

Who Gets Politicized? The Architecture of Political Appointments in a Closed Bureaucracy

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A one-dimensional view of bureaucratic politics

Patronage bureaucracies

- Recruitment based on personal and/or partisan loyalty and connections
- No job security; bureaucratic turnover follows political turnover
- Promotions and careers follow informal accountability
- Large influence of politics on the bureaucracy

Weberian bureaucracies

- Recruitment based on merit (typically through written exams)
- Once recruited, bureaucrats have tenure
- Promotions and careers are rule-based
- Bureaucrats and their work are insulated from politics

A two-dimensional view of bureaucratic politics

	Open bureaucracy	Closed bureaucracy
Integrated careers	<i>Patronage</i> (e.g., party machines in 19th c. Europe, less developed settings)	<i>Corporatist</i> (e.g., France, Japan, Italy, Spain)
Separated careers	<i>Managerial</i> (e.g., Australia, Canada, Sweden)	<i>Autonomous</i> (e.g., Germany, South Korea)

Adapted from Dahlström & Lapuente (2017, 38)

Our focus on this paper

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 - A pathology

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- Instead of focusing on macro-level politicization, **we focus on individual careers** as embedded in **politically meaningful civil service corps**
- We remain agnostic about the effects for governance – cognizant of the costs of integration, but also open to considering its benefits.

This paper, in a nutshell

- A **two-part argument on politicization**:
 - Politicization is a feature, not a bug, of corporatist civil services systems
 - formal and informal institutions matter
 - Variation within the civil service is key – not all corps and not all civil servants are politicized equally

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 - Variation within the civil service is key – not all corps and not all civil servants are politicized equally
- An **original dataset** on the selection and careers of all civil servants in 6 elite corps in Spain
- A set of **descriptive results** demonstrating that:
 - Many but not all elite civil servants reach political appointments
 - Politicization varies systematically across corps and time
 - Both individuals and corps varying levels of intensity and partisanship of their politicization
 - Political appointments are meritocratic in some corps but not in others

Plan of the Talk

1. Motivation
2. Theoretical argument
3. Institutional setting
4. Research design
5. Findings
6. Implications and next steps
7. The broader project

Plan of the Talk

1. Motivation

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- Politicization – a feature, not a bug
- The subjects of politicization

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 - Reproduced by the formal and informal practices of both political and bureaucratic actors → **politicization is not just driven from above**
 - Varies significantly across bureaucrats and across corps, in intensity and partisan direction → **politicization is not just a macro-level variable**

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- Regarding **variation across corps**:
 - Corps vary in the intensity and partisan direction of their politicization
 - Politicization can afford the corps, as a within-government interest group, certain advantages (e.g., salaries, privileges, access)
 - Politicization can however also come with costs (e.g., more exposure to cabinet turnover)

Plan of the Talk

1. Motivation
2. Theoretical argument
3. Institutional setting
 - Spain's political and bureaucratic system
 - Spain's Napoleonic civil service system
4. Research design
5. Findings
6. Implications and next steps
7. The broader project

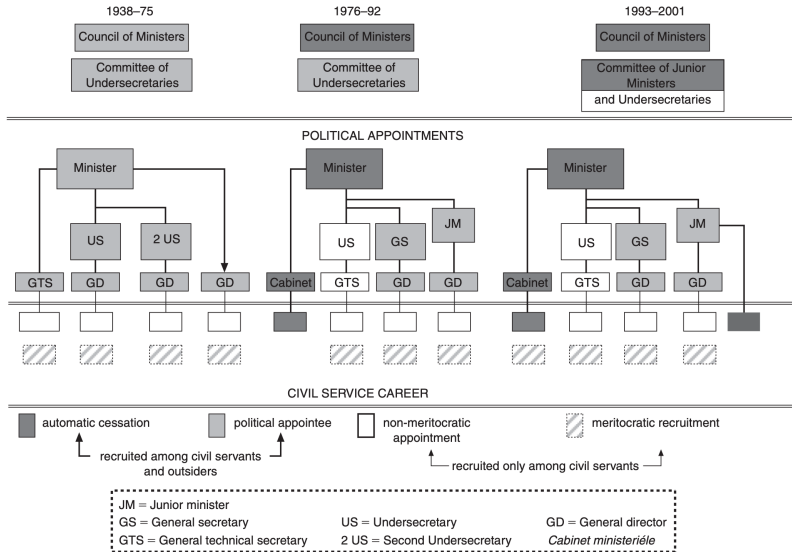
Spain's political and bureaucratic system

