



Feeling Political in Public Administration: French Bureaucracy between Militancy and *Sens de l'État*, 1789–2019

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Paris, 25 April 2019: French President Emmanuel Macron was about to deliver an important speech. His country was in turmoil. A rise in the tax on diesel and petrol in November 2018 had provoked a backlash among many voters, especially those coming from lower-income and rural households. The protests soon escalated, epitomizing age-old issues of trust between state élite and normal citizens. Right-wing politicians like Marine Le Pen and populists of various stripes sought to capitalize on the outrage of the *gilets jaunes*, or yellow vests, as the protest movement came to be called. The President's speech was crafted as a response to the people giving voice to a general sense of decline in citizen efficacy.¹ In the months leading up to the April speech, the French state had collected lists of grievances from around the country and hosted town hall events to hear the

¹Taylor, Nanz, and Taylor, *Reconstructing Democracy*, 4.

I would like to thank Vanda Nazzari di Calabiana Wilcox for scanning journals for me at the BNF and Amanda Maffei for taking high-resolution pictures at the Archives Nationales. Both made it possible to write such a chapter in times when travelling to Paris was not an option.

opinions of citizens who felt unable to impact the political agenda, despite suffering its economic and social consequences. How could Macron effectively respond to these feelings?

Among other things, he announced a great transformation of the French state, underlining that such a radical endeavour had to come with a ‘reform of our high civil service’.² Macron’s target was the ENA, the National School of Administration (*École Nationale d’Administration*), the primary higher education training ground for French state elites since 1945 from which he himself graduated in 2004. Was this, as the chief political columnist of the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro* conjectured, a ‘scalp offered to the *gilets jaunes*’?³ Most observers thought so. Macron acknowledged that it was unfair that a lifelong career in the civil service could be guaranteed simply by attending the ENA or another of the French higher education institutions known as *grandes écoles*: it had to be opened up to individuals coming from the private sector and the NGOs. Was this the response the French people expected? Would protesters motivated by the decline in forces of production, cuts in the number of well-paid jobs, and fiscal concerns be placated by what may have sounded like another step towards the privatization of the public sector? Why did one of the oldest democracies in the world choose this path to face the highly emotional political fatigue of its citizens? What does this tell us about the French concept of bureaucracy and its relationship to both state and citizenry?

This chapter will illustrate that in order to be considered functional, this relationship required specific emotional performances. It was the French Revolution that paved the way for such an understanding of public engagement by civil servants. Building on the sense of community and participation inherent in the concept of nation, revolutionary institutions laid claim to the hearts of their employees.⁴ Whereas *Ancien Régime* monarchies demanded superficial obedience from courtiers and the personnel of an administrative bureau, according to the revolutionary élites of 1789, the ‘regeneration’ of the political system started in the offices of the public sector.⁵ This is how bureaucracy became one of the main agencies regulating the relationship between individual and the state.

Such a political undertaking did find its critics, though, both during and after the Revolution. The attention given to the role of public

² Macron, ‘Conférence de presse’.

³ Tabard, ‘ENA’.

⁴ On the model of militancy, see Buscemi, ‘Importance of Being Revolutionary’.

⁵ Ozouf, *Homme régénéré*.

administration over the course of the nineteenth century attests to the existence in modern France of two colliding conceptions of the relationship between political power and bureaucracy, embodied in the notion of the civil servant. On the one hand, there is the traditional understanding of civil servant as a real *servant*, subject to the chain of command and loyal only to direct superiors; on the other, there is the notion of the civil servant as *fonctionnaire*, a citizen who embodies the values of the Republic and whose work is offered up to the altar of public good. The French Revolution tried to impose the latter model on all citizens in state employ. This included even the king, who was seen merely as the first public servant (*premier fonctionnaire public*). As this chapter will show, the contention over the core principles that were to found the *res publica* was also defined by the various emotions that civil servants have been expected to feel over the course of French modern history.

Were feelings the key to acquiring the status of civil servant?⁶ Which feelings in particular? What practices embodied the emotions employees had to feel in order to declare themselves good servants of the state? How were they trained to feel as they were supposed to feel? Is what French people call ‘sense of the state’ (*sens de l’État*) an emotional state? In tackling these questions, three historical moments have been chosen for closer examination: first, the politicization of the apparatus of the state during the years 1789–1799; second, the failed attempt to re-orientate this system after the revolution of 1848; and third, the foundation of the ENA in 1945 and its pursuit of balancing managerial efficiency with emotional templating for the civil servant. In each of these moments, the regime in question faced several obstacles in engineering the emotions of their bureaucrats. In all cases, civil servants had to negotiate a balance between their emotional templating, their own needs, and the historical context.

BUREAUCRATIZING MILITANCY: THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY NATION AND THE OATHS OF THE *FONCTIONNAIRES CIVIQUES* (1789–1799)

How could a system based on flattery work for the public good? It was through attributing an excess of dissimulation to the *Ancien Régime* that the French revolutionaries in 1789 built a model of loyalty for civil

⁶For similar perspectives being opened in the larger field of administrative history, see the articles in Collin, Garot, and de Groot ‘Bureaucracy and Emotions’.

servants based on transparency. The emotions of the *fonctionnaires* did not need to be hidden. On the contrary, they were supposed to be the motor driving their actions, the very reason they held such a position in the first place.

This new model of ‘serving’ the country owed a lot to late eighteenth-century sentimentalism. A certain understanding of natural sincerity as ‘emotional excess’ was nurtured in the socially prescribed roles men and women were expected to thrust themselves into.⁷ The oaths that all citizens holding a public office or receiving a salary from the state had to take responded to the same logic. Even before the Revolution, public officers had to swear their loyalty, yet the way their oaths were formulated was entirely different. In most cases, people were only asked to assure that they would obey laws and respect regulations, passively. Swearing loyalty simply meant to formally declare allegiance to the crown. Actual feelings were not at stake. In the rare cases where a check on morality was deemed necessary, the candidate for a certain position could ask his parish priest for a letter testifying ‘his Catholicity, his probity, his good life and his mores’.⁸

That would not be enough for the French revolutionaries. Their plan to regenerate the state by mobilizing the nation entailed an emotional connection between democratic institutions and the sovereign people. Making all civil servants swear a specifically formulated oath was one of the ways to build that bond. When taking an oath, people first give a definition of themselves: they declare that they are the people described in the formula. This section will show how the practice of oath-taking emotionally templated the ethos of the ideal servant of the public as the French revolutionaries saw it.

