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To cite this article: Christopher A. Cooper (2021) Politicization of the Bureaucracy across and within Administrative Traditions, International Journal of Public Administration, 44:7, 564-577, DOI: [10.1080/01900692.2020.1739074](https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2020.1739074)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2020.1739074>



Published online: 18 Mar 2020.



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Politicization of the Bureaucracy across and within Administrative Traditions

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ABSTRACT

It is frequently claimed within the politicization literature that while governments around the world are increasingly politicizing senior public service appointments, the nature and extent of this politicization varies across administrative traditions. To date, however, differences across administrative traditions have received little empirical scrutiny; research tends to be more comparable than comparative. Using data from an expert survey systematically measuring the merit-, political-, and personal-recruitment of senior public servants in 20 countries, this article examines differences across and within the Nordic, Westminster, Germanic and Napoleonic administrative traditions, in addition to the alternative Anglo-American and Southern European traditions. Various tests show meaningful variation in politicization across administrative traditions, with the starkest differences found between the Nordic and Napoleonic traditions. The results also show less variation among the countries comprising the Nordic tradition than that found within the other traditions.

KEYWORDS

Administrative tradition; bureaucracy; politicization; quality of government; comparative public administration; patronage

Introduction

The politicization of public service appointments is presently experiencing a resurgence of interest from public administration scholars (Christensen et al., 2014; Dahlström & Niklasson, 2013; Kim & Hong, 2019; Lee, 2018). A frequent claim within this literature is that the nature and extent of this politicization varies across countries because of differences in their *administrative tradition* – the formal and informal institutions that define the nature of the public service, as well as the relationship that the public service has with the government, the state, and its citizens. Scholars tend to support these claims, however, by comparing the findings of separate studies using different methodologies. Research studying politicization across administrative traditions thus tends to be more “comparable than comparative” (Derlien, 1992, p. 279). This article advances this literature by empirically examining politicization across, as well as within, administrative traditions.

This article uses data from an expert survey measuring senior public servants’ recruitment on the basis of merit, political connections and personal connections in 20 countries that encompass the Nordic, Westminster, Germanic and Napoleonic administrative traditions, as well as the alternative Anglo-American and Southern European traditions. The results from various statistical tests suggest that there are indeed

important differences across these traditions. In the Nordic and Westminster traditions, merit recruitment is the highest, while recruitment based on political and personal connections are the lowest. Conversely, in the Germanic and Napoleonic traditions, merit recruitment is the lowest, while recruitment based on political and personal connections are the highest.

Overall, the findings in this study empirically support claims that levels of politicization vary according to the larger social context of a country’s administrative tradition. While the desire to control the bureaucracy may be ubiquitous in the contemporary era of governance, the results suggest that a country’s underlying administrative tradition influences, but does not determine, the extent to which governments politicize public service appointments. Specifically, politicization is less likely to be a chosen method of control in countries whose administrative tradition has historically had little tolerance for political appointments to the bureaucracy.

The remainder of this article is organized into four sections. After reviewing the concepts of politicization and administrative tradition, the first section explains the theoretical reasons why politicization may vary across, but also within, administrative traditions. The second section outlines the data and methods used to measure the merit-, political- and personal-based recruitment of senior public servants in 20

countries comprising six administrative traditions. The third section interprets the results from various statistical tests. The conclusion identifies the contributions this article makes to research studying politicization and comparative public administration, as well as identifies some questions for future research.

Theory: politicization and administrative tradition

What is politicization?

To speak about a “politicization of the bureaucracy” necessitates a minimum belief in the politics-administration dichotomy. As proclaimed by Wilson (1887):

... administration lies outside the proper sphere of *politics*. Administrative questions are not political questions. Although politics sets the tasks for administration, it should not be suffered to manipulate its offices. (p. 210 emphasis in the original)

At its most essential meaning, politicization is any intrusion of politics into administration. This rudimentary meaning leads us to be aware of the various ways that politics can enter the impartial realm of bureaucracy (Eichbaum & Shaw, 2008; Hustedt & Salomonsen, 2014; Peters, 2013), including political actions by public servants themselves (Boräng et al., 2018; Saint-Martin, 2003).

A central type of politicization is the prioritization of political criteria when appointing administrative officials. In their oft-cited book *Politicization of the Civil Service in Comparative Perspective*, Peters and Pierre (2004) define politicization as the “substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the public service” (p. 2). Although some scholars use alternative terms to describe this behaviour, such as “patronage as governance” (Flinders et al., 2012) or “patronage as an organizational resource” (Kopecký & Mair, 2012), the appointment of senior public servants receives the most scholarly attention. There are two good reasons for this.

First, a growing body of research shows a positive relationship between merit recruitment and the quality of government. Hiring senior public servants according to merit has been tied to socioeconomic development (Evans & Rauch, 1999), organizational efficiency (Fuenzalida & Riccucci, 2018), expertise (Richardson, 2019), low levels of corruption (Dahlström & Lapuente, 2017) and voicing frank and fearless advice (Cooper, 2018a).

Second, appointing senior public servants has long been seen as a central means through which governments can control the bureaucracy. Many of the earliest and most seminal publications in public administration,

such as Wilson’s (1887) *The Study of Administration* and Britain’s *Northcote-Trevelyan Report* (Northcote & Trevelyan, 1984/1954), were concerned with the extent to which administrative officials were being hired on the basis of political criteria, and professed that hiring officials according to merit would improve the quality of the bureaucracy. Accordingly, in many countries the creation of independent civil service commissions during the late 19th and early 20th centuries tapered the practice of awarding administrative offices in return for partisan support (Dreyfus, 2000; Silberman, 1993). Yet importantly, these reforms generally did not make their way to the bureaucracy’s top offices, instead, remaining under the control of the government. Thus historically, as a growing wave of distrust in the intentions of public servants swept across many industrialized countries in the 1980s (Aucoin, 1990), the search for the best and the brightest yielded to the need for administrative allies committed to the government’s policy agenda.

