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Moderation, Science and the State in the Nineteenth Century

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Depoliticisation After Revolution: Moderation, Science, and the State in the Nineteenth Century

Matthijs Lok

In his magisterial study *Revolutionary Spring*, the British-Australian historian Christopher Clark provides a panorama of the revolutions that shook the European continent from 1848 to 1849. Although the revolutionaries ultimately fell short of their own objectives, the events of 1848–1849 should not be regarded as failures, according to Clark. The experience of these continent-wide upheavals had a profound effect on European political life on many levels. Paradoxically, one of the most important consequences was the effect it had on the revolutions' opponents, the counter-revolutionary monarchies. Although the latter succeeded in suppressing the revolutionary activities in the short term by force due to the divisions among the revolutionaries themselves, the experience of revolution transformed them in fundamental ways. The counter-revolutionaries became convinced of the necessity to adopt modern methods of government and administration. After the 'failed' liberal and radical revolutions, self-proclaimed moderates from both sides looked to purportedly impartial technocratic rule as well as an enhanced

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authority of the state to circumvent the polarisation and bitterness left by the revolutions.[1]

In this contribution, I will use a broader historical lens to chart moments of depoliticisation in the decades prior to 1848, starting with the French Revolution. I will argue that the revolutions of 1848–1849 cannot only be analysed as the culmination of earlier periods of polarisation and contestation, but that the foundations of the depoliticisation attained after 1849 had deeper roots in the post-1789 decades as well.[2] In many ways, the 'script' of depoliticisation was first articulated in the years following the Reign of Terror (1793–1794) and subsequently reworked in the first half of the nineteenth century, only to be implemented again after 1849. My claim is that modern depoliticisation was 'invented' after the various revolutions in the decades after 1795. Hence, this period witnessed not only the establishment of and experimentation with modern concepts and practices of politics but also the rise of modern depoliticisation efforts.

In particular, I will argue that the moments of post-revolutionary depoliticisation in the nineteenth century were the result of a coalescence of three elements: a) the pursuit of moderation, b) governance aided by allegedly impartial experts, and c) the growth of state power and bureaucracies.[3] So far, while much research has been done on the confluence of expert rule, depoliticisation, and state power in the twentieth century, there seems to be far less research on this topic with respect to the

[1] Christopher Clark, *Revolutionary Spring: Fighting for a New World 1848–1849* (London: Penguin, 2023), in particular chapters 8 and 9.

[2] For the classical account of the political culture of the French revolution, see François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978); idem, *La Révolution, vol. I De Turgot à Napoléon, 1770–1814* (Paris: Hachette, 1988).

[3] The Romanian-American political scientist Aurelian Craiutu has characterised political moderation as "a complex and diverse tradition of thought which forms, as it were, an entire 'archipelago', with a wide array of ideas and modes of argument and action. […] [I]t refers to several things at once that are often (though not always) related to each other: a certain character trait, a specific style of political action, and a unique set of institutional and constitutional arrangements." Aurelian Craiutu, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748–1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 13.

nineteenth century.[4] In this chapter, I will therefore explore the coalescence of these three depoliticising elements at four distinctive periods in nineteenth-century European history. First, there was the Thermidor period after the radical revolutionary French Republic and the Napoleonic regime (1795–1814), followed by, second, the Restoration era (1814–1830). The third episode is the July Monarchy (1830–1848) while, fourth and finally, the technocratic counter-revolution in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions (1848–1870) will be briefly examined.

Most attention will be paid to the case study of France. France was, at least until the founding of the German Empire in 1871, the most influential country on the European continent and often served as a laboratory and model for other European countries. Besides France, some examples from Prussia, Piedmont-Sardinia, and the Netherlands will also be provided. Hopefully, in future research, other European countries can be studied in more detail as well. As Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), author of one of the sources for this chapter, already observed in the early nineteenth century, political life in individual countries does not develop in isolation: internal politics are closely intertwined with the international sphere.[5] This is certainly also true for times of depoliticisation, which, like revolutions, are usually the result of a combination of international and national factors. However, in the limited space of this chapter, I will pay most attention to internal developments.

