

# PSEUDO-BUREAUCRACIES AS TOOLS FOR DESPOTIC LEADERS: THE CASE OF THE 18TH CENTURY GOVERNMENT OF THE MARQUIS OF POMBAL

Miguel Pereira Lopes

## ABSTRACT

*The present study analyses the government of the Marquis of Pombal in the 18th Century Portugal in order to understand how despotic leaders use modern bureaucratic structures to gain and keep their ruling legitimacy. We conclude that despotic leaders set forth “pseudo-bureaucracies” mostly by centralizing decision-making and relying on a small and dependent self-serving ruling group of people. At the end of this paper, we outline several implications of this conclusion for the bureaucratic politics and politicization debate in public management research.*

**Keywords** - *bureaucratic-politics, despotic leadership, enlightenment, politicization, pseudo-bureaucracy.*

## INTRODUCTION

There are many examples of despotic leaders throughout the human history and up to our current days. Despite this, with several exceptions (e.g., Cunha, Rego, and Clegg, 2011), the scientific literature on management and organizational history has been limited in analysing how these leaders have acted in order to exercise their despotic leadership, as well as on discussing its relevance for organizational management today. This is somewhat surprising given that both to prevent the emergence of and to learn how to overcome destructive leadership processes we need a better understanding of these phenomena. As such, in the present study we specifically analyse how leaders create and manage “pseudo-bureaucracies” in order to instil a despotically led government regime, based on the analysis of the government of the despotic leader Marquis of Pombal in the 18th century Portugal.

Understanding how despotic leaders behave and which strategies they use in order to set up a despotic leadership style is of particularly major importance for the present times, since the emergence of despotic leaders is often associated with epochs of societal crisis, such as we are currently living worldwide.

**Copyright:** © 2022 Lopes. Copyright for this article is retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the International Public Management Review (IPMR). All journal content, except where otherwise noted, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. By virtue of their appearance in this open-access journal, articles are free to use, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings.

**Corresponding Author:** mplopes@iscsp.ulisboa.pt

Padilla, Hogan, and Kaiser (2007) proposed that the emergence of a despotic leadership style is not the product of a single person but of a “toxic triangle”. This triangle included the presence of (i) destructive leaders, narcissistic, with personalized power and an ideology of hate, (ii) susceptible followers, such as conformers with low core self-evaluations and/or ambitious colluders, and (iii) a conducive environment, impregnated with instability, perceived threats and a lack of checks and balances and ineffective institutions.

Despotic leaders thus seem to rely on an administrative and organizational apparatus, including certain kinds of followers to achieve their goals. Thoroughgood, Padilla, Hunter, and Tate (2012) identified five types of followers that contribute to destructive leadership, including the acolytes, the opportunists, the bystanders, the lost souls, and the authoritarians. At least from the last century onwards and up to our days, despotic leadership phenomena in public and private organizations has probably involved these kinds of followers among the administrative body of bureaucrats, technocrats and scientists that helped to legitimate despotic action as if it was of a rational, logical, or natural order (à la Max Weber’s bureaucracy).

The historical roots of this rationalist strategy for despotic action legitimation in modern organizations are yet to be understood. One can only conceive of a scientific rationalization of despotic action after the enlightenment revolution that has taken place in the seventeenth-century, since up to there, despotic behaviours must have been grounded in sources of power other than the scientific or technocratic ones. As such, the present study relies on the analysis of the government of the despotic leader Marquis of Pombal in the 18th century Portugal to understand how leaders begun using bureaucratic and scientific sources to legitimate their despotic action right after the availability of science and scientifically based techniques as a legitimate source.

The analysis of the present case shows that the Marquis of Pombal made all the efforts to set up a series of bureaucratic institutions (including academic institutions) in order to legitimate his despotic action. A deep analysis of the historical data available evidences, however, that these institutions were politically aligned with Pombal’s viewpoints and the chosen bureaucrats and scientists were somehow coerced to validate the despot’s policies in advance or were otherwise eliminated. This shows that these institutions were in fact “pseudo-bureaucratic” in their essence.

