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**Party Systems and Bureaucratic Politicization:
The Coalition Effect**

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Abstract

This research examines how different political party systems influence the degree of bureaucratic politicization across states. Drawing on a mixed-methods design, it features cross-national statistical analysis using two OLS regression models based on the Quality of Government Expert Survey data, followed by qualitative case studies of Germany, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The results demonstrate that multi-party systems are associated with lower levels of bureaucratic politicization, whereas two-party and dominant-party systems exhibit higher politicization. Furthermore, within multi-party systems, coalition stability and structure critically mediate the degree of bureaucratic politicization. Case study findings determine distinct pathways of politicization, with centralized executive-driven mechanisms in Turkey and fragmented, party-distribution mechanisms in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Germany's coalition dynamics, by contrast, demonstrate how formalized power-sharing arrangements can reinforce bureaucratic neutrality. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of moving beyond bureaucratic structures to consider how party systems and coalition dynamics shape administrative autonomy and neutrality.

Introduction

Bureaucracies play a central role in governance by implementing policies (Pressman and Wildavsky 1984), providing expertise (Weber 1946), and ensuring public accountability (Peters 2010). However, the extent to which bureaucracies remain autonomous or become politicized often depends on the broader political environment in which they operate. Bureaucratic politicization refers to the process by which political considerations, rather than meritocratic principles, affect decision-making and policy implementation, potentially undermining bureaucratic neutrality and expertise (Peters and Pierre 2004; Dahlström and Lapuente 2022). This politicization can occur through mechanisms such as patronage-based appointments, manipulation of recruitment procedures, politically motivated promotions or dismissals, and the creation of parallel institutions that bypass formal civil service channels (Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012; Kopecký, Mair, and Spirova 2012).

The dangers of bureaucratic politicization are profound. Politicized bureaucracies decrease effectiveness, neutrality, and accountability because decisions are driven by partisan interests rather than expertise (Lewis 2008; Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012). Excessive political control over the civil service also erodes public trust in government institutions, weakens checks and balances, and increases the risk of corruption (Rauch and Evans 2000). Conversely, meritocratic recruitment and insulation from political interference correlate with lower levels of corruption and higher-quality public goods (Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012). So, as bureaucracies become an extension of ruling political elites, they lose their capacity to function as independent policy implementers. Given the global trend of executive consolidation, where leaders increasingly centralize power and weaken institutional constraints (Freedom House 2024), understanding the relationship between political party systems and

bureaucratic politicization is more critical than ever for assessing the quality of governance worldwide.

Existing scholarship explores various aspects of bureaucratic development, including administrative autonomy (Dahlström and Lapuente 2022; Schneider 1993; Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012), political oversight (McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987; Moe 1989; Lewis 2008), and institutional design (Page 2012; Heady 1959; Peters and Pierre 2004). Yet, how different political party systems (multi-party, two-party, one-party) influence these aspects remains a relatively underexplored domain in comparative administrative studies. Multi-party systems may encourage higher levels of bureaucratic neutrality because shifting coalitions necessitate compromise and balanced policymaking. Conversely, two-party or dominant-party systems may experience higher degrees of politicization due to concentrated executive power and fewer political checks. This research seeks to fill this gap by conducting a comparative mixed-methods analysis to answer two related puzzles: Do different party systems influence varying degrees of bureaucratic politicization? How do coalition politics in multi-party states mitigate bureaucratic politicization?

Following the literature review, a mixed methods approach uses quantitative analysis featuring two ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models, followed by qualitative comparative case studies of three multi-party states to answer these questions. The first statistical model examines the relationship between the different types of party systems and levels of politicization, while the second model builds on the first to illustrate the effects of coalition politics in multi-party states on bureaucratic politicization. Lastly, the qualitative case studies help explore the causal mechanisms of coalition governance on the processes that lead to politicization.

Comprehensive frameworks are necessary to analyze bureaucratic systems across varying political contexts because administrative dynamics cannot be understood in isolation from their surrounding political environments in which administrative institutions are embedded (Heady 1959; Diamant 1960). Thus, understanding these patterns across political systems is essential for identifying the institutional safeguards that promote bureaucratic neutrality and those that enable executive overreach, particularly as global governance trends increasingly point toward the erosion of democratic accountability (Freedom House 2024).

Literature Review

The United States has long dominated the field of bureaucratic literature. Foundational works by Wilson (1887) and Weber (1946) frame bureaucracy as a hierarchical and apolitical entity. However, later research examines how elected officials shape bureaucratic behavior (McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987; Moe 1989). The "fire-alarm" oversight model (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984) and presidential administration research (Kagan 2001) illustrate evolving control mechanisms, for example. More recently, scholars focus on politicization by demonstrating how executive appointments influence policy implementation (Lewis 2008; Potter 2017). Overall, while some early literature determined the influence of parties (Skowronek 1982), contemporary studies prioritize the executive-legislative dynamic and sideline the role of political parties due to administrative reforms, such as the Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act in 1883 and the Hatch Act in 1939 (Kagan 2001; Lewis 2008).

While the U.S. literature offers valuable insights into how executive-legislative dynamics shape administrative behavior, comparative studies suggest that these dynamics play out differently across political systems (Dahlström and Lapuente 2022; Bersch and Fukuyama 2023). For example, Dahlström and Lapuente (2022) examine the deliberate institutional design choices

that shape bureaucratic autonomy, neutrality, and vulnerability to politicization. They propose a typology of four bureaucratic structures, each offering different balances between professional expertise, political oversight, and administrative discretion. The first is Weberian, which are bureaucracies characterized by merit-based recruitment, life tenure, and adherence to formal legal rules, such as Germany. The second is Legalistic bureaucracies, exemplified in Italy, which are rule-bound but subject to stronger political oversight. Next, Liberal bureaucracies prioritize efficiency and managerial discretion alongside bureaucratic independence, like the Nordic countries. Lastly, Dahlström and Lapuente (2022) categorize states like Turkey as Populistic bureaucracies, which are flexible but highly politicized structures where managerial discretion coexists with extensive political appointments. These typologies help explain that not all bureaucracies are created equal, and some are specifically designed to increase oversight by political actors versus mitigate it.

However, as Bersch and Fukuyama (2023) stress, bureaucratic autonomy is not an absolute condition but the outcome of strategic interactions between political actors and administrative agents. They identify five key mechanisms through which political principals can exert control over bureaucracies: (1) ex ante procedural constraints like civil service laws, (2) ex post review mechanisms including judicial oversight, (3) appointment and promotion powers, (4) removal powers, and (5) ad hoc interventions, such as emergency powers. In contrast, career patterns, recruitment mechanisms, and tenure protections serve as critical buffers against political interference (Schneider 1993). This suggests that autonomous bureaucracies are often the product of structural incentives that prioritize meritocratic advancement over political loyalty.

Germany is a great example of this, where institutional resilience and bureaucratic neutrality stem from strict political appointment processes diffusing power across coalitions (Fleischer 2016; Jann and Veit 2021; Page 2012). In Germany's frequent coalition governments, cabinet positions are divided among different political parties through formal coalition agreements. Each coalition partner controls specific ministries, meaning no single party holds sway over the entire bureaucracy (Fleischer 2016). Furthermore, while political appointments exist, they are constrained by meritocratic principles. The Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) oversees strict civil service regulation, where political influence is confined to the level of political appointees (Staatssekretäre), while Beamte (tenured civil servants) have high levels of legal protection and career stability (Fleischer 2016; Jann and Veit 2021).

France's fragmented system is another great example of how multi-party states limit direct political control over civil servants. While political oversight exists, France's administrative elite maintain larger policymaking discretion, making it a legalistic structured bureaucracy (Kreuzer and Stephan 2003; Dahlström and Lapuente 2022). One example of France's technocratic insulation is the role of Prefects (Préfets), who serve as the central government's representatives in regional and local administrations. Although appointed by the President, Prefects are career civil servants, whose recruitment and advancement are formally structured to prioritize expertise and bureaucratic continuity over partisan affiliation (Ehrmann 1961; Kreuzer and Stephan 2003; Suleiman 1974). Since both French and German-focused scholarship illustrate low levels of politicization, despite their differing government structures (semi-presidential vs. parliamentary) and bureaucratic structures (Weberian vs. Legalistic), this suggests that institutional structure alone does not explain variations in politicization. Instead, party system characteristics and traditions may play a more decisive role.

Like France, Japan operates under a highly meritocratic civil service structure, dominated by elite technocrats recruited through competitive exams and trained in prestigious institutions such as the University of Tokyo (Pempel 1992; Johnson 1975). However, Japan's experience challenges the assumption that elite meritocratic structures inherently insulate against politicization. While the bureaucracy has historically played a central role in policy formulation, such as surpassing cabinet influence through deliberation councils, informal mechanisms of politicization persist (Muramatsu and Krauss 1984). For example, Zoku (policy tribes) are informal groups of parliamentarians within the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). These policy tribes specialize in specific policy domains and maintain close, often clientelist, relationships with the corresponding ministries and bureaucrats to influence policy (Choi 2007). Thus, despite its Weberian legalistic foundations, Japan's system illustrates how politicization can emerge not through partisan appointments, but through entrenched informal alliances between bureaucrats and political actors.

