Feather-Handed Fascists:
Surveillance as a Signal of Bureaucratic Loyalty*

Pau Grau-Vilalta† Lorenzo Vicari‡ Andrea Xamo§

October 17, 2025

Abstract

How do bureaucrats' incentives shape surveillance in autocratic regimes? Most explanations relate bureaucratic output to ideological alignment or expertise. This paper argues that it can be mainly driven by bureaucrats who need to signal their loyalty to the regime. We compile a province–year dataset for Fascist Italy (1922–40), originally digitising biographies and appointments of all 415 provincial prefects. We then link them to the universe of about 100,000 state surveillance dossiers. We exploit prefect mobility to estimate a staggered Difference-in-Differences design, with prefects that voluntarily joined the Fascist Party, particularly before it seized power, as treatment. The bureaucrats with this credible loyalty marker opened about 20 per cent fewer dossiers than career-appointed counterparts. After testing multiple alternative explanations, including competence and preferential deployment, we highlight that credible loyalists achieved comparable job security with lower surveillance and focused less on "usual suspects", relative to career-appointed colleagues. The pattern fits loyalty-signalling motives: careerists, starting from lower loyalty priors, have to work harder to secure their positions. These findings provide rare systematic evidence on authoritarian surveillance and show how career concerns can be banal yet powerful drivers of coercive behaviour.

Keywords: Fascist Italy, surveillance, policing, dictatorship, bureaucracy, autocratic consolidation, loyalty, signalling, congruence, alignment, effort, principal-agent

Word count: 9039

[Early stage research, please do not circulate]

*We thank Livio Di Leonardo, Gemma Dipoppa, Nicola Fontana, Margaret Frost, Simon Hix, Eréndira León, Moritz Marbach, Ahmed Ezzeldin Mohamed, Douglas Page, James Quirk, Sascha Riaz, Roberto Ricciuti, Arturas Rozenas, Nelson Ruiz, Ludwig Schulze, Emilia Simison, Guillermo Toral, Daniel Urquijo, Elisa Maria Wirsching, Stephane Wolton, and Alexei Zakharov for sharing feedback and reflections. We also thank insightful audiences at UCL's CPEB Seminar, NYU's Comparative Politics Workshop, MPSA, KCL's APSG Conference, Political Connections Pre-conference, EPSA, SISP, and APSA. All errors are our own. Authors listed in alphabetical order.

†European University Institute, Department of Social and Political Science, pau.grau@eui.eu.

‡London School of Economics and Political Science, Department of Government, l.vicari@lse.ac.uk.

§Università di Verona, Department of Economics, andrea.xamo@univr.it.

All these motives, individually or combined among themselves, were operative in giving rise to this gray zone, whose components [...] were united by the will to preserve and consolidate their privilege.

— Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986, pg. 27)

1 Introduction

In a pivotal scene of *Rome, Open City* by film director Roberto Rossellini, a smiling, unnamed police officer pulls out of his coat a surveillance file. It identifies the protagonist, Giorgio Manfredi, as a longstanding communist and leader of the anti-fascist resistance, prefiguring his death by torture. Who decided, years before, to surveil Mr. Manfredi, and why? This study sheds light on the motives of leading security bureaucrats in autocracies.

All modern states exercise surveillance (Foucault, 1977). Notably, autocracies use it to provide the intelligence that underwrites their repressive functions - identifying suspects to fine-tune coercion and minimise unintended spillovers (Xu, 2021; Hager and Krakowski, 2022). Yet, we know autocrats delegate surveillance to bureaucratic agents whose covert and strategic behaviour is hard to measure and explain. As a result, existing studies on the matter are primarily theoretical (e.g. Egorov and Sonin, 2011; Zakharov, 2016; Montagnes and Wolton, 2019; Tyson, 2018) and mostly frame the issue as the problem of selecting or retaining agents that are both sufficiently aligned and sufficiently competent to carry out sensitive tasks. Yet, competing expectations on how high-level bureaucrats will react to these requirements can be generated on the basis of these theories, and empirical evidence is rare. This study argues that regime loyalists will leverage their political credentials to exert less effort than career-appointed—and potentially less politically aligned—counterparts.

We support our argument empirically in the context of the National Fascist Party (PNF)'s consolidation of power in Italy (1922–1940). Prefects - the regime's key provin-

cial agents - were central to the surveillance apparatus of the regime. To analyse their behaviour, we link newly digitised biographies and appointments of all 415 prefects to 99,583 individual surveillance reports (*Casellario Politico Centrale*, herein CPC). Our empirical strategy systematically associates prefects with their Fascist Party enrolment date to distinguish early joiners from late ones, using the rise to power in October 1922 as our main demarcation line. Early joiners are more likely to have been genuinely aligned ideologically, given the limited material advantages of joining what was then a fringe political movement. We then compare how the same province was surveilled by agents with different loyalty markers over time, leveraging a Difference-in-Differences framework with staggered treatment adoption. We find that prefects who joined the Fascist Party early directed the political police to open between 18 to 22% fewer surveillance records relative to bureaucrats lacking equally credible fascist pedigrees.

Based on multiple empirical tests, we discard explanations based on mere turnover issues, lack of competence, preferential deployment, and embeddedness. The mere rotation of prefects, regardless of their loyalty markers, is not associated with drops in surveillance. Most interestingly, the introduction of competence proxies drawn from biographies, i.e. experience on the job and academic achievement, does not dent the core finding. Moreover, we leverage prefects' birthplaces to argue against credible fascists holding more sway on their appointments, as they are not more likely to be deployed close to their birthplaces; this also speaks against embeddedness playing a decisive role, together with the absence of an association between appointment distance from birthplaces and levels of surveillance. Instead, we find limited evidence in favour of deterrence, as fascist prefects' ruthless reputations might be leading the opposition underground, implying more limited surveillance needs. However, this might also have the opposite effect: a more careful and restrained opposition might heighten, rather than reduce, the surveillance required.

Concluding, we highlight an explanation rooted in loyalty signalling. We observe

that increasing surveillance increases office retention only for loyalists, leading to the apparent paradox that less surveillance is exercised with larger returns. We explain that by conceptualising bureaucratic effort, in this case, the opening of surveillance records, as a signal of loyalty. If a given loyalty threshold needs to be cleared to be retained on the job, and if early party members start out as more credible, they will need much less effort to establish their trustworthiness in the eyes of the regime. Thus, they will be frequently retained in response to a comparatively low surveillance level. Their bureaucratic counterparts, lacking clear loyalty markers, will obtain the same job security after much harder work.

The core contribution of this paper is to the study of bureaucratic behaviour. Brierley et al. (2023) point to the lack of evidence surrounding high-level personnel decisions in bureaucracies outside the United States. Our case study offers precisely that: we analyse heads of provinces in a profoundly different historical context. While the case aligns with similar responses to loyalty requirements by officials in democracies (Geys et al., 2025), we offer a rare empirical analysis of security officials' behaviour under autocracy: one line of research underlines the importance of political alignment and loyalty for successful policy implementation (e.g. Rivera, 2020; Spenkuch et al., 2023), while another highlights career incentives and strategic signalling performed by regime outsiders, who need to establish their trustworthiness (e.g. Svolik, 2012; Hassan et al., 2022). Our case suggests that outsiders might face sharper incentives to act. This clearly resonates with the theoretical contribution by Luo and Zakharov (2025) where autocratic agents repress "in excess" to signify their effectiveness to the leadership. Empirically, this supports findings mostly coming from the Chinese (Qian and Bai, 2024; Jia et al., 2015; Carter et al., 2025) or Russian (Baturo et al., 2024) contexts, underscoring the importance of the interaction between trustworthiness and career prospects. We contribute a more exhaustive empirical exploration of the mechanisms leading to such results. Furthermore, it echoes Fontana et al.'s (2025) finding that Mussolini's visits

increased the number of exiled dissidents, but focusing on the cogs in the machine: state agents.

Secondly, we substantively connect with the literature on surveillance, contributing a historical exploration of physical surveillance to work largely focused on digital technologies in China (e.g. King et al., 2013; Xu, 2021; Beraja et al., 2023), with few notable exceptions. Dipoppa and Pezone (2025) leverage the CPC to study how education and class determine which individuals are surveilled, while Hager and Krakowski (2022) delves into the consequences of surveillance in communist Poland. Our study, instead of focusing on the characteristics or reactions of the watched, delves into the motives of the watchers.

Third, we contribute a view of personnel decision problems after autocratisation. While most studies focus on the coexistence between expert but misaligned legacy bureaucrats and newly appointed aligned ones after democratisation (e.g. Nalepa, 2022), some scholarly work examines consolidating autocracies, e.g. Vichy France (Kitson, 2002) or Francoist Spain (Balcells and Villamil, 2020). In Nazi Germany, Heldring (2023) shows the transferability of this competence: more efficient local administration (e.g. trash collection) during the Weimar Republic corresponded to more efficient deportations of Jews. However, most of these studies frame the staffing dilemma as a trade-off between loyalty and competence. We add a dimension to the problem and highlight that hiring loyalists can backfire, as they will be subject to less pressure.

Finally, we assemble one of the most comprehensive micro-level historical datasets on high-level bureaucrats to date. While we focus on the period from 1922 to 1940, we have newly digitised biographical information (Cifelli, 1999) and appointment sequence (Missori, 1989) for all Italian prefects from 1861 to 1945. This will allow students of bureaucracy, policing, and Italian politics to track the highest state officials deployed on the territory.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The following section situates our con-

tribution within the literature and outlines competing theoretical expectations. Section 3 contextualises the Italian case. Section 4 introduces the data on surveillance and our novel dataset on prefects. Section 5 presents the core result, followed by an investigation of the mechanisms underlying our findings in Section 6. Section 7 concludes.

2 Theory

Authoritarian rulers rely on bureaucrats to implement politically sensitive policies, including surveillance and repression. Yet delegation in such settings is inherently fraught: bureaucrats control local information and enforcement capacity, but rulers cannot directly observe their preferences or effort. This problem becomes especially acute during regime transitions, such as decolonisation (Ketchley and Wenig, 2023), democratisation (Nalepa, 2022), and - most relevantly for us - autocratisation (Heldring, 2023; Aaskoven and Nyrup, 2021). New rulers inherit administrative elites whose loyalties were forged under prior institutions. Some bureaucrats are trusted insiders; others are legacies of a previous order (Nalepa, 2022; Aidt et al., 2025). In this context, loyalty markers - such as early membership in the ruling party - offer potentially valuable signals of alignment. Yet how these markers translate into bureaucratic effort remains theoretically ambiguous.

The first expectation, consistent with both classic theory and empirical evidence, is that loyalty markers complement repressive enforcement. Bureaucrats who joined the ruling party early are more likely to share the regime's goals and are better trusted by rulers. Because rulers can delegate politically costly tasks to them with less fear of defection, these bureaucrats may pursue more ambitious policies, including intensive surveillance and repression (Svolik, 2012; Egorov and Sonin, 2011; Zakharov, 2016).

Empirical studies support this view. For example, during Argentina's Dirty War (1975–81), Scharpf and Gläßel (2020) find that nationalist army officers - whose ideology

aligned closely with the junta's - perpetrated significantly more violence than liberal officers under identical central directives. Similar dynamics appear in Nazi Germany, where trusted loyalists are tasked with politically sensitive operations (Aaskoven and Nyrup, 2021).

> **H1 Ideological Enforcement** Prefects with credible loyalty markers open *more* surveillance dossiers.

However, a more strategic interpretation predicts the opposite. Bureaucrats without an "ideological pedigree" face a handicap: lacking early-party credentials, their loyalty is uncertain and they are likely to be scrutinised more closely than their colleagues. Career advancement depends on demonstrating reliability to the regime, which creates incentives to overcompensate in performance. One way to do so is by engaging in more aggressive surveillance than loyalist bureaucrats, using repression as a visible signal of commitment.

This dynamic maps directly onto a principal–agent problem (Ross, 1973; Moe, 1984; Weingast, 1984). When rulers cannot directly observe bureaucrats' preferences or effort, they rely on observable outputs - such as the number of surveillance dossiers opened - to infer alignment. Bureaucrats without credible loyalty markers therefore face stronger incentives to inflate observable effort in order to secure their positions and avoid dismissal.

Formal theories of delegation under autocracy reinforce this mechanism. Montagnes and Wolton (2019) and Dragu and Przeworski (2019) both model how rulers resolve uncertainty over bureaucratic alignment by using performance as a proxy. When ideological signals are unavailable or unreliable, rulers reward high-performing agents and punish underperformers - even at the cost of bureaucratic efficiency. Accordingly, Jia et al. (2015) empirically describe loyalty and competence as complements in Chinese leadership's decisions on the promotions of provincial cadres. These frameworks imply

that bureaucrats lacking costly loyalty markers face particularly strong incentives to overproduce observable effort, such as opening more surveillance dossiers, to secure trust and avoid becoming purge targets.