The findings of the present study significantly contribute to public management theory in several ways. First, they bring new knowledge on leadership characteristics during the paradoxical times of the Enlightenment, a clearly understudied epoch in terms of leadership (cf. Lopes, 2017, 2014). In addition, the present study sheds light on the origins of the issues of “bureaucratic politics”, “bureaucratic politicization”, and the “political-bureaucratic divide” (Peters and Pierre, 1998; Rosenthal, ‘t Hart, and Kouzmin, 1991), as it analyses the relationship between political power and the emerging scientific and technically grounded administrative institutions. The case of the Pombal government is particularly suitable for the purpose of the present study, since Pombal has been pointed as a preeminent example of the paradoxical enlightened despotic leaders that ruled in the transition period from the ancient regime into the Enlightenment (cf. Maxwell, 1995).

In the remainder of the present paper, we will first clarify the methodological options and assumptions of the present study. We then introduce the problem of the political-bureaucratic divide that theoretically grounds the goal of the present study both historically and for the present times. After, we show evidence of the despotic character of the Marquis of Pombal and describe how he created and used a pseudo-bureaucracy to aid his despotic purposes. We conclude by outlining implications for contemporary management and organizational theories as well as for the current practice of managers and administrators.

## METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The present study follows a “historical perspective” approach, following the arguments of Lawrence (1984). We thus rely on a set of secondary sources to build further knowledge on leadership and organization theory. Although using primary historical facts is usually an advantage for the purposes of doing historical research, it becomes less critical in the present study, since reliable secondary sources can be as much or more important for the goal of generating new theoretical possibilities from an historical account. On this matter, we stress the claim of Jacques (2006) of seeing management history research as “informative” rather than history “in itself”.

We follow the perspective of Lent and Durepos (2019, p. 430) of using “history as a method” more than “history as a theory”, aiming the “conduct of historical analysis for purposes of theory building”. We thus see the present work as a theoretically motivated study aiming to understand how despotic leaders create and use pseudo administrative and scientific bureaucracies for their despotic purposes. With that in mind, we also make explicit that we somehow intend to learn from the past (Clark and Rowlinson, 2004), with all the cautions of generalizations between the present and the past (Söderlund and Lenfle, 2013; Zald, 1993). In any case, since theory is our primary goal, we see great value on the conceptual distinction of Suddaby (2016) concerning history as “text”, i.e., looking for historical facts as a goal in its own sake, and history as “subtext”, i.e., considering history as a lens through which we can view the present. We certainly align the present study mostly with this latest perspective.

Despite these onto-epistemological options guided by theoretically motivated reasons, the present study can also be included on a “path-dependent” historical approach (Schreyögg, Sydow, and Holtmann, 2011), in that it also seeks to understand how a historical phenomenon – the political-bureaucratic divide – evolved over time. The present study specifically contributes to our understanding of how the processes of bureaucratic politicization and bureaucratic-politics have evolved. It also contributes to improve our knowledge about the roots of these organizational processes or at least their development in the critical age of the Enlightenment.

Mikelson (2018) analysed how much historical administrative systems can help to understand the present day national public administration patterns and found that the level of political control over the public bureaucracies in western European countries can be accounted for by the their 18th century state infrastructure. Countries that established a patrimonial administration in the 18th century, such as Portugal, are prone to have currently higher levels of bureaucratic politicization (Boräng, Cornell, Grimes, and Schuster,

2018). As such, it also becomes clear that the selection of the case of the Marquis of Pombal Government in the 18th century Portuguese context can be considered as highly appropriate for the purpose of the present study. We thus believe that the analysis of this historical case, as well as its insights, can be of value for management and organization researchers and practitioners.

## FINDINGS

### **The Despotic Leadership of the Marquis of Pombal**

Despotic leadership has been a topic of interest in political leadership literature. However, research on the topic of despotic leadership “in the broad management and applied psychology literatures is still in its infancy” (Naseer et al, 2016, p. 15).

The word “despotism” is rooted on the Greek word *despôtēs* who meant technically a master or ruler of a household full of slaves or servants (Boesche, 1990). In a despotic regime, a single person that directs all the state affairs by his own will and caprice controls the society. During the period of transition from the Ancient Regime to the Enlightenment, despots swallowed up “intermediate institutions, subverting the judiciary, concentrating all power in the monarchy and its Intendants, and transforming nobles into commoners, all of whom would become equal in misery and servitude” (Boesche, 1990, p. 743).

Through an analysis of how the concepts of tyranny and despotism evolved along history, Turchetti (2008, p. 160) has distinguished between the two terms, following an Aristotelic point of view. In his words, “Despotism is a form of government which, while being authoritarian and arbitrary, is legitimate if not legal (...) whereas tyranny, in the most rigorous sense, is a form of government which is authoritarian and arbitrary and which is illegitimate and illegal, because exercised not only without, but against the will of the citizens”. In both cases, however, these rulers aim to control their subjects through force and fear.