Literature on China's bureaucracy paints a much different picture as it operates under complete party dominance. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) controls administrative structures through parallel party-state hierarchies (Barnett 1966; Lian 2018; Jiang 2018). Here, bureaucratic responsiveness aligns with party directives rather than public accountability. Specific channels of politicization are evident through the CCP's Organization Department, which oversees all senior appointments across ministries and local governments (Barnett 1966; Jiang 2018). By centralizing control over promotions and career advancement, the Organization Department ensures that political loyalty outweighs meritocratic criteria, directly embedding partisan alignment into the structure of the bureaucracy.

Overall, the literature offers important theoretical and empirical insights into how institutional design and administrative tradition shape bureaucratic autonomy and politicization. Yet notable gaps remain. Much of the scholarship emphasizes regime type, legal traditions, or state capacity in isolation, without fully accounting for how the structure of party competition and coalition governance interacts with these institutional variables. Moreover, while typologies such as those by Dahlström and Lapuente (2022) offer valuable heuristic tools, they do not sufficiently explain cross-national variation in politicization within similarly categorized systems. This thesis addresses these gaps by showing how different types of party systems and coalition dynamics influence patterns of bureaucratic politicization.

Argument

Building on the existing literature, different party systems might create distinct patterns of bureaucratic politicization. In multi-party systems, where coalition-building is common, bureaucracies may exhibit higher levels of neutrality due to the need for policy compromise among shifting political alliances. Furthermore, coalition agreements often operate as formal negotiations for the dispersion of political appointees among political parties (Fleischer 2016). This environment could reduce the likelihood of bureaucratic capture by any single political entity, thus fostering greater administrative stability and autonomy.

Conversely, two-party systems might be prone to greater politicization because one party holds total executive power, as either prime minister or president. Opposition parties typically have limited formal avenues through the legislature to contest politicization, particularly due to the legislature's high transaction costs, fragmented incentives, and collective action problems that hinder institutional resistance (Moe and Howell 1999). Moreover, opposition parties may have little incentive to curb politicization when out of power, as they anticipate eventually

benefiting from the same tools of political control once they regain office. For instance, in the United States, Senate rejection of presidential Cabinet nominations is exceedingly rare, with only nine rejections in U.S. history (O'Connell 2021). Overall, two-party systems might see greater politicization because the dominant party sees fewer checks from the opposition party.

Lastly, bureaucratic politicization is likely far greater in dominant-party or one-party systems because autonomy is often limited, with administrative structures operating as extensions of the ruling party's agenda. The absence of partisan rivals removes incentives to maintain administrative impartiality, as there are no external checks. Furthermore, the lack of horizontal accountability mechanisms, such as judicial independence and parliamentary oversight, allows politicization to proceed unchecked (Barnett 1966; Lian 2018).

These dynamics suggest that bureaucratic politicization is not merely a product of institutional design but also significantly influenced by the broader political and electoral contexts in which bureaucracies operate. These patterns underscore the importance of examining how political competition is structured. Rather than treating politicization as a function of institutions alone, this thesis argues that it is the configuration of party systems and coalitional arrangements that mediate the relationship between politics and bureaucracy. This theory is tested through both cross-national statistical analysis and comparative case studies to illustrate how party systems interact with the administrative state.

Data and Operationalization

For the quantitative analysis, this study relies on the Quality of Government's (QoG) Original Expert Survey 2020. The QoG dataset provides a comprehensive set of expert assessments on bureaucratic structures and performance across 117 countries, making it a suitable tool for this research. However, to ensure consistency across models, the sample is

limited to 69 countries for which all selected variables are available, excluding any cases with missing data. Additionally, because the analysis relies on cross-sectional data from 2020, the results capture a snapshot of politicization at a single point in time and may not fully reflect dynamic changes over time.

The dependent variable for both models is a composite measure of politicization, derived from three QoG indicators: *Professionalism Index* (*proff_pca*), *Political Interference* (*impar1*), and *Impartiality* (*impar2*). The indicators factor into measuring politicization in different ways. First, the *Professionalism Index* is a composite measure based on meritocratic recruitment, tenure security, and impartiality, so a higher value indicates a professional bureaucracy insulated from political influence. *Political Interference* measures the extent to which political considerations affect bureaucratic decision-making; higher values indicate greater political interference and thus increased bureaucratic politicization. Lastly, *Impartiality* evaluates whether bureaucrats apply policies without political bias, so a higher score here indicates less partisan favoritism in bureaucratic decision-making and reflects lower politicization.

The following formula creates a composite *Politicization Index* (PI), where a higher PI score indicates greater bureaucratic politicization:

$$PI = (impar1 - impar2 - proff_pca)/3$$

The first regression model uses party system type as the key independent variable. Each country was categorized as having a multi-party, two-party, one-party dominant, or one-party system.¹ This classification considered both formal electoral structures and de facto political dynamics, including the competitiveness of elections, the regularity of power alternation, and the degree of control exerted by ruling parties. Sources included the Varieties of Democracy's (V-

¹ This categorical variable was converted into three dummy variables, using one-party as the reference group.

Dem) V-Party dataset, Freedom House reports, and official election results, with special attention to countries exhibiting hybrid or transitional characteristics. For instance, states like Russia are categorized as one-party dominant in 2020 due to sustained electoral dominance and institutional barriers to opposition. In the coding, one-party dominant systems are classified as one-party because the goal here is to test electoral competition.

For the second regression model, a typology of six coalition types captures meaningful variation within multi-party systems: *Stable*, *Volatile*, *Fragmented*, *Consociational*, *Dominant-party*, or *Power-sharing*.² These categories were developed similarly to the party-system classification with combining assessments from V-Party quantitative indicators, academic literature, and electoral data.

Countries classified as *Stable* exhibit long-standing, coalition governance characterized by high-party system institutionalization, moderate-to-low seat share of the largest party, and high levels of inter-party deliberation. *Volatile* systems are marked by frequent breakdowns, weak party institutionalization, and unstable executive-legislative relations. *Fragmented* systems exhibit excessive party fractionalization, making it difficult to form or maintain coalitions, despite potentially high deliberative norms. *Consociational* systems are ones designed for elite power-sharing among identity groups (e.g. ethnic), often formalized through proportionality and mutual veto arrangements. *Dominant-party* systems, while technically multi-party, are characterized by one party's consistent control of government, often accompanied by reduced legislative constraints on the executive. Finally, *Power-sharing systems* are post-conflict arrangements where coalition governance is designed to ensure group representation, but often

² This categorical variable was also converted into dummy variables for the OLS regression, with stable systems as the reference group.

lacks institutional depth, resulting in patronage-driven or symbolic inclusion rather than functional pluralism.

In addition to the key independent variables, the regression models include several control variables to account for alternative explanations of bureaucratic politicization. These controls are incorporated to isolate the effect of party and coalition dynamics from other institutional, economic, and regional factors. The first control is for the type of political regime, a categorical variable that distinguishes between parliamentary democracies, semi-presidential democracies, presidential democracies, civilian dictatorships, etc. To account for geopolitical factors, the models include a regional variable differentiating between Eastern Europe/Post-Soviet states, Western Europe and North America, Latin America, North Africa/Middle East, etc.³ Both statistical models also control for economic development using the GDP per capita variable (measured in USD), taken from QoG's Standard Dataset.

Table 1: Summary Table of Variables for Quantitative Analysis

Variable	Measurement/Coding	Models Included
Politicization Index	Continuous	Dependent variable (both)
Party System	One-party, Two-party, Multi-party	Model 1
Coalition Type	Stable, Volatile, Fragmented, Consociational, Dominant-party, Power-sharing	Model 2
Regime Type	Parliamentary, Semi-presidential, Presidential, Civilian dictatorship	Both models
Region	Western Europe/North America, Eastern Europe/Post-Soviet, Latin America, North Africa/Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia	Both models
GDP per capita	Continuous (USD)	Both models

Note: Full descriptive statistics in appendix Table A1.

³ Both the regime type and regional variables were taken from QoG's Standard Dataset and converted into dummy variables, with parliamentary democracy and Western Europe and North America as the reference categories, respectively.

Lastly, for the second half of this research, the case study analysis relies on a qualitative approach to explore the causal mechanisms linking coalition dynamics to bureaucratic politicization. The analysis draws on a mixed body of sources, including constitutions, civil service laws, government reports, NGO evaluations, and peer-reviewed academic literature. This source base enables a comprehensive assessment of both formal institutional structures and informal political practices shaping administrative outcomes across cases.