Empirical evidence supports this logic of strategic adaptation. In democracies, Geys et al. (2025) show that bureaucratic elites frequently adjust their partisan identification following political turnover, especially when their careers depend on elected principals. In autocracies, vulnerable officials engage in sycophantic over-performance to secure trust: governors in fragile economic positions exaggerate loyalty displays to retain office (Baturo et al., 2024), security agencies inflate repression levels to signal effectiveness (Luo and Zakharov, 2025), and personality cults exploit differences in preference falsification costs to screen personnel (Crabtree et al., 2020).

Similarly, during China's Anti-Rightist Campaign, cadres with uncertain revolutionary credentials initiated wider purges than trusted Red Army veterans, using repression itself as a loyalty signal (Qian and Bai, 2024). Importantly, this overproduction need not reflect a deeper ideological commitment. In the GDR, for example, De Juan et al. (2021) show that regimes could increase bureaucrats' apparent system engagement without inducing genuine norm internalisation. Conversely, credible loyalists - those with costly ideological markers - face less pressure to demonstrate alignment and often engage in less aggressive repression (Luo and Zakharov, 2025; Zakharov, 2016).

In our setting, prefects without early-party membership face greater pressure to prove themselves. Unlike early joiners, they lack a costly signal of ideological alignment and therefore cannot rely on pedigree to secure trust. Surveillance activity, which leaves a clear paper trail, becomes an effective way to demonstrate loyalty and safeguard their careers.

> **H2 Loyalty-signaling:** Prefects with credible loyalty markers open *fewer* surveillance dossiers.

Evidence in favour of this hypothesis, however, would be *prima facie* observationally

equivalent to other dynamics.

Theory establishes that autocrats delegate surveillance to bureaucratic agents who are more driven to express loyalty when they are less competent (Egorov and Sonin, 2011; Zakharov, 2016), creating an endogenous trade-off between competence and loyalty in personnel decisions. Empirical evidence compounds competence-related concerns: when rulers privilege loyal appointees, they may do so at the expense of expertise (Colonnelli et al., 2020; Lewis, 2011). In fact, empirical explorations show that politicised appointments lead to worse program implementation (Gallo and Lewis, 2012) and to a net decrease in agency responsiveness (Lowande, 2019). It would be reasonable to deduce that appointing loyalist prefects for their credentials disregarded their competence in directing the political police. In addition, newly appointed loyalists might have shorter professional experiences, reducing learning on the job (Emeriau, 2023).

Secondly, empirical explorations have shown that bureaucrats' personal (Park and Somanathan, 2004), factional (Francois et al., 2023), and ethnic (Hassan, 2017) connections tend to land them in more desirable positions. Accordingly, fascist prefects might receive favourable appointments in already pacified provinces. If so, they would exercise less surveillance due to the privilege stemming from their "upward embeddedness" (Toral, 2024), rather than due to their lack of loyalty-signalling concerns.

Bureaucrats' downward embeddedness might be leading to fewer records opened as well. In line with Bhavnani and Lee (2018)'s argument, prefects born close to where they serve might be more embedded with the local community. Thus, they might need less surveillance to extract the same amount of information, as they might be able to target it more effectively. On the other hand, they might display lower levels of surveillance because they are more hesitant to surveil - or more easily corrupted by - a population they are closer to (Xu, 2021).

Finally, particularly harsh crackdowns during the earlier years of fascist rule by PNF

members might have created a deterrent effect. Thus, the opposition might prefer to go underground rather than to challenge the regime (Przeworski, 2015; Bramstedt, 2013). This shift would also explain why we observe lower levels of realised surveillance under fascist prefects.

We will produce evidence related to all these alternative explanations, together with loyalty-signalling, in Section 6. In what follows, we detail the historical context of our empirical exercise.

3 History

In Fascism's narrative, Italy became a dictatorship right after the March on Rome - 28 October 1922 - when King Victor Emmanuel III called upon Benito Mussolini to form a new government. In practice, though, Fascism's rise to power was more gradual. As Morgan (1998) noted, to consolidate its grasp on power, the new regime had to compromise with existing powers: the monarchy, the Church, and the policing, judicial and executive apparatus of the state.

In the political arena, Mussolini's rise to power was relatively rapid. Its first crucial step was the 1923 electoral law, which granted two-thirds of the MPs to the party that won the electoral majority, provided it reached at least 25% of the vote. In the following national elections of 1924, the National Fascist Party [1] secured 64.9% of the vote as part of the "National List" coalition with liberal and centrist parties. The success was in no small part due to widespread political violence and intimidation. After publicly denouncing these irregularities in Parliament, Giacomo Matteotti, a socialist MP, was murdered by a Fascist hit squad in June 1924. In response, opposition parties began boycotting all parliamentary activities. Their absence allowed Mussolini's government to survive a motion of no confidence and pass several laws that granted the PNF *de*

[1] In Italian, *Partito Nazionale Fascista*, hereafter PNF.

facto control over Parliament and the country. Between December 1925 and November 1926, the government suspended the rights to strike and assembly, outlawed non-Fascist labour unions, and banned boycotting opposition parties, removing their MPs from Parliament. Furthermore, the regime imposed censorship, established a system of internal deportation (the *confino*), and created the OVRA secret police[2]. Establishing the Special Tribunal for the Defence of the State[3] further institutionalised political repression (e.g. Panza et al., 2023).

The PNF also formalised its grasp on local administrations. In 1926, Mussolini replaced elected mayors and municipal councils with a single official - the *podestà* - directly nominated by the government via royal decree[4]. As the PNF progressively transformed into a more traditional - albeit ubiquitous and pervasive - political party, the provincial administration became its centre stage. Early local leaders - or their trusted lieutenants for those who reached positions of power in Rome - came to head the provincial sections of the PNF as federal secretaries. Even if the party organisation grew to fully identify itself with the State, Fascism also used the existing executive apparatus. Since unification, Italian provinces have been headed by a prefect, the direct representative of the government at the local level. The Italian prefects were civil servants and politicians at the same time. As such, prefects usually followed the fortunes of the government that nominated them. New governments often made sweeping changes in the ranks of prefects to appoint their men. The first Mussolini government arguably followed this tradition in retiring and transferring many prefects in late 1922 and early 1923 (Morgan, 1998; Tosatti, 2001)[5]. Most of these movements were politically motivated. For instance, the prefects of Potenza, Reggio Emilia and Brescia, nominated by Prime

[2]The acronym has no clear meaning. It is often interpreted as standing for *Opera Vigilanza Repressione Antifascismo*, the Organisation for Anti-fascism Surveillance and Repression.

[3]In Italian, *Tribunale speciale per la difesa dello Stato*.

[4]Law 4 February 1926, n. 237 and R.D. 3 September 1926, n. 1910.

[5]Between 8 November 1922 and the end of the year, sixty-two prefects changed position between new appointments, transfers, and early retirements. In 1923, there were seventy-one such movements (see Tosatti, 2001; Melis, 1996).

Minister Nitti - the first coming from the so-called radical left[6] - in 1919-20 were sent into early retirement by the end of 1922. Others, such as the prefects of Cagliari, Udine, Campobasso, Genoa, Caserta, Pesaro, Turin and Verona, were forced to retire due to severe disagreements with the local fascists (see Saija, 2001, pp 438-40).

Prefects had almost complete control over the local administration of their province. They, for instance, convened and dissolved municipal councils, allocated the police force on the territory, dealt with emergencies and generally kept the central government informed on the local situation. Then, if the prefect was the representative of choice of the old liberal governments, who could better represent the new Fascist government than the provincial federal secretary of the PNF, with his direct connection with either the *Duce* or his closest associates? In June 1923, Mussolini answered this question by stating that "only representative of government authority in the Province is the prefect and no one but him. (...) Provincial fascist representatives as well as other party authorities are subordinate to the prefect."[7] Mussolini later claimed to have asked the party in 1923 to give him "seventy-six prefects and seventy-six police chiefs"[8]. The PNF would then have taken over the executive and police structures in all Italian provinces. At a stage in which real political power resided with the party, leaving it for a civil servant's career probably came with a considerable loss of personal power. Nonetheless, this general fascistization of local bodies did not materialise. Mussolini found compromising with the existing civil service easier, coopting it into the new regime (Morgan, 1998).

By the early 1930s, the latent conflict between the federal secretaries and prefects had been resolved in favour of the latter, at least formally. The prefect answered to the interior minister, while the PNF's federal secretary answered both to the PNF central secretary - the official head of the party - and the prefect itself. This implied that, barring

[6]The Italian radical left comprised the socialist, republican and radical parties. Francesco S. Nitti (1868-1953) was the first member of the Italian Radical Party (PRI) to ever serve as Prime Minister.

[7]Circular sent by telegraph on 13 June 1923, reported in Tosatti (2001). Translation by the authors.

[8]Speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 26 may 1927, reported in Tosatti (2001). Translation by the authors.

an internecine conflict in the party-state apparatus, the PNF central secretary had to nominate a *federale* amenable to the prefect, and not vice-versa (Di Nucci, 2010, pp 419-22).

The progressive empowerment of prefects as the local arm of state repression under Fascism took many steps. In 1925, a law allowed them to dismiss all public employees responsible for "activities incompatible with the general political directives of the Government" (Fried, 1967, p 179). The reforms of 1926 left the prefect even more in control of the local apparatus dedicated to political repression[9]. With the creation of the *confino* system, the prefect came to head the provincial commission that decided on the punishment to be inflicted on denounced "anti-fascists".[10]

4 Data

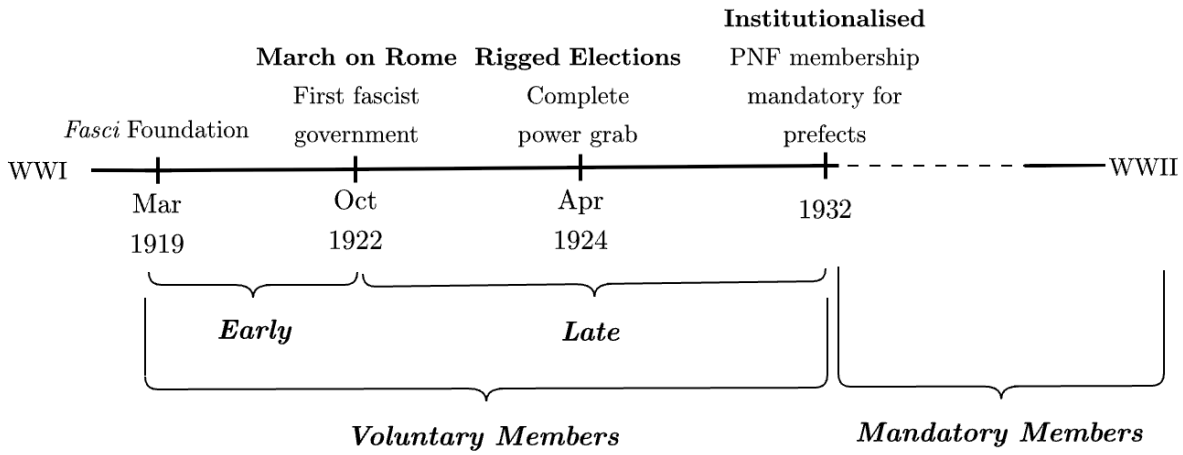
To examine how the loyalty markers influenced surveillance levels in fascist Italy, we build a dataset at the province–year level that maps prefect appointments, CPC dossiers, and covariates. We digitise biographical details on prefects from Cifelli (1999), extracting variables such as age, birthplace, professional background, education and, most importantly, affiliation date. We then match this dataset with the universe of prefects' appointments, which we also digitise from Missori (1989).

As anticipated, our main independent variables are indicators of *Loyalty* for each prefect, constructed based on the reported date of enrolment in the fascist party. Figure 1 summarises our approach to the definition of loyalty indicators.

We broadly distinguish between voluntary and mandatory PNF members. From 1932, PNF membership formally became a mandatory requirement to be promoted to the highest echelons of the Italian public administration, including prefectural positions[11]. We classify those that receive their party membership after that date as *mandatory*

[9] Law 3 April 1926, n. 660.
[10] Law 6 November 1926, n. 1848.
[11] See the Prime Minister Decree, 17 December 1932, on requisites for public employment

FIGURE 1. A TIMELINE OF FASCIST LOYALTY INDICATORS, 1918-1940



members[12]. Since their enrolment was an institutional requirement, such membership is not evidence of ideological commitment. Before 1932, however, it was *voluntary* and could be considered a signal of political alignment with the regime's methods and objectives. Nonetheless, the signal is mixed with reasons of political convenience, as being members of the PNF favoured public careers long before it became a formal requirement (Dunnage, 2012). To refine the signal, we further differentiate between early and late voluntary PNF members. We consider *early* voluntary members those who joined the PNF - or its predecessor, the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* - before October 1922, i.e. the March on Rome and the first Mussolini government. These men joined the party before its political success, often took an active role in its violent first years of life, and sometimes faced significant personal risks in doing so. We consider this to be a more reliable marker of ideological alignment. Conversely, we define those who joined the PNF between the March on Rome and 1932 as *late* members. While still unforced, this might represent a much more opportunistic decision, rather than a deep-seated ideological alignment. Given the amount of honorifics and *ad hoc* decorations the PNF

[12]This distinction is already present in Cifelli (1999), which reports the PNF membership date only for those prefects that enrolled before it became mandatory.

awarded to its early members[13], this distinction seems also salient to PNF leadership.

