

# Democracy and bureaucracy in newly industrialized countries: A systematic comparison between Latin America and East Asia

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## Abstract

This article analyzes the political-institutional determinants of bureaucracy quality among a group of newly industrialized countries in Latin America and East Asia democratized in the Third Wave. Four causal conditions are examined for the occurrence of higher levels of bureaucratic “weberianess” in the selected cases: historical sequence, political parties’ institutionalization, electoral competition, and ethnic politics. The study employs the fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis to explore the expectation that each of these conditions’ implications depends on other conditions’ presence or absence. The findings disconfirm claims about the critical role of party system institutionalization for Weberian bureaucracies in new democracies. Besides, the analysis did not declare a professional public administration’s prior existence before democratization as a necessary or sufficient condition for the outcome of interest. Finally, although the electoral competition was declared necessary for the outcome occurrence, it does not imply the same result if combined with ethnic politics.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Researchers agree that establishing public bureaucracies organized with Weberian principles is a necessary condition for state capacity and quality of government (Centeno et al., 2017;

Dahlström & Lapuente, 2017). A Weberian bureaucracy is characterized as merit-based, rule-bounded, and impartial. Contrarily, in a patronage-based one, the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is based on personal reciprocity and clientelism. According to Max Weber, merit and patronage-based bureaucracies imply two differing modes of legitimation of the state: legal-rationalism and neopatrimonialism, respectively. Therefore, while a Weberian civil service is related to rationality and effectiveness, patronage systems are commonly associated with a lack of professionalism, partisanship, and spoils (Grindle, 2010).

Nevertheless, in all modern political systems, political appointments cohabit with merit recruitment in public administrations at different levels. Typically, this kind of appointment is at the top level of governments and public organizations (Grindle, 2012). Additionally, discretionary appointments are the means for politicians to exercise control over the formulation and implementation of public policies (Panizza et al., 2018).

The professionalization of state bureaucracies is a complex phenomenon, and newly democratized countries present interesting cases. This is because the relationship between democratization and quality bureaucracy is an issue in dispute. Bäck and Hadenius (2008), for instance, found that “the effect of democracy on state capacity is negative at low values of democracy, nonexistent at median values, and strongly positive at high democracy levels.” Alternatively, some authors contend that the level of bureaucratic quality at present depends on whether the state’s professionalization was undertaken before it was opened to broader democratic participation (Fukuyama, 2014; Shefter, 1994). In turn, others argue that the relationship between stateness and democracy is much less straightforward than that assumed by the sequential approach (Croissant & Hellmann, 2020). Additionally, existing studies emphasize the role of electoral competition and party organization in bureaucracy quality (Schuster, 2016).

Why do new democracies, with comparable developmental stages, present different levels of “weberianess”? To answer this research question, the study explores an expectation not yet examined in the literature that this is a conjunctural and equifinal phenomenon. This means that explanatory factors should be combined to reveal causal patterns, and there may be more than one combination of causal conditions related to the same outcome.

Thus, this research aims to reveal combinations of political-institutional conditions among a group of new democracies that present or do not present high levels of bureaucratic weberianess. The study empirically analyzes 10 Latin American and East Asian newly industrialized countries democratized in the third wave. Methodologically, the research uses the fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), which has not been previously applied to answer the research question. QCA is an analytical technique and a research approach well suited to identify combinations of (configurations) causal conditions associated with an outcome of interest (Ragin, 2008; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009).<sup>1</sup> Usual regression analyzes are not well suited to explore combinations of causes as well as examining multiple causal paths to the same outcome (Vis, 2012). Although causal case studies, like process tracing, deal with causal complexity, equifinality, and asymmetry, they do not enable claims about necessity nor sufficiency given the lack of counterfactual variation (Beach, 2018). Within-case studies follow the results obtained by the QCA to find plausible interpretations for the identified causal paths.

By verifying the extent to which the empirical results corroborate theoretical expectations, the research findings contribute to the literature by shedding light on the limitations of existing theories and indicating directions to be expanded. Considering the deterministic ontology that supports the analysis, the findings disconfirm claims about the critical role of party system institutionalization for Weberian bureaucracies’ presence in new democracies. Besides, the QCA results do not declare a professional public administration’s prior existence before

democratization as necessary or sufficient for the outcome of interest. Finally, although electoral competition was declared necessary for the outcome occurrence, it does not imply the same result if combined with ethnic politics.

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews existing theories on the topic, presenting the research expectations. Section 3 describes the case selection criteria. The operationalization of outcomes and causal conditions is explained in Section 4, while Section 5 applies the method used. Section 6 analytically assesses the results, followed by conclusions and research limitations in Section 7.

## 2 | EXISTING THEORIES AND EXPECTATIONS

The current literature suggests several alternatives to answer why some new democracies present high levels of bureaucratic weberianess while others do not. The research focuses on political-institutional factors.

Fukuyama (2014) states that the most modern contemporary bureaucracies were established early by authoritarian states in their pursuit of national security. This is the case in northeast Asian countries. In contrast, countries that democratized before they established rational-legal administrations would develop patronage-based public sectors. For Fukuyama (2014), States where political franchises were open before rational-legal consolidation would have more difficulties accomplishing bureaucratic quality than those acquired from authoritarian times. According to him, building Weberian bureaucracies after the advent of democracy is possible. However, it requires the mobilization of new social actors and strong political leadership.

Based on Schuster (2016), two political explanations for bureaucratic professionalization in democracies call attention—electoral competition and party organization. Nevertheless, he claims that the literature contests both factors regarding their weight, mechanisms, and signs of causal effects. Regarding other political causes, such as electoral or government systems, Cruz and Keefer (2015) claim that there is limited evidence about their impact on patronage reform. Similarly, studies demonstrate that civil service professionalization rarely results from societally organized interests (Grindle, 2012; Schuster, 2016).

