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21

Politicization of the Civil Service

Luc Rouban

The politicization of the civil service has been the subject of considerable debate in Western democracies for at least the past two centuries. The matter is of particular importance in the eyes of both civil servants and theorists of the state. For civil servants at the start of the twenty-first century, politicization represents a threat to their professional status and the strategic balance that has gradually been achieved between public administration and politics. For theorists, politicization implies taking into consideration all dimensions of bureaucratic activity. In fact, public administration is, in the broad sense, a political institution. As Charles Levine et al. point out: 'Since administrative activity invariably affects who gets what from government and cannot be value-free, all of public administration is in a sense political. But different observers see politics from different viewpoints' (Levine et al., 1990: 103).

The scope and complexity of the subject explain why there is no general theory or a major 'paradigm' of politicization but instead a series of limited theories that try to handle some of the variables and analyze the case of a few different countries. In political science, relations between bureaucrats and elected

officials have mainly been studied in a very broad manner by theories of political development that attempt to explain the historical dynamics which led to the building of modern nation-states or democratic regimes (i.e., Shils, 1960). But these very ambitious and often disputable theories have devoted no attention to administrative sociology. On the other hand, the public policy analysis literature has brought to light the underlying political arrangements of government programs in the welfare state. Unfortunately, the frontiers between academic disciplines have caused public policy analysis to leave research on public administration by the wayside or devote only minor attention to it. The politicization of the civil service is an interdisciplinary matter that remains at the exploratory stage at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Some epistemological precautions must therefore be taken.

Today, it is impossible to study the politicization of the civil service without taking into account the social evolution, political culture and the history of the various countries reviewed. Although major constitutional and political differences exist between the United States and Latin America countries or between European Union and Eastern

European countries, there are also major national differences that may differentiate countries in the same cultural area or sharing similar political regimes. For instance, the very nature of the relationship between the executive branch and senior civil servants is not the same in Australia, Canada and Great Britain, even if these three countries are part of the 'Westminster system' (Campbell and Halligan, 1992). Moreover, the politicization of the civil service is not only a complex phenomenon but also a changeable one that can evolve over time within a single country. For instance, politicization has suddenly accentuated at a rapid pace in France since 1981, whereas it had remained at a fairly low level from 1958 (Rouban, 2001). Any research on the politicization process should include a good assessment of the whole political environment.

Other questions may be pointed out: Is the politicization process based on the government will? Is there any kind of a 'politicization policy'? Politicization can be the result of voluntary action, as was long the case in totalitarian political regimes, or a systemic effect, as is generally the case in Western democracies. Sweeping reforms have been enacted in the nineteenth century to control the politicization of civil servants in the United States (Civil Service Reform Act of 1883) as well as in Britain (Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854). It was indeed a matter of containing a phenomenon that no one could or wanted to eradicate totally. The politicization of the civil service could be desirable in the context of the democratization of Western political systems, allowing governments to overcome bureaucratic resistance. So the questions are: What are the boundaries within which the politicization process is politically affordable and profitable? And for whom?

Another problem lies in the lack of a precise definition, not of politicization this time, but of the civil service. First, Western countries do not all use the same defining criteria: in France, teachers are civil servants, whereas they are not in Britain. Second, the legal

status of civil servants may vary considerably. As a result, politicization will be on a very unequal scale, and especially, may have a very different meaning from one country to another. In a country with a weak administrative tradition, such as Greece, not until the 1990s was any policy decision made to control the excesses of politicization (Spanou, 1996). Lastly, politicization can spread beyond the civil service strictly speaking into the entire public sector, affecting state-owned companies, agencies with an ill-defined legal status or even corporations or institutions working under government contract. The fact that frontiers between public and private sectors have been somewhat blurred as a consequence of the New Public Management theories and practices since the 1990s allows a number of political jobs to be created that escape the usual legal or political checks.

The subject of politicization therefore raises important questions that touch as much on the nature of administrative models as on the real extent of democracy. The overlapping of these two registers gives rise to many clichés and much confusion. All public administration specialists (see, in particular, Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman, 1981; Peters, 1988; Pierre, 1995) agree on the point that the politicization of the civil service can refer to at least three distinct phenomena: politicization as civil servant participation in political decision making; politicization as control over nominations and careers; and politicization as civil servants' political involvement. These three phenomena can occur in combination.

