

# Justice or Practicality: the operation of vetting commissions in the process of purging the enforcement apparatus in Poland

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## Abstract

Peaceful transitions to democracy, which do not end in total defeat of the ancien regime, present new democracies with the dilemma of how to reckon with members of their repressive and enforcement apparatuses. An enforcement apparatus is essential for the state to provide its minimal function: protect citizens and their property from mutual predation. One solution was to just disband authoritarian enforcement agencies in their entirety and build new ones, alongside institutions of the new democratic state. A competing approach, is to pick out and only fire the “bad apples.” The latter approach is one a new democracy may want to take when it is strapped for competent enforcement agents and when competent—as opposed to predominantly loyal—agents were indeed employed by the preceding autocratic regime. We analyze the costs and benefits of conducting a “thorough purge”—understood as dismissing everyone in a certain law enforcement agency—and a “selective purge,” where the competence and loyalty of agents is evaluated on a case-by-case basis (we also consider a third option: of doing nothing and letting all former agents keep their positions). We propose a theory that formalizes the loyalty-competency trade-off facing new democracies deliberating how to reform their security apparatus. Our model allows to make predictions about the causes as well as consequences of thorough as opposed to selective purges. We corroborate our theory using newly acquired data from the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in Poland on the operation of verification commissions in 49 sub-national regions in 1990.

# 1 Introduction: disband or reform?

Protection of the rights of life, liberty, property, and contract is a fundamental function of the state, even according to the most minimalist conception (Nozick 1978; Mack 2018). Hence, it is crucial for governments to ensure that the institutions offering protection, such as the police, security services, and courts function properly. Yet, this is not always the case.

The 1990's in Eastern Europe were a period when private protection and security services were in high demand. Large and even not so large urban areas became hotbeds of violence committed by a range of actors ranging from mobs of organized crime to soccer fans. Fights among the latter became heated enough to, at times, disrupt public infrastructure and citizens' daily lives, not to mention interfering with the conduct of sporting events that antagonized the fans in the first place.

Telling is an example from Poznan, Poland where fans of "Lech," the local soccer club initially attacked, with wooden planks torn out of stadium benches, supporters of the opposing team and later, after a small group of policemen confronted them, joined forces with that very opposing team to together attack the police NASZKOWSKA (1992). Normally, following such an embarrassing turn of events the police would rally the troops and appear in full force in future matches, but this did not happen in the staff-strapped Poznan police district. Less than a year later, when Lech was set to play in Warsaw, the police did not even bother screening the fans for weapons as they boarded a Warsaw-bound train, armed in chains, machetes and even home-made swords. They merely alerted the police units in Warsaw to prepare them for the impending doom. Since Warsaw has three train stations, strained as it was, the Warsaw police staffed all three. The fans preempted the police, however, by pulling the emergency break and disembarking in Ochota, a Warsaw suburb. They first made their presence known by breaking glass at the local train station and tearing up the travelers' lounge. Next, they proceeded to vandalizing property of local merchants (including setting fire to a local food truck). Beyond property damage, Lech fans had in the past beaten up fans of the opposing side and even came close to murdering one after setting him, wrapped

in a soccer club flag, on fire. A single “away” match would typically result in 111 arrests, with one in five fans sent to juvenile detention (NASZKOWSKA 1992).

By 1995 the Włodzimierz Lecki, the voivode (chief executive) of the region where Poznan is capital, was considering closing Lech’s stadium to the public (covid pandemic style) altogether or moving the matches to a stadium located closer to the train station to minimize the exposure of guest team fans to the wrath of Lech supporters (NASZKOWSKA 1992). Why would Lecki choose such an escapist response when just 200 miles north of Poznan, in Olsztyn, even matches between arch rivals, classified as “high risk,” proceeded smoothly? On the day of a typical match, from the early hours of the morning close to 200 police troops would patrol the Olsztyn train station. Such mobilization proved sufficient: when roughly 150 fans disembarked, specially chartered buses scooped them up to transport them to a stadium where the soccer match started in time to allow the fans to catch the train back home on the same night. The police searched every single soccer fan entering the Olsztyn stadium for weapons. Aside from an occasional fire cracker that went off during the match, the events, aside from the quality of soccer, of course, were unremarkable. Following the match chartered buses shuttled guest team fans back to the train station. The local police chief commented later “we stuck to well-rehearsed routines in this case, just as with other large events with the potential for confrontation, everything went smoothly.” (Redakcji 2003)

Why were the responses of the police in Poznan and Olsztyn so dramatically different? The answer lies in the fact that Poznan’s supply of agents of repression had been severely depleted by processes of verification that were held in the early post-transition years in Poland. Plain and simple, in contrast to Olsztyn, there were not enough policemen to confront soccer fans in Poznan. According to the data that we use later in this paper, in 1990, Olsztyn’s vacancies in agencies employing experts in repression were below the average level (14 % while the average was at 15%), whereas in Poznan, they were above the average (at 18%). In addition, compounding the problem of staffing shortages, Olsztyn’s verification

to the approach we refer to as a “selective purge”, whereas Poznan chose a “thorough purge” approach, meaning it fired practically all agents of enforcement who had been active under the communist regime.

We chose soccer stadium examples of crowd control to avoid any contamination of the the depletion in repression resources by political variables. In their article Kossakowski et al. (2018) note that although in the 2010’s East Europeans soccer fans tended to lean right in their anti-systemic tendencies, this trend was not yet present in the 1990’s. Hence, mismanagement of soccer games is a much better illustration of enforcement apparatus deficiency than, say, mismanaging political protests, where the very presence or absence of a protest could be correlated with how the new democracy dealt with agents of repression employed by the former communist state.

These two examples provide anecdotal evidence for the broader dynamic this article taps into. Any state, even a new democracy that eschews political violence, has a demand for specialists in violence. When a new democracy fires all well-trained specialists in violence it may fail to protect citizens from one another, even in the most apolitical settings, such as soccer matches.

The broad point we make is that at the critical juncture of communist collapse in East Central Europe, former socialist states were faced with the challenging task of purging their security and enforcement apparatus of officers whose responsibilities ranged from spying and repressing the opposition to fighting white collar crime in communist states. In addition to this, most agencies had also been infiltrated by the KGB.

In the words of one Polish historian “there were two opposing views among the [new] political elite in response to how the secret police treated the anti-communist dissident movement. Some politicians wanted to limit the influence of old agencies entirely resulting in a thorough purge. On the other end of the spectrum were the pragmatists. They argued that law enforcement is but a tool in the hands of politicians and just as the agency once supported the communist authoritarian regime, it could now serve the needs of the new

Polish democracy. The secret service should be reformed, but in a way that retains the experts whose origins were in the communist secret police force” (Kozłowski 2019, p.289).

The above quote suggests that the choices before newly democratized states seeking to reform their security services were to either disband the enforcement apparatus in its entirety or engage in careful verification of individual files in an attempt to “pick out the bad apples.” There was however also a third choice. Not all democratizing states seek a personnel reform. For example, Chile and Brazil did not conduct significant police personnel purges after the end of military rule (Pereira 2001). Hence there was also a third possibility of “doing nothing.”

Moreover, the meaning of “bad” in the term “bad apples” is ambiguous. It could refer to enforcement agency officers who persecuted the anti-authoritarian opposition and “deserved” to be punished by members of the incoming democratic regime; or it could refer to incompetent agents, who were appointed to their positions due to their ideological loyalty to the communist leaders. The latter kind of officers are bad not because they persecuted the opposition, but because they are incompetent and retaining them offers no value to the new state.

In this paper, we use the case of Post-Communist Poland to illustrate how policy-makers resolve the dilemma of whom to fire and how their sense of practicality—the demand for experts skilled in fighting crime —keeps their desire for justice (and potentially revenge) in check. Section two provides anecdotal The next section places our question within the general literatures on the authoritarian secret police agencies and agencies of repression more broadly and with the literature on the loyalty competency trade-off. Here, we explain how the transitional justice context adds nuance to this classical and well-researched dilemma. The following section presents a simple theoretical model that systematizes criteria for determining when policy-makers are motivated by justice and when they are motivated by practicality. Section four makes the argument for why Poland, with its 49 regions and 49 verification commissions, is the ideal case for studying our question. This section also intro-

duced readers to the archival data from the Institute of National Remembrance. Section 5 provides preliminary results and concludes.