Electoral competition has been widely studied as it contributes to strengthening the administrative capacity because politicians are incentivized to be more responsive and effective in providing public services for winning elections. Moreover, electoral competition could motivate governments to professionalize their bureaucracies against patronage access by hostile successors. Giving tenure to civil servants can increase the incumbent's political decisions' durability, ensuring that supportive bureaucrats remain in office to implement them (Panizza et al., 2018). Additionally, electoral competition enhances the likelihood of party parity. For Geddes (1996), in this situation, parties may have equal access to patronage. Therefore, patronage losses imposed on parties by civil service reforms could be similar, unblocking resistance to abandoning patronage and building a neutral and professional public administration. In other words, Geddes argues that bureaucratic professionalization can occur when neither of the major parties has an advantage in using patronage (Cruz & Keefer, 2015).

Nevertheless, electoral competition may not incentivize merit-based systems because government turnovers enhance patronage's need to control bureaucracies staffed with untrusted appointees of predecessors (Schuster, 2016). Further, electoral competition reduces incumbents'

time horizons and, therefore, their expectation of long-term gains from administrative reform. This problem of inter-temporal cost-benefit incidence of reforms was called the “politician’s dilemma” by Geddes (1996). In essence, although a professional civil service would help a country in the long term, an unprofessional, patronage-based civil service would help in the short-term survival of political leaders.

Despite the pluralist claims that competitive elections discipline governing parties by allowing voters to punish them for seeking excessive patronage, O’Dwyer (2006) argues that electoral competition can constrain patronage only when the party system is robust and institutionalized. This is because the less institutionalized the party system, the more difficult it is to generate credible political oppositions, vertical accountability, and coherent governments. According to him, in a disorderly and unpredictable party system, parties have short time horizons, making them more likely to engage in patronage. Additionally, the challenge of building parliamentary majorities in a noninstitutionalized party system allows them to demand patronage concessions from the government.

Moreover, Huber and Ting (2020) suggest that electoral competition will encourage civil service professionalization only under limited conditions. According to them, party system polarization must be low, as their model suggests there are strong incentives for patronage-based systems in countries with high polarization across parties. If both parties want to use the party system for electoral gain, they will be unlikely to sustain the cooperation required for a merit-based reform in a competitive democracy. Therefore, good bureaucracy requires “synergistic commitments to civil service that exist across parties” (Huber & Ting, 2020). As the authors state, creating a merit-based bureaucracy is a collective action problem because the party that initially invests in reforms will bear a cost. Thus, each party prefers that the other party makes the initial investment.

Moreover, Huber and Ting (2020) emphasize ethnic-based political conflicts in divided societies as a determinant of patronage. After transitions from an authoritarian to a democratic government, social divisions can be an issue, mainly if there is a history of ethnic politics. After a democratic transition, if the opposition represents previously discriminated groups under an authoritarian regime, an ethnic-based coalition could rely on patronage-based appointments as a political power source. Rauch and Evans (2000) also mention ethnic divisions may make it more difficult to replace a clientelistic bureaucratic structure with a more rule-based one. On the other hand, excessive ethnic-based patronage can lead ethnic outsiders to push for merit-based reforms (Schuster, 2016).

Therefore, existing theories on the determinants of Weberian bureaucracies in new democracies present mixed arguments and competing hypotheses on the effects of the examined political-institutional factors. The electoral competition’s favorable implication will depend on its combination with an institutionalized and nonpolarized party system. Simultaneously, the democratic transition should not be marked by a history of ethnic politics. Moreover, countries where democracy preceded state-building have more challenges in achieving high-quality administration than those that inherited it from authoritarian times. It leads to an expectation that any causal condition’s effect will be contingent on the presence or absence of other conditions, and there may be more than one combination of conditions to the same outcome. That is to say, the effects of each of the causal conditions are conjunctural and equifinal. Therefore, the research expects that the existence of a professional public administration before democratization or the presence of electoral competition and an institutionalized party system and the absence of ethnic politics are sufficient conditions to bring about Weberian bureaucracies in third-wave democracies.

### 3 | THE CASES

This study aims to explain outcomes in a group of cases that fall within a homogeneity space that can be considered constant in the analysis (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006; Rihoux & Ragin, 2009). These criteria constitute the scope conditions for the results—the specific contexts within which the insights gained are considered valid (Thomann and Maggetti, 2020). Thus, the selected cases are newly industrialized countries (NIC) from Latin America and East (northeast and southeast) Asia democratized in the third wave, once these are cases with comparable economic and political development levels.

NIC is a term used by experts to describe a late-industrialized country whose economic development level ranks it between developing and highly developed classifications. These countries have moved away from an agriculture-based economy and into an industrialized urban one after the second half of the 20th century (Majaski, 2019). Scholars are yet undecided about countries that should be included in a list of NICs.

The research cases are countries from the so-called Asian Tigers, the four leading members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (known as the ASEAN-4), and the most prominent Latin American economies (measured by nominal gross domestic product in US Dollars). All of them were democratized in the third wave and classified as fully democratic or democratic by the Center for Systemic Peace (Polity IV Project) in 2015.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 presents the cases' democracy score and transition year.

Even though Singapore and Hong Kong are in the Asian Tigers group, both countries are not classified as institutionalized democracies. The Polity IV Project data series score Singapore as a “weak” autocratic regime, and the Economist Intelligence Unit categorizes Hong Kong as a “flawed democracy.” Moreover, Hong Kong was never an independent country.

Thailand is a paradoxical case study of democracy. According to Croissant and Lorenz (2018a), civilian rule returned to the country in 1992, followed by a democratic regime with a series of short-lived coalitions. However, according to them, the country has passed through a period of political uncertainty and crisis since the turn of the 21st century. In May

**TABLE 1** Selected cases, democracy scores, and transition year

Group	Country	Democracy score 2015	Transition year
Asian “Tigers”	South Korea	8	1988–
	Taiwan	10	1993–
ASEAN-4	Indonesia	9	1999–
	Malaysia	6	2008–
	Philippines	8	1987–
	Thailand	7 <sup>a</sup>	1992–2005 and 2011–2013
Latin America	Argentina	9	1983–
	Brazil	8	1985–
	Chile	10	1989–
	Mexico	8	1997–

Source: Classification based on the Polity IV Project dataset. Political regimes have been selected with a score of six or more for at least three consecutive years.

