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Continuity and change in the West German federal executive elite 1949–1984

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Abstract: The entire West German federal executive elite, politicians and top level bureaucrats, who held office between 1949 and 1984, is analyzed with respect to social background, professional training and career patterns. The time dimension is dealt with in a dual way by distinguishing legislative periods and political generations. The composition of the elite, it is argued, is the product of the kind of supply offered by a specific generation and the demands generated during political periods. It is demonstrated that the important government changes of 1969 and 1982 accelerated or retarded developments inherent in the recruitment basis. The time series reveal, apart from short-term oscillations, some long-term changes. While politicians tend to be more from the middle class, working class background among civil servants has slightly increased. Furthermore, among bureaucrats the monopoly of jurists is waning and uninterrupted civil service careers are being replaced by unorthodox careers. Politicians, on the other hand, have increasingly studied law and have acquired administration experience. Taken together with a considerable recruitment from civil service families, it might be justified to conclude that the state affinity of the German political executive is mediated to some extend through bureaucratic culture.

Society consistently undergoes minor, and occasionally dramatic, changes. Being political scientists, we expect governments to respond to emerging societal demands and to reflect social change in their own composition. While demands on the steering capacity of national politico-administrative elites would result primarily in policy change, the social composition of the political elite need not necessarily adjust. The notorious lack of evidence of a relationship between social background of elite members and their attitudes corresponds with the incongruency between policy change and social change of national elites. Apart from revolutionary regime changes, whose very policy may be to curb the social power of previous elite groups, we would thus not suppose social change to be immediately reflected in the structure of an acting national politico-administrative elite. That might be one reason why elite studies focusing on normal periods of history reveal continuity rather than change. This holds true in particular for the bureaucratic elite with its formalized recruitment criteria and life-long tenure, which in German history has structurally survived even the revolutionary changes of 1919, 1933, and 1945 (Derlien, 1987). The relationship between societal demands, policy imper-

atives, and elite characteristics might, however, become a more direct one when we turn to studying elite qualification, because certain types of education and training might be better suited towards devising and carrying out a specific required policy. This fit between policy and professional training would – ceteris paribus – foster the careers of people to the top who dispose of the sought-for qualifications.

Although the West German national politico-administrative elite has been scrutinised several times (Hoffmann-Lange, 1983; von Beyme, 1974; Zapf, 1965), historical change of career patterns and social composition was hardly traced because study designs did not allow more than momentary pictures and cross-sectional comparisons of various functional elites (Roth, 1976; Hoffmann-Lange, 1976). In the present paper I attempt to find out if changes occurred underneath the well-known long-term stability of the West German politico-administrative elite in Bonn between 1949 and 1984. For both the political as well as the administrative elite, the supposedly more stable social background is inspected and training and career patterns are analyzed along legislative periods.

The research question has so far been formulated in the framework of a rudimentary demand model of elite recruitment, in which elite succession and regeneration follow the functional imperatives of policies and policy-makers already in elite positions. The explanation of change of qualifications and professional careers in particular should, however, be open for a supply model as well, which would take into account the qualifications offered in the recruitment field at a given point in time. The paper will therefore also relate the investigated elite properties to birth cohorts.

Methodologically the paper, thus, will emphasize the time dimension of the historical period under scrutiny in a twofold way. Most elite studies compare the elite composition at two points in time and draw longitudinal inferences from the variation of individual properties observed. The historical aspect may be adequately covered and trends discovered by these momentary shots in very long perspective (Armstrong, 1973; Preradovic, 1955); but for shorter periods of time swings and oscillations would lead to misinterpretation, if measured only at two points. I shall cope with this problem by using time series data distinguishing on the one hand political generations which enter and leave elite positions, and on the other hand legislative periods to determine what kind of change in elite composition occurred. Theoretically, the two time dimensions will help us to disentangle generation and periodization or political regime effects.

The 900 members of the politico-administrative elite governing in Bonn between 1949 and 1984 comprise a political executive of 121 federal ministers, including the chancellors, and 72 parliamentary state secretaries. Correspond-

ingly, the two top functional groups of the administrative elite are inspected: 150 state secretaries, 438 Ministerialdirektoren as division heads, and 119 division heads of other ranks. In the course of establishing the federal government and bureaucracy, the number of positions has tripled from 52 in 1950 (the first regular budget year) to 181 in 1983, of which 18 are ministers, 27 parliamentary state secretaries, 25 state secretaries, and 111 division heads of various ranks. The potential structural effect induced by the expansion of positions over time, in particular by the introduction of the office of parliamentary state secretary in 1967, will be kept in mind, but not systematically accounted for in this article.

The data were collected from government manuals (positions and names) and authorized biographies published in who-is-who-type collections or questionnaire-based information from press-archives. Of course, we do not have data for all variables. Occasionally the number of missing values is considerable for the administrative elite – a methodological problem, which at the same time constitutes an interesting substantive finding: the biographies of bureaucrats are less guided by selfpresentation needs than those of politicians.

1. Succession of political generations

The 900 elite members do not constitute a monolithic population, but were elected or appointed throughout 35 years and stayed in office with varying duration. Above all, they were borne during a period of 70 years of German history, were socialized in different historical contexts, and usually started their professional careers before they entered positions in institutions of the second German republic. The oldest elite member is the first Federal Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, born in 1876; the youngest is the Parliamentary State Secretary, von Schöler, born in 1948. While Adenauer experienced four political regimes of German history and even modelled the last one considerably, von Schöler not even consciously experienced the post world-war-II reconstruction phase of the Federal Republic. Of course, we do not know how particular historical events affected outlooks, attitudes and role understanding of the cohorts, but employing the concept of political generation (Fogt, 1982) can at least help to recollect specific historical contexts in which the elite was politically socialized at the age of 16 to 21. It might be illustrative to relate the biographies of the federal chancellors to the generations distinguished in table 1 and, hopefully, render the concept of political generation less metaphorical.

Konrad Adenauer, born 1876, president of the parliamentary council in 1948/49 and first chancellor (1949–1963), can be regarded a representative of the Kaiser-Reich generation. Not only did he complete his university studies

before 1914; he was also elected councillor in 1906 and mayor of the city of Köln in 1917, even being appointed member of the Prussian house of lords in 1917.

