The Determinants of 'International Men': Staff Loyalties to the ILO and League of Nations in World War II*

Minju Kim†, Julia Gray‡

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Abstract

When cooperation collapses, how do international organizations respond? Much research has examined IO responses to crises, but not to an utter breakdown in cross-border cooperation — even though many IOs endure through civil and international wars. Once it becomes abundantly clear that cooperation has failed, do the IO staff that hang on do so out of loyalty or a lack of exit options, and what are the consequences for subsequent international cooperation? We argue that when IOs are at their most beleaguered, national loyalties draw away staff who tended to view the IO as a source of personal professional gain. However, the bureaucratic staff that endure may face a unique opportunity ,where political control by principals is minimal and their own autonomy is maximized – an appealing prospect for those who aspire to be neutral international civil servants. We test this argument by comparing the fate of the staff in the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the League of Nations during World War II, particularly the more "political" actors, with those who were selected as international civil servants. While many of the more political staff returned to their home countries, the ILO relocated its secretariat altogether to a "war room" at McGill University in Montreal, while the League remained in a pared-down version in Geneva, with many officers working remotely from their home countries. Using archival materials on pensions and indemnities of the staff, we assemble a unique dataset of the wartime employees of the League and ILO and compare their background characteristics to those of staff who resigned in the period.

*Authors are listed in reverse alphabetical order. Both authors contributed equally to the paper.

†Assistant Professor of Political Science, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, mkim71@syr.edu.

‡Associate Professor of Political Science, The University of Pennsylvania, jcgray@sas.upenn.edu.

Introduction

National interests have always problematize international cooperation. Countries often pursue their own national priorities at the expense of multilateral compromise; this often means that state delegates to international organizations (IOs) will, in turn, prioritize deals that favor their home countries rather than seeking optimal solutions. IOs are thus the sites where competing interests contest (Chaudoin, 2016). Staff within these organizations manage this contest in their daily work (Novosad and Werker, 2019), and much IO scholarship grapples with the fate of international cooperation once it is delegated to agents (Pollack, 1996; da Conceicao-Heldt, 2018).

These concerns underpinned even the earliest discussions of modern international cooperation. In the early 1900s, competing visions of global cooperation included a court-based system, informal summits such as the Concert of Europe, or what was then a revolutionary vision of an "international civil service" of technocrats and public administrators loyal not to their own country but to internationalism (Wertheim, 2012). Modeled on the British civil service, this idea eventually prevailed in the design of the League of Nations (Pedersen, 2015; Dykmann, 2015). But the question of finding staff who would cleave to international cooperation rather than to their own country's interests was particularly urgent at the time of designing the world's very first IOs. How would internationalists be selected or cultivated among the staff?

This question was particularly salient at the crafting of the world's very first modern international organizations, but it lies at the heart at debates about cooperation today. The day-to-day stewardship of global governance is left in the hands of bureaucrats, and scholars disagree on whether their allegiances lie primarily with their own careers (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999; Johnson and Urpelainen, 2014), with their home country's national interest (Parízek, 2017), or if they espouse commitment to the ideals of diplomatic governance (Gray and Baturo, 2021).

After World War I, with the idea of global governance newly emergent, and no preexisting IO bureaucrats from which to draw, attention fell to the characteristics of potential staff. Many public intellectuals at the time had a vision of "international men" (Butler, 1919) who would eschew their national biases in favor of technocratic global governance. An international civil service with loyalties not to their home government but rather to global concerns was foundational to the first blueprints for modern global governance, in the form of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the League of Nations, and continued even with the establishment of the United Nations (Laves, 1951).[1] Recruiters were at pains to identify potential civil servants whose loyalties could be international rather than domestic,

The outbreak of World War II, however, laid bare the loyalties of the international civil service. On the one hand, for those with home-country biases, the war heightened the draw to return to their country of origin. Wartime conditions could have signified a failure of those IOs, and in an uncertain future many bureaucrats could have taken the "exit option" of returning to their home country. On the other hand, the uncertainties of the war meant that many bureaucrats saw opportunities for autonomy from their home government; indeed, the ILO set up a remote office at McGill University in Quebec, and the League of Nations operated skeleton operations at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies and Williams College (Lavelle, 2007; McAllister, 2022).

What drove some employees to stay with their IOs, even in hard times? In other words, which bureaucrats exhibited loyalty to the IO versus their home government? These questions sit at the center of debates about technocratic governance (Bertsou and Caramani, 2020; Steffek, 2021) as well as to bureaucratic insulation from member-state pressures (Hawkins et al., 2006). They were prominent as well in the minds of the original administrators of an international civil service, who struggled to disentangle experience in public administration in their home governments with loyalty to the idea of international cooperation, and who

[1]Many scholars have described how the idealized goals of the hiring of internationalists fell far short of the reality. In practice, many employees were hired based on personal recommendations and relationships, and many countries remained underrepresented despite paying their dues, a practice about which many nations complained (Dykmann, 2015).

aimed to cultivate an international esprit d'corps over time.

We argue that, all else equal, for many staff the war activated national loyalties rather than their service to an international ideal. However, we argue that in the world's first IOs, the forces of selection and socialization played an important role in staff loyalty. We argue that the staff that were more likely to demonstrate IO loyalty even in the hardest of times were those who either had no background in politics in their home country, or who had served for a relatively long period at the IO. We argue that the parallel processes of *selection* and *socialization* played strong roles here. A lack of political embededness in their home country, as well as a relatively longer period working at the IO, were more likely to build IO loyalty — consistent with the founder's hopes of building an international civil service.

Novel data from the world's first IOs help us explore these propositions. We first assemble a unique dataset of the staff members who, immediately following the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, had to declare whether they would stay with the League or step down. In other words, at a moment of great uncertainty, IO staff faced a decisionmaking juncture as to whether their loyalties lay with the IO or with their home country.

We find evidence in support of *selection* in both the League and the ILO, and evidence in support of *socialization* in the ILO only. Using background information on the staff members who in 1939 were working for both the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization, we find that past experience working for home government was strongly associated with a decision to exit. Some support exists for the socialization hypothesis, with longtime ILO staff members in particular being more likely to stay at the organization in wartime. The result holds after controlling for several rival explanations, such as the 'exit options' that staff might have faced.