Oath-taking enabled the standardization of a new ethos for civil servants. The more radical the revolutionaries became, the more frequent the decrees extending oath-taking were. By the end of Autumn 1790 all sectors of the administration were to swear to ‘maintain the Constitution with all their power, to be faithful (*fidèles*) to the nation, to the law and to

⁷On the ‘escalation of emotional expression’ in those years, see Reddy, ‘Sentimentalism’. The ‘regeneration’ of the administration is one episode in which the French state’s obsession with transparency and self-definition is more obvious. It is also one in which Reddy’s model reveals more ripples: can the standard wording used in political oaths be considered an ‘emotive’? For a general review of some approaches to the history of emotions in the field of the French Revolution, see Rosenfeld, ‘Thinking about Feeling’.

⁸‘Arrêt de réglemant du parlement’, 167.

the king, and to perform the duties of their job well'.⁹ The promise to maintain the constitution went beyond obedience and respect. It meant readiness to fight to keep it. The demand for active engagement departed from the tradition of passive obedience. The constitutional act of September 1791 officially and definitively established the role of the civic oath in the institutions of the kingdom: it framed the body of public administration, binding all employees of every order and rank to the same political faith (§ II, sec. IV, art. 3).

Its organization was not, however, peaceful: on several occasions, the Assembly and the government had to ask the local administrations for evidence of the oath's correct performance by the kingdom's civil servants—particularly in times of high political tension.¹⁰ The effect of these ministerial initiatives was twofold: to force thousands of citizens in the provinces to take a stand towards the revolution and to bureaucratize the revolutionary militancy by encouraging all citizens to give material proof of their political commitment. Reports from local governments began to arrive at the ministry of the interior in Paris, one of the main bodies the national authorities had for assessing the public mood (*esprit public*) in the provinces.¹¹ Using these reports, it is possible to trace the practical ways in which employees took the oath in this context: a superior would solemnly read the wording of the oath and each prospective employee would then answer 'I swear it'. Sometimes, it seems, they were asked to affirm the oath with their signature. This left an even more physical trace of their emotional commitment and thus increased the individual's sense of public responsibility, which was the main objective of the civic oath (Fig. 2.1).

It is not only bundle of oath reports that fill these files of the National Archives. To attest to a citizen's political credentials, various agencies also issued certificates of good civic-mindedness (*civisme*). These documents could be mass-produced by the sections, the subdivisions of revolutionary Paris, and then filled in by adding the personal information of the individual concerned. This was another way the required political ethos in the regenerated state was bureaucratized. The one issued by the Luxembourg

⁹'Suite des articles fur les Municipalités', 177; 'Teneur du Décret portant conflitution des Municipalités', 205.

¹⁰'Décret relative aux circonscriptions de paroisses'.

¹¹'Ministère de l'Intérieur, Esprit public, Prestation de serments', F/1CIII/Seine/22, Archives Nationales de France (hereafter AN).



Fig. 2.1 Example of *strings* of written oaths sent to the Central Administration, Paris, Archives Nationales, F/1CIII/Seine/22. (Photo by Amanda Maffei, courtesy of Archives Nationales)

Section, dated 31 March 1792, and sent in by an employee was particularly sophisticated (Fig. 2.2).

Its iconographic paratext referred to the symbolism of the revolutionary oath. On the right side, a uniformed figure performs the ritual pose of the oath, his arm outstretched towards the symbols of the nation at the centre of the document. Below this figure is the text of oath taken on the day of the Federation (14 July 1790). On the left side, a representation of the altar of the Fatherland built for that occasion bears a motto synthesizing the dedication expected from a member of the National Guard: ‘Only the Fatherland or the Law / can arm us; / Let us die to defend it, / and live to love it’. Being a citizen also meant bearing arms, as stipulated in the legal definition of ‘active citizens’. The common reference to the militancy of civil servants was not just a metaphor. The fact that an employee felt the need to justify his political credentials by sending proof of his affiliation to the National Guard is significant. Sometimes the certificate was presented to prove that the same oath had been taken before or as an assurance of



Fig. 2.2 Certificate of affiliation to the National Guard, Département de Paris, arrondissement ‘des Carmes’, 31 March 1792, Paris, Archives Nationales, F/1CIII/Seine/22. (Photo by Amanda Maffei, courtesy of Archives Nationales)

one’s ‘political conduct’. For these *fonctionnaires*, their militancy as armed citizens and their commitment as civil servants had to be represented as inextricable.¹²

On 10 August 1792, the night the monarchy fell, the Assembly agreed upon new wording for the civic oath. All employees in the state administration were asked to take the oath again as a demonstration of their commitment to the new situation: ‘I swear to be faithful to the Nation, to maintain with all my power Liberty and Equality or to die defending them.’ This oath marked the foundation of the Republic. The central government had to make sure all the public employees in the provinces were following the revolutionary elites in Paris in this direction. Templating the

¹² *Ibid.*

emotions of the civil servants became a way for the central authorities to overcome the anxiety of those hectic days. The collection of minutes recording oaths taken and certificates of citizenship became systematic.

To fight for Liberty and Equality or to die defending them: we should not dismiss this oath as a grandiloquent formula that made sense only inside the hall of the Legislative Assembly. The words really mattered, at least to some of the people who took that oath. Nicolas-Joseph Beaurepaire, who was in charge of the defence of Verdun against the forces of the First Coalition, the military alliance set against revolutionary France, took them quite literally. Instead of surrendering to the enemy, as he was asked to do by large parts of the population and the local town *fonctionnaires*, he committed suicide on the night of 2 September 1792. The Legislative Assembly in Paris tried very quickly to make an example of him, in order to shame civil servants who were not quite ready to face the extreme consequences of their commitment to the cause of the Revolution. As the text below this popular print reported, Beaurepaire ‘gave his life at Verdun in the presence of public servants, cowards, and perjurers, who wanted to abandon to the enemy the post entrusted to their courage’. The horror in their faces was meant to convey their distance from the model of civic virtue represented by Beaurepaire (Fig. 2.3).

Even after Thermidor, the end of the Terror in 1794, the oath marked the encounter between the institutional life of the French administration and symbolic representations of the political order. Oath-taking ceremonies, where employees gathered to collectively swear their faith to the nation, offered an occasion for particularly emphatic speeches that helped give meaning to the experience and popularize the rhetoric of devotion to the homeland. By swearing the newly formulated oath, or by attending the oath-taking ceremonies of local officials, people in the provinces learnt about the new ideology of the Republic in a way that was more direct than the grandiose declarations of public edicts.