His successor as chancellor (1963–1966), Ludwig Erhard, born in 1897, would belong to the 'world-war-I' political generation. Before taking up university training, he enlisted in the army in 1916 and was seriously wounded.

Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger (1966–1969), born in 1904, belongs to the political generation which was moulded by the 1919 revolution and the critical years of the first German republic. He took up his studies in 1925, shortly before Erhard was awarded his doctoral degree (1928).

Willy Brandt (born in 1913), chancellor from 1969 to 1974, was not politically socialized during the relatively stable years of the Weimar Republic (1924–1929), but belongs to those formed by the years of economic and political crisis (1929–1933). After having passed the A-level in 1932, he had to emigrate in 1933.

Helmut Schmidt (born in 1918), in the chancellory 1974–1982, was politically socialized under established national-socialism. After the A-level in 1937, he was drawn to mandatory labour service and finally to the Wehrmacht.

The present chancellor (since 1982), Helmut Kohl (born 1930), would be a representative of the 'postwar-reconstruction' generation. In 1950 he passed the Abitur after having become a member of the Christian-Democratic Party in 1947. Indicatively, he gained his doctoral degree in 1958 with a dissertation about the 'Resurrection of Political Parties after the Collapse of 1945'.

Table 1 shows the distribution of political generations for those 798 persons whose birthyear is known. Not surprisingly, the oldest and the youngest generations are small, as the former was already too old to start careers or take over more frequently the still few elite positions immediately after 1949. The last two generations, contrariwise, are too young to have reached elite positions more often. By 1984 the world-war-II generation, i.e. those born between 1923 and 1928 and politically socialized by 1945, constituted the strongest political generation in the federal elite.

In the following paragraphs I shall first describe the processes of recruitment of these generations into and their retirement from top positions. The central question is when certain political generations came into office or disappeared from the executive elite. The second paragraph is to point out how these flows have affected the stocks, i.e. the generational composition of the elite, at different points in time.

1.1 Entry and exit of generations

From Table 2 it appears that the political generations moved into ministerial

top positions with different speed. While the small Kaiser-Reich generation was almost exhausted after two legislative periods (96.4 per cent by 1956), the second and third generations (1893–1904) needed until 1966 and 1969 respectively fully to seize elite positions. The fourth and fifth generations only expanded gradually, with individuals entering elite positions slowly after 1949. The following generations 6 to 8 including the quantitatively dominant 7th 'world-war-II' generation were appointed to top positions only relatively late, but managed to fill the elite positions by 1984 within about twenty years. While generation 6 was already declining in 1983, generation 7 could not yet have achieved its full quantitative impact by the end of the period under investigation.

The picture, however, becomes scattered, once we differentiate the elite according to political and administrative positions. Whereas the pattern depicted so far holds roughly true for top civil servants with the first three generations appointed by 1969 and generations 6 to 8 moving abruptly into elite positions after 1966, the comparable vintages of politicians fill their elite position with a time lag or enter them prematurely (generation 6 since 1961).

Table 1. Distribution of political generations by elite positions.

Position / Generation (birth cohort)	Minister	Parliam. State Secret.	State Secretary	Min. Director	Other Division Head	Total %	n
1 Kaiser-Reich (–1892)	8.3	0.0	3.4	1.8	8.5	3.5	28
2 World War I (1893–1898)	10.7	0.0	5.4	4.4	11.3	5.8	46
3 Revolution & Crisis (1899–1904)	10.7	0.0	16.8	11.4	14.1	11.5	92
4 Stable Weimar Rep. (1905–1910)	8.3	1.4	13.4	13.8	18.3	12.2	97
5 Weimar Rep. in Crisis (1911–1916)	13.2	4.2	8.7	12.5	14.1	11.3	90
6 Establ. National-Social. (1917–1922)	12.4	12.5	14.1	10.9	8.5	11.7	93
7 World War II (1923–1928)	17.4	25.0	18.1	22.1	8.5	19.7	157
8 Post-War Recon-struc. (1929–1934)	10.7	27.8	16.8	16.9	9.9	16.3	130
9 Establ. Adenauer era (1935–1940)	7.5	22.2	2.7	4.7	4.2	6.3	50
10 Student Revolt (1941–1948)	0.8	7.0	0.7	1.6	2.8	1.8	15
total n = 100%	121	72	149	385	71	100.0	798

This 'irregularity' stems, of course, from the absence of any formalization of political careers, whereas civil servants' careers are more likely to follow the principle of seniority and predictably end at the age of 65, if not earlier.

Due to the risk of temporary retirement of the German 'political civil servants', they share periodization effects with their political counterparts in that they are occasionally prematurely ousted from office. Thus, while parts of a generation are still moving into positions, a certain percentage of the same generation may already have left office. The exit rate was highest between 1969 and 1971 with 116 cases and 1982 to 1984 with 127 cases, i.e. 12.9 and 14.2 per cent of all retirements occurred in connection with the government changes in 1969 and 1982 (Derlien, 1988). Recruitment into elite positions peaked in these periods with the same rate. Table 3 reveals that it was generations 4 and 5

Table 2. Period of appointment to last position by political generation.

Generation (birth cohort) \ Period	1949–1952	1953–1956	1957–1960	1961–1964	1965–1968	1969–1971	1972–1975	1976–1979	1980–1981	1982–1984	total n = 100%
1 Kaiser-Reich (–1892)	85.7	96.4	100								28
2 World War I (1893–1898)	41.3	67.4	87.0	95.7	100						46
3 Revolution & Crisis (1899–1904)	22.8	44.5	67.3	85.8	97.8	100					92
4 Stable Weimar Rep. (1905–1910)	3.1	14.4	35.0	55.6	83.4	95.8	100				97
5 Weimar Rep. in Crisis (1911–1916)	3.3	7.7	11.0	23.2	52.1	83.2	95.4	100			90
6 Establ. National-Social. (1917–1922)				4.3	19.4	40.9	62.4	72.1	79.6	100	93
7 World War II (1923–1928)					5.7	20.3	43.9	62.4	69.4	100	157
8 Post-War Reconstruc. (1929–1934)					3.8	7.6	25.3	43.8	53.8	100	130
9 Establ. Adenauer era (1935–1940)							12.0	26.0	50.0	100	50
10 Student Revolt (1941–1948)								20.0	33.3	100	15
total n	70	50	54	56	94	90	101	76	45	162	798

that were stricken by the government change of 1969, whereas the 7th and 8th generations were the predominant victims of the turn in 1982; the quantitatively not yet fully grown out youngest generations, indicatively, were proportionately most severely hit. However, while in 1969 the first three generations were completely ousted and the fourth had declined by three quarters, in 1982 only the 5th had vanished; 25 per cent of the 6th remained in office together with 40 per cent of the 7th, and even 53 per cent of the 8th generation survived politically in their positions.