Quantitative Analysis

As discussed, while existing research often emphasizes regime type or administrative tradition, this analysis posits that these institutional features interact with the configuration of party systems to either constrain or facilitate political interference in the civil service. Specifically, that multi-party systems reduce opportunities for politicization by fragmenting executive power and imposing inter-party checks through coalition politics. In contrast, politicization is expected to be higher in one-party systems, dominant-party environments, or unstable coalitions where institutional constraints on executive control over appointments are weak or absent.

The quantitative analysis incorporates two models. The first model examines whether the general party system structure explains cross-national variation in bureaucratic politicization. This approach provides a general test of whether the level of competition in the party system alone shapes political actors' ability to capture the bureaucracy. Then the second model focuses on variation within multi-party systems, introducing the coalition typology developed in the operationalization section to test whether different coalition patterns further explain politicization outcomes where formal competition exists.

Both models use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, with the *Politicization Index* serving as the dependent variable. Regime type, region, and economic development (GDP per capita) are included as controls to account for alternative explanations. Together, these models assess both the structural conditions under which politicization is likely to occur and the specific coalition dynamics that may shape politicization mechanisms.

Party Systems and Bureaucratic Politicization

The first regression model supports the expectation that multi-party systems are significantly associated with lower levels of bureaucratic politicization relative to one-party systems ($p < .05$), as shown in Table 2. This result reinforces the theoretical claim that when power is fragmented among multiple parties, opportunities for politicization are constrained either by coalition bargaining or more opposition-party checks through oversight mechanisms. Importantly, this suggests that the competitive structure of the party system itself exerts an institutional check on political interference in the civil service.

By contrast, the coefficient for two-party systems does not reach statistical significance, implying that power alternation between two dominant parties may not produce the same constraints. One possible interpretation is that in two-party systems, parties anticipate returning to power, therefore maintain systems of politically motivated appointments and informal norms of executive discretion. This finding complicates assumptions that any electoral competition is sufficient to limit politicization and suggests that the number of meaningful veto players matters.

Among the control variables, GDP per capita remains a significant and negative predictor of politicization ($p < .001$), which is consistent with the expectation that higher levels of economic development are associated with greater bureaucratic professionalization. Regional variation also remains significant, with Eastern Europe/Post-Soviet states exhibiting higher

politicization relative to Western Europe/North America. These results align with prior research suggesting that post-authoritarian administrative legacies continue to shape patterns of politicization (O'Donnell 1973). Notably, regime type does not emerge as a significant predictor, underscoring the limitations of formal regime classifications as explanatory variables for bureaucratic outcomes. Furthermore, the overall model fit is strong, with an Adjusted R² of 0.704, indicating that approximately 70% of the variance in bureaucratic politicization is explained by party system type and the included controls. The F-statistic of 13.436 ($p < .001$) confirms the statistical significance of the model as a whole.

Table 2: Party System Type vs. Bureaucratic Politicization (Model 1)

Variable		Politicization Index
Party System (ref: One-party)	Two-party system	-0.400 (0.266)
	Multi-party system	-0.415 (0.196)*
Regime Type (ref: Parliamentary democracy)	Semi-presidential democracy	0.280 (0.154) †
	Presidential democracy	0.313 (0.181) †
	Civilian dictatorship	0.325 (0.171)
Region (ref: Western Europe/North America)	Eastern Europe/Post-Soviet	0.134 (0.237)*
	Latin America	0.034 (0.307)
	North Africa/Middle East	0.836 (0.391)*
	Sub-Saharan Africa	-0.160 (0.277)†
	East Asia	-0.723 (0.287)
	Southeast Asia	-0.579 (0.328)
	South Asia	-0.073 (0.402)
GDP per capita (logged)		-2.091e-5 (0.000)***
Constant		0.493 (0.328)
Adjusted R ²		0.704
F-statistic		13.436***
N		69

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.10$; Reference categories: One-party system, Parliamentary democracy, Western Europe/North America.

Exploring the Coalition Effect

While the first model demonstrates that multi-party systems, on average, exhibit lower politicization, there is still meaningful variation among multi-party states with some exhibiting

the lowest levels of politicization in the total sample and some exhibiting the highest observed levels. So, the second model is important to explain this variation and examine whether coalition-driven governance further explains politicization outcomes. This approach recognizes that within multi-party systems, the stability and structure of coalition governance may shape bureaucratic politicization. So, Model 2 isolates the multi-party subsample ($N = 50$) and replaces the party system dummies with the coalition typology discussed earlier. Stable coalitions serve as the reference category, allowing for comparison across volatile, fragmented, consociational, dominant-party, and power-sharing coalitions.

The results, presented in Table 3, provide strong support for the argument that coalition dynamics play a critical role in shaping bureaucratic politicization. Compared to stable coalitions, volatile coalitions experience significantly higher levels of politicization ($p < .01$). Consociational coalitions and power-sharing coalitions also exhibit a significant positive relationship with politicization ($p < .05$). This finding highlights the risk that formal power-sharing agreements, though designed to ensure group inclusion, may institutionalize patronage and dilute meritocratic hiring practices. Dominant-party coalitions, where one party exercises total control despite formal multi-party arrangements, demonstrate the strongest positive coefficient ($p < .05$), which is consistent with the expectation that reduced party competition and separation of oversight enables political capture of the bureaucracy.

Interestingly, fragmented coalitions do not show a significant effect, suggesting that fragmentation alone is not sufficient to drive politicization unless coupled with instability or dominance dynamics. This result underscores that it is not simply the number of parties, but the configuration and stability of their cooperation, that conditions bureaucratic outcomes.

Control variables remain consistent with the first model, where GDP per capita retains its negative and significant association with politicization, and regime type does not reach significance. The model exhibits an even stronger fit, with an Adjusted R² of 0.796, explaining nearly 80% of the variation in politicization within multi-party systems. The overall model significance is confirmed with an F-statistic of 13.709 ($p < .001$).

Table 3: Coalition Dynamics vs. Bureaucratic Politicization (Model 2)

Variable		Politicization Index
Coalition Type (ref: Stable)	Volatile coalition	0.579 (0.185)**
	Fragmented coalition	0.062 (0.243)
	Consociational coalition	0.613 (0.264)*
	Dominant-party coalition	0.922 (0.361)*
	Power-sharing coalition	1.038 (0.422)*
Government Type (ref: Parliamentary democracy)	Semi-presidential democracy	0.231 (0.137)
	Presidential democracy	0.075 (0.212)
Region (ref: Western Europe/North America)	Eastern Europe/Post-Soviet	-0.083 (0.227)
	Latin America	-0.377 (0.340)
	North Africa/Middle East	0.191 (0.441)
	Sub-Saharan Africa	-0.274 (0.279)
	East Asia	-0.541 (0.325)
	Southeast Asia	-0.757 (0.399)†
	South Asia	-0.275 (0.398)
GDP per capita		-1.867e-5 (0.000)***
Constant		-0.154 (0.276)
Adjusted R ²		0.796
F-statistic		13.709***
N		50

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.10$; Reference categories: Stable coalition, Parliamentary democracy, Western Europe/North America.

The results of Model 2 provide crucial empirical support for the central claim that the coalition governance within multi-party systems is a key mechanism through which politicization dynamics are mediated. While the first model demonstrates that multi-party systems, on average, exhibit lower levels of bureaucratic politicization compared to one-party systems, the second model reveals that stable coalitions increase bureaucratic autonomy and

neutrality. However, the insulation effect of multi-party systems is neither automatic nor uniform across all multi-party contexts. Rather, it is conditional on the presence of stable coalition arrangements. Where coalitions are unstable, dominated by a single party, or structured through consociational or power-sharing frameworks, the risks of politicization rise substantially.

These findings emphasize the importance of looking beyond broad regime labels or formal bureaucratic structures alone to understand when and how bureaucracies are politicized. The implications are particularly relevant for multi-party democracies, where coalition pressures are often unavoidable. These pressures extend beyond electoral dynamics and into the machinery of public administration, raising concerns about the politicization of appointments and the erosion of merit-based governance.

While the quantitative analysis provides compelling evidence that broader and unstable coalitions are associated with higher levels of bureaucratic politicization, it cannot fully capture the institutional, historical, and political mechanisms through which these dynamics operate. To address this, the next section turns to in-depth qualitative case studies of three multi-party states: Germany, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. By moving beyond cross-national statistical correlations, the case studies aim to illustrate the causal processes that link coalition governance to levels of politicization and provide a deeper understanding of how political structures interact with bureaucratic systems across diverse contexts.