- We cover an 85-year period covering:
 - Franco's dictatorship (1940-1977) – first a fascist dictatorship, and since the late 50s increasingly a case of “bureaucratic authoritarianism”
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 - Democratic era (1978 - today) – parliamentary system with a largely bipolar party system and, until 2019, single-party cabinets
- Either the cabinet or a Minister select political appointees, including:
 - Junior ministers (“Secretarios de Estado”)
 - General secretaries (“Secretarios generales”)
 - Undersecretaries (“Subsecretarios”)
 - General directors (“Directores generales”)

The formal politization of the civil service



Spain's Napoleonic civil service system

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Spain's Napoleonic civil service system

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- Access to the civil service is through formal exams
- Civil service jobs are highly valued, prestigious, and relatively well paid
- The civil service is organized in corps – and there is hierarchy across and within them
- Most corps are attached to one ministry

Plan of the Talk

1. Motivation
2. Theoretical argument
3. Institutional setting
4. Research design
 - Cases
 - Data
 - Methods
5. Findings
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Cases: Members of 6 elite civil service corps in Spain

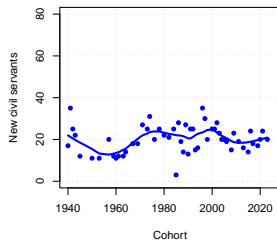
- **Counsels:** state counsels or lawyers, corps created in 1881
- **Administrators:** generalist senior managers, corps created in 1964
- **Diplomats:** foreign service; corps created in 1852
- **Economists:** state economists, corps created in 1984 after the merger of two corps created in 1930 and 1956
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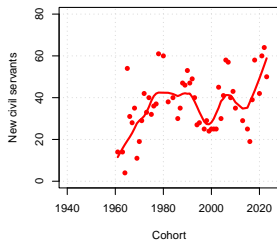
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- Entry to all corps requires a university degree & citizenship
- Selection process managed by each corps but typically combines written and oral exams
- The examining board typically includes members of other corps
- Successful candidates often spend 3-5 years preparing full time

Cases: Members of 6 elite civil service corps in Spain

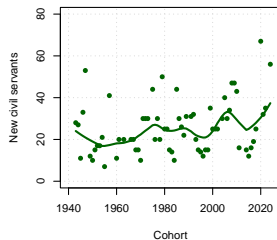
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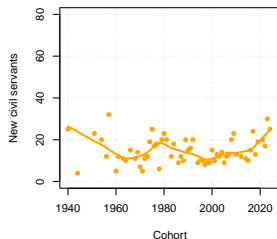
Administrators



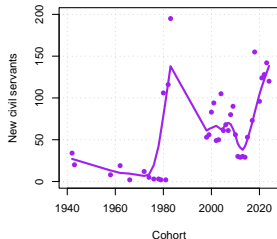
Diplomats



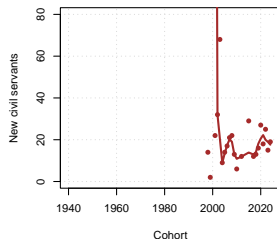
Economists



Tax inspectors



Comptrollers



Data sources and variables



BOLETÍN OFICIAL DEL ESTADO



Núm. 73

Lunes 26 de marzo de 2012

Sec. II.A. Pág. 2558

II. AUTORIDADES Y PERSONAL

A. Nombres, situaciones e incidencias

MINISTERIO DE JUSTICIA

4132 Resolución de 12 de marzo de 2012, de la Abogacía General del Estado-Dirección General del Servicio Jurídico del Estado, por la que se aprueba la relación circunstanciada de funcionarios del Cuerpo de Abogados del Estado, referida al 1 de marzo de 2012.