1.2 Changes in elite composition

Different size of generations, varying speed of entrance of individual generations (partly owing to structural effects of an expanding field of elite positions), and politically induced exit movements were bound to produce gener-

Table 3. Exit from elite position by political generation.

Generation (birth cohort) \ Period	1949–1952	1953–1956	1957–1960	1961–1964	1965–1968	1969–1971	1972–1975	1976–1979	1980–1981	1982–1984	in office 1984	total n = 100%
1 Kaiser-Reich (–1892)	25.0	78.6	92.9	100								28
2 World War I (1893–1898)	8.7	30.4	60.8	86.9	97.8	100						46
3 Revolution & Crisis (1899–1904)	4.3	10.8	22.8	44.5	88.0	100						92
4 Stable Weimar Rep. (1905–1910)	1.0	3.1	10.3	19.6	37.1	74.2	97.9	100				97
5 Weimar Rep. in Crisis (1911–1916)	1.1	3.3	8.9	11.1	25.7	50.4	74.0	92.0	98.7	100		89
6 Establ. National-Social. (1917–1922)				2.2	6.5	16.2	33.4	50.6	54.9	75.3	24.7	93
7 World War II (1923–1928)					0.6	3.8	14.0	27.4	35.0	59.2	40.8	157
8 Post-War Recon struc. (1929–1934)						3.1	6.9	14.6	20.0	46.9	53.1	130
9 Establ. Adenauer era (1935–1940)							2.0	6.0	6.0	60.0	40.0	50
10 Student Revolt (1941–1948)										46.7	53.3	15
total n	17	35	41	47	80	88	82	67	29	127	184	797

ation overlaps and, consequently, distinct compositions of political generations at various points in time. Table 4 displays the generational composition six months after the beginning of a new legislative period, thus accounting for the time it normally takes a government to carry out its personnel policy particularly in the higher career civil service.

It becomes apparent that the Kaiser-Reich generation (32.7 per cent), with chancellor Adenauer, was formative for the first legislative period together with the already strongly represented second and third generations. The representatives of the first generation were found above all among the ministers, most of whom had managed to survive the Third Reich without being involved in the Nazisystem; some even were victims of the system and had served before 1949 side by side with the first state secretaries in positions of the

Table 4. Composition by political generation through legislative periods.

Generation (birth cohort) \ Period	2/1950	3/1954	3/1958	3/1962	3/1966	3/1970	5/1973	4/1977	4/1981	9/1983
1 Kaiser-Reich (–1892)	32.7	14.6	1.9	0.8						
2 World War I (1893–1898)	26.9	28.1	20.8	9.9	2.3					
3 Revolution & Crisis (1899–1904)	25.0	32.3	38.7	36.4	25.6	2.8				
4 Stable Weimar Rep. (1905–1910)	13.5	18.8	31.1	36.4	40.6	23.9	10.2	0.6		
5 Weimar Rep. in Crisis (1911–1916)	1.9	6.3	7.5	13.2	24.1	19.0	18.0	8.1	1.7	
6 Establ. National-Social. (1917–1922)				3.3	5.3	21.1	20.4	20.8	16.6	16.0
7 World War II (1923–1928)					1.5	24.6	34.7	37.0	37.7	35.9
8 Post-War Recon struc. (1929–1934)					0.8	7.7	13.2	24.9	27.4	33.1
9 Establ. Adenauer era (1935–1940)						0.7	3.6	7.5	13.7	11.6
10 Student Revolt (1941–1948)								1.2	2.9	3.3
total n = 100%	52	96	106	121	133	142	167	173	175	181

bizonal Frankfurt administration (Wengst, 1984). Whereas the world-war-I generation at no time became dominant in the Bonn elite, the generation 'revolution and crisis' (38.7 per cent) put its stamp on the elite at the beginning of the third legislative period (1957–61), when – for the only time in the second republic – a chancellor (still Adenauer) ruled with an absolute majority of conservatives. Again it took 8 years until the next generation, socialized during the stable years of the Weimar Republic, formed the majority of the federal elite in 1966 (40.6 per cent) under chancellor Erhard. By early 1966 the first generation was out of office and the strong 7th and 8th generations had begun to move in, thus widening the composition to an unprecedented 7 generations – a pattern that persisted into the sixth legislative period and returned in 1977.

The 5th and 6th generations (1911–1922) have been the weakest of all the eight quantitatively relevant generations at every period under investigation. While the 5th generation turned up very early and disappeared only after 30 years, the 6th generation ('established national-socialism') after its emergence only in 1962 gained at most 21 per cent of the elite positions. Beginning at the end of 1966 with the formation of the grand coalition of Christian and Social Democrats under chancellor Kiesinger, the social-liberal Brandt government of 1969 accelerated the generation change after the disappearance of the first three generations. While generations 4 to 6 each constituted roughly 20 per cent of the 1970 elite, the seventh ('world-war-II') generation advanced to constitute the majority as early as 1970. In 1970 every third minister and every second parliamentary state secretary belonged to the 7th generation. In other words, generations 1 to 3 were not replaced by the immediately following generations, but by a premature march of the 6th and 7th generation into elite positions. It was to be the world-war-II generation that dominated the federal elite not only under Social-Democrat chancellors Brandt and Schmidt, but still under Christian-Democrat chancellor Kohl, because the latter's government retarded the exit of the 7th generation.