According to the law decreed by the Directory on 12 January 1796—22 *Nivôse*, year IV in the Republican calendar—all municipalities, all land and sea armies, and all local administrations, judges, and notaries would have ideally gathered at noon nine days later to swear the same oath that was being simultaneously sworn in Paris by members of the two legislative councils and the representatives of the executive power. Oath-takers were required to declare hatred for the monarchy and love for the Republic and the Constitution.¹³ The date for the ceremony had not been randomly

¹³ ‘Séance du 16 nivôse an IV’, in *Réimpression de l’ancien Moniteur*, 184.



Fig. 2.3 Detail of *Trait sublime de courage et de dévouement*, etching by Villeneuve, Paris, 1792. (Courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, <http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb402538196>)

chosen: 21 January was the anniversary of the execution of Louis XVI. This visual display of faithfulness by employees of the administration and national representatives was designed to test their loyalty to the new regime. A state apparatus threatened by subversion, monarchist plots, and disruptive convulsions on the radical left needed to appear stable: ‘everything must present the image of concord and the reunion of all minds.’¹⁴

The minutes of the oath-taking ceremonies were detailed. Besides the names of oath-takers, they recorded whether the formula was recited individually by each employee or the assembly responded in unison with ‘I swear it’, whether the wording was altered in any way, whether music was

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

performed during or after the ceremony, and whether the oath was taken in front of the main church, as it was usually done. Most importantly, those who were in charge of writing the report knew the authorities in Paris expected to read about the emotions of the newly sworn civil servants.¹⁵

The fact that the authorities insisted on such precise information about the ceremonies illustrates how important it was that the ideology of the state be imparted in the presence of its citizenry. Even those who for whatever reason could not be present on 21 January 1796 had to take their oaths in public on some other date, for as one official stated, ‘it is only right not to deprive any of them the opportunity to show on this great occasion the feelings that must animate them.’¹⁶ There was an ambivalence here: eliciting allegiance to the citizenry paved the way for possible conflicts with the state, if civil servants were committed to always act in the best interests of their peers. The sentimental language of the French Revolution made it possible for many bureaucrats to go against the institutions they worked within, if by doing so they felt more loyal to the political emotions they had sworn for.

These militant feelings were embedded in the ceremonies of 21 January. The citizens of Charenton-le-Pont who went to see their local *fonctionnaires* take the oath, for instance, listened to several speeches ‘whose goal was to inspire in all listeners love for the Fatherland, respect for its laws and hatred for the tyrants, and above all to electrify the souls of all the spectators’.¹⁷ Those taking the oath were the main characters in these patriotic shows, but it was the presence of the wider citizenry that made their oath meaningful. It extended the individual commitment of civil servants to a public one, something they could be confronted with in the future by their fellow citizens. And they were: every person who took the oath during the revolutionary years was ultimately forced to reckon with it.¹⁸

Those who refused to take the oath were acutely aware of that risk. The trails they left in the archival records suggest that oath-taking was not merely an empty ritual to soothe the paranoia of the revolutionary elites.

¹⁵ fasc. 1, BB1 14, AN.

¹⁶ ‘Ministère de l’Intérieur, Esprit public, Prestation de serments’, FIC III 23, AN.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ On the history of the accusation of being a *girouette*—one who betrayed promises or quickly changed allegiances—see Serna, *République des girouettes*.

In the Section *de l'Ouest*, for example, the report recorded the opinion of the citizen Derey, who 'declared that he would always be attached to the Republic, and that he did not know hatred and did not want to know it'. In the canton of Nanterre someone 'refused to take his oath, declaring that he could not vow hatred to anyone'.¹⁹ By refusing to take the oath with the standard formula, these civil servants were negotiating their emotional self with the authorities: they were ready to declare themselves good citizens, but did not consider hatred a legitimate emotion.²⁰ Others tried to adapt the wording of the oath to their own position, such as citizen Richard, a teacher, who clarified that 'with his oath he promises and commits himself in full submission to the law and constituted authorities, to maintain the constitution' for his whole life and to inspire the same feeling (*sentiment*) in the pupils entrusted to him.²¹ Despite the use of the expression 'submission to the law' (*soumission aux lois*), which was usually considered insufficient, the authorities seemed to accept his formulation, probably thanks to his reference to the sentimental nature of his commitment.²² The institutional templating of civil servants' emotions, in the case of Richard, could be tailored to his own emotional and ideological needs.

Many historians have depicted the politicization of state bureaucracy during the French Revolution through the lens of coercion. After all, weren't all these oaths only taken under the threat of losing one's job in a time of political and social mayhem?²³ To be sure, revolutionary elites sought to use these practices to control and police civil servants. At the same time, we should take these symbols seriously and try to grasp their effects among the citizenry. We should make the effort to imagine the impressive displays of national unity these ceremonies provided: dignitaries giving speeches, patriotic songs and music, flags, 'liberty trees', uniforms, cockades, and the newly minted civil servants promising to serve

¹⁹ 'Ministère de l'Intérieur, Esprit public, Prestation de serments', FIC III 23, AN.

²⁰ Many pamphlets debated the legitimacy of 'hatred' as a political feeling in order to respond to such resistance. See *Éclaircissements*.

²¹ fasc. 3, BB1 14, AN.

²² Other employees and public officials were not so lucky and were told that their oath 'does not conform to the wording required by the Executive Board Order'.

²³ After March 1796, losing one's job was not the only punishment. Those who refused to take the oath were deported. See 'Archives des Assemblées', C 485, AN; 'Séance du 18 ventôse', in *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, 655.

their community in front of their families, friends, and acquaintances.²⁴ It was the image of a nation building a connection between its institutions and citizens with emotions as the connective element. Whether or not these public employees were actually in love with the cause of the Revolution, they certainly needed to appear so.

UNSETTLING THE FEELING RULES OF BUREAUCRACY:
CARNOT'S *ÉCOLE D'ADMINISTRATION* AND THE UNIONISM
OF CIVIL SERVANTS (1848)

What happened to men enrolled in the civil service after the French Revolution? In the Napoleonic years, the more complex the organization of government became, the more bloated the administration. Sudden regime changes and a general feeling of precarity did make it more difficult for institutions to keep these public workers politically mobilized. A minister could fire employees at his sole discretion. Still, after the Restoration, many conservatives considered them a potential threat to the stability of the state: some of the civil servants might have developed an awareness that they belonged to a group imbued with values that went beyond the framework of professional ethics and entered the more intimate sphere of human experience, that of citizens' individual affections. This was another field in which revolutionaries democratized the link between honour and merit, although most of the high-ranking positions remained venal, if not hereditary.²⁵

How could a new regime make sure that the emotional allegiance of the *fonctionnaires* was directed towards the state, rather than the citizens that they were expected to represent according to democratic ideology? Such fears had been a problem for the restored Bourbon monarchy. When discussing the budget act for 1817, several members of the Chamber of Deputies confronted the massive bureaucratic apparatus inherited by the Revolution. As the Viscount of Castelbajac put it, the restored monarchy

²⁴ Such a display of national unity was not exceptional. It had become more and more ritualized after the Federation festivals of 1790. For some insights on the local reception of these rituals, see Bell, *Cult of the Nation*, 169–71.