This is an important finding in the study of international cooperation. Scholars have long identified the importance of individuals in policy outcomes. However, the connections between individual policy attributes and policy outcomes is often unclear theoretically; furthermore, in international cooperation, a bureaucrat rarely has to make costly and con-

sequential decisions about their loyalties. We leverage this unique moment in history to explore the attributes that made bureaucrats more likely to declare a commitment to international cooperation. This has implications for our inferences about the role of individual characteristics and commitment to international ideals rather than national interests.

Measuring the Motives of Individuals in International Policymaking

Individuals are important to policy outcomes at all levels of policy and across a variety of dimensions. Executive heads and key bureaucratic actors can exert significant influence within IOs, even in contexts where institutional structures and mandates appear to dominate decision-making. Principal-agent models traditionally depict IOs as agents of their member states (principals), tasked with implementing the collective will of their principals while constrained by formal rules and oversight mechanisms. However, individuals within IOs can exercise authority, often reshaping outcomes beyond the direct control of member states (Johnson, 2013; Buzas and Graham, 2020).

But it is challenging to disentangle the influence of the individual officeholder from the office they occupy. This reflects a broader difficulty in understanding how personal attributes, institutional dynamics, and structural conditions interact. Regimes and organizations often attract individuals whose traits align with existing norms, creating a congruence that complicates causal analysis (Baturo and Elkink, 2014). Cognitive biases further exacerbate this difficulty, as observers tend to overemphasize the role of leaders in shaping outcomes, even when those outcomes may be more directly attributable to the constraints and incentives of the office itself (Patty and Weber, 2007).

Isolating the effects of institutional structures from those of individual officeholders is particularly challenging in executive leadership contexts. For example, Historical evidence can occasionally link specific policy decisions to officeholders' preexisting beliefs, distinguishing

these personal convictions from the broader institutional pressures of the job (Canes-Wrone, 2006). Similarly, the behavior of executive heads and top officials in IOs can illuminate the relative impact of individual agency, compared with institutional culture (Hall and Woods, 2018; Bode, 2015). These studies highlight the difficulty of drawing clear lines between the individual and the office, as both are shaped by overlapping social, cultural, and political influences.

Moreover, the socialization of staff at international organizations further complicates this distinction. International public administration staff internalize norms and values through their institutional roles, blurring the boundaries between personal attributes and professional conduct (Checkel, 2005). Such socialization processes suggest that individuals may come to embody the norms of their offices, making it difficult to determine whether their actions are driven by personal beliefs or by the institutional context.

This difficulty is particularly pronounced in international organizations, where staff are simultaneously constrained by the institutional mandate and empowered by the perception of neutrality and technocratic authority associated with their offices. These dual dynamics reinforce Weber (1947)'s critique of bureaucratic neutrality, as the power of bureaucracies often lies in their ability to present themselves as impersonal and rational, even as they enact deeply political decisions.

For example, individual leaders' experiences in the military may increase their propensity for conflict (Horowitz and Stam, 2014); the education of IMF staff may influence the types of IMF programs they design (Chwieroth, 2014); career experience in banking may compromise the neutrality of independent central bankers (Adolph, 2013). In those examples, the through-line between background characteristics and policy outcomes is relatively straightforward. Indeed, the more prominent operatationalizations of the policy preferences of individuals tend to center on fairly narrowly defined issue areas. Military experience and bellicose outcomes, or neoliberal economic training and market-friendly loan conditionality, have clear connections, even if the causal mechanism and the selection process might be

more difficult to identify. In certain types of policy areas, individuals have an opportunity to reveal their 'type.'

However, when considering other outcomes related to international cooperation, antecedent background characteristics are less obvious. Multilateral policymaking is complex and multidimensional, often with slow-moving outcomes for which individual policymakers may not be able to take immediate credit (Baturo and Gray, 2023). With that in mind, employees in international organizations do not necessarily have clear attributes that should lead to the success of international policymaking in a variety of area of interest.

'International Men' in the World's First IOs

Even the founders of the world's first IOs struggled with the question of identifying appropriate staff to steward international cooperation. Once the idea of an 'international civil service' gained traction, the incipient IO designers ruminated about the best means of identifying potential employees who would be loyal to the idea of internationalism rather than promoting their own country's national interest. In order to work toward cooperative solutions, the thinking went, staff needed to remain committed to multilateral processes rather than policies that privileged their home country (Butler, 1919).

The question was how to identify such "international men." Particularly because no other similar organization existed prior to the creation of the League, one could not use past IO experience as a hiring criterion. The qualifications to become an international civil servant were not always straightforward, and in fact hiring practices often devolved into patronage, with personal networks playing an important role (Dykmann, 2015). At the same time, the international civil servants, by and large, were loyal to the League and struggled with member states' interests, as well as with the presence of mostly German, Italian, and Japanese spies within the staff (Dykmann, 2015).

Thus, even though loyalty to internationalism was difficult to observe, those IOs — for

better or for worse — soon faced a crossroads where staff were able to reveal their type, with the outbreak of aggressions that led to World War II. The next section presents our theory of the determinants of IO loyalty in times of crisis.

The League and ILO at the Outbreak of War

The League of Nations and, to a lesser extent, the International Labour Organization had already survived several existential challenges in the early years of their life. The League endured despite the failure of the US Senate to ratify the agreement, and League staff successfully an early membership 'exit' crisis in which Brazil threatened to leave the agreement (Hirschmann, 2023). At the same time, significant advances in technical cooperation had been undertaken, including coordination on opium trade as well as introducing labour standards for members.

Even during the events that set World War II in motion, historians argue that there was significant uncertainty about the course of events and the fate of the IOs in question (Pedersen, 2015). The League had just moved into a new set of buildings in Geneva in Feb 1936, and Egypt had applied to be a member in 1937. Switzerland in 1938 had declared neutrality, suggesting that the work of the League and ILO could continue uninterrupted. The League had also taken decisive steps in enforcement of its principles: in December of 1939 it expelled the USSR for its invasion of Finland, unprecedented at the time and still standing as a relatively rare case of an IO sanctioning a member-state to the point of expulsion (Vabulas and von Borzyskowski, 2018).