En uso de las competencias establecidas en el artículo 1 del Real Decreto 987/2005, de 28 de julio, por el que se aprueba el Reglamento del Servicio Jurídico del Estado, esta Abogacía General del Estado aprueba y ordena la publicación en el «Boletín Oficial del Estado» de la relación de funcionarios del Cuerpo de Abogados del Estado, referida al 1 de marzo de 2012.

Dentro del término de quince días corridos desde el siguiente al de la publicación de esta Resolución en el «Boletín Oficial del Estado», los interesados podrán formular ante el Ministerio de Justicia (Abogacía General del Estado-Dirección del Servicio Jurídico del Estado) las reclamaciones que estimen pertinentes en relación a sus respectivos datos.

Madrid, 12 de marzo de 2012.-La Abogada General del Estado, María Silva de Lapuerta.

RELACIÓN CIRCUNSTANCIADA DE FUNCIONARIOS DEL CUERPO DE ABOGADOS DEL ESTADO REFERIDA AL 1 DE MARZO DE 2012

Número completo	Nombre completo	Fecha de nacimiento	Categoría	Formación	SI	Deducción
1	Medina Fernández, Enrique	18/08/1962	AE	1908/1907	EV	
2	Urdaz Romero, José Ignacio	07/07/1962	AE	1908/1907	EV	
3	Hernán Baeza, Aitor	20/04/1962	AE	1910/1908	EV	
4	Fernández Espinosa, Carlos Raúl, José Ignacio	01/07/1962	AE	1910/1908	AC	A.E. Madrid
5	Casado Sánchez, Fernando	23/07/1962	AE	1910/1908	EV	
6	Diego-Juanes Barrio, Julián	01/07/1962	AE	1910/1908	EV	
7	Méix Algor, Francisco Javier	08/12/1964	AE	1907/1971	EV	
8	Marín López, Adrián	08/09/1965	AE	1907/1971	EV	
9	Serra Hita, José	09/10/1962	AE	1907/1971	EV	
10	Ruano Ramos, Manuel	13/07/1964	AE	1907/1971	EV	
11	Pérez García-Villaverde, José José	26/05/1961	AE	1907/1971	AC	Presidente Trib. Adm. Central de Recursos Contencioso-Hacendario y Administraciones Públicas
12	Javier Lapaquiza, Pascual	10/05/1965	AE	1907/1971	EV	
13	Hernán Ceballos, Juan Carlos	04/09/1965	AE	1907/1971	EV	
14	Das Lourido, José María	05/09/1964	AE	1907/1971	AC	A.E. Zaragoza
15	Alonso Ferrer, Santiago	02/03/1966	AE	1907/1971	EV	
16	Recoder de Casas, Emilio	30/11/1965	AE	1907/1971	EV	
17	Lorente Salvo, Francisco Javier	28/09/1962	AE	1907/1971	EV	
18	Pérez González, Luis	23/09/1963	AE	1907/1971	AC	A.E. Málaga
19	Hernán García, David	08/09/1962	AE	1907/1971	EV	
20	Rivera Campaño, Jesús	17/11/1965	LJ	2901/1972	EV	
21	Coma Canale, María	14/09/1968	AE	2703/1973	EV	
22	García Torres, Jesús	27/02/1965	AE	2703/1973	AC	Subdir. General de Constitución y Derechos Humanos
23	Vizcaino Galdeano, Miguel	18/12/1967	AE	2703/1973	AC	A.E. Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Turismo

ISSN 0004-0155-4132

- **Main source:** Spain's official gazette
- **Time Period:** 1940 - 2024
- **What we observe for all civil servants** who enter in the 1940-2024 period:
 - Name
 - Date of entry
 - Rank in the exam
 - Political appointments
 - Candidacy for elected office
- **What we observe for some corps / years:**
 - All candidates taking the exam
 - Deployment upon entry
 - Promotions to higher echelons of the corps
 - Status and deployment of all civil servants at given years

Methods

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Descriptive inference for a largely descriptive argument:

- Univariate analyses of administrative data to document variation across time, corps, and individuals in politicization
- Regression analyses to uncover correlates of political appointments at the individual level

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2. Theoretical argument
3. Institutional setting
4. Research design
5. Findings
 - How formal institutions fuel politicization
 - How politicization varies across time and corps
 - How politicization varies across civil servants
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How formal institutions fuel politicization

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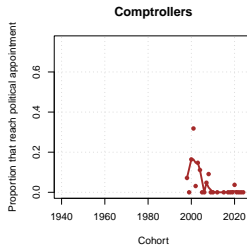
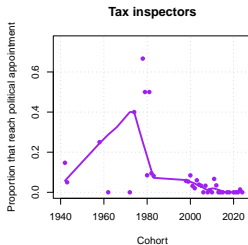
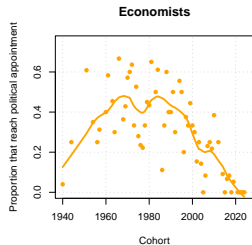
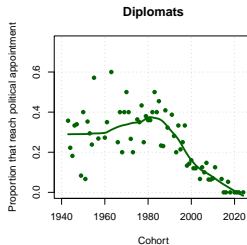
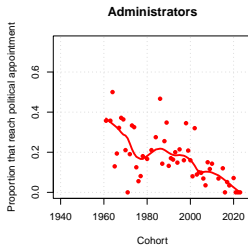
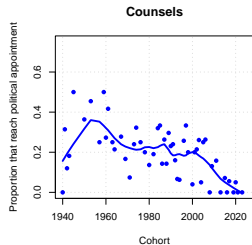
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How formal institutions fuel politicization

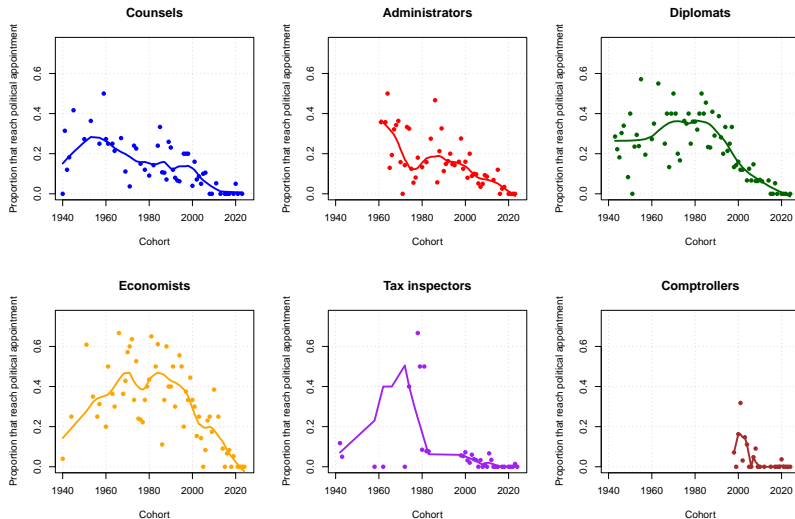
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- Formal incentives exist at the level of the corps as well – at least in the diplomatic corps, promotion to the highest echelon in the bureaucratic ladder requires, and access to an ambassador post is facilitated by, experience in a top-level political post

Many elite civil servants reach political appointment, but that varies by corps

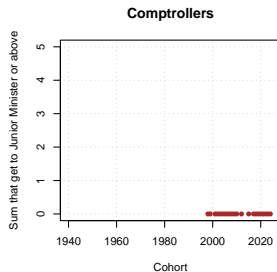
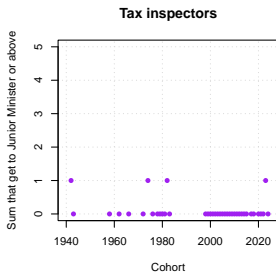
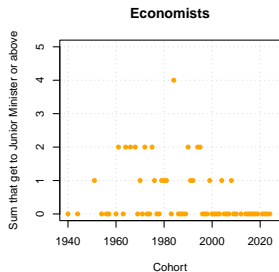
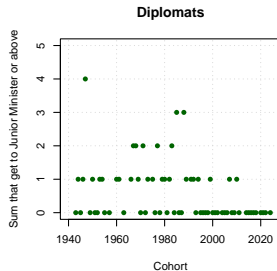
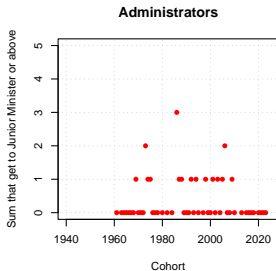
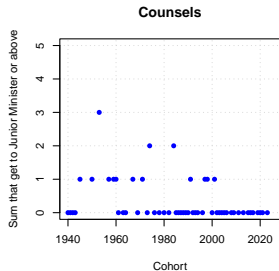