<sup>a</sup>2013.

2014, a *coup d'état* revoked the 2007 democratic constitution (see Chambers, 2020). Despite the autocratic reversal, Thailand was selected as a research case because it was rated as democratic by the Polity IV Project for two periods after the 1990's: 1992–2005 (14 years) and 2011–2013 (3 years).

Similarly, Malaysia is not precisely a third-wave democracy. Some authors claim Malaysia is a competitive authoritarian regime with multiparty elections biased toward the ruling coalition—the so-called National Front led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO). However, the Polity IV dataset scores the country as an institutionalized democracy since the 2008 general elections. In that election, the National Front lost two-thirds majority in parliament. This being said, whether these changes will trigger a transition of the political system toward a fully democratic regime remains to be seen (Croissant & Lorenz, 2018b).

Finally, concerning the Latin American group, despite Colombia being the fourth-largest economy in the region, according to the International Monetary Fund, the country has been rated as a democracy since the late 1950s by the Polity IV data series. Consequently, Colombia was not included in the comparative analysis.

#### 4 | OUTCOMES AND CAUSAL CONDITIONS

The research's outcome of interest is the current level of weberianess observed in the selected countries' public bureaucracies. This outcome was operationalized using the 2015 Quality of Government Expert Survey Data (Dahlström et al., 2015). The QoG Survey is a dataset containing information on the central governments' public bureaucracies in 159 countries, including characteristics such as politicization, professionalization, and impartiality. Two indexes were created to measure bureaucratic weberianess: professionalization and patronage. The former measures the extent to which bureaucracy is merit-based and impersonal, and the latter measures the extent to which bureaucracy is politicized and personalized. Both indicators are based on specific questions extracted from the survey questionnaire following theoretical criteria (Fukuyama, 2014; Rauch & Evans, 2000; Rothstein & Teorell, 2008). The online Appendix (Supporting Information) presents the questions extracted from the Survey questionnaire and explains how the indexes were constructed. The indicator of bureaucratic weberianess ( $W$ ) was calculated by subtracting the patronage index from the professionalization index, as illustrated in Table 2.

According to the table, South Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil have the highest bureaucratic professionalization rates, while Argentina, Mexico, and Malaysia have the lowest. Concerning the levels of patronage, the latter group of countries has the highest indicators, while South Korea, Taiwan, and Chile have the lowest. Thus, considering the index of bureaucratic weberianess, South Korea, Taiwan, Chile, and Brazil display the highest standards. In contrast, Argentina, Mexico, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia present minimal.

Theoretical criteria guided the selection of causal conditions (the “perspectives approach,” according to Berg-Schlosser & Meur, 2009). Based on previous studies (Section 2), the critical explanatory factors for the research's outcome of interest were narrowed to four conditions: (a) bureaucratic quality before democratization, (b) electoral competition, (c) party system institutionalization, and (d) ethnic politics. With four conditions, the “limited diversity problem” (i.e., observed data are less abundant than the potential property space outlined by the conditions) can be avoided.

**TABLE 2** Bureaucratic weberianess indicators: selected countries

Country	Professionalization	Patronage	W
Argentina	2.95	5.40	-2.45
Brazil	5.28	4.09	1.19
Chile	5.19	3.95	1.24
Indonesia	5.26	4.42	0.84
Korea. South	5.82	3.46	2.36
Malaysia	4.33	4.73	-0.40
Mexico	3.19	5.28	-2.09
Philippines	5.15	4.33	0.82
Taiwan	5.67	3.53	2.14
Thailand	4.55	4.28	0.27

*Note:* The bureaucratic professionalization and patronage levels are based on specific questions extracted from the 2015 Quality of Government (QoG) Expert Survey Data, and the bureaucratic Weberianess indicator (W) is the subtraction of professionalization by patronage.

The variables to be chosen to operationalize the conditions must reflect the causal concept to be measured. Consequently, the first causal condition (**icrg\_bq**) was measured by the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) dataset. According to the ICRG Methodology, the Bureaucracy Quality component estimates the level of political autonomy and the reputability of the mechanism for recruiting and training a country's state bureaucracy (from 0 to 4 points). Hence, countries that lack a strong bureaucracy receive low points because a government change tends to be disruptive in policy formulation and daily administrative functions. Each case score was estimated considering the average rating from the beginning of the series (1984) to the year of the country's democratic transition.

The variable "competition" from Tatu Vanhanen's Measures of Democracy dataset (1810–2018) was used to measure the electoral competition condition (**van\_comp**). According to the dataset's codebook, the variable depicts smaller parties' electoral success in parliamentary and/or presidential elections. The index is calculated by subtracting the percentage of votes won by the largest party from 100. For example, if the most significant party receives 40% of the votes, the smaller parties' share is 60%. The average score from the year of the democratic transition to 2015 was calculated to measure each country's condition.

The BTI Project Party System indicator (**bti\_ps**) estimates the party system's institutionalization condition. The indicator assesses the extent to which a stable and socially rooted party system can articulate and aggregate societal interests in a country, and it is based on four categorical variables (Dahlström et al., 2015): 1. There is no party system to articulate and aggregate societal interest; 4. The party system is unstable with shallow roots in society (high fragmentation, high voter volatility, and high polarization); 7. The party system is relatively stable and socially rooted (moderate fragmentation, moderate voter volatility, moderate polarization); and 10. The party system is stable and socially rooted (it can articulate and aggregate societal interest with low fragmentation, low voter volatility, and low polarization). The statistical mode from the year of democratization to 2015 was computed to estimate each country's score.