Certainly top decisionmakers seemed to believe that the world's core international organizations would continue their operations even in the face of conflict. In February 1939 the US Secretary of State at the time, Cordell Hull, told Secretary General Avenol that the US government "looked forward to the development and expansion of the League's machinery for dealing with these problems, would continue to collaborate therein, and would willingly

consider the means of making its collaboration more effective."[2] This points to internal discussions among pivotal officials that took for granted the continued existence of the League, suggesting that for staff members, there was a prospect of productive future employment.[3]

Not until conflict expanded into northwestern Europe in May 1940 did war become inevitable, and the IOs — hemmed in by hostilities even in neutral Switzerland — began planning their exit strategy. Components of the Economic and Financial organization. and the Communications and Transit Department moved to Princeton University's Institute for Advanced Studies; the Treasury went to London, the International Labor Organisation to Montreal, and the Permanent Central Opium Board and the Drug Supervisory Body relocated to Washington D.C (Mumby, 2023).

Prior to that breakup, however, in September of 1939 all officials at the League and its agencies were faced with the option of terminating their employment with full benefits, or remaining at the organization. This move was taken due to the worries of the staff, many of whom expressed concern about the growing hostilities and wanted the opportunity to return to their country without the penalty of resignation.

This moment served as a window of clarity for staff to reveal their type. The prospect of war, for some staff, pushed them toward casting their loyalties and their talents with their home government. For others, however, their commitment to the ideals of internationalism — along with what, at the time, seemed like a prospect of future employment with the IOs — led them to favor continued service with the IOs, and indeed a quarter of the staff at the time chose this option. The next section describes our theory of the attributes that sorted these two bureaucrats into these different trajectories.

[2](Walters, 1952, 760-61).

[3]Secretary General Avenol's role during this period is particularly contentious; for an exhaustive evaluation, see Barros (1969). While initially advocating for the League's centrality in global governance, his later actions—marked by collaboration with Axis-aligned governments—cast a shadow over his leadership. Critics argue that his lack of decisive support for maintaining the League's integrity contributed to its declining influence during the war. Avenol's ambiguous stance undermined staff morale. This dynamic highlights the tension between individual leadership and institutional commitment during moments of crisis. As the League fractured and relocated, Avenol's controversial decisions became emblematic of the complex interplay between personal diplomacy and the broader ideals of international governance.

Theory: Selection and Socialization

We posit that bureaucrats would remain loyal to their international organizations (IOs) even during their most challenging periods through two interrelated processes: selection and socialization. The selection process involves self-selection by individuals who lack particularly strong national loyalties, while the socialization process entails the internalization of organizational ideals during their tenure of service. Together, these mechanisms explain why some IO staff may exhibit dedication to their organizations, even in the face of adversity.

First, all else equal, the types of workers that might *select* into service at the League and ILO might be consistent with the stated aims of the world's first international civil service: employees who genuinely had interests in international cooperation rather than national priorities. While such tendencies are difficult to observe directly, we could expect certain proxies to be associated either positively or negatively with the likelihood of remaining at the IOs in wartime. Prior government experience might be an indicator of a preference for national interests; international experience — through education, residence, or career — might be positively associated with a more broadly global outlook.

The selection process suggests that individuals who choose to work for IOs are less likely to have strong national loyalties, instead exhibiting a predisposition toward international cooperation. In the context of early IOs like the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO), testing this hypothesis presents unique challenges. Unlike modern IOs, where international experience may be reflected in prior employment with other IOs, the League and ILO were the world's first large-scale multilateral organizations, making such direct indicators unavailable. Therefore, other proxies for internationalism must be used.

- H1: Bureaucrats with loyalties to their home government are less likely to remain with IOs during periods of crisis than those with proxies indicating a broader international outlook.

Second, irrespective of an employee's motivations for joining an IO, they may be socialized into internationalist behavior depending on the length of time that they worked for the IO (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Bearce and Bondanella, 2007). Considering that these IOs were the first to adhere to the contemporary template for multilateralism, bureaucrats who did not necessarily know what they were getting into could still be socialized into a belief in internationalism.

The socialization process posits that employees internalize the norms and values of their IO through continued exposure and engagement. Over time, even individuals who initially lacked strong internationalist commitments may develop such values through their experiences within the organization.

- H2: The longer a bureaucrat serves in an IO, the more likely they are to remain with the organization during periods of crisis due to the internalization of its norms and values.

Rival Explanations

Although selection and socialization offer compelling explanations for the resilience of IO staff loyalty during crises, several rival explanations warrant consideration. These alternative factors emphasize the broader context within which bureaucrats made decisions about whether to remain with their organizations or depart. These considerations offer complementary perspectives and potential modifications to the selection-socialization framework.

A key rival explanation involves the exit options available to individual bureaucrats. The personal circumstances of staff members, including the likelihood of facing discrimination, violence, or persecution if they returned to their home countries, could significantly influence their decisions. For instance, individuals from countries experiencing authoritarianism, occupation, or severe economic distress may have viewed staying with the IO as a safer or more viable option. Similarly, Swiss nationals, who lacked a home country office to which to return given Switzerland's neutrality and the relocation of IO headquarters, may have found

themselves with fewer exit opportunities and thus were more likely to remain. Additionally, staff from countries with strong Allied or Axis affiliations may have faced political or social repercussions if they returned, further complicating their decision-making calculus.

The economic conditions of an individual's home country also play a critical role. Bureaucrats from countries severely impacted by the economic depression, wartime disruption, or hyperinflation may have prioritized the relative financial stability and international prestige offered by IO positions. Moreover, the substantive nature of their job within the IO could influence their commitment. Higher-level roles or specialized positions may have provided a stronger incentive to remain, as such positions were less replaceable and more aligned with long-term professional aspirations. In contrast, those in lower-level administrative positions might have felt their roles were more easily transferable to other opportunities outside the IO, making departure a more feasible choice.

Uncertainty about geopolitical developments could also shape an individual's decision to stay. Bureaucrats from countries that delayed aligning with either the Allied or Axis powers may have faced an uncertain future and opted to remain with the IO to avoid precarious or potentially dangerous conditions in their home countries. For instance, nationals from politically unstable or newly aligned states may have preferred the stability and relative neutrality of the IO over returning to volatile domestic circumstances. This uncertainty may have been particularly pronounced for individuals from nations that were under occupation, in transition, or experiencing internal political shifts.

The broader qualifications and career trajectories of IO staff could also influence their choices. Bureaucrats with advanced degrees, specialized skills, or extensive international experience may have seen continued service in the IO as a unique opportunity to further their careers and enhance their professional networks. These individuals may have perceived IO roles as not only safer during a crisis but also as prestigious and impactful positions that aligned with their long-term aspirations. Conversely, less-qualified individuals or those with primarily national career trajectories might have viewed their positions as temporary or as

stepping stones to other opportunities, making departure during crises a more attractive option.

