Imperial Diffusion of Bureaucratic Practices? Entrance Examinations to the Indian Civil Service and the British Civil Service

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State-Making and the Origins of Global Order in the Long Nineteenth Century and Beyond

Imperial Diffusion of Bureaucratic Practices? Entrance Examinations to the Indian Civil Service and the British Civil Service

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Imperial diffusion of bureaucratic practices? Entrance Examinations to the Indian Civil Service and the British Civil Service

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I Introduction[1]

British imperial rule in India went through a fundamental change in the 1850s. Not merely were open examination and merit introduced as the chief norms for recruiting British civil servants to the Indian Civil Service (ICS), which completely undermined the East India Company's (EIC) previous recruitment procedures, sovereign control over British India also changed hands from being the responsibility of the EIC to being fully exercised by the British state. While the former was foremost a consequence of the emergence of novel ways of envisioning the ideal British civil servant, the latter was primarily the result of the so-called Indian Mutiny in 1857.

In Britain, parallel and equally momentous developments took place from the early 1850s in relation to the recruitment of civil servants, epitomised by recommendations of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report, and the two processes—of sending a new type of recruits out to India and the effort to change the make-up of the body of civil servants at home—were ostensibly intertwined and dependent on each other. To many, it has, hence, seemed as if the ICS came to function as a testing ground for the changes that were eventually to be fully introduced and implemented in the Home Civil Service. The validity of this conjectured and pervasive imagery—i.e. of the reformed ICS as a precursor to merit reforms in the British Civil Service as a whole—is, however, yet to be thoroughly examined. To rectify this, and to move the debate beyond anecdotal evidence, the present article answers the following questions: in what precise manner were merit reforms introduced in the case of the ICS prior to the adoption of an equivalent reform of the Home Civil Service; and were the changes to ICS' recruitment procedures a key source of, and significant catalyst for, merit reforms that applied to the British Civil Service as a whole?

II The false givenness of the diffusion argument

While many accounts of nineteenth century abolishment of patronage accentuate a changing socio-political environment (e.g., Parris 1969), which both entailed an increasing demand from the public for reforms (see MacDonagh 1977; Chester 1981; Silberman 1993) and intensified political

[1] The authors thank Pia Lonnakko for excellent research assistance.

competition, the extant literature contains a parallel tendency to maintain that it was often directly inspired by preceding reforms in other countries. For example, the American reformers that promoted the Pendleton Act (which was passed in 1883) are claimed to have been inspired by the aforementioned British merit reforms that were initiated three decades earlier (Johnson and Libecap 1994), whereas the British themselves are seen as influenced by the introduction of entry examinations to the ICS, the colonial administration in British India (e.g., Davies 2006; Gladden 1967; Osborne 1994; Subramanian 1957). In the latter case, the influence is portrayed as, on the one hand, attributable to the personal experiences of individuals who were first employed as colonial administrators in India and, thereafter, became key figures in bringing about merit reforms in Britain and, on the other hand, as the outcome of a more general diffusion of ideas and practices from the ICS to the Home Civil Service—one that was not necessarily tied to the role of individuals who converted their personal experiences into institutional change.

However, the facticity and tenability of the argument of exogenous motivation and inward diffusion—i.e. what Têng once described as the 'common conviction that the civil service examination was first developed in India and then applied to the Home Service' (1943: 301)—remain to be properly scrutinised. Might it really be argued that the professionalisation of the ICS in the early 1850s came to undergird and inform civil service reform in Britain? It is, put differently, necessary to inquire into Subramaniam's, as it seems, overly definite assertions that '[i]n a sense *competition, graduate recruitment and the administrative class* are the triple gifts of the Indian Empire to Britain' and that the '[triple] ideal, tried and found workable in India, *was taken back* to the mother country fully fledged in 1870, when the Northcote-Trevelyan proposals were finally implemented' (1957: 375, emphasis added).

Whereas the second claim is—as elaborated upon in next section of the article ('Mapping merit reforms')—outright erroneous, the purported transference of the 'triple ideal' from the ICS to the Home Civil Service deserves close examination, which is the focus of the third ('Introducing merit reforms in the Indian Civil Service') and fourth ('Department heads and the salience of personal experience') sections below. Thus, before we turn to the question of whether an inward diffusion of merit reforms is detectible, either in the inter-departmental exchange on the introduction of open competition or in the personal history of department heads, the basic postulate that the ICS represents the starting point for competitive recruitment procedures has to be investigated.

We, accordingly, begin the analysis by mapping the sequencing and distribution of merit reforms across the British Civil Service during the second half of the nineteenth century. To our knowledge, this has not been done before—at least not in a systematic fashion and with the range that the present article offers. Merit reforms are principally aimed at changing patterns of recruitment. That is, they strive to make recruitment and promotion of civil servants based on the skills and merits of the public employee—rather than appointments based on political or other connections (such as friends or relatives), i.e. patronage positions—the general norm (Dahlström and Lapuente 2017: 41*f*). The first core ambition and contribution of the article is, hence, to trace and establish the patterns of implementation of open competition in the examinations to the different offices and the positions that were affected within these offices. Do the observed patterns confirm, what might be designated, the 'origin' argument, viz. that the ICS was the entity in which open competition was originally introduced? In order to answer this, we have put together a data set on examinations to the public offices that covers the period 1855 to 1879.

If the presumed sequence turns out to be accurate, Subramaniam's intuition appears to be right. The problem is that it is nothing more than that, a mere intuition. His claim ultimately rests on the historical confluence of ICS and Home Civil Service reforms and the indeterminate supposition that the more sweeping transition to 'the principle of merit' that occurred in 1870 was spawned and moulded by the 'battles' of the immediately preceding decades (on the latter, see Davis 2006: 27-29). We, thus, seek to probe the assumed connections more thoroughly. On the one hand, we scrutinise archival material relating to the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which was established in 1855 as a direct consequence of the 1854 Northcote-Trevelyan Report and the resultant Order in Council in 1855. Related documentary material has been obtained through the India Office Records collection at the British Library and the Trevelyan Archive at Newcastle University. On the other hand, we examine—by way of charting their personal career trajectories—whether the Heads of Departments of the different offices had earlier experience of being involved in the colonial administration of India.

In sum, the article establishes, in a meticulous fashion, the sequencing of the introduction of open competition in public offices and subjects to critical scrutiny the conventional belief that norms, ideas and practices pertaining to British merit reforms originated in and were derived from the ICS.