## 2 Loyalty, Competency and Justice

The recent decade has brought increased interest among scholars in the how autocrats use their various enforcement apparatuses to stay in power. In the non-formal literature on the subject, the most prominent example is the book by Sheena Greitens (2016) who argues that the way autocrats organize their repressive apparatuses depends on the kind of threat they face. If they are more concerned with revolution from below, they will centralize secret police forces and create a powerful agency that might be threatening to some autocrats, just not those who fear most of all a popular rebellion. If their primary concern is with a lateral coup d'état, they will fragment their security forces and sacrifice efficiency in intelligence gathering to avoid a threat to their own power. Poland, the case we use here was most definitely an instance where the greatest threat to communist rule came in the form of revolution from below rather than a lateral agency. Hence, the secret police was highly centralized.

This created other dilemmas for the rulers, which have been formalized, such as the loyalty competency trade-off.

Originally, the loyalty-efficiency tradeoff was formalized by Egorov and Sonin (2011) who used it to explain why rulers, but particularly dictators, have to balance their desirability for loyal agents on the one hand and skilled ones on the other. In the words of these authors, “the very competence of the vizier makes him more prone to treason ” (Egorov and Sonin 2011, p. 904). Unsurprisingly, strong rulers will resolve the dilemma differently than weak rulers. The former will choose competence over loyalty, as they are capable of staging off threats; the latter will invest in loyal agents as it does not take much for them to feel threatened.

Alexandre Debs (2016), although he does not talk specifically about the incentives of leaders and their rank-and-file, adds nuance to this point of view by drawing attention

to regime type. Specifically, uniformed personnel from former military regimes fair better under new democratic rulers than non-democratic rulers. Since democracies select rulers based on citizenship support and not brute force, military members do not pose a threat to new democracy in the same way they pose a threat to an autocracy. Debs uses this insight to draw conclusions about the speed and nature of regime change. He predicts that transitions from military rule to democracy should appear more swiftly than from other forms of dictatorship.

Other scholars have integrated social networks into analyzing the competency-loyalty tradeoff. For instance, Josef Woldense (2018) shows that rulers can alleviate it by shuffling employees laterally from one geographic region to another. Shuffling prevents agents' entrenchment and staves off their becoming powerful enough to threaten the ruler. At the same time, shuffling is better than firing, because agents continue to acquire expertise and have higher competence value to the ruler.

Shuffling is hence one of the ways to avoid the loyalty-competence trade-off. It allows rulers to have skilled employees that do not pose a challenge to their rule.<sup>1</sup> Yet not posing a threat does not immediately imply loyalty. What if the agent just doesn't care to put in effort?

Jack Paine (2022) examines this aspect of the competency-loyalty tradeoff in the context of organizing security and repressive apparatuses by authoritarian rulers. In this interpretation of the tradeoff, the authoritarian ruler considers appointing a professional (hence equipped with expertise) army against a personal (hence loyal, but relatively less skilled) militia. It follows from the fact that neither kind of security force can survive a revolution from below (the radicalism of such revolutions reduces survival prospects of both kinds of security apparatuses to nil), that autocrats will appoint personalist rather than professional militaries when they are more concerned about external threats than about revolutionary threats from within. Because, in the view of Paine (2022) post-revolutionary regimes fire

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar argument in the context of Putin's Russia, see Olimpieva (2021)

everyone from the enforcement apparatus, professional militaries lack the will to effectively fight revolutionary threats. In contrast, in the case of external threats, professional militaries can count on leniency. Indeed, in some instances, they even collaborate with external challengers to the autocrat. In light of this, they put less effort into averting external threats. Consequently, the autocrat who fears such threats is better off investing in a personal militia.

In a final paper we discuss here on the loyalty-competency dilemma, Alexei Zakharov (2016) considers an interaction between a dictator and individual subordinates where the dictator chooses a specific level of loyalty (and correspondingly lack of competence) he needs from his subordinates. A controversial prediction from his model is that unskilled agents invest in loyalty because they are aware that their limited skill-set renders them unemployable by future rulers. But skilled agents, knowing that they can find lucrative employment under any regime have an incentive to shirk.

Our model departs from Paine, Zakharov, Egorov and Sonin, and Woldense in several respects. Key among them is that we are less interested in the former authoritarian ruler and more in the incentives of democratic rulers who succeed him. In the democratic context, the trade-off between loyalty and expertise becomes nuanced by the fact that agents with expertise and weaker loyalty to the outgoing, authoritarian regime, may in fact be more loyal to the new democratic regime. Hence, in some circumstance, the loyalty-competence trade-off can be averted. Moreover, since the new democrats inherit a state staff potentially loyal to the autocrat, their decision, at least initially, is more about whom to appoint, but about whom to purge from the authoritarian state apparatus.

Not modeled in our theory, as a normative motivation cannot be incorporated in a non-cooperative game theory setting, is the decision to fire agents based on their repressive behavior towards dissidents. In this article, we treat this tendency towards repressive behavior to be independent of loyalty and competence.

### 3 The Model

In order to model the tasks before a policymaker in a new democracy deciding how to deal with members of an authoritarian security apparatus, we follow Nalepa (2022) in using the work-horse model of American politics scholars studying bureaucracies, the delegation model (Epstein and O'halloran 1999; Huber and Shipan 2002; Callander et al. 2008). The problem of whether or not to fire a law enforcement agent is the flip side of the delegation problem. Instead of choosing to delegate, the new democratic politician chooses whether to retain an existing agent that was appointed by a different principal.

In the case of the decision to purge, the new democratic Politician can retain an agent of the former authoritarian regime (equivalent to delegating in models of bureaucracy) or can purge this agent and appoint an inexperienced replacement in his place.<sup>2</sup> The players are a new democratic policy maker with ideal point 0 in a uni-dimensional issue space and a former law enforcement agent who may be one of two types: (1) hired by the former authoritarian regime for loyalty (and therefore, lacking in competence) (2) hired by the former authoritarian regime for competence. The agent of the law enforcement apparatus also has an ideal point in the policy implementation space, which is unknown to the new democratic policy maker,  $x_t$ , where  $t \in T = \{m, e\}$  With probability  $\theta \in (0, 1)$  the agent is moderate (with ideal point at  $x_m$ ); with probability  $(1 - \theta)$ , the agent is extreme (with ideal point at  $x_e$ ).

It is important here to note, that extremity and moderation are orthogonal to competence and loyalty for the following reason. Although an autocrat may have hired an extreme agent for his or her competence, that agent is not necessarily extreme from the perspective of the new democratic Politician. In fact, he may, though need not be moderate relative to the new democrat. For this reason, in the baseline model, we make the assumption that the two spaces:

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<sup>2</sup> We note that while the original agent, as we show below, can also be incompetent/inexperienced, the new one definitely is such.

1. loyalty versus competence; and
2. extremity versus moderation

are in fact cross-cutting an orthogonal to one another.

We also assume that competent agents are better at detecting signals/implement policy with less noise. For simplicity, in the baseline model, they observe the noise with which policy is implemented perfectly and can correct for it. Noise is represented by  $\omega \in \{-\epsilon, +\epsilon\}$ . With probability  $\frac{1}{2}$  the shock is  $-\epsilon$  and with probability  $\frac{1}{2}$  it is  $+\epsilon$ . A competent agent learns  $\omega$  with perfect precision, as in the standard delegation model. With probability  $\mu \in (0, 1)$  the agent is competent (can observe  $\omega$ ) and with probability  $1 - \mu$  he was appointed for loyalty to the autocrat. For now, we assume that  $\theta$  and  $\mu$  are independent, but this can be relaxed later. Assume that  $0 < x_m < \epsilon < x_e < 1$ .