Finally, the operational context of the IOs themselves could shape bureaucratic loyalty. Although both the League of Nations and the ILO dissolved their Geneva headquarters during the war, the relocation of operations to new locations may have influenced staff calculations. For example, the willingness to move to a new location could depend on an individual's personal circumstances, logistical constraints, or attachment to the ideals of the IO. Staff members with strong institutional ties may have seen relocation as an extension of their commitment, while those less invested in the IO's mission might have viewed it as an opportunity to leave.

These rival explanations do not necessarily contradict the selection-socialization framework but instead highlight additional factors that could intersect with these processes. For example, while self-selection may bring individuals with weaker national loyalties into IOs, personal circumstances such as geopolitical uncertainty or limited exit options could reinforce their decisions to stay. Similarly, socialization may foster commitment to internationalist values, but economic and professional considerations could enhance or temper this process depending on the individual's circumstances. By incorporating these rival explanations into the analysis, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of the complex decision-making processes that sustained early IOs during periods of crisis.

Data collection

We construct an original dataset to understand international bureaucrats during the interwar period at the individual level. Acquiring individual-level information of international bureaucrats is enormously challenging due to privacy concerns and the internal rules IOs have regarding disclosing information to the public. To our understanding, this is the first dataset that documents the career trajectories of international bureaucrats during the inter-

war period across multiple IOs. The data collection is primarily based on our in-person visits to the League of Nations (LON) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) archives, both of which are located in Geneva, Switzerland. We visited the archives in September 2019, and July 2023, respectively.

Four kinds of archive documents are used to construct the dataset—the pension files, indemnity files, personnel files, and the biography collection of ILO bureaucrats. We gather the pension records of international bureaucrats to identify individuals from the interwar period and determine the duration of their service. The pension files record all the names of the secretariat staff at the LON and ILO who are eligible for pension benefits based on the old system. International bureaucrats who entered the LON and ILO *after* World War II are excluded in the files because they received retirement benefits from the new United States Staff Pensions Fund *(Interview with the ILO archivist on July 21, 2023)*. We thus use the pension files to identify the secretariat staff members during the interwar period. Figure 1 in the appendix presents the sample structure of the pension files. The pension files are valuable because they reveal the entry and exit dates of individual bureaucrats. The exit date information helps us determine which individuals remained with the organization and who left as World War II approached.

We use the indemnity receipt information to distinguish involuntary layoffs from voluntary layoffs. The indemnity files record to whom the LON and ILO provided indemnity payments, which are the financial benefits paid to secretariat staff members to help them cover the loss of income from an unexpected layoff due to the war. According to a 1940 LON document titled 'Special measures to be applied to personnel during the crisis period' (R5335/17/39258/36209), the LON forced their employees to choose between suspension of contract and resignation on May 15. Similarly, the ILO instructed their employees to choose between suspension of their contracts or resignation on June 20, 1940 (P/20/18/1 'ILO Staff Pensions Fund'). The two IOs provided indemnity payments in return. Both announcements were sudden, and the secretariat staff members had to notify their decisions within 24

hours. Figure 2 and Figure 3 present the title page and sample structure of the indemnity files. Considering that the two IOs provided indemnity payments only to those in service a year after the outbreak of World War II, we assume that the indemnity recipients are those committed to global governance.

The personnel files record the nationality, amount of salary, division, and rank information of international bureaucrats in the two IOs. Figure 4 and Figure 5 provide the personnel files' title page and sample structure. The nationality and salary information is useful for understanding the exit options that individual bureaucrats had if they considered an exit from the IOs in times of crisis. The division and rank information of international bureaucrats allows us to infer the kinds of jobs that they held at the IOs. Indeed, international bureaucrats in our dataset served various roles necessary to maintain the IOs as organizations, ranging from translators, typists, messengers, operators of "roneos" (an early form of copier) to doorkeepers.

The biography collection of ILO bureaucrats, scanned from the ILO archive, offers the most detailed individual information among the four primary sources. As shown in Figure 6 in the appendix, the biographies include records of each bureaucrat's previous work experience before joining the ILO, their education, and birth date. This level of detail is particularly valuable because, to our knowledge, no secondary source provides such comprehensive information of ILO bureaucrats at the individual level. However, it is important to note that the ILO selectively documented the career paths of 70 'important' bureaucrats during the interwar period, without clearly explaining the criteria for their selection (*Interview with the ILO librarian, July 24, 2023*). As a result, we recognize the potential for the unknown selection process to introduce bias into our analyses.

Other than the primary sources mentioned above, we use secondary sources and other kinds of primary sources to additionally record the career trajectory information of international bureaucrats. On the side of the LON, we complement the in-person archive visit by reading documents from the digital archive (https://archives.ungeneva.org/lontad)

and extracting relevant information from the LONSEA database (http://www.lonsea.de).

By combining the primary and secondary sources, we construct the individual-level dataset of 1,255 bureaucrats during the interwar period—768 from the LON and 487 from the ILO. All the 1,255 bureaucrats began working at the IOs before the start of World War II in 1939. Descriptively, 45% of the bureaucrats are female, and many of them are from Switzerland, followed by the United Kingdom, France, and Italy.[4] Unfortunately, not all of the 1,255 bureaucrats from the interwar period have full information on all the covariates. The preliminary results are based on data from 638 bureaucrats with the complete information on all the covariates, with 580 from the League of Nations and 58 from the ILO. In the following section, we introduce our main variables of interest.

[4]This number excludes international bureaucrats with multiple nationalities.

Variables of interest

Our dependent variable is an individual bureaucrat's receipt of indemnity payments (*Receipt of indemnity*). The receipt of indemnity payments identifies those who remained despite the war. If a bureaucrat has a record of indemnity receipt, we code the variable as 1 and 0 otherwise. Among the 1,255 bureaucrats, 385 received indemnity payments, with 194 from the LON and 191 from the ILO.

To test the selection hypothesis, we construct an independent variable representing whether international bureaucrats previously worked for their home country governments (*Government experience*). We use previous employment in the home government as a proxy for individual biases/loyalties. So far, we have identified the prior career trajectories of 637 bureaucrats out of 1,255, and 237 of them have previous work experience in their home governments. Those lacking background information in our data were less visible individuals who have less of a traceable record in history.