[4] For the twentieth century, on, for instance, the phenomenon of technocracy and expert rule, see Duncan McDonnell and Marco Valbruzzi, "Defining and Classifying Technocrat-Led and Technocratic Governments", *European Journal of Political Research* 53, no. 4 (2014), 654–671. Cf. Daniel Bell, *The Coming Of Post-Industrial Society* [1976] (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Camilo Erlichman, "Moderation through Expertise: Functional Elites and the Politics of Moderation in Western Europe's Mid-Twentieth Century", in Ido de Haan and Matthijs Lok (eds.), *The Politics of Moderation in Modern European History* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 163–186; Pepijn Corduwener, "'Disconnect Romanticism from Politics': Democracy's Moderate Face in Cold War Western Europe", in de Hann and Lok (eds.), *The Politics of Moderation,* 187–204. On postwar technocracy, see Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 143–146.

[5] Leopold von Ranke, "Die groβen Mächte", *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift* 2 (1833), 1–52.

In this chapter, I will not try to come up with a timeless definition of concepts such as depoliticisation, moderation, expertise, and state authority. In line with the overall constructivist and historical approach of this volume, I will instead focus on how words and concepts such as *idéologie*, *juste milieu*, and *realism* were used by historical figures in various historical contexts. I will thus examine who the relevant historical actors were, what phenomena they addressed, the contexts in which they operated, what the prevailing conceptions of the political and its alternatives they responded to were, and what means they employed in their respective efforts at 'reconstructing' the boundaries between the political and counter-spheres or-concepts.[6] I am particularly interested in how attempts at depoliticisation served as a means to legitimise or delegitimise political regimes, institutions, ideas, and people. For instance, after 1815, monarchs all over Europe tried to regain their legitimacy by appealing to concepts of impartial justice, societal stability, and good administration rather than referring to either radical revolutionary-era foundations for leadership or an exclusively divine or historical right to rule. At the same time, as this chapter seeks to demonstrate, depoliticisation in modern European history is also a tradition that constantly reinvents itself, so mechanisms resembling those after 1815 can be observed at various times in nineteenth-century European history.[7]

Thermidor and Napoleon: The First Depoliticisation Efforts (1795–1814)

The first period of depoliticisation in modern European history can be found in the aftermath of the radical phase of the French Revolution (1792–1794).[8] In the month of Thermidor (July 1794), the radical revolutionary regime fell and was eventually replaced by a Directorate, a governing committee consisting of five members, in December 1795.

[6] For a conceptualisation of 'depoliticisation' and 'politicisation', see the introduction to this volume.

[7] To some extent, this chapter is based on the collection of essays I edited with Ido de Haan in 2019, *The Politics of Moderation in Modern European History* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[8] Mark Greengrass, *France in the Age of Henri IV: The Struggle for Stability* (London: Routledge, 1995); idem, *Governing Passions: Peace and Reform in the French Kingdom, 1576–1585* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The Directorate did not succeed in stabilising the revolution, however. Instead, it was plagued by *coups d'état* by both the monarchists and the radical revolutionaries and former Jacobins. The legitimacy of the Directorate was also undermined by its venality and corruption. Meanwhile, military successes in foreign campaigns augmented the reputations of the commanders of the revolutionary armies. Eventually, it was a general, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), who brought the rule of the Directorate to an end by a *coup d'état* in 1799.