As such, although despotic leadership and tyrannical leadership are somewhat different concepts, for the purposes of the present study they can be used as interchangeable, since the 18th Century ruler Marquis of Pombal showed behaviours that were both despotic and tyrannical at the same time. Kets de Vries (2006, p. 197) defined tyrannical leadership as “the arbitrary rule by a single person who, by inducing a psychological state of extreme fear in a population, monopolizes power to his or her own advantage (unchecked by law or other restraining influences), exercising that power without restraint and, in most cases, contrary to the general good”. Although there is plenty controversy about the positive and negative aspects of the Marquis of Pombal’s leadership (Coates, 1997; Maxwell, 1995), it seems clear that it is hard not to qualify him as a despot and tyrannical leader.

A further example is illustrative of Pombal’s despotic leadership. A key feature of his leadership was his taking charge of cultural and scientific Censorship. As stated by Carneiro, Simões and Diogo (2000, p. 599), during Pombal’s government “Censorship mechanisms severely hampered free expression and undermined individual or collective initiatives. For example, all newspapers and periodicals were banned between 1768 and

1777". An evidence of a this despotic deliberate action is that Pombal had the priest D. João Cosme da Cunha, one of his protégées, nominated as the head of the Royal Censorship Table (a commission in charge of screening all the books and documents and defining which would be forbidden, such as those of Voltaire or Rousseau).

In sum, there seems to be no doubt that the Marquis of Pombal is a great example of a despotic leader. That makes his leadership as a good example for the purposes of the present study.

### **The Political-Bureaucratic divide: Bureaucratic Politics and Politicization**

The critical issue of the present study is that the Marquis of Pombal created, reinforced and used bureaucratic institutions in order to legitimate his despotic action. By doing this, he set up a distinction between bureaucratic and political realms of government.

Today, there is a relevant literature on the relationships between bureaucracy and politics. In general, this literature has grown under the umbrella of the bureaucratic-politics or "bureau-politics" label (Rosenthal, 't Hart, and Kouzmin, 1991). It places the focus of governance on the relationships and potential conflicts between the technical-bureaucratic perspective and the political-democratic standpoint and calls for a better understanding of how a polycentric approach to societal problem-solving can benefit from the interchanging work and checks and balances between different social actors (Farazmand, 2010). But how long in history can we trace back this clear separation of the two types of authority that constitute the bureaucratic and scientific, along with the political realm? We believe that, because of the emergence of scientific knowledge, experimentation, and scientifically based techniques that happened in the transition from the ancient regime to the Enlightenment, that is the critical historical moment to search for the origins of the political-bureaucratic separation as we conceive it nowadays. Thus, the appropriateness of the present case to further our knowledge on this management issue.

In addition, bureau-politics has also been stressed to be present particularly in periods of social crisis, such as after the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake that happened in the beginning of the Marquis of Pombal's leadership. Although the analysis of real case-studies is scarce, some authors have argued that the understanding of this phenomena could profit from the analysis of real world crisis episodes, since "under critical situations, the lines between political and administrative roles and activities tend to be blurred" (Rosenthal, 't Hart, and Kouzmin, 1991, p. 331). As such, we need further knowledge about what is going on in the power and influence games that happen between bureaucratic and political actors in these situations and how they influence state efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with crises. By analyzing such a case in an historical perspective, the present study could not be further appropriate.

Another angle to look into the political-bureaucratic relationship is that of the "bureaucratic politicization". Politicization can be defined as the "substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards and disciplining of members of the public service" (Peters and Pierre, 2004, p. 2), where the recruitment and promotion of public servants becomes dependent on political loyalty (whether of a personal or a political party standpoint) more than the result of meritocracy or professional



skills (Lapuente and Suzuki, 2020). Recent research on European comparative public administration has found that today's national administrative traditions – the “formal and informal institutions that define the nature of public service, as well as the relationship that the public service has with the government, the state, and its citizens”, including “the beliefs of about the proper rapport between politicians and bureaucrats” (Cooper, 2020, p. 1) – can be traced back as far as to the 18th century state infrastructure, namely its patrimonial or truly bureaucratic character at that time (Mikkelsen, 2018).