The democratic policy maker can pay a cost and uncover if the law enforcement agent was hired for loyalty or for competence (this is the individual level, selective purge). The cost will be later interpreted as investing in a verification commission that actually studies and evaluates the files. The personnel files of secret police officers contained relevant information about their performance, whether they received awards or sanction, their tenure on the job as well as transfer history.

For the baseline model, we analyze the following interaction between the policy maker,  $P$  and law enforcement agent,  $A$ .

In the first period, Nature chooses if the agent is competent and whether his ideal point is moderate or extreme. If one were to represent the former authoritarian ruler's ideal point at 1 an extreme agent is one who is more loyal to the former authoritarian ruler. In the second period, the policy maker observes the implemented policy (not having observed the noise) and chooses one of three actions  $a_P \in \{tp, sp, np\}$ :

- thorough purge ( $tp$ ), fires everyone and appoints replacement who has the same ideal point as the policy maker, i.e., 0, but no competence (so cannot observe  $\omega$ );/footnoteWe

motivate the assumption about the same ideal point following Nalepa (2022) who points out that while many loyalists are eager to participate in the new democratic state, few have the expertise necessary to perform. This assumption applies ideally to Poland, where the 3 million strong Solidarity trade union—at the height of its popularity was made up of numerous workers demoted during Martial Law.

- selective purge ( $sp$ ), where after paying cost  $v$  he can learn the competence (but not ideal point) of the agent and only fire the incompetent one;<sup>3</sup>
- no purge ( $np$ ), where nobody is fired and no new information is learned

In the third period, the original agent (if he was not replaced), implements policy. If the agent was replaced, then his replacement (an untrained agent of the policy maker with identical ideal point, at 0, but no ability to learn  $\omega$ ) implements policy. The game ends and payoffs are collected.

Utility functions are defined by distance of implemented policy (so  $p + \omega$ ) from players' ideal points. In the case of the policy maker, utility functions are also determined by the cost of appointing a verification commission (if one is appointed). The agents' utility is also shaped by the distance of implemented policy from ideal point, but also by the value of employment (not being purged).

The utilities are as follows:

$$u_A(p; a_P) = -(|p + \omega - x_T|)$$

, where  $T \in \{M, E\}$

$$u_P(p; a_P) = -(|p + \omega|) - v * \mathbb{1}_{sp}$$

where,  $v$  represents the cost of appointing a verification commission that will conduct careful analysis of personnel files before reaching each individual decision.

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<sup>3</sup> The idea here is that the new democratic Politician fires the incompetent agents and replace him with also an incompetent agent, albeit one with an ideal point that overlaps with his own.

Since this is an extensive game of complete but imperfect information, we solve it for Subgame Perfect Equilibrium through generalized backward induction (Kaminski 2019; Kaminski and Nalepa 2014).

First, consider actions of the agent, starting with the replacement agent, which is appointed in the event of a thorough purge or if a selective purge reveals the agent is extreme (and so would be disloyal to the new democratic administration). This agent's ideal point is at 0, so her utility, as a function of her policy choice can be written as:

$$u_A(p; np) = -(|p + \epsilon|) * \frac{1}{2} - (|p - \epsilon|) * \frac{1}{2}$$

Given this agents' utility function, his optimal choice if  $p^* = 0$ .

Consider now the agent without competence. Like the replacement agent, he cannot observe  $\omega$ , so he maximizes his utility function

$$u_A(p; np) = -(|p + \epsilon - x_T|) * \frac{1}{2} - (|p - \epsilon - x_T|) * \frac{1}{2}$$

leading him to choose  $p^* = x_M$  for the Moderate and  $p^* = x_E$  for the Extreme incompetent types, respectively.

Finally, consider the competent types of agents, who are aware of the value of  $\omega$ . Their maximization problem, in light of knowing  $\omega$  leads them to chose

$$p^* = \begin{cases} x_T + \epsilon & \text{if } \omega = -\epsilon; \\ x_T - \epsilon & \text{if } \omega = +\epsilon. \end{cases}$$

We can next move to the New Democratic Politician's  $A$ 's best response, whose expected utility of can be written as:

$$U_P(p^*; nocost, tp) = -\epsilon$$

This is a straightforward consequence of the fact that a thorough purge results in the ap-

pointment of the replacement agent who plays his optimal strategy described above as  $p^* = 0$ .

$$\begin{aligned}
 U_P(p^*, nocost, np) = & \underbrace{-\theta\mu x_M}_{\text{moderate, competent}} \\
 & \underbrace{-(1-\theta)\mu|x_E|}_{\text{extreme, competent}} \\
 & \underbrace{\theta(1-\mu)(-|x_M + \epsilon| * \frac{1}{2} - |x_M - \epsilon| * \frac{1}{2})}_{\text{moderate incompetent}} \\
 & \underbrace{(1-\theta)(1-\mu)(-|x_E + \epsilon| * \frac{1}{2} - |x_E - \epsilon| * \frac{1}{2})}_{\text{extreme incompetent}}
 \end{aligned}$$

This slightly more complex expressions reflects what takes place when no purge takes place. Starting from the top, the moderate and competent former secret police agent will adopt the policy that “absorbs” the shock  $\omega$ , (which he observers) to arrive at his ideal point,  $x_M$ . There are  $\theta$  (for moderate) \*  $\mu$  (for competent) such cases. Moving on to the incompetent agents, reflected in the next two lines, recall that these agents too strive to arrive at their ideal point but are unable to absorb the shock,  $\omega$  which with probability  $\frac{1}{2}$  makes them veer right from their ideal point and with the same probability makes them veer left. There are  $\theta(1-\mu)$  such moderate agents and  $(1-\theta)(1-\mu)$  such extreme agents.

The above expression reduces to:

$$-\epsilon(x_M(1-\mu)) - \theta\mu x_M - x_E(1-\theta) \tag{1}$$

Finally, the expected utility from the selective purge, so after paying a cost for a methodical verification process is given by:

$$\begin{aligned}
U_P(p^*, \text{paycost}, sp) = & \underbrace{-\theta\mu x_M}_{\text{moderate, competent}} \\
& \underbrace{-(1-\mu)(\epsilon)}_{\text{replaced any incompetent}} \\
& \underbrace{-(1-\theta)\mu\epsilon}_{\text{replaces extreme competent}} - v
\end{aligned}$$

To understand this expression, recall that the selective purge reveals complete information on both the competence and the ideology of the former agents. A plausible extension that follows assumes that agents have a chance to appeal (that is accept or reject the decision to be purged) and have the appeal reconsidered by a “central” verification commission, we will assume that this commission only gets observe the ideology, but not competence of the agents.<sup>4</sup>

The above expression reduces to:

$$-\epsilon(1-\theta)\mu - \theta\mu x_M - v \quad (2)$$

What does the New Democratic Politician choose as her optimal action? The optimal policy can be easily gleaned from comparing the payoff from a thorough purge,  $-\epsilon$ , to 1 and next, 2.

Note first, that, just as the payoff from thorough purge, the entirety of 1 is negative. However, the coefficient on  $\epsilon$  is less than 1, so at least for some parameter values, 2 can be greater than  $-\epsilon$ .

Specifically, an ideal point of the moderate type of agent closer to the ideal point of the New Democratic Politician will unambiguously increases the value of expression 1, which is consistent with standard delegation framework (if the agent’s and principal’s preferences are aligned relative to the the uncertainty associated with policy implementation, then delegation

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<sup>4</sup> The intuition behind this assumption is that the bulk of information about competence comes from local knowledge and interviewing the candidate, whereas the ideology can be gleaned from features of the files such as education, association membership and employment history.

is more likely). Another factor that will decrease 1 relative to  $-\epsilon$  is the proportion of extreme agents  $(1 - \theta)$ . Based on eyeballing the expression alone, it is not immediately clear what the effect of  $\mu$ , the proportion of competent agents on the payoff from a thorough as opposed to no purge.