Finally, Juliano et al.'s (2020) work was used to classify the levels of ethnic-based politics (**eth\_conf**).<sup>3</sup> Unlike the other cases studied, the ASEAN-4 states are pervaded by ethnic politics (Brown, 1994). Considering this, Juliano and coauthors classified those states in a continuum from exclusionary (countries that perform violence and discrimination against ethnic minorities) to pluralists or multiethnic. Therefore, they ranked Thailand and Malaysia as highly exclusionary, the Philippines as low exclusionary, and Indonesia in the midpoint. Such classification has been transformed into a four-value scheme as follows: zero for the absence of ethnic politics, 1 for highly exclusionary countries, 0.33 for low exclusionary, and 0.67 for the states in the midpoint between the pluralist and exclusionary ones. Table 3 presents the raw data for the causal conditions.

Table 3 indicates that Thailand, Taiwan, South Korea, and Brazil have the best bureaucratic quality indicators before democratization. In contrast, the Philippines, Mexico, Indonesia, and Argentina have the worst ones. Regarding the institutionalization of the party system, Taiwan and Chile have the highest levels, in contrast to the lowest levels of Thailand and the Philippines. On the other hand, Mexico and the Philippines display the highest electoral competition scores, while Indonesia and Thailand display the lowest. Finally, Malaysia and Thailand present the highest ethnic-based conflict score. Latin American countries, South Korea, and Taiwan do not present ethnic-based conflicts. The Philippines, the lowest level of ethnic contention among the Southeast Asian states, while Indonesia has an intermediate position in that group.

## 5 | METHOD

As an analytic technique, QCA is operationalized by the following steps: calibration of the fuzzy sets, analysis of necessity, construction of the truth table, and Boolean minimization for the sufficiency analysis (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). These steps were conducted with the help of the fsQCA 3.1 software.<sup>4</sup>

### 5.1 | Data calibration

Calibration is the process of assigning set membership scores to cases by converting raw data for conditions and outcomes into values that represent the degree to which the case belongs to the set, between 0 (full non-membership) and 1 (full membership) (Kahwati & Kane, 2020; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

Fuzzy sets can be calibrated qualitatively using fixed values (where they take on discrete set membership values between 0 and 1) or by continuous values utilizing the direct or indirect calibration method (Ragin, 2008; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Substantive case knowledge and theoretical standards should determine the points for total membership to the set (1), not the entire association to it (0), and the crossover point (0.5). Nevertheless, for qualitative fixed-value fuzzy set calibration, a precise location is not required for the 0.5 anchors (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 38).

Table 4 describes the approaches (fixed value or continuous) and methods (qualitative and direct) used for the conditions and the outcome calibration. The table also reveals the criteria used to determine the thresholds. Table 3, above, lists the final calibrated data for each variable.



**TABLE 3** Outcome and conditions: raw and calibrated data

Country	icrg_bq	BURQL	bti_ps	PARTY	eth-conf	NETH	van_comp	COMP	Weberianess	W
Argentina	2	0	6	0.33	0	1	55	1	-2.45	0
Brazil	3	0.95	6	0.33	0	1	57	1	1.19	0.62
Chile	2.12	0.11	9	1	0	1	47	0.77	1.24	0.65
Indonesia	2.01	0.05	6	0.33	0.67	0.33	38	0.2	0.84	0.38
Korea. South	3.03	1	7	0.67	0	1	58	1	2.36	1
Malaysia	2.67	0.78	7	0.67	1	0	49	0.92	-0.4	0
Mexico	1.86	0	8	1	0	1	60	1	-2.09	0
Philippines	0.83	0	5	0.33	0.33	0.67	60	1	0.82	0.37
Taiwan	3.12	1	9	1	0	1	50	0.95	2.14	1
Thailand	3.17	1	4	0	1	0	40	0.27	0.27	0.1

*Note:* lower case: raw data; capital letters: calibrated data. Icrb\_bq and BURQL: high-quality bureaucracy before democratization; bti\_ps and PARTY: institutionalized party system; eth-conf and NETH: ethnic-based political conflicts and non-ethnic politics, respectively; van\_comp and COMP: electoral competition; weberianess and W: bureaucracy weberianess.

## 5.2 | Necessity analysis

A condition  $X$  is necessary if, whenever the outcome  $Y$  is present, the condition is also present. Consistency indicates the proportion of the outcome included in the set of each condition. To claim that a condition is necessary, it must exhibit a consistency of at least 0.9 (Hirschhorn, 2020; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Coverage captures the degree to which a necessary condition is empirically relevant (i.e., observed in the data).

The causal conditions NETH and COMP display consistency levels of 0.963 and 0.944, respectively (see online Appendix, Supporting Information). Besides, both conditions do not present coverage values closer to 0 (0.567 and 0.479). Therefore, NETH and COMP are declared necessary conditions for outcome  $W$ . It is worth saying the necessary conditions are not trivial. However, there are no necessary conditions for the nonoccurrence of the outcome ( $\sim W$ ) since none of them displayed consistency levels greater than or equal to 0.9.