III Mapping merit reforms in the British Civil Service in the nineteenth century

The first steps towards abolishing patronage in the British Civil Service (hereafter 'the Civil Service') were arguably taken already from the beginning of the eighteenth century and onwards when the public administration was gradually separated from the Crown. During the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, the Crown lost influence over patronage positions through removing the 'expenditure on civil government' from the civil list (Chester 1981: 79), sinecure posts were gradually abolished (*ibid*. 125-129), the Crown's power to put its own placemen in the House of Commons was substantially reduced, etc. (Parris 1969: 33–36; Chester 1981: 77-97; Bourne 1986: 20f). The monarch, thus, lost control over patronage in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Silberman 1993: 300; see also Parris 1969). This did not only reduce some habits related to patronage, but also meant that the remaining patronage fell in the hands of the public offices themselves and the Parliament: '[i]ts use became decentralized, falling under the control of a variety of administrative officials on the one hand, and on the other, to individual backbencher MPs who, by the early 1800s, had acquired the right to nominate local appointments' (Silberman 1993: 301).

It should be noted that there were no spoils system with periodic rotation similar to the one in the US;

> [a] party coming into office did not automatically eject the nominees of their predecessors: patronage was limited to vacancies and new positions and even there the conventions about promotion for those already in the public service were respected. (Richards 1963: 41)

Therefore, it is sometimes argued that there were less supply of patronage positions and less political gain from it than, for example, in the case of the US spoils system (*ibid*. 61).

The workload of the public offices increased over this period. The Ministers had to spend more and more time in the House of Commons to answer to the Parliament, while the burden on the public servants also increased with time. Ministers had less time to spend on administrative duties, which contributed to a separation between administration and politics (Parris 1969; Chester 1981: 284–286) and to the creation of permanent secretaries that were not politically appointed (*ibid*. 295–297).

The Northcote-Trevelyan Report, first publicly referred to in the Queen's speech to Parliament in January 1854, proposed the introduction of open and competitive examinations to positions in the public administration. However, the report was not met with unanimous support and the immediate result of the report was only a very partial achievement of its proposals (MacDonagh 1977: 207; Gladden 1967: 19f). On 8 March 1854, *The Morning Herald* even went as far as describing the report as seemingly compiled 'by some crochetty pettifogger or tyrannical usher' (CET 48). The Whigs came to power in 1855 and they were against its implementation. Prominent Whigs feared that open examinations implied that the lower classes would be let in to the Civil Service, people without the right social class and qualifications (MacDonagh 1977: 207). Its mixed reception, and initial limited impact, make Osborne's view that the report provided the main impetus for 'administration as an autonomous ethos or art, separated both from the pull of political patronage and from narrow, specialized expertise' ring hollow (1994: 294).

The report did, however, result in the voluntary introduction of examinations for junior positions, even though it was not made mandatory that these examinations should be open (e.g., Parris 1969: 72; Chester 1981: 159). The examinations were often only open to those that had been nominated by the Head of Department of the agency (or Minister) in question. Patronage was, thus, still used for appointments, with the difference that the appointees, in some cases, had to pass an examination and earn a qualification. This qualification was issued by the new permanent Civil Service Commission (CSC), set up in May 1855 through an Order in Council to monitor appointments and to be responsible for the examinations (Hughes 1942: 79; Silberman 1993: 363f). It was already from the outset tasked with issuing certificates of qualification, which depended on the Commissioners establishing

> *first*, that the candidate is 'within the limits of age prescribed in the department to which he desires to be admitted;' *secondly*, that he is 'free from any physical defect or disease which would be likely to interfere with the proper discharge of his duties;' and *thirdly*, that 'the character of the candidate is such as to qualify him for public employment.' (CSC 2/66)

Its exact mandate, however, was vague. The minutes from a board meeting at the Treasury in December 1855 contain the following depiction: 'no fixed rules have been prescribed as to the nature of evidence by which the qualification of candidates is to be tested, and […] the Commissioners will exercise a just discretion in adapting their proceedings to the varied circumstances of the

different cases brought before them' (*ibid*.). The CSC did not, in other words, operate in a unified and uniform manner during its first years of existence.

In 1860, the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments put forward a recommendation that 'a system of limited competition' should be adopted by every department; at least five candidates per vacancy should be nominated, according to its recommendation (Chester 1981: 160). Some departments started to introduce open examinations in the period after (Gladden 1967: 21). However, it was not until 1870 that another Order in Council was issued that made open and competitive examinations mandatory more generally in the Civil Service (albeit with exceptions) (e.g., Silberman 1993: 350–397; MacDonagh 1977: 197–213; Fry 1969: 34–69; Richards 1963: 53). The main exceptions were the Home Office, the Foreign Office and (parts of) the Education Office (Fry 1969; Chester 1981: 160).

It is noteworthy that the Order in Council from 1870 states that

> whereas the former Order [from 1855] applied exclusively to 'junior positions,' a term to which it was found *in practice difficult to attach a sufficiently definite signification*, the present Order applies to all situations not in terms excepted from its operation, whether the employment be permanent or temporary. (CSC 8/4, emphasis added)[2]

In the following two parts of the article, we, first, present original data on the implementation of open competition in the Civil Service as a whole and we, thereafter, elaborate on the details of merits reforms in case of the ICS.

The (actual) pattern of implementation

In this section, we plot and explicate the implementation of open competition in the Civil Service, including the ICS, and we, in particular, examine whether the data precludes or allows for the possibility that other agencies were influenced by the implementation of open competition in the ICS. For this purpose, we have coded data on patterns of recruitment from the CSC yearly reports. Our dataset, *The Public Office Data Set*, includes data from 1855 up to

[2] The formulation to which it refers in the 1855 Order in Council reads 'And it is hereby ordered, that all such young men as may be proposed to be appointed to any junior situation in any Department of the Civil Service shall, before they are admitted to probation, be examined by, or under the directions of, the [Civil Service Commissioners]; and shall receive from them a certificate of qualification for such a situation' (CSC 8/1).

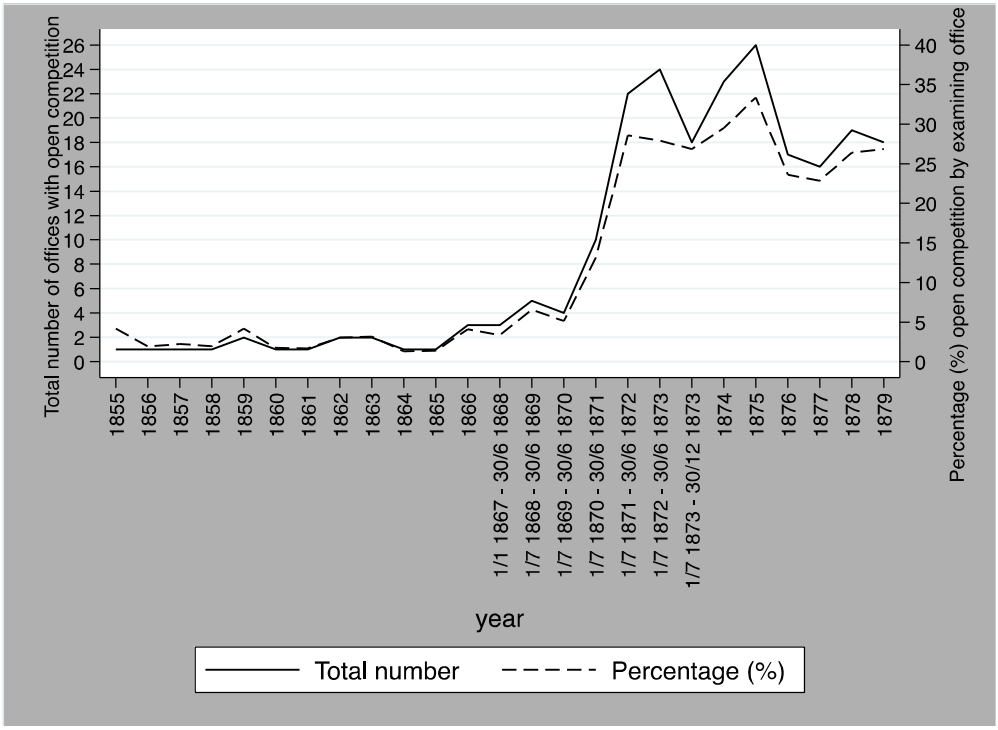
1879. The CSC took over the responsibility for the examinations to the ICS in 1858, but the CSC reports contain data on examinations to the ICS also prior to that date (see Civil Service Commission Report 1858).