It was not until the beginning of the 20th Century though that the study of the bureaucracy as scientific research object came into being in the well-known work of Weber (1978, 1947). Although the origins of bureaucratic forms of organization can possibly be traced back as far as the origins of the human species itself (Schott, 2000), and there are certainly ancient examples of social organizations and societies that can be cited as bureaucratically organized (Antonio, 1979; Jacques, 2006), the understanding of the origins of the “modern” bureaucracy in terms as those described by Max Weber are probably best achieved tracing back to the emergence of the Enlightenment. The “ideal type” or “archetypal” rational-legal organization proposed by Weber, requires in some sense a scientific and/or technocratic knowledge-based and competent individuals that can only be conceived as that within the context of the scientific era of the Enlightenment as we know it. Despite that, and somewhat paradoxically, the bureaucracy as an “ideal type” means that in the real world we can only achieve something close to the ideal bureaucratic phenomenon, particularly in what refers to the independent and rationalistic action of the bureaucrats. In some sense, all organizations are indeed “pseudo-bureaucracies”, though one can image a continuum linking organizations closer or farther away from that ideal. Our point here is that the first types of bureaucratic organizations were clearly “pseudo-bureaucratic” in that they lack a series of organizational features that would qualify them as “truly” bureaucratic.

A “pseudo-bureaucracy” is thus an organizational apparatus that resembles some characteristics of a bureaucracy, such as legitimacy from technical and scientific authority, but lacks critical features of a “true” Weberian bureaucracy, namely a meritocratically recruited and impartially acting public administration (Lapuente and Suzuki, 2020). In the following section, we will analyse the role of pseudo-bureaucracies for the action and establishment of a despotic leadership.

### **Pseudo-bureaucracies as tools for Despotic Leaders**

We now deeply analyse how the Marquis of Pombal set forth an administration apparatus in order to enlarge his personal power and achieve his own goals. The analysis shows that Pombal's leadership exhibited strategies today interpretable as “bureaucratic politicization”.

Pombal's power as Ministry of foreign affairs was already of some influence over the King Joseph I. However, the great Lisbon earthquake that almost destroyed the city on November 1st 1755, gave him the leitmotiv to consummate his will for absolute power. In the days that followed the earthquake, the previously existing institutions and governmental members in power (mostly aristocrats) were unable to function given the dangers associated with the destruction of the buildings and the perils of transportation throughout

the city. In the midst of this context, Pombal quickly implemented a strategy to achieve full power. As described by Subtil (2006, p. 157), a first step “coincided with the unexpected destruction of the material conditions supporting the administrative apparatus and the dysfunctionality of human resources caused by the earthquake. A second step was marked by the activity of an inorganic government nucleus that temporarily assumed the management of the crisis”. The next steps included the creation or the smart exploitation of political facts – such as the supposed attempted regicide – to overcome all the opponents with the support of the King and the dismantling of his adversaries’ institutions, namely those of the Jesuits and traditional aristocracy.

While doing this, the Marquis of Pombal cunningly used two main strategies that can be interpretable as bureaucratic politicization: (1) the centralization of decision-making and (2) the reliance on a small and dependent self-serving ruling elite group. We turn our attention for each of these strategies in the following pages.

### *Centralization of decision-making*

A key feature of Pombal’s despotic action was that of centralizing decision-making. From education to economics, from judicial issues to police and public order matters, the Minister progressively, but in a fast way, created new structures and had the King nominating trusted men for key positions, including family members (brothers, nephews). As Hespanha (2007, p. 2) emphasizes, there was a clear “trend towards a centralization of the political decision-making process around an ever smaller ruling group formed from grandes and suchlike”.

This was particularly visible in the matters of police and public order, given the near-chaos situation of the city of Lisbon that emerged from the 1755 earthquake. After the earthquake, Pombal quickly accelerated the process of political centralization, having the King Joseph I transferring all the powers to his government and the police intendency organizations created meanwhile (Subtil, 2006), such as what happened with the decree of 25th of June 1760, which created the General Intendency of Police (Cunha, 2010). Pombal also legitimated a few close personalities as administrators of the city of Lisbon neighbourhoods, all aligned with his political agenda.