## 5.3 | Truth tables and sufficiency analyses

A sufficiency relationship between a condition set (or combination of conditions sets) and an outcome set can be inferred when the outcome set is nearly always observed among cases with membership in the condition set (Kahwati & Kane, 2020). To identify sufficient conditions, QCA proceeds with the logical minimization of truth tables.<sup>5</sup>

As a case-oriented approach, QCA shares the ontological assumption of causal asymmetry. It means that the method assumes that the cause of a given outcome is usually different from the cause of its absence. Thus, Tables 5 and 6 show the truth tables for the occurrence and non-occurrence of the outcome. The truth tables were constructed with a cutoff frequency of 1 (as this research works with a few cases) and a cutoff point of 0.8 raw consistency, as conventionally defined (see Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

TABLE 4 Calibration

Names (codes)	Calibration approach (method) and thresholds	Criteria
Weberianess ( <i>W</i> )	<i>Continuous (direct)<sup>a</sup></i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal to or above 2.14: Fully in (1)</li> <li>• Equal to 1.00: Crossover point (0.5)</li> <li>• Equal to or below 0.00: Fully out (0)</li> </ul>	<p>It is generally accepted that the Taiwanese state has an effective and professionalized bureaucracy. Therefore, all countries achieving a score equal to or above that of Taiwan (2.14 in weberianess scale) receive a fuzzy membership score of 1.</p> <p>Zero is the point at which the professionalization index is equal to that of patronage. That is, the point of full non-membership 0 is located. Therefore, the point between the raw values of 2.14 and 0.00 was established as the crossover point (0.5).</p>
Bureaucratic quality before democratization (BURQL)	<i>Continuous (direct)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal to or above 3.03: Fully in (1)</li> <li>• Equal to 2.4: Crossover point (0.5)</li> <li>• Equal to or below 2.00: Fully out (0)</li> </ul>	<p>“Asian Tigers” developmental states were notorious for having Weberian bureaucracies (Evans, 1995). Hence, all countries achieving a score higher or equal to that of South Korea (3.03) received a fuzzy membership score of 1. On the other hand, authoritarian Argentina was recognized as having a patronage-based civil service (Grindle, 2012). Thus, all countries achieving a score lower than or equal to 2.00 received a fuzzy membership score of 0. The prominent gap in the ICRG indicator between Chile and Malaysia’s raw values was used to establish 2.40 as the point of indifference.</p>
Electoral Competition (COMP)	<i>Continuous (direct)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Above 50: fully in (1)</li> <li>• Equal to 45: Crossover point (0.5)</li> <li>• Equal or below 30: Fully out (0)</li> </ul>	<p>The electoral competition index represents the percentage of votes gained by the smaller parties in parliamentary and/or presidential elections. The higher the index, the more significant the electoral competition.</p>
Party System Institutionalization (PARTY)	<i>Four-value (qualitative)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Above 7: Fully in (1)</li> <li>• Equal to 7: More in than out (0.77)</li> </ul>	<p>Based on the BTI Party System classification (a categorical and ordinal variable): 1. There is no party system; 4. The party system is unstable; 7. The party system is</p>

TABLE 4 (Continued)

Names (codes)	Calibration approach (method) and thresholds	Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Above 4 and below 7: More out than in (0.33)</li> <li>• Equal or below 4: Fully out (0)</li> </ul>	relatively stable and socially rooted; 10. The party system is stable and socially rooted with low fragmentation, low voter volatility, and low polarization
Non-Ethnic politics (NETH)	<i>Four-value (qualitative)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latin American and Northeast Asian countries: Fully in (1)</li> <li>• The Philippines: More in than out (0.67)</li> <li>• Indonesia: More out than in (0.33)</li> <li>• Malaysia and Thailand: Fully out (0)</li> </ul>	Based on Juliano et al. (2020).

<sup>a</sup>The direct method uses a logistic function to fit the raw data in-between the three qualitative anchors at 1 (full membership), 0.5 (point of indifference), and 0 (full non-membership), see Schneider and Wagemann (2012).

TABLE 5 The truth table for weberianess

BURQL	PARTY	NETH	COMP	W	Cases	Raw consist.	PRI consist.	SYM consist.
1	1	1	1	1	South Korea, Taiwan	1	1	1
1	0	1	1	1	Brazil	0.952381	0.919355	1
0	0	0	0	0	Indonesia	0.506667	0	0
0	1	1	1	0	Chile, Mexico	0.458955	0.171429	0.184049
0	0	1	1	0	Philippines, Argentina	0.389937	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	Thailand	0.174419	0	0
1	1	0	1	0	Malaysia	0.0694444	0	0

Note: 1 represents set membership; 0 represents set non-membership. Raw consistency refers to the degree to which a set relationship exists. PRI (proportional reduction in inconsistency) is an alternate measure of the consistency of subset relations. SYM (Symmetric) consistency is a slightly tweaked version of PRI consistency, forcing it to be symmetric.

The three types of solutions derived by the Standard Analysis of the fsQCA (Ragin, 2008)—complex, parsimonious, and intermediate—are presented in the online Appendix, Supporting Information. Tables 7 and 8 present the intermediate solutions for the occurrence and non-occurrence of the outcome. The following directional expectations were used to generate the intermediate solutions in the logical minimization of the truth tables: for the outcome occurrence ( $W$ ), according to the necessity analysis, that both conditions NETH and COMP are present; for the nonoccurrence of the outcome ( $\sim W$ ), in line with the theoretical expectations, that conditions BURQL, PARTY, and NETH are absent.

As can be observed in Tables 7 and 8, the consistency of the two intermediate solutions and individual paths (solution terms) is superior to the consistency cutoff defined for the truth

**TABLE 6** The truth table for non-weberianess

BURQL	PARTY	NETH	COMP	$\sim W$	Cases	Raw consist.	PRI consist.	SYM consist
1	0	0	0	1	Thailand	1	1	1
1	1	0	1	1	Malaysia	1	1	1
0	0	1	1	1	Philippines, Argentina	0.974843	0.958763	1
0	0	0	0	1	Indonesia	0.933333	0.864865	1
0	1	1	1	1	Chile, Mexico	0.843284	0.76	0.815951
1	0	1	1	0	Brazil	0.409524	0	0
1	1	1	1	0	South Korea, Taiwan	0.232228	0	0

Note: 1 represents set membership; 0 represents set non-membership. Raw consistency refers to the degree to which a set relationship exists. PRI (proportional reduction in inconsistency) is an alternate measure of the consistency of subset relations. SYM (Symmetric) consistency is a slightly tweaked version of PRI consistency, forcing it to be symmetric.