This phenomenon points to a mechanism of elite succession observable in 1970 as well: the incoming Social-liberal political elite had aged in opposition and accounted for the appearance of the quantitatively small 6th generation, whose protagonist was Helmut Schmidt, while working with newly recruited younger bureaucrats and junior ministers. The Kohl government after 1982, in contrast, belonged rather to the younger 'post-war-reconstruction' generation like the chancellor himself, while carrying on working with the by now aged world-war-II generation of bureaucrats, who had partly been in 'internal opposition' within the bureaucracy under chancellor Schmidt and were now rewarded by promotion. Sixty per cent of the 'world-war-II' generation, however, had been ousted after 1982 – politicians and bureaucrats alike, who

had been affiliated with the previous government. As the institution of political civil servant allows temporary retirement, the administrative elite is subject to the same periodization effect, which induces dismissal of politicians. Nevertheless, incoming governments carry on working with the majority of political civil servants.

Of course, these shifts in generational composition are reflected in the average age of the successive administrations. While the average age of officeholders steadily increased from 53.8 years (1950) to 57.6 years (1966) due to the persistence of generations 3 and 4, it abruptly dropped to 52.4 years in 1970 with the advent of the 6th and 7th generations in the first Brandt administration. The elite was youngest in 1977 (51.2 years) and, owing to the deferred exit of the strong seventh generation, aged slightly to 54.5 years in 1983.

2. Stability and change of social background

Of course, we should not expect the German federal elite to be socially more representative than other national elites, for whom the law of increasing disproportionality (Putnam, 1976: 22) holds true as well (Aberbach et al., 1981: 46). Noteworthy might be the kind of social bias of the elite. As a secular trend the share of the nobility in elite positions has become marginal in Germany as in other countries (Zapf, 1965: 181; von Beyme, 1974: 41): 4.8 per cent (43) of the 900 elite members were of noble origin – still socially overrepresented, but totally untypical of the elite of the second German republic compared to previous regimes (Derlien, 1986). There is no difference between politicians (9 = 4.7%) and elite bureaucrats (34 = 4.8%), nor does noble origin correlate with political party. Noblemen were found among Socialist elite members (renegades of their class in R. Michels' terms) in politics and administration no less frequently than among the conservatives. If one merely covered the first twenty years of the Federal Republic, one could be tempted to maintain a continuation of the secular trend: whereas during the 3rd legislative period (1957–61) 8.3 per cent (10) of the federal elite were still of noble origin, by 1969 during the first Social-Democratic chancellorship their rate had decreased to 2.5 per cent (4). However, by 1980–83 the nobility again increased to 5.1 per cent (9). Obviously, once a group has become so marginal, it is likely to oscillate up and down due to chance or other social and career factors they have in common with the majority of the elite.

Measured by father's profession, data available for 41.3 per cent (372) of the elite population (Table 5), three out of four persons were socially recruited from only 3 professional groups: the fathers of 43.5 per cent had been in the

civil service, of 19.9 per cent in trade and of 12.4 per cent in free professions. Only 7.5 per cent revealed working class background. Surprisingly, politicians as well as bureaucrats were predominantly brought up in civil servants' homes. This self-recruiting tendency is particularly high, with 49 per cent, for top administrators, whereas one-third of the politicians (34.3%) had a civil service background. Affinity to the state among German politicians is obviously mediated to a large extend by primary socialization in civil service families – a fact that reminds us that bureaucracy is not only historically older than parliament, but also persisted through recent accidents of German history.

Status heritage of the administrative elite in Bonn appears even more dramatic when we focus on higher civil service background: 44.3 per cent of the administrative vs. only 21.2 per cent of the political elite originate from higher civil service families. The higher percentage of politicians brought up in lower and middle civil servants' families points to a well-known characteristic of delegation elites as opposed to appointment elites like bureaucrats. German politicians are in general more representative of lower classes than is the administrative elite: 16.1 per cent (22) reveal working class background compared to 4.7 per cent of their bureaucratic collaborators.

Has this picture to be modified to account for variations over time? There is one indicator which urges for deeper dynamic analysis: among those politicians whose ultimate position was parliamentary state secretary, we find relatively fewer people whose father was a higher civil servant than among

Table 5. Social background by elite group.

Occupation of Father	Politicians		Civil Servants		total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
unskilled labourer	3	2.2	0	0.0	3	0.8
skilled labourer	19	13.9	6	2.6	25	6.7
lower employee	5	3.6	5	2.1	10	2.7
leading employee	7	5.1	13	5.5	20	5.4
tradesman/craftsman	29	23.2	45	19.1	74	19.9
entrepreneur	2	1.5	5	2.1	7	1.9
free profession	14	10.2	32	13.6	46	12.4
party/interest group functionary	1	0.7	1	0.4	2	0.5
professional politician	4	2.9	4	1.7	8	2.2
civil servant, lower grade	7	5.1	5	2.1	12	3.2
civil servant, middle grade	11	8.0	6	2.6	17	4.6
civil servant, higher grade	29	21.2	104	44.3	133	35.7
other	6	4.4	9	3.8	15	4.0
total n = 100%	137		235		372	

ministers (14.3 vs. 19.6 per cent), while incumbents with working class background were more frequent than among ministers. The position of parliamentary state secretary, though, was institutionalized only in 1967!

2.1 Social background and generational change

In fact, when we analyze the relationship between social background and political generations, a subtle change in the social composition of the politico-administrative elite becomes apparent, a change which is not at all equally directed among politicians and bureaucrats. About one quarter of the entire elite in all generational groups had its origin in the middle class, while lower class origin is growing from pre-war (11.1%) to post-war generations (23.3%), and the likelihood that elite members were brought up in the upper regions of society decreased from 62.4 to 47.7 per cent. This increased intergenerational mobility of the lower class and the shrinking status heritage of the upper class might reflect the general societal tendency in Germany to level out status boundaries.

More surprising is the contrary development in both elite groups compared here: politicians, who are supposed to be socially more representative than bureaucrats, tend to be more middle-class and less lower-class recruited the younger they are, with upper class origin remaining constant at about 38 per cent. The administrative elite, however, is characterized by an opposite development: an almost dramatic, although in absolute numbers small, increase of lower class recruitment among the war- and post-war-generations. This social re-shuffling takes place at the expense of the upper class, which loses 12.5 per cent against the pre-war generations of bureaucrats.

The detailed analysis of this result reveals another unexpected finding for the administrative elite: the reduction of recruitment from the upper class is accompanied by an even more dramatic decrease of recruitment from higher civil service families. While among the pre-war-generations 52.2 per cent of the administrative elite had inherited their profession from higher civil servant fathers, in the post-war-generations the rate is merely 23.8 per cent. This overproportionately high loss (compared to the 12.5% overall loss of the upper class) is partly compensated by recruitment from the free professions (physicians, solicitors, pharmacists plus 11.6%), and from leading employees in industry (plus 4.3%).