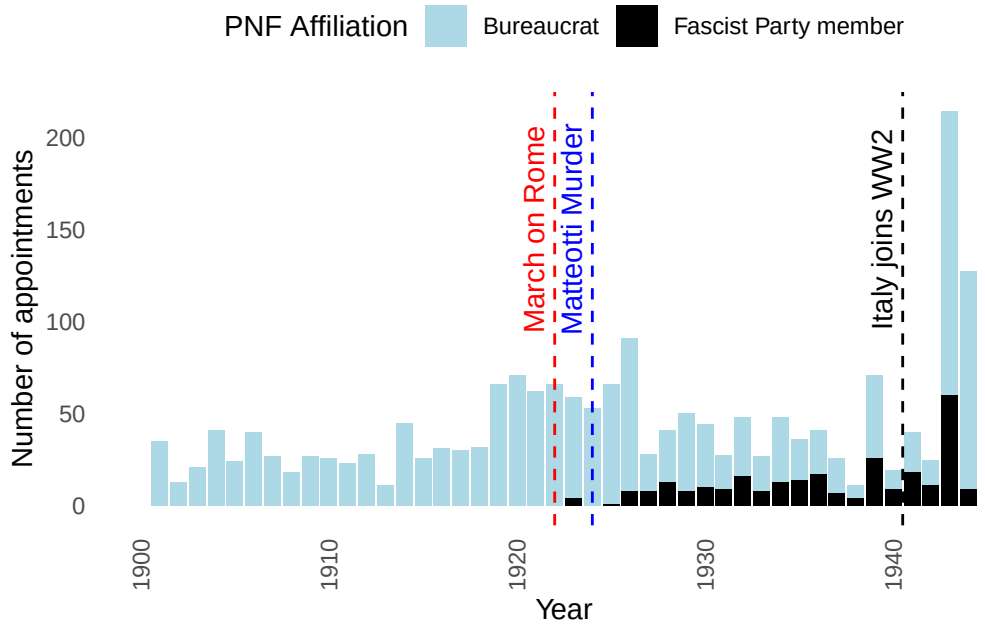
We then leverage the appointment records in Missori (1989) to locate prefects across years and provinces. To accurately reproduce the geographies at the time, we produce a previously unavailable digital map of Italy in the interwar period, which includes territories later ceded to Slovenia and Croatia. The result is synthesised in Figure 2b.

Our main dependent variable is the number of surveillance records opened at the provincial level each year. We calculate this quantity aggregating individual-level data on surveillance targets from the digitised Central Political Records Office archive (CPC), housed at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato[14]. Established in 1894 to monitor political opponents, the registry expanded significantly during the Fascist era to include communists, socialists, anarchists, and other groups targeted by the regime for political reasons. The archive contains a total of 152,589 personal files, primarily covering the period from 1894 to 1945. These files document individuals through biographical cards, police reports, interrogation records, and other materials. This dataset provides detailed information on the affiliations, professions, municipalities, and ages of individuals. Figure 3 illustrates the types of information derived from this source, while Section A.2 offers examples of the data structure through the file of Caterina Picolato in Table A4. Each record also includes information on the start and end dates of surveillance, as well as notes on measures taken against individuals (see Figure A3). Different subsets of the same source have underpinned other quantitative studies: beyond the aforementioned Dipoppa and Pezone (2025), Panza et al. (2023) isolate Special Tribunal referrals and investigate the long-term effects of anti-fascists repression.

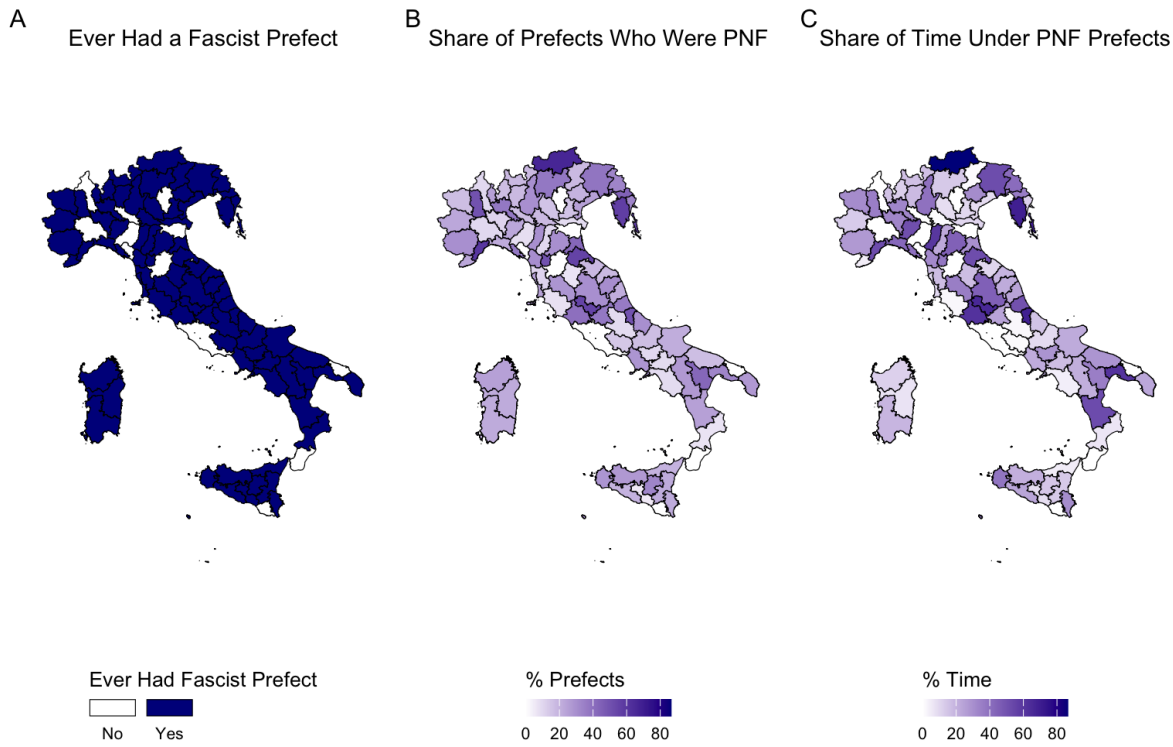
Combining these two rich sources, we construct a dataset with one observation for each province-year, recording the characteristics of the currently appointed prefect and

[13]For instance, participants in the March on Rome received a state-sanctioned commemorative medal in December 1923 (F.O. M.V.S.N. 31 December 1923). A ministerial circular of 20 January 1930 included, among the merits recognised for public officials, participation in the March on Rome, attested by a certificate issued by the PNF.

[14]Accessible online at http://dati.acs.beniculturali.it/CPC/.



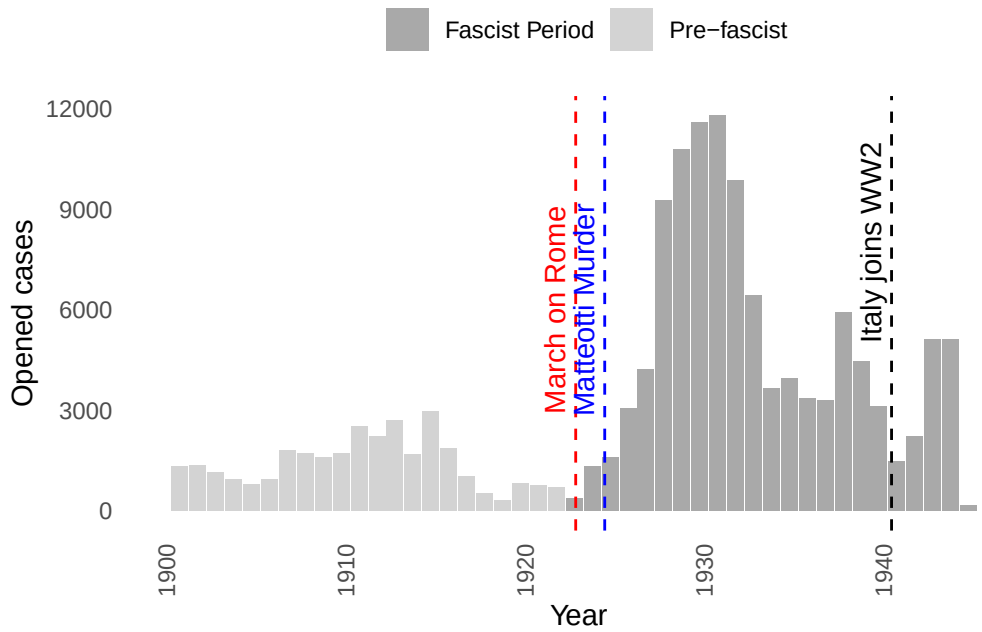
(A) Yearly Appointments, 1900–1944



(B) Geographic Distribution, 1922–1940

Figure 2. Prefect Appointments by PNF Affiliation. *Source:* Authors' elaboration on data from Missori (1989) and Cifelli (1999).

FIGURE 3. YEARLY NEW CPC RECORDS, 1900-1944



Source: Authors' elaboration on data from Archivio Centrale dello Stato.

of the amount of surveillance they directed. Because surveillance data are available only at the yearly level while prefects can change within a year, we construct $\text{Loyalty}_{p,t}$ as the share of prefect-days in year t held by early joiners in province p. The variable ranges from 0 to 1, where a value of 0.5 indicates that early joiners held the prefecture for half the year.[15]

Prefects were granted considerable discretion. For instance, Figure A4 presents a letter from the Prefect of Turin to the Interior Minister, requesting the termination of surveillance on Caterina Picolato. The Prefect justifies this by noting that she "behaves well and, despite not being a PNF member, is compliant with the institutions of the regime".

The resulting dataset connects a very granular account of the universe of recorded surveillance in Fascist Italy with an original mapping of the personal and political characteristics of the bureaucrats in charge of it. The following section details the patterns emerging from this dataset.

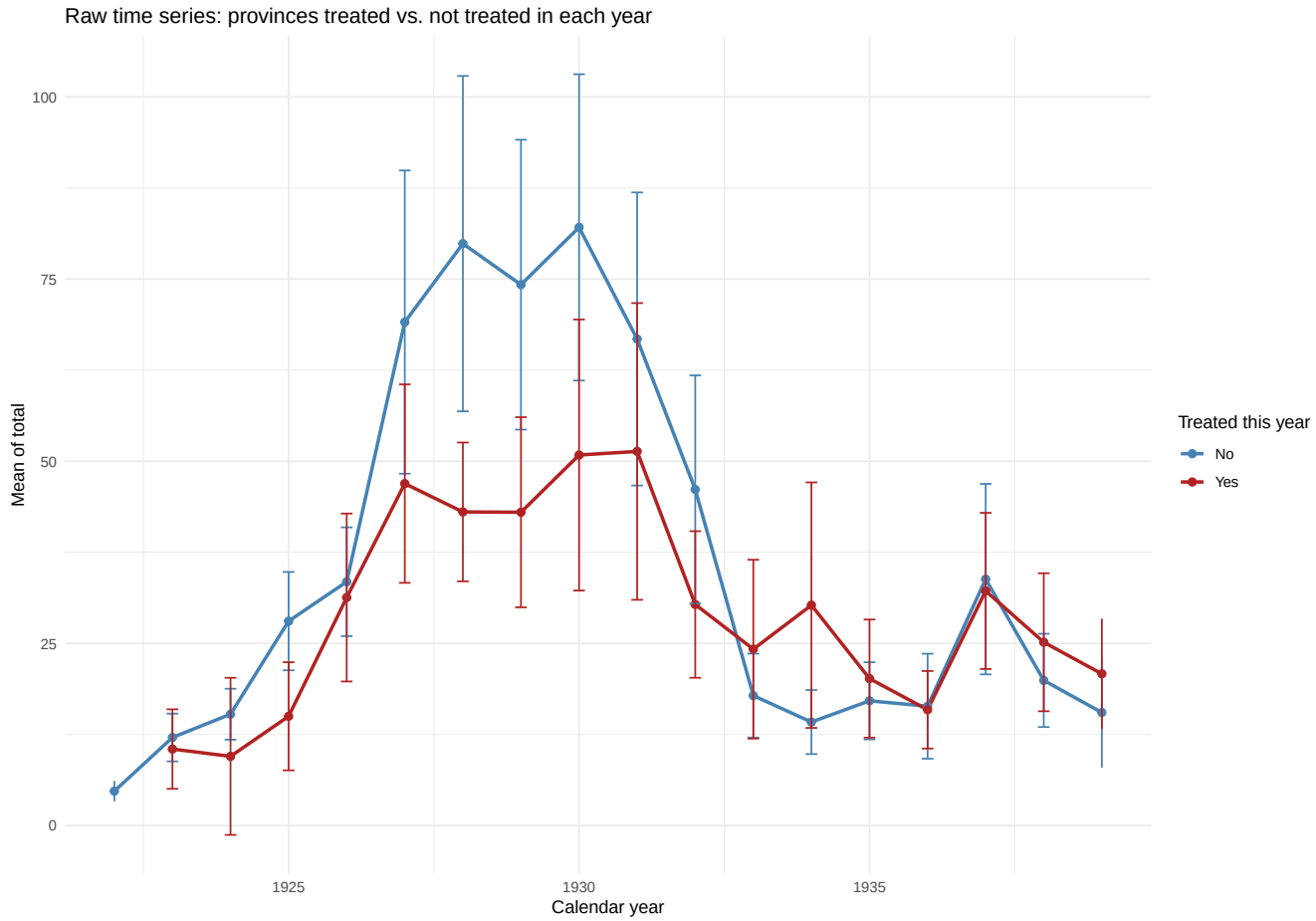
[15]Most observations are exactly 0 or 1; results in Section 5 will be robust to excluding fractional values (see Table A5).