Below, the three dimensions of politicization will therefore be studied, as well as the theoretical and practical questions they raise.

POLITICIZATION IN A
POLITICAL CONTEXT. THAT SHOULD IT
BE ACKNOWLEDGE.

POLITICIZATION AS PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL DECISION MAKING

In a first interpretation, politicization is the result of the prevailing balance between the

political control that governments exercise over the administrative machinery and civil servants' involvement in the definition and implementation of public policy. The politicization of the civil service is in this case synonymous with participation in political authority. In this sense, all civil servants are 'political' because they are called upon to carry out political decisions, adapt them and explain them: in other words, to accomplish work of a political nature that obviously is not limited to the mere application of legal or economic rules. The fact that civil servants are thinking beings precludes considering them as machines having no freedom of judgment. However, there are a whole range of situations, varying from intelligent interpretation of political decisions depending on the actual circumstances of implementation to technocracy: in other words, a sociopolitical system in which decisions made by bureaucrats replace decisions that should normally be made by elected officials. The problem here lies in the fact that this sort of politicization is more a matter of degree than of qualitative threshold. Most public administration specialists, unlike politicians, consider that it is very difficult to distinguish between making rules and enforcing them, all the more so since Western democracies have produced complex public policies of which the normative effect has more to do with measures of implementation than with the decisions originally made by legislators or the executive branch. Thus, it is possible to slip imperceptibly into technocracy by allowing civil servants more latitude in managing major public policies.

To a certain extent, all industrialized democracies are more or less technocracies, in that the political class is no longer the sole actor in the decision-making process, and the decision is often difficult to identify and localize (Allison, 1971). Specific national situations can be identified. In certain countries, such as Britain, Conservative governments have criticized the fact that senior civil servants were not enough involved in defining public policy and hid behind total

political neutrality (Hood, 1998). In France, on the other hand, a majority of politicians both on the Left and the Right have always been wary of technocracy and what they feel to be the excessive power of graduates of the Ecole Nationale d'Administration and the Ecole Polytechnique. In Japan, the senior civil service controlled the entire political process up until the 1980s, orienting economic policy through a tight network of influences in the Diet as well as in industry. In the Japanese case, some scholars have mentioned a true 'iron triangle' interlocking the bureaucracy, the Liberal Democratic Party and the major state enterprises (Johnson, 1982). In the 1990s, state reform thus aimed mainly at reducing the influence of the bureaucracy (Nakamura, 1998). In the aforementioned cases, the 'politicization' of the civil service has only involved the senior civil service, whose role in public policy making also depends on its social status and its history.

The question is a different one in developing countries, because the civil service is almost always the only expertise and advisory resource for governments. In this case, the 'politicization' of the civil service must be interpreted differently, because civil servants are often the only organized social force on which governments can rely. The situation is sometimes also reversed in favor of the public service, especially the military, which may act as the only organized political force in the country. Relations between the government and the civil service in developing countries can be organized according to a variety of models, depending on the relative strength of the political leadership and the social role assumed by the bureaucracy (Cariño, 1991). One model is that of a political domination provided by the party in power, either in democratic conditions (for instance, Corazon Aquino's government at the end of the 1980s in the Philippines), or in the context of an authoritarian regime that can literally organize purges in the civil service or submit it to an extremely restrictive political discipline (this was in particular the

case of Korea between 1961 and 1963). In a contrasting model, bureaucracy shares power with the political leaders on the basis of an implicit 'arrangement'. The bureaucracy can then support democratic reforms as long as they allow it to increase its powers (this was Mexico's case in the 1970s). In some cases, civilian bureaucracy shares power with a military-style authoritarian regime (this was the case of the 'guided democracy' in Indonesia under Sukarno's administration between 1959 and 1965).