In the following years, this centralization would become clearer in other social domains as education and science. By the hand of the Marquis of Pombal, Portugal has created in 1759 the first public and secular School of Commerce within the context and the philosophy of mercantilism and Enlightenment (Rodrigues, Craig, and Gomes, 2007). Though this initiative had several economic and social benefits to the country, such as preparing a new cohort of entrepreneurs and bureaucrats partially based on meritocracy, it also served Pombal’s purposes of power domination and societal control. As acknowledged by Rodrigues and Craig (2009, p. 380), “Pombal as Chief Minister of King Joseph I (D. José I), was responsible for appointing João Henrique de Sousa as the first teacher of the School of Commerce (1759–62), and Albert Jaquéri de Sales as the second teacher (1762–84). Sousa and Sales were important transmitters of commercial knowledge in Portugal in the latter half of the 18th century. Many of their students became prominent in the Portuguese

bureaucracy, and as merchants, and were instrumental in the development and modernization of Portugal's economy and society". This clearly evidences the centralized and control-oriented ideology of Pombal's educational initiatives.

The same was true regarding university education, in which a revolution occurred by the hand of Pombal. The main focus of Pombal's action was the University of Coimbra, by that time the most important university in Portugal. When he arrived in charge, the University of Coimbra was dominated by the Jesuits "scholastic" kind of teaching, based on the Aristotelic thought. Soon, Pombal took personal charge of changing the faculty of that University, disingenuously on the need to change the teaching philosophy into a more scientific-experimental kind. Scientists and scholars were "appointed by Pombal to teach science at the University of Coimbra" (Carneiro, Simões, and Diogo, 2000). This top-down approach to scientific knowledge was in sharp contrast with the "new" scientific discourse and philosophy of progress at that time, evidencing the paradoxical nature of the absolutist government led by Pombal (cf. Maxwell, 1995).

All these examples are evidence of Pombal's strategy of centralizing all the decisions, through direct control of the appointment of bureaucrats, technicians and scholars. This leads us to the second and complementary strategy discussed in the following section.

#### *Small and dependent self-serving ruling elites*

Along with the centralization of decision-making, and as a need to implement that centralization strategy, Pombal had to rely on the action of a few men. These men, which one could label as the "ruling elite" were still have to be small in number and dependent of the despotic govern of Pombal, in order to become trustworthy and reliable. As acknowledged by Carneiro and colleagues (2000, p. 602), "a typical feature of Pombal's era was "the accumulation of positions by a few men due to the lack of qualified and cultural people who could 'faithfully' carry out his policies". One field where these controlling and small elite was notorious was that of education and science, as just described. As highlighted in Araújo (2000), Pombal "relied on a very small group of collaborators (...) called to collaborate in teaching reforms, and play their role in the Counsel in a clear accumulation of positions". A key person appointed by Pombal was Luís António Verney who wrote a book entitled "Verdadeiro Método de Estudar" ("The True Method of Studying"), used as a counterpoint to the scholastic-Aristotelian type of teaching of the Jesuits.

This academic revolution has brought a dramatic brain drain in academics of all sorts, not just of Jesuits, and implied important academic losses. As regarded by Carneiro and colleagues (2000, p. 600) "outside of Pombal's control, the new scientific discourse and its philosophy of progress were, after all, perceived as potentially threatening to his absolutist government, a fact that may explain the considerable brain drain, both 'voluntary' and forced, that occurred during this period". The goal of Pombal was mainly to remove doubtful experts and replace them with reliable and blind-trustful followers.

Another example of the small and dependent participating man in the govern of the society was that relating to economic and business affairs. The mercantilist approach developed during the stay in office of the Marquis of Pombal is per se an evidence of the centralized character of his leadership (Lara, 1981; Pereira, 2009). However, his control of



all the economic affairs through a small group of man seems to be quite more pervasive. As asserted by Cunha (2010, p. 9), “it was specifically a small number of individuals in the midst of all the fluidity who represented the business class in Lisbon at that time – or, in other words, who gave consistency to the group (...) it is precisely this central group of businessman, rather than any general increase in its size, which can be associated with Pombal’s policy of drawing closer to an ever promoting mercantilism”.