During this time, some scholars began to speak about an increasing politicization of senior public service appointments (Bourgault & Dion, 1989; Derlien, 1988). Importantly, research suggests that ongoing transformations in the nature of governance since the 1980s, including the 24/7 news cycle, social media, and the permanent electoral campaign, have further amplified governments’ desire to control the bureaucracy (Aucoin, 2012; Marland et al., 2017).

Accordingly, over the last 20 years a growing number of studies have sought to measure, and better understand the political dynamics – such as a change in government – that push governments to politicize senior public service appointments (Bach & Veit, 2018; Boyne et al., 2010; Cooper, 2019; Dahlström & Holmgren, 2019; Derlien, 2003; Ennsner-Jedenastik, 2016; Kim & Hong, 2019; Lewis & Waterman, 2013; Meyer-Sahling & Mikkelsen, 2017; Park & Kim, 2014; Petrovsky et al., 2017). A notable feature of this literature is that the majority of studies examine a single polity. While employing different methodologies, most studies do find evidence of increased politicization. Importantly, it is also commonly claimed within this literature that the nature and extent of politicization varies across countries, in large part, because of differences in their administrative tradition (Dahlström et al., 2011; Gherghina & Kopecký, 2016; Neuhold et al., 2013; Peters & Pierre, 2004).

What is an administrative tradition?

Painter and Peters (2010) define an administrative tradition as a “more or less an enduring structure pattern in the style and substance of public administration in

a particular country or group of countries” (p. 6). The nature of an administrative tradition is manifested in both a country’s formal and informal institutions, and includes the beliefs about the proper rapport between politics and administration as well as the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats (Yesilkagit, 2010). In this sense, an administrative tradition defines the contours of the “public service bargain” concerning the appropriate behaviour of politicians and senior officials (Hood & Lodge, 2006).

While governments in most industrialized countries appear to desire more control over the bureaucracy, administrative traditions may influence the extent to which governments seek this control by prioritizing political criteria when appointing senior public servants. The theoretical reason for this is a sociological institutionalist explanation of politics (Jenson & Frédéric, 2010): while individuals pursue their interests, they do so through the prism of social context. This social context influences not only the nature of an actor’s preferences (such as control over the bureaucracy), but also the judgments about how these preferences are best realized (such as the politicization of senior public service appointments). According to March and Olsen (1998), individuals approach:

opportunities for action by assessing similarities between current identities and choice dilemmas and more general concepts of self and situations. Action involves evoking an identity or role and matching the obligations of that identity or role to a specific situation. The pursuit of purpose is associated with identities more than with interests. (p. 949)

By influencing the strategic actions of governments and bureaucrats, comparative public administration scholars often focus on administrative traditions to understand patterns of behaviour, most particularly, administrative reforms (Greve et al., 2019; Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2019; Orelli et al., 2016).

Administrative traditions vary in several respects including the legal foundation of the public service (Pierre, 2010), the public service’s autonomy from the government (Heper, 1985; Knill, 1999) as well as the educational and professional background of senior officials (Painter & Peters, 2010). Critically, one defining feature of an administrative tradition is where politics and administration find equilibrium. Norms concerning the appropriate relationship between politics and administration differ, as does the acceptability of prioritizing political criteria when appointing senior bureaucrats (Peters, 2008, p. 123; Rouban, 2004). This is how an administrative tradition influences politicization: while a high desire for control may be ubiquitous in the contemporary era of governance, the degree to which prioritizing political criteria when recruiting senior personnel is

acceptable within the larger administrative tradition tempers the extent to which governments politicize public service appointments. Politicization is more likely to be noticed, criticized, and even resisted, in countries whose administrative tradition has historically had little tolerance for politically motivated appointments to the bureaucracy. Specifically, the literature frequently claims that tolerance towards political appointments has historically been lower within the Nordic and Westminster administrative traditions than in the Germanic and Napoleonic.

Politics and administration: Nordic, Westminster, Germanic and Napoleonic traditions

Various case studies examining countries from the Nordic – encompassing Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway – and the Westminster tradition – encompassing the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Canada – claim that a core tenet of their tradition is the absence of political appointments to the public service.

Studying Sweden, Pierre (2004) claims that increased efforts to politicize the bureaucracy are a rupture to the norm of having a strong separation between politics and administration. Pierre (2004) observes, “it is almost a *faux pas* to mention politicization in the heart of a state’s political and administrative spheres” (p. 41). Examining Denmark, Christensen (2004) claims that the embedded norm of non-political appointments to the public service has protected it against politicization: “the very sensitivity of the politicization issue allows for the civil service ... to operate politically to defend merit principles” (pp. 22–23). Claims that have been repeated in the literature, including studies of Norway and Finland (Allern, 2012; Christiansen et al., 2016; Læg Reid et al., 2007).

Scholarship examining Westminster countries also note that historically, there has been a low tolerance for political appointments to the public service. This is found in the notion of the Schafferian public service bargain, in which public servants are hired according to merit and given tenure, and in return, bureaucrats provide governments with impartial and frank advice (Hood & Lodge, 2006). In fact, as governments began to politicize public service appointments, scholars spoke of such acts as “Breaking the Bargain” (Savoie, 2003) and constituting “The End of Whitehall” (Campbell & Wilson, 1995). Studying politicization in the Canadian province of New Brunswick, Cooper (2018b) found that norms of merit recruitment and impartiality led senior bureaucrats to resist initial attempts of politicization because they “viewed [it] as an attack against their professional identity and financial interests, as well as a larger affront to the professional integrity of the career civil service” (p. 32).