**TABLE 7** Intermediate solution for  $W$ 

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	Typical cases
BURQL*NETH*COMP	0.662621	0.662621	0.892157	South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil
Solution coverage: 0.662621				
Solution consistency: 0.892157				

**TABLE 8** Intermediate solution for  $\sim W$ 

	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	Typical cases
$\sim$ PARTY* $\sim$ NETH	0.370748	0.178571	0.935622	Thailand and Indonesia
$\sim$ NETH*COMP	0.292517	0.10034	1	Malaysia
$\sim$ BURQL*COMP	0.586735	0.459184	0.813679	Philippines, Mexico, Argentina
Solution coverage: 0.930272				
Solution consistency: 0.853354				

Note: Tables 7 and 8: the  $\sim$  denotes a logical negation, and the \* denotes logical "AND." *Solution consistency* indicates how consistent each configuration is with the assertion that the combination of conditions is sufficient for the outcome, and *solution coverage* expresses the extent to which the outcome is covered by the model (Hirschhorn, 2020; Ragin, 2008). *Raw coverage* indicates the portion of cases in the outcome set in the solution term set. *Unique coverage* expresses the portion of cases in the outcome set in the solution term set and is not covered by any other solution terms. Consistency is a numeric value that quantifies a set relationship (Kahwati & Kane, 2020).

Tables (0.8); consequently, the minimum threshold for declaring sufficiency is observed in all the term solutions.

The analysis of the superset and subset relationship between outcomes and solutions (see XY-plots in the online Appendix, Supporting Information) indicates that Chile is both a deviant case for consistency (i.e., the case is a member of the solution path  $\sim$ BURQL\*COMP, but does not exhibit the outcome  $\sim W$ ) and coverage (the case displays the outcome  $W$ , although no solution path covers it).

## 6 | DISCUSSION

### 6.1 | Analysis of results

The intermediate solution formula for the occurrence of  $W$  indicates that there is only one sufficient path toward the outcome:

$$\text{BURQL} * \text{NETH} * \text{COMP} \rightarrow W$$

In words, the occurrence of a high level of weberianess of state bureaucracies in the selected countries is due to a professional public administration's existence before democratization combined with electoral competition and non-ethnic politics. South Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil are typical cases.

Brazil is a compelling case to illustrate the first solution's formula. The country's central bureaucracy is more inside than outside the set of high bureaucratic weberianess, and the country's political parties are more outside than inside the institutionalized party system set (see Table 3). Grindle (2010, 2012) observes that Brazil began an effort to end patronage practice in the late 1930s, during the Vargas' authoritarian regime. After this, other administrative reforms have, in some way, succeeded in professionalizing the civil service (e.g., the 1967 reform conducted by the military). Despite the patronage system surviving in parallel with an expanding career system, the democratic Constitution of 1998 included civil servants' meritocratic recruitment (Grindle, 2010).<sup>6</sup> These factors may explain the considerable stability and professionalism that characterize much of the central government's bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, as Grindle (2010) states, the civil service continues to coexist with extensive opportunities for personal appointments outside the career system (*cargos em comissão*)—and not just for the top level of governments and public organizations, as it happens in all modern political systems. This fact can be explained by the country's presidents' challenges in building parliamentary majorities due to a fragmented party system. In Brazil, legislators use patronage as a bargaining chip to support government bills (Praça et al., 2011).

The necessity test declared electoral competition and no ethnic politics as necessary conditions for bureaucratic weberianess. A history of ethnic politics did not mark South Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil's democratization processes. Besides, the three cases are inside the high electoral competition set.

The South Korean and Taiwanese cases support Shefter's (1994) and Fukuyama's (2014) argument that the introduction of democracy in a context where a merit-based bureaucracy exists does not engender political contenders' practices offer government positions in exchange for votes. The presence of strong and Weberian characteristics has already been explored in the literature on authoritarian developmental states' success in Asian Tigers (Evans, 1995). Hellmann (2020) and Templeman (2020) reveal that the introduction of democracy initially caused a decline in state capacity in South Korea and Taiwan, primarily because the sudden jump in electoral competition strengthened politicians' and parties' incentives to engage in particularistic activities. However, after a maturation phase, democratic institutions reinforced the state's capacity to defend against political elites' narrow interests demands.

Regarding the nonoccurrence of the outcome ( $\sim W$ ), the intermediate solution identified three sufficient pathways. In Boolean notation:

$$(\sim \text{PARTY} * \sim \text{NETH}) + (\sim \text{NETH} * \text{COMP}) + (\sim \text{BURQL} * \text{COMP}) \rightarrow \sim W$$

In straightforward language, non-institutionalized party systems and ethnic politics, or ethnic conflicts and electoral competition, or the nonexistence of professional public service before democratization and electoral competition imply the nonoccurrence of a high level of bureaucratic weberianess in the studied countries. Thailand and Indonesia are typical cases of the first solution term, Malaysia of the second, and Argentina, Mexico, and the Philippines of the third causal pathway.

Argentina and Mexico are both outsiders, and the Philippines is more outside than inside the high Weberian bureaucracies set. At the time of democratization, these countries had not yet consolidated a professional civil service according to the Bureaucracy Quality component of the ICRG dataset (see Table 3). As discussed, countries like these have much higher problems achieving a rational-legal administration than those that inherited it from authoritarian times.

According to Grindle (2012), although the Argentine Constitution of 1957 limited patronage by guaranteeing job stability for civil servants, under the dictatorship installed in 1976, the military used patronage to recolonize public administration with members from various branches of the armed forces. Until 1983, the military regime had expanded the public sector, creating more jobs for its supporters, civilian and military. However, with the return to democracy, public jobs have also become a means of rewarding party supporters, and no significant change in public service has been made. For Panizza et al. (2018), Argentina's political system is currently characterized by hyper-presidentialism that exacerbates top-down politicization of public administration and, consequently, patronage's personalist bias. Besides, according to the authors, the Argentine civil service problems are more severe in the country's political context, characterized by power alternations between the polarized ideological blocs allied to Peronism and anti-Peronism.