The respective role of civil servants and elected officials in defining public policy also depends on contextual variables. One essential variable is a minister's capacity to exercise real political leadership over his civil servants and advisors (Savoie, 1999). Some French ministers have complained of being dispossessed of their power by the senior civil servants in their entourage. Conversely, in Britain, senior civil servants have denounced the overly directive role of Margaret Thatcher's government, accusing it of wanting to politicize the senior civil service, or at least make it espouse the Conservative ideology (Hennessy, 1990). There is no doubt that a politician must often assert himself to earn respect from professionals who have expertise and time on their side. Politicization becomes the result of a potentially perilous power struggle that depends as much on the networks on which senior civil servants can rely as on the political or personal legitimacy of politicians. The question of politicization became all the more sensitive in the 1990s, since it raised a fundamental question about the respective roles that should fall to elected officials and civil servants at a time when public administrations seemed to be losing control of the situation in the face of an increasingly fragmented civil society, infatuated with new technologies and prompted to demand ever greater quality from the public service for lower taxes (Rouban, 1999).

Most public administration specialists have thus concluded that politicization cannot be treated in a broad manner but only on a

case-by-case basis. Another series of variables in fact has to do with the fragmentation of today's administrative apparatuses. The most autonomous administrations are usually administrations that have a technical or scientific competence, whereas the most vulnerable are those with a fairly low level of expertise. Reinforcing administrative specialization or transforming civil servants into managers can contribute to weakening the political control exercised over these administrations. Some ministerial bureaucracies can also impose their viewpoint on ministers when powerful and well-organized lobbies in their economic sector back them: this is especially the case of the Agricultural Ministry in France. Here, cases of actual fusion of political, economic and administrative powers have been observed, since the minister himself has sometimes been chosen among farmers' union leaders! The same type of situation has been noted in Japan. Politicization in this case leads to a blending of powers. Not only is there no longer a difference between political decisions and administrative decisions but also it is impossible to distinguish between public and private interests. But it is precisely this 'big difference' that has served as the historical basis for liberal democracies. Paradoxically, then, privatization can foster politicization, as exemplified by the New Public Management reform which favored ad hoc appointments on the basis of private contracts in the process of transforming classical bureaucrats into managers eager to reduce costs. By privatizing state services ensuring economic development, and even, sometimes, sovereign functions such as customs or border control, some African states have been able to recover the political control of their economy (Zartman, 1995). We can also interpret Margaret Thatcher's attempt to submit the British administration to private management and subject it to the rules of competition as a means of recovering the political control of an administration regarded as too independent (Bouckaert and Pollitt, 2004).

The strategies deployed in European countries by politicians and civil servants alike to

control the process of politicization have been partly transformed by the creation of the European Union. European integration, in fact, has had two main consequences: the first was to weaken the national political classes, which were forced to comply with decisions made in Brussels, particularly in the area of public sector privatization. The second consequence is the reinforcement of administrations, which have become the primary interlocutors for private interest groups in highly technical matters. National civil servants henceforth adapt directives passed by the European Commission to the state or local level in the framework of a multilateral negotiation that politicians cannot fully control.

POLITICIZATION AS PARTISAN CONTROL OVER THE BUREAUCRACY

The second, much more precise and more widespread, meaning of politicization of the public sector refers to government and non-government activities that subject the appointment and career of civil servants to political will. In this case, politicization means that not only a civil servant's activity but also his career depend more on political than professional norms defined by the administrations and ruled by law.

There is considerable confusion surrounding this point. The first misunderstanding has to do with the fact that politicization can be perfectly legal and legitimate, because democratic rule implies that the voters' choices should actually be implemented and not buried under the workings of bureaucracy. This is the whole logic of the spoils system that developed in the United States in the nineteenth century. It is also logical for certain positions to depend on a political choice that takes into consideration the ideas backed by the civil servants, because these positions have a particular strategic importance in the eyes of the government. Generally, these positions are limited in duration and involve

very few senior civil servants who serve as go-betweens for the political realm and the bureaucracy. All Western countries have created 'political positions' to give the executive branch some means of control over public policy.

Another source of confusion comes from the fact that the politicization of appointments does not necessarily imply a lack of professional competence. Politicization generally seems linked to the idea of an amateurish administration. This matter has always been at the heart of the debate in the United States. But in some countries, such as Germany and France, top-level positions are occupied by senior civil servants who are both highly qualified professionals drawing on an old tradition of professional autonomy and highly politicized, as they have been previously involved in political activities as advisors or party supporters. Actually, politicization connotes incompetence mainly when it affects not only appointments but also careers. Politicization can then become a means of showing favor to some political allies to the detriment of others, whatever their level of performance or their merits, or of allowing trade unions to define personnel policies. On a historical level, there is no question that the fight against favoritism was one of the major labor demands of British and French bureaucrats in the nineteenth century. Today, for many developing countries, the only way to fight politicization therefore that is connected with corruption practices, which can harm the country's economy, is to organize a truly professional civil service.