One issue of debate is whether the United States should be included alongside Westminster countries to constitute an Anglo-American tradition (Halligan, 2010, 2015). In one respect, according to the Wilsonian tradition of public administration, the United States shares with the Westminster tradition a stark ideational distinction between politics and administration (Kettl, 2002). However, American presidents also appoint approximately 4,000 individuals to the public service on the basis of political criteria (Lewis, 2008), which is far greater than the number available to first ministers from Westminster countries. In short, the inclusion of the United States among Westminster countries remains an open and contested matter.

In contrast to the Nordic and Westminster traditions, the politicization of senior public service appointments has not led scholars studying countries from the Germanic – comprising Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Netherlands – and the Napoleonic – comprising France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece – traditions to decry the breaking of any bargain. This is because the separation between politics and administration has historically been less stark in these traditions, where political appointments to some elite public service positions have long been practised (Peters, 2008, p. 124; Rouban, 2004; Yesilkagit, 2010)

For instance, in the Napoleonic tradition, *cabinets ministériels* are staffed according to the minister's discretion (Dierickx, 2003; Diez, 2004; Rouban, 2015). While there are no ministerial cabinets in the Germanic tradition, a number of senior public service positions are appointed by ministers, which are temporarily retired from the public service following a change in government (Schröter, 2004; Van der Meer, 2004; Veit & Scholz, 2016).

Some scholars further distinguish the countries of Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece within the Napoleonic tradition as constituting a distinct Southern European administrative tradition (Painter & Peters, 2010, p. 22). These countries are seen as having an even higher acceptance of political-based appointments throughout the public service, including middle- and lower-level positions (Sotiropoulos, 2004). Overall, in the Napoleonic and Germanic traditions, politicization of senior appointments has historically been accepted to a greater degree than in the Nordic and Westminster traditions (Dahlström et al., 2011; Peters, 2008).

To date, claims that politicization varies across administrative traditions have generally been supported by comparing the findings of two or more studies. Although focusing on differences across countries rather than differences between administrative traditions, a few recent studies using systematically collected

data measuring public service appointments provide some evidence that politicization may vary across traditions.

Kopecký et al. (2016) use an expert survey to measure the extent to which political parties appoint bureaucrats in 22 countries from West and East Europe, Latin America and Africa. The results show that some of the lowest levels of political appointments are in countries that belong to the Westminster and Nordic tradition. Similarly, using data gathered from a survey of executive public servants from several West European countries, Bach et al. (2020), as well as Van de Walle (2019), find lower levels of politicization in some countries belonging to Nordic tradition and higher levels in countries belonging to the Napoleonic or Germanic tradition. While the results from these studies show differences across some of the countries belonging to different administrative traditions, they do not directly compare levels of politicization across administrative traditions, nor do they examine all of the countries that comprise each tradition. This article advances the literature by doing just this.

Data and methods

Data

This article investigates levels of politicization between and within the Nordic, Westminster, Germanic and Napoleonic administrative traditions using the Second Wave of the Quality of Government Expert Survey (Dahlström et al., 2015). Conducted by the Quality of Government Institute, this survey measures the quality of public bureaucracies in over 120 countries and includes variables measuring the merit, political and personal recruitment of senior public servants.

The Second Wave of the Quality of Government Expert Survey was conducted in 2014 and 2015. Potential respondents were identified from the United Nations Public Administration Network, peer-reviewed journals, university websites as well as the professional networks of scholars in the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg. A total of 7,096 potential respondents were sent an electronic questionnaire asking them to self-identify their country of expertise and 1,294 respondents completed the survey, for a response rate of 18% (Dahlström et al., 2015). By systematically measuring the recruitment of senior public servants across a large number of countries, the Quality of Government Expert Survey offers a good means to investigate differences across and within administrative traditions. Despite this advantage, as a perception-based survey, one potential limitation is

that the data may suffer from respondent bias. Post-survey tests, however, found little evidence of systematic bias stemming from respondents' country of residence, education, age or gender (Dahlström et al., 2015, p. 13).

Admittedly, an administrative tradition is what Gallie (1955) calls a "contested concept" and debate exists over what countries are classified within each tradition. This work follows the consensus within the literature when classifying countries into the Nordic, Westminster, Germanic and Napoleonic traditions, but it also takes a look at two of the most common alternative traditions: the Anglo-American and Southern European traditions. Table 1 outlines the countries and the number of surveyed experts in each tradition.

Methods

The recruitment criteria prioritized when appointing senior public servants are measured with three separate questions. Respondents were asked to answer each question on a seven-point scale, where 1 is "hardly ever" and 7 is "almost always." Merit recruitment is measured using the question, "When recruiting public sector employees, the skills and merits of the applicants decide who gets the job." Political recruitment is measured using the question, "When recruiting public sector employees, the political connections of the applicants decide who gets the job." In addition to these questions, the analysis also examines a third question, "When recruiting public sector employees, the personal connections of the applicants (for example, kinship or friendship) decide who gets the job." Although this question does not directly measure political influence, hiring individuals on the basis of who they know goes against the impersonal application of merit recruitment. Hiring individuals because of their connections to persons of influence, nonetheless, reduces the extent to which a public service is exclusively merit-based. Because administrative traditions are believed to vary in the extent to which merit-based recruitment is a defining characteristic, administrative traditions may also display variation in this nonpolitical but nepotistic recruitment.