Bureaucrats who spend their careers at an organization often become sympathetic to its mission (Carpenter, 2014), which can lead to greater commitment to global governance. This is the 'socialization' mechanism described above. We create a variable that measures the number of years bureaucrats worked at the IO before their departure (*Length of service*); higher values indicate a greater likelihood of socialization. Note that if bureaucrats continued working at international organizations after receiving indemnity in 1940, the length of service is calculated as the number of years between a bureaucrat's entry date and the indemnity receipt date. This approach allows us to assess how length of service impacts an individual bureaucrat's decision to stay in their workplace.

To account for some alternative explanations, we control for dual nationality, gender, substantive task, and entry age. We use dual nationality as a proxy for internationalism (*Dual nationality*), assuming that those with citizenship from multiple countries might be more committed to international civil service than those without. We also consider the

gender of international bureaucrats (*Female*) since female bureaucrats may have different considerations than male bureaucrats when deciding whether to stay or exit. Bureaucrats who handled substantive tasks, as opposed to those who handled administrative tasks, might be more dedicated to international civil service, so we control for *Substantive task*, with 1 indicating yes and 0 otherwise. We categorize *Substantive task* using bureaucrats' rank and division details from their personnel files. A task is considered substantive if the rank or division information includes any of the following terms: economic, legal, military, research, opium, agriculture, women, health, management, or political. Finally, we take into account the entry age of a bureaucrat (*Entry age*). Given the existing research emphasizing the significance of experience at a young age (Kim, 2024), individuals who started working at an international organization (IO) at a younger age might be especially dedicated to international cooperation.

We also control for the exit options of individual bureaucrats in three dimensions: Swiss nationality, the home country's status of joining Allies or Axis in 1939, and home country GDP. International bureaucrats born and raised in Switzerland would be more likely to stay in Switzerland during the crisis, where the League and ILO are located. We create a binary variable for *Swiss nationality* and include it as a covariate. We also control for the home country's alignment with the Allies or Axis powers in 1939 (*Allies in 1939*, *Axis in 1939*). If a home country joined either the Allies in 1939 or earlier, we code it as 1; otherwise, we code it as 0. We apply the same rule in coding *Axis in 1939*. If a country did not join the Allies or Axis by 1939, this could increase uncertainties about the future of their home country which could impact international bureaucrats' decisions to exit the international organizations. Those who experienced World War I as a soldier or journalist may be more committed to internationalist values, and we code 1 to those with such experience and 0 otherwise (*War veteran*).[5] We also control for the logged value of home country GDP, as international bureaucrats from countries with relatively high GDP might more easily find

[5]Due to limitations in archival documents, whether an individual experienced World War I as a soldier or journalist is information available exclusively to ILO bureaucrats.

jobs with similar material compensation back home. The GDP data is from the Maddison database (Bolt and Van Zanden, 2020), and we use the GDP information from one year before an individual bureaucrat's retirement to avoid post-treatment.

Although not included in this analysis, we plan to add three additional covariates in the regression analyses: temporary or permanent appointment held by a bureaucrat, marriage to someone who also works at the same organization, and the amount of their salary for the most recent year before the outbreak of the war. We are currently gathering information to construct these variables.

Preliminary results

Our preliminary findings suggest that international bureaucrats with previous working experience at the home government are more likely to exit the LON and ILO in times of crisis. The largely similar results across LON and ILO — event though those IOs had strikingly different mandates and diverging wartime fates — strengthen the generalizability of our findings.

Who stays in the League?

Table 1 presents the regression result using the information of LON bureaucrats.[6] The coefficients in Column 1 are OLS regression coefficients and those in Column 2 are logistic regression coefficients. Although we have information of 788 League bureaucrats in the master dataset, the regression result is based on the information of 580 League bureaucrats with complete information of all the covariates.

As for the selection hypothesis, the League bureaucrats who previously worked at the home government are more likely to leave (= less likely to receive the indemnity payments) when its organization faces a crisis. The coefficients of *Government experience* in Table 1 are

[6]Table 3 in the appendix presents the summary statistics.

negative and statistically significant (−0.09 in Column 1, −0.66 in Column 2). This provides preliminary evidence in support of the selection hypothesis. The professional background of individual bureaucrats accumulated in the past years shapes their decision to exit the IO.

In contrast, the length of service does not appear to influence the decision of League bureaucrats to leave. While the *Length of service* coefficients in both regression models are positive (0.004 and 0.02 respectively), their p-values are 0.25 and 0.23, respectively. The socialization hypothesis is not supported with a significance level threshold of 0.1.

Besides the previous government experience, we find that *Swiss nationality* and *Female* affect the League bureaucrats' decisions to exit the organization. International bureaucrats with Swiss nationality are less likely to leave (more likely to receive the indemnity payments). The coefficients of *Swiss nationality* in Table 1 are positive and statistically significant (0.26 in Column 1, 1.52 in Column 2) with a p-value of less than 0.05. Along with bureaucrats with Swiss nationality, female bureaucrats are less likely to leave (more likely to receive the indemnity payments) than male bureaucrats. The coefficients of *Female* in Table 1 are positive and statistically significant (0.09 in Column 1, 0.52 in Column 2) with a p-value of less than 0.05.

Table 1: Who stays in the League?

	Receipt of Indemnity (1=Yes)	
	OLS	Logistic
	(1)	(2)
Government experience (1=Yes)	-0.09^{**}	-0.66^{**}
	(0.04)	(0.29)
Length of service	0.004	0.02
	(0.003)	(0.02)
Swiss nationality	0.26^{***}	1.52^{***}
	(0.05)	(0.36)
Female	0.09^{**}	0.52^{**}
	(0.04)	(0.22)
Substantive task (1=Yes)	-0.005	-0.09
	(0.04)	(0.24)
Entry age	-0.002	-0.02
	(0.002)	(0.02)
Dual nationality	-0.13^{*}	-0.86^{*}
	(0.08)	(0.48)
Allies in 1939	0.06	0.41
	(0.05)	(0.35)
Axis in 1939	-0.10	-1.41^{*}
	(0.07)	(0.79)
Home country GDP, logged	0.02	0.18
	(0.02)	(0.16)
Constant	-0.21	-5.03
	(0.43)	(3.06)
N	580	580

$^{*}p < .1$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .01$

Who stays in the ILO?