Case Studies

Germany, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina were selected to represent a spectrum of bureaucratic politicization under varying coalition structures and institutional environments. Germany's low-politicization, stable coalition system is embedded within a strong legal-rational bureaucracy. Turkey, by contrast, reflects a highly politicized environment shaped by

institutional weakening and increasing executive dominance. Bosnia and Herzegovina exemplifies a case of extreme politicization within a deeply fragmented, consociational state. Each case study traces the development of the modern bureaucratic state from key institutional turning points to 2020 to contextualize contemporary patterns of politicization within longer trajectories of state-building. So, this study focuses on Germany's post-World War II administrative restructuring, Turkey's transition from military to civilian rule, and Bosnia's post-Dayton state formation. The analysis draws on a wide range of sources, including constitutional texts, civil service laws, government reports, NGO evaluations, and peer-reviewed academic literature to ensure both legal-institutional accuracy and analytical depth.

Based on the findings from the quantitative analysis, it is expected that Germany's stable governing coalitions are institutionalized into its bureaucracy through formal power-sharing agreements. In contrast, Turkey's dominant-party system is likely to show evidence of centralized control over appointments and diminished administrative autonomy. Bosnia and Herzegovina, though also exhibiting high levels of bureaucratic politicization in the quantitative models, is expected to reveal a less centralized form of politicization than Turkey because of its consociational coalitions. Examining these cases will strengthen the findings from the regression model by revealing how different configurations of coalition strength and institutional context shape the processes and opportunities for bureaucratic politicization.

Table 4: Case Study Selections

Country	Politicization Score	Coalition Dynamic
Germany	-1.44 (Low)	Stable/Power-Sharing (Type 1)
Turkey	1.18 (Very high)	Dominant-Party (Type 5)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.61 (High)	Consociational (Type 4)

Germany

Political System and Coalition Patterns

Germany is a federal parliamentary republic that has been widely regarded as a model of institutional continuity and democratic governance in postwar Europe. The foundation of the modern German state is the 1949 *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law), drafted after the collapse of the Nazi regime to ensure the democratic functioning of political institutions and the insulation of administrative systems from authoritarian interference. The *Grundgesetz* introduced a robust system of checks and balances, a powerful Constitutional Court, and a commitment to federalism by dividing authority among the central government and 16 constituent states (Länder).⁴

The German party system is multi-party, and coalition governments are the norm. The adoption of proportional representation has encouraged coalition politics, but the electoral threshold (5%) has provided some constraint on party fragmentation, creating a more stable coalition dynamic.⁵ So, these coalitions are often ideologically coherent. The prevalence of such governments reflects the broader political culture of consensus and negotiation, a culture embedded in both parliamentary procedure and administrative practice (Gunlicks 2003).

In the classification scheme used in this analysis, Germany fits within Type 1 coalition governments: minimal-winning or two-party coalitions. Historically, it has been dominated by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), as well as the Social Democratic Party (SPD). These parties frequently govern either individually or in coalition, with smaller parties such as the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and

⁴ Federal Republic of Germany. *Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany* [Grundgesetz]. https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html.

⁵ Federal Republic of Germany. *Bundeswahlgesetz* [Federal Elections Act], §§ 4, 6. <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bwahlg/BJNR011620964.html>.

Alliance 90/The Greens.⁶ However, more recently, the "traffic light" coalition of the SPD, Greens, and FDP shows a growing ideological diversity and a pragmatic approach to governance (Galpin and Jones 2021). While three-party coalitions have become more common due to increasing electoral volatility, they remain tightly structured through formal coalition agreements that delineate policy priorities and ministerial allocations.

Bureaucratic Structure and Traditions

Germany's administrative tradition is quintessentially Weberian, with a foundational commitment to legality (Rechtsstaat), rational bureaucracy, and a professional civil service insulated from political interference. The German civil service is anchored in a robust legal framework that seeks to ensure bureaucratic competence, impartiality, and continuity irrespective of political change. At the constitutional level, Article 33 of the Basic Law guarantees equal access to public office based on aptitude, qualifications, and professional achievement.⁷ It also enshrines core tenets such as life tenure, loyalty to the state, and a duty of neutrality, forming the constitutional backbone of the civil service ethos.

The legal framework governing civil servants is primarily codified in the *Beamtenstatusgesetz* (Civil Service Status Act) and the *Bundesbeamten-gesetz* (Federal Civil Servants Act).⁸⁹ These civil service laws detail recruitment criteria, promotion procedures, disciplinary regulations, and employment protections. Furthermore, these statutes were designed to cultivate a nonpartisan, reliable, and technically competent administrative corps to formalize

⁶ Based on historical electoral data from the German Federal Returning Officer, <https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de/en/bundestagswahlen/1949.html>

⁷ *Basic Law*, Art. 33.

⁸ Federal Republic of Germany. *Beamtenstatusgesetz* [Civil Service Status Act]. <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/beamstg/>.

⁹ Federal Republic of Germany. *Bundesbeamten-gesetz* [Federal Civil Servants Act]. https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bbg_2009/.

the principle of *Berufsbeamtentum* (professional civil service). This system deliberately insulates key bureaucratic functions from short-term political pressures, emphasizing long-term institutional memory and the rule of law.

Furthermore, the German civil service comprises two primary tracks: Beamte, or tenured civil servants, and Tarifbeschäftigte, contractual employees.¹⁰ Civil servants have a constitutionally protected status, including life tenure, special pension rights, and disciplinary protections. These protections are grounded in Article 33, as mentioned, and codified in civil service statutes.¹¹ The German Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) emphasizes that civil servants' rights and duties reflect a "relationship of loyalty defined by public law," ensuring the continuity and neutrality of governance functions.¹² However, these guarantees are balanced by stringent obligations: civil servants must remain politically neutral, loyal to the constitutional order, and are prohibited from striking.

Oversight and regulation of civil service employment is centralized at the federal level through the BMI, which issues administrative guidelines and enforces compliance with legal norms. The BMI's published principles stress that the public service should serve the common good through the impartial execution of law and policy, thus explicitly warning against political patronage or clientelism.¹³ State-level (Länder) administrations follow similar statutes with minor variations, which creates a federal but standardized civil service structure across the country.

¹⁰ As of 2023, over 64% of core federal administration staff were tenured civil servants or judges.

¹¹ *Basic Law*, Art. 33.

¹² Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community. The Federal Public Service. https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/EN/publikationen/2025/BMI25008-the-federal-public-service.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1

¹³ Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community. Rules on Integrity. https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/EN/publikationen/2014/rules-on-integrity.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

Politicization Trends and Factors

Germany scores a -1.44 on the Politicization Index, placing it firmly in the low-politicization category. Despite its multi-party system and frequent coalition governments, politicization of the federal bureaucracy remains rare and institutionally discouraged. Empirical studies have consistently found low levels of party-political appointments to senior administrative posts. In a comparative study of OECD countries, Germany ranks among the least politicized systems, alongside other Northern and Western European states with strong civil service traditions (Veit, Reichard, and Hammerschmid 2013). This paradox can be explained through both the stable nature of Germany's coalitions and the robust legal-institutional framework that governs its civil service.

Instances of politicization, where they exist, tend to be confined to political advisory roles or personal staff within ministries rather than extending into the core bureaucracy. For example, appointing political state secretaries (Parlamentarische Staatssekretäre) to federal ministries is the key process that leads to politicization in the German bureaucracy. These individuals are typically members of parliament aligned with the governing coalition and serve as political appointees positioned just below the minister. While they do not displace career civil servants, their role in shaping policy and bridging the political-administrative interface introduces a minor degree of politicization (Bach and Veit 2021). However, even during periods of significant political transition, such as the transition from CDU-led to SPD-led governments, senior bureaucrats have typically remained in post.¹⁴ This low turnover illustrates how stable coalition dynamics ensure continuity in policy implementation and administrative procedure.

¹⁴ Germany had a turnover rate of approximately 3% in its senior public service following the 1994 election, for example (OECD 1997).

Several powerful mediating factors explain how Germany's bureaucracy maintains low bureaucratic politicization. First, the legal framework governing civil service appointments, anchored in both constitutional and statutory law, strictly separates political leadership from career administration, as discussed. Civil servants have tenure and legal protections that shield them from arbitrary dismissal or partisan influence. Additionally, Germany's system of administrative courts allows civil servants to challenge political interference in personnel decisions. This provides a powerful deterrent to parties seeking to politicize the bureaucracy because any unlawful dismissals or appointments can be reversed and sanctioned by the courts (OECD 2022). This legal insulation significantly reduces opportunities for coalition parties to use public sector jobs as bargaining tools.

Next, recruitment into the civil service is highly structured and competitive, involving university qualifications, public law training, and examination procedures. The BMI outlines a clearly defined legal framework for eligibility, training, and advancement. Civil service entry is regulated by aptitude, qualifications, and professional achievement, as enshrined in Article 33 of the Basic Law. The German administrative education system, particularly institutions like the Hochschule für Verwaltung in Speyer, strongly reinforces these norms. As a result, a significant portion of senior civil servants hold doctorates in law, economics, or administrative sciences, reflecting a technocratic tradition that prioritizes expertise over partisanship (Butzer 2023). This creates a bureaucratic identity distinct from partisan politics and fosters resistance to political pressures.