In all these examples, we can find a common ground assumption: that of the dependency of these bureaucrats and scholars from Pombal’s will. Either by fear or by love (or both, cf. Lopes, 2017), these individuals acted according to the command of the Marquis of Pombal. His action to increase this fear is also acknowledge in general (Maxwell, 1995), with several terror episodes during his stay in power. A statement from Pombal’s well known history research specialist Hespanha (2007, p. 8) reports the modus operandis of his action after an attempt of regicide of the king Joseph I. In this researcher’s words, after the attempt on the King’s life in 1758, “Pombal set up a notorious political investigation committee – the Junta da Inconfidência – to which he invited both faithful and dubious political supporters. This clever stratagem allowed him to test the fidelity of those invited onto the committee, enlisting those who readily accepted the commission among his faithful political cohort and expelling the reluctant ones from the court or sending them to jail”.

In sum, Pombal’s strategy for bureaucratic control was based on a small but trustworthy bureaucrats, scholars and even businessperson. Either because they agree with their worldview or most probably because they fear his terror action for those who did not support him, these agents were very important in the consolidation of Pombal’s despotic leadership.

### **Pseudo-bureaucracy as a tool for Pombal’s Despotic Leadership**

According to Kets de Vries (2006), despotic leaders use several tools to try to achieve their supreme goal of remaining in power. These include: (1) the enchantment of ideology; (2) enforcing mind-control; (3) a master use the media; (4) the illusion of solidarity; (5) the identification of scapegoats for negative situations. In the present study, we further develop this list and deeply analyse the development and use of a pseudo-bureaucracy by the Marquis of Pombal in order to assert his despotic leadership and his will to stay in power.

The analysis of Pombal’s strategy to enlarge and keep his power evidences of a politicization of scientific and administration bureaucracies. This mode of action resembles what today would be labelled as the bureaucratic politicization, particularly for public bureaucracies (Peters and Pierre, 2004). The case analysis shows a two-way strategy including action towards a centralized and controlled decision-making combined with the appointment of a small and dependent technocratic elite. In addition, the present study also traces back the historical roots of bureaucratic politicizations, showing that the bureaucratic-politics divide and bureaucratic politicization debate of our days can be traced back at least as far as the transition period from the ancient regime into the Enlightenment.

The modus operandis of the Marquis of Pombal can possibly be found in other 18th century state leaders. However, contrary to what has been written about other 18th century leaders, the case of the leadership of the Marquis of Pombal brings a different perspective about the tenets of the bureaucratic apparatus used to create and maintain political power on the verge of the transition from the ancient regime and the enlightened epoch. Writing about the 18th century Russia “bureaucracy”, for instance, Le Donne (1993, 142) has stated that “Positions in the elite were filled by the ruler from among what I call the ruling families”, and clearly asserted that administration officials needed to be members of the nobility. This is in contrast with Pombal’s administration where this despotic leader favoured “bureaucratic” serfs that were not from traditional nobility families, but coming instead from a technically trained and qualified officials (Cunha, 2010), many of them with strong connections with foreign scientific and technical connections, the so-called *estrangeirados* (Carneiro, Simões, and Diogo, 2000). In that sense, the present study may be seen as giving a good historical perspective of how the despotic leaders politically appropriate “modern” bureaucracies (i.e., organization based on scientific and technical knowledge) for their own despotic purposes.

## CONCLUSIONS

Previous research on despotic leadership in the political science field has downplayed the role of bureaucratic politics as a tool for despots to keep their power. As asserted by Boesch (1990, p. 748), “we need to ask why Montesquieu did not picture despots as ruling through elaborate administrative hierarchies. The answer must be that bureaucracies place intermediate powers between subjects and despot”. Despite this, recent research has highlighted that in some cases despotic and totalitarian leaders create huge bureaucratic machines to aid them in their quest for staying in power (Kets de Vries, 2006). The present study presents evidence that despotic leaders may, at least in some cases, fall between these two extremes. As showed in the present study, the despotic Marquis of Pombal created a complex and intricate “pseudo-bureaucratic” apparatus that help him to enforce his rule for almost thirty years.

In today’s complex and challenging world, we must be aware of how despotic leaders ultimately become powerful and merciless. This is particularly problematic given the accumulated evidence that despotic leaders and their “pseudo-bureaucracies” negatively relate to economic growth, improved health outcomes, lower levels of corruption, and innovative outputs and scientific productivity (Lapuenta and Suzuki, 2020). Overall, they negatively relate to government effectiveness.