However a comparison of  $-\epsilon$  with expressions 1 and 2 allows us to also formulate conditions under which a thorough purge will be more attractive than a selective purge or “no purge.” The payoff associated with a thorough purge is flat: at  $-\epsilon$  it does not depend at all on  $\mu$  or  $\theta$ . Conditions when a thorough purge is preferred over a selective or “no purge” can be extracted from 2 and 1 as:

$$\begin{cases} -\epsilon > -\epsilon(1 - \theta)\mu - \theta\mu x_M - v \\ -\epsilon > -\epsilon(x_M(1 - \mu)) - \theta\mu x_M - x_E(1 - \theta) \end{cases}$$

After simplifying the above expression we arrive at the following proposition

**Proposition 1.** 1. Assume that relative to the proportion of moderate agents, the magnitude of the uncertainty of policy implementation, is small (i.e.,  $\epsilon < \theta$ ). The New Democratic Proposition choose a thorough purge over “no purge” or selective purge if and only if the probability of competent agents is sufficiently large, specifically when

$$\mu > \max\left\{\frac{\epsilon - v}{\epsilon(1 - \theta) + \theta x_M}, \frac{\epsilon(1 - x_M) - x_E(1 - \theta)}{\theta x_M - \epsilon x_M}\right\}.$$

2. Assume conversely, that relative to the proportion of moderate agents, the magnitude of the uncertainty of policy implementation, is large (i.e.,  $\epsilon > \theta$ ). The New Democratic Proposition choose a thorough purge over “no purge” or selective purge if and only if the probability of competent agents is moderate, that is, when

$$\frac{\epsilon(1 - x_M) - x_E(1 - \theta)}{\theta x_M - \epsilon x_M} > \mu > \frac{\epsilon - v}{\epsilon(1 - \theta) + \theta x_M}$$

Consider the first part of proposition 1. When the shock of policy implementation is low, competent agents pose a liability because they are effective at absorbing the shock making

the final policy outcome coincide with their ideal point. In this event, the New Democratic Politician would rather roll the dice and deal with  $\epsilon$ .

The second part of proposition 1, extends the logic of the tradeoff between competent agents and the policy shock of the first part. As the shock gets larger, New Democratic Politicians become willing to forgo thorough purges when the proportion of competent agents is high, though they will still choose a thorough over selective purge for moderate levels of competence on average.

Consider next an informal comparison of the payoff from a selective purge, summarized in 2 with the payoff from a thorough purge. We see here that increasing the cost of verification,  $v$  unambiguously decreases the value of the selective purge. But similarly, decreasing  $\mu$ , the probability of the agent being competent increases the value of the selective purge relative to a thorough purge. This may be puzzling, but becomes clear upon deeper reflection: if few agents are competent, it may be worth paying the extra verification cost to find out who among them are the competent ones. Formally, the condition for a selective purge to be preferred over a thorough or no purge, it has to be the case that:

$$\begin{cases} -\epsilon(1-\theta)\mu - \theta\mu x_M - v > -\epsilon \\ -\epsilon(1-\theta)\mu - \theta\mu x_M - v > -\epsilon(x_M(1-\mu)) - \theta\mu x_M - x_E(1-\theta) \end{cases}$$

After simplifying the above expression we arrive at the following proposition

**Proposition 2.** *The New Democratic Politician,  $P$ , chooses to pay a verification cost,  $v$ , and embark on a selective purge if and only if the probability of competent agents,  $\mu$ , is sufficiently small, specifically when*

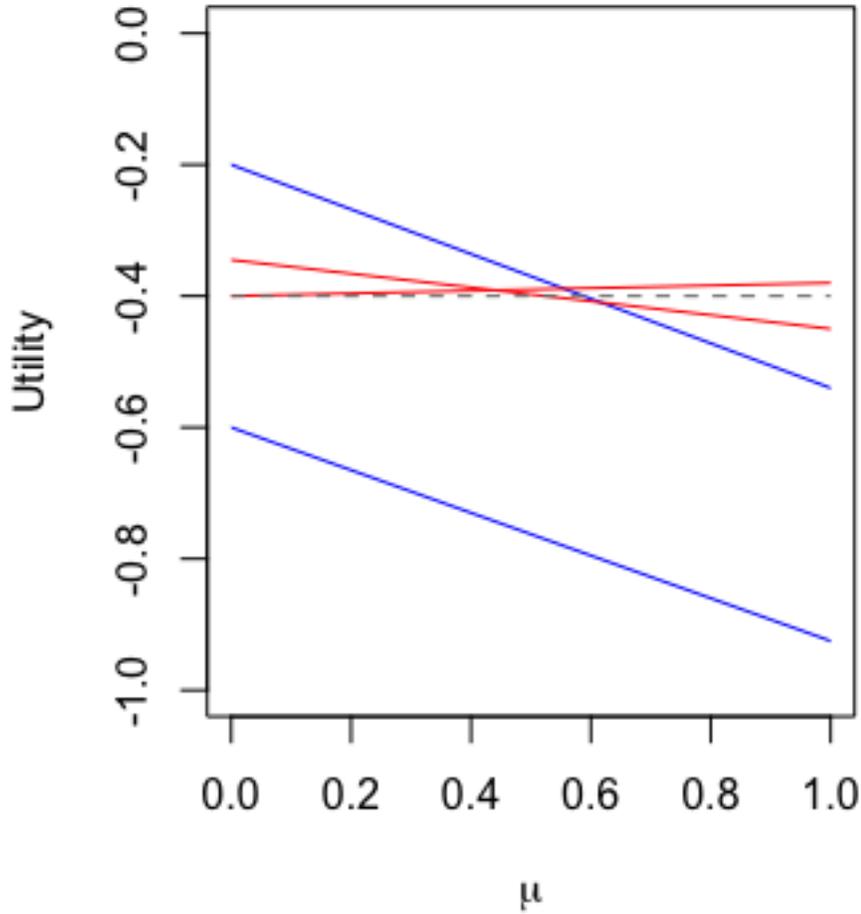
$$\mu < \min\left\{\frac{\epsilon-v}{\epsilon(1-\theta)+\theta x_M}, \frac{v-x_E(1-\theta)-\epsilon x_M}{\epsilon(\theta-x_M-1)}\right\}.$$

### 3.1 Discussion

To see the results of this analysis in yet a different way, the New Democratic Politician's decision problem can also be represented with the following two figures, showing the utility of the New Democratic Politician from his three separate actions as a function of  $\mu$  for several fixed levels of  $\epsilon$  (.4),  $\theta$  (.2 top and .75 bottom),  $x_M$  (.1 top and .3 bottom),  $x_E$  (.45 top and .9 bottom) and  $v$  (.2 top and .75 bottom)

Figure 1 allows to illustrate the main propositions above. We see that selective purges provide the New Democratic Politician with the highest utility when the proportion of competent agents is lower, provided that the cost of verification is not too high. Perturbations of the parameters defining the ideal points of the former agents and even the proportion of moderate as opposed to extreme agents does change the optimality of selective purging as much as increasing the value of  $v$  does.

When  $v$  is high however, the horse race for the optimal purge action is between thorough purge (the dashed line) and no purge (the red lines). The upward sloping red line corresponds to a relatively low proportion of extreme agents whereas a the slightly downward sloping red line corresponds to the payoff from no purge when the proportion of extreme agents is high. Consistently with Proposition 1, in the former case, a high level of competent agents urges the New Democratic Politician to abandon the idea of purging altogether, settling for the no purge choice. In the event that the proportion of competent agents is low, it is a toss up between “no purge” and “thorough purge”, at least of the set of parameters we have chosen (the lines almost overlap). In contrast, in the latter case, when there is a high chance of extreme agents, the New Democratic Politician chooses Thorough Purge when the the level of competent agents is high, but no purge when the level is of competent agents is low. This is intuitive: as remarked, when most of the former agents are extreme *and* competent, they will be very effective at moving policy implementation closer to their ideal point, which is far from the New Democratic Politician's ideal point.