²⁵ On the democratization of honour, see Reddy, *Invisible Code*, 10; on the gendered nature of honour in France, see also Nye, *Masculinity*. On the venal nature of public office in the early nineteenth century, see Charle, *Hauts fonctionnaires*; Reddy, 'Mériter votre bienveillance'.

needed to ‘destroy this bureaucracy, the beloved child (*enfant chéri*) of the Revolution devouring the substance of the State; similar to those poisonous plants that dry out the tree to which they are attached’.²⁶ The liberal regime after the revolution of 1830 did not have a better relationship with its bureaucracy. The crisis of the July Monarchy ran parallel to the crisis of its administration. Several voices intervened from different sides of the political spectrum, from Adolphe Thiers and Honoré de Balzac to Alexis de Tocqueville and Alexandre-François Vivien.²⁷ More than its inefficiency, the main problem of the administration derived from its shaky political foundations. Many legitimists felt ill at ease with a government built on militant bureaucracy, not simply because they feared that civil servants’ ties with the previous regimes were too strong. At stake was the ideological construction of the state. Balzac, a legitimist who was quite nostalgic of the societal order of the Bourbon Restoration, did not see any benefit in a system that conceived its power as a bureaucratic force. The status and pride of civil servants holding public positions undermined the principle of authority that he understood to be the essence of politics: ‘to serve the State no longer means to serve the prince, who knew how to punish and how to reward! Today, the State is everybody To serve everybody means to serve nobody.’²⁸

By dismantling the moral principles of bureaucracy, Balzac was attacking the entire political system. With his humorous and merciless descriptions of the world of the *fonctionnaires*, he held up for ridicule the assumptions about civil service that governed society after the French Revolution and the July Revolution of 1830. At the same time, while legitimists rejected the militant model of 1789, liberal thinkers and left activists attempted to re-orientate the template towards their distinct political goals. All groups seemed to be aware of the necessity to offer an alternative vision for the civil service, in order to conquer political hegemony. The so-called administrative illness (*malaise administrative*) was a mixture of lack of purpose and institutional corruption. Among the social

²⁶ ‘Chambre des députés, 4 February 1817’, in *Archives Parlementaires*, 543.

²⁷ The *Revue des deux mondes* published a series of articles by Vivien, a future conservative minister close to Thiers and usually considered one of the fathers of French administrative science. A re-elaboration of those articles was published as *Études administratives* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1845).

²⁸ Balzac, *Physiologie de l’employé*, 30.

tensions that triggered the revolution of 1848 was a sense that the system prevented new men from being hired or making a career in the administration.²⁹

The very short space of freedom opened up by the revolution in 1848 saw a confrontation between two different groups of bureaucrats, or aspiring ones, with two different conceptions of civil service. The first group was composed of the public employees of France, especially those belonging to the lowest sectors of the administration. For these people, working for the state was a personal question. It represented their aspiration to acquire a dignified status in society and gain the most important capital in the world they lived in: honour.³⁰ They were keen to emphasize the political stakes of their work and use their position within the administration to push the socialist agenda of the revolution. Most of these bureaucrats did not repudiate the intense politicization in the years following 1789. Despite Balzac's mocking tones, there were civil servants who did more than just get by. Considering that 5.1 per cent of the insurgents in the Revolution of July 1830 were clerks, and 7.23 per cent in the February Revolution of 1848, one cannot easily dismiss the workers of the public sector as salary grabbers lacking any morality.³¹ During the revolution of 1848, they would also evoke their political engagement to push the agenda of their union associations, their journals, and magazines.³²

On the other side of the political spectrum were the liberal elites. When Hippolyte Carnot was made Minister of Public Instruction in the provisional government following the revolution of 1848, they seized an opportunity. He followed the wave of debates on the reform of the administration in the 1830s and 1840s, when politicians, intellectuals, and high-ranking *fonctionnaires* had asked to open a competition for the hiring of new civil servants on the basis of talent, not their political associations. These interventions were a direct attack on the corruption of the July

²⁹ See Charle, *Histoire sociale*.

³⁰ Reddy, *Invisible Code*, 117. See the example of Eudier, who was an assistant in a pharmacy when he met his future wife, a seamstress. After becoming a ministry employee as a copyist (*expédientaire*), however, 'his pride made him blush' at his wedding. Since honour was a key driving force for men and women in the nineteenth century, we can see how high the emotional stakes were around getting a public position, even such a humble one as that taken by Eudier.

³¹ Pinkney, 'Crowd'; Traugott, 'Crowd', 650.

³² Such as *Le Moniteur des Postes*, *La Tribune des Employés*, *La Réforme Administrative*, *L'Éco des Employés*. See Thuillier, 'Aux origines'.

Monarchy bureaucracy, and those supporting the cause of reform were now in power. On 8 March 1848, the provisional government decreed the establishment of a School of Administration (*École d'Administration*). Carnot imagined it as a 'special incubator' of educated men: 'Popular political education is the natural foundation of republican institutions.'³³ This boys' club—women in the civil service were only confined to a few teaching positions in elementary schools—would be shaped by meritocracy.

The subjects the students had to study were mostly related to law and economy, but history, philosophy, literature, and hard sciences were also included in the curriculum. In the wording of those in charge of the project, these subjects were all necessary to deliver a 'political education'.³⁴ This education had to be more than technical and reflect the new constitutional order: 'From the moment that the nation regains possession of itself in order to conduct itself by its own sovereignty, it is of the utmost necessity that the study of the high sciences of government be instituted in its bosom in the widest and most efficient manner.'³⁵ The emotions of students and their human formation were never mentioned.