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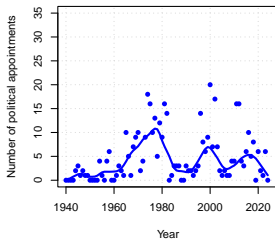
... even excluding posts reserved to civil servants

A non-trivial number of these elite civil servants get to junior minister or minister

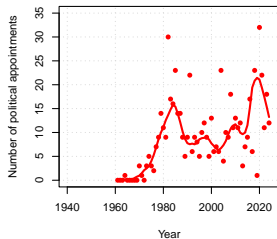


Corps vary in the intensity and timing of politicization

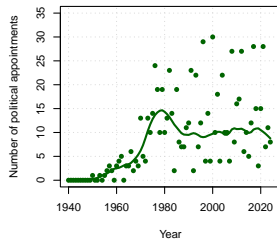
Counsels



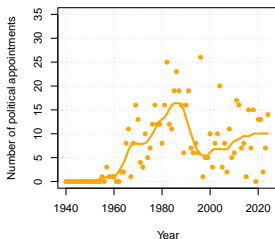
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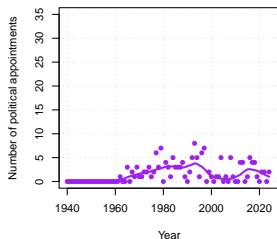
Diplomats