The data allows us to trace the implementation of examinations, whether these were only open to persons that had been nominated, whether there was some competition (i.e. more candidates for the position than situations finally offered), and whether there was open competition (i.e. examinations open for all with no prior nominations). Here, we focus on the introduction of open competition, which represents the true watershed, and we establish—by specifying the timing of implementation in the different offices—whether the ICS was indeed the first agency with open competition. That is, is the basic criterion for the argument about the 'external' origins of merit reforms met?

Figure 1 shows the number of offices that had any examination for a position with open competition in a given year according to the data from the CSC.[3] In 1855, it was only the ICS that had open competition. Thus, the data shows that the essential condition for inward diffusion seems to hold. In the first year of the period, no other office than the ICS had introduced open competition. As Figure 1 demonstrates, it is not until 1859 that we have another office with open competition. From this data we can also conclude that the Order in Council that was decreed in June 1870, which made open competition mandatory, was important as a catalyst for its implementation. The data shows, as expected, that open competition increased substantially after 1870.

[3] It should be noted that some reports denote periods that do not correspond to the calendar year.

Figure 1. Open competition over time



Note: The figure shows the total number of offices (and percentage of offices) with open competition to any position. (The positions for which a few situations were appointed by nomination and the rest by open competition have been excluded from the calculation.)

However, the data also shows that the implementation of open competition was more gradual than what is postulated and asserted by secondary sources, that often refer to 1870 as the definite year of abolishment of patronage and introduction of meritocracy in the public administration. It has, sometimes, been pointed out that some offices were exempted and, hence, did not introduce open competition until later (Chester 1981: 122).

While examining the official list of offices that were included in the Order in Council of 1870 it is clear that many existing offices are not listed (see Table 1). It should be noted that *The Public Office Data Set* indicates when offices actually had examinations with open competition (*de facto*), whereas this list shows the offices that were stipulated to implement open competition (*de jure*). It is, nonetheless, interesting to note that, according to our data set, several of the listed offices had not held any examination with open competition (marked with an asterisk in Table 1) by the end of the period covered by it; in other words, nine whole years after the Order in Council stipulated open competition.

Table 1. List of offices included in the Order in Council of 1870

Admiralty	General Register Office	Public Record Office
Board of Trade	General Register Office (Ireland)	Public Works Office (Ireland)
Charity Commission	India Office	
Chief's Secretary's Office (Ireland)*	Inland Revenue	Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer's Office (Scotland)
Civil Service Commission	Inspectors of Lunatic Asylums' Office (Ireland)*	Registrar of Petty sessions Clerks' Office (Ireland)*
Colonial Office	London Gazette Office	Registry of Deeds (Ireland)
Constabulary Office (Ireland)*	Mint	Registry of Designs*
County Courts Judgments Registry*	National Debt Office	Registry of Joint Stock Companies*
Customs	Office of Examiners of Criminal Law Accounts*	Registry of Seamen
Directors of Convict Prisons' Office (Ireland)*	Office of Inspectors-General of Prisons (Ireland)	Science and Art Department
Divisional Justice Offices, Dublin*	Office of Woods	Stationery Office
Dublin Metropolitan Police Office	Office of Works	Treasury
Education Office	Paymaster-General's Department	University of London
Emigration Office	Poor Law Board*	War Office
Exchequer and Audit Department	Privy Council Office*	
General Post Office (Clerks in Secretary's Department)	Privy Seal Office*	

Source: Order in Council 4 June 1870, reproduced in the Civil Service Commission Report 1869/70. Those offices marked with a star had no open competition up until at least 1879 (according to *The Public Offices Dataset*).

Table 2 shows the year of implementation of open competition for offices and positions from *The Public Offices Dataset*. We can see that the second office to introduce open competition to any position was the India Office—set up as a government department in 1858 as a consequence of the dismantling of the EIC's administration of India—which might be indicative of similarities between offices being of importance.

Next, we move to the specific positions within those offices that had implemented open competition at any stage during this time period. What is interesting to note from Table 2 is that, among the positions that were open to

competition, clerks seem to have been relatively common. However, based on this list, we cannot conclude that the offices with clerk positions were more likely than other offices to be open to competition. In addition, according to our current understanding of the matter, the examinations to the ICS were not targeting specific types of positions. Instead the civil servants would be appointed to specific positions at a later stage when they had already passed two examinations and been employed for some time in the ICS (for example, see Blunt 1937). It is, thus, not possible to, in a consistent manner, determine what positions in other offices that would be immediately comparable to a position in the ICS.

Table 2. Offices and Positions with Open Competition

First year with open competition	Office	Position
1855	Indian Civil Service	All (Not specified) Candidates for entrance into the India Civil Engineering College (1870/1871)
1859	India Office	Writers Clerks Accounts Branch, Assistant Bookkeepers (1871/1872) Bookkeepers (1872/1873) Clerks in Store Branch (1873) Clerks and Bookkeepers (1875) Clerks of the Superior Class in the Accounts and Stores Branches (1876) Clerks (1876) Bookkeepers in Stores Department, Officers of Forest Department (1877) Candidates for entrance into the Indian Telegraph Department (1878)
1862	Admiralty	Dockyard Schoolmasters Clerks and Temporary Clerks (1867) Assistant Schoolmasters in Dockyards (1868/1869) Assistant Dispensers, Engineer Students, Dockyard Apprentices, Dockyard and Victualling Yard Artificers (1870/1871) Junior Assistants in the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, Chief Assistants in the Observatory, Cape of Good Hope, Junior Assistants in the Observatory, Cape of Good Hope, Clerks in Malta Dock and Victualling Yard, Assistants in the Nautical Almanac Office (1872/1873) Junior Assistants for Photographic and Spectroscopic Observations (1873) Junior Draughtsmen (1874) Coopers' apprentices, Hired store issuers, Schoolmasters, Assistants or Computers (1875) Architectural Draughtsmen, Engineering Draughtsmen, Third Assistant in the Observatory, Cape of Good Hope (1876) Accountant Clerks (1877)
1863	Civil Service Commission	Clerks, Supplementary Clerks Boy Messengers (1868/1869) Junior Clerks (1870/1871) Labourers (1871/1872)
1866	Convict Service	Clerks
	Foreign Office	Student Interpreters Student Dragomans (1877)
1868/1869	London University	Supplemental Clerks
	Royal Irish Academy (Ireland)	Clerks
1869/1870	County Surveyors in Ireland	All (Not specified) County Surveyors (1874)