**Figure 1:** *New Democratic Politician’s Utility from “selective purge” (blue) “no purge” (red) and thorough purge (dashed) as a function of  $\mu$ , the proportion of competent former agents*

*Note: Other parameters have been fixed at the following values:  $\epsilon$  (.4),  $\theta$  (.2 top and .75 bottom),  $x_M$  (.1 top and .3 bottom),  $x_E$  (.45 top and .9 bottom) and  $v$  (.2 top and .75 bottom), where “red top” refers to the function increasing in  $\mu$*

## 3.2 Extensions

In order to construct the baseline model described above, we had to make a number of simplifying assumptions, such as that the new democratic politician, after paying the cost of verification, uncovers the competence and loyalty of the former agent with perfect precision and that once made, his decision to retain or fire a former agent of the *ancien régime* is final. Consequently, our model does not capture the right of rejected officers to appeal their decisions to a central verification commission, something that our archival research indicates was common practice. In the first extension of our model, we will add two additional periods to our game. In the first, the officer, who knows he was fired but is not sure whether he was fired due to a thorough or selective purge can choose to reject the result and ask a central commission to reconsider the decision. The appeal comes at a cost to the ex-officer, but if his appeal is granted, he enjoys the benefit of office. The central commission, however, only learns the loyalty (or ideology), not the competence of the appealing officer and bases its decision on that alone. Since competence, as argued earlier, comes from interviewing the officer and local knowledge the central commission does not have access to. Note, that this may lead the central commission to make mistakes and retain an incompetent but moderate agent. The central commission is only motivated by its ideal point, which coincides with the ideal point of the new democratic politician.

In a second extension, one could allow the loyalty and competence of candidates not to be independent as currently assumed, leading the central commission to infer competence from loyalty (if loyalty and competence are not independent, but correlated, loyalty effectively serves as a signal of competence).

A final extension that could be considered would relax the assumption of perfect selective purging. The New Democratic Politician could choose how much she wants to pay for the selective purge which would result in a imperfect signal of competence and/or loyalty. The advantage of this extension, like the previous ones, would be to offer a better match with the Polish case at hand, which is discussed in the next section.

In the following section, we take the main findings of the baseline model to data. To summarize, the most robust finding, even after accounting for the loyalty competency tradeoff, is that decreasing the competence of a typical former agent of the former authoritarian apparatus, makes selective purges the most attractive option **when the costs of verification are relatively low**. After introducing Poland, the setting of our empirical interpretation, we attempt to corroborate this finding with data from the Institute of National Remembrance on the operation of verification commissions in 1990.

## 4 Verification of security officers in Poland

In the late 1980s and early 1990s Poland underwent a transition from a communist authoritarian system to a free-market democracy. The transition was gradual and involved negotiations —the so-called “Roundtable Talks.” Despite its name, the negotiation was bilateral and held between the old government and Solidarity trade union-based opposition<sup>5</sup> from February, 6 to April 5, 1989. The official Roundtable followed months of preparation, and included many secret rounds of bargaining over the terms of the negotiations. These latter talks took place in September 1988 in Magdalenka, a Warsaw suburb.

The topic of reforming the *Stuzba Bezpieczeństwa* (SB), as the communist security services were called, was even on the Magdalenka agenda. After all, it had been the SB who had been arresting and persecuting members of the opposition, some of whom had aspirations to become part of the Post-communist government. After a long history of repressing dissidents, SB was perceived as a key pillar of authoritarianism and the future of the security services became a contentious topic in negotiations between Solidarity and the old government.

Its sheer size made reforming the SB challenging. In 1989, the Ministry of Internal Affairs employed 125,625 people. Among them, officers of the SB constituted 24,308 (Kozłowski 2019). While removing officers suspected of persecuting opposition was obviously important,

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<sup>5</sup> The Solidarity Trade Union was the dominant anticommunist organization in the 1980’s. Its exponential growth ultimately prompted the authorities to implement Martial Law.

any staffing policy had to respond to challenges facing the new democratic state.

Poland's regime change consisted really of two transitions: The first, from authoritarianism to democracy; The second, from market socialism to capitalism. As a result, Poland had to deal not only with dismantling institutions of authoritarianism but also with large scale property crimes and corruption brought about by the uncertainties and unequal access to resources left behind by the outgoing regime given fragile market institutions. Democratic governments needed officers trained in fighting corruption and white collar crime.

To a large extent, the former secret police agents were better positioned to do this than insufficiently trained outsiders. Hence, the new security system was bound to include at least some personnel trained under the authoritarian SB. The new democracy was in dire need of a screening mechanism.

To make the new services credible and implement a modicum of transitional justice (Kozłowski 2019), the first democratically sanctioned cabinet implemented a series of “verification” commissions. Although, all SB officers employed as of 31 July 1989 were fired, each had a chance to regain employment in the newly created Office for National Protection (*Urząd Ochrony Państwa, UOP*) on two conditions:

1. they had to be positively verified by the relevant (regional) commission;
2. they had to be recruited by UOP

This second condition was non-trivial, as while some 14000 officers participated in the verification process, there were only c.a. 5000 vacancies in UOP. Hence, verification was not synonymous with re-employment in the new secret service. The process of approval or removal was sanctioned by the Central Verification Commission alongside a so-called Qualifying Commission, but initiated by one of 49 Regional Verification Commissions (RVC). Established in July 1990, RVCs were comprised of an UOP representative, the head of local police, a universally trusted local activist as well as MPs, and senators. This composition was more or less uniform in each *województwo* (as 49 the regions in Poland are called).

With little more than a few weeks to review hundreds of personnel files, RVC resources were thinly stretched. We'd thus expect RVC members to resort to shortcuts, such as the volume of work assignments, flags of disciplinary issues or signs eagerness to use violence to accelerate investigations. It would not be surprising, given how little guidance was offered at the national level, for RVCs to adopt different criteria for evaluation. Some, for instance, may have only approved officers who stood out by having achieved some socially desirable outcomes, while rejecting all remaining. Others may have rejected only those who were proven guilty of transgressions, while retaining all other candidates. This is one possible explanation for high variance in the proportion of officers verified negatively that we describe in the coming sections. As we argue, there is a different reason for this variance.

The decisions of the RVCs were not final. Officers could appeal the outcome of their verification to the Central Verification Commission (CVC). The CVC either made their own independent decision relying on the personnel files or additional materials supplied by the candidate or requested that the relevant RVC reconsider or provide further justification for its decision. Ultimately, out of the 14034 security officers that underwent verification a vast majority, 10439, were verified positively and could go on to apply to work in the new democratic security service.

## **4.1 Poland as a case study**

Poland is an appealing case to study the turnover of agents of repression accompanying regime change for several reasons. First, during its transition years it needed to deal with security forces that had loyalties and beliefs that could potentially destabilize the state. As described above, the new Polish democratic government had to decide how to retain competent moderate officers capable of staving off the threats of the transition while sifting through the disloyal and/or possibly incompetent “bad apples.”

Moreover, Poland's 49 województwa offer considerable variance in the outcome of operations of the Regional Verification Commissions. The range of negatively verified officers runs

from 7% to 80%, allowing us to see all three types of purges considered in the model within one country. A sub-national study like this allows us to keep constant other country-specific variables. Moreover given that the 49 RVCs operated fairly independently from one another in making the initial verification decision, this kind of analysis is reminiscent of subnational analysis of, say, state legislatures in the 50 United States.

## 4.2 Data

To understand the determinants of the type of purges, we have analyzed a number of historical and archival sources, some of which we compiled into an original dataset allowing for the first to our knowledge quantitative analysis of purges.