By understanding that employees in pseudo-bureaucracies are acting based on fearing retaliation and that the fact that few of them dare to challenge the status quo can be the outcome of a despotic style of leadership. This finding can help organizations to identify destructive cases of leadership and avoid the harm they can do to both people and the

**Miguel Pereira Lopes** is Associate Professor at University of Lisbon and Senior Researcher at INTEC, Instituto de Tecnologia Comportamental, Lisboa, Portugal. E-mail: [mplopes@iscsp.ulisboa.pt](mailto:mplopes@iscsp.ulisboa.pt)

organizations as a whole. Despotic leaders pretend they value bureaucracy, but they actually sue it in a politicized manner.

Another way of interpreting the despotic action of Pombal is that of the requirements of dealing with the paradoxes of bureaucracy in itself. As acknowledged by Antonio (1979), while aiming to depoliticize decision-making and bringing scientific/technical rationality to organizational life, bureaucracies might have no escape to becoming structures of domination. As observed in real life, “the bureaucracy is almost always a means for realizing the interests of a ruling elite” (Antonio, 1979, p. 897). This being true, what we have considered as the despotic action of Pombal, may simply be the result of a leader dealing with the paradoxical nature of leadership itself, particularly in the beginning period of the Enlightenment (cf. Lopes, 2017). If this is a leadership task of continuing relevance today is still a matter of empirical research, but certainly a one that is worth of analyzing in future leadership research.

### REFERENCES

- Antonio, R.J. 1979. “The contradiction of the domination and production in bureaucracy: The contribution of organizational efficiency to the decline of the Roman Empire.” *American Sociological Review* 44: 895-912.
- Araújo, A.C. 2000. “Dirigismo cultural e formação das elites no Pombalismo”. Pp. 9-40 A.C. Araújo, ed., *O Marquês de Pombal e a Universidade*. Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade.
- Boesch, R. 1990. “Fearing monarchs and merchants: Montesquieu’s two theories of despotism.” *Western Political Science Quarterly* 43: 741-62.
- Boräng, F., Cornell, A., Grimes, M., and Schuster, C. 2018. “Cooking the books: Bureaucratic politicization and policy knowledge.” *Governance* 31: 7-26.
- Carneiro, A., Simões, A., and Diogo, M.P. 2000. “Enlightenment science in Portugal: The Estrangeirados and their communication networks.” *Social Studies of Science* 30 (4): 591-619.
- Clark, P., and Rowlinson, M. 2004. “The treatment of history in organization studies: Towards an ‘Historic Turn’”. *Business History* 46: 331-352.
- Coates, T.J. 1997. “Review of the book *Pombal: paradox of the enlightenment*”, by Kenneth Maxwell”. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 77 (4): 686-687.
- Cooper, C.A. 2020. “Politicization of the bureaucracy across and within administrative traditions.” *International Journal of Public Administration* 44 (2): 1-14.
- Cunha, A.M. 2010. “Police science and cameralism in Portuguese enlightenment reformism: Economic ideas and the administration of the state during the second half of the 18th century.” *e-Journal of Portuguese History* 8 (1): 36-47.
- Cunha, M.P., Rego, A., and Clegg, S. 2011. “Pol Pot, alias Brother Number One: Leaders as instruments of history.” *Management and Organizational History* 6 (3): 268-286.

- Farazmand, A. 2010. "Bureaucracy and Democracy: A theoretical analysis." *Public Organization Review* 10: 245-258.
- Hespanha, A.M. 2007. "A note on two recent books on the patterns of Portuguese politics in the 18th Century." *e-Journal of Portuguese History* 5 (2): 1-9.
- Jacques, S. 2006. "History, historiography and organization studies: The challenge and the potential." *Management and Organizational History* 1 (1): 31-49.
- Kets de Vries, M.F.R. 2006. "The spirit of despotism: Understanding the tyrant within." *Human Relations* 59 (2): 195-220.
- Lapuente, V., and Suzuki, K. 2020. "Politicization, bureaucratic legalism, and innovative attitudes in the public sector." *Public Administration Review* 80 (3): 454-467.
- Lara, A.S. 1981. "A política económica do Marquês de Pombal." *Separata da Revista Economia e Gestão* 26: 3-16.
- Lawrence, B. A. 1984. "Historical perspective: Using the past to study the present." *Academy of Management Review* 9: 307-312.
- Le Donne, J.P. 1993. "The eighteenth-century Russian nobility: Bureaucracy or ruling class?" *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique* 34 (1-2): 139-147.
- Lent, W.V., and Durepos, G. 2019. "Nurturing the historic turn: "history as theory" versus "history as method"". *Journal of Management History* 25 (4): 429-443.
- Lopes, M.P. 2017. "Leading by fear and by love: Niccolò Machiavelli and the enlightened despotism of the Marquis of Pombal in the eighteenth century Portugal." *Management and Organizational History* 12 (4): 374-390.
- Lopes, M.P. 2014. "Rebuilding Lisbon in the Aftermath of the 1755 Earthquake: Max Weber Revisited." *Journal of Management History* 20 (3): 278-291.
- Maxwell, K. 1995. *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mikkelsen, K.S. 2018. "Old habits die hard, sometimes: history and civil service politicization in Europe." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 84 (4): 803-819.
- Naseer, S., Raja, U., Syed, F., Donia, M. B. L., and Darr, W. 2016. "Perils of being close to a bad leader in a bad environment: Exploring the combined effects of despotic leadership, leader member exchange, and perceived organizational politics on behaviors." *The Leadership Quarterly* 27: 14-33.
- Padilla, A., Hogan, R., and Kaiser, R.B. 2007. "The toxic triangle: Destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments." *The Leadership Quarterly* 18: 176-194.
- Pereira, A.S. 2009. "The opportunity of a disaster: the economic impact of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake." *Journal of Economic History* 69 (2): 466-499.
- Peters, B.G., and Pierre, J. 2004. *Politicization of the civil service in comparative perspective: The quest for control*. London: Routledge.