Germany's federal structure also acts as a buffer against centralized politicization. Each of the 16 Länder has its own civil service laws and structures, which disperse administrative authority and make it more difficult for any single party at the federal level to dominate the

entire public administration. This diffusion of power is especially important in limiting politicization, as it fragments the opportunities for political interference across multiple layers of governance. Furthermore, the federal government retains limited direct administrative scope, with most implementation powers devolved to the Länder, reinforcing decentralized insulation from political interference.¹⁵

Importantly, coalition agreements in Germany rarely extend into the bureaucratic apparatus beyond the political layer, including ministerial appointments. While the distribution of cabinet portfolios is subject to detailed negotiation, civil service appointments, especially at the senior level, are governed by long-standing legal rules and merit-based procedures. The Civil Service Status Act restricts political discretion over senior appointments and creates a formalized hierarchy that resists politicization.¹⁶ So, while political advisors may be installed to serve ministers directly, senior bureaucrats remain largely career professionals with expertise in their respective policy fields.

Lastly, the cohesion and programmatic orientation of coalition parties reduces the reliance on patronage as a tool of coalition management. German coalitions are usually formed among established parties with clear policy platforms and overlapping constituencies. Furthermore, they tend to prioritize long-term policy outcomes over the short-term distribution of posts (Veit, Reichard, and Hammerschmid 2013). This reduces incentives to politicize the bureaucracy to manage coalition dynamics because policy negotiation takes precedence over spoils-sharing.

¹⁵ *Basic Law*, Art. 33.

¹⁶ *The Basic Law*. Art. 33(5).

In combination, these factors explain why coalition strength in Germany acts as a stabilizing force rather than a vector for politicization. The institutional design of the German state, particularly its legal protections and federal structure, shapes coalition incentives away from patronage and toward long-term policy coordination. As a result, even complex or ideologically diverse coalitions operate within a framework that privileges bureaucratic neutrality and resists partisan encroachment.

Summary Assessment

The German case illustrates that coalition strength, when embedded in a robust institutional framework, can mitigate the risks of bureaucratic politicization. In Germany, coalition governments operate within a governance structure that prioritizes policy compromise and legal adherence over patronage or administrative control. The very nature of coalition governance, involving negotiation among parties with differing priorities, could, in a weaker system, lead to politicized bargaining over bureaucratic appointments. However, this pressure is diffused in Germany by formal legal constraints, decentralized administrative authority, and strong civil service norms prioritizing neutrality and meritocracy. So, coalition partners have little incentive or ability to politicize the bureaucracy because doing so would undermine the stability and legitimacy of the government itself. Thus, Germany demonstrates that when strong and stable coalition dynamics interact with institutional safeguards, the safeguards perform as intended and actively promote bureaucratic professionalism rather than undermine it.

Turkey

Political System and Coalition Patterns

The Republic of Turkey operates under a presidential system following a major constitutional reform in 2017, which transitioned the country away from its parliamentary

roots.¹⁷ This shift centralized executive power in the hands of the president, currently Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and significantly weakened the role of the legislature and judiciary. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), in power since 2002, began consolidating power through successive electoral victories and ultimately abolished the prime ministerial role in 2018.

Prior to this transformation, Turkey had a complex, multi-party parliamentary system with a history of complex and regionally significant coalitions. During the 1990s, coalition governments were the norm. Nowadays, Turkey's party system remains electorally competitive but shows increasing tendencies toward dominance by the AKP, illustrated by the party's period of single-party dominance between 2002 and 2015.¹⁸ Despite the presence of opposition parties like the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), electoral and institutional reforms have tilted the playing field in favor of the ruling party.¹⁹ Since 2018, the AKP has governed in a de facto coalition with the MHP through the People's Alliance, establishing it as a type 5 coalition (dominant party) and creating a nationalist-conservative bloc that has formalized Turkey's shift toward majoritarian governance.

Bureaucratic Structure and Traditions

Turkey's civil service traditionally exhibited legal rationality and formal meritocracy features, modeled partly on French and German administrative systems. For example, the *State Personnel Law No. 657*, enacted in 1965, outlined recruitment and promotion procedures based

¹⁷ Republic of Turkey. *Law No. 6771 on the Amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye*, Official Gazette No. 30030, April 11, 2017. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2017/02/20170211-1.htm>.

¹⁸ Based on election data from the TC Supreme Election Board, <https://www.ysk.gov.tr/tr/secim-arsivi/2612>

¹⁹ In 2022, Turkey enacted several amendments to its electoral laws, including lowering the electoral threshold to 7% and changing the method for allocating parliamentary seats (Freedom House 2023).

on merit, impartiality, and seniority.²⁰ This legal framework reflects the early Republic's ambition to modernize and professionalize the state administration. However, political upheavals, military interventions, and party system instability repeatedly disrupted these traditions. The AKP era has accelerated a shift from bureaucratic autonomy to a more patronage-based and politically compliant bureaucracy.

The Turkish civil service includes both kadrolu memurlar (permanent civil servants) and sözleşmeli personel (contracted personnel), with the former expected to operate under laws that mandate neutrality, professionalism, and merit-based recruitment. Approximately 65% of public sector employees were classified as permanent civil servants, while 35% worked under temporary or contract-based arrangements.²¹ The increasing use of contracted personnel has been a notable administrative trend since the 2000s, with implications for bureaucratic efficiency and oversight mechanisms.

As mentioned, Turkish permanent civil servants are governed by rules intended to ensure neutrality, professionalism, and insulation from political pressures, as outlined in *Law No. 657*. This civil service law includes protections such as tenure, standardized pay scales, and formal grievance procedures.²² Additionally, entry into the career civil service requires passing the *Kamu Personel Seçme Sınavı* (KPSS), or Public Personnel Selection Examination, which is a centralized exam conducted by the Ölçme, Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi (ÖSYM), followed by probationary service and promotion based on a points-based evaluation system.²³

²⁰ Republic of Turkey. *Law No. 657 of July 14, 1965 on Civil Servants*. Official Gazette No. 12056, July 23, 1965. <https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/legislation/details/11090>.

²¹ Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK). "Labour Force Statistics, July 2022." Published September 2022. <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Labour-Force-Statistics-July-2022-45653&dil=2>.

²² *Law No. 657*

²³ Republic of Turkey. *Law No. 6114 on the Establishment and Duties of the Measurement, Selection and Placement Center*. Official Gazette No. 27897, March 3, 2011. <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=6114&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5>.

However, since coming to power in 2002, the AKP has undertaken a sweeping transformation of the Turkish bureaucracy. Not only did the 2017 constitutional referendum introduce a presidential system, but it also drastically restructured the administrative apparatus. The Prime Ministry was abolished, and executive coordination functions were centralized under new presidential offices, policy boards, and directorates, including the Presidency of Strategy and Budget, the Directorate of Communications, and the Directorate of Religious Affairs.²⁴

Alongside the centralization of executive functions, the judiciary underwent major administrative reforms. In particular, the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK), which oversees judicial appointments, was restructured to consist mostly of members selected by the President and the Parliament, thus aligning judicial governance more directly with the political executive (Venice Commission 2017). The Constitutional Court, Court of Cassation (Yargıtay), and Council of State (Danıştay) have also been affected negatively by revised appointment procedures, while the Ministry of Justice has seen expanded administrative oversight powers.

With the administrative restructuring, the AKP created numerous quasi-governmental institutions and presidential offices that exist outside traditional ministerial hierarchies. These entities include policy councils, directorates, advisory boards, coordination offices, and task-specific agencies, many of which were established by presidential decree following the 2017 constitutional reforms.²⁵ Notable examples include the Presidency of Strategy and Budget (Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı), the Directorate of Communications (İletişim Başkanlığı), the Human Resources Office (İnsan Kaynakları Ofisi), and Presidential Policy Boards on areas such as education, economy, and security. These bodies report directly to the President and are

²⁴ Law No. 6771

²⁵ Republic of Turkey. *Presidential Decree No. 1 on the Organization of the Presidency*. Official Gazette No. 30474, July 10, 2018. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2018/07/20180710-1.htm>.

typically staffed with appointees selected for their proximity to executive leadership rather than civil service seniority or technical expertise.²⁶

Politicization Trends and Factors

Turkey scores 1.18 on the Politicization Index, marking it as one of the highest among the countries analyzed. This high score is supported by a growing body of evidence indicating deep and systemic politicization of the public administration. The trend toward politicization severely accelerated following the 2017 constitutional referendum.