As Bronisław Baczko famously argued, the Thermidor regime's aim was to end the Revolution (*terminer la Révolution*), that is to end the process of radicalisation while at the same time confirming the revolutionary legacy and attempting to return to its moderate origins of 1789–1791.[9] In his account of the Thermidorian period, Andrew Jainchill emphasises the return of political theory and the development of a liberal ideology on the basis of ancient republicanism and the idea of representative government.[10] Howard Brown, however, has stated that the importance of this phase in the French Revolution must be found in the construction of a strong security state, which would be completed under Napoleon but whose roots can be found already under the Directorate.[11] So far, however—surprisingly—the Thermidor period has rarely been analysed through the lens of depoliticisation and moderation.[12]

In response to the extreme ideological experience of the revolutionary Terror, a diverse group of philosophers and statesmen called the *idéologues* developed new ideas on how to construct a new political system on purported rational and impartial grounds rather than on the basis of ideological and religious convictions. This group included Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836), Pierre-Louis Roederer (1754–1835),

[9] Bronislaw Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur: Thermidor et la Révolution* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

[10] Andrew Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[11] Howard G. Brown, *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

[12] An important exception is René Koekkoek, *The Citizenship Experiment: Contesting the Limits of Civic Equality and Participation in the Age of Revolutions* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), particularly chapter 5. See also idem, "Against Popular Societies and Faction: Transatlantic Discourses of Moderation in the American, French and Dutch Republics of the 1790s", in De Haan and Lok (eds.), *The Politics of Moderation*, 29–48.

Constantin-François de Volney (1757–1820), Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832), Dominique-Joseph Garat (1749–1833), Pierre-Claude Daunou (1761–1840), Joseph Lakanal (1762–1845), and Alexandre Deleyre (1726–1797). The moderate ideas of Benjamin Constant (1767–1830) and Germaine 'Madame' de Staël (1766–1817), who were also associated with this group, are well researched by Aurelian Craiutu, among others, but this is less true of the *idéologues* in general.[13]

Building on the legacy of the Enlightenment, the *idéologues* advocated the crucial role of knowledge as a purportedly neutral basis for politics and government. They regarded science as an alternative lodestar to the political virtue championed in the age of Maximilien de Robespierre (1758–1794), which had been discredited as a result of the violence of the Terror. Scholarly institutions such as the *Institut de France* and various academies, staffed by scientists and academics rather than politicians, should play a leading role in post-revolutionary society, or so the *idéologues* believed. In conjunction with this belief in scientific knowledge, they believed in an augmented role for the state in ending polarisation, with some even advocating a new form of enlightened state despotism.[14] The *idéologue* ideas on political moderation were disseminated across the sister republics such as the Batavian Republic as well as in Germany, pointing to an often overlooked transnational dimension of the *idéologue* moderation project.[15]

[13] Craiutu, A *Virtue for Courageous Minds*. Cf. Arthur Ghins, "Moderation and Religion in France after the French Revolution", in De Haan and Lok (eds), *The Politics of Moderation*, 49–66. For existing publications on the *idéologues*, see B.G. Garnham (ed.), *The Intellectual Background of the French Revolution: Original Texts of les Idéologues, 1789–1825, with an Interpretive Commentary* (Lewiston: New York, 2007); Emmet Kennedy, *A Philosophe in the Age of Revolution: Destutt de Tracy and the Origins of Ideology* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978, xviii); Winfried Busse and Jürgen Trabant, *Les idéologues: Sémiotique, théories et politiques linguistiques pendant la Révolution française* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1986); Jean-Pierre Harris, *Antoine D'Estutt de Tracy, l'éblouissement des Lumières* (Précy-sous-Thil: L'Armançon, 2008); Brian Head, *Politics and Philosophy in the Thought of Destutt de Tracy* (New York: Garland, 1987). On their religious thought, see Arthur McCalla, *Religion and the Post-Revolutionary Mind: Idéologues, Catholic Traditionalists, and Liberals in France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023), 17–68.

[14] Garnham, *Intellectual Background*, "Introduction".

[15] Research on the transnational dissemination of the works and ideas of the *idéologues* is a task which still needs to be undertaken but is outside the scope of this chapter.