Behind the growing upward mobility of later members of the administrative elite, belonging to the vintages that participated in the second World War (cohorts 1911–28), there lies a complex bundle of causal factors, which can only be hinted at here: the vacuum left by the Nazi administrative elite, high striving of the existentially stricken returning soldiers, and unorthodox educa-

tional gates like trade union academies together with a declining regional provenance from eastern Prussian territories typical for higher civil service background of the older generations. Last but not least, we find a statistical relationship with party membership. Among the younger generations of civil servants with lower class background, SPD membership climbs to 56.5 per cent, while among the pre-war generations CDU membership had dominated with 73.3 per cent. What at first pointed to a mere generation effect behind increased civil service elite recruitment from lower classes, now indicates also a political periodization effect.

2.2 Social background by legislative periods

As will be remembered, there is a relationship between political generations and legislative periods of the Federal Republic, although with different time lags of generational circulation and with shifting overlaps of generations. We therefore would not necessarily expect to find the trend of long-term intergenerational social elite mobility replicated along the successive political periods of the 35 years of post-war history. All government formations since 1945 have engendered short-term changes in the social composition of the political as well as the administrative elite, with a multitude of exchange and substitution process among the various social strata.

By a narrow margin politicians were, in the majority, offsprings of the business class (leading employees, entrepreneurs, free professions) in all governments. Unless one sums up elite members from the different civil service strata, which would give this group a majority between 1954 and 1966 (and in 1977), business class background of politicians is in fact typical of German governments. However, we notice oscillations with an almost steady increase until the second social-liberal Brandt government of 1973, followed by a downswing during the Schmidt governments and an unprecedented increase of business background after the formation of the conservative-liberal Kohl government in 1983. Furthermore, under SPD chancellors between 1970 to 1977, not surprisingly, politicians with working class background were most frequent. Their reduction, however, did not take place after the advent of the conservative government in late 1982; politicians with working class background were already diminishing in the last Schmidt government, when the 6th generation of SPD ministers, who had come into office after 1969, were finally retiring. The increasing middle class recruitment of politicians belonging to the younger generations has also to be attributed to a structural as well as to a periodization effect: during the Social-Democrat governments since 1969 the number of positions of parliamentary state secretary, an institution created only in 1967, expanded and their incumbents are regularly younger than the

ministers. Thus, to put it simply, SPD cabinet ministers with labour class background tended to be accompanied by ever more junior ministers belonging to the younger generation, who originated rather from the social middle class. Secondly, in the course of the government change of 1982 the generational effect was accelerated by even younger recruitment into the again mushrooming positions of junior ministers, combined with a possibly party political rooted bias in favour of business class background. In the civil service elite the number of people with labour class background was also highest after 1969 and declined after 1982. In 1970 we furthermore observe a decrease of people with a higher civil service pedigree. However, during the Schmidt governments their number was slightly growing again, before dropping drastically after 1982. Overall, the predominance of higher civil service breeding ends after 1966 with the first three generations finally leaving office. Instead, since the first Brandt government, business class background among the bureaucratic elite briefly gained importance, a trend that was to be reverted during the last Schmidt government without being revived in the Kohl administration.

It would be possible to demonstrate similar oscillations of other ascribed properties of the federal elite, e.g. religious confession. A Catholic majority even among the state secretaries can be observed for the first time after 1982 due to the invasion of South German position holders of the Christian Democrats in general and the import of Bavarian CSU officials to Bonn in particular. This can hardly be interpreted as the beginning of a new trend, nor will the reduction of the number of women in the elite (15 altogether in 35 years, of whom 12 were politicians) be eternal: since the creation of the Ministry of Family Affairs etc. in 1961 the administrations embraced at least one female member for symbolic reasons; their number increased, however, with the SPD's entering the grand coalition in 1966 to 4 and under the last Schmidt government to 6, before dropping to 3 in the Kohl government of 1983.

The explanation of all these short-term oscillations can, of course, be found in the very political criterion implied in our periodization: all of these phenomena are basically related to party membership, which naturally varies within the political elite over time, but also has repercussions among the administrative top ranks. As German top civil servants are exposed to the threat of temporary retirement if they lack congeniality with their political masters, they are all the same candidates for recruitment into top positions if they display the appropriate party affiliation (Mayntz and Derlien, 1989). Therefore, preferential recruitment of the political and administrative elites, as a matter of course, is ultimately guided not by social background or gender (I am not so sure about religious confession in Christian-Democrat governments); rather, short-term changes in these attributes are brought about via party membership. The decline of higher civil service pedigrees among the adminis-

trative elite, though, seems to be a long-term trend, since it has persisted through generational successions and political periods.

3. Changing training and career patterns

In this section some findings are to be presented which shed light on the type of qualification both elite groups have gained on their way to the top. Again, my interest is in the dynamics of the system. After an analysis of the educational background and the kind of training the federal elite has gone through, a typology of the overall career will be presented; and finally the question of intersectoral mobility between politics and aministration will be dealt with.

3.1 Education and professional training

The elite in Bonn possesses a very high degree of formal education: 91.1 per cent have completed university training, another 1.8 per cent have gone through academies or colleges, and 3.2 per cent at least passed an A-level examination. Only 3.9 per cent entered elite positions without advanced educational achievements (Table 6). The administrative elite, owing to the formal career requirements of the higher civil service, attained a university degree even with 96.8 per cent, while the politicians with barely 71.7 per cent university training and 14.7 per cent normal school qualifications are less disproportional vis à vis the electorate. Of those in both elite groups, however, who had undergone university education, barely fewer politicians (64.2%) than administrators (70.9%) were awarded doctoral degrees. The small difference is accounted for by the institutionally and generationally younger parlia-

Table 6. Level of educational achievement.

Level of education	Politicians %	Civil Servants %	total %	n
secondary school (B-level)	14.7	0.8	3.9	33
A-level or unfinished university training	7.3	2.0	3.2	27
technical college	3.1	0.5	1.1	9
trade union academy	3.1	0.0	0.7	6
university degree	71.7	96.8	91.1	769
total n = 100%	191	653		844
%			100	

mentary state secretaries (51.1%), who mostly went to university after world war II when the diploma had come to replace the doctoral dissertation as the normal qualification. Ministers, though, are academically decorated as often (70.8%) as particular state secretaries (72.7%).