	India Forest Department	All (Not specified)
	Probate and Divorce Courts	Writing Clerks Copying Clerks (1872/1873)
1870/1871	General Register Office (Ireland)	Clerks
	Inland Revenue Department	Assistant of Excise Assistant Surveyors of Taxes (1871/1872) Supplementary Clerks (1872/1873) Second Class Assistants of Excise (1872/1873) Practical Mechanician (1972) Out-Door Officers (1874) Clerks (1876) Law Clerks (1877)
	Post Office	Boy Clerks, Boy Sorters, Telegraph Messengers Unprofessional Clerks, Assistants (Letter Carrier Class) (1872/1873) Clerks, Labourers, Counterwomen, Female returner (1873) Assistant (1874) Assistant, Clerks (Higher division) (1877) Professional Clerks (1878) Paper Keeper (1879)
	War Office	Supplemental Clerks, Candidates for entry into the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich Sub-assistant Commissaries, Superintending Clerks (1871/1872) Candidates for First Appointments to the Cavalry, and for Commission in the West India Regiments (1872/1873) Clerks (1873) University Candidates examined for First Appointments to the Cavalry and Infantry (1874)
	Works, Office of	Assistant Surveyors of Work, Technical Clerks, Junior Examiners, Assistants to Clerks of the Furniture, Clerks to Assistant Surveyors Clerks to Curator of Kew Gardens, Second Assistants in Kew Herbarium (1871/1872) Clerks (1872/1873) Assistants to the Surveyor (1877)
1871/1872	Dublin Metropolitan Police (Ireland)	Clerks in Divisional Offices
	Emigration Office	Clerks at Liverpool
	Local Government Board	Clerks in the Medical Department Clerks (1872/1873)
	Lunacy Commission	Clerks
	Mint	Clerks
	Prisons Board (Scotland)	Clerks
	Queen's and Lords Treasurer's Remembrancer's Offices (Scotland)	Clerks
	Record Office (Ireland)	Clerks
	Records Office	Clerks
	Registry of Deeds Office (Ireland)	Clerks
1872/1873	Board of Trade	Supplementary Clerks Assistant Clerks (1876)
	Customs	Clerks Out-Door Officers (1876)

	Land Revenue Record Office	Assistant Keepers
	Metropolitan Police Courts	Clerks
	National Debt Office	Clerks
	Seamen's Registry Office	Clerks
	Stationery Office	Second Assistant Examiner of Binder Clerks (1873) Receiver and Examiner of Job Printing (1874)
	Treasury	Clerks Supplementary Clerks, Professional Clerks (1878)
	Woods, Office of	Assistant Clerks Supplementary Clerks (1876) Junior Clerks (1877) Clerks (1879)
1873	Bankruptcy Court	Clerks
	Charity Commission	Clerks
	Reformatories	Clerks
1874	Colonial Office	Supernumeraries in the Public Works Department of Ceylon Clerks (1877)
	Education Department	Assistant Clerks
	General Register Office	Index Compliers
	Home Office	Supplemental Clerks, Inspectors of Coal Mines
	Paymaster-General's Office	Clerks
	Public Works Office (Ireland)	Assistant Engineers, Clerks Estimating Clerks, Furniture Clerk (1875) Examining Clerks (1876)
	Royal Observatory (Edinburgh)	Second Assistant Astronomer
	Science and Art Department	Clerks Museum Clerks (1875) Assistant Curators (1876) Junior Assistant (1879)
1875	Exchequer and Audit Department	Clerks
	London Gazette Office	Clerks
	Office of Surveyor-General of Prisons	Clerks, Draughtsmen
1878	India Audit Office	Clerks (Lower Division), Clerks
	Patents Office	Indexing and Abridging Clerks, Clerks
1870	Metropolitan Police	Clerks

The findings provided by *The Public Offices Data Set* convey two key insights. The ICS equals the first office to implement open competition and it was not until several years later that other offices began to do the same. In addition, the introduction of open competition in the Civil Service was gradual and its implementation varied considerably between different offices. The fact that the ICS was first suggests that it was potentially also a source of inspiration for other agencies. The next section, consequently, closely examines the interdepartmental debates on ICS merit reforms that took place during the 1850s, with an emphasis on whether any signs of inward diffusion are discernible.

IV Introducing merit reforms in the Indian Civil Service

Ending patronage and closing down the East India College

The recruitment of civil servants to the East India Company (EIC) underwent a comprehensive change in the first half of the 1850s. Open competition, available to '[a]ny natural-born subject of Her Majesty' being more than 18 years and less than 23 years old, was introduced in 1855 in the ICS as a direct result of the Charter Act of 1853 and Lord Macaulay's 1854 *Report on the Indian Civil Service* (henceforth 'the Macaulay Report'). The earlier practice of, through patronage and nomination, educating young men at the East India College at Haileybury before posting them to India was abandoned and replaced by a system based entirely on open examination and competition monitored by the CSC. The change meant that the College was closed and that the age of recruits was raised, chiefly due to the new ambition to employ men who had already obtained a university degree.

Candidates were selected on the basis of how well they performed in a standardised exam, after which the most successful entered into a period of probation during which subjects deemed to be of particular relevance for the administration of British India was taught. The period of probation ended with a second exam, subsequent to which positions in the 'covenanted service' of the EIC were assigned. Additional exams awaited the successful candidates once they arrived in India.[4]

Chapman concurs with the view that the Charter Act of 1853 is crucial to consider if we wish to study the process whereby 'appointments were to be thrown open to a form of competition' (2014: 13). He lists the following key developments in the wake of the promulgation of the Act:

> A committee was then appointed by the President of the Board of Control (for India) to advise on the best method for examining candidates. Macaulay was the chairman […]. The report was brief, but to the point; […] it was signed in November [1854]. The report recommended that Haileybury should cease to be maintained as a higher education college for

[4] *Viz*. 'language examinations in the Presidency Towns [Bombay, Calcutta and Madras]' followed by 'two professional examinations in the Mofussil' (see Trevelyan's comment, dated 25 July 1863, on the minutes of the Board of Examiners in CSC 2/17).

> the ICS; that there should be a broad general education […] rather than a specialist training for ICS recruits […]; that recruitment should be by open competition in order to select the best available candidates […]; and that appointment in the first instance was subject to a period of probation. (*ibid*.)