It is perhaps ironic to examine a group of political philosophers called *idéologues* as an example of post-revolutionary 'depoliticisation'. The irony is above all the result of a confusion in terminology. The term *idéologues* was originally a derogatory concept given to them by Napoleon, by then an adversary, to underscore the impracticality and speculative nature of the group's ideas. The concept *idéologie*, on the other hand, was famously first used by Antoine Destutt de Tracy in his short 1796 treatise called *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*.[16] Tracy understood the word very differently from how we use it today. As the pamphlet made clear, he was primarily interested in developing a nonpolitical 'science of ideas' building on the works of the Enlightenment philosophers Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780) and John Locke (1632–1704), which emphasised the sensations as the source of human behaviour and thought. Tracy's intention was to create a stable and undisputable foundation for the moral and political sciences comparable to mathematics and physics, in order to establish a social and political order beyond the ideological struggles that, in his view, had plagued the revolutionary years:

> I am deeply convinced that the speculative sciences are most commendable for their applications, for, in the final analysis, what is the purpose of all research, if it is not usefulness? […] But I believe that by devoting yourself to these works of practical utility, you are able to create the theory of moral and political sciences, which have languished until now in a disastrous uncertainty.[17]

Tracy's career and life exemplified the fate of the *idéologues* in the vicissitudes of the revolutionary and Napoleonic years. He came from an aristocratic family with Scottish roots and originally planned a career in the army. In 1788, however, he was elected a representative of the nobles in the Estates-General, which convened in May 1789 to discuss the reform of the monarchy and the French state. In the spring of 1792,

[16] Antoine Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser*, 2 Floréal an IV (Paris: Baudoin, 1796), 325.

[17] "Je suis profondément persuadé que les sciences spéculatives sont surtout recommandables par leur applications. Car, en dernier analyse, quel est le but, de toutes les recherches, si ce n'est ne l'utilité? … Mais je crois qu'en vous livrant à ces travaux d'une utility pratique, il est surtout digne de vous de créer la théorie des sciences morales et politiques, qui ont langui jusqu'á présent dans une incertitude funeste." Destutt de Tracy, *Mémoire*, 285.

he was in command of the cavalry in the army of the north, but as radical revolutionaries increasingly came to dominate the military, he took an indefinite leave of absence. He then settled at Auteuil near Paris, where, together with the Marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794) and Pierre Cabanis (1757–1808) he devoted himself to scientific studies as an alternative to political debates and struggles. During the Reign of Terror he was imprisoned by the radical regime, and during this incarceration, Tracy became interested in philosophy and started to study the social sciences in addition to physics and mathematics.[18]

With the fall of the radical regime, his fortunes changed again: in 1795, he became an associate of the *Institut de France*, and in 1808, he was elected to the *Académie française*. He also became part of the Napoleonic senate and, having survived the fall of the Empire, part of the Restoration monarchy's *Chambre des Pairs* after 1815. However, he kept his distance from both regimes. His magnum opus was the *Eléments d'idéologie* (1801–1815), in which he argued, following Condillac, that all conscious life could be explained by sensations.[19] Later works dealt with a critical discussion of Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* and a treatise on political economy.[20] Tracy's philosophy is often described as a failure, not in the least by himself. Yet, rather than interpret his ideas in terms of philosophical success, I propose to understand Tracy and his attempt to construct an impartial science of ideas through the lens of post-revolutionary depoliticisation.

The Napoleonic takeover of power in 1799 was initially supported by the *idéologues*. They hoped that this military commander would stabilise the revolution following the model of the American president as a strong executive, in line with their beliefs in a strong and rational state administration as an alternative to polarised politics. However, the Napoleonic experiment also clearly demonstrated the pitfalls of this Caesarean solution to political polarisation. Soon the *idéologues* fell out with Napoleon as his new empire turned out to be increasingly authoritarian and aggressive militarily, waging bloody campaigns in the name of rationalism and progress. The fact that Tracy strongly favoured a republic on the model of the American constitution did not help endear him to Emperor Napoleon.

[18] Kennedy, *Philosophe*.

[19] Antoine Destutt de Tracy, *Élémens d'idéologie*, 5 vols. (Paris: Courcier, 1801–1815).

[20] Idem, *Commentaire sur l'esprit des lois de Montesquieu* (Paris: Delauney, 1819).