Educational achievement of the elite, too, is predetermined by social background: one-third of those elite members with a working class background have not achieved at least A-level qualification. This finding holds only for the political elite, while top civil servants with working class background all made their way to a university degree. Furthermore, since we know about the relationship between social background and party membership, one is hardly surprised to learn that in the political elite Social Democrats are less likely to have studied (70%) than politicians of the other parties (about 85%).

As to the subjects studied, with 64 per cent the monopoly of jurists is not as paramount as is often believed (Czudnowski, 1975: 204; for a differentiation see Pedersen, 1972), but other subjects (most important: economics 12.9%, science 5.7%, social science 2.0%) individually rank far behind the study of law (see the marginals in Table 7). The difference between politicians and bureaucrats in this respect is hardly worth mentioning (59.6 vs. 65.1% law degrees). Among those who studied economics state secretaries are most frequent (17.8%), followed by ministers (14.8%), parliamentary state secretaries (12.5%) and only then by ministerialdirektoren (11.5%). Again one discovers a party-effect: every second member of the SPD (49.4% compared to 67.0% of the CDU) has studied law, politicians and those civil servants, whom we know to be party-members, alike. On the other hand, Social Democrats have studied economics more often (22.5%) than Christian Democrats (11.7%).

When examining potential generation effects, we detect no change of the level of educational achievement in the administrative elite; stability is safeguarded by traditional formal recruitment criteria. Politicians, nevertheless, are subject to a specific generational influence on education. While of the early generations (1876–1904) 77 per cent of the politicians had studied at a university, a rate that is met again by the post-war political generations (born after 1928), only 50 per cent (generation 1917–22) or 68.4 per cent of generations 4 to 7 taken together (1905–1928) have completed a university course. This downswing is caused by the biographical irregularities warfare and post-war turbulences imposed on the middle generations. Typically, all of those who attended a (trade union) academy after 1945 belong to the world-war-II political generation (1923–1928); they compensated for foregone normal educational opportunities later on in their occupational lives.

Whereas the level of formal education oscillates between generations, there is a more longlasting effect observable as to the field of studies. While more than 70 per cent of the oldest generations (until 1910) had studied law,

beginning with generation 5 (1911–16) the share of law students in the elite fell below 70 per cent, reaching a minimum in the (quantitatively small) Adenauer-generation (1935–40) with 43.2 per cent. This secular trend of diminishing importance of law training surprisingly is more marked in the administrative than in the political elite. A concomitant trend is the rise of economics from 13.4 per cent in generation 5 to 36.4 per cent in generation 9. In addition, training in economics is more widespread in the younger generations of bureaucrats than among their political peers.

Again, one has to be careful about drawing systematic inferences from this generational effect, because generations turn up in the politico-administrative elite in different compositions. We would, nevertheless, expect the secular trends to shape the elite system in the more recent periods. Educational level, which was lowest among the 6th generation (1917–22), dropped during the first social-liberal government Brandt with only 86.3 per cent with university

Table 7. Subjects studied by legislative periods.

Subject	Year	2/1950	3/1954	3/1958	3/1962	3/1966	3/1970	5/1973	4/1977	4/1981	9/1983	total 1949–1984	
												%	n
	Tot.	66.7	70.2	68.1	71.8	71.9	62.7	62.8	57.8	61.9	64.5	64.0	447
Law	Pol.	55.6	35.7	53.3	53.3	52.9	41.2	50.0	50.0	60.0	64.9	59.6	81
	C.S.	69.7	77.1	70.9	75.0	75.3	66.3	65.0	59.1	62.3	64.4	65.1	366
	Tot.	11.9	10.7	8.5	5.8	10.5	16.1	17.2	17.0	16.1	14.0	12.9	90
Economics	Pol.	11.1	28.6	6.7	6.7	17.6	17.6	22.7	20.0	20.0	10.8	14.0	19
	C.S.	12.1	7.1	8.9	5.7	9.3	15.8	16.3	16.5	15.4	14.8	12.6	71
Enginee-	Tot.	11.9	9.5	6.4	4.9	6.1	7.6	6.9	5.4	4.5	2.3	5.7	40
ring	Pol.	33.3	14.3	20.0	13.3	11.8	11.8	9.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	8
	C.S.	6.1	8.6	3.8	3.4	5.2	6.9	6.5	6.3	5.4	3.0	5.7	32
Philology/	Tot.	4.8	0.0	0.0	2.9	2.6	0.8	1.4	1.6	1.3	2.3	3.0	21
Liberal	Pol.	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.3	11.8	5.9	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	4
Arts	C.S.	6.1	0.0	0.0	1.1	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.5	3.0	3.0	17
Agricult.	Tot.	4.8	2.4	3.2	2.9	1.8	2.5	2.1	4.1	3.2	4.1	2.9	20
Science	Pol.	0.0	7.1	6.7	0.0	0.0	5.9	4.5	5.0	4.0	2.7	2.9	4
	C.S.	6.1	1.4	2.5	3.4	2.1	2.0	1.6	3.9	3.1	4.4	2.8	16
	Tot.	0.0	2.4	4.3	1.9	1.8	1.7	0.7	0.7	1.9	2.3	2.3	16
History	Pol.	0.0	7.1	6.7	6.7	5.9	5.9	0.0	0.0	4.0	8.1	4.4	6
	C.S.	0.0	1.4	3.8	1.1	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.8	1.5	0.7	1.8	10
Social	Tot.	0.0	0.0	2.1	1.0	1.8	2.5	1.4	2.7	3.9	1.7	2.0	14
Sciences	Pol.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	4.5	5.0	8.0	0.0	2.2	3
	C.S.	0.0	0.0	2.5	1.1	2.1	2.0	0.8	2.4	3.1	2.2	2.0	11
	Tot.	0.0	4.8	7.4	8.7	3.5	5.9	7.6	10.9	7.1	8.7	7.2	50
Other	Pol.	0.0	7.1	6.7	6.7	0.0	5.9	4.5	20.0	4.0	13.5	8.1	11
	C.S.	0.0	4.3	7.6	9.1	4.1	5.9	8.1	9.4	7.7	7.4	7.2	40
total	Tot.	42	84	94	103	114	118	145	147	155	172		698
n = 100%	Pol.	9	14	15	16	17	17	22	20	25	37		136
	C.S.	33	70	79	88	97	101	123	127	130	135		562

degrees, but rose gradually to the same level (95.6 per cent) in the Kohl administration that was typical of the elite of the third legislative period (1957–61). Even among the administrative elite, university degrees were least frequent in 1970 (93.4%). The outstanding overall 95.6 per cent of the Kohl administration is produced by an almost unprecedented 88.1 per cent of university graduates among the politicians. Academy graduates have appeared and disappeared with SPD chancellors.