Although merit-based recruitment still governs entry-level civil service posts, higher appointments increasingly reflect political loyalty over expertise. Under both single-party and coalition arrangements, political appointments have expanded in scope and depth. The president now appoints ministers, vice presidents, and most senior bureaucrats without parliamentary approval.²⁷ Additionally, while the traditionally recruited civil servants operate under legally mandated neutrality, the special advisors, presidential appointees, and politically controlled directorates now dominate policy implementation (Demirelli and Aydin 2024). This concentration of appointment powers creates concerns about the erosion of professional standards and the emergence of a spoils system reminiscent of historical patronage systems.

Additionally, after the failed 2016 coup attempt, the government launched a sweeping purge of the bureaucracy. Over 130,000 public employees were dismissed or suspended under emergency decrees, many of them accused of affiliation with the Gülen movement (U.S. Department of State 2022). These mass dismissals were carried out without due process or

²⁶ Republic of Turkey. *Presidential Decree No. 14 on the Organization and Duties of the Directorate of Communications*. Official Gazette No. 30488, July 24, 2018. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2018/07/20180724-14.htm>.

²⁷ Republic of Turkey. *Constitution of the Republic of Turkey*, as amended in 2017. Official Gazette No. 30030, April 11, 2017. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2017/04/20170411-1.htm>.

transparent legal procedures, which decimated institutional memory and paved the way for widespread, politicized replacements.

As discussed, the AKP's bureaucratic strategy included restructuring key institutions, such as the judiciary, to ensure alignment with executive priorities, one of the most visible indicators of politicization. Once a relatively autonomous body, the Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors was restructured to place it under tighter executive control. This institutional capture now extends to regulatory bodies and public agencies, further undermining bureaucratic impartiality (Gerson 2022). Similarly, the Court of Accounts, Turkey's supreme audit institution, sees its findings increasingly ignored or underreported, and the Civil Service Council, tasked with defending merit-based practices, has been marginalized (Freedom House 2023). These trends suggest increased politicization and institutional decay in mechanisms designed to safeguard bureaucratic neutrality.

Furthermore, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's newly created agencies are designed to enhance his policy priorities and strategic oversight. In practice, they often duplicate or bypass the authority of existing ministries, creating parallel administrative pathways. This overlapping authority undermines the coherence and accountability of public administration. For instance, while the Ministry of National Education retains statutory authority, the new Presidential Board of Education and Training has an influential role in curriculum development, educational reform, and policy discourse, raising questions about overlapping mandates (Freedom House 2023). Similarly, the Directorate of Communications, though initially conceived as a central communication office, now exercises broad influence over media regulation, international public

diplomacy, and information flow, overlapping with the roles of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and other regulatory bodies.²⁸

Several structural and political factors help explain the depth of bureaucratic politicization in Turkey. First and foremost is the 2017 constitutional reform, which abolished the parliamentary system and concentrated nearly all executive and administrative powers in the presidency. This reconfiguration eliminated critical horizontal accountability mechanisms, such as parliamentary oversight of appointments and judicial independence. At the same time, the emergence of a dominant-party coalition system with the formalization of the People's Alliance between the AKP and MHP in 2018 created a consolidated ruling bloc capable of governing without meaningful opposition. This alliance enhanced the executive's ability to reshape state institutions without the checks typically imposed by coalition bargaining or inter-party oversight. Rather than constraining politicization, coalition politics in this context reinforced it by aligning multiple centers of power around a shared partisan and ideological agenda. The erosion of institutional independence, the restructuring of regulatory and judicial bodies, and the proliferation of extralegal presidential institutions then further blurred the line between administration and political authority. Together, these developments created a bureaucracy in which political loyalty increasingly replaces meritocratic principles as the primary criterion for appointment and advancement within the state apparatus.

Summary Assessment

Turkey represents a clear case of high bureaucratic politicization and illustrates the vulnerabilities of administrative systems in hybrid regimes where formal civil service rules coexist with informal executive dominance. Unlike Germany, where coalition governance

²⁸ *Presidential Decree No. 14.*

stabilizes a professional bureaucracy, Turkey's administrative system has transformed into an extension of partisan control. The country's transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system concentrated political authority, while purges, institutional restructuring, and the proliferation of politically appointed personnel have eroded bureaucratic neutrality.

In the context of this study's broader theoretical framework, Turkey demonstrates that institutional design alone cannot prevent politicization. Even countries with formal meritocratic traditions and recruitment rules, like Turkey's *Law No. 657*, are vulnerable when executive authority grows unconstrained. The Turkish case underscores that the presence of formal rules is insufficient when executive dominance undermines the institutional mechanisms designed to enforce them. Importantly, Turkey also illustrates the limits of coalition politics as a constraint on politicization. While coalition governance in many multi-party systems introduces bargaining dynamics that can diffuse political control over bureaucracies, Turkey's *de facto* coalition under the People's Alliance reinforces executive power rather than checking it. Instead of distributing influence across parties, the coalition consolidated it, enabling further state restructuring and insulation of the executive from institutional oversight.

This suggests that the presence or absence of coalitions is not determinative; instead, the nature and purpose of coalitions matter greatly. Turkey's decline in competitive coalition-building over time has not mitigated politicization. Instead, it has reflected and reinforced a shift toward dominant-party rule under a consolidated executive. This highlights a critical implication that executive consolidation can weaponize coalition politics and institutional restructuring to erode bureaucratic autonomy in hybrid or transitioning regimes. Thus, Turkey provides a cautionary tale of how the politicization of public administration can become an instrument of authoritarian drift, even in contexts where legal frameworks nominally support meritocracy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Political System and Coalition Patterns

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is a complex, consociational democracy established under the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords to end the Bosnian War.²⁹ The Accords created a power-sharing system among the country's three main ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. The constitutional framework divides authority between two semi-autonomous entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), and a central state government with limited competencies.³⁰ The FBiH is home to predominantly Bosniaks and Croats, whereas the Serbs mainly reside in the RS. In addition, the Brčko District operates as a self-governing administrative unit under joint sovereignty. This means the central government holds limited competencies, restricted primarily to foreign policy, fiscal matters, and inter-entity coordination.

BiH's political system is characterized by fragmentation, ethnic-based voting, and pervasive elite bargaining. The presidency is a tripartite institution, with one elected representative from each ethnic group rotating every eight months as chair.³¹ The Presidency serves as the collective head of state, composed of one Bosniak, Croat, and Serb member, each directly elected by voters from their respective entities, and the chairmanship rotates every eight months. This institution primarily handles foreign affairs, diplomatic appointments, and symbolic state functions to ensure equal ethnic representation at the highest level. In contrast, the

²⁹ Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. *General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Paris, December 14, 1995. <https://www.osce.org/bih/126173>.

³⁰ Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. *Annex 4: Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Paris, December 14, 1995. <https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/icty/dayton/daytonannex4.html>.

³¹ Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Article V. Adopted December 14, 1995. Accessed April 11, 2025. <https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/bosnia-constitution.html>.

Chair of the Council of Ministers is nominated by the Presidency and confirmed by the state Parliament, functioning as the head of government.³² The Chair coordinates the work of the Council of Ministers, which is BiH's executive body responsible for state-level administrative functions such as foreign trade, finance, and security. However, their authority is limited by the autonomy of the Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska, each of which maintains its own government and prime minister. This division of leadership reinforces the decentralization of power in BiH and exemplifies how executive authority is both ethnically balanced and institutionally dispersed.

Furthermore, BiH operates under a Type 4 coalition structure, involving broad and often unstable governing coalitions formed along ethnic and party lines. Coalition governments are necessary at both the state and entity levels due to the proportional electoral system and ethnic quotas mandated by the Dayton Constitution.^{33,34} Additionally, political parties are primarily ethnonational in orientation, including the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ-BiH), and the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD). Consequently, coalitions are often formed through protracted negotiations and are prone to breaking down, especially when interethnic tensions rise.

The 2022 general elections underscore the complexities of BiH's coalition politics when it took over two months to form a governing coalition and seven months to form the Federation government.³⁵ Despite securing the most seats in the FBiH House of Representatives, the SDA failed to form a functional coalition. Consequently, with support from other parties, a coalition

³² *Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Article V(4).

³³ *Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Annex 4.

³⁴ Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, https://www.izbori.ba/Documents/documents/English/Laws/Election_Law_BiH.pdf.

³⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2022 Parliamentary Elections." <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/BA/BA-LC01/election/BA-LC01-E20221002>.

led by Troika and HDZ BiH formed the government and appointed Nermin Nikšić as Prime Minister in April 2023. However, this formation required intervention by the High Representative, highlighting the persistent challenges in BiH's political processes.³⁶ At the state level, the Presidency saw the election of Denis Bećirović (Troika), Željka Cvijanović (SNSD), and the re-election of Željko Komšić (DF). However, in January 2025, Troika withdrew support from the coalition due to SNSD's failure to support key EU-related legislation, reflecting the fragility of these alliances.