Regarding Mexico, the authoritarian political regime that endured for 71 years in the country dominated by the *Partido de la Revolución Institucional* (PRI) developed a system of clientelism that originated in a powerful presidential office and spread throughout the public sector (Grindle, 2010). In this system, public sector jobs were all currencies to stabilize the regime. Even after the PRI lost Congress control in 1997 and the presidency in 2000, the patronage system has not changed (Grindle, 2012). In 2003, Congress approved a new professional career service. Nevertheless, the new legislation's implementation was confronted by a series of political challenges, and the patronage system continued in existence.

Hicken (2018) claims that if the US has installed democratic institutions in the Philippines, it did little to build a professional and rule-bound bureaucracy. Political and economic power remained widespread among the landowning elites across the country, and these elites, also known as oligarchs, became patrons of several clientelistic networks nationwide (Hicken, 2018). During the Marcos regime (from 1972 to 1986), the public bureaucracy completely lost its political neutrality (Rebullida & Serrano, 2006). With democratization, the formal commitment of public service to Weberian ideals was established. However, despite these efforts, the Philippine bureaucracy is still seen as an extension of factionalized political elites. For Hodder (2018), the influence exercised informally by the president and legislators on appointments is a significant problem in the country. Politics in the Philippines are also characterized by high voter volatility, which implies a very fluid party system (Hicken, 2018). As O'Dwyer (2006) pointed out, parties have short time horizons in an unpredictable party system, making them more likely to get involved in patronage.

Conversely, if Malaysia presented a relatively coherent and robust bureaucracy before democratization, it is currently outside the Weberian bureaucracies set (see Table 3). Doner et al. (2005) reported that the state bureaucracy's recruitment in the country's authoritarian period was mostly based on competitive examinations, and promotions were based on merit. Despite this, the biggest challenge facing Malaysia since independence is ethnic politics—and, according to Chin (2011), this issue currently permeates the civil service. In line with the author, after democratization, existing ethnic tension in the political system implied that each group (Malays, Chinese, and Indians) sought to gain an advantage over the other. Establishing recruitment quotas for the administrative elite led to the gradual domination by the Malays, which meant that from the 1970s to the 2000s, the ethnic composition for the whole civil service increased from 60.8% Malay, 20.2% Chinese, 17.4% Indian, and 1.6% others, to 77.3%, 9.4%, 5.1%, and 7.8%, respectively (Chin, 2011). If, right now, there is widespread support from all ethnic groups to reform the civil service, to make it more accountable and professional, the support from the Malay community will dip when the changes include opening up the public service to non-Malays. The Malay community sees civil services as one of its traditional political power sources and employment (Chin, 2011; Lim, 2007).

Thailand also presented a strong bureaucracy before democratization, and nowadays, the country is more outside than inside the high Weberian bureaucracies set. During the military rule, there was the so-called “bureaucratic polity” where all decisions were made within the bureaucracy, in an insulated manner, with no external forces, such as political parties. Then, the bureaucracy was a privileged and influential group (Bowornwathana, 2011). However, after democratization, the lack of an institutionalized party system may explain Thailand's current situation of being almost excluded from countries with high Weberian bureaucracies. Bowornwathana (2011) claims that to survive in the country's context of unpredictable political changes, Thai bureaucrats need to expand their network connections, such as among powerful families, business groups, or political bosses. Furthermore, Neher (1996) argues that due to poorly developed political institutions (such as political parties, legislatures, and the like), personal bonds are crucial to the country's state bureaucracy functioning.

Finally, Berenschot (2018a) discusses how the Indonesian democratization process has failed to promote a merit-based bureaucracy. The country is more outside than inside the high Weberian bureaucracies set (Table 3). According to the author, the failure of bureaucratic reforms in Indonesia is due to the way elections triggered competition to control state resources. Because political parties are not institutionalized, control over the distribution of state resources concentrated in the bureaucratic apparatus, and this situation, he claims, compels politicians to use bureaucratic commitments as a means of gaining campaign support and developing control over state resources. Similarly, Berenschot (2018b) states that candidates build their campaigns by clientelistic networks due to Indonesian political parties' weak mobilizational capacity.

Consequently, politicians need to build connections with local elites, including local bureaucrats. In return, they promise to provide privileged access to state resources, such as business licenses, government contracts, and jobs. The relationships that animate political campaigns are based on clientelism and patronage (Berenschot, 2018a).

## 6.2 | Deviant case and the missing condition

In comparative research, instead of accepting that a deviant case is an outlier to an overall trend, the researcher needs to know if there is an omitted causal condition that must be present

to explain the occurrence of the outcome of interest and update the cross-case model (Beach & Pedersen, 2016; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Chile was identified as both a deviant case for coverage and consistency (see above).

For Grindle (2012), Chile's public sector has been characterized by a centralized and robust system, with a large allowance for a party and presidential appointments. According to her, this situation did not change with the return to democracy in 1990 as patronage aided recolonizing the government with those committed to the new regime. However, things changed in 2002 with a political scandal. This political scandal arose from the practice of offering "envelope salaries," an informal system to attract well-qualified people to the government by delivering extra-cash to high-level officials (Grindle, 2010). Chileans were offended when they discovered that kind of corruption, and the president's popularity declined immediately. This scandal became a window of opportunity for a group of reformers who already had a reform plan to present to the government, which they rapidly gave to party leaders (Grindle, 2012). Under enormous pressure, the party leaders worked out new legislation. According to Grindle (2010), opposition parties supported the bill as they expected the new system to provide them with increased opportunities for their partisans in government, as they expected to win the next election. The executive branch initially tried to resist the approval of the law. However, when that did not seem to be a winning strategy, it sought to include many transitional elements in the new system. The new legislation passed within a few weeks in 2003 and came into effect in January 2004 (Grindle, 2010). It establishes that every public employee must be selected after passing a competitive exam, following equality and nondiscrimination principles. Besides, the new law establishes that promotions will only occur after an internal competitive exam. Nevertheless, political appointments still coexist with the new system since the president can even directly appoint "trusted staff" (Fonseca, 2013).