The secular generational shift from law to economics as the subject of university training had its impact on the federal elite since the formation of the reformist first Brandt government in 1969. While the share of law graduates declined from 71.9 per cent in 1966 to 62.7 per cent in 1970, economists rose from 10.5 per cent to 16.1 per cent, and topped in 1973 with 17.2 per cent (Table 7). As was indicated above by the opposite generational trends among politicians and bureaucrats, the percentage of law students in the administrative elite stagnated on the 65 per cent level since 1970 in combination with a fairly constant 15 per cent rate of economists. Politicians, contrariwise, are increasingly recruited with a law background after 1970, culminating with a historically unique 64.9 per cent in 1983. Economists in the Kohl government (10.8%) were hardly less rare than during the 3rd and 4th legislative periods. As jurists traditionally are the generalists in Germany, it might not be exaggeration to maintain that politicians during the last 15 years have become more managerial as heads of the ministerial bureaucracy, while parts of the administrative elite, those with a background in economics, turned more specialist for managing the economic and financial aspects of the expanding (1970s) or contracting (at last since 1982) welfare policies.

3.2 Change of career patterns

Closed civil service career systems, in which officials would spend all their professional life after having completed their training, are questioned by many an observer for tending to become elitist, for not breeding the necessary expertise to respond to new societal demands, or for lacking innovativeness. One aim of the research project, therefore, was to investigate to what extent the administrative elite in Bonn corresponded to or deviated from the extreme of civil service careers uninterrupted by initial or intermediate stays in other socio-economic sectors. Secondly, since we know that the political elite in Germany has a strong state affinity owing to their often being socialized in civil service families and that politicians have frequently studied law, it seems worthwhile to compare the overall careers of the later political masters with those of their bureaucratic servants. Table 8 provides the results of a classification ranging from uninterrupted civil service careers, over civil service careers

deferred by up to four years at the beginning of professional life, to mixed careers with longer external occupational activities, to careers with less than five years spent in the civil service or made completely outside public administration. Not surprisingly, the majority of bureaucrats had gone through uninterrupted careers, and civil servants are not found in the lower part of the tabulation; they reveal at best (29.6%) mixed internal and external careers. Also corresponding to the ideal type, two-thirds of the politicians – predominantly ministers – have never been in the civil service. Nevertheless, roughly one-third of the executive politicians had some administrative experience, disproportionately among these the younger parliamentary state secretaries.

There is a close association between training in law and uninterrupted civil service careers in the administrative elite (71.2%), whereas a degree in economics is least typical (9.4%). On the other hand, economists among the administrative elite are more often characterized by mixed careers than jurists. This trait they have in common with those of their colleagues and those politicians who have studied (from the point of view of the traditional higher civil service) even more exotic subjects. In other words, a classical civil servant's career is more likely with a law degree, while politicians, too, tend to have spent considerable parts of their professional life in public administration, if they have finished university training with a law degree.

The data from 35 years suggest distinct career patterns of executive politicians; at best some overlap between both elite groups. Hidden behind these aggregate figures, however, lies a generational as well as a periodical change. Table 9 demonstrates that uninterrupted civil service careers among bureaucrats have become rather the exception since generation 6 (1922) and decreased to 28 per cent in the 'post-war reconstruction' generation. Mixed careers, instead, became normal. While the percentage of politicians who have never been in the civil service decreased and oscillates around 65 per cent since generation 6, there is a small, but rising, tendency among politicians to have

Table 8. Career type by elite-group.

Position / Type of career	Politicians		Civil Servants		total n
	%	n	%	n	
uninterrupted civ. serv. career			52.8	298	298
deferred civil service career			17.6	99	99
mixed c.s. and external career	13.5	26	29.6	167	193
less than 5 years in civil service	15.5	30			30
never in civil service	71.0	137			137
total n = 100%		193		564	757

spent at least some years in public administration, the younger they are. As would have been predictable from the changing generational compositions during successive legislative periods, the shift from traditional to unorthodox careers of the administrative elite can be observed after 1966, when generations 1 to 4 had gradually retired. The government change of 1969, which was characterized by the replacement of a considerable part of the administrative elite, brought 51.5 per cent (1966: 31.8%) into the highest bureaucratic positions, who had made their way through deferred or mixed careers. After the government change of 1982, unorthodox careers amounted to even 56.0 per cent among the top administrators. The Kohl government, however, consisted also of 33.3 per cent politicians with mixed careers or short administrative experience.

The decline of traditional uninterrupted internal civil service careers and the increased mobility between other sectors and the civil service is obviously a

Table 9. Career type by generation.

Generation (birth cohort)	Type	POLITICIANS				CIVIL SERVANTS			
		never civ.s.	short c.v. job	mixed career	total n = 100%	civ. s. career	deferr. c.s.car.	mixed career	total n = 100%
1 Kaiser-Reich (–1892)		100.0	0.0	0.0	10	100.0	0.0	0.0	15
2 World War I (1893–1898)		92.3	0.0	7.7	13	85.7	3.6	10.7	28
3 Revolution & Crisis (1899–1904)		84.6	15.4	0.0	13	74.6	4.5	20.9	67
4 Stable Weimar Rep. (1905–1910)		72.7	9.1	18.2	11	68.6	12.9	18.6	70
5 Weimar Rep. in Crisis (1911–1916)		94.7	5.3	0.0	19	52.3	18.5	29.2	65
6 Establ. National-Social. (1917–1922)		66.7	20.8	12.5	24	53.7	22.4	23.9	67
7 World War II (1923–1928)		53.8	28.2	17.9	39	39.0	27.1	33.9	118
8 Post-War Recon struc. (1929–1934)		63.6	15.2	21.2	33	32.3	22.9	44.8	96
9 Establ. Adenauer era (1935–1940)		64.0	16.0	20.0	25	28.0	12.0	60.0	25
10 Student Revolt (1941–1948)		66.7	16.7	16.7	6	33.3	22.2	44.4	9
total	%	71.0	13.5	15.5	100	52.5	17.7	29.8	100
	n	137	30	26	193	294	99	167	560

long-term trend caused by changed generational curricula vitae. Politicians seem to develop greater professional affinity to the civil service in the long run, a fact that might be caused by the overrepresentation of civil servants in parties and parliaments, the recruitment field of the political elite. Besides these generational effects from the supply side, the periodization effect of 1969/70 seems to have accelerated the development by favouring younger generations.