Bureaucratic Structure and Traditions

BiH's bureaucratic structure reflects its complex political framework, characterized by multiple layers of governance and a fragmented civil service system. The civil service is formally governed by both state and entity-level civil service laws, most of which were developed with international assistance in the early 2000s. At the state level, the *Law on Civil Service in the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina* emphasizes principles of legality, transparency, accountability, efficiency, and political independence.³⁷ This law categorizes civil servants into six salary grades, with positions ranging from Specialists to Directors, each with defined responsibilities and qualifications. These laws emphasize principles of merit, impartiality, and professionalism.

As discussed, each entity also maintains its own civil service commission, recruitment procedures, and salary structures, resulting in significant variation in administrative quality and

³⁶ Office of the High Representative. *65th Report of the High Representative for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Secretary-General of the United Nations*. May 2024. <https://www.ohr.int/65th-report-of-the-high-representative-for-implementation-of-the-peace-agreement-on-bosnia-and-herzegovina-to-the-secretary-general-of-the-un/>.

³⁷ Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Law on Civil Service in the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina. <https://rai-see.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina-Law-on-Civil-Service.pdf>.

standards. In the FBiH, the civil service is regulated by *the Law on Civil Service of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*.³⁸ This law outlines the legal employment status of civil servants across federal, cantonal, city, and municipal levels. Importantly, Article 3 of the law mandates proportionate representation of the constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs) based on the 1991 census. The law also outlines recruitment and promotion procedures, emphasizing open competition and professional merit. This means that positions are announced publicly, and selection is based on written tests, interviews, and professional qualifications. The Civil Service Agency of FBiH is responsible for managing recruitment, examinations, and training. However, it lacks strong enforcement powers, and political appointments are still common, especially in senior-level roles.

The RS operates under its own *Law on the Civil Service in the Republika Srpska Administration*, which similarly governs the legal status of civil servants within its jurisdiction.³⁹ The recruitment process in RS is formally regulated through public competitions and overseen by the Civil Service Agency of RS, an autonomous body. The body's selection committees are typically composed of experienced civil servants and subject-matter experts from the recruiting body.⁴⁰ Importantly, the RS law does not contain the same explicit ethnic quota requirements as FBiH. However, RS is overwhelmingly Serb-populated, so the SNSD party issues appointments.

³⁸ Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Law on Civil Service of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Official Gazette of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. <https://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/legal/laws-of-bih/pdf/009%20-%20PUBLIC%20ADMINISTRATION/Civil%20Service/FBH/FBH%20LAW%20ON%20CIVIL%20SERVICE%2029-03.pdf>.

³⁹ Republika Srpska. *Law on the Civil Service in the Republika Srpska Administration*. Official Gazette of Republika Srpska. <https://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/legal/laws-of-bih/pdf/009%20-%20PUBLIC%20ADMINISTRATION/Civil%20Service/RS/RS%20LAW%20ON%20CIVIL%20SERVICE%20IN%20THE%20RS%20ADMINISTRATION%2016-02%2C%2062-02%2C%2038-03.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Civil Service Agency of Republika Srpska. *About Us*. https://www.bacid.eu/CAF_Civil_Service_Agency_of_Republica_Srpska.

On both the state and entity levels, political appointees typically occupy senior managerial positions. They are appointed based on their political affiliations, while career civil servants are selected through competitive processes that emphasize merit and professional qualifications. The overlap between political and administrative roles is particularly pronounced at the local government level, where party patronage networks significantly influence hiring practices (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2024). However, comprehensive data detailing the exact breakdown between these groups is limited.

Ultimately, efforts to professionalize the civil service in BiH have been ongoing. The European Union (EU) highlights the need for reforms to align with European principles of public administration for BiH to graduate from EU candidacy status to member status (European Commission 2024). Key recommendations include amending civil service laws to reinforce merit-based recruitment and promotion, enhancing the capacities of civil service agencies, and establishing performance-based monitoring systems to ensure transparent human resource management. Addressing these challenges is crucial for developing a more efficient, transparent, and professional civil service that can effectively serve the diverse needs of BiH's population.

Politicization Trends and Factors

Bosnia and Herzegovina scores 0.61 on the Politicization Index, reflecting a high level of politicization relative to other European countries. The relationship between coalition structures and politicization in BiH is shaped by several factors that reinforce each other. Above all, the constitutional and legal architecture established by the Dayton Peace Agreement embeds ethnic power-sharing into every level of governance. This institutional logic requires that governing coalitions represent all three constituent peoples, which in practice means that bureaucratic appointments are distributed as political concessions among ethnonational parties.

Politicization is deeply embedded in the state's consociational logic. The need to balance ethnic representation in governing coalitions means that every major political party demands a proportional share of appointments across ministries, agencies, and local administrative bodies. These shares are formalized or informally agreed upon during coalition negotiations and often adhered to with rigid discipline (European Commission 2024). Administrative appointments are routinely used as bargaining chips in coalition agreements, leading to a politicized and heavily segmented public administration. Unlike Germany, where coalition agreements typically exclude the bureaucracy, in BiH, the distribution of civil service positions is often explicitly negotiated among parties. As a result, senior civil service roles become extensions of party authority, used to reward loyalty and exert influence within bureaucratic institutions.

The negotiated appointment system directly ties administrative turnover to political turnover because coalition reshuffling triggers the mass replacement of personnel. This undermines institutional memory and bureaucratic expertise and reinforces a culture in which merit-based recruitment bows to party loyalty, despite numerous civil service laws stating otherwise. Furthermore, public sector employment is widely viewed as a source of patronage and political capital, further encouraging parties to exploit coalition agreements to secure administrative posts. This dynamic is visible at all levels of government. In local governments, especially, political control over hiring is pervasive because ethnic representation requirements often serve as a justification for appointing party loyalists, regardless of qualifications. This politicization has a cascading effect where civil servants are aware that their tenure depends on political allegiance, so they may refrain from enforcing rules, acting independently, or even entering the public administration in the first place.

The fragmented structure of the state multiplies opportunities for political capture. Each administrative unit operates with substantial autonomy and maintains its own bureaucracy, civil service laws, and appointment procedures. Consequently, the politicization of the bureaucracy is not a centralized phenomenon, but one that is replicated across dozens of overlapping jurisdictions. For example, four main CSAs perform centralized human resource management functions; however, they lack the authority to effectively lead and monitor the implementation of civil service policies (OECD 2024). This fragmentation results in inconsistencies in human resource management practices and hinders the mobility of civil servants between different levels of government. Public audits, when conducted, rarely result in meaningful reform or disciplinary action. The judiciary, too, is fragmented and often subject to political pressure, particularly within entity-level courts. This lack of institutional oversight means that coalition arrangements can override formal procedures with minimal consequences.

Together, these factors create a feedback loop where coalition strength, rather than disciplining party behavior, enhances opportunities for administrative control and clientelism. Political elites have strong incentives to perpetuate this model, while institutional and societal constraints on politicization remain weak. As a result, the civil service continues to function less as an autonomous administrative body and more as a venue for sharing political power.

Summary Assessment

Bosnia and Herzegovina exemplifies how institutional design, when rooted in ethno-political accommodation rather than administrative functionality, can produce systemic bureaucratic politicization. The fragmentation of authority, the ethnicization of politics, and the weakness of oversight institutions combine to create an administrative environment in which meritocracy subordinates to political expediency.

Unlike Germany, where institutional safeguards insulate the bureaucracy from political interference, BiH operates in a context where political bargaining is inseparable from administrative practice. Compared to Turkey, BiH lacks the executive centralization that enables sweeping administrative control but suffers from a diffuse and decentralized politicization that permeates every level of governance.

In sum, Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrates how politicization can become not merely an outcome of weak institutions but a foundational logic of governance. This entrenched politicization has clear implications for the quality of bureaucratic performance, particularly in terms of inefficiency, uneven service delivery, and limited policy continuity across administrative units. BiH consistently scores poorly on measures of government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and control of corruption, performing well below the regional average for Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans (OECD 2024). Surveys of citizens also reveal widespread dissatisfaction with public services, with trust in public administration ranked among the lowest in Europe (Regional Cooperation Council 2021). Ultimately, BiH's fragmented and ethnically partitioned administration significantly undermines meritocratic governance and institutional accountability.

Comparative Analysis

The comparison of Germany, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina reveals distinct patterns in how coalition structures interact with institutional environments to shape bureaucratic politicization. While these countries differ in regime type, administrative traditions, and levels of development, their trajectories demonstrate that neither the presence of coalitions nor formal meritocratic rules alone determines bureaucratic neutrality. Instead, politicization is better

understood as a function of how coalitions are embedded in broader institutional logic and whether legal, normative, or structural safeguards constrain them.