When the school finally opened its doors to the first cohort of students in July 1848, its organization was strictly regulated.³⁶ Lessons ran from 8 a.m. until 9.30 p.m., with a break between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. Students ate in the courtyard and were not allowed for any reason to have a meal outside school premises, located within the Collège de France. Every written note could be scrutinized by their professors. During breaks, they were not to make too much noise and should avoid smoking, even in the courtyard; in the eyes of the school board, it was 'a habit that is rather inappropriate for the functions they might one day have'. More generally, the regulations emphasized that the board would 'attach the greatest

³³ Carnot, 'Mémorial de 1848', 243 (note written in April).

³⁴ See the report written by Reynaud and presented to the provisional government by Carnot on 7 April 1848: Carnot, 'Rapport du ministre', 8. In another report of the commission, comparative 'Republican Law' was added to the curriculum.

³⁵ Carnot, 'Rapport du ministre', 8.

³⁶ The school only operated from 8 July 1848 to 19 October 1848 and from 19 May 1849 to 9 August 1849, due to lack of support by the new government. The regulations of the school can be found in 'Extrait des règlements généraux de l'École d'Administration', C 921, AN, available in the appendix of Thuillier, *E.N.A.*, 268–73.

importance to qualities it regards as an indispensable complement to the capacity for the exercise of public functions'.³⁷

At first glance, the only concern of the school's management seems to have been the decorum of prospective civil servants. One might be tempted to say that the school was thereby repressing individual character in its pupils. If we consider the role of 'active silence' in nineteenth-century pedagogy, however, we should instead allow for the possibility that such rules were meant to instil a certain capacity for emotional, as well as vocal and mental/moral, control.³⁸ Being able to regulate one's own bodily performances was a sign of strength and focus, similar to what occurred in theatres after the foundation of modern spectatorship. This possible value of active silence seems even more plausible if we look at the self-regulations the students gave themselves, which followed the same disciplinary framework. All the students seemed to care about was a model of behaviour that protected the 'dignity of the School'. The official regulations on 'Discipline outside the School' are revealing:

Art. 8—Whenever students leave the School, they should avoid, within a sufficient radius around the School, any group, lively discussion or improper action that could be attributed to the School as a whole.

Art. 9—All students in uniform shall behave in accordance with the idea that the public will judge the whole School by their conduct and deeds. ...

Art. 12—It is forbidden for any pupil to disclose to the public, without the permission of the School, anything relating to internal decisions or facts, unless it is a personal matter.

Art. 13—In the meeting place designated by the School, students will be required in the public rooms to maintain by their conduct the dignity of the School.³⁹

³⁷ Thuillier, *E.N.A.*, 271.

³⁸ See Hoegarts, 'Silence', 519. Among other things, Hoegarts documents the frequency of such practices and the popularity of these views even at the Collège de France, where the lessons of the *École d'Administration* took place. Albert Lemoine has described this silence as more than the 'absence' of cries: 'the active suppression of sound, "imposing" silence, underscores the active nature of this silence, and hints at its entanglement with identities defined by age and gender as well This silence is ultimately a political one—one that articulates power in different social settings' (Hoegarts, 'Silence', 519)

³⁹ 'Projet de règlement discuté et adopté dans le conseil des délégués', 8 August 1848, quoted after Thuillier, *E.N.A.*, 279–83. This was a document negotiated by the students in different assemblies.

By all appearances, these regulations were meant to impress upon the students the importance of having a sense of decorum and pride—a *sens de l'État*, a feeling for the state, a concept difficult to translate into many modern languages. The obsession with the inner lives of civil servants during the French Revolution was one source for this tendency towards self-affirmation, characteristic of a century often described as having rewarded individual initiative over communality.⁴⁰ In the culture of the Restoration, the process of self-affirmation came with an awareness of its dangers: weren't the political passions of 1789 driven by individualistic ambitions? What was being hidden behind an oath if not the attempt to put the self in the foreground of politics? If being a militant civil servant began with the utterance of a sentence in the first person, 'I swear', the post-1848 state now needed methods to contain individualities. These men seemed to belong to those who in the nineteenth century did not allow themselves to gush with political enthusiasm.⁴¹ What seemed legitimate during the revolution of 1789, in the age of sentimentalism, could now be deemed inappropriate—at least for these liberals who were about to dedicate their lives to public affairs. Wrestling at the same time with their ambition and the fear of being considered too prone to their own proclivities, these men knew they had to self-efface themselves in order to shine. A modest demeanour was the new standard for the civil servant.⁴² How much this depended on the bourgeois origin of the students and how much on their training as *fonctionnaires* is hard to say. What is certain is that these students were already trying to don the clothes of what they considered the ideal, respectable, civil servant.

With Louis-Napoléon becoming president of the Republic, the school was doomed. The new Minister of Public Instruction, Alfred de Falloux, was a royalist with clear ideas about the role of political institutions in templating the characters of the people. He had an ambition to end the education system created after the Revolution and Napoleonic years, which was centred on the state initiative. Judging that state-trained subjects had more opportunities to develop republican and subversive ideas, the new minister let the Catholic Church take a leading role. It is no surprise that Falloux opposed Carnot's project from the beginning. One of his first acts as minister in January 1849 was to dismiss all the professors

⁴⁰ Goldstein, *Post-Revolutionary Self*; Gay, *Naked Heart*.

⁴¹ Legoy, 'Enthousiasme de l'adhésion'.

⁴² Gerson, 'Modest Men', 189.

appointed to teach the aspiring civil servants. The students tried to put pressure on several members of parliament and for several months they animated the public debate with their interventions. The victory in the spring of the right-wing coalition calling itself the ‘Party of Order’ led to the dismantling of every radical initiative taken during the first months of the Revolution, including the foundation of the school. In August 1849 the school was officially closed.⁴³

The conservative government was not the only enemy of the *École d’Administration*, however. Even the existing class of *fonctionnaires* was hostile to the project. Their newspapers ran articles criticizing what they considered an attack on their professional entitlements.⁴⁴ Civil servants’ unions were afraid this new generation of bureaucrats would form an administrative aristocracy: graduates of the School of Administration would acquire the status of *fonctionnaires* immediately, bypassing all the traditional career hurdles, without having to work their way up from the lowly position of ‘copyist’ (*expéditionnaire*).

It was not only the defence of privileges or career perspectives that motivated these bureaucrats. Their interventions revealed a sense of entitlement based on their constitutional value. They advocated for union rights, but they also claimed that civil servants acted as intermediaries between citizens and governments. This was the main political argument of the emerging associations of bureaucrats, such as the *Association fraternelle des bureaucrates*, founded in March 1848. The newspaper *La Tribune des Employés* campaigned for its subscribers to be accepted into the National Guard for precisely this reason and in the name of equality. This demand evoked the revolutionary militancy of 1789–1799:

Up to now the class of employees could have been compared to a machine that operates regularly from such and such an hour to such and such a time, to an automaton, to a body acting without movement being communicated to it by the soul. It is time for it to claim its rightful place in the social order and prove that it is the indispensable resource between the legislative and executive powers.⁴⁵

The letters sent to the newspaper echoed this sense of revolutionary hope and the expectation for a political showdown with the elites of the French

⁴³ Wright, ‘Ecole nationale d’administration’.

