

BUREAUCRATS

Comparative Politics

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What we'll cover today

- How bureaucrats matter

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- Models of the bureaucracy

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- Models of the bureaucracy
- Patronage

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- Research design exercise

How bureaucratsd matter

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- In a context of polarization and declining trust, political entrepreneurs sometimes turn to attacks on bureaucracies and bureaucrats
- The erosion of bureaucratic capacity can fuel a loop of declining performance and trust

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 - Order is ultimately produced by police officers, soldiers, etc.

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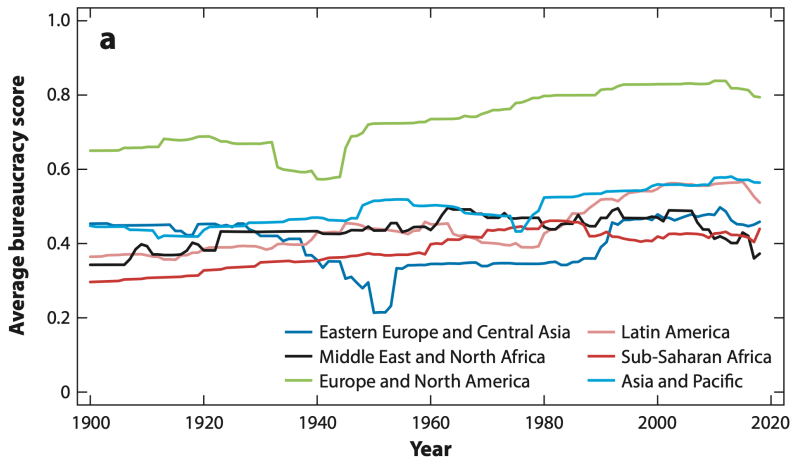
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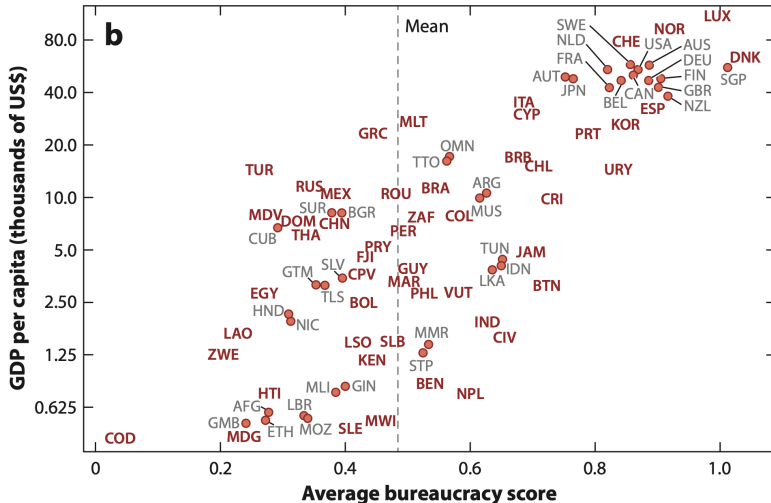
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- How do we improve the quality of our bureaucracies?

Bureaucratic quality is persistent

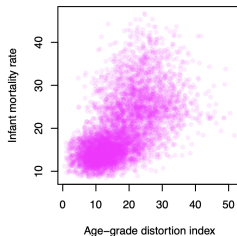
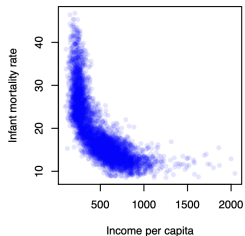
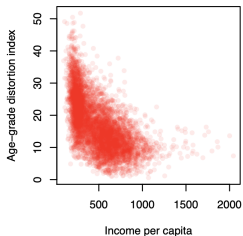


Bureaucratic quality is correlated with economic development



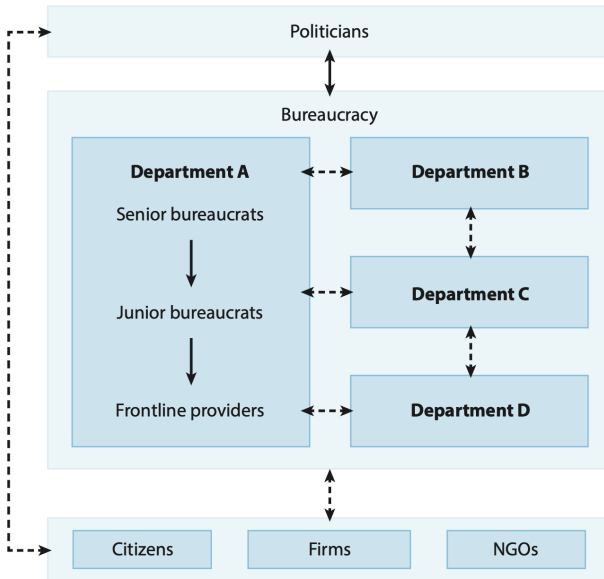
But bureaucratic performance varies a lot