Table 2 presents regression results using the variables based on ILO bureaucrats.[7] Same as Table 1, the coefficients in Column 1 are OLS regression coefficients, and those in Column 2 are logistic regression coefficients. Unlike the League, the ILO does not have secondary sources to collect individual-level information of the bureaucrats, leading to a sizable number of observations with missing values. The regression result is based on 58 ILO bureaucrats with complete information of all the covariates, which covers 12% of the entire ILO bureaucrats ($58/490 \times 100$) during the interwar period based on the pension file.

We continue to find that international bureaucrats with previous working experience at their home government are more likely to exit (= less likely to receive the indemnity payments) among ILO bureaucrats. The coefficients of *Government experience* in Table 2 are negative and statistically significant (-0.28 in Column 1, -2.91 in Column 2). The result provides an additional support to the selection hypothesis.

Along with the bureaucrats' past working experience in the home government, the length of service affects their decision of leave the ILO. *Length of service* coefficient in Column 1 is positive (0.03) and statistically significant at the level of 0.1. The logit coefficient is also positive (0.40) and statistically significant at the level of 0.05.

Among the covariates, we find that *Swiss nationality* affects the ILO bureaucrats' decisions to exit the organization. Swiss bureaucrats, in comparison to bureaucrats from other countries, are less likely to leave (=more likely to receive the indemnity payments). The coefficient of *Swiss nationality* in Table 2 are positive and statistically significant (0.58 in Column 1). Considering that both the League and ILO headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, this suggests that where an IO is located not only affects the kinds of bureaucrats' decisions to entering the IO (Gray, 2018), but also their decisions to exit.

[7] Table 4 in the appendix presents the summary statistics.

Table 2: Who stays in the ILO?

	Receipt of Indemnity (1=Yes)	
	OLS	Logistic
	(1)	(2)
Government experience (1=Yes)	-0.28^{**}	-2.91^{***}
	(0.11)	(1.13)
Length of service	0.03^{*}	0.40^{**}
	(0.01)	(0.19)
Swiss nationality	0.58^{***}	7.26^{*}
	(0.20)	(3.75)
Female	0.07	1.11
	(0.14)	(1.20)
Substantive task (1=Yes)	−0.01	0.17
	(0.12)	(1.14)
Entry age	0.01	0.03
	(0.01)	(0.08)
Dual nationality	0.46	6.50
	(0.31)	(4.06)
Home country GDP, logged	0.03	−0.39
	(0.06)	(0.94)
Allies in 1939	0.02	4.39
	(0.15)	(4.17)
Axis in 1939	−0.04	2.98
	(0.19)	(4.03)
War veteran	−0.04	−0.56
	(0.19)	(1.69)
Constant	−0.96	−5.31
	(1.31)	(18.99)
N	58	58

$^{*}p < .1$; $^{**}p < .05$; $^{***}p < .01$

Conclusion

Although we are still in the process of coding variables for the analysis, our preliminary results point to the durability of a principle of early IO recruitment: the forsaking of national loyalties in favor of an international civil service. The duration of employment was not associated with the League bureaucrats' decisions to leave, suggesting that socialization played a less consistent role than selection into employment. This perhaps indicate that, although historians have criticised the "insider" rather than merit-based staffing practices of the League, as well as under-representation of key countries, especially outside the West,[8] the loyalties of many staff in wartime hewed to the IO itself rather than to their home governments.

The perceptions of these "international men" carried over to the staff of the UN as well. Not only did many of the employees in our dataset pick up work at the UN after the end of World War II, but the principles [The UN's] secretaries general and their international staffs will be symbols of world unity. ... reach[ing] the peoples of the world and gradually weav[ing] the emotional ties that are necessary for a world opinion" (Rogers, 1945).

This has implications for the functioning of global governance today. IO staff have discretion beyond the formal design of the IOs for which they work (Buzas and Graham, 2020). Bureaucrats whose national allegiance is stronger than their international one may dampen possibilities for cooperation.

[8] See Parizek and Stephen (2021) for a similar point: contemporary IO staffing practices tend to under-represent the global South.

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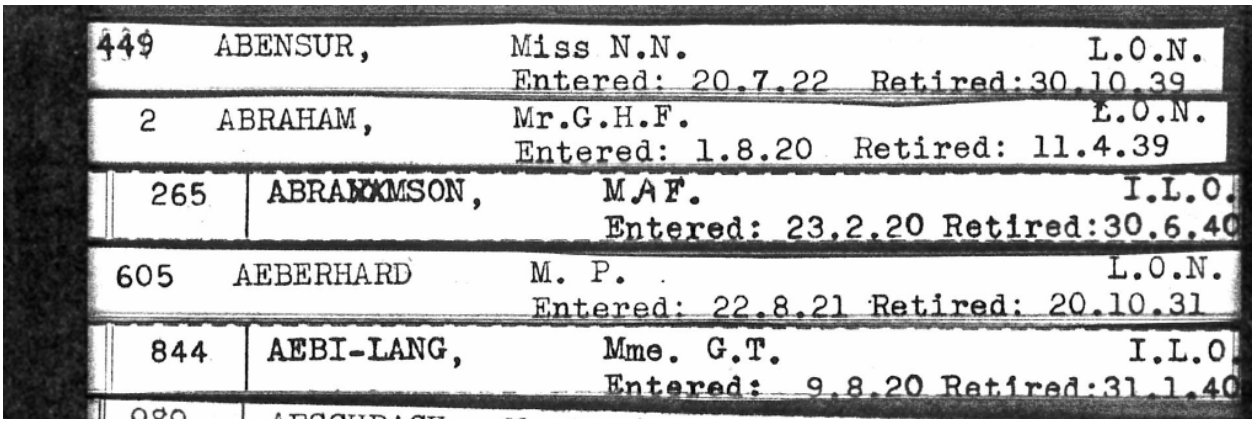
Appendix



449	ABENSUR,	Miss N.N.	L.O.N.
		Entered: 20.7.22 Retired:30.10.39	
2	ABRAHAM,	Mr.G.H.F.	L.O.N.
		Entered: 1.8.20 Retired: 11.4.39	
265	ABRAMSON,	M.A.F.	I.L.O.
		Entered: 23.2.20 Retired:30.6.40	
605	AEBERHARD	M. P.	L.O.N.
		Entered: 22.8.21 Retired: 20.10.31	
844	AEBI-LANG,	Mme. G.T.	I.L.O.
		Entered: 9.8.20 Retired:31.1.40	