The archival data from files of the RVCs (*Wojewódzkie Komisje Kwalifikacyjne*) contain information on the severity of purges, our key variable of interest, for each of the 49 województwa. The files allow us to extract:

1. the number of officers that have undergone verification;
2. the number of those verified positively and negatively;
3. the time each RVC spent on deliberation;
4. the proportion of officers that appealed the negative decision of the commission;
5. the outcome of the appeal

An example of a page from the files constituting our data is provided in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: *Example of a Regional Verification Commissions summarizing the commission's decisions*

SKŁAD KOMISJI KWALIFIKACYJNEJ DLA FUNKCJONARIUSZY  
BYLEJ SŁUŻBY BEZPIECZEŃSTWA

województwo ..... GDAŃSK .....

przewodniczący	Franciszek JAMROŹ.....
przedstawiciel Szefa Urzędu Ochrony Państwa	Adam HODYSZ .....
przedstawiciel Komendanta Głównego Policji	... plk Stefan BACHORSKI .....
przedstawiciel Zw.Zaw.	... por. Jerzy PELC .....
poseł	... Jan Krzysztof BIELECKI .....
poseł	... Czesław NOWAK .....
senator	... Lech KACZYŃSKI .....
osoba o uznanym autorytecie	.....
sekretarz	.....

- Komisja rozpoczęła działalność w dniu .....

- Zakończono działalność w dniu ..... 25.07.1990r .....

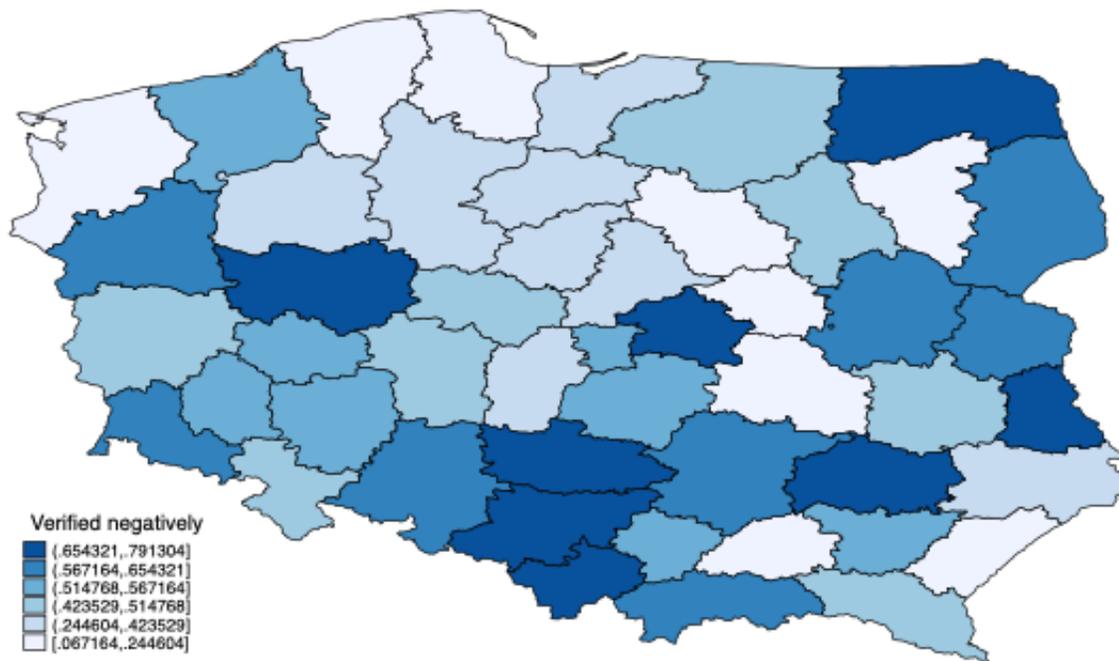
- Kwalifikacja objęto 439.. osób

- Zaopiniowano: pozytywnie 405..... osób  
negatywnie ... 34..... osób  
odwołało się ... 34..... osób

rozpatrzono pozytywnie ... 11..... odwołań  
negatywnie ... 20..... odwołań

Even a cursory glance at the data from the verification commissions reveals a high level of variation in their level of severity. The proportion of those verified negatively ranges from 0.07 to 0.79 in the period preceding the appeals process (see Figure 3). Moreover, there is no obvious evidence for geographic clustering.

FIGURE 3: *Geographic distribution of the proportion of secret service officers verified negatively*



However, rather than focusing on the proportion of negatively verified officers, the empirical interpretation of our model ought to focus on the type of purges conducted in each *województwo*. The type of purge is best captured as a combination of the verification outcome and the amount of effort that each RVC put into adjudicating the individual cases. Since selective purges require careful reading of files and interviewing candidates, we expect them to be the most time-consuming. Hence, in this section, we define a *selective purge* as one where a commission spent a long time deliberating each case; a *thorough purge* as an instance where RVCs which took less time deliberating *and* verified a high proportion of officers negatively; and *no purge* as an instance where the RVCs took little time deliberating *and* cleared a high proportion of officers to serve under the new democratic system.

The time and negative proportion cut-offs are, of course, arbitrary and can be defined in a number of ways. To arrive at the preferred specification, we used the average values as a guide for delineating the categories (see Table 2). We operationalize the above definitions, as follows:

TABLE 1: *Types of purges*

Purge type	Proportion verified negatively	Hours per application	Frequency	Percent
No	<0.48	<1.37	9	25.71
Selective		>1.37	13	37.14
Thorough	>0.48	<1.37	13	37.14

This rule allows us to classify the vast majority of wojewodztwa according to the type of purge they used in dealing with former secret police agents (Figure 4).

Our classification necessarily rests on a number of arbitrary choices concerning the levels of key variables. To increase its credibility, we corroborate the resulting classification with supporting information from the archives of RVCs, consisting of letters, reports to see the picture of the commissions this qualitative data paints.

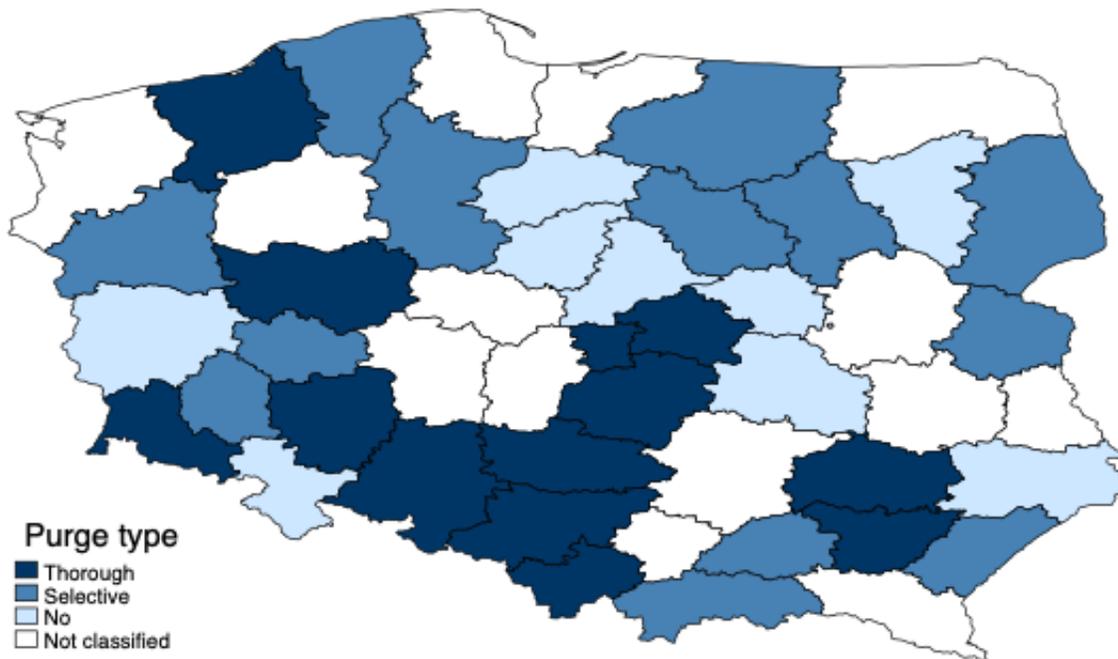
In województwa classified as having no purges, the documents consist of complains regarding the low levels of purges. For instance, Włocławek’s Solidarity Trade Union rep wrote a letter to the RVC complaining about the high level of positive verification in the województwo (BU\_3546\_52). In Zamość, the commission wrote “Society judged our position as too lenient. SB’s activity in the Zamość area was particularly brutal and repressive.” (BU\_3546\_53 p.22). Finally, in Radom, the leader of the RVC wrote “We feel that the Commission’s activities have not met public expectation.” (BU\_3546\_39). Documents from wojewodztwa that saw selective purges show less dissatisfaction and allow for erring on the side of caution. In Bydgoszcz, the commission reports on “considerable and rather approving public interest in the work of the RVC. Attitudes demanding revenge soon morphed into acceptance and even empathy.” In Tarnow, the selective aspect is also clearly visible “(i)n cases where the in-depth information did not give unequivocally negative indications, the RVC requested positive consideration of the appeals. On the other hand, the RVC in