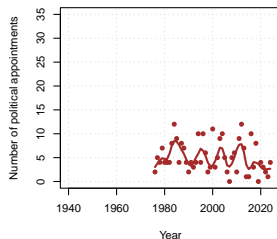
Economists



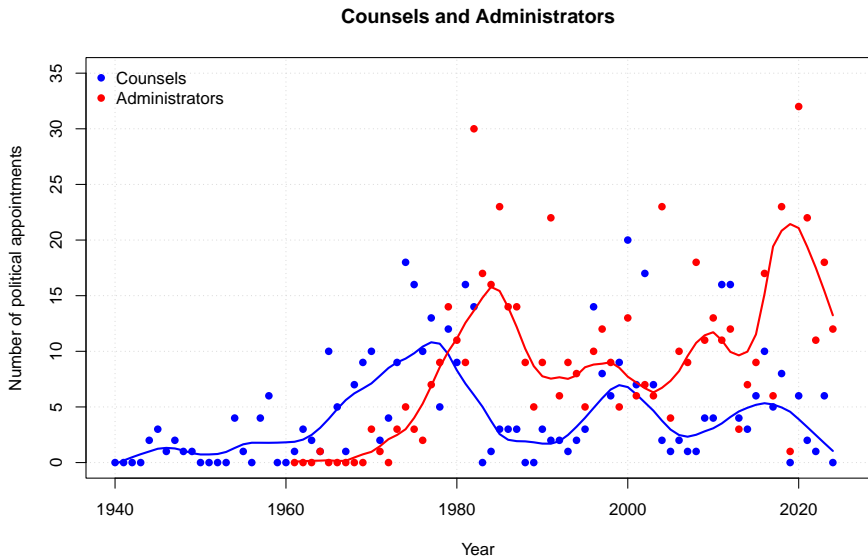
Tax inspectors



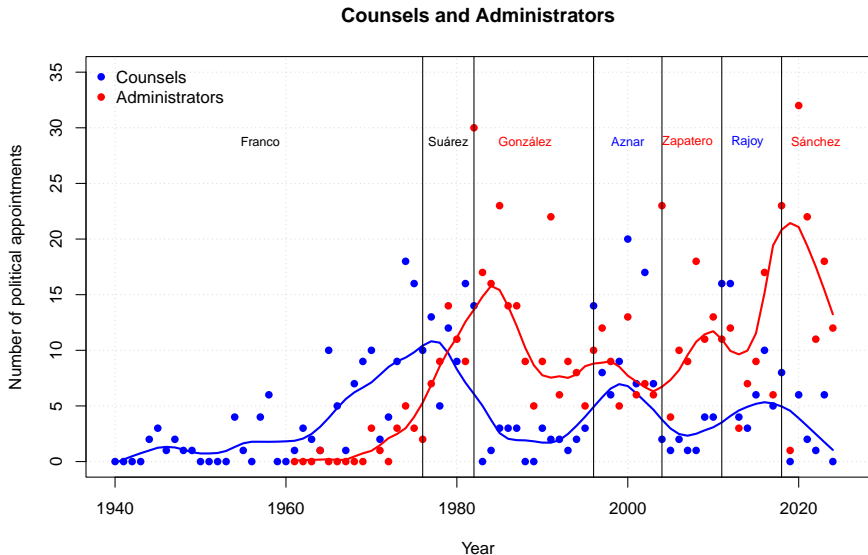
Comptrollers



Politicization of the corps of Counsels vs Administrators

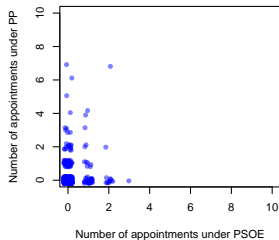


Politicization of the corps of Counsels vs Administrators

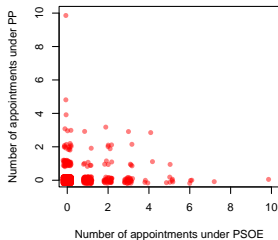


Civil servants tend to have partisan appointment careers

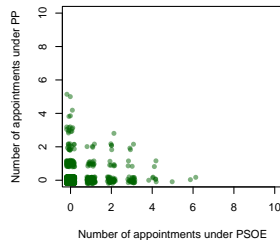
Counsels



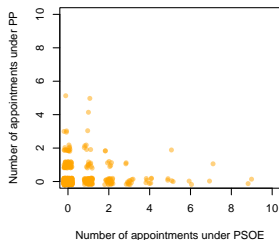
Administrators



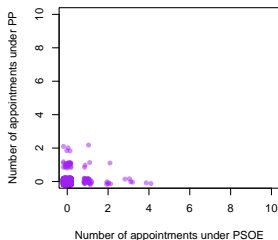
Diplomats



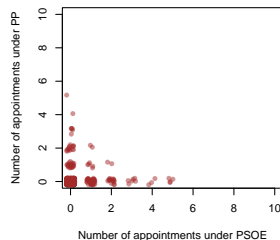
Economists



Tax inspectors



Comptrollers



Civil servants tend to have partisan appointment careers

Correlation with the number of political appointments under PSOE, by corps

	Counsels	Administrators	Diplomats	Economists	Tax inspectors	Comptrollers
Appointments under PP	-0.083 (0.061)	-0.862*** (0.049)	-0.610*** (0.097)	-0.488** (0.166)	-0.534* (0.199)	-0.756*** (0.045)
Total appointments	0.145** (0.045)	0.843*** (0.058)	0.580*** (0.095)	0.614*** (0.088)	0.601** (0.178)	0.756*** (0.042)
Number of civil servants	1086	1948	1747	914	2442	1109
Number of appointments	411	595	768	624	145	253
R^2	0.215	0.868	0.636	0.683	0.628	0.810

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. All models include cohort fixed effects and cohort-clustered standard errors.