The Chilean case demonstrates that the presence of an institutionalized party system and electoral competition is not sufficient to bring about a meritocratic-based civil service in new democracies. As stated by Fukuyama (2014), building a Weberian bureaucracy after the advent of democracy requires both political mobilizations of new social actors and political leadership. In Chile's case, public opinion or voters' demand was crucial for civil service reform.

Therefore, the Chilean case proves that the missing condition to distinguish Mexico's is public pressure or the voters' demand for reform (let us call this condition VDEM). Thus, to comprise the case of Chile, a sufficient new path can be added:

$$\text{VDEM} * \text{PARTY} * \text{NETH} * \text{COMP} \rightarrow \text{W}$$

In other words, voters' demand, institutionalized party systems, electoral competition, and the absence of ethnic politics lead to a high level of bureaucratic weberianess in Chilean democracy.

## 7 | CONCLUSION

This article advances the view that Weberian bureaucracies' presence or absence in new democracies is a complex political phenomenon depending on distinct combinations of political-institutional factors. To address this perspective not yet explored in the literature the study applied fuzzy-set QCA to a group of third-wave East Asian and Latin American democracies.



The analysis identified necessary and sufficient conditions for the occurrence of the outcome of interest, clarifying why some of the selected countries presented merit-based and rule-bound civil services while others did not.

The findings revealed that an institutionalized party system is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for Weberian bureaucracies' occurrence in new democracies. Considering the deterministic ontology that supports the analysis, this finding disconfirms O'Dwyer's (2006) and Cruz and Keefer's (2015) claim about the critical role of a robust and long-standing party system for that outcome. Additionally, the Chilean case indicated that civil society's pressure is required to bring about patronage reform even in an institutionalized party system. Nevertheless, in asymmetrical reasoning, the lack of a robust and institutionalized party system acted as an insufficient but non-redundant part of an unnecessary but sufficient (INUS) condition for the absence of high bureaucratic weberianess in the selected cases, as illustrated by the Thai and Indonesian cases.

Furthermore, QCA results have not declared a professional public administration's previous existence before democratization as a necessary or sufficient condition for the presence of high bureaucratic weberianess in the analyzed countries. The deviant case of Chile disconfirmed this historical-sequential approach. Instead, the Brazilian, South Korean, and Taiwanese cases indicated a pre-democratization bureaucracy quality as an INUS condition for the outcome of interest. In contrast, Malaysia demonstrated that even in strong and politically insulated bureaucracies before democratization, ethnic politics can be a source of bureaucratic patronage in new democracies.

Finally, although the electoral competition was declared a necessary condition for high levels of bureaucratic weberianess, if it is combined with ethnic politics (Malaysian case) or with the absence of a Weberian bureaucracy before democratization (Argentina, Mexico, and the Philippines), the electoral competition will imply low levels.

By contrasting empirical results with theoretical expectations, the research findings shed light on directions existing theories could be expanded. The outcomes of interest have many causes brought about by several distinct combinations of factors, each sufficient to cause the effect. Two conditions were found necessary for bureaucratic weberianess, but none were declared as such for the nonoccurrence of that outcome.

However, generalizations of the analysis results should be limited to the types of cases included in the analysis. This is because the same causal conditions should have different effects in diverse contexts. Another limitation comes from the fact that if QCA has the advantage of discerning relational cross-cases patterns, these patterns will not necessarily reflect causality; that is to say, the method does not describe the underlying causal mechanisms that drive the outcomes. Additionally, it is impossible to guarantee that all potentially relevant conditions were included in the analysis (as demonstrated by the deviant case). Nevertheless, this does not mean that the study's purpose is flawed: the conditions were chosen based on existing studies, and QCA, as a comparative method, can make theoretical propositions about counterfactual causal relationships (Beach, 2018).

Further studies can help address the shortcomings by paying attention to historical processes and underlying causal mechanisms between conditions and results and exploring other explanatory conditions. This can be done by complementing the QCA with such as pairing within-case studies or process tracing. Likewise, further studies can test hypotheses generated from the research findings in other cases or a large-N international comparative studies.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Rihoux and Yamasaki (2009) discuss the strengths and weaknesses of QCA. Thomann and Ege (2020) present a systematic review of articles using QCA published in the major Public Administration journals, and Roig-Tierno et al. (2017) conduct a bibliometric analysis of the use of the method by the area of study (including comparative politics and government and administration).
- <sup>2</sup> As discussed in the next section, 2015 was chosen because the research's outcomes of interest refer to the Quality of Government Institute's Expert Survey 2015 (Dahlström et al., 2015).
- <sup>3</sup> The commonly used ethnic fractionation indices could not be used for the analysis because they do not reflect the causal concept to be measured. As Posner (2004) indicates, ethnic fractionation indices measure the probability that two randomly selected people from a given country will belong to different groups, but not reflect whether such groups engage in political competition.
- <sup>4</sup> Copyright © 2004–2017, Charles Ragin and Sean Davey.
- <sup>5</sup> A truth table displays all the possible combinations (i.e., configurations of conditions) and their membership in the outcome set as well as the number of cases within each configuration (Kahwati and Kane and Kane, 2020).
- <sup>6</sup> It should be mentioned that along with the new requirements for the meritocratic recruitment of civil servants, the new democratic constitution gave tenure to 400,000 officials hired initially by the military regime (Bresser-Pereira & Spink, 1999).

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in the Quality of Government Dataset at <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18157/qogstdjan20>.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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