Additional detail is needed, however. While the report advised that the initial selection of candidates was to be done on the basis of 'an excellent general education', including knowledge of Latin, Greek, the French, the Italian and the German as well as mathematics, 'some natural sciences which do not fall under the head of mixed mathematics' and the moral sciences,[5] it recommended that the period of probation should be devoted to specialised subjects only (for the report, see CSC 2/17). During the period of probation, which was to take place in Britain, the following subjects were to be studied: 'the history of India', 'the general principles of jurisprudence', political economy and one of the 'vernacular languages' (*ibid*.). It is noteworthy that the significance ascribed to merit was affirmed at the time of the second examination, as the 'seniority' of the successful candidates was to 'be determined according to the order in which they stand on the list resulting from such examination' (see *Regulations framed by the Commissioners for the Affairs of India*, dated January 1855 and available in CSC 2/17).

An individual of key interest to us—due to his links to both the ICS and the Home Civil Service—is Charles Edward Trevelyan, who Moore describes as 'the champion of civil service reform in the mid-nineteenth century' (1964: 249). In 1858, while facing a possible reversion back to patronage as a basis for making appointments to the ICS, Trevelyan (at the time Assistant Secretary at the Treasury) forcefully advocated that 'the President and Members of the Indian Council should have full power *to regulate the first appointments to the Indian Services* in the manner most conducive to the public good', but '*should not themselves make those appointments*' (see his memorandum to John Lawrence on Indian patronage in CSC 2/17).

An interesting aspect of Trevelyan's involvement in reforming the public administration is that he, in June 1853, expressed the view that there was 'no inconsistency between the competitive principle and Haileybury's [continued]

[5] Ideally, in the eyes of the authors of the report, also entailing a test of the candidates' 'knowledge of the history and constitution of *our country*' and 'the extent of the knowledge of *our poets, wits, and philosophers*' (CSC 2/17, emphasis added).

monopoly of the appointments' (*ibid*. 250).[6] The East India College at Haileybury was operative between 1806 and 1858. Its responsibility was to educate EIC's civilian officials before they were sent to India. In 1813, it was decided 'that all appointees [of the EIC] would have to complete four terms at Haileybury before proceeding to India' (Wilkinson 2017: 984). However, as Wilkinson points out, throughout its existence the College became a node for contestations relating to 'the problem of how to ensure the capability and good conduct of the men responsible for governing British territories abroad' (*ibid*. 944).[7] Considerations relating to Haileybury thus 'presaged, and subsequently shaped, reform of the British civil service in the late nineteenth century' (*ibid*. 945).

In Moore's analysis of the cessation of Haileybury's relevance, it is noted that

> [s]ince July 1853, the course of the movement to replace the system of patronage with the principle of competition had undergone a profound change. It had then been no intention of the Whig reformers—Wood, Macaulay, Lowe and Granville—to send university men to govern India, or to close Haileybury. The first steps taken towards these ends were taken in November 1854 because it was believed practicable to blend the reform of the universities with the abolition of patronage. (1964: 256*f*)

In the Macaulay Report, we also find a more tangible appraisal of the disadvantages of Haileybury, namely that those recruited through open competition would be grown-ups having already attended university, and thus 'accustomed to enjoy the liberty of men', rather than boys arriving straight from school, and that much of the specialised skills needed for serving in India were best acquired through attaining practical knowledge and experience of public administration—a condition not easily 'compatible with residence at Haileybury' (CSC 2/17). Consonant with this assessment, Charles Wood, then President of the Board of Control, in late November 1854 recommended that admissions to the College should be terminated by January 1856 (see his letter to the Court of Directors in *ibid*.).

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[6] According to Marshall, the original source of this monopoly was that '[t]he deep involvement of the [EIC] in national politics in the eighteenth century meant that its Directors who made the appointments to India were under pressure to create lucrative posts for the well connected out of the revenues of India' (1997: 92). To which he adds, '[o]nce established, patterns of employment proved to be very difficult to change […]' (*ibid*.).

[7] Wilkinson insists that what was at stake in 'the Haileybury debate' was the moulding of colonial officials with outstanding 'moral and intellectual qualities' in order to counter prevalent anxieties regarding British deficiency and lacking superiority *vis-à-vis* colonial subjects (2017: 945*f*).

Here, Trevelyan's role in furthering the cause of merit reforms and of countering continued usage of patronage—especially as a former EIC representative in India—stands out as worthwhile to consider. Trevelyan spent twelve years in India as a colonial administrator between 1826 and 1838, after having attended Haileybury, and reportedly 'achieved a reputation as a fearless opponent of corruption' (Richards 1963: 42*f*).[8] In 1858, he gave influential voice to an assessment of the EIC's misfortunes as caused by its method for appointing civil servants, which he claimed put it 'in a state of habitual antagonism towards the natives and European settlers, whose claims to be employed within such limits as the circumstances require, are supposed to be incompatible with the claims of patronage' (memorandum to John Lawrence in CSC 2/17). To which he added that '[a] high standard cannot be maintained while a family compact is believed to prevail, and every idle young man who neglects his duty relies, however erroneously, upon his "friend in the Court of Directors"' (*ibid*.).

The immediate historical setting of the amended recruitment practices was, hence, persistent debates about how India was to be administered. The main contentions revolved around whether to uphold the patronage system, replace it with open examination in Britain or to make the administration accessible to everyone irrespective of age, including those already based in India. Of related concern was the question of the desirability of further colonising India by increasing the presence of British settlers, and the concomitant need to, if so, expand the ICS.[9] These debates intensified as a consequence of 'the Mutiny' against British rule in 1857, an event that spawned a great deal of apprehension among the British relating to their physical security and the future of British presence in and possession of India. Although the the status of the EIC as an imperial power came to an abrupt end after the Mutiny in 1857 with the passing of the Government of India Act, 1858

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[8] Other strongly held beliefs emerge through an engagement with the Trevelyan Archive. For example, in *A Treatise on the Means of Communicating the Learning and Civilization of Education of Europe to India* (published in 1834), he asserts that the expanded use of English 'for the transaction of public business' will place British officers in 'a high position whence confidence, knowledge and civilization will be diffused, as from a centre' (CET 93). In such a system, according to Trevelyan, 'each day produces a closer union between the two nations' and '[t]he conquered people, instead of opposing, endeavour to emulate, their masters' (*ibid*.).

[9] The impression of its insufficient size was summarised by Major-General George Borlase Tremenheere in his testimony to the Selection Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India) on 6 May 1858. He maintained that 'The strength of the regular civil service is too small for a country of such a vast extent. They work hard, and are a most exemplary body of men; but there is a limit to individual exertion, and they look to England as their ultimate home' (1858a: 27).

('An Act for the Better Government of India'),[10] which transferred imperial authority to the British Crown, these sentiments lingered.