5 Results

This section details the core result of the study: regime insiders initiate less surveillance than outsiders.

Ahead of detailing the estimation strategies deployed to isolate a plausibly causal effect, Figure 4 plots the raw, calendar-year means of opened records, separating provinces with an early-PNF prefect in office (red line and shaded 95% CI) from those without one (blue line and shaded 95% CI). These raw means already show provinces headed by credibly fascist prefects opening relatively fewer surveillance records, particularly between 1926 and 1934, where the main increase in levels took place.

Figure 4. Yearly mean of new police records, 1922-1940



Raw annual means of the outcome variable *total* in provinces with (red) and without (blue) an early-PNF prefect in office. Lines show the mean of *total* in each calendar year; shaded bands are 95 per cent confidence intervals.

This, however, might be caused by long-standing differences among provinces, e.g. population and political character, which we should expect to be correlated with assignment decisions. It is, moreover, unclear if this tendency is a significant one across the whole period.

To address these doubts, we turn to two complementary estimation strategies - TWFE and DiD regressions - to establish the presence of a robust causal connection between prefects' loyalty markers and surveillance levels. Formally, our target estimand is the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT), i.e., the average difference in surveillance activity in provinces after the appointment of an early-PNF prefect relative to what would have been observed had such a prefect not been appointed.

5.1 Two-Way Fixed Effects

The first empirical strategy we deploy is a series of panel OLS regressions with provinces as units of observation and years as periods. The analysis is restricted to the period between 1922, when fascism took power, and 1940, when Italy entered the Second World War. Our baseline regression is a simple two-way fixed effects (TWFE) model, specified as follows:

$$\text{Surveillance}_{p,t} = \beta_1 \text{Loyalty}_{p,t} + \alpha_p + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{p,t} \tag{1}$$

where β_1 is the estimand of interest. The dependent variable, $\text{Surveillance}_{p,t}$, represents the number of new surveillance dossiers opened in province p during year t. Our key explanatory variable, $\text{Loyalty}_{p,t}$, measures the presence of a prefect with credible partisan loyalty - i.e. voluntary membership, then considered separately for early and late joiners, as shown in Figure 1. By including α_p and γ_t we account for province-levels and yearly means, respectively. Finally, $\varepsilon_{p,t}$ represents the error term.

Our identification strategy relies on parallel trends: absent the appointment of a

loyal prefect, surveillance activity in treated provinces would have evolved as in control provinces. A violation would arise if loyal prefects were deployed to provinces expected to require less surveillance. While this cannot be directly observed, Figure 5 shows no differential pre-trends, and Section 6.1.2 tests for preferential deployment and finds no evidence of it.

TABLE 1. EARLY FASCISTS SURVEIL LESS RELATIVE TO CAREER ADMINISTRATORS

Dependent Variable:	Number of Records Opened			
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Variables				
Voluntary Member	-5.622**		-5.468**	
	(2.480)		(2.687)	
Early Member		-6.845**		-6.284**
		(2.641)		(2.860)
Late Member		2.194		-0.087
		(6.387)		(6.560)
Restricted Sample			✓	✓
Fixed-effects				
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fit statistics				
Dependent variable mean	31.057	31.057	31.766	31.766
Observations	1,794	1,794	1,412	1,412
Adjusted R^2	0.613	0.614	0.619	0.619
F-test	6.033	5.825	6.348	6.120

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

The result of fitting the model of equation 1 with the different measures of loyalty is reported in Table 1. In columns 1 and 2, the reference category is prefects who were not voluntary members of the Fascist National Party (PNF)—that is, they are not recorded as having joined the PNF before membership became mandatory. Hence, "career appointees" are defined residually. In columns 3 and 4, we restrict the comparison to prefects who were not voluntary party members and were explicitly recorded by Cifelli (1999) as having entered the administrative career through a public examination

process.

The headline result, consistent across samples, is that provinces receiving a prefect with a marker of loyalty display fewer police records being opened per year (columns 1 and 3). Voluntary membership status is associated with more than five fewer political surveillance records, amounting to approximately 18% of the yearly provincial mean.

This correlation, however, seems to be influenced by the credibility of such a marker. In fact, differentiating voluntary members between early and late joiners, we see that the effect is driven by the difference in recordings opened by prefects that have joined the party *before* it seized power in October 1922 (columns 2 and 4), who open about 22% fewer records than career appointees. Nonetheless, estimation of the behaviour of late members might suffer from a lack of statistical power due to their limited size.

We note that these results are not tied to the years with partial loyalty markers values, in which a change of prefects implies only a fraction of the year was presided over by a loyalist. We address this concern in Section A.3.1 in two ways. First, we exclude province-years with partial treatment exposure. Second, we fill in fractional values and introduce a dummy variable to account for partially treated years. Both exercises yield the same results.

Secondly, prefect turnover alone might be causing readjustments due to the lack of location-specific knowledge of the new prefects. This would be consistent with the larger drop in surveillance records observed in the first year of treatment in Figure 5. However, turnover cannot account for the result if we disregard loyalty markers. In Section A.3.2, we introduce a dummy that identifies any prefect change, which does not show any systematic effect on the intensity of surveillance.

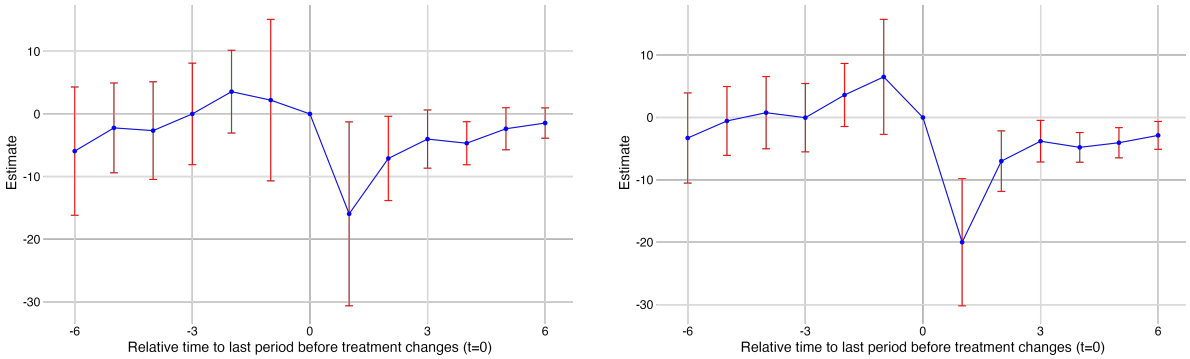
5.2 Robust Difference-in-Differences

To test the robustness of the finding, we rely on the routines proposed by de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2024), which provide us with a DiD estimator that accommodates staggered treatment adoption, treatment exit, and continuous treatment measures.

Intuitively, the estimator compares the change in surveillance activity for provinces that receive an early-PNF prefect at a given time with the corresponding change in provinces that have not yet received such a prefect at the same point in relative time. These comparisons are then aggregated across appointment cohorts to estimate dynamic treatment effects. In our main specification, we normalise treatment effects by exposure duration. This means that the estimated coefficients represent the effect of having an early-PNF prefect *per year of treatment*, rather than the cumulative effect since appointment. Normalisation ensures that treatment effects are comparable across provinces, regardless of whether they adopted an early-PNF prefect early or late in the period.

Figure 5 presents the event-study estimates. Coefficients are normalised by treatment exposure duration, making effects comparable across appointment cohorts. Pre-treatment coefficients are statistically indistinguishable from zero, supporting the the identifying assumption of parallel trends before treatment.

FIGURE 5. EFFECTS OF APPOINTING A FASCIST PREFECT ON SURVEILLANCE.



(A) ALL VOLUNTARY PNF MEMBERS. (B) EARLY PNF MEMBERS.

Notes: Estimates obtained using the de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfœuille (2024) staggered DiD estimator, with not-yet-treated provinces as controls. Coefficients are normalised by treatment exposure and represent effects per year. Blue points represent point estimates; red whiskers indicate 95% confidence intervals. Period $\ell = 0$ is the omitted baseline. Panel 5b controls for late members to keep the reference category constant.

Following the appointment of a fascist prefect, the number of surveillance dossiers opened in a province drops sharply by roughly 15 dossiers per year and remains lower over the subsequent four years (panel 5a). The effects are even more pronounced when singling out early members only (panel 5b).

Taken together, the evidence is consistent with our second hypothesis: prefects who voluntarily joined the Party oversaw significantly fewer surveillance dossiers after appointment, suggesting they did not need high numbers of surveillance records to demonstrate their political buy-in. Specifically, the aggregate difference estimated ranges between 18 and 22% depending on specifications. The following section presents empirical evidence that probes several potential explanations, ultimately settling on loyalty signalling.

6 Mechanisms

Instead of loyalty-signalling, multiple rationales might explain fascists being lighter-handed relative to career-appointed counterparts. In what follows, we argue that this

is not due to differences in competence levels, deployment dynamics, or the degree of embeddedness of bureaucrats. Instead, we find limited evidence in support of deterrence dynamics, and we stress different signalling incentives as the most cogent and theoretically fertile explanation for our findings.

6.1 Alternative Explanations

6.1.1 Competence

Guided by the theoretical literature on the loyalty-competence trade-off (Egorov and Sonin, 2011; Zakharov, 2016), we first turn to the (lack of) ability of fascist prefects to explain lower relative surveillance by voluntary party members.

We leverage the data available in Cifelli (1999) to extract educational attainment, and we estimate experience on the job using the careers reconstructed from Missori (1989). Table A2 shows that voluntary PNF members tend to be younger, enter the career at an earlier age, and are less likely to be university-educated. It is thus plausible that these bureaucrats lack the necessary preparation to steer the political police apparatus towards higher levels of activity.

Hence, we sequentially add these competence proxies to the specification in Equation 1 and fit the models. Although we cannot directly assess the ability of these administrators, we follow Besley et al. (2011) in considering a university degree an acceptable proxy for skills when entering the job. Similarly, years of service as a prefect and the number of mandates held are proxies of the experience gathered.

The results displayed in Table 2 suggest that competence is not a significant factor in determining the difference in surveillance levels between voluntary members and other prefects. It does not seem to consistently impact records when considered in isolation (columns 1 to 4), and all three of the proxies we employ do not meaningfully alter the estimate on the impact of early PNF members (columns 5 to 8). The same is true when

TABLE 2. EARLY FASCISTS POLICE LESS CONTROLLING FOR COMPETENCE PROXIES

Dependent Variable:	Records Opened							
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Variables								
Has a Degree	4.985			4.346	-2.120			-1.963
	(4.275)			(4.128)	(3.452)			(3.466)
Years of Experience		-0.381		-1.332		-0.538		-1.288
		(0.627)		(1.277)		(0.605)		(1.341)
Mandate Number			1.005	2.456			0.583	2.020
			(0.931)	(2.089)			(0.769)	(2.100)
Early Member					-7.291**	-6.355**	-6.865**	-6.154**
					(2.791)	(2.665)	(2.638)	(2.930)
Late Member					2.006	1.783	2.515	2.152
					(6.457)	(6.391)	(6.475)	(6.455)
Fixed-effects								
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fit statistics								
Dependent variable mean	30.964	30.964	30.964	30.964	31.057	31.057	31.057	31.057
Observations	1,828	1,828	1,828	1,828	1,794	1,794	1,794	1,794
Adjusted R^2	0.598	0.598	0.598	0.602	0.613	0.614	0.614	0.616
F-test	5.660	5.654	5.668	5.347	5.619	5.637	5.625	5.317

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

considering all voluntary members, as shown in Table A9.

