the various administrative types we find in the literature – patrimonialism, meritocracy, politicization, and neo-patrimonialism – are best viewed as subtypes that address the same general tension between bureaucratic autonomy and political control. In one sense, our analysis merely explicates what numerous analyses have already hinted at, namely that the tension is not easily solved but rather a constant concern in any political system. Indeed, as shown, the tension is transhistorical and not just confined to the post-1789 period. However, our historical analysis identifies the mechanisms through

which the tension has been resolved across the different administrative types, and how these mechanisms have tilted power towards the politician or the administrators.

The books reviewed in this article indicate that students of bureaucratic politics would do well to go historical rather than solely analyzing it in the setting of modern states. They tap into a larger literature that compares the balancing of autonomy and control in several entities over time (e.g. Grindle 2012; Schuster 2016). Our approach thus provides insights on how politicians balance bureaucratic autonomy and political control across time and space. This makes us able to combine historical and contemporary knowledge of the type and quality of bureaucratic organizations and study their causes and consequences. The dilemma between bureaucratic autonomy and political control continues to be a core concern for administrative reform today. Our analysis encourages us to go even further. For any political system, we should try to enlist new data on how the tension has manifested itself, what solutions have been attempted, and to what extent these have been successful. This review is merely a first and very general attempt to quarry this historical material.

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