The division between administration and politics is a central organizing principle in all Western political systems. This distinction is of course based on the principles Max Weber put forth in his classical analysis of bureaucratic legitimacy in modern societies (Weber, 1947). The creation of professional bureaucracies in the first half of the twentieth century stems from the simultaneous application of two principles: subordination to a hierarchy and separation of administrative careers from

partisan influences. It is perfectly obvious, as many observers have already pointed out, that the separation principle has never been entirely enforced. In fact, an evolution in the interpretations of this principle can be noted: in the early twentieth century it implied that the political authority made decisions and bureaucrats merely carried them out. With the increasing complexity of the welfare system and public interventionism, it has become nearly impossible to distinguish the decision from its implementation and no longer are there any administrative 'details' that cannot be transformed into a real political issue. The separation between the political and the administrative world has created complex possibilities for strategic interplay between the two groups of actors, depending on the circumstances.

The separation principle is therefore probably a myth, but a founding myth allowing all Western political systems to modernize, since it is useful from a functional standpoint. On one hand, it allows civil servants to intervene in policy making in the name of their professional autonomy when political elites are deficient; on the other hand, it allows politicians to remove some decisions from citizens' control by entrusting them to public administrations, contending that they are too technical in nature to be debated publicly. The separation principle thus organizes the relative autonomy of the political and administrative worlds, an autonomy that paradoxically indirectly challenges the principle of accountability on which democratic regimes are based.

On the strictly administrative level, the separation principle should above all be understood as a professional norm on which the merit system can be organized. It is in this perspective that the major theorists of public administration, such as Woodrow Wilson and Frank Goodnow, have championed it. In the late nineteenth century, the professionalization of public administration was associated with the development of scientific management. In his famous 1887 essay, Woodrow Wilson declared: '... the field

of administration is a field of business. It is removed from the hurry and strife of politics' (Wilson, 1941: 493).

Therefore, another problem lies in the fact that this professionalization of civil servants has been conceived in very different ways in Western countries. Although professionalization was early on seen in the United States as a means of developing managerial standards, in France and Germany it was principally associated with the development of a vast body of administrative law. In Britain, professionalization implies the independence of civil servants from Parliament but as agents of the Crown, their steadfast obedience to the decisions of the executive branch.

Although all European systems are based on the merit system and equal access to the civil service, recruitment systems are rooted in very different philosophies. For example, even if all Europeans countries organize the recruitment of professional civil servants on the basis of an objective procedure in order to guarantee equality among candidates, the criteria for selection vary considerably: in Germany, the good professional is above all a high-level legal specialist (Derlien, 1990); in Britain, the main quality is found in a generalist who has a feeling for team work; whereas France prefers to measure the general level of education and intellectual brio. The very notion of civil servant does not, therefore, refer to the same type of culture or even the same type of professional practice. Consequently, it is logical that politicization is conceived and especially experienced in a very different manner from one country to another.

In most Western countries, specific rules have been set up to distinguish civil servants who are political appointees from civil servants whose career is entirely subjected to professional norms. In the United States, the corruption fostered by the spoils system, particularly under Richard Nixon's administration, led to reorganizing the senior civil service with the Civil Service Act of 1978, which created the senior executive service (SES). The SES is made up of higher

positions, 10 percent of which can be politically appointed. In Germany, the *Politischer Beamter* are distinct from other civil servants: the *Politischer Beamter* can be appointed and revoked on the basis of political considerations but with career guarantees. France distinguishes 'positions at the government's discretion': in other words, a set of approximately 500 higher positions, the holders of which can be appointed and revoked at the government's discretion. Here again, there are, nevertheless, professional guarantees because these positions are mainly occupied by career civil servants who can use particular legal provisions allowing them to return to their original agency after they are revoked. This distinction between political positions and career positions is far more recent in Eastern European countries. In Russia, it did not appear until 1995 because the concept of civil servant, in the Western sense of the term, did not exist (Peters, 2008).