3.3 Mobility between politics and administration

From the previous paragraph it became obvious that administrative inbreeding of the future elite is declining, because top administrators have increasingly spent the initial years or greater parts of professional life outside the civil service after having started there. The later political elite, on the other hand, has gathered administrative experience before climbing to the top. Normally, however, both groups have been occupied in their respective elite sector for several years before taking the last step, i.e. executive politicians have at least been a member of parliament for some time, and top bureaucrats have served one or two grades below their ultimate position. There are, however, exceptions to the rule, when people immediately prior to being elected or appointed to their ultimate elite position have not been active in the respective sector of politics or administration. Altogether, there were 64 outsiders in elite positions within 35 years, among these 9 politicians and 55 bureaucrats, i.e. less than 10 per cent in each elite group. Their number typically culminated in 1969 and 1982 with 10 and 12 external recruitments of civil servants, respectively. Apart from these exceptional periods, however, there is neither a periodization nor a generational effect recognizable. As to the sector from which these 64 cases were recruited into elite positions, 5 politicians had been in administrative positions before.

Among these was chancellor Schmidt's last finance minister Lahnstein, an unorthodox bureaucrat anyway, who has turned to industry after 1983, but also Westrick, chancellor Erhard's minister of the chancellory, who has been Erhard's state secretary in the ministry of economics and had to turn politician after having reached civil service retirement age. Another case is transport minister Gscheidle (1974–82), who had been state secretary since 1969, but was previously a member of parliament, i.e. he returned into the political arena. The only genuine stranger in a cabinet was education minister Leussink (1969–72), recruited from university; he is the only executive politician who never gained a seat in the Bundestag.

The 15 members of the administrative elite coming from the realm of politics were relatively often (7 cases) appointed state secretaries in Bonn after having been minister in a Land government; division heads with intersectoral mobility

tend to have served in staffs of the parliamentary party factions like two of the six ministerialdirektoren in the chancellor's office at present. Thus, the politicization of bureaucracy in Bonn is not due to direct recruitment from political positions, nor is the bureaucratization of parliament caused by top civil servants of the federal ministries moving into the Bundestag. The career paths of both elite groups are distinct and cross-overs are exceptional. Socially, however, both groups of the executive elite move closer to one another, as civil servants increasingly become party members (Mayntz and Derlien, 1989) and politicians have studied law and gathered administrative experience early in their career.

4. Conclusion

The empirical results show that the federal politico-administrative elite is characterized by stability as well as by long-term change and oscillations during the first 35 years of the FRG. Basically unchanged in qualitative terms is the social background of the elite; in particular, the civil service elite still originates predominantly from the upper regions of society with a high self-recruitment rate from higher civil service families, while politicians are socially slightly more representative, although they tend recently to stem from the middle class. Both elite groups, furthermore, are overwhelmingly university trained with law remaining studied most frequently. Again this trait is most pronounced among the members of the civil service elite. Despite their similarity in these respects, both elite groups remain distinct when it comes to recruitment into highest positions. Intersectoral mobility towards the end of the individual career is low.

Apart from the obvious generational succession and the varying composition of the elite according to political generations, long-lasting smooth changes could be discovered in a declining self-recruitment rate of the civil service elite, the diminishing importance of law as the preferred subject studied by the administrative elite, the emergence of a stable 15 per cent of economists since 1969 and an erosion of classical, secluded civil service careers. Among the politicians an opposite trend was observed: together with a slightly growing preference for the study of law, the political elite tends to move closer to the administrative sector by having spent early parts of their careers in public administration or having served some years of their political career in higher administrative offices before taking over political elite positions.

While these trends may even change the so far stable characteristics of the elite in the long run, other traits oscillate from period to period and are subject to differential change in the subgroups of the political as well as the administrative elite. Be it the frequency of university training, the intermediate

increase of working class background and the social recruitment from specific father professions, these and other characteristics not elaborated here, like religious confession, are obviously subject to periodization effects. They are mostly closely associated with party membership – itself a property heavily subject to periodical change as a matter of course. The importance of party membership as an explanatory variable was not made explicit in the article, but was implied in the periodization and the denomination of the various governments. In particular, the fundamental government changes of 1969 and 1982 account for many of the oscillations observed (Derlien, 1988). It is the very absence of an impact of the 1982 government change on the long-term permutations which leads me to conclude that these are not just periodical swings. In view of these long-term changes and short-term oscillations it is methodically as questionable to analyze aggregate data of various periods (as did Blondel, 1985), as it is to infer trends from merely punctual observations.

In the introduction it was suggested that we could explain change and stability within the framework of a supply-demand-model of elite recruitment. Interpreting the properties of elite generations as the supply-side, we might tentatively arrive at the conclusion that intergenerational stability explains the lasting properties of the elite, which appear at the surface of the elite system throughout the various periods. Political demand factors operate via preferential recruitment of party loyalists on a number of social background variables, but also via the political agenda on elite qualification, in particular of the top administrators. A case in point is the inflow of economists into the social-liberal reformist government after 1969, who were needed for the various planning functions and for managing Keynesian economic policy. These political demand factors interacted with the increased supply of economists among younger generations of the recruitment field. Stable elements and long-lasting changes, therefore, can only be accelerated by increased circulation (which happened in 1969) or temporarily retarded (partly in 1982) without being basically reversed or stopped. The short-term oscillations observed, then, seem to be brought about by an explicitly politically selective personnel policy of governments, as most of the respective traits are related to party membership.

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