Overall, the data analyzed in this study comprises 372 observations. In the aggregate of all observations, the means and standard deviations of the three recruitment criteria are: merit recruitment (mean, 5.61; standard deviation, 1.32); political connections (mean, 2.89; standard deviation, 1.32); and personal connections (mean, 2.78; standard deviation, 1.57).

The empirical analysis is conducted in two steps. The first step uses descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to investigate whether there are differences in the recruitment criteria of senior public servants across, as well as within, administrative traditions. Because the dependent variables are interval, a one-way analysis of variance is used. As a robustness test, additional analysis used a nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance. This alternative analysis produced results suggesting similar conclusions to those reported in the text. The second step of the empirical analysis uses OLS regression to investigate the direction and effect size of the relationship between administrative tradition and the criteria prioritized when appointing senior officials. In three separate models, merit recruitment, political recruitment, and personal recruitment are respectively regressed against administrative tradition.

Results and discussion

Figures 1–3 display the mean value of merit recruitment, political recruitment and personal recruitment, respectively, within each administrative tradition along with 95 percent confidence intervals. The results show meaningful differences across administrative traditions. As the literature suggests, the Nordic and Westminster traditions exhibit higher levels of merit-recruitment and lower levels of recruitment based on political connections than that found in the Germanic and Napoleonic traditions. The Napoleonic tradition, however, is particularly notable with even lower levels of merit recruitment, and higher levels of political connections, than in the Germanic tradition.

Figures 1–3 also show a similar relationship between recruitment based on political connections and recruitment based on personal connections. In the Nordic and

Table 1. Administrative traditions.

	Nordic	Westminster	Germanic	Napoleonic	Anglo-American	Southern European
	Sweden (13)	UK (35)	Germany (35)	France (11)	UK (35)	Spain (23)
	Norway (16)	Ireland (11)	Austria (7)	Belgium (7)	Ireland (11)	Portugal (17)
	Finland (6)	Australia (24)	Netherlands (26)	Spain (23)	Australia (24)	Italy (21)
	Denmark (22)	New Zealand (14)	Switzerland (5)	Portugal (17)	New Zealand (14)	Greece (15)
		Canada (18)		Italy (21)	Canada (18)	
				Greece (15)	United States (61)	
N	57	102	73	94	163	76

Number of experts surveyed per country in parentheses.

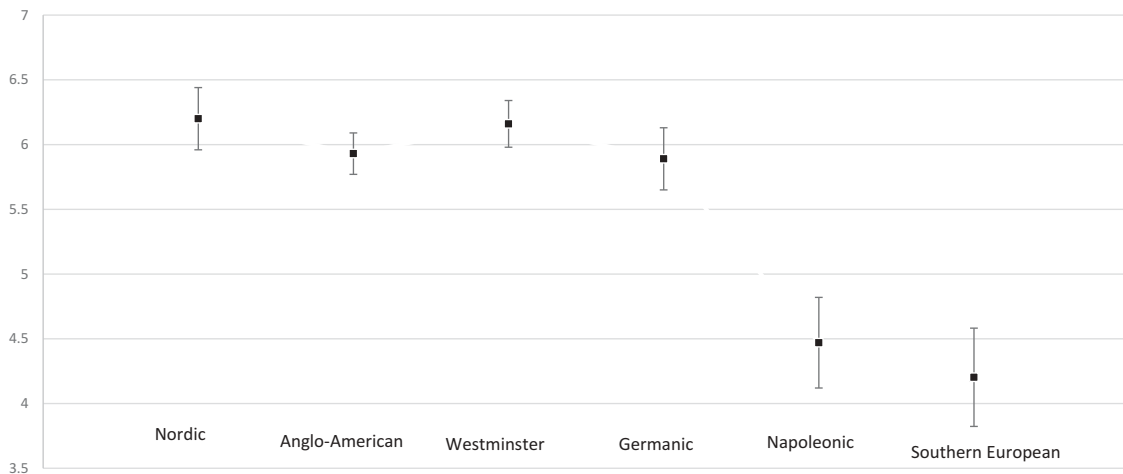


Figure 1. Public servants hired according to merit across administrative traditions.

Mean with 95 percent confidence intervals

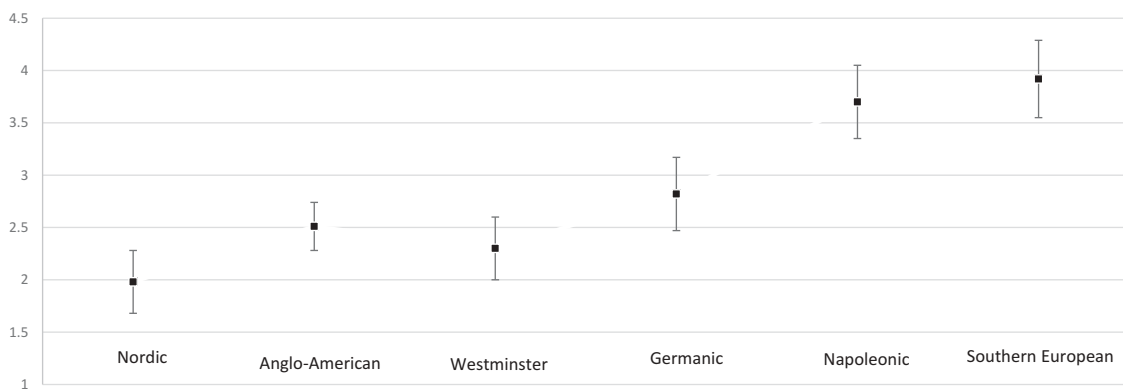


Figure 2. Public servants hired according to political connections across administrative traditions.