A year after the transfer of power, one could, for instance, read in *The Calcutta Review* that '[t]he rising men of England will not come to a land which every one who is in it hates', and an uneasiness was expressed regarding if 'India [had] ceased to be the best career for the average Englishman of the educated middle class' and whether 'an Indian career' will turn into 'a refuge for the destitute instead of an object of ambition to the enterprising' (1859: 465). It is, thus, notable that Trevelyan found it fit to, in March 1858, argue that '[i]n order […] to maintain our relative position, and to strengthen the connection between this country and India, it is necessary that *the best of our youth* should be selected for the Government of India', and that 'the new Government of India cannot be inaugurated with the public confidence and strength which ought to belong to it, if it is not entirely relieved of this depressing, disparaging element of patronage' (memorandum to John Lawrence in CSC 2/17, emphasis added).

However, the backdrop to the abandoning of patronage was not solely contemporaneous with the reform. Prior to the promulgation of the Charter Act of 1853, a scheme of restricted competition to the ICS already existed; the Charter Act of 1833 had prescribed that 'the directors [of the EIC] should nominate annually four times as many candidates as there were vacancies, from whom one should be selected by competitive examination' (Chapman 2004: 13). Yet these dictates were neither 'effectively operated' (*ibid*.) nor did they equal open competition, as the nomination of prospective recruits remained the prerogative of the Court of Directors.

The examinations that came into effect in 1855 were also met with scepticism regarding the extent of their openness and inclusivity. Both British settlers in India and Indians were negatively affected by the fact that the exams were held in Britain and by the first test placing emphasis on general knowledge, rather than on competence specifically relevant for the ICS. As Marshall notes, the British community in India was 'dominated by official employment, recruited in Britain and set on returning to Britain' (1990: 26). The sense among British settlers in India not affiliated with the ICS or the military was that, even as part of the new system, 'gentlemen are appointed magistrates and judges without any regard whatever to their qualifications

[10] The EIC had, during the course of the first half of the nineteenth century, completed a 'metamorphosis' from being foremost 'a trading company' into 'a powerful imperial agency exercising control over territories containing millions of people' (Bowen 2006: ix, 1). In India, it had always exhibited the latter quality, but this function became even more pronounced after it 'lost its last remaining commercial privileges in 1833' (*ibid*.).

and aptitude in those respects, but merely as a matter of right, by virtue of them being members of a privileged service' (see Joseph Gabriel Waller's testimony to the Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India) 1858b: 169).[11]

A parallel strand of critique concerned the foremost rationale for the merit reforms and whether patronage really was less advantageous for India than open competition. In 1858, John Abraham Francis Hawkins, employed in the Examiner's Office at the India House in Calcutta, for instance, maintained that 'it appears to me that this system of competitive examination at home has been framed much more for the benefit of the Universities in England than for the benefit of the people in India' (The Select Committee on Colonization and Settlement (India) 1858b: 123). Hawkins, thus, implied that matters pertaining to conditions specific to Britain rather than India were behind the merit reforms.

At the same time, the reforms profoundly impacted on the ICS; they led to an emphasis on the 'competitive principle' (Moore 1964: 246) and on merit as a 'principle of recruitment' (to echo the Northcote-Trevelyan Report), and thus to the 'replacement of ascription by performance-testing' (Subramaniam 1967: 1011). The change also, in theory (yet not in practice), 'gave Indians an equal chance of admission' (Compton 1967: 99).

Prestige and paternalistic absorption combined

> To speak plainly—the Nobles and Gentry of India, will not be governed by the sons of petty shopkeepers of England. (William Nassau Lees, Secretary of the Board of Examiners, 1863)

The new recruitment process was, moreover, bound up with novel expectations as regards the sought-after characteristics of the model civil servant, who was envisaged as a man of 'general intelligence' with a 'sense of duty' (Dewey 1973: 268)[12] and a 'habit of authority' (Beaglehole 1977: 249). In the Macaulay Report the following traits were listed as 'securities against

[11] To a question from the Committee's chairman regarding whether 'the present system of competitive examination' is able to 'secure the best and most able men for the public service in India?', Waller—active at the Sudder Adawlut ('the chief Court of Appeal')—replied 'Very far from it […] because I think that the competitive examination leaves things exactly as they were […]; […] the service with all its inherent evils is left exactly the same. No man after the age of 23 can aspire to serve the State in India.' (1858b: 174).
[12] Chester has correspondingly described the most significant aspect of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report as being 'the separation of intellectual from routine work, graduates to be recruited for the former, non-graduates for the latter' (1968: 300).

vice': 'industry, self-denial, a taste for pleasures not sensual, a laudable desire of honourable distinction, a still more laudable desire to obtain the approbation of friends and relations' (CSC 2/17). All were deemed qualities to be found in the men who passed the entry examinations to become British civil servants in India. With the introduction of open competition, such men of outstanding character would be '[compelled] to undergo a long and continuous training through successive grades of employment rising in importance and responsibility', which, in turn, would facilitate 'the devotion of a lifetime to the public service' (see R.D. Mangles' dissent to *The East India (Civil Service) Bill*, dated 13 July 1860 and found in CSC 2/17).

While the reforms sought to improve recruitment and thereby wider bureaucratic practices, they also led to the prevalent deployment of the term 'competition-wallah', which carried evident negative connotations. For the wider British community in India, marked by a clear stratification 'between an elite, within which there were considerable gradations, and what can be very loosely regarded as the equivalent of a working class' (Marshall 1997: 91), the competition-wallah was perceived as a threat to existing modes of distributing status and influence. In contrast to the hopes expressed in the Macaulay Report, questions were also raised about the overall aptitude of the new recruits. Did they demonstrate the requisite 'high intellectual and mental culture' of 'a well educated English gentleman' (see William Nassau Lees' 1863 memorandum to the Civil Service Commissioners in CSC 2/17)? Or, as Dewey put it, '[t]he competition-wallah […] might be more prolific and agile with a pen; but was he also a *gentleman*[;] [w]as not his physique so weakened by excessive concentration on the book work needed to succeed in the open examination that his health broke down in India?' (1973: 272). A strong ideal of the gentleman was, as these points reveal, still at work. The gentleman was conceived of and projected as 'the ideal administrative unit', and '[t]he areas in which European officials could have meaningful contact with Indians were those in which the ['appreciative'] Indian was viewed characteristically as an extension of the English gentleman' (Compton 1968: 270; see also Cook 1987: 514).

The pattern of recruiting so-called 'competition-wallahs' rather than members of the aristocracy (or even holders of 'B.A. degrees from Oxford or Cambridge' [Spangenberg 1971: 342]), in addition, went against the originally anticipated outcome of the reform, i.e. that '[o]ne of the great recommendations of the change would be that it would "strengthen and multiply the ties between the higher classes and the possession of administrative power"' (see Compton 1968: 266). In the Macaulay Report it is stated that the 'prize' for the successful candidate 'is nothing less than an

honourable social position, and a comfortable independence of life' (see CSC 2/17), and Subramaniam has asserted that 'in Macaulay's mind, graduate recruitment and competition were interrelated' (1957: 374).[13] The report itself is a testament to this through its recurring references to the agreeable and emulable conditions at Cambridge and Oxford.