Human development outcomes across Brazilian municipalities



Models of the bureaucracy

Bureaucracies as embedded hierarchies



Bureaucratic governance

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- Both make some **assumptions** that do not always hold true

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 - Bureaucrats are **tenured**
- By having capable and autonomous bureaucrats with authority, organizations will achieve **speed and efficiency**

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- **Give bureaucrats tenure:** hire bureaucrats for the long-term, and protect public organizations from turnover
- **Protect politicians from political interference:** politicians' interventions in the bureaucracy are harmful

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- **Politicians are not always ill-intentioned** when seeking to intervene in the bureaucracy

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 - **Information asymmetries**: the agent knows things that the principal ignores, which hinders monitoring

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- **New public management:** set up material incentives, decentralize, and promote competition

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- **Principals may not be capable or able to hold agents accountable**

Patronage and what to do about it

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- A more precise definition of patronage is the discretionary hiring and firing of bureaucrats based, at least partly, on political criteria
- An extreme version of patronage is the so-called spoils system, where most of the administration is changed with the winner's political supporters after political turnover

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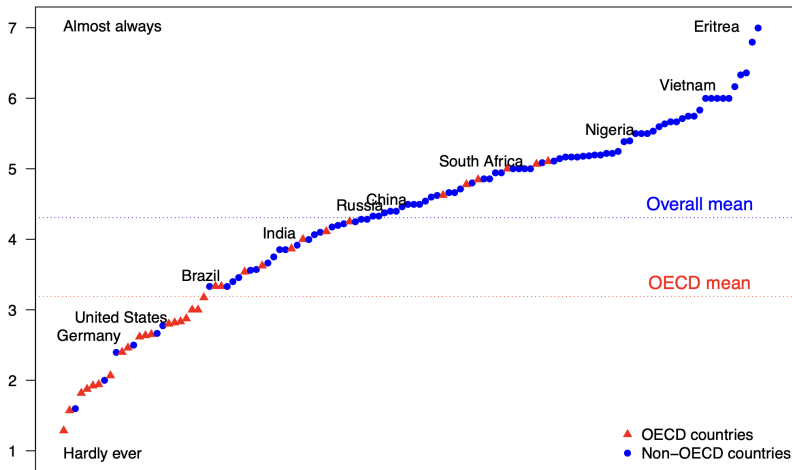
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 - This helps politicians lead the bureaucracy
 - Political appointees help keep public administration accountable to democratic mandates
- But there are very wide variations in the prevalence and nature of patronage across and within countries

Where do we find patronage

Figure 1-1: Average country-expert responses to the question
How often do the political connections of the applicants decide who get the job?



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- I'll ask 2 or 3 groups to share their ideas

A possible research design

Table 1 **Bureaucracy score and economic growth**

	Outcome: log of GDP per capita				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Lag (meritocratic recruitment)	0.025** (0.012)	–	0.023* (0.012)	–	–
Lag (rigorous and independent administration)	–	0.013 (0.011)	0.004 (0.012)	–	–
Lag (average bureaucracy score)	–	–	–	0.024* (0.013)	0.041** (0.016)
Observations	1,602	1,634	1,602	1,634	1,634
Lag (log of GDP per capita)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Country FE × linear trend	–	–	–	–	✓

The asterisks denote the levels of statistical significance: ** indicate $p < 0.05$ and * indicates $p < 0.1$. The regressions relate log of GDP per capita to the presence of meritocratic recruitment (Column 1), a rigorous and independent administration (Column 2), their combination (Column 3), and the average bureaucracy score (Column 4). Column 5 augments the specification of Column 4 by including country-specific linear time trends. All regressions include country and year fixed effects (FE). The independent variables are standardized to have mean zero and a standard deviation of one. Standard errors are clustered at the country level. Sample is collapsed to 5-year means, and the regressions control for the lagged (log) GDP per capita.