Political appointments reward best performers only in some corps

*Correlation with reaching political appointment, by corps
(extensive margin)*

	Counsels	Administrators	Diplomats	Economists	Tax inspectors	Comptrollers
Top 3 of cohort	-0.013 (0.035)	0.001 (0.035)	0.118*** (0.033)	0.097* (0.036)	-0.030* (0.011)	-0.033+ (0.016)
Female	-0.018 (0.030)	-0.042* (0.018)	-0.017 (0.026)	-0.048 (0.033)	-0.006 (0.007)	-0.008 (0.017)
Composed last name	0.023 (0.030)	-0.108*** (0.029)	-0.056* (0.028)	0.066 (0.040)	0.007 (0.014)	0.029 (0.048)
Num.Obs.	1076	1253	1717	902	2350	443
R2	0.095	0.116	0.146	0.202	0.132	0.137
R2 Adj.	0.045	0.090	0.110	0.141	0.117	0.086

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. All models include cohort fixed effects and cohort-clustered standard errors.

Political appointments reward best performers only in some corps

*Correlation with number of political appointments, by corps
(intensive margin)*

	Counsels	Administrators	Diplomats	Economists	Tax inspectors	Comptrollers
Top 3 of cohort	0.088 (0.107)	-0.005 (0.073)	0.260*** (0.074)	0.284** (0.095)	-0.061 (0.036)	-0.054+ (0.028)
Female	0.037 (0.095)	-0.113* (0.051)	-0.051 (0.051)	-0.081 (0.073)	-0.009 (0.010)	-0.057+ (0.029)
Composed last name	0.051 (0.098)	-0.213** (0.069)	-0.057 (0.072)	0.014 (0.079)	0.025 (0.030)	0.088 (0.098)
Num.Obs.	1076	1253	1717	902	2350	443
R2	0.089	0.111	0.127	0.165	0.279	0.143
R2 Adj.	0.039	0.086	0.090	0.102	0.267	0.092

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. All models include cohort fixed effects and cohort-clustered standard errors.

Plan of the Talk

1. Motivation
2. Theoretical argument
3. Institutional setting
4. Research design
5. Findings
- 6. Implications and next steps**
7. The broader project

Implications

- **Politicization is not just an informal phenomenon** – in corporatist civil service systems, formal institutions in the organization of the bureaucracy fuel the interaction of careers

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Implications

- **Politicization is not just an informal phenomenon** – in corporatist civil service systems, formal institutions in the organization of the bureaucracy fuel the interaction of careers
- **Politicization is not just driven from above** – in corporatist civil systems, politicians are not the only ones driving politicization; civil servants' ambitions and proactive behaviors contribute too
- **Politicization is best understood when considered at the level of the civil servant as well as the corps** – this perspective raises unexplored questions about the implications of politicization for state capacity and democracy

Next steps

- Incorporating data we have been collecting on **civil servants running for office**

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- Exploring how **civil servants use publications for signaling**

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- Exploring how **civil servants use publications for signaling**
- **Measuring peer effects** to demonstrate civil servants are central players in politicization
- Obtaining yearly deployment data (likely only for one or two corps) to **measure the effects of cabinet and minister turnover**

Plan of the Talk

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 - Data sources
 - Key theoretical insights
 - Papers under production

The broader project: Data

3 types of data

- Administrative micro-level data on the selection and career of civil servants in **9 elite corps** during the period 1940 - 2024
 - Counsels
 - Administrators
 - Counsels
 - Economists
 - Tax inspectors
 - Comptrollers
 - Judges
 - Prosecutors
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- **Surveys** of candidates and civil servants

The broader project: Key theoretical insights

4 cross-cutting ideas

- The civil service is a site of fundamental political and societal contestation

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4 cross-cutting ideas

- The civil service is a site of fundamental political and societal contestation
- Closed, corporatist bureaucracies are permeated by politics – often through formal as well as informal institutions
- Going beyond macro-level arguments through a focus on individual careers and administrative corps
- The politics of the civil service cut across a number of phenomena at the core of comparative politics and political economy:
 - Political selection
 - Party competition
 - State capacity
 - Regime change

The broader project: Papers under production

5 papers

- ***Politicization***: A feature, not a bug, of corporatist civil service systems

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- ***Under-representative bureaucracy***: How barriers to entry produce countervailing biases in recruitment and promotion