Figure 1: Structure of the pension files

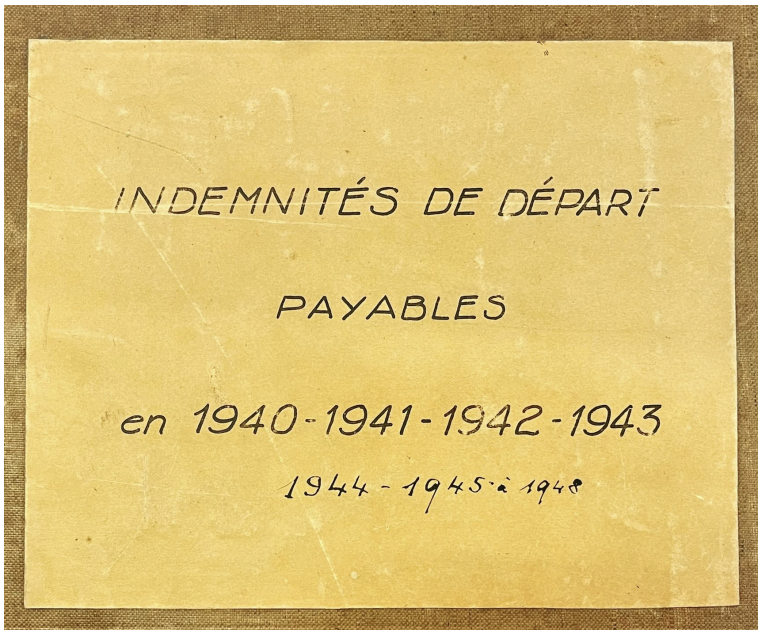


Figure 2: Title page of the indemnity files

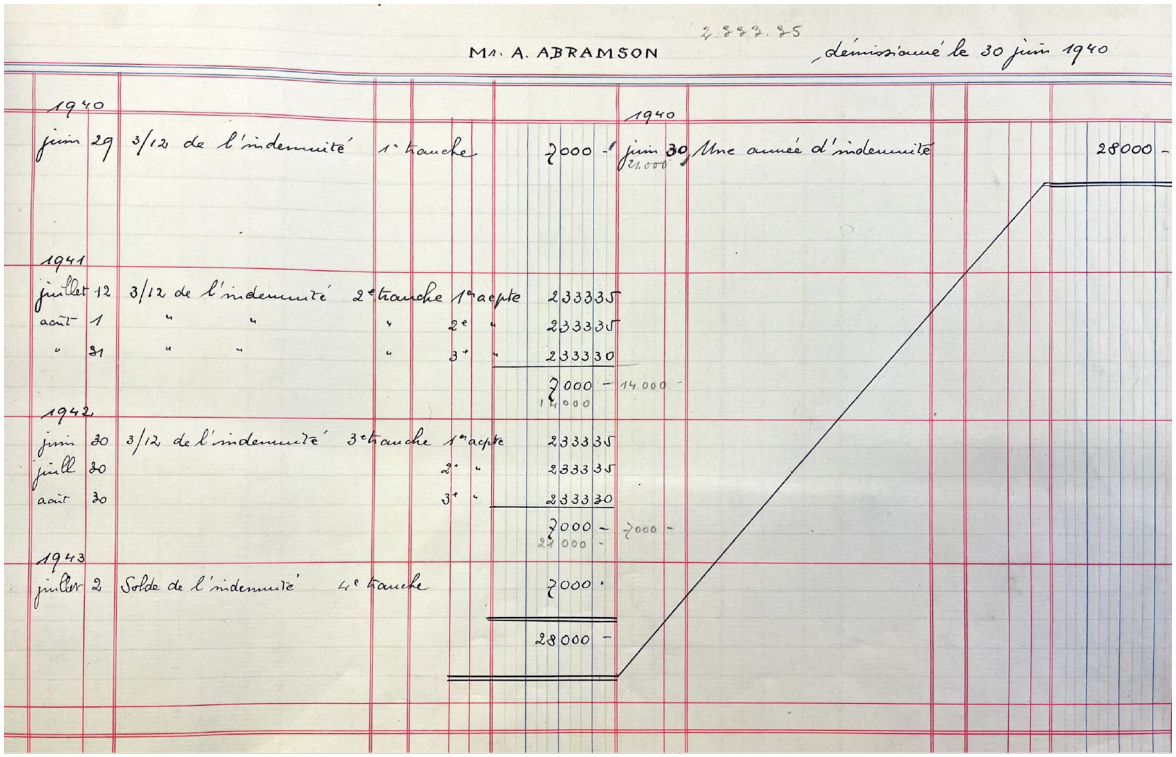
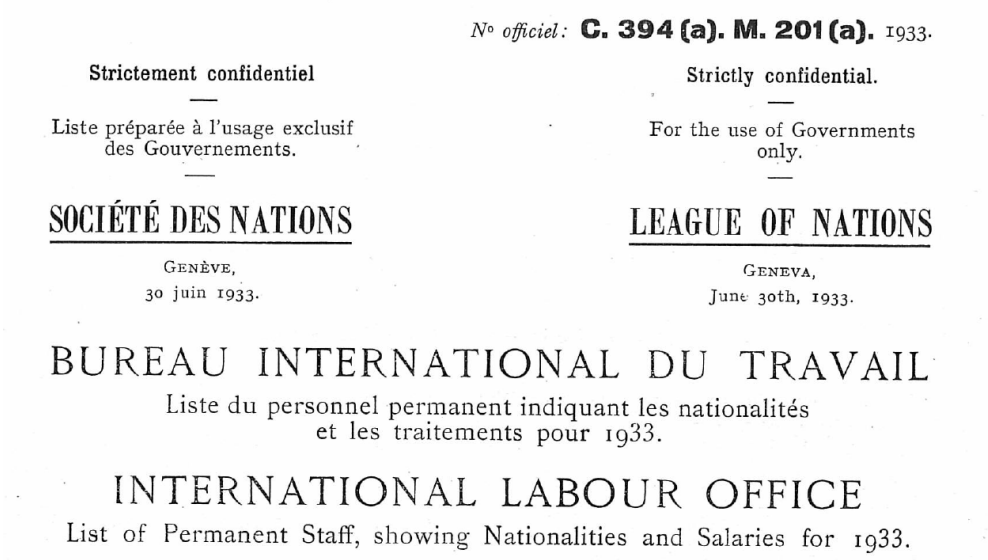


Figure 3: Structure of the indemnity files



N° officiel : **C. 394 (a). M. 201 (a).** 1933.