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 - If government jobs are used to transfer public money to the pockets of political supporters, government employees would work less on actual tasks

The costs of patronage: Quasi-experimental evidence from the British empire



FIGURE 1. TERRITORIES ADMINISTERED BY THE COLONIAL OFFICE - 1905

Design: Quasi-experimental evidence from the British empire

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- **Design:** Comparing the performance of connected versus unconnected governors of the Colonial Office, exploiting the turnover of the Secretary of State in London

Results: Quasi-experimental evidence from the British empire

TABLE 5—FISCAL PERFORMANCE AND CONNECTEDNESS TO SECRETARY OF STATE

Panel A: Revenue	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Colony-level Public Finance			
	Public revenue			
	Overall		Trade	Internal
Mean of dep. var	12.31	12.31	11.47	11.59
Connected	-0.040	-0.055	-0.053	-0.043
	(0.017)	(0.021)	(0.026)	(0.032)
Connected × Reform dummy		0.061 (0.033)		
Connected + Connected × Reform dummy	-	0.005 (0.026)	-	-
Year FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Governor-Colony FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spell length FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Time-varying controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,510	3,510	2,670	2,657

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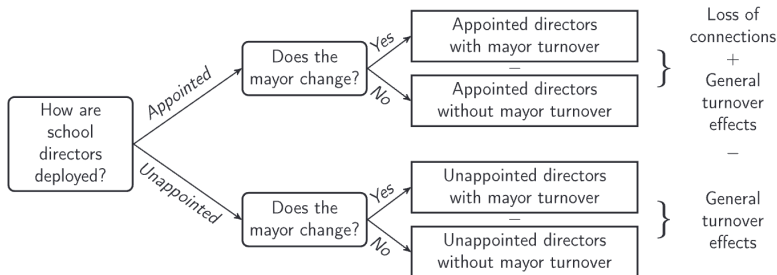
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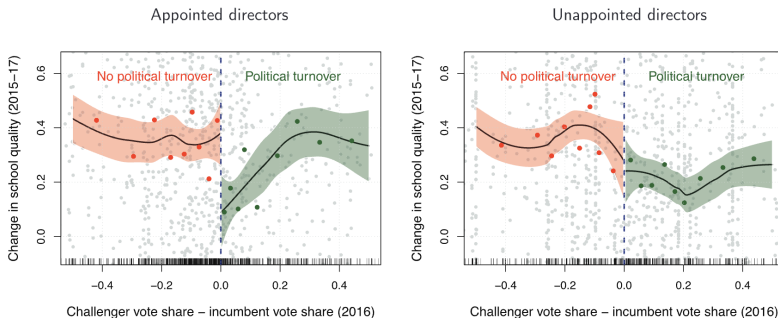
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Results: Quasi-experimental evidence from Brazil



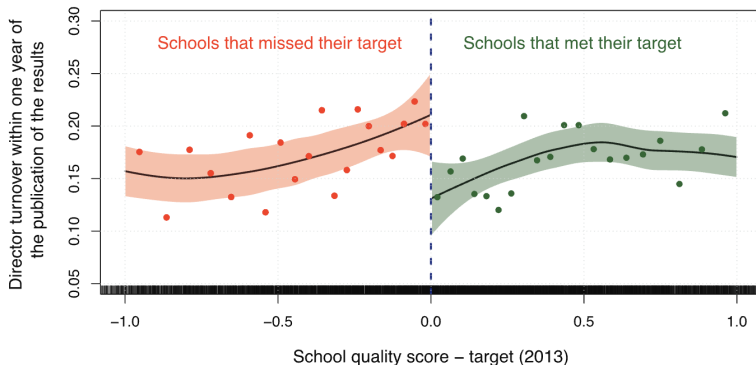
Notes: The design exploits three sources of variation in performance: within-bureaucrat changes from before to after the election, between appointed and unappointed bureaucrats, and between localities with and without political turnover.

Results: Quasi-experimental evidence from Brazil



Notes: Colored dots are local averages for equally-sized bins. Lines are loess regression lines estimated at both sides of the threshold with no controls. Shaded regions denote 95% confidence intervals.

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Research design exercise

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- Be ambitious with your empirical strategy! Remember you don't need to execute it. It needs to be something that could be feasible with a research budget and much more time.

Research design: Key resources at your disposal

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6. Find, read, and engage with previous academic studies on the topic (use Google Scholar and focus on top political science journals such as APSR, AJPS, JOP, BJPS, ARPS, CPS, WP)

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What can be done to improve the theory? And the empirics?

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- **Make progress on your research design**