In turn, Napoleon, as was described above, despised the *idéologues* for their alleged abstract and 'useless' philosophies.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that Napoleon too defended his empire in terms of a middling solution to the polarisation of French society, preventing a return to either the ancient monarchy or the radical revolutionary republic.[21] In fact, in Napoleon's regime we can observe a quite similar coalescence of the three elements of post-revolutionary depoliticisation as outlined in the introduction: moderation, scientific knowledge, and enhanced state power. First, Napoleon tried to 'end' the revolution by a policy of 'fusing' the different ideological groups. Former aristocrats and counter-revolutionary émigrés as well as radical revolutionaries were employed in the various institutions that governed the empire on condition of their absolute loyalty to Napoleon.[22]

Second, Napoleon created a new governing elite for his continental empire on the criteria of merit as well as obedience. Rather than choosing them on the basis of ideological purity or birth, Napoleon chose the imperial cadres from the higher socioeconomic social strata for their technocratic knowhow and practical skill. Next to his military commanders, he most favoured those with expertise in the field of infrastructure, state finance, and administration. Excluded from his (in comparison to the radical revolutionary years) rather depoliticised empire were any radicals, either in the service of the revolution or the counter-revolution, including the former dynasty of the House of Bourbon. In addition, in the increasingly hierarchical Napoleonic society, women and those at the bottom of the social pyramid were politically sidelined more and more. Napoleon reinstated slavery in the colonies as part of his attempt to restore 'order'. Finally, critical voices and intellectuals were systematically excluded from the new empire, as we have seen in the case of his one-time fellow travellers, the *idéologues*. One of his most outspoken political critics, the publicist and intellectual Madame de Staël, had to go into exile in Switzerland to keep out of Napoleon's reach.

[21] The literature on the Napoleonic Empire is vast. Seminal publications are Thierry Lentz, *Nouvelle histoire du premier empire*, vol. I [1804–1810] (Paris: Fayard, 2002); Michael Broers, Peter Hicks, and Agustín Guimerá (eds.), *The Napoleonic Empire and the New European Political Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).

[22] Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his Collaborators: The Making of a Dictatorship* (New York: Norton, 2002).

Third, although the priority of the Empire lay with its military, the Napoleonic period also witnessed the construction of a new governmental and bureaucratic structure and mentality on a scale not seen before in European history.[23] Bureaucrats, especially prefects, enjoyed a huge prestige as well as significant powers over the lives of individual citizens. Institutions like the Council of State provided traineeships for aspiring and talented young bureaucrats from various corners of Europe in preparation for their future roles in the continental empire as well as instilling in them a bureaucratic and technocratic *esprit de corps*. It is telling that it was not internal opposition that brought Napoleon's rule to an end. Despite increasing opposition and dissatisfaction in response to the increasing burdens of war, Napoleon's empire continued to enjoy a large degree of support among social elites in France as well as elsewhere in the Empire. It was the external military defeats and the coalition building of the great powers that would cost him his crown, ending the violent and authoritarian Napoleonic experiment of depoliticisation that succeeded the Thermidor period.

Attempts at Monarchical Depoliticisation: The Restoration (1814–1830)

When the Napoleonic Empire collapsed in the spring of 1814 due to military defeats, a new international order was constructed at the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815). The Vienna peacemakers regarded themselves first and foremost as 'moderates', rather than as the counter-revolutionaries or reactionaries they were made out to be by later historians.[24] They aimed

[23] Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (London: Routledge, 1992). For Napoleonic administration in the Netherlands, see Matthijs Lok and Martijn van der Burg, "The Kingdom of Holland and the imperial departments", in Broers, Hicks, and Guimerá (eds.), *Napoleonic Empire*, 100–111. For the prefect at the regional level, see Martijn van der Burg, *Napoleonic Governance in the Netherlands and Northwest Germany: Conquest, Incorporation and Integration* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2021).

