

*Today's Leader*¹

Christopher Adair-Toteff

During Donald Trump's first term, the president admired Andrew Jackson and during the first months of his second term it is apparent that he still does hold Jackson in high regard. That is why it is important to examine Otto Hintze's comments on Jackson and to compare Jackson with Trump. In *Der Beamtenstand* (1911) Hintze had provided a study of bureaucracy, one which predated Max Weber's account in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* by almost a decade. Weber's has become famous; Hintze's deserves reading. Hintze had argued that the bureaucratic class in France was bad because of the rivalry between the old nobility and the new class of bureaucrats. The situation was, however, much worse in America because it lacked the old traditions that France still had. It was Jackson who had introduced the new 'spoils' system in America but it was much like the old French system because it was based upon power. The difference was that in France, power was bound with tradition, whereas in Jackson's America power was a matter of the spoils belonging to the winner ('Dem Sieger die Beute!') (Hintze 1911: 135; Hintze 1981: 47). There were two major problems with this arrangement: first, the people were appointed on the basis of their loyalty to Jackson and not on any qualifications. Second, this arrangement lacked any sense of permanency since the presidential election occurs every four years, the bureaucrats would serve only as long as the victor was president. Then the entire class of bureaucrats would be replaced. But it was the first problem that Hintze regarded as the most pressing. That was because it meant there was no genuine training and no real exams; hence, these 'office holders' lacked qualifications and they lacked knowledge about procedures.

¹ This is Part IV of a longer article on Otto Hintze to be published in *Max Weber Studies*.

Hintze then turned to the matter of the bureaucrats in the private sector and suggested that the situation was particularly precarious in America but it was not much better in England, France, nor in Germany. It was precarious because the basis for the private bureaucrat was the commission rather than an official contract. That the position was tied to one's performance made the official's life uncertain. No matter how good and how dedicated an individual was, his success was often largely dependent upon economic factors which were beyond his control. Hintze suggested that the roots of the modern business official went back to the France of the fourteenth century while the modern public official was derived from the English 'clerk'. That is because the clerk's dedication to his writing profession can be considered the forerunner to the 'leased doctors' ('gemieteten Doktoren') of modern Germany (Hintze 1911: 136; Hintze 1981: 47-48). It is not clear how Hintze intended this description to be taken. It could be assumed to be disparaging because Hintze may be suggesting that these doctors are being 'leased' just to polish the image of the bureaucracy. But it could also be assumed that the emphasis is on 'doctor' as an indication of the education and professionalism. It appears that Hintze intended the latter because his account of the bureaucratic class is primarily positive. But it is Trump who may think of the 'rented doctors' in a negative way. He distrusts professionals because they value competency and independence. As many commentators have pointed out that the only qualification that Trump looks for in someone is that person's degree of loyalty.

Whether one is a Trump MAGA member or a 'Never Trumper' will help determine one's attitude toward the bureaucracy in the United States. For Donald Trump's followers, the bureaucrats are the 'Deep State.' In the MAGA view, the members of the 'deep state' not only possess the negative traits that have historically been assigned to bureaucrats, they are actively thwarting Trump's intentions. That is, bureaucrats are not just lazy and useless and may or not be tolerated; they are essentially enemies who need to be defeated. Since Trump views

everything in terms of loyalty, bureaucrats are suspect because their allegiance is to the office and not to him. Since Trump is always transactional, bureaucrats are regarded with disdain because of their belief in principles. Because Trump cannot trust the members of the 'Deep State' they need to be replaced with his own people. This is similar to Jackson's 'spoils system' except that Jackson believed in government and he wanted it to function. In Trump's case, it is not clear that he thinks that government is worth defending. It is not clear because a government functions as an organization with rules and procedures that everyone is expected to follow. But Trump despises rules and procedures; instead, he issues decrees and proclamations and expects everyone to follow them. But these are not thought-out ideas; rather, they are whims. Orders have some sense of regularity and some degree of permanence; Trump's statements are nothing like official orders but are much more like personal decrees. What he insists upon one day often changes by the next day. Trump admits that his decisions are based upon his feelings and his feelings change within minutes. Even a Jacksonian official knew what Jackson wanted and he also realized that what Jackson wanted on one day would most likely be similar, if not identical, to what Jackson would want the next day. Jackson's government was composed of the spoils of the election. However, those individuals who had a personal allegiance to Jackson, but they were also officials who had a sense of duty and had respect for the office that they held. They also appeared to have a shared story of the past and a shared vision for the future and this 'sharedness' helped define these officials. In contrast, only Trump is entitled to have a vision of the future and it is irrelevant whether others share it. It is important to eliminate the bureaucrats who are supposedly against it. The contrast comes down to this: America has always had a government with officials duty-bound to make laws, determine judgments, and to enforce them. In its early decades, the numbers of officials were rather small and over the centuries that number has steadily increased. But Trump does not believe in government 'by the people for the people.' What he appears to believe is that Trump and only Trump is the

government and he issues decrees. But this is not a real government; at least not in the American tradition. Granted, there have been presidents who have issued proclamations and there have been some who have had more regard for themselves than for others. Lincoln is an example of the former and Nixon of the latter. But both Lincoln and Nixon had respect for the Office of the President and recognized that they were the temporary office holders. In this sense, Lincoln and Nixon were officials; that is, bureaucrats. But Trump is more like today's king and he does not occupy the Office of the President as much as he believed that he 'owns' it. He does not need nor want competent bureaucrats; he wants loyalists.

In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* Weber provided a list of traits which bureaucrats tended to have. This list was mostly ideal-typical, thus it was representative and not definitive. Officials were rigorously trained and thoroughly examined. Thus, they were specialists by training. They had learned rules and how to apply them (Weber 1922: 124-129, 674-676). They adhered to rationalistic principles which meant that they judged each case according to its merits—neither with favor nor with disfavor (Weber 1922: 664). To Weber's list one can add Hintze's. Hintze's list includes having the sense of duty, having a conscience, and having the belief in impartiality and fairness. It also includes having pride in doing one's job, having the feeling of belonging to a special group, and having the conviction that the position is a calling in the service of one's country. There is no question that Max Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* continues to enjoy its exalted status in the history of sociology. It is time that Otto Hintze's *Der Beamtenstand* receives the recognition that it so richly deserves. It is unlikely that Hintze will achieve the fame that accompanies Weber, but like Weber, Hintze belongs in the sociological pantheon.

References

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