Across the cases, coalition politics emerges as a potential vector for both insulating and politicizing the bureaucracy, depending on the nature and strength of the coalition. In Germany, coalition governance is institutionalized through detailed agreements that largely exclude the administrative realm, supported by legal norms and a culture of bureaucratic professionalism. In contrast, in both Turkey and BiH, coalition dynamics provide a vehicle for politicization, though through different mechanisms. In Turkey, the formalization of a dominant-party coalition allowed the executive to bypass institutional constraints and expand patronage networks. In Bosnia, coalition arrangements serve as ethno-political contracts, with public administration used as a mechanism to divide state resources among constituent groups. This suggests that the mere existence of coalitions does not constrain politicization. What matters more is the type of coalition, the incentives it generates, and the institutional frameworks within which it operates.

A second pattern emerging from the cases is the decisive role of institutional safeguards, such as legal protections and oversight mechanisms, in mediating the effects of political competition on administrative independence. Germany's strong civil service laws, constitutional protections, and administrative courts create a high barrier to politicization. These safeguards are further reinforced by a professionalized recruitment pipeline and decentralized administrative authority across the state-level, which collectively deters political interference.

By contrast, Turkey and Bosnia both show how weak or hollowed-out institutions allow coalitions and executives to penetrate the bureaucracy. In Turkey, despite the existence of formal recruitment procedures, executive control over senior appointments, widespread purges, and the proliferation of parallel institutions have eroded the autonomy of the civil service. In Bosnia, the

institutional weakness is more structural with overlapping jurisdictions, fragmented civil service agencies, and unenforceable meritocratic laws creating ample space for party-based appointments and administrative bargaining at every level of government. These patterns indicate that legal-institutional insulation, not just simply legal frameworks, is a necessary condition for maintaining bureaucratic impartiality under coalition rule.

Another shared pattern is the use of administrative appointments as a tool of coalition management. While this is controlled in Germany due to strict legal and normative boundaries, it is a defining feature of Bosnia and Turkey. In both, administrative control becomes a form of political currency. In Bosnia, bureaucratic appointments are explicitly bargained over during coalition negotiations, while in Turkey, control over appointments reinforces cohesion within the dominant-party alliance. This reveals a broader mechanism that when coalition partners lack policy coherence or institutionalized oversight mechanisms, they are more likely to turn to personnel distribution to ensure loyalty and secure political stability. Administrative politicization, in this context, becomes a substitute for policy-based consensus. As such, politicization is not just an unintended consequence of coalition politics. Rather, it is a deliberate strategy of coalition management in systems that are weakly institutionalized or highly polarized.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the extent and mechanisms of bureaucratic politicization are deeply shaped by the structure of party systems and the dynamics of coalition governance. Across both the quantitative and qualitative analyses, one central finding stands out: it is not simply the presence of electoral competition that matters for bureaucratic outcomes, but how that competition is organized. Specifically, whether power is concentrated in dominant parties, alternates between

two major contenders, or is fragmented across multiparty coalitions with varying degrees of stability and institutionalization.

The regression analysis presented in this thesis provides broad cross-national evidence for these dynamics. Model 1 demonstrates that multi-party systems, on average, are associated with lower levels of bureaucratic politicization relative to one-party systems. This finding supports the expectation that fragmented executive authority constrains the capacity of political actors to dominate administrative appointments. However, Model 2 reveals that this insulating effect is highly conditional. Within multi-party contexts, coalition stability and configuration significantly shape politicization outcomes. Stable coalitions are associated with lower levels of politicization, while volatile, consociational, dominant-party, and power-sharing coalitions are correlated with higher levels of politicization. These statistical findings reinforce the core argument that it is not merely the presence of electoral competition, but its structure and the incentives it generates, that meaningfully condition bureaucratic outcomes.

The qualitative case studies of Germany, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrate the causal mechanisms behind these patterns. The cases demonstrate two distinct pathways through which politicization unfolds. In Turkey, politicization is top-down, driven by an increasingly centralized executive that has dismantled checks on presidential appointment power and built parallel administrative structures. In Bosnia, politicization is bottom-up and horizontally diffuse, stemming from the state's fragmentation and the multiplicity of actors entitled to representation in the public administration. Both pathways ultimately lead to similar outcomes, including a weak meritocracy, politicized appointments, and the erosion of bureaucratic capacity, but through different causal routes. Turkey's centralized politicization reflects a dominant executive leveraging coalition support to consolidate control. Bosnia's

decentralized politicization reflects a system where coalition governance is inseparable from the administrative allocation of power among parties and ethnic groups.

These findings suggest that bureaucratic politicization is not completely reducible to party system type or the existence of coalitions. Instead, it emerges from the interaction between political incentives and institutional constraints. Coalition governments can insulate or exploit the bureaucracy, depending on the legal safeguards, professional norms, and functional oversight institutions. The Turkish case, in particular, shows that even well-designed formal structures can be hollowed out during prolonged dominant-party dynamics, turning the civil service into a site of political contestation rather than neutral governance.

This analysis carries important implications, as it calls for a reassessment of common explanatory frameworks that emphasize bureaucratic structure or legal safeguards as the primary determinants of bureaucratic autonomy. Instead, the findings highlight the need to focus on the strategic incentives created by executive power balances among parties combined with the institutional environment in which these coalitions operate. Civil service protections alone are insufficient without political environments that reduce the utility of patronage-based appointments and limit abuse of executive oversight. These patterns also offer valuable lessons for future peace negotiations, particularly in contexts like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the imperative to include multiple warring factions must be balanced against the long-term risks of institutional fragmentation. Designing inclusive settlements should not come at the expense of building a coherent and professional bureaucracy, as the Dayton Accords inadvertently demonstrated.

At the same time, several limitations of this research should be acknowledged. The quantitative analysis is cross-sectional, relying on the 2020 QoG Expert Survey, and therefore

cannot fully capture how politicization patterns evolve across time or in response to shifts in coalition stability. Though the qualitative case studies offer a touch of this, a longitudinal analysis of bureaucratic appointments and coalition dynamics over time would offer greater insight into how politicization pressures fluctuate with coalition stability, electoral turnover, or executive power consolidation. Additionally, the party systems and coalition typology used in the regression analysis, while grounded in established literature and electoral data, involves a degree of nuance, especially in hybrid or ambiguous cases where coalition structures may not fit neatly into categories.

Furthermore, while the quantitative analysis features two-party systems in Model 1, the qualitative component focuses exclusively on multi-party contexts. This leaves important questions about the applicability of the argument to two-party states, where executive turnover between parties is typically higher and coalition governance is absent. In such systems, politicization dynamics may follow different logics, such as the anticipation of partisan alternation leading to institutionalized spoils systems or politicization limited to the highest administrative tiers. Further research is needed to examine whether the strategic use of appointments in two-party systems reflects similar coalition-based bargaining incentives or whether formal civil service protections play a more decisive role.

Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of literature that seeks to explain the political threats to bureaucratic governance. The central claim that bureaucratic politicization is shaped by the structure of party systems and the incentives generated by coalition dynamics finds support across both quantitative models and qualitative case studies. Whether coalitions constrain or facilitate the bureaucracy depends not simply on their existence, but on how they are organized, how stable they are, and how they interact with institutional safeguards.

As global patterns of executive power consolidation, democratic erosion, and coalition fragmentation continue to reshape political landscapes (Freedom House 2024), understanding the conditions under which bureaucracies maintain or lose their autonomy and neutrality remains a pressing question. This research highlights the need to look beyond formal administrative design and regime classifications to consider the political competition and incentives that shape bureaucratic behavior at its core. In doing so, it offers both theoretical and practical insights for scholars and policymakers concerned with preserving the integrity and effectiveness of public administration.

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Appendix

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Coded Dummy Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Politicization Index		69	-0.20	0.82	-2.32	2.01
Party System Type	One-Party	12	0.17	0.38	0	1
	Two-Party	7	0.10	0.30	0	1
	Multi-Party	50	0.72	0.45	0	1
Coalition Style	Stable	14	0.28	0.45	0	1
	Volatile	25	0.50	0.51	0	1
	Fragmented	4	0.80	0.27	0	1
	Consociational	3	0.60	0.24	0	1
	Dominant-Party	2	0.04	0.20	0	1
	Power-Sharing	2	0.04	0.20	0	1
Regime Type	Parliamentary democracy	24	0.35	0.48	0	1
	Semi-presidential democracy	21	0.30	0.46	0	1
	Presidential democracy	19	0.28	0.45	0	1
	Civilian dictatorship	5	0.07	0.26	0	1
Region	Western Europe and North America	20	0.29	0.46	0	1
	Eastern Europe/Post-Soviet	20	0.29	0.46	0	1
	Latin America	8	0.12	0.32	0	1
	North Africa/Middle East	2	0.03	0.17	0	1
	Sub-Saharan Africa	10	0.14	0.35	0	1
	East Asia	4	0.06	0.24	0	1
	Southeast Asia	3	0.04	0.21	0	1
	South Asia	2	0.03	0.17	0	1
	GDP per capita		69	26343.48	26343.01	355.78