Mean with 95 percent confidence intervals

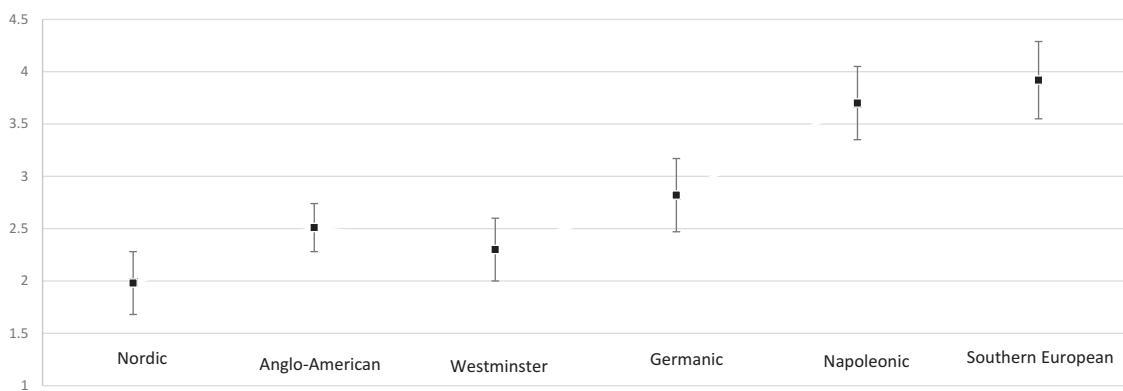


Figure 3. Public servants hired according to personal connections across administrative traditions.

Mean with 95 percent confidence intervals

Westminster traditions, where merit recruitment is high, appointments based on political and personal connections are low. Conversely, in the Germanic and Napoleonic traditions, where merit recruitment is lower, both political and personal connections are

higher. The results from a one-way ANOVA in Table 2 show that the differences in the merit, political and personal recruitment of senior public servants across these traditions are statistically significant (probability value less than .0001).

Table 2. Hiring criteria across administrative traditions, one-way ANOVA.

		Nordic	Westminster	Germanic	Napoleonic
Merit recruitment	1 – Hardly ever	0	0	0	2.22
	2	0	1.02	0	13.33
	3	1.82	0	4.17	16.67
	4	0	4.08	4.17	12.22
	5	9.09	12.24	18.06	24.44
	6	54.55	41.84	45.83	21.11
	7 – Almost always	34.55	40.82	27.78	10.00
	Mean	6.2	6.16	5.89	4.47
		$F(3,311) = 42.17, p = .0001$			
Political connection	1 – Hardly ever	38.18	34.69	19.44	9.78
	2	41.82	34.69	30.56	16.30
	3	10.91	13.27	22.22	21.74
	4	3.64	8.16	11.11	19.57
	5	3.64	4.08	11.11	16.30
	6	1.82	3.06	4.17	11.96
	7 – Almost always	0	2.04	1.39	4.35
	Mean	1.98	2.30	2.82	3.70
		$F(3,313) = 20.76, p = .0001$			
Personal connection	1 – Hardly ever	20.37	29.29	23.94	12.09
	2	46.30	35.35	30.99	15.38
	3	14.81	14.14	19.72	25.27
	4	11.11	8.08	7.04	16.48
	5	5.56	5.05	11.27	10.99
	6	1.85	5.05	7.04	14.29
	7 – Almost always	0	3.03	0	5.49
	Mean	2.41	2.51	2.71	3.64
		$F(3,311) = 10.74, p = .0001$			

Reporting percentage of respondents.

Finally, the results from Figures 1–3 also show, as some researchers suggest (Halligan, 2010; Painter & Peters, 2010; Sotiropoulos, 2004), that merit recruitment is slightly lower, and political and personal connections slightly higher, in the Anglo-American and Southern European traditions than in their counterparts, the Westminster and Napoleonic traditions, respectively.

Importantly, an administrative tradition is not theorized to be the sole factor influencing levels of politicization, but an important institution influencing the degree to which governments engage in such behaviour. Accordingly, there may be differences in politicization between the countries that makeup each tradition. Figures 4–6 examine whether there are differences in the recruitment criteria of senior

public servants across the countries of each tradition with descriptive statistics displaying the mean value along with the 95 percent confidence intervals. The results show intra-tradition variation in levels of merit-, political- and personal-based recruitment.

Tables 3–6 display the results from one-way ANOVA tests that examine whether differences between each tradition's member countries are statistically significant. The results show that in some traditions differences in merit recruitment, political- and personal connections across countries are statistically significant, meanwhile in other traditions, they are not. The countries belonging to the Nordic tradition display the least variation in hiring criteria: only differences in political connections is statistically