The above imagery of the weak and undependable graduate recruit is not confirmed, however, by the archival records of the CSC. In reports submitted in response to a request in 1861 by Viscount Canning, then Governor-General of India, that senior members of the ICS should state their views on 'the efficiency of the Civilians who have come to India under the competitive system compared with those who entered the service under the old system', the consensus was that the new recruits were more qualified and able (for these reports, see CSC 2/17). As R. H. Davies, Secretary to the Government of Punjab, wrote: 'they have proved themselves men of higher natural intellect, and greater educational culture than the nomination Civilians' (*ibid*.). Of the fifteen reports merely two articulated a preference for the old system, by pointing to how it more efficiently produced men demonstrating an 'executive nature'—i.e. men who were both 'rough and ready' for serving in India and 'born gentlemen'.[14]

Resistance against novel recruitment practices was not only conveyed through an idealising of the supposedly born gentleman. It also came in the guise of portraying Indians as predisposed to subject themselves to 'the simple form of Oriental Government', rather than to 'the more elaborate system of English rule' (for example, see Viscount Cranborne's speech in the House of Commons, 24 May 1867; Cranborne was, at the time of the speech, Secretary of State for India). In a grand act of self-delusion, given that the Home Civil Service had not yet introduced a completely merit-based system, conditions intrinsic to India were blamed for impeding the establishment of an imperial bureaucracy informed by the impersonal and the objective (Haynes 1990: 497*f*). In direct contrast, Ogden notes the presence, in nineteenth century India, of a 'scribal elite' and 'people of the pen' made up of Indians, which—apart from being a core constituent of 'a public sphere of rational debate over

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[13] Hart has similarly shown that Trevelyan was committed to preserving the status of the aristocracy (1960: 110), which is substantiated by a letter Trevelyan wrote to George Cornewall Lewis, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in July 1856, in which he maintained that 'the true means of strengthening our aristocratical institutions' were to be found in 'rais[ing] the standard of qualifications throughout the public service and [in providing] for the early promotion of those who do best' (CET 53).

[14] To which F.B. Gubbins, Commissioner of the Benares Division, appended a highly concrete anxiety: 'I have among their whole number met but with two who could ride, and as it appears very probable that future duties of the members of the service will be limited to mere District work, I look upon this defect as almost a fatal one' (CSC 2/17).

interlocking concerns politics, religion, and aesthetics'—was '[a]rmed with an ethic of service to the state independent of any particular ruler' (2007: 18).

It does not, therefore, come as a surprise to encounter signs that educated Indians, during the late 1850s, had begun to outperform British civil servants, especially in practicing law. In 1859, the Director of Public Instruction in the Bombay Presidency, E.J. Howard, noted with great concern that '[t]he time is fast approaching when lawyers "trained in this country" will be procurable in such numbers, and possessed of such professional attainments and practical experience, as to constitute a formidable body of rivals to the untrained judges of the Civil Service' (CSC 2/17). Howard warned his superiors in Bombay and London that it was likely that this situation, within a foreseeable future, would 'give natives a monopoly of the judicial bench', which would mean that a core part of bureaucratic activities would be entrusted 'native servants, whose life and antecedents are hidden […] behind a veil from English eyes' (*ibid*.). The 1850s was, in other words, a decade marked by worries about how British civil servants recruited through open examination and the superior skills of educated Indians would possibly unsettle existing structures for distributing positions of influence and authority.

The latter was not only relevant for those who strove to protect their own private interests. The activities of the ICS were, after all, embedded in a broad register of expectations bound up with imperial oversight and rule. Being described as the 'steel frame' of British rule (Potter 1973: 48*f*), it was, by many, held up as an exemplar and archetype to be emulated elsewhere. Two observations confirm its perceived importance: Compton has maintained that '[t]he question of the admission of Indians to the Covenanted Civil Service was perhaps the most import single issue connected with the British empire in India during the 19th century' (1967: 99), while Dewey has argued that—despite the 'state of the home civil service' being viewed 'as far worse than that of' ICS—the ICS stood out as 'more important' to make 'efficient' (1973: 267). The perception was that 'the Indian civil servant exercised a power for good or evil which no English civil servant – *perhaps no functionary in the world* – possessed' (*ibid*., emphasis added; see also Cook 1987: 509).

Members of the ICS were, among other things, expected to promote a 'transference to India of British political institutions' (Dewey 1973: 275)[15] and

[15] A sense of what the ICS represented is conveyed by Trevelyan in the aforementioned pamphlet from 1834 on how to introduce 'a new system of learning' in India. He contends that: 'Above all nations, it is most incumbent upon England to forward this mighty process, because she is the most replete with benefits of the human race. She is the most highly gifted in the perfection of arts, and in the enterprise of her people and political institutions, the most beneficial of the human race, are the acknowledged right

to be able to operate in—what the British posited and construed as—the 'ritual-political' space of 'petty durbars' (Compton 1968: 270; Haynes 1991). The last-mentioned refers to how the 'the body of the civil servant [was] envisaged as an embodied legitimation of the British presence in India'; a body conceived of as 'divided into a symbolic ceremonial and an active, self-disciplined bureaucratic body' (Collingham 2001: 117-128). These conceptions of the ICS and its function were closely related to the ideal of the gentleman, as described above, yet they were also an expression of the autocratic nature of imperial rule.

In confirmation of this, Macaulay, in 1853, described the position of the British civil servant in India as one which had to 'synthesize […] the prestige of an elite member of the governing race and that paternalistic absorption in the interests of native India upon which the I.C.S. prided itself' (cited in Compton 1968: 267). Charles Wood, speaking as Secretary of State for India, told the House of Commons in June 1861 that '[a]ll experience teaches us that where a dominant race rules another, the mildest form of government is despotism' (HC Deb 6 June 1861 vol 163). These remarks clearly sets the ICS reforms apart from merit reforms 'at home', and make it difficult to concur with the argument that the ICS provided the foremost underpinning of efforts to 'establish a common culture of officialdom, separated from those governed, a homogeneous class of experts with a common ruling identity' in the Civil Service as a whole (cf. Osborne 1994: 300).[16]

The possibility of reintroducing patronage in the case of certain high-level positions and to place the prerogative of nomination in the hands of the Secretary of State in Council was again raised in correspondence between members of the Council of India in 1860. It is apparent from the many minutes of dissent that were written as a response to this proposal that, only within the span of a few years, a significant shift in attitudes had taken place. E. Macnaghten, for example, maintained that '[e]very such appointment would be unfairly canvassed, and unjustly suspected', while R.D. Mangles, as noted above, contended that 'the existing system ensures the devotion of a lifetime

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and inheritance of her children, till at last they have become identified with their feelings, and they impart them sooner or later as a matter of course to every people whom Providence entrusts to their care' (CET 93). To which he adds a depiction of 'England' as 'the medium of communication between the civilised and barbarous world' and he concludes by stating that 'we have nothing to give to the Natives but our superior knowledge. Every thing else we take from them'.