In many countries, politicization occurs through the multiplication of short-term contract positions. In Britain, there has been a marked rise in the number of personal ministerial advisors since the early 1980s. In Australia, the creation of 'ministerial advisors' in the late 1980s has provided a means to avoid politicizing senior jobs along the American model, while reinforcing political control over career civil servants' activities (Campbell and Halligan, 1992). In most Latin American countries, government political advisors are recruited on a contractual basis (Farazmand, 1991).

Growing job instability can also provide governments with a ready means to politicize the civil service. This form of politicization is not used to control an administration's activity but much rather to hand out jobs to friends of the political party or parties in power, operating a shift from a relationship of *clientela* to one of *parentela* (Peters, 2009). This politicization has especially been observed in the 1970s in Italy, where the Christian Democratic Party was used to distribute local jobs (the *lottizzazione* system). This type of politicization is closer to the

administrative models of developing countries, where it is above all regarded as a means to make political allies by giving jobs to the unemployed. Political deals of this kind can, nevertheless, be found in the most developed countries, especially at the local level and fairly often lead to the spread of illegal practices. When this occurs, there are no longer any institutional barriers between government agencies and political parties. Such practices, be they clearly illegal or only ethically dubious, have developed sporadically in Europe, especially in Mediterranean countries, but also at the local level in the United States. This type of politicization quickly exhausts the limits of modern public administration theory, for it very often becomes impossible to distinguish in these public positions between what is due to politicization and what is due to personal loyalty. Weber's 'bureaucratic' model thus gives way to his model of 'traditional' authority. Furthermore, ties of personal loyalty appear to play an important role in setting up new administrations in Eastern European countries. In Russia, nearly 65 percent of the administrative management officials in the 1990s were former Communist Party members associated with networks of personal power that ran through major state enterprises such as Gazprom or the bureaucracies of large cities.

Personal loyalty connections are playing a growing role in the internal regulation of most Western bureaucracies in the twenty-first century, allowing the political class to cheat with transparency provisions and public accountability. The pace of this change varies from one country to another, but it signifies clearly that the state summits are privatized. While politicization implies some kind of an institutionalization of relationships inside bureaucracies, or between them and the political sphere, personal connections call for subtle influence on policy making as well as on careers. Such connections may be based upon specific philosophical communities (historically, this has been the case – and it is suspected to be still the

case – of Freemasonry) or social ones (such as women, gays, veterans, etc.) looking for specific promotions or reforms. This new pregnancy of 'private' connections requires public administration specialists to be particularly aware of personal networks when studying the relationship between public administrations and politics. Unfortunately, this 'sociological appraisal' is still rare.

Politicization can also be exercised through the creation of specific structures at high state levels, which are charged with ensuring the link between government wishes and the implementation of public policy by professional bureaucracies. The White House Office in the United States, the Cabinet Office in the UK, the Federal Chancellery in Germany, the Prime Minister's Cabinet and the Secretariat General of the Élysée in France insure a very important role in defining and carrying out administrative activity. In general, these top-level administrations have developed considerably in Europe since the end of the 1980s, in small countries such as Denmark as well (Peters, Rhodes, and Wright, 2000). They are usually made up of a few hundred top-level civil servants who are fairly highly politicized, and have connections in the administrative system either through the network of political advisors or ministerial offices. The strengthening of senior administrations is rooted in three factors: first, in Europe, the European integration policy has required the creation of coordinating agencies to harmonize national policy with European programs. Then, most of the national administrations have adopted a subsidiarity model, meaning that ministers and the executive branch have gone from 'doing things' to 'getting things done'. This has resulted in an increased demand for administrations specialized in policy implementation and evaluation, as most major government programs are now handled by a wide range of public and private agencies. Finally, since the early 1980s, most Western governments undeniably have clearly sought to strengthen and centralize their political power in the face of changing societies that

have become much more diversified than before. It is highly probable that the 2008 financial crisis accentuated this evolution even more.