Tarnów is fully convinced that the persons assessed negatively and whose decision was upheld should not work in the ministry (...).“ (BU\_3546\_48 p.8). Correspondence stored in the archives of the województwa that underwent thorough purges strike a yet different tone, emphasizing the perception of victor’s justice and desire for revenge. According to one author (a former SB officer) of a letter addressed to the Ombudsman for Human Rights“ on its first day of proceedings, the commission handled a vast majority of valuable and highly educated personnel. (...) Moreover (...) there was a list drawn up by ”Solidarity“ containing the names of about 40 people who were supposed to be dismissed. Among those negatively verified were even secretaries, an archivist, and even an officer who contributed to one of the new parliamentary committees (...) This was but another act of revenge carried out in our country.”

An alternative check of the robustness of our categorization is provided by the proportion of officers that appealed their RVC decision in conjunction with the percentage of those whose appeal was granted. We expect the proportion of appeals to be the highest in the województwa classified as experiencing a thorough purge and the lowest in those with no purges. Similarly, negative decisions should be reversed most frequently in the thorough purge województwa. A comparison of the means shows exactly that: in województwa with thorough purges 91.7% officers verified negatively had appealed the result, while in województwa with selective purges that number was 88.3% f. Finally, wojewodztwa with no purges had only 85.6% of appealed decisions. Of these appeals, the highest proportion— 73.2%— of reversals took place in województwa experiencing thorough purges, followed by 62.8% in wojewodztwa with selective purges. The figure for wojewodztwa with no purges was 60.6% .

These two robustness checks increase the credibility of our classification rule.

FIGURE 4: *Classification of purge types in województwa*



### 4.3 Explanatory variables

As discussed in the theory section, the key explanatory variables in the model are the level of competence among officers in a given województwo, the extent of extremism among the officers, and the cost of conducting a selective—that is, associated with a careful reading of personnel files—verification commission. HERE We operationalize competence of the security services officer corps using data from an IPN publication covering the basic statistics on the type and number of officers at the regional level (Piotrowski 2003). The most relevant measure is the proportion of officers securing economic resources (Department for the Protection of the Economy (PoE), *Wydział Ochrony Gospodarki*) in 1989. We use it as a proxy for competence, as the prestige of this department attracted highly able officers (Kozłowski 2019), with skills that can be no doubt considered “usable” Grzymala-Busse (2002) by the new democratic regime. In contrast to officers who spent their time repressing the anticommunist opposition or the Catholic church, officers from PoE were trained to trace crimes that

were more economic than political in nature. According to our data, the proportion of PoE officers among all officers employed in the region varied between 0.13 and 0.53 (Table 2).

The level of extremism among officers in a given województwo is measured using the intensity of repression during the Polish Martial Law (1981-1983). Here, we focus on the number of people convicted of political crimes following the implementation of Martial Law standardized by the number of Solidarity Trade Union members (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej 2021). The standardization ensures the capture of the intensity of punishment conditional on the level of dissent. This is a good measure of extremism, as it allows to capture the response of a local security apparatus to similar levels of opposition. While the courts and the security services were nominally separate organizations, research by Popova (2012) and McCarthy (2015) suggests that in autocracies, actions of these institutions are more rigidly aligned. Hence, higher levels of repression by courts can be used as a proxy for extremism among the local security services.

Finally, to account for the cost of running the verification commission we use population density in 1985. Województwa with a higher population density have a dense network of dissident activists, implying a higher moral sense of justice towards those who carried out repression against dissidents.

Hence, in województwa with smaller population density the commission would pay a lower cost for engaging in a scrupulous examination of individual officer files. In the tightly knit województwa with a higher population density, the easy way out was to succumb to popular demand for revenge.

## 5 Analysis

Given the above operationalization of the key variables, we can now check the model's propositions against the data.

TABLE 2: *Descriptive statistics*

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Verified negatively	49	0.4766944	0.2003923	0.0671642	0.7913043
Hours/application	35	1.371241	1.000872	0.1655172	4.132451
Protecting the economy	48	0.265018	0.0880872	0.1329114	0.5333334
Sentenced	47	38	50.78082	0	213
Security officers	49	148	94.12337	45	541
Population	49	761814	596134.1	244300	3916400
Population density	49	139.35	138.64	42.80	660.24
Repression	47	0.18	0.17	0	0.59

Below is a summary of how we operationalize the parameters of our baseline model:

- $\mu$  - the proportion of competent agents, is measured as the proportion of officers who prior to the transition worked in the Department for the Protection of the Economy
- $v$  - the cost of setting up the commission is proxied for by the population density in each województwo
- $\theta$  - probability that the agent is moderate. Conversely  $(1 - \theta)$  is the probability that the agent is extreme, which we measure using the level of repression in each województwo

We interpret the policy shock  $\epsilon$  as the uncertainty related to the regime transition and hence common for the whole country. This means that for the theoretical propositions  $\epsilon$  can be held constant and so does not enter directly our empirical analysis and does not need to be operationalized.

According to the propositions of the model, we should (1) see more selective purges where the proportion of competent agents is small (2) see more thorough purges where *either* the proportion of competent agents is high and proportion of extremists low *or* proportion of competent agents is middling and the proportion of extremists is high. Increased cost of setting up the commission measured as high population density (3) unambiguously decreases the payoff from a selective purge.

Given the tripartite nature of the choice of the democratic policy maker, the empirical theory would ideally involve a Multinomial Logit Model. However, given the low number of observations ( $N=35^6$ ), we start by analyzing the data using a simple comparison of means (Table 3).

TABLE 3: *Means of the purge type determinants*

Type of purge	$\mu$	SD( $\mu$ )	$(1 - \theta)$	SD( $1 - \theta$ )	$v$	SD( $v$ )
No	0.280	0.080	0.631	0.278	157.407	183.603
Selective	0.245	0.066	0.713	0.262	84.615	32.669
Thorough	0.252	0.109	0.633	0.275	207.029	191.114

As postulated by the model, województwa that chose a selective purge are also the ones where the level of competence ( $\mu$ ) prior to transition was the lowest. The proportion of officers belonging to the PoE was 0.24 in the selective purges województwa, as compared to 0.28 and 0.25 for no and thorough purges, respectively. Hence, selective purges were associated with a lower proportion of competent agents. The effect of the verification cost ( $v$ ) is also apparent: the areas with lowest population density, that is those where conducting thorough investigation was less costly, were also the ones that saw selective purges. Moreover, the areas that saw thorough purges are also the ones with highest density, confirming the logic behind operationalizing cost in terms of local network size.

The relationship between competence ( $\mu$ ) and extremism ( $1 - \theta$ ), and a thorough purge is non-linear hence a simple comparison of means is not sufficient to verify the implications of the model. Table 4 presents the full data on competence, cost, and extremism and the type of purge chosen in each of the 49 województwa. We can use this data to measure the type of purges that is most likely given low (below median: 0.12) extremism and high (above median: 0.24) competence to confirm the predictions of the model. This applies to seven województwa, out of which four (57%) had a thorough purge and three (42%) experienced no

<sup>6</sup> While we have data on the proportion of negatively verified officers for all województwa, not all the files included the period of operation of the verification commission

purge. Hence, in line with the theory, in settings with high competence and low extremism, a thorough purge is more likely than any other type of purge.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the dilemma facing new democracies in the aftermath of their transition to democracy. These new democratic governments must rebuild their ships while at sea, to use the words of Jon Elster et al. (1998). Specifically, we analyzed the policies of reforming and/or purging the security apparatus of the authoritarian regime. Without rigorous analysis, the answer to the question who should be fired seems obvious: the bad apples. But the meaning of “Bad” here is ambiguous. It can refer to lack of competence, but it can also mean ideologically distant from the new democratic government. In this latter case, retaining competent agents is actually detrimental to the new democracy.