While this result suggests something else could be driving our result, we cannot rule out an argument based on innate ability, rather than preparation or experience, as Zakharov (2016) highlights how less competent officials will endogenously be more loyal - in our setting, they will be more likely to become party members. Nonetheless, this counterargument would not completely apply to individuals taking up membership *before* the fascist party was in power, unless they predicted this would have turned out to be useful in the future.[16]

6.1.2 Preferential Deployment and Embeddedness

It is important to consider that fascist prefects might have had more say than others as to where they would have been appointed. This would align with the literature on insiders' appointments (Bhavnani and Lee, 2018). As anticipated when discussing

[16]Even in case they did, this accurate prediction on their part would likely be correlated with high ability, thus dampening, rather than inflating, the core result we observe.

the parallel trend assumption underlying our interpretation of the results, this would systematically change the potential outcomes of treated units, as fascist prefects might be more often deployed to already pacifying provinces. These "easy" appointments would not be completely taken into account by province fixed effects, as the level of underlying opposition is likely to incorporate a time-varying element. Should this be true, the results we observe would be the consequence of fascist prefects receiving provinces predicted by the regime to become less oppositional, and thus requiring less surveillance.

As we do not observe the underlying levels of opposition, but only the surveillance realised in equilibrium, we cannot directly test this reconstruction. Nonetheless, the evidence we produce speaks against it.

If fascist prefects hold more sway over appointments, we would expect them to consistently reach more desirable positions. We operationalise this desirability in two ways. First, we leverage the information we have on birthplaces to compute the distance of each deployment location from the prefect's home province. Resting on the assumption that, all else equal, it is generally appreciated to be deployed closer to home, we consider short distance to be another desirable appointment feature. Secondly, we calculate a prestige index for each province based on the number of prefects who held office there and went on to become Members of Parliament, as indicated in their biographies. Since this measure would be endogenous to who is appointed to the province in the first place, we compute the index based on the period from 1861 to 1921 in our dataset, which precedes the Fascist period analysed in the study. It is reasonable to assume that ambitious individuals will seek appointments that have proven useful in advancing their institutional ranks.

We restructure the dataset to have prefect $\times$ mandate observations, and we fit the following simple model:

$$\text{Desirability}_{i,m} = \beta_1 \text{Loyalty}_{i,m} + \alpha_p + \gamma_m + \varepsilon_{i,m} \quad (2)$$

$Desirability_{i,m}$ is alternatively measured in the negative distance of the province of the current mandate to the birthplace of the prefect, or in its prestige score. $Loyalty_{i,m}$ is represented by the party membership categories described above. α_p and γ_m are province and mandate fixed-effects. Finally, $\varepsilon_{i,m}$ represents the error.

TABLE 3. LOYALISTS ARE NOT CONSISTENTLY DEPLOYED TO BETTER PLACES

Dependent Variables:	Birthplace Closeness (km)						Prestige Score	
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Variables								
Voluntary Member	30.415		17.950	14.006			0.005	
	(23.659)		(22.068)	(23.416)			(0.006)	
Early Member		24.200			16.620	12.933		0.001
		(25.924)			(24.546)	(25.834)		(0.006)
Late Member		72.539*			26.324	20.802		0.032***
		(38.355)			(38.702)	(37.602)		(0.007)
Fixed-effects								
Province			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Mandate number				Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Fit statistics								
Dependent variable mean	-433.264	-433.264	-433.264	-433.264	-433.264	-433.264	0.158	0.158
Observations	788	788	788	788	788	788	800	800
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.000	0.049	0.047	0.047	0.046	0.111	0.111
F-test	1.566	1.052	18.037	1.634	9.020	1.509	1.565	0.791

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

The result of fitting each variation of Equation 2 is represented in Table 3. We are not able to introduce province or prefect fixed effects when evaluating prestige scores because they would completely capture the dependent and the independent variables, respectively. We always include γ_m to compare prefects at the same stage of the career progression (results are unaffected if the term is omitted).

Loyalty markers do not appear to be consistently related to better appointments. The point estimates are directionally consistent with the hypotheses, but they are largely insignificant. Late joiners seem to be the exception, as some specifications associate them with favourable postings (columns 2 and 8). However, this is possibly additional evidence against preferential deployment explaining lower levels of surveillance, as

the effect is driven by early joiners and absent in late ones (see Table 1). In summary, loyalists do not appear to have preferential access to desirable postings, which likely includes locations with waning underlying opposition.

Calculating birthplace closeness further allows us to investigate embeddedness. Prefects more local to the communities they surveil might be more knowledgeable about them - they might have more *métis* (Scott, 1998). This could allow them to surveil more efficiently, i.e. opening fewer, more targeted records. For example, Mattingly (2019) similarly shows how embedded officials in China draw on social networks to gather information and exercise control. Table 3's columns 1 to 4 seem to disprove that insiders are consistently allocated closer to where they were born in the first place, so embeddedness would not explain the pattern we observe. Plus, regressing surveillance records by birthplace distance (Table A10) displays no association between how close a prefect was born and the amount of formal surveillance he exercises on the community. In sum, this suggests embeddedness is a second-order determinant of surveillance in this context.

6.1.3 Deterrence

We then turn to another plausible explanation based on anticipation by opposition forces. If credibly fascist prefects are known for engaging in heinous policing practices, opponents might choose to halt or reduce their operations when such a prefect is assigned to their territory. This would decrease oppositional activity, leading to less surveillance.

If the premise holds, early joiners might have initially opened more records, gaining a reputation for tough enforcement, which then deterred opposition forces, leading to fewer records later on (as historically documented by Licht and Allen, 2018). While Figure 4 seems to offer evidence against this, a more precise estimation of the effect of having an early joiner in office is in order. Thus, we estimate equation 1 by year and plot the β_1 coefficients, adding prefect fixed effects in the most stringent specification.

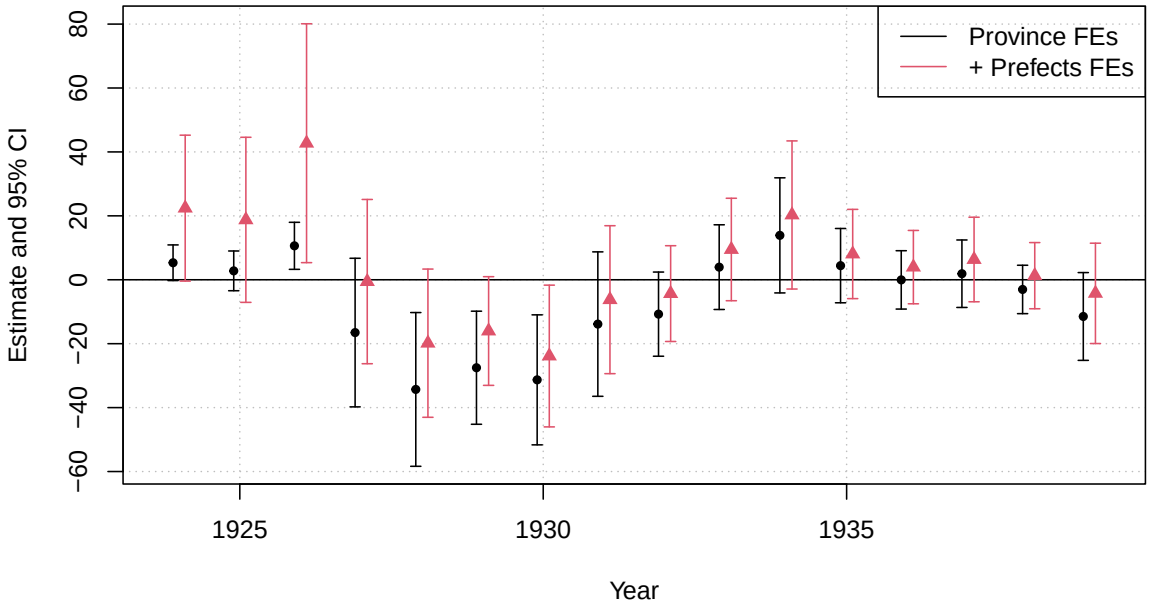


FIGURE 6. COEFFICIENT PLOT OF "EARLY MEMBER" (MODEL IN TABLE 1, COLUMN 2) BY YEAR.

When accounting for province fixed-effects, the estimation partly supports deterrence building, albeit not conclusively. In the years from 1924 to 1926, early joiners seem to open more records relative to their counterparts. In subsequent years, they produce markedly less and by the mid-thirties, the difference fades. The patterns are broadly replicated when considering within-prefect variation due to prefect fixed-effects. Even if year-bound coefficients are sparsely significant, this dynamic needs to be further investigated.

To do so, we single out the surveillance prefects have carried out during their first mandate, as a proxy for the establishment of a particularly harsh reputation. We then fit the model below:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Surveillance}_{i,m} = \beta_1 \text{Loyalty}_{i,m} + \beta_2 \text{Early Surveillance}_{i,m} \\ + \beta_3 \text{Loyalty}_{i,m} \times \text{Early Surveillance}_{i,m} + \alpha_p + \gamma_m + \varepsilon_{i,m}\end{aligned}$$

which interacts early surveillance with loyalty markers. Should the interaction term β_3 be significant, it would indicate that prefects exercised lower surveillance also because they had built deterrence in the past. Moreover, self-standing loyalty markers (β_1) losing their significance when interacted with early surveillance would constitute strong evidence that loyalists surveil less *only* when they have built deterrence.

TABLE 4. EARLY SURVEILLANCE DOES NOT SEEM TO BUILD DETERRENCE

Dependent Variable:	Number of Records Opened							
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Variables								
Early Surveillance	0.369***	0.371***	0.375***	0.384***	0.362***	0.384***	0.362***	0.391***
	(0.107)	(0.103)	(0.111)	(0.100)	(0.117)	(0.105)	(0.119)	(0.099)
Voluntary Member	-9.329***	-8.899**			-8.978***	-8.064**		
	(3.179)	(3.504)			(3.103)	(3.509)		
Early Surveillance × Voluntary Member	0.091	0.163			0.050	0.116		
	(0.213)	(0.198)			(0.201)	(0.186)		
Early Member			-9.443***	-8.966**			-9.209***	-8.229**
			(3.456)	(3.873)			(3.341)	(3.857)
Late Member			-7.276	-5.345			-7.949	-5.666
			(6.025)	(5.619)			(5.907)	(5.252)
Early Surveillance × Early Member			0.074	0.104			0.078	0.095
			(0.245)	(0.249)			(0.246)	(0.254)
Restricted Sample					✓	✓	✓	✓
Fixed-effects								
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mandate Number		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
Fit statistics								
Dependent variable mean	32.599	32.599	32.599	32.599	32.401	32.401	32.401	32.401
Observations	567	567	567	567	506	506	506	506
Adjusted R^2	0.570	0.579	0.569	0.578	0.569	0.583	0.568	0.582
F-test	52.757	13.000	39.551	12.048	54.588	13.729	40.951	12.738

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

However, results shown in Table 4 seem to suggest deterrence did not play a key role in lowering surveillance levels by loyalists. Higher early surveillance is correlated with higher surveillance overall - possibly due to the idiosyncratic characteristics of the prefect. Most importantly, loyalty markers retain their negative and significant impact, while the interaction term with early surveillance does not. In sum, while 7 suggests deterrence played a role in lowering equilibrium surveillance, a more detailed analysis seems to suggest it is a second-order determinant.

6.2 Signalling Incentives

Guided by the theoretical intuitions in Montagnes and Wolton (2019) and Luo and Zakharov (2025), we turn to the explanation we deem most cogent and analyse the

impact of surveillance levels on the likelihood of keeping prefectural office. To do so we once again set observations as prefect × mandate and we run a simple survival analysis:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Retain Office}_{i,m} = \beta_1 \text{Records}_{i,m} + \beta_2 \text{Loyalty}_{i,m} \\ + \beta_3 \text{Records}_{i,m} \times \text{Loyalty}_{i,m} + \phi_i + \gamma_m + \varepsilon_{i,m}\end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where $RetainOffice_{p,t}$ is a dummy that marks that prefect i was reappointed after mandate m and $Records_{p,t}$ is the number of political police records opened per month. We are especially interested in β_3, which will tell us if record opening is rewarded differently based on the presence of a loyalty marker. The results are reported in Table 5, where we progressively introduce prefect and mandate number fixed effects (ϕ_i and γ_m). In columns 3 and 6, we fit logit models, while the rest are OLS.