Strictement confidentiel

Liste préparée à l'usage exclusif des Gouvernements.

SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS

GENÈVE,
30 juin 1933.

Strictly confidential.

For the use of Governments only.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

GENEVA,
June 30th, 1933.

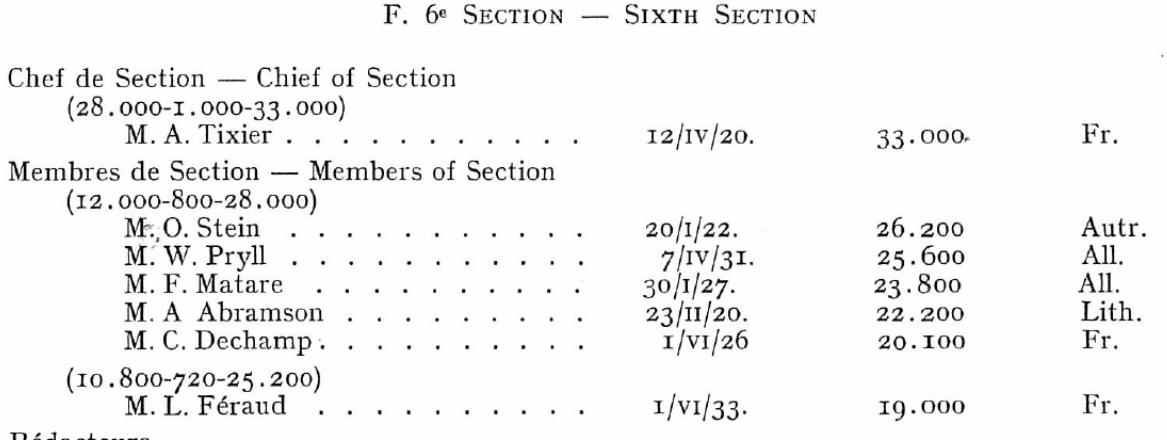
BUREAU INTERNATIONAL DU TRAVAIL

Liste du personnel permanent indiquant les nationalités et les traitements pour 1933.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

List of Permanent Staff, showing Nationalities and Salaries for 1933.

Figure 4: Title page of the personnel files



F. 6e SECTION — SIXTH SECTION

Chef de Section — Chief of Section			
(28.000-1.000-33.000)			
M. A. Tixier	12/IV/20.	33.000	Fr.
Membres de Section — Members of Section			
(12.000-800-28.000)			
M. O. Stein	20/I/22.	26.200	Autr.
M. W. Pryll	7/IV/31.	25.600	All.
M. F. Matare	30/I/27.	23.800	All.
M. A Abramson	23/II/20.	22.200	Lith.
M. C. Dechamp	1/VI/26	20.100	Fr.
(10.800-720-25.200)			
M. L. Féraud	1/VI/33.	19.000	Fr.
Rédacteurs			

Figure 5: Structure of the personnel files

Ignace Marcel Camille Bessling

Background

Nationality – Luxembourgeois
Father Johann Peter (Jean-Pierre) Bessling, an inspector, and mother Louise Gleis
Born 13 September 1894 in Winseler, Luxembourg
Married 13 May 1925 to Anna Maria Oliveri (Born 11 January 1887 in Rivalta Bormida, Italy; Died 17 February 1980)
Died 17 August 1975

Education and previous employment

Institutions :
1906-1914 – Lycée de Luxembourg et de Nancy
1913-1916 – Unversity of Grenoble
1917-1920 – University of Paris, the Sorbonne
1918-1923 – University of Paris, Faculté de Droit
1921-1923 – Ecole des sciences politiques
Degrees:
Licencié d'allemand
Licencié d'italien
Diplome d'Etudes Supérieures (Lettres)
Licencié et Doctorate en droit (Economics and Political Science)
Work :
Professeur des langues vivantes et de droit, l'Ecole Commericale de Paris and others

Work within the ILO

15 September 1924 - Entry into service
15 September 1924 – Member of Section B, Industrial Relations Service
Charged with studying freedom of association
1 January 1931 – Member of Section
18 September 1933 – Transferred to the Conditions of Work Section
1 July 1937 – Transferred to the Labour Law Section
1940 – Transferred to the ILO's temporary headquarters in Montréal
1945 – Chief of the Labour Law Service
Circa April 1946 – Returned to Geneva
July 1947 – Chief of the Labour Law and Workers' Relations Sections
31 October 1956 - Retirement

Figure 6: Sample ILO biography, Mr. Bessling

Table 3: Summary statistics, League of Nations

Statistic	N	St. Dev.	Mean	Min	Max
Receipt of indemnity (1=Yes)	580	0.43	0.25	0	1
Government before (1=Yes)	580	0.44	0.27	0	1
Swiss nationality	580	0.47	0.33	0	1
Female	580	0.50	0.48	0	1
Substantive task (1=Yes)	580	0.46	0.31	0	1
Length of service	580	5.81	12.85	1	22
Entry age	580	7.59	31.62	12	60
Dual nationlaity	580	0.25	0.07	0	1
Allies in 1939 (1=Yes)	580	0.50	0.44	0	1
Axis in 1939 (1=Yes)	580	0.28	0.08	0	1
Home country GDP, logged	580	1.19	18.77	14.34	21.58

Table 4: Summary statistics, ILO

Statistic	N	St. Dev.	Mean	Min	Max
Receipt of indemnity (1=Yes)	58	0.41	0.21	0	1
Government before (1=Yes)	58	0.49	0.60	0	1
Swiss nationality	58	0.31	0.10	0	1
Female	58	0.41	0.21	0	1
Substantive task (1=Yes)	58	0.47	0.67	0	1
Length of service	58	5.03	16.16	3	22
Entry age	58	8.81	35.10	20	54
Dual nationlaity	58	0.18	0.03	0	1
Allies in 1939	58	0.50	0.53	0	1
Axis in 1939	58	0.37	0.16	0	1
Home country GDP, logged	58	1.16	19.43	15.25	22.45
Veteran	58	0.28	0.09	0	1