Using a simple formal model, that placed familiar elements, such as the loyalty-competence dilemma, in the context of regime change, we found unique circumstances when new democracies will take the time to carefully verify their security apparatus through a process we have called a “selective purge.” We show that as long as the costs of verification are not prohibitively high, selective purges are more likely when on average former security officers are less competent. This may seem puzzling at first, but becomes clear upon deeper reflection: if few agents are competent, it may simply be worth paying the extra verification cost to find out exactly who the competent ones are.

Our theoretical findings are corroborated with preliminary analysis using data from the operation of 49 regional verification commissions in Poland in 1990. We find preliminary support for our theory, summarized in the form of comparative statics from a baseline model.

Several extensions remain to be examined in successive drafts. We conclude this version with a consideration of scope conditions.

It is worth considering the extent to which Poland’s verification commissions ar represen-

tative of screening mechanisms for former secret servicemen in the Post-Communist context. Poland shares with countries in the region the dual nature of regime change, encompassing both a transition from authoritarianism and a transition from a planned economy. What sets Poland apart from many countries in the region, however, is the very gradual process of the transition and the fact the pace of transition itself was the subject of negotiation. It is very likely that the pace factored into the price of selective purges, making careful verification simply more affordable. One could however also make the opposite argument according to which gradual transitions gave outgoing autocrats a chance to destroy incriminating personnel files of secret police officers, which would ultimately make the work of verification commissions harder. Kozłowski (2019) cites numerous sources as evidence that such destruction of archives took place in the ten month long transition period, although most of the sources point to destroying files of informers, rather than officers themselves. Taken together, this suggests that selective, as opposed to thorough or no purges, could be more expensive in countries where the transition was more abrupt, perhaps even prohibitively expensive. Even despite these caveats, the underlying problem modeled here—namely, the combination of personnel shortages with acute uncertainty concerning competence and loyalty to the former authoritarian rulers among state employees— is universal. Even transitions devoid of any negotiations whatsoever have to make personnel decisions, at least in the short term until new competent agents and bureaucrats can be trained. Universally, these new democracies need employees who can choose democratic policy in a way that will “match the true state of the world.” Hence, the implications of our theoretical model extend well beyond the Polish context.

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## 7 Appendix

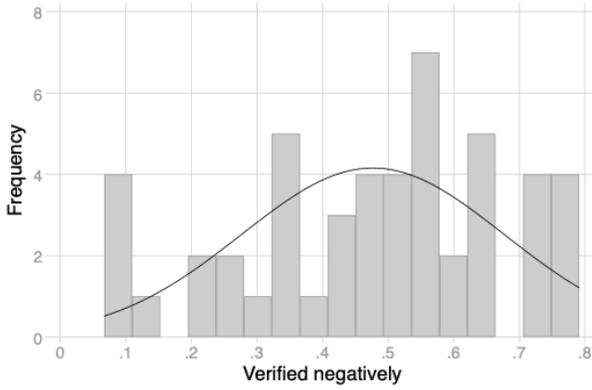
### 7.1 Full results

### 7.2 Alternative definition of purges

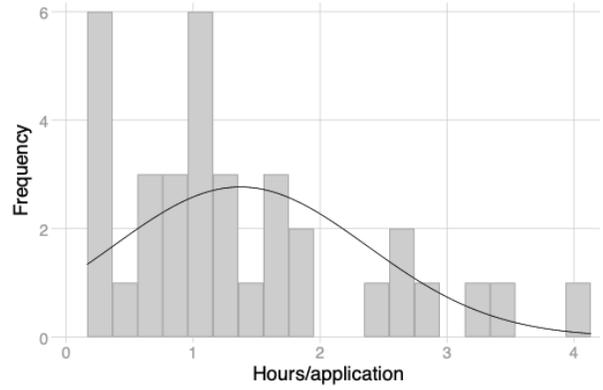
To create an alternative definition of purges, we use the distribution of the key variables to identify the high and low values of negative verification and time spent per application (Figure 5). Because such categorization of purges concentrates on more extreme cases, we are able to classify a smaller group of województwa (Figure ??)

TABLE 4: *Full results*

Województwo	Repression	Competence	Population density	Purge type
Białostockie	0.2318655	0.232	66.79264	selective
Białkopodlaskie		0.348	55.70307	selective
Bielskie	0.1111111	0.331	235.8531	thorough
Bydgoskie	0.292517	0.363	104.7251	selective
Chełmskie	0.5317106	0.366	63.19193	
Ciechanowskie	0.0119464	0.193	65.71833	selective
Częstochowskie	0.150107	0.27	124.9757	thorough
Elbląskie	0.119403	0.324	76.47059	
Gdańskie	0.3668648	0.346	189.5456	
Gorzowskie	0.3149606	0.272	56.87176	selective
Jeleniogórskie	0.0316943	0.254	117.4926	thorough
Kaliskie	0.0866667	0.223	106.941	
Katowickie	0.0908999	0.177	588.9323	thorough
Kieleckie	0.25	0.172	127.1198	
Konińskie	0.0767731	0.423	89.37537	
Kozalińskie	0.3083333	0.225	57.82763	thorough
Krakowskie	0.499984	0.278	371.6349	
Krośnieńskie	0.0390165	0.23	83.33918	
Legnickie	0.1681024	0.294	125.1672	selective
Leszczyńskie	0.0718236	0.204	90.41888	selective
Łódzkie	0.4643481	0.247	660.2362	thorough
Łomżyńskie	0.0273115	0.411	43.39651	no
Lubelskie	0.1360691	0.153	168.0065	
Nowosadeckie	0.0184887	0.142	119.6915	selective
Olsztyńskie	0.1863729	0.204	58.87077	selective
Opolskie	0.0149467		118.1019	thorough
Ostroleckie	0.1510058	0.225	59.12589	selective
Piłskie	0.135129	0.229	53.58623	
Piotrkowskie	0.0444444	0.154	101.0373	thorough
Płockie	0.5452293	0.365	100.0782	no
Poznańskie		0.326	159.2443	thorough
Przemyskie	0.027027	0.194	89.22695	selective
Radomskie	0.0074074	0.199	100.0411	no
Rzeszowskie	0.2541667	0.213	157.2208	thorough
Siedleckie	0.024724	0.242	71.33209	
Sieradzkie	0.0294118	0.224	82.41578	
Skierniewickie	0.0132073	0.533	100.8838	thorough
Słupskie	0.2	0.302	53.14639	selective
Suwalskie	0.1290323	0.478	42.80267	
Szczecińskie	0.193596	0.3	94.42998	
Tarnobrzeskie	0	0.133	92.39217	thorough
Tarnowskie	0.0705292	0.211	154.5411	selective
Toruńskie	0.3856172	0.204	119.7831	no
Wałbrzyskie	0.0259898	0.309	177.0633	no
Warszawskie	0.2637277	0.247	636.8004	no
Włocławskie	0.0777778	0.354	96.75148	no
Wrocławskie	0.5239562	0.161	177.1751	thorough
Zamojskie	0.0488586	0.228	69.89971	no
Zielonogórskie	0.5921053	0.206	72.84619	no



(A) *Proportion of officers verified negatively*



(B) *Hours spent per application*

FIGURE 5: *Histograms of the variables key for purge categorization*

Purge type	Proportion verified negatively	Hours per application	Frequency	Percent
No	<0.4	<2	8	38.10
Selective		>2	7	33.33
Thorough	>0.7	<2	6	28.57