[24] B.E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Beatrice de Graaf, *Fighting Terror after Napoleon: How Europe became Secure after 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Christine Haynes, *Our Friends the Enemies: The Occupation of France after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Glenda Sluga, *The Invention of International Order: Remaking Europe after Napoleon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

above all to counter what they regarded as the radicalism of both the left and, to a lesser extent, the right by creating an enlightened order fulfilling the idea of a perpetual peace. The constitutional monarchy, based on the principles of stability, reconciliation, and the rule of law, was presented all over continental Europe as an apolitical solution to the ideological struggles of the revolutionary decades.[25] The reconfigured trinity of moderation, impartial science, and state authority can be observed in the post-Napoleonic monarchical order as well. Within a few years, however, this new monarchical international order increasingly acquired repressive features, fighting real and imagined revolutionaries on the European continent, and became the subject of new contestation and polarisation from the left as well as from the right during the 1820s and 1830s. In France, the attempt to repress political debate by force consequently led to the undoing of the Restoration monarchy.

At the state level, the victors of 1814 created a series of very similar constitutional monarchies that replaced the imperial institutional structures all over the European continent.[26] These restored or new monarchies presented themselves at the beginning as essentially 'moderate' monarchies. Kings acted as 'loving fathers', forgiving and forgetting the deeds of their naughty subject-children during the revolutionary years.[27] These monarchies founded their legitimacy not only on traditional dynastic claims and providential design but also on purportedly apolitical virtues such as striving for peace, stability, and prosperity, which they combined with a silencing of the problematic revolutionary past. A well-ordered and benevolent monarchy on a constitutional basis, established from above but with support of the grateful people, reflected the

[25] Matthijs Lok, *Europe against Revolution: Conservatism, Enlightenment and the Making of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), in particular chapter 8.

[26] Markus Prutsch, "Constitutional Monarchism in Post-Napoleonic Europe", in Michael Broers and Ambrogio A. Caiani (eds.), *A History of the European Restorations, vol. I: Government, States and Monarchy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 109–120.

[27] Many studies on the political culture of the Restoration have appeared in recent years: Michael Broers and Ambrogia A. Caiani (eds.), *A History of the European Restorations*, vol. I and II (London: Bloomsbury, 2019 and 2020); Jean-Claude Caron and Jean-Philippe Luis (eds.), *Les Restaurations dans l'Europe postnapoléonienne* (Rennes: PUR, 2015); Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater: The Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815–1830* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000); Volker Sellin, *Das Jahrhundert der Restaurationen 1814 bis 1906* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

ideal of the depoliticised regime during the post-Napoleonic period on the continent.[28]

A telling example of this new type of post-Napoleonic kingship was the Dutch king Willem I (r. 1813/15–1840). In the case of his monarchical representation, the appeal to the past was problematic: his family members had formerly been mere stadtholders in a republican system, rather than coming from an old monarchical dynasty. Moreover, as a system of government, the monarchy had been introduced in the Netherlands by Napoleon, placing his brother Louis on the throne as the first 'King of Holland' in 1806, only to take his position away when the French Empire annexed the Dutch departments in 1810. Furthermore, with the amalgamation with the Southern Netherlands in 1815, an exclusive north Netherlandish past was less useful, and Willem's attempts to situate himself in a Burgundian pan-Netherlandish tradition on the model of Habsburg emperor Charles V were not very successful with his subjects.[29]

Instead, Willem I based his new monarchy on a promise to his subjects for the future: societal stability and prosperity, inaugurating a new Dutch Golden Age. Through infrastructural projects and state support for industrial development, he endeavoured to make the Netherlands a prosperous country again. He saw progress and prosperity as the means to make people forget the political divisions of the past, prefiguring similar attempts by counter-revolutionary monarchies after the 1848–1849 revolutions. Moreover, with his administrative mindset, micromanaging every detail of his country's government, Willem I behaved much like an administrator trained in an enlightened and Napoleonic fashion. Rather than choosing the sides of fervent counter-revolutionary monarchists and

[28] Of course, this was the official discourse. In practice, it was not possible to halt all political activity; for the Netherlands, see Joris Oddens, *Op veler verzoek: Inclusieve politiek in Nederland (1780–1860)* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2023).