⁴⁴ *Tribune des employés*, no. 3 (17 April 1848), 19.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

bureaucracy.⁴⁶ The class struggle took often an emotional twist in the rhetoric of *La Tribune*. Writing against high-ranking *fonctionnaires* accumulating multiple roles while ‘administrative workers’ (*ouvriers*)⁴⁷ earned too little, its editors described civil service as a social duty to which men are called to devote themselves for their entire life. How could anyone dedicate their existence to more than one job?⁴⁸ Letters from employees to this and other union newspapers expressed the hope that the ‘administrative regeneration’ ignited by the February Revolution would solve these inequities once and for all, or would at least hasten the removal of civil servants who were not sufficiently republican.⁴⁹ These men did not see their social redemption. The conservative turn of the Revolution saw their newspapers closed down and constraints on the political freedom they advocated until May 1848.⁵⁰

In the following decades the situation seemed to improve for their liberal opponents. Organized under the umbrella of their Alumni Association, they met every year with Carnot and other politicians and lobbied for their own rights.⁵¹ These people mobilized their cultural and social capital towards a model of civil service that had much more to do with class pride than political militancy. Their emotional labour was focused on acquiring the appropriate decorum, an embedded *sens de l'État*. The civil servant's uniform they aspired to don was more like a suit of armour: it made them shine and they could feel proud because of it, but it also concealed their most intimate feelings. As Vivien, one of the ideologists of administrative reform, put it:

The civil servant cannot engage in hostility against the political regime consecrated by the constitution; he would be violating his most sacred commitments. ... However, this doctrine can only be applied in the case of external manifestations. To seek out the feelings (*sentiments*) that the public servant holds in his heart would be an odious inquisition, and to use them as a

⁴⁶ See *Tribune des employés*, no. 5 (8 May 1848), 40.

⁴⁷ *Réforme administrative*, no. 2 (18 May 1848), 2.

⁴⁸ ‘Du cumul’, *Tribune des employés*, no. 4 (24 April 1848), 30.

⁴⁹ See the letters in *Réforme administrative*, no. 3 (25 May 1848), 4; no. 5 (8 June 1848), 3.

⁵⁰ ‘An employee who is too loyal to contain the expression of his feelings is regarded as a *brouillon* by his bosses’; ‘Indépendance politique des employés’, *Tribune des employés*, no. 5 (8 May 1848), 33.

⁵¹ Machin and Wright, ‘Élèves’. In one speech in 1858, Carnot said that the School was founded in order to respond to ‘democratic feelings’.

weapon against him would be a measure of tyranny. While passionate governments (*gouvernements passionnés*) have sometimes dared to do so, the conscience of honest people has protested against such violence.⁵²

Which one of these possible futures for the French bureaucracy would win the battle over the emotional template of civil service?

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE *SENS DE L'ÉTAT*: THE BIRTH OF THE ENA (1945)

In 1870 the abolition of the political oath (*serment politique*) that had been required of all civil servants since the French Revolution could have potentially led to the depoliticization of the state administration, a goal of many conservatives during the nineteenth century. Only Vichy dared to reintroduce an oath for *fonctionnaires*, judges, and all the members of the bureaucracy.⁵³ Does this mean that being a civil servant has been just an ordinary job since the Third Republic? Not necessarily, if one considers the purges in the public sector after the victory of the republican left in 1879.⁵⁴

Nonetheless, the foundation of the ENA certainly constituted an important step towards the professionalization of civil service. The new *École Nationale d'Administration* itself owed a lot to the consolidation of 'administrative science' as a discipline in the first half of the twentieth century. It was due to the strong support for these ventures by Charles de Gaulle that the ENA took a central role in post-war France. De Gaulle entrusted the task of administrative reform to Michel Debré, who single-handedly drafted the ENA project.⁵⁵ Although the school celebrated its centenary in 1948, thereby claiming an ideological and emotional connection to the *École d'Administration* founded 100 years earlier by Carnot, Debré had something quite different in mind.⁵⁶ The result was a compromise between the revolutionary approach to the formation of bureaucracy and the more scholarly focus of the 1848 school modelled on the *grandes*

⁵²Vivien, *Études administratives*, 250–51.

⁵³Sansico, *Justice désbonorée*, 221–22.

⁵⁴Wright, 'Épuration du Conseil d'État'; Gerbod et al., *Épurations administratives*.

⁵⁵Debré, one of the fathers of the constitution of the Fifth Republic, would also become prime minister with de Gaulle's return to power in 1958.

⁵⁶'Vie de l'école: Centenaire de l'école, 1848–1948: Documentation', 19790447/120, Archives ENA, AN.

écoles (*École Polytechnique* and the *École Normale*). From the latter tradition, the ENA adopted selection by exam and awarding graduates with the status of *fonctionnaires*. Yet its strong connection with the political establishment and a certain attention to the morality and personality of students was a legacy of the revolutionary approach. The School was attached directly to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. It was also the first *grande école* to admit women, which occurred in the same year they were given the vote, although female students remained a minority until recent years. Debré wanted candidates to be certain of their vocation as civil servants and to have already developed an independent personality. That meant students at the very beginning of their higher education were not admitted to the entrance exam, as was the case with the *École Normale* and the *École Polytechnique*. In his report of 1946, Debré was quite explicit that:

The training—one need not hide it—also has a moral objective. It is not a mission of the School to play politics or impose a particular doctrine. But the School must also teach its future civil servants a feeling for the state (*sens de l'État*), it must make them understand the responsibilities of the Administration, make them taste the grandeur and accept the servitudes of the profession (*metier*).⁵⁷

This was to be achieved through ‘a constant effort on the part of its best teachers’:

by evoking the great men of history, it [the School] must give its pupils a taste of some of its most important qualities: the sense of humanity which infuses life into all work, the sense of decisiveness which, after weighing up the risks, allows pupils to act, the sense of imagination which fears no boldness, no greatness.⁵⁸

The mission of the ENA was above all else a moral mission. How could the school nurture the morality of students? Imitation seems to have been the path chosen: imitation of the past, in line with the cult of great men that had nourished French nation-building since the eighteenth century, and imitation of those already working as civil servants.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Debré, *Réforme*, 14. Cf. Suleiman, *Elites*, 41.