- Peters, G., and Pierre, J. 1998. "Governance without government? Rethinking public administration." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 8: 227-243.
- Rodrigues, L.L., and Craig, R. 2009. "Teachers as servants of state ideology: Sousa and Sales, Portuguese School of Commerce, 1759–1784." *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 20: 379–398.
- Rodrigues, L.L., Craig, R., and Gomes, D. 2007. "State intervention in commercial education: the case of the Portuguese School of Commerce, 1759." *Accounting History* 12 (1): 55-85.
- Rosenthal, U., 't Hart, P. and Kouzmin, A. 1991. The Bureau-Politics of crisis management. *Public Administration* 69: 211-233.
- Schreyögg, G., Sydow, J., and Holtmann, P. 2011. "How history matters in organisation: The case of path dependence." *Management and Organizational History* 6 (1): 81-100.
- Schott, R.L. 2000. "The origins of bureaucracy: An anthropological perspective." *International Journal of Public Administration* 23 (1): 53-78.
- Söderlund, J., and Lenfe, S. (2013). Making project history: Revisiting the past, creating the future. *International Journal of Project Management*, 31(5), 653-662.
- Subtil, J. 2006. "O terramoto politico (1755-1759): Portugal aflito e conturbado." Pp. 155-185 M. F. Rollo, A. I. Buescu, and P. Cardim, eds., *História e Ciência da Catástrofe: 25º Aniversário do terramoto de 1755*. Universidade Nova de Lisboa: Edições Colibri.
- Suddaby, R. 2016. "Toward a historical consciousness: Following the historic turn in management thought." *M@n@gement* 19 (1): 46-60.
- Thoroughgood, C.N., Padilla, A., Hunter, S.T., and Tate, B.W. 2012. "The susceptible circle: A taxonomy of followers associated with destructive leadership." *The Leadership Quarterly* 23: 897-917.
- Turchetti, M. 2008. "'Despotism' and 'Tyranny': Unmasking a tenacious confusion." *European Journal of Political Theory* 7 (2): 159-182.
- Weber, M. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Zald, M. N. 1993. "Organization studies as a scientific and humanistic enterprise: Toward a reconceptualization of the foundations of the field." *Organization Science* 4 (4): 513-528.



#### About IPMR

**IPMR** The International Public Management Review (IPMR) is the electronic journal of the International Public Management Network (IPMN). All work published in IPMR is double blind reviewed according to standard academic journal procedures.

The purpose of the International Public Management Review is to publish manuscripts reporting original, creative research in the field of public management. Theoretical, empirical and applied work including case studies of individual nations and governments, and comparative studies are given equal weight for publication consideration.

**IPMN** The mission of the International Public Management Network is to provide a forum for sharing ideas, concepts and results of research and practice in the field of public management, and to stimulate critical thinking about alternative approaches to problem solving and decision making in the public sector.

IPMN includes over 1300 members representing about one hundred different countries, both practitioners and scholars, working in all aspects of public management. IPMN is a voluntary non-profit network and membership is free.

**ISSN** 1662-1387