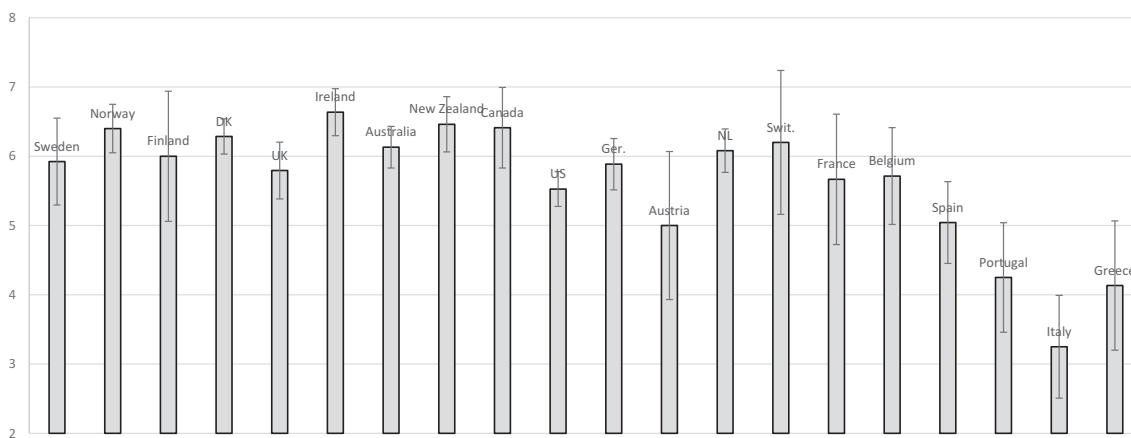


Figure 4. Public servants hired according to merit across countries. Mean, with 95 percent confidence intervals

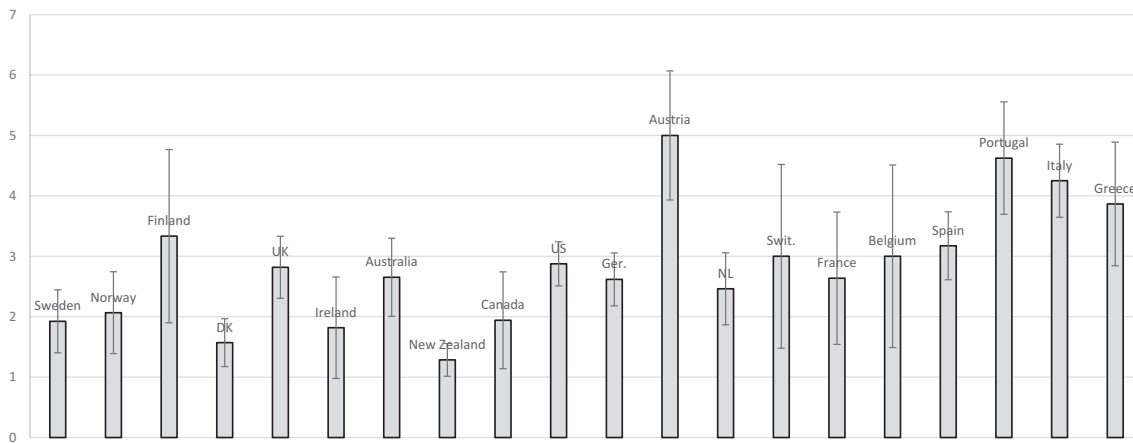


Figure 5. Public servants hired according to political connections across countries.
Mean with 95 percent confidence intervals

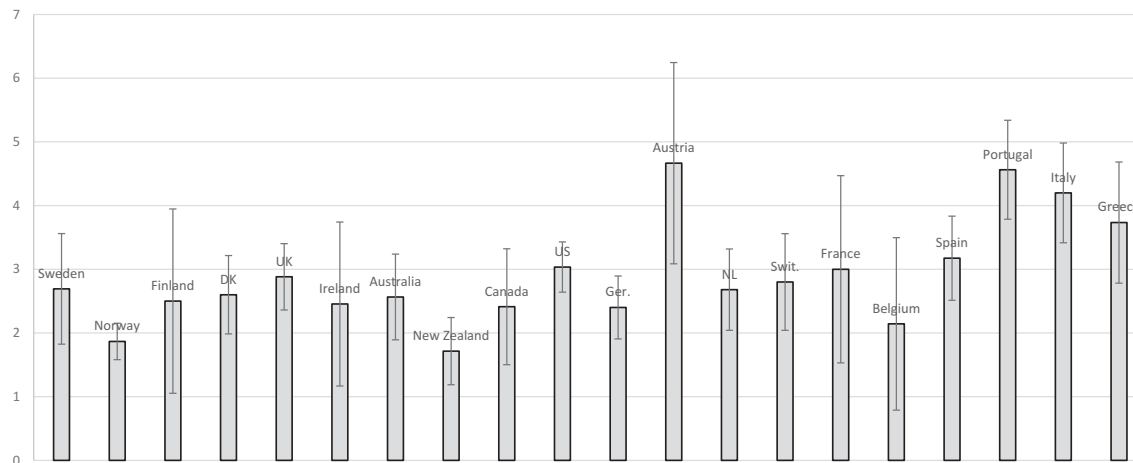


Figure 6. Public servants hired according to personal connections across countries.
Mean with 95 percent confidence intervals

significant. Meanwhile, differences among the countries in the Napoleonic tradition are found in all three recruitment criteria.

The relationship between administrative tradition and the recruitment criteria of senior public servants is finally examined with OLS regression. Models 1, 2 and 3 regress merit-, political-, and personal-based recruitment, respectively, against the Nordic (reference category), Westminster, Germanic and Napoleonic traditions. Models 4, 5 and 6 regress merit-, political-, and personal-based recruitment, respectively, against the Nordic (reference category), Anglo-American, Germanic and Southern European traditions. The results are shown in Table 7.

Models 1, 2 and 3 show that there is no statistically significant difference in the levels of recruitment criteria between the Nordic and the Westminster tradition. Meanwhile the Germanic and Napoleonic tradition both

have statistically significant lower levels of merit recruitment and higher levels of political recruitment than the Nordic tradition. Equally notable is that although administrative tradition is the only predictor in the models, the R-squared is relatively high (especially for the model examining merit recruitment), thus indicating that a sizeable amount of variation in the recruitment criteria prioritized, is explained by administrative traditions.