⁵⁸ Debré, *Réforme*, 25.

⁵⁹ On the cult of great men, see Bonnet, *Naissance du Panthéon*.

References to great men of the past were everywhere in the ENA. On 23 October 1947, the School's Director sent a letter to every ministry and to the deputy general secretary of the General Federation of Civil Servants (*Fédération Générale des Fonctionnaires*). The students of the ENA had asked that every room of the institution be named after a civil servant who fought and fell in the Resistance or in the Liberation Army: 'the dream would be to have at least one fallen *fonctionnaire* to represent every career path the School prepares its students for.'⁶⁰ Students needed to see and be guided by these examples every day, the Director stressed in his letter. On a similar note, every year the committee overseeing the flame of remembrance at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe (*Comité de la Flamme*), which represented several veterans' associations, asked that a delegation of ENA students take charge of the ritual ceremony to rekindle the flame.⁶¹

These symbolic elements in the life of the ENA did not have a top-down dynamic. The individual personalities of students mattered in their selection, but they were also required to think of themselves as part of a generation, to feel that they were torchbearers within a community. Each annual cohort was encouraged to find a group name in assemblies. The *Archives Nationales* has kept the reports of their deliberations submitted to the Director of the School, including the various proposals and how many votes they received in each ballot. Some of the names included France Combattante (1946–1947), the first cohort, composed of veterans of the Resistance and the Liberation Army; Union Française (1946–1948), named after the association of French former colonies; Croix de Lorraine (1947–1948), one of the symbols of the 'Free France' government in exile under Charles de Gaulle, and later on of Gaullism more generally; as well as Nations Unies (1947–1949) and Jean Moulin (1948–1949), after the most popular hero of the French Resistance during the war (himself a civil servant). The political and emotional imagery of the students shone through in these group names.

What was in a name? 'By giving it [the cohort] a name, we gave it life', answered one alumnus, writing in 1949 about the decision of his cohort 'Europe' (1949–1951):

⁶⁰ 19790447/119, Archives ENA, AN.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

The year of our competition was the year of Europe Our debate led to an early agreement on the ideas of reconciliation, reconstruction, and peace and freedom, which were to be the hope for the years to come and of which Europe would be the symbol. So the name was quickly chosen, but was it necessary to add an adjective? A 'political' discussion arose, in the best sense of the word: a liberated Europe? Free Europe? Western Europe? Agreement was only reached by renouncing the adjective: this seemed to me the best solution, the one that gave Europe the most meaning, the most strength, and was largely open to the future.⁶²

By building an emotional connection between their training as civil servants and the political events of 1948—the birth of Benelux and the Hague Congress where Winston Churchill, Paul-Henri Spaak, Alcide De Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, and Robert Schuman laid the foundations of the Council of Europe—these students were playing their part in fostering feelings of hope for the future.

This act of collective self-denomination could in fact acquire different meanings. On the one hand, it was the part of the emotional template that ENA students gave themselves; the group name evoked an ideal they endeavoured to follow while pursuing their future goals, since it would be associated with each of them for the rest of their careers. On the other hand, their choice of name was an intervention into society, a public act they offered to all citizenry to represent their time and one of the few opportunities they had to make their voice heard as a group by all of France. ENA cohort names were and are still today discussed in newspapers, presented with short statements by the school offering a clear interpretation of the message they represented. If the names of early cohorts reflected calls for national unity in the patriotic momentum of the post-war years, other generations did not shy away from bolder political statements. Right in the middle of the Algerian War, the 1955–1957 cohort named itself France-Afrique. One year before the return to power of Charles de Gaulle in 1958, the 1956–1958 cohort decided for the evocative denomination of Dix-huit Juin, the date his appeal was broadcast to France from London on 18 June 1940, a founding moment for the French Resistance and the General's fame. In the 1960s students leaning more to the political left managed to revive the symbols of socialist imagery. The cohorts named after Saint-Just (1961–1963), Jean Jaurès (1967–1969),

⁶²Long, *Mes regards*, 14.

Robespierre (1968–1970), and Thomas More (1969–1971), taken as a martyr of censorship, represented a generation of ‘68ers’ who did not hesitate to bring the agenda of the youth movement into the ENA. More recently, a cohort with a record number of women (45 per cent) had Olympe de Gouges and Rosa Parks as shortlisted options, even though they ultimately settled on Winston Churchill (2014–2015), while another cohort, in response to the 2015 terror attack against the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, chose George Orwell as a banner for freedom of expression. For these future civil servants, templating their own feelings demanded the skilful operation of the tools of emotional marketing.

It was not only to the past that ENA students turned in order to learn how to embody the emotions required for their vocation. Debré did not envision a curriculum consisting only of lectures on the basics of administrative law. He wanted students to experience the life of the administration. Traineeships and placements in various offices of the state apparatus therefore constituted the core of instruction, and it was here that a great deal of effort by School management was concentrated. As Pierre Racine, cofounder of the ENA and director of internships from 1945 to 1956, put it, practical training within state administration was designed to ‘instil a feeling for the state’.⁶³ Motivational speeches and written information provided to the students about the internships insisted on discipline, respect for their new colleagues, and a general sense of decorum, but also encouraged audacity: students should feel free to take the initiative and ask for more responsibilities. They should endeavour to be likeable among their colleagues to overcome any resistance, but also discreet and loyal.

The destinations for internships were individually tailored: a conversation with Racine would reveal what was required to mould the personality of each student appropriately. For instance, in 2008 Marceau Long recalled how the director had initially inquired about whether he felt ‘repugnance’ for Africa, but ultimately decided to send him to Pas-de-Calais expecting that to be even more disorienting for a Provençal than Africa.⁶⁴ Traineeships were opportunities for ENA students to show ‘character and judgment’, where they could acquire ‘those essential qualities without which there is no real administrator: common sense, moral independence, a sense of

⁶³ ‘Communication sur les stages, par M. Pierre Racine, Maître des Requêtes au Conseil d’État, Directeur des Stages, le 3 janvier 1949, lors de la réception de la nouvelle promotion [Promotion Europe]’, 19790447/119, Archives ENA, AN.

⁶⁴ Long, *Mes regards*, 16.

action and responsibility, a taste for initiative and risk', as the Director wrote in 1948.⁶⁵ By nurturing these virtues, while also feeling disorientation (*dépaysement*) engendered by the challenges of their new roles within the state, students would finally embody the emotional template that would shape their lives and careers in the future: the *sens de l'État*.