Table 5. Early Members Gain More Job Security from Surveillance

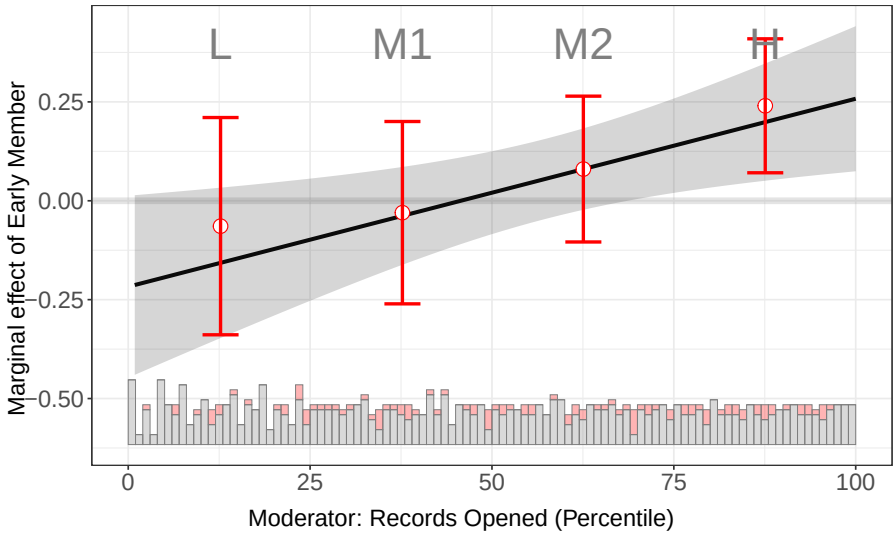
Dependent Variable:	Retain Office					
Model:	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) Logit	(4) OLS	(5) OLS	(6) Logit
Variables						
Records Opened	0.001***	0.001***	0.009***	0.001**	0.001***	0.007***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.003)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.002)
Early Member				-0.088	-0.092	-0.508
				(0.069)	(0.070)	(0.382)
Early Member × Records Opened				0.005***	0.005***	0.029**
				(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.011)
Fixed-effects						
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mandate number		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Fit statistics						
Dependent variable mean	0.599	0.599	0.609	0.599	0.599	0.609
Observations	780	780	767	780	780	767
Adjusted R^2	0.025	0.027		0.031	0.033	
F-test	14.167	1.344		5.067	1.220	

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Opening more records seems to generally improve prefects' job security (columns 1 to 3). However, it does so differently for early members relative to other prefects, as they gain more job security for the same amount of records opened (columns 4 to 6).

This is graphically represented in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7. MARGINAL EFFECT OF EARLY-MEMBER STATUS ON THE PROBABILITY OF REAPPOINTMENT.



Notes: Marginal effect of early-member status on the probability of reappointment, by number of surveillance records opened (model 5 in Table 5). Estimates use the binning estimator in Hainmueller et al. (2019). 95% confidence intervals shown; standard errors clustered at the province level. Specification includes province and mandate-number fixed effects.

We reconcile *fewer* records opened by early members with *higher* returns per record as follows.

Among other evaluation dimensions, it is likely that prefects had to be considered sufficiently loyal to retain office, i.e. to attain a given loyalty threshold. Then, opening a certain volume of surveillance records might have served as a way of signalling loyalty to regime objectives, with signal informativeness increasing in the number of records. If we assume early joiners to have higher loyalty priors than other prefects, it follows that they needed to open fewer records to reach the same posterior thresholds. In other words, higher priors allowed them to send a less informative signal (i.e. opening fewer records) and still easily clear the loyalty threshold, while other prefects had to open more records to attain comparable results. In sum, it is plausible that early joiners were subject to less pressure relative to those with a more uncertain fascist pedigree. This would lead to the observed difference in outcomes, as non-members must implement higher levels of surveillance to achieve comparable or even less favourable posterior beliefs regarding

their loyalty. Thus, suspicion around careerists' loyalty leads to observing similar or worse job security for a given level of surveillance.

Furthermore, this dynamic would explain the concentration of the main effect in early members displayed in Table 1. Joining a party before it gains power, sometimes at a degree of personal risk, sends a costly signal of loyalty. Joining it after the power is seized could be a merely instrumental move, harder to distinguish from sycophantic cheap talk (Baturo et al., 2024). Thus, late members do not escape the autocrat's suspicion and are not able to open fewer records.

6.2.1 Testable Theoretical Implications

Following the empirical implications set in Luo and Zakharov (2025), we should expect that security agents that increase repression to signal their effectiveness will disproportionally target social groups that are *a priori* more likely to harbour dissent. That is due to the fact that the dictator only observes the identity of targeted individuals, not whether they actually represent a menace. Thus, agents "over-repress" more menacing ethnic groups to boost their posteriors even further.

This logic travels well to our context, where surveilling "in excess" more ex-ante oppositional groups would boost prefects' loyalty posteriors. If our reasoning is correct, the effect of loyalty markers on the smaller number of new surveillance dossiers should operate mostly through fewer working-class individuals caught in the net. We focus on the working class as this was the most fertile segment for anti-fascist opposition (Delzell, 1961), while ethnicity was not central to the socio-political landscape at the time.[17] In synthesis, prefects that are less concerned with showing their loyalty will not over-police the usual suspects, unlike those trying to prove themselves.

We test this implication using a two–stage causal mediation design and find that it is indeed the case (Table 6). This is consistent with career-appointed bureaucrats targeting

[17]We could also use political labels (e.g. communist, socialist) but these ideological categories might much more easily represent "cheap talk" by the prefect classifying individuals.

the ex-ante most suspicious segments of society to boost their loyalty posteriors in the eyes of the leadership.

Table 6. Causal–mediation decomposition of the early-PNF effect. Mediator: working-class targets

Effect	Estimate	95% CI
ACME (indirect)	–7.24	[–11.26 ; –3.73]
ADE (direct)	0.27	[–1.14 ; 1.76]
Total effect	–6.97	[–10.85 ; –3.56]

Notes: Two–equation OLS with province and year fixed effects; standard errors and confidence intervals from a 1,000-draw cluster bootstrap (province level). ACME = average causal mediation effect; ADE = average direct effect. Point estimates in new records per province–year.

Concluding, the patterns of office retention and the targets selected all suggest signalling loyalty has been a major driver of heightened bureaucratic effort by career-appointees within the surveillance apparatus in fascist Italy. The upcoming section concludes, taking stock of the evidence and suggesting future research avenues.

7 Conclusions

Why do some bureaucrats under autocracy surveil more widely than others? This paper builds on theories emphasising the trade-off between effectiveness and allegiance within authoritarian bureaucracies and explains surveillance as the result of bureaucrats' career concerns.

Utilising an original, individual-level dataset that links detailed biographical records of Italian prefects (1922–40) to province-level surveillance reports, we demonstrate that bureaucrats who possessed strong loyalty credentials —those who joined the Fascist Party before it took power—initiated approximately 18 to 25 per cent fewer surveillance files than their career-driven counterparts. We empirically investigate the causes, offering evidence against explanations based on competence, appointment dynamics, and embeddedness, while we find limited evidence in support of deterrence. Additionally, our analysis reveals that the Fascist regime selectively rewarded higher surveillance with greater job security, albeit disproportionately in favour of insiders. We reconcile higher bureaucratic effort by outsiders in return for relatively less job security, highlighting plausible signalling dynamics. Effort - surveillance, in our case - is understood as a costly signal of loyalty. As career-appointed bureaucrats start from lower loyalty priors than insiders, they need to surveil more to reach comparable levels of trustworthiness from the leadership's viewpoint. We mutuate testable theoretical implications from Luo and Zakharov (2025) and find results consistent with this interpretation.

This paper makes three main contributions. First, it advances the study of bureaucratic behaviour by analysing provincial heads in Fascist Italy. This provides rare empirical evidence on high-level personnel decisions outside of the United States, Russia, or China, which highlights how career incentives and strategic signalling can drive officials equally or more than their ideological alignment. Second, it contributes to the surveillance literature by shifting the focus from the characteristics of those being

watched to the motives of the watchers, offering a historical exploration of physical surveillance in contrast to studies that are largely focused on digital technologies. Third, it adds to research on personnel decisions during autocratic consolidation, showing that while prior work emphasises a loyalty–competence trade-off, hiring loyalists can reduce output for reasons unrelated to expertise.

Future research, potentially making use of the dataset we constructed, should explore the generalizability of these signalling dynamics across different bureaucratic and political contexts[18]. Understanding whether similar mechanisms shape effort in contemporary authoritarian settings remains an important avenue for further investigation. The same logic applies to democratic institutions under ideological turnover: new political appointees must decide whether to fill key roles with known co-partisans or take advantage of the increased effort of holdover staff trying to retain their positions. This trade-off is salient where once anti-establishment parties now govern and must manage administrations that may not share their programme. By mapping the incentives bureaucrats face and how these shape observable surveillance, this research agenda can help policymakers design staffing and oversight rules that strengthen democratic resilience.

[18]For a classic account emphasising the ordinariness of bureaucratic compliance rather than exceptional zeal, see (Arendt, 1963).

References

Aaskoven, L. and J. Nyrup (2021, 10). Performance and promotions in an autocracy: Evidence from nazi germany. *Comparative Politics 54*(1), 51–74.

Aidt, T. S., J. Lacroix, and P.-G. Méon (2025). Connections During Democratic Transitions: Insights from the Political Purge in Post-WWII France. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*.

Arendt, H. (1963). *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London: Faber.

Balcells, L. and F. Villamil (2020, 07). The double logic of internal purges: New evidence from francoist spain. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics 26*(3), 260–278.

Baturo, A., N. Khokhlov, and J. Tolstrup (2024). Playing the sycophant card: The logic and consequences of professing loyalty to the autocrat. *American Journal of Political Science*.

Beraja, M., A. Kao, D. Y. Yang, and N. Yuchtman (2023). Ai-Tocracy. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics 138*(3), 1349–1402.

Besley, T., J. G. Montalvo, and M. Reynal-Querol (2011, August). Do Educated Leaders Matter? *The Economic Journal 121*(554), F205–227.

Bhavnani, R. R. and A. Lee (2018, January). Local Embeddedness and Bureaucratic Performance: Evidence from India. *The Journal of Politics 80*(1), 71–87.

Bramstedt, E. K. (2013, September). *Dictatorship and Political Police: The Technique of Control by Fear*. London: Routledge.

Brierley, S., K. Lowande, R. A. Potter, and G. Toral (2023, June). Bureaucratic Politics: Blind Spots and Opportunities in Political Science. *Annual Review of Political Science 26*(1), 271–290.

Carter, E. B., J. Lee, and V. Shih (2025, October). Who Represses? Career Incentives and the Geography of Repression in China. *The Journal of Politics*.

Cifelli, A. (1999). *I prefetti del Regno nel ventennio fascista*. Rome: Scuola Superiore Amministrazione Interno - SSAI.

Colonnelli, E., M. Prem, and E. Teso (2020, October). Patronage and Selection in Public Sector Organizations. *American Economic Review 110*(10), 3071–3099.

Crabtree, C., H. L. Kern, and D. A. Siegel (2020, July). Cults of personality, preference falsification, and the dictator's dilemma. *Journal of Theoretical Politics 32*(3), 409–434. Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd.

de Chaisemartin, C. and X. D'Haultfœuille (2024, 02). Difference-in-differences estimators of intertemporal treatment effects. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 1–45.

De Juan, A., F. Haass, and J. Pierskalla (2021, October). The Partial Effectiveness of Indoctrination in Autocracies: Evidence from the German Democratic Republic. *World Politics 73*(4), 593–628.

Delzell, C. F. (1961). *Mussolini's Enemies: The Italian Anti-Fascist Resistance*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Di Nucci, L. (2010). *Lo Stato-partito del fascismo. Genesi, evoluzione e crisi 1919-1943*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Dipoppa, G. and A. Pezone (2025). The Logic of State Surveillance: Evidence from a Century of Italian Dissidents.

Dragu, T. and A. Przeworski (2019). Preventive repression: Two types of moral hazard. *American Political Science Review 113*(1), 77–87.

Dunnage, J. (2012). *Mussolini's Policemen: Behaviour, Ideology and Institutional Culture in Representation and Practice*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Egorov, G. and K. Sonin (2011, 10). Dictators and their viziers: Endogenizing the loyalty–competence trade-off. *Journal of the European Economic Association 9*(5), 903–930.

Emeriau, M. (2023, October). Learning to be Unbiased: Evidence from the French Asylum Office. *American Journal of Political Science 67*(4), 1117–1133.

Fontana, N., F. Barilari, and N. Mastrorocco (2025). When the dictator is in town.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (2nd Vintage Books ed ed.). New York: Vintage Books.

Francois, P., F. Trebbi, and K. Xiao (2023). Factions in Nondemocracies: Theory and Evidence From the Chinese Communist Party. *Econometrica 91*(2), 565–603.

Fried, R. (1967). *Il prefetto in Italia*. Milan: Giuffré.

Gallo, N. and D. E. Lewis (2012). The Consequences of Presidential Patronage for Federal Agency Performance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART 22*(2), 219–243.

Geys, B., P. Lægreid, Z. Murdoch, and S. W. Yackee (2025, August). I'm a Survivor: Political Dynamics in Bureaucratic Elites' Partisan Identification. *American Political Science Review 119*(3), 1115–1129.

Hager, A. and K. Krakowski (2022, 05). Does state repression spark protests? evidence from secret police surveillance in communist poland. *American Political Science Review 116*(2), 564–579.