Models 4, 5 and 6, substitute the Anglo-American and Southern European traditions in place of the Westminster and Napoleonic traditions. The results, when compared to Models 1, 2 and 3 add further insight into the differences that these two alternative traditions have with their counterparts. Specifically, whereas there is no significantly significant difference in recruitment criteria between the Nordic and Westminster administrative traditions, there is a significantly significant difference between the Nordic

Table 3. Hiring criteria across Nordic tradition, one-way ANOVA.

		Sweden	Norway	Finland	Denmark
Merit recruitment	1 – Hardly ever	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0
	3	7.69	0	0	0
	4	0	0	0	0
	5	7.69	6.67	33.33	4.76
	6	61.54	46.67	33.33	61.90
	7 – Almost always	23.08	46.67	33.33	33.33
	Mean	5.92	6.4	6.0	6.29
		$F(3,51) = 1.18, p = .328$			
Political connection	1 – Hardly ever	30.77	26.67	0	61.90
	2	53.85	60.00	33.33	23.81
	3	7.69	6.67	33.33	9.52
	4	7.69	0	0	4.76
	5	0	0	33.33	0
	6	0	6.67	0	0
	7 – Almost always	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1.92	2.07	3.33	1.57
		$F(3,51) = 4.58, p = .007$			
Personal connection	1 – Hardly ever	23.08	20.00	33.33	15.00
	2	30.77	73.33	16.67	45.00
	3	15.38	6.67	16.67	20.00
	4	15.38	0	33.33	10.00
	5	15.38	0	0	5.00
	6	0	0	0	5.00
	7 – Almost always	0	0	0	0
	Mean	2.69	1.87	2.5	2.6
		$F(3,50) = 1.47, p = .235$			

Reporting percentage of respondents.

Table 4. Hiring criteria across Westminster tradition, one-way ANOVA.

		UK	Ireland	Australia	New Zealand	Canada
Merit recruitment	1 – Hardly ever	0	0	0	0	0
	2	2.94	0	0	0	0
	3	0	0	0	0	0
	4	0	0	0	0	0
	5	17.59	0	17.39	7.69	11.76
	6	52.17	36.36	52.17	38.46	35.29
	7 – Almost always	30.43	63.64	30.43	53.85	52.94
	Mean	5.79	6.63	6.13	6.46	6.41
		$F(4,93) = 3.01, p = .022$				
Political connection	1 – Hardly ever	15.15	54.55	17.39	71.43	52.94
	2	36.36	27.27	43.48	28.57	29.41
	3	21.21	9.09	17.39	0	5.88
	4	15.15	0	8.7	0	5.88
	5	3.03	9.09	8.7	0	0
	6	9.09	0	0	0	0
	7 – Almost always	0	0	4.35	0	5.88
	Mean	2.81	1.82	2.65	1.29	1.94
		$F(4,93) = 4.13, p = .004$				
Personal connection	1 – Hardly ever	17.65	36.36	26.09	50.00	35.29
	2	29.41	36.36	43.48	35.71	35.29
	3	23.53	9.09	8.70	7.14	11.76
	4	14.71	0	4.35	7.14	5.88
	5	5.88	9.09	8.70	0	0
	6	8.82	0	4.35	0	5.88
	7 – Almost always	0	9.09	4.35	0	5.88
	Mean	2.88	2.45	2.57	1.71	2.41
		$F(4,94) = 1.39, p = .245$				

Reporting percentage of respondents.

tradition and the Anglo-American tradition, specifically a lower level of merit recruitment and a higher level of political recruitment. Meanwhile, although the Southern European tradition has the same statistical significance with recruitment criteria as the Napoleonic tradition, the size of the coefficients are slightly larger, thus suggesting that this tradition has an association with an even lower

level of merit recruitment and even higher levels of political- or personal-based recruitment.

Conclusion

A growing body of research suggests that since the 1980s, governments have sought to increase their control over

Table 5. Hiring criteria across Germanic tradition, one-way ANOVA.

		Germany	Austria	Netherlands	Switzerland
Merit recruitment	1 – Hardly ever	0	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0	0
	3	14.29	5.71	0	0
	4	14.29	2.86	4.00	0
	5	28.57	20.00	12.00	20.00
	6	42.86	40.00	56.00	40.00
	7 – Almost always	0	31.43	28.00	40.00
	Mean	5.89	5.00	6.08	6.2
$F(3,68) = 2.45, p = .071$					
Political connection	1 – Hardly ever	17.65	0	26.92	20.00
	2	38.24	0	34.62	0
	3	20.59	14.29	23.08	40.00
	4	11.76	14.29	3.85	40.00
	5	11.76	28.57	7.69	0
	6	0	42.86	0	0
	7 – Almost always	0	0	3.85	0
	Mean	2.62	5.00	2.46	3.00
$F(3,68) = 7.18, p = .000$					
Personal connection	1 – Hardly ever	31.43	0	24.00	0
	2	31.43	16.67	36.00	20.00
	3	20.00	0	12.00	80.00
	4	5.71	16.67	8.00	0
	5	5.71	33.33	16.00	0
	6	33.33	33.33	4.00	0
	7 – Almost always	0	0	0	0
	Mean	2.4	4.68	2.68	2.8
$F(3,67) = 4.21, p = .009$					

Table 6. Hiring criteria across Napoleonic tradition, one-way ANOVA.