[16] Our critique of Osborne does not end here, as he erroneously reverses the order in which the Macaulay Report and the Northcote-Trevelyan Report came to fruition, when he claims that 'the Northcote-Trevelyan Report was set up by Gladstone as a follow-on to the reforms in the Indian service' (1994: 302). This is plainly wrong. The latter was introduced in Parliament in the end of February 1854, after having been 'signed and issued by' Trevelyan and Northcote in November 1853 (see Têng 1943: 297), well before the Macaulay Report was sent to Parliament in November the same year.

to the public service, and renders success in that service the great object of hope and ambition from early manhood' (see CSC 2/17). J. Lawrence similarly opined that if the amendment was approved 'under pretext of improving the general efficiency of the Civil Administration of India, great facilities for the abuse of patronage will be created, even to the gradual supersession of selection for the service by competition' (*ibid*.), and Colonel Durand expressed the view that the suggested amendment 'confers unlimited powers upon the authorities in India, and upon the Secretary of State, without any adequate security against their abuse' (*ibid*.).

The new system, after only being in use for five years, thus made it possible for H.C. Montgomery to, with certitude, convey that '[b]ecause the good government of India requires that the Civil Service should be composed of men who, having been specially educated for it, enter into the lower grades, and become, by practice and experience, qualified for the higher and more important positions' (*ibid*.). For these dissenters, and many others, merit reforms had, at last, made conceptions of the corrupt EIC representative—in wide circulation from the late eighteenth century onwards (Bowen 2006: 15-17; Fidler and Welsh 1999; Nechtman 2010)—redundant.

It is not, however, possible to maintain that the ICS reforms were equivalent to 'the immediate prototype of administrative system based on the principle of open, competitive examination' (cf. Osborne 1994: 302). From what we have found, no *single* significant mentioning of the ICS when the Home Civil Service is substantively discussed—and vice versa—is made in the CSC records or in the kept writings and correspondence of Trevelyan. The same goes for the 1860 Report from the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments (see the Select Committee on Civil Service Appointments 1860). It, conversely, appears more convincing to, akin to Hughes, point to how 'the appointment of the Trevelyan commission to inquire into the civil service have a long history' (1942: 60). As Hughes observes, '[b]y 1854 reports on no fewer than eleven departments had been made' (*ibid*. 61; for details on these previous reports, see Civil Service Commission 1860); and this is further substantiated by Hart when she writes that Trevelyan's kept 'letter books confirm the view that it [the Northcote-Trevelyan Report] was the culmination of many years of thought and work […] and not just a flash in the pan' (1960: 106).[17] From what transpires in our revisiting of the CSC records that relate to

[17] The view of a long history is also better at accommodating the existence of corresponding steps taken in other parts of the British Empire. Chapman has, for example, drawn attention to how '[i]n South Africa […] a Commission was established in 1847 to improve the organisation of and regulate admission to the civil service', and he notes similar efforts to introduce 'open competitive examinations' in the case of Malta (Chapman 2004: 14; see also Jeffries 1938: 8).

the ICS, we might, with certainty, conclude that they do not corroborate and validate the notion and imagery of inward diffusion.

V Department heads and the salience of personal experience

Even though the analysis, so far, does not substantiate the claim that the ICS functioned as a direct precursor to and blueprint for merit reforms in other parts of the Civil Service, it is, nonetheless, possible that the (by others) posited diffusion was channeled through and realised by the individuals that staffed various offices. As mentioned above, the personal experience of having been involved in the colonial administration of India has been stressed as an important factor in the transference of ideas and practices associated with merit reforms from the ICS to the Home Civil Service. While *The Public Office Data Set* faciliates an analysis of the pattern of when and how open competition was adopted by different offices, it does not allow for a consideration of how personal trajectories might have impacted on the irregular, yet incremental, adoption of merit reforms. We have, therefore, collected data on Heads of Department, and their connections, from 31 offices (for details, see Appendix). These are all offices that did not deal directly with matters relating to India—we have excluded the India Office, India Board, etc.—but that may, nevertheless, have been led by individuals with connections to India.

We, initially, had to identify positions that could be seen as equivalent to the designation Head of Department. These positions vary between different offices depending on their character. For an office such as the War Office, which was a ministry, the Head of Department denoted a political figure (i.e. a Minister at the cabinet-level); while the Board of Trade, for example, had a President as its Head of Department. In some instances it is difficult to ascertain the exact position that should be regarded as the Head of Department, and especially whether the top political position ought to be coded as Head of Department or as the highest ranked civil servant.

Connections to India can be of different sorts. We have opted for a broad definition that encompasses any prior experience of having been to India or of being involved in the colonial administration of India. There are, for instance, Heads of Departments that have served the EIC in a civil or military capacity, while others have past experience of being members of the Board of Control (also known as the India Board) or of being assigned the role as Secretary of

State for India. We have coded whether a Head of Department had a connection to India prior to taking up the position and documented what sort of connection it was. We then used the data on open competition presented above to examine whether there is any relationship between having a Head of Department with an earlier connection to India and the introduction of open competition.

We first proceed to make a simple cross table, in which we include all 704 observations (office year), i.e. 25 years (fewer years for those offices that did not exist during the entire period 1855-1879) at the 31 offices. The results are shown in Table 3. Although there is a slightly higher chance for those offices that are led by Head of Departments with India connections to have examinations with open competition—10.42% compared to 7.32% in cases without a Head of Department with India connections—the difference between the groups is not significant. Similarly, a T-test of the means between the two groups does not show a significant difference. In congruence with the qualititative analysis of the archival material, the data on Heads of Departments does not, in other words, support the argument of exogenous motivation and inward diffusion. (In the next iteration of the paper, we intend to perform tests of the importance of past experience of administering India when it comes to the first introduction of open competition in an office.)

Table 3. India experience and open competition

	Open competition		
India Experience	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**
No	519	41	560
(%)	92.68	7.32	100.00
Yes	129	15	144
(%)	89.58	10.42	100.00
Total	648	56	704
(%)	92.05	7.95	100.00
Pearson chi2 = 1.4988 Pr = 0.221			

VI Conclusion

The article has explored if it is valid to conceive of the merit reforms of the ICS as the source of ensuing changes in the Home Civil Service. The conclusion is that there is no support for a constitutive and decisive impact of merit reforms in the ICS on the reforms in the Home Civil Service. Even though the data on the introduction of open and competitive examinations evinces that it was implemented earlier in the ICS than in the public offices of the Home Civil Service, the subsequent analysis of the relationship between prior experience of the administration of India and the introduction of open competition in the Home Civil Service does not substantiate the presumption of inward diffusion. The gradual and varied implementation of open competition in the Civil Service as a whole is, hence, principally attributable to other factors.

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