Hainmueller, J., J. Mummolo, and Y. Xu (2019, April). How Much Should We Trust Estimates from Multiplicative Interaction Models? Simple Tools to Improve Empirical Practice. *Political Analysis 27*(2), 163–192.

Hassan, M. (2017). The Strategic Shuffle: Ethnic Geography, the Internal Security Apparatus, and Elections in Kenya. *American Journal of Political Science 61*(2), 382–395. _eprint: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/ajps.12279.

Hassan, M., D. Mattingly, and E. R. Nugent (2022, 05). Political control. *Annual Review of Political Science 25*(Volume 25, 2022), 155–174.

Heldring, L. (2023). Bureaucracy as a tool for politicians: Evidence from germany. *Working Paper*.

Jia, R., M. Kudamatsu, and D. Seim (2015, August). Political Selection in China: The Complementary Roles of Connections and Performance. *Journal of the European Economic Association 13*(4), 631–668.

Ketchley, N. and G. Wenig (2023, 12). Purging to transform the post-colonial state: Evidence from the 1952 egyptian revolution. *Comparative Political Studies*, 00104140231209966.

King, G., J. Pan, and M. E. Roberts (2013, May). How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression. *American Political Science Review 107*(2), 326–343.

Kitson, S. (2002, 08). From enthusiasm to disenchantment: the french police and the vichy regime, 1940–1944. *Contemporary European History 11*(3), 371–390.

Lewis, D. E. (2011, June). Presidential Appointments and Personnel. *Annual Review of Political Science 14*(Volume 14, 2011), 47–66.

Licht, A. A. and S. H. Allen (2018, September). Repressing for reputation: Leadership transitions, uncertainty, and the repression of domestic populations. *Journal of Peace Research 55*(5), 582–595. Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Lowande, K. (2019, January). Politicization and Responsiveness in Executive Agencies. *The Journal of Politics 81*(1), 33–48.

Luo, Z. and A. Zakharov (2025, February). Repression with reputation concerns.

Mattingly, D. C. (2019). *The Art of Political Control in China*. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Melis, G. (1996). *Storia dell'amministrazione italiana, 1861-1993*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Missori, M. (1989). *Governi, alte cariche dello Stato, alti magistrati e prefetti del regno d'Italia*. Number 2 in Pubblicazioni degli archivi di Stato. Sussidi. Roma: Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, Divisione studi e pubblicazioni.

Moe, T. M. (1984). The New Economics of Organization. *American Journal of Political Science 28*, 737–777.

Montagnes, B. P. and S. Wolton (2019, November). Mass Purges: Top-Down Accountability in Autocracy. *American Political Science Review 113*(4), 1045–1059.

Morgan, P. (1998, 09). The prefects and party-state relations in fascist italy. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies 3*(3), 241–272.

Nalepa, M. (2022, 09). *After Authoritarianism: Transitional Justice and Democratic Stability* (1 ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Panza, L., M. Lecci, E. Swee, and G. Zanella (2023). Historical Anti-Fascism and Right-Wing Voting in Italy.

Park, N. and R. Somanathan (2004, February). Patronage in public administration: Presidential connections, position assignments and the performance of Korean public prosecutors, 1992-2000. *Discussion Papers* (04-02).

Przeworski, A. (2015). Political Institutions and Political Order(s). In A. Przeworski (Ed.), *Democracy in a Russian Mirror*, Cambridge Studies in the Theory of Democracy, pp. 247–267. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Qian, J. and S. Bai (2024, July). Loyalty Signaling, Bureaucratic Compliance, and Variation in State Repression in Authoritarian Regimes. *Comparative Politics 56*(4), 423–447.

Rivera, C. V. (2020, October). Loyalty or Incentives? How Party Alignment Affects Bureaucratic Performance. *The Journal of Politics 82*(4), 1287–1304.

Ross, S. A. (1973). The Economic Theory of Agency: The Principal's Problem. *The American Economic Review 63*(2), 134–139. Publisher: American Economic Association.

Saija, M. (2001). *I prefetti italiani nella crisi dello stato liberale. I.* Milan: Dott. A. Giuffrè Ed.

Scharpf, A. and C. Gläßel (2020). Why underachievers dominate secret police organizations: evidence from autocratic Argentina. *American Journal of Political Science 64*(4), 791–806.

Scott, J. C. (1998). *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press.

Spenkuch, J. L., E. Teso, and G. Xu (2023). Ideology and Performance in Public Organizations. *Econometrica 91*(4), 1171–1203.

Svolik, M. W. (2012). *The politics of authoritarian rule*. Cambridge studies in comparative politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Toral, G. (2024). How Patronage Delivers: Political Appointments, Bureaucratic Accountability, and Service Delivery in Brazil. *American Journal of Political Science 68*(2), 797–815.

Tosatti, G. (2001). Il prefetto e l'esercizio del potere durante il periodo fascista. *Studi Storici, Anno 42* (4,), 1021–1039.

Tyson, S. A. (2018, October). The Agency Problem Underlying Repression. *The Journal of Politics 80*(4), 1297–1310. Publisher: The University of Chicago Press.

Weingast, B. (1984). The congressional-bureaucratic system: a principal agent perspective (with applications to the SEC). *Public Choice 44*(1), 147–191. Publisher: Springer.

Xu, X. (2021, 04). To repress or to co-opt? authoritarian control in the age of digital surveillance. *American Journal of Political Science 65*(2), 309–325.

Zakharov, A. V. (2016, 04). The loyalty-competence trade-off in dictatorships and outside options for subordinates. *The Journal of Politics 78*(2), 457–466.

A Appendix

Contents

A.1 Descriptives

Table A1. Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables. Prefect dataset.

Variable	Unique	Missing Pct.	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max
PNF Member	19	1	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.0
Early PNF Member	17	0	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.0
Late PNF Member	13	1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	1.0
Career Bureaucrat	24	0	0.7	0.4	0.0	1.0	1.0
Mandate number	12	0	3.0	2.0	1.0	3.0	12.0
Experience as Prefect (years)	552	0	4.5	3.4	0.0	3.8	20.0
log(Opened Records)	186	3	2.9	1.1	0.7	2.9	6.3
Opened records	177	3	33.2	52.1	1.0	17.0	548.0

Table A2. Balance Table for Key Variables. Prefect dataset.

	Bureaucrat (N=320)		PNF (N=90)			
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Diff.	p-value
Age at start	52.8	5.8	45.2	7.0	−7.6	< 0.001
Birth year	1876.6	9.0	1892.3	7.4	15.7	< 0.001
University	1.0	0.2	0.8	0.4	−0.2	< 0.001
Mandate length (days)	650.4	536.5	653.9	582.3	3.5	0.960
Anormal length (de jure)	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.253
Anormal length (de facto)	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.241
Education	N	Pct.	N	Pct.		
Diploma	5	1.6	9	10.0		
License	2	0.6	4	4.4		
Other	4	1.2	9	10.0		
University Degree	309	96.6	68	75.6		

Note: Differences are based on means or proportions. p-values from two-sample t-tests.

FIGURE A1. PRESENCE OF PREFECT PNF STATUS OVER TIME BY PROVINCE.

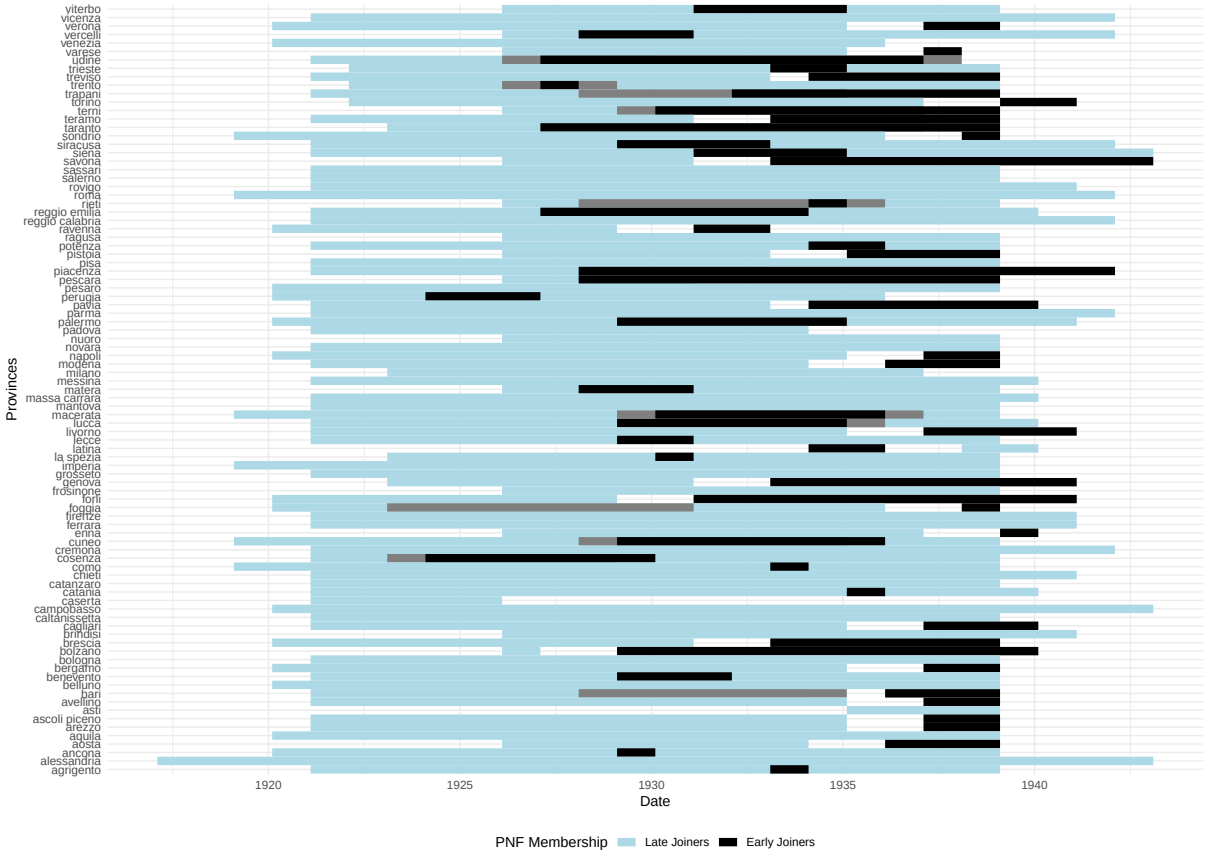
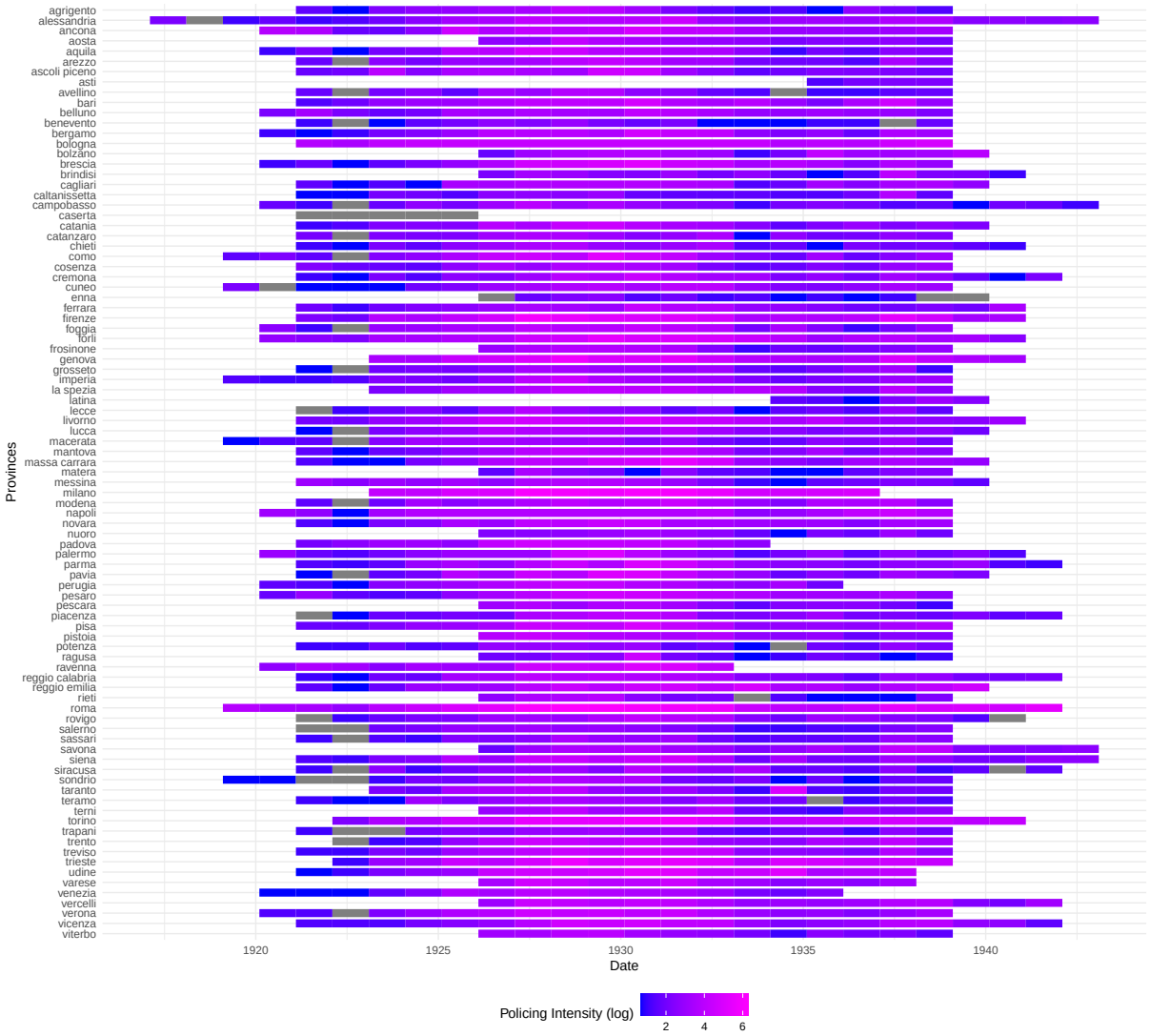


Figure A2. Repression Over Time by Province.