		France	Belgium	Spain	Portugal	Italy	Greece
Merit recruitment	1 – Hardly ever	0	0	0	6.25	5.00	0
	2	0	0	4.35	6.25	30.00	26.67
	3	11.11	0	13.04	12.50	35.00	13.33
	4	0	0	13.04	25.00	15.00	6.67
	5	22.22	42.86	21.74	37.50	5.00	33.33
	6	44.44	42.86	39.13	6.25	0	13.33
	7 – Almost always	22.22	14.29	8.70	6.25	10.00	6.67
	Mean	5.67	5.71	5.04	4.25	3.25	4.13
$F(5,84) = 6.03, p = .0001$							
Political connection	1 – Hardly ever	27.27	14.29	8.70	6.25	5.00	6.67
	2	27.27	42.86	21.74	6.25	0	20.00
	3	27.27	0	34.78	12.50	15.00	26.67
	4	0	14.29	17.39	18.75	45.00	6.67
	5	9.09	28.57	13.04	18.75	20.00	13.33
	6	9.09	0	4.35	25.00	10.00	20.00
	7 – Almost always	0	0	0	12.5	5.00	6.67
	Mean	2.64	3.00	3.17	4.63	4.25	3.87
$F(5,86) = 3.56, p = .006$							
Personal connection	1 – Hardly ever	30.00	42.86	13.04	0	5.00	6.67
	2	20.00	28.57	21.74	0	10.00	20.00
	3	20.00	14.29	30.43	31.25	25.00	20.00
	4	0	0	17.39	25.00	15.00	26.67
	5	20.00	14.29	4.35	12.50	15.00	6.67
	6	0	0	13.04	18.75	25.00	13.33
	7 – Almost always	10.00	0	0	12.50	5.00	6.67
	Mean	3.00	2.14	3.17	4.56	4.20	3.73
$F(5,85) = 3.34, p = .008$							

Reporting percentage of respondents.

the bureaucracy, and that a common tactic to do so has been to prioritize political considerations when appointing elite public servants (Aucoin, 2012). However, it is also frequently claimed that levels of politicization are strongly influenced by a country's underlying administrative tradition (Dahlström et al., 2011; Gherghina & Kopecký, 2016; Neuhold et al., 2013; Peters & Pierre, 2004). To date, however, little research has used

systematic measures to investigate empirically differences across and within traditions.

Using expert survey data that systematically measures the criteria prioritized when recruiting senior public servants in 20 countries, this article investigated differences across and within the Nordic, Westminster, Germanic and Napoleonic traditions, as well as the alternative Anglo-American and Southern European traditions. Analyses

Table 7. OLS regression, traditions and appointment criteria.

Model	1		2		3		4		5		6	
	Merit recruitment	Political connection	Political connection	Personal connection	Personal connection	Merit recruitment	Political connection	Political connection	Personal connection	Personal connection	Personal connection	
Nordic (<i>reference</i>)												
Westminster	-.037 (.137)	.314 (.211)		.108 (.229)								
Germanic	-.311* (.156)	.838*** (.233)		.311 (.245)		-.311* (.155)		.838*** (.232)				.311 (.245)
Napoleonic	-1.73*** (.201)	1.71*** (.230)		1.23*** (.245)								
Anglo-American						-.271* (.128)		.525*** (.191)				.298 (.206)
Southern European						-2.00*** (.216)		1.982*** (.15211)				1.457*** (.252)
Constant	6.2*** (.102)	1.98*** (.152)		2.41*** (.164)		6.2*** (.101)		1.98*** (.158)				2.41*** (.163)
R ²	.29	.17		.09		.30		.16				.10
N	315	317		315		356		355				355

***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05 Robust standard error in parentheses.

using descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, and OLS regression, showed important differences in levels of merit-, political- and personal-based recruitment across these administrative traditions. Merit recruitment is higher – and recruitment based on political and personal connections are lower – in the Nordic and Westminster traditions than in the Germanic and Napoleonic traditions. However, while there are important differences in the merit and non-merit criteria prioritized across administrative traditions, the results also found differences between the countries that comprise each tradition in at least some of the hiring criteria. This intra-tradition variation, however, is not the same among each tradition. In particular, there is less variation among the countries belonging to the Nordic tradition than in the other traditions. This intra-tradition variation suggests that while administrative traditions are indeed an important factor in understanding different levels of politicization across countries, scholars should be wary of overemphasizing their influence. Institutions influence actors' behaviour, they do not determine it. Future research could improve our understanding of the influence of administrative traditions on governments' behaviour by investigating empirically cases when administrative traditions have deterred governments from politicizing senior public service appointments.

The results also shows that in each tradition the level of recruitment based on political connections is similar to the level of recruitment based on personal connections. One possible reason for this may be that the embeddedness of merit recruitment within an administrative tradition not only keeps political based hiring at bay, but that it may also reduce (ostensibly non-political) nepotistic practices.

The results also speak to the usefulness of setting apart the alternative Anglo-American and Southern European traditions when analyzing politicization. Regression analysis showed that the Anglo-American

tradition had a relationship with politicization that was different than the Westminster tradition, whereas the Southern European tradition had the same, but slightly stronger relationship with political recruitment as the Napoleonic tradition. This suggests that including the United States alongside the Westminster countries is problematic when analyzing the politicization of senior bureaucrats, but that excluding France and Belgium to speak of a Southern European tradition is not.

Overall, this study adds to a growing body of comparative public administration research using systematically collected data to identify and understand differences across countries, including levels of politicization (Bach et al., 2020; Kopecký et al., 2016). While these studies have found variation across countries belonging to different administrative traditions, they have not systematically examined differences between and within them. By investigating these differences, this study adds empirical weight to claims that administrative traditions are an important factor in understanding trajectories of public administration. As rational choice approaches focusing on the strategic behaviour of governments become increasingly common among research seeking to explain politicization, it is important to be mindful that politicians and public servants are embedded in an institutional social context, which, while not determinate, does influence their strategic behaviour.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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