Speaking at the School in November 1959, now as President of the Republic with Debré as his prime minister, de Gaulle galvanized the students by drawing a parallel between the men they were and the civil servants he had worked with in his political career:

You are astonishingly similar to those who have come before you, in the sense that you are, like them, men called by your vocation and your ability to exercise the most important and noble function in the temporal order, that is, the service of the State. ... First of all, those in the front ranks who had to serve the State had to be an elite, an elite in every respect, an intellectual elite, a moral elite.⁶⁶

This sense of pride and devotion to the state by the civil servants marked most of de Gaulle's years as political leader of France. This feeling for the state, the *sens de l'État*, enabled French elites to control the institutions and to shape them according to their political goals. According to one anecdote, de Gaulle gave the following advice to a newly named Minister for Agriculture, Edgard Pisani: 'Don't forget, sir, that you are Minister of French Agriculture, not the minister of the farmers.' This sense of responsibility for the state, beyond political will of citizens and stakeholders in particular matters, is indeed what many French bureaucrats interpreted as *sens de l'État*. The ENA was founded to train the civil servants 'responsible for implementing public policies according to the requirements of the general interest—requirements that are often difficult to assert in the face of the multitude of particular interests', as proudly proclaimed by its alumni association.⁶⁷ The special relationship between the state and the bureaucrats that was shaped by the ENA's emotional templates was built on the assumption that they were not merely another political player, but were above politics altogether. This attitude did not help the popularity of ENA alumni (*enarques*), who by definition were bred to be an elite among

⁶⁵ Bourdeau de Fontenay, 'Formation des fonctionnaires', 10.

⁶⁶ 'Allocution du Général de Gaulle, Dossier "Visite du Général De Gaulle", 17 novembre 1959', 19790447/119, Archives ENA, AN.

⁶⁷ Association des Anciens Élèves de l'École Nationale d'Administration, 'Notre Identité'.

the elite of *Grandes Écoles* alumni in the French education system, with the various *École Normales Supérieures*, the *École Polytechnique*, and the *École Nationale de la Magistrature* among the most important.⁶⁸

As de Gaulle's chief of staff Étienne Burin des Rozières wrote in 1994, in an article published in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, the *sens de l'État* was not only a system of ethics for civil servants. It was the 'feeling of responsibility *vis-à-vis* the country' that those who hold the power in civil society were required to have.⁶⁹ As he put it: 'Was the feeling for the state limited to the professional conscience of the public servant? Did not the expression refer, more generally, to the intimate feeling obtained through the demanding duties conferred by belonging to a national elite, regardless of one's career?'⁷⁰

It is likely that the decline of this model in modern societies led to the crisis of emotional stakes in the French administration that Macron sought to tackle in 2019. The bureaucratic apparatus of one institution, in particular, the European Union, was largely inspired by the French model.⁷¹ Often criticized for being politically cumbersome or too remote from the emotional lives of European citizens, EU personnel represents the embodiment of the 'technocratic slant' that lies at the centre of the European integration process.⁷² Whether political institutions continue to rely on citizens' trust in their civil servants will only be revealed in the years to come.

CONCLUSION

From 1789 onwards, new rules and regulations were designed to instil a sense of commitment in citizen-bureaucrats. Some of these organizational reforms survived even the fall of Napoleon.⁷³ Others became topic of contention in political debates or needed to be renegotiated with every change of regime. Focusing on the instability of the emotional templates given to civil servants enabled the continuity of centralization strategies by the French state to be challenged. The traditional representation of modern France as moving coherently and steadily towards centralization revealed

⁶⁸ Bourdieu and Passeron, *Héritiers*.

⁶⁹ Burin de Rozières, 'Sens de l'État', 60.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Mangenot, 'Revendication d'une paternité'.

⁷² Patel, *Project Europe*, 130.

⁷³ Kingston, *Bureaucrats*.

cracks, contradictions, and failures when emotions are brought into the picture.

The various regimes of the French national state have often employed similar symbolic practices to engage their civil servants at the level of emotion. Oaths, ceremonies for inauguration into office, and rituals in remembrance of martyrs worked both as aids in fostering belief and commitment and as a means of building an ideological and emotional homogeneity among the *fonctionnaires*. Yet, some of these symbolic practices (the oath, for instance) lost prestige, compromised as they were with the turmoil of numerous revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. More importantly, similar solutions were often directed towards very different goals. Analysing the politicization of oath-taking or the contrasting styles adopted by the two *École Nationale d'Administration* (one founded after the 1848 Revolution and the other after the Second World War), this chapter has tried to grasp how particular emotional templates have shaped French bureaucracy over time. A constant tension is revealed in the construction, reception, and re-orientation of institutional frameworks designed to elicit the emotions of bureaucrats under each regime: depending on the historical circumstances, civil servants had to learn how to navigate their feelings between national or partisan militancy and pragmatic indifference to party politics, in favour of a superior sense of belonging to the state. At least once in their lives, French bureaucrats had to face the choice between being loyal to their fellow citizens or to the institution whose torch they bore.

When Macron put public administration reform at the centre of his strategic response to the concerns of the *gilets jaunes*, he seemed to acknowledge the fact that most of his compatriots no longer took the personal struggles of professional civil servants seriously. A bureaucratic system built on elitism was a perfect symbol for a state now accused of having abandoned its most fragile constituents. At the beginning of 2021, after promising to dissolve the ENA in 2019, debating of several plans, and dealing with the heavy toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government announced a new goal: to diversify recruitment and make state administration more reflective of French society. A programme to promote 'equal opportunities' was launched to open the higher ranks of the state bureaucracy to young people from the working classes, a programme whereby ENA alumni would mentor students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Only a few months after the launch of this initiative, in April 2021, Macron concluded that this was not enough to rejuvenate one of

the core elements of French democracy—the bond of trust between citizens and civil servants. He decided instead to abolish the ENA. This decision inflamed the political debate, and Marine Le Pen attacking Macron for undermining the authority of the state: ‘As an elected representative of the nation’, she wrote in a letter to the prefects, ‘I share the concern, often silent, but still painful, of all those who feel the sens de l’État and who witness the collapse of the resources, the reputation and, as a consequence, the authority of the State.’⁷⁴ One year before a presidential election that promises to be quite challenging for democracy, the endless emotional labour needed to work for the French state is undergoing another intense period of politicization.

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⁷⁴ Floch, ‘Marine Le Pen’.

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