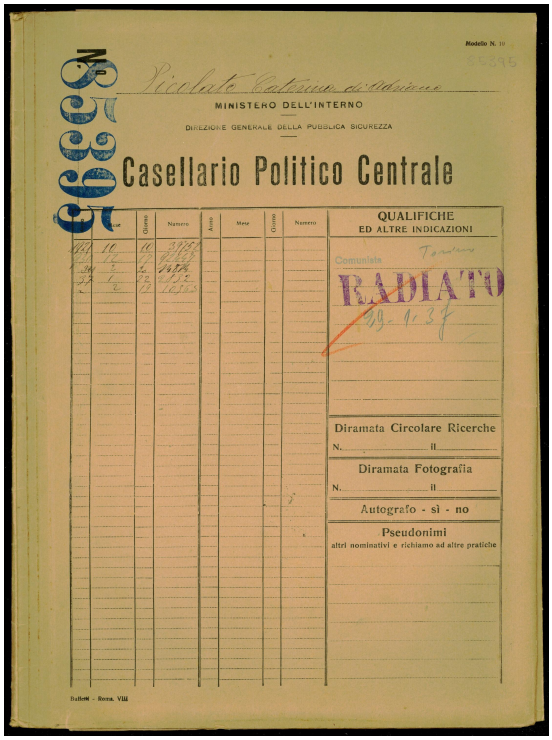
A.2 The Casellario Politico Centrale

The dataset has a row per each individual with a folder in the CPC. For example, Table A4 presents an example of the variables of interest for Caterina Picolato.[19]. As it can be seen in Table A4, in the dataset we do have information on when surveillance started and ended, as well as some notes on the measures taken against her (see Figure A3).

Variable	**Value**
DENOMINAZIONE	Picolato Caterina
RESIDENZA	Torino, Piemonte, Italia
UNITDATE	1923-1937
DATAINIZIO	1923
DATAFINE	1937
BUSTA	3951
FASCICOLO	B47025
MESTIERE	impiegata
ANNOTAZIONI	radiato
MATRICOLA	NULL
NOTEDOCARC	NULL
NOTA ARCHIVISTICA	NULL

Table A4. Example of variables in the CPC dataset.

[19] Available at https://tecadigitaleacs.cultura.gov.it/item/835585d4-a5e5-4c7a-ac28-05c2d9721160.


MINISTERO DELL'INTERNO

DIREZIONE GENERALE DELLA PUBBLICA SICUREZZA

Casellario Politico Centrale

QUALIFICHE
ED ALTRE INDICAZIONI

Comunista

RADIATO

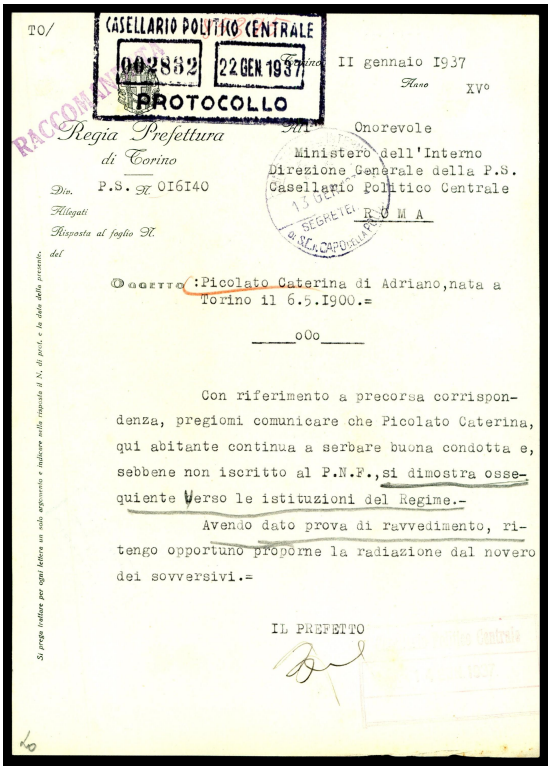
Diramata Circolare Ricerche

Diramata Fotografia

Autografo - sì - no

Pseudonimi
altri nominativi e richiamo ad altre pratiche

FIGURE A3. COVER OF CATERINA PICOLATO'S REGISTRY AT THE CPC.


CASELLARIO POLITICO CENTRALE
002852
22 GEN 1937
PROTOCOLLO

Regia Prefettura
di Torino

Div. P.S. N. 0I6I40

Allegati

Risposta al foglio N.

del

Torino II gennaio I937

Anno XV°

Onorevole
Ministero dell'Interno
Direzione Generale della P.S.
Casellario Politico Centrale
R O M A

Oggetto: Picolato Caterina di Adriano, nata a Torino il 6.5.I900.=

_____oOo_____

Con riferimento a precorsa corrispondenza, pregiomi comunicare che Picolato Caterina, qui abitante continua a serbare buona condotta e, sebbene non iscritto al P.N.F., si dimostra ossequiente verso le istituzioni del Regime.-

Avendo dato prova di ravvedimento, ritengo opportuno proporne la radiazione dal novero dei sovversivi.=

IL PREFETTO

FIGURE A4. LETTER FROM THE PREFECT OF TORINO, ASKING FOR CATERINA PICOLATO'S EXCLUSION ("RADIAZIONE") OF SURVEILLANCE AT THE CPC.

A.3 Robustness Checks

A.3.1 Avoiding Fractional Values of Loyalty

Table A5. Full Values Only

Dependent Variable:	Number of Records Opened			
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Variables				
Voluntary Member	-4.741*		-5.356**	
	(2.535)		(2.678)	
Early Member		-6.063**		-6.180**
		(2.716)		(2.849)
Late Member		4.849		1.401
		(6.359)		(6.585)
Restricted Sample			✓	✓
Fixed-effects				
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fit statistics				
Dependent variable mean	30.877	30.944	31.367	31.450
Observations	1,611	1,597	1,382	1,368
Adjusted R^2	0.610	0.611	0.613	0.613
F-test	6.034	5.843	6.230	6.021

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Table A6. Filled Values with Loyalty Change Dummy

Dependent Variable:	Number of Records Opened			
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Variables				
Loyalty Change	-1.536	-1.329	-4.862	-6.246
	(2.833)	(2.797)	(6.487)	(6.370)
Voluntary Member	-4.861*		-5.236*	
	(2.504)		(2.680)	
Early Member		-6.356**		-6.286**
		(2.619)		(2.796)
Late Member		2.012		-0.270
		(5.955)		(5.521)
Restricted Sample			✓	✓
Fixed-effects				
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fit statistics				
Dependent variable mean	30.964	30.964	31.766	31.766
Observations	1,828	1,828	1,412	1,412
Adjusted R^2	0.599	0.599	0.619	0.619
F-test	5.474	5.299	6.122	5.916

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

A.3.2 Turnover versus Loyalty

We have shown that voluntary party membership - and especially early joining - predicts a substantial drop in police-registry openings. A natural question is whether this effect simply reflects the arrival of a new prefect, regardless of political background, rather than any specific loyalty marker. To test this, in Table A7 we replace our loyalty indicator with a dummy for "any prefect change" from year $t-1$ to t.

We re-estimate equation (1) but with $\Delta_{p,t} = \mathbf{1}\{\text{prefect at } (p,t) \neq \text{prefect at } (p,t-1)\}$ as an additional control.

Table A7 reruns the core specification shown in 1. Table A8 avoids fractional treatment values and marks as treated any year where a loyalist was present, regardless of the number of months.

In both tables, columns 1 and 2 use the full sample; columns 3 and 4 restrict to provinces where prefects have explicit career-admin and PNF information. All models include province and year fixed-effects, with standard errors clustered by province.

Across every specification, the coefficient on "any prefect change" is essentially zero and never statistically significant. Whether we look at the full sample or the restricted subsample, mere turnover - absent a loyalty marker - bears no systematic relationship with policing intensity.

These null findings confirm that it is not the replacement of a prefect per se that drives our main results. Rather, the reductions in police-registry openings documented in Table 1 arise specifically when a *fascist* (PNF) prefect - particularly an early joiner - assumes office.

TABLE A7. MERE TURNOVER DOES NOT DRIVE THE RESULT

Dependent Variable:	Number of Records Opened			
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Variables				
Any Change	-1.632	-1.618	-0.759	-0.809
	(1.553)	(1.546)	(2.202)	(2.206)
Voluntary Member	-5.712**		-5.532**	
	(2.493)		(2.683)	
Early Member		-6.939**		-6.364**
		(2.657)		(2.856)
Late Member		2.009		-0.160
		(6.394)		(6.559)
Restricted Sample			✓	✓
Fixed-effects				
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fit statistics				
Dependent variable mean	31.057	31.057	31.766	31.766
Observations	1,794	1,794	1,412	1,412
Adjusted R^2	0.613	0.614	0.618	0.618
F-test	5.815	5.622	6.114	5.903

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

TABLE A8. MERE TURNOVER DOES NOT DRIVE THE RESULT (FILLED VALUES)

Dependent Variable:	Number of Records Opened			
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Variables				
Any Change	-0.519	-0.408	-0.542	-0.523
	(1.484)	(1.489)	(2.198)	(2.216)
Voluntary Member	-5.332**		-5.743**	
	(2.248)		(2.640)	
Early Member		-6.740***		-6.705**
		(2.438)		(2.784)
Late Member		1.688		-1.532
		(5.894)		(5.483)
Restricted Sample			✓	✓
Fixed-effects				
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fit statistics				
Dependent variable mean	30.964	30.964	31.766	31.766
Observations	1,828	1,828	1,412	1,412
Adjusted R^2	0.599	0.599	0.619	0.619
F-test	5.473	5.298	6.119	5.910

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

A.4 Mechanisms

A.4.1 Competence

TABLE A9. VOLUNTARY MEMBERS POLICE LESS CONTROLLING FOR COMPETENCE PROXIES

	Number of Police Records Opened			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Voluntary Member	-5.987**	-5.236**	-5.597**	-4.969*
	(2.657)	(2.471)	(2.470)	(2.722)
Has a Degree	-1.809			-1.663
	(3.424)			(3.453)
Years of Experience		-0.575		-1.328
		(0.596)		(1.333)
Current Mandate Number			0.539	2.023
			(0.755)	(2.095)
Dependent variable mean	31.057	31.057	31.057	31.057
Observations	1,794	1,794	1,794	1,794
Adjusted R^2	0.613	0.614	0.613	0.616
F-test	5.811	5.833	5.816	5.488
Province fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓

, **, and * correspond to 10, 5, and 1% levels of significance, respectively.*
Standard errors are clustered at the province level.

A.4.2 Embeddedness

TABLE A10. MORE LOCAL PREFECTS DO NOT SURVEIL LESS

Dependent Variable:	Records Opened					
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Variables						
Birthplace Distance	-0.003	-0.004	-0.004	-0.005	-0.004	-0.005
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Birthplace Distance × Voluntary Member			0.012	0.012		
			(0.009)	(0.009)		
Birthplace Distance × Early Member					0.013	0.012
					(0.009)	(0.009)
Fixed-effects						
Province	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mandate Number		Yes		Yes		Yes
Fit statistics						
Dependent variable mean	30.201	30.201	30.201	30.201	30.201	30.201
Observations	751	751	751	751	751	751
Adjusted R^2	0.485	0.486	0.484	0.486	0.483	0.485
F-test	105.705	9.144	35.344	7.861	26.522	7.340

Clustered (Province) standard-errors in parentheses
*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Table A10 suggests embeddedness, to the extent it is proxied having been born closer to the province of appointment, is not a consequential factor in determining surveillance levels. Columns 3 to 6 feature interaction terms also allowing for closeness to be differently leveraged by fascist prefects.