It is always fairly difficult for scholars to measure the degree of politicization. We can take into consideration the turnover of staff appointed to 'sensitive' positions or analyze biographies so as to identify political networks within public administrations. The task is, nevertheless, a tricky one because, although it is possible to measure flows, it is impossible to measure intentions or ulterior motives. Interviews must always be interpreted with great caution, as it is obviously rare to find senior civil servants who will assert that their only qualification is to be a friend of the minister! In most cases, politicization can only be demonstrated through historical comparative data showing trends in recruitments and careers. → INTRODUCTION

In the early twenty-first century, politicization seems to have increased in most Western countries. This may appear paradoxical, because so many observers have drawn attention to the development of an economic orthodoxy that would inevitably lead all developed countries to follow the same model of 'good governance' on the basis of a single recipe: decrease in public deficits, tax reductions, better management of public spending, and public policy evaluation. One of the most intriguing questions is: To what extent has the development of this 'good governance' led to new administrative practices? In particular, the effects of the New Public Management on the relations elected officials have with senior civil servants can be examined. Subjecting senior civil servants to managerial norms can just as much reduce their leeway, and thus subject them more to political authority, as it can increase the power they exercise on a daily basis on the running of administrative affairs and thus give them greater autonomy with respect to the government's political considerations. The blend of New Public Management and politicization has not had the same effects in all countries: although

senior civil servants are more tightly controlled by the political authorities in Britain, they are now more independent in the Netherlands and Finland. In 'Napoleonic tradition' countries, the same diversity may be observed (Ongaro, 2009).

It is easy to understand that in countries where democracy is fragile, such as in South America, governments try to win over the public service to their cause, especially the military. Civil servants' loyalty to the single party is also a *sine qua non* condition for survival and prosperity in totalitarian countries like China. On the other hand, it is more difficult to explain the increasing politicization of the civil service in developed countries. One of the most satisfactory explanations seems to lie in the crisis running through representative democracies, characterized by a high abstention rate at elections and the rise in power of a social criticism condemning the political class (but not civil servants) (Perrineau and Rouban, 2009). The political class in most Western countries is constantly threatened by the risk of scandals or challenges to its usefulness, given the growing independence of civil society. In the face of this criticism, the initial reflex is to make the senior civil service even more political: first, by mounting 'political fuses' that will blow in the event of failure; second, by giving the impression that the government is still capable of coordinating public policy and making effective decisions – that is, simply of governing. Paradoxically, the development of pluralistic 'governance' has thus been associated with a greater will to politicize the civil service, directly or indirectly.

Politicization must therefore be conceived in developed countries as the effect of a general evolution of the political system. If governments attempt to better control administrative activity through politicization, there are, nevertheless, limits to this politicization other than legal ones. Management of the civil service by senior administrations has not always been an easy task. For instance, the setting up of the 'administrative Presidency' in the United States under

Richard Nixon was thwarted by the fragmentation of the US administrative machinery. Moreover, direct intervention of political authorities in the professional life of civil servants requires daily effort and therefore considerable energy.

Appointments are another means of politicization, but the political choice is usually considerably checked by the need to recruit competent individuals already having a great deal of experience in administrative affairs. If not, a political cast, or a 'government of strangers' (Heclo, 1978) is created, largely rejected by career civil servants. As Ball and Peters point out: 'Although their political "masters" may want to control the bureaucracy, the expertise of the bureaucracy is crucial for effective government and the success of any elected government' (Ball and Peters, 2000: 221). The fact that technical matters having to do with public health or the environment protection are becoming increasingly preponderant in politics reinforces the professional situation of civil servants who can use their expertise to counter the more or less demagogic plans of governments.

Another limit lies in the fact that political parties, particularly in the United States and in France, can be weakened and divided by internal movements. The political choice then must take into consideration the diversity of these viewpoints that are not necessarily reconcilable. In European countries where governments are very often elected on the basis of political coalitions (Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands), political positions must also be distributed in proportion to the election results of the various parties, which leads to a sort of 'parliamentarization' of the executive branch.

Lastly, there is a political limit to politicization, particularly in Europe, which has to do with the fact that civil servants inspire more trust among citizens than politicians or governments (Perrineau and Rouban, 2009). A government's legitimacy can thus be seriously threatened if the press can attest to an overly politicized civil service.

POLITICIZATION AS POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

Politicization of the civil service has a third meaning. In this case, politicization refers to the degree of civil servants' political involvement as citizens and voters. The question is thus the following: Is the civil service a political force?

First, situations can be found in which the ideological commitment of civil servants is a crucial element in setting up a new political system: this was particularly the case in regimes born in Africa in the 1960s following decolonization. On the other hand, in India and Pakistan, public administration served instead as a stabilizing element at the time of Independence. In both cases, the civil service compensated for the lack of a sufficiently developed middle class to offer democratic governments an electoral base. This central position of the public service, particularly that of the military, is obviously a factor of weakness and political dependence: successive *coups d'état* have occurred in both Africa and Latin America, often following conflicts within the very state apparatus. In Europe, the civil service has rarely served as a social basis for major political change.

The fact that civil servants share political convictions obviously plays an essential role in a country's political life but also in the management of its administrations. It is hard for a government to ask civil servants to implement public policies that run counter to their ideological convictions, even if they are called upon to work as perfectly neutral professionals. In France, civil servants constitute the most loyal electorate of the Socialist Party and a majority of senior civil servants share Left values. This does not facilitate the implementation of public management reforms based upon business and competition values (Rouban, 1998, 2007).

Comparative studies have shown that civil servants in Western countries usually maintain an affinity with the Socialists in Europe and the Democrats or the 'Center Left' in North America (Blais and Dion, 1991;

Rouban, 2001). They are more inclined than private sector workers to defend the welfare state and government intervention in economic and social matters. This propensity to defend the 'big government' can be considered perfectly normal among civil servants who are paid out of the state budget. Nevertheless, behind the global figures there are considerable differences that tend to make civil servants' vote and political attitudes vary according to their profession (police officers are usually more to the Right than teachers) and their rank (senior civil servants are more interested in politics than clerical workers). It is also highly tempting to compare globally civil servants to their private sector counterparts. But here again the profession matters more than the legal status of the job, even if civil servants are generally more culturally liberal and less economically liberal than private business workers.

Depending on the country, civil servant politicization can also draw support in trade unionism. Trade union rights are generally acknowledged in all European countries (except for certain categories such as the military), whereas they are far more limited in the United States. Trade unionism can, however, vary in degrees of politicization as well as its power of influence over government decisions. It is fairly highly politicized in Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Spain, where civil service unions are branches of national unions that group workers by political affinity. In Britain, trade unionism has been very profession-oriented, at least until the 2008 financial crisis when it entered the political debate.

Another dimension of civil servant politicization has to do with the legal and social possibilities bureaucrats have of getting involved in political life. Though in Great Britain senior civil servants are barred from participating in political activity at the national level, there are no such restrictions in France, Germany and Spain. As a result, the political class of these three European countries is largely made up of former civil servants, who can easily recover their posts

and their rank in public administration if they lose an election. This professional freedom is often considered a privilege with regard to private sector workers, who must give up their job to enter into politics. It is obviously a strong incentive for civil servants to play the political card if their career is at a standstill. On the other hand, the effects of this massive presence of civil servants in the ranks of parliament on political debate should not be overestimated, because former civil servants very soon adapt to the rules of the political game and no longer consider themselves civil servants.

CONCLUSION

Any scholar will find it difficult, if not impossible, to control all the variables that may influence the politicization of the civil service. In most cases, sociology will be called upon to support political science research. In particular, the effect of politicization on civil servants' switch-over to private enterprise needs to be studied, because in some countries, such as France, Japan and the United States, access to senior positions in the administration allows civil servants later to become chief executive officers (CEOs) of major private corporations.

However, two variables seem especially important: on the one hand, the strength of the administrative tradition, which can be measured by civil servants' degree of professional independence or 'corporatism'; and, on the other hand, civil servants' involvement in political life, which can be measured by their capacity for collective mobilization or their presence within political parties. From these two dimensions, a diagram of politicization in the main developed countries can be drawn up (Table 21.1), showing that political involvement of civil servants can very well go hand in hand with a strong administrative tradition (France, Germany and Spain) and that the lack of a strong professional culture does not necessarily imply any particular

Table 21.1 Models of politicization by civil servant involvement in political life and the strength of the professional tradition

	Professional tradition	
	Low	High
Political involvement of civil servants		
Low	United States, Russia	Australia, Italy, UK
High	Austria, Belgium, Netherlands	France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Japan

partisan involvement (the United States). It should especially be noted that there is no 'European model' and that the models of politicization do not fit into simple dichotomies, which, for instance, would divide countries of the Northern Hemisphere from those of the Southern Hemisphere, or federal countries from unitary countries.

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