[29] Matthijs Lok, "'Tegen de partijgeest': Bestuurlijke netwerken in het Verenigd Koninkrijk", in Remieg Aerts and Gita Deneckere (eds.), *Het (on)Verenigd Koninkrijk, 1815–1830>2015: Een politiek experiment in de Lage Landen* (Rekkem: Ons Erfdeel, 2015), 61–69.

ancien régime patrician regents, Willem's policy was to unite capable officials from various political backgrounds as long as they were loyal to him and his new state.[30]

In these efforts, he relied on a corps of professionally trained and technocratic civil servants, often with careers in the Napoleonic bureaucracy. A good example of a Restoration technocrat is Felix van Maanen (1769–1846), Minister of Justice and *perpetuum stabile* of Willem's regime. This former Napoleonic official believed in a strong and authoritarian state with as little room as possible for political debate. At the same time, however, he thought that the government should act rationally and according to the rule of law.[31] Another figurehead was Cornelis Kraijenhoff (1758–1840), engineer, physicist, minister, and the official responsible for the fortification of the southern border.[32] Kraijenhoff exemplifies the union of the elements of practical science, administration, and warcraft, prefiguring the counter-revolutionary technocrats of the 1850s.

Although Willem had promised his subjects freedom and constitutional government upon his accession, his rule in the 1820s increasingly acquired authoritarian traits in line with the Napoleonic training of most of his senior civil servants and office holders. Opposition from the Southern Netherlands as well as—cautiously—from the North was voiced on the basis of liberal principles. Even the intellectual 'father' of the Constitution of 1814, Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp (1762–1834), became a severe opponent of the king in Parliament over time. As in other examples in this chapter, policies aimed at moderation and depoliticisation in the Netherlands gradually resulted in an authoritarian state, which in turn became a target of polarisation.[33]

Like their counterparts in the Netherlands, royal ministers in the French Restoration monarchy, such as Louis XVIII's (r. 1814–1824)

[30] Idem, *Windvanen. Napoleontische bestuurders in de Nederlandse en Franse Restauratie, 1813–1820* (Amsterdam: Prometheus Bert Bakker, 2009).

[31] Ibid., in particular chapter 7.

[32] Wilfried Uitterhoeve, *Cornelis Krayenhoff 1758–1840: Een loopbaan onder vijf regeervormen* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2009).

[33] Jeroen Koch, *Koning Willem I, 1772–1843* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2013); Jeroen van Zanten, *Schielijk, winzucht, zwaarhoofd en bedaard: Politieke discussie en oppositievorming, 1813–1840* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2004).

favourite Élie Decazes (1780–1860), favoured a strong royal executive state as a way of overcoming the polarisation of French society and restoring stability.[34] Here too, this quest for stability was aided by the continuity of administrative and military personnel between the Napoleonic Empire and the early Restoration monarchy, particularly in the technical departments of finance, law, and infrastructure. This administrative continuity was accompanied by a politics of forgetting or *oubli*. During the first Restoration, this *oubli* had a benevolent character, whereas after the unexpected return of Napoleon after the Hundred Days in the spring of 1815, it became more forced and repressive.[35]

The Napoleonic intermezzo of 1815 shows the influence of random events on the processes of politicisation and depoliticisation and constitutes a useful warning against the use of ahistorical theoretical models which do not allow for accidents and human agency. The post-Napoleonic monarchy with a strong executive might have been successful in stabilising France, had it not been for the Hundred Days and the Bourbon king's second exile in the spring of 1815. Napoleon's return forced the allied armies to mobilise to defeat him a second time, leading them to impose a much harder peace on the French, including a three-year occupation. In effect, the Hundred Days increased polarisation and bitterness among the French population.[36] This made it much harder to follow a depoliticised and moderate course, and the French Restoration monarchy never lost the stigma that it owed its existence to foreign intervention rather than the support of the French people.

Furthermore, the assassination of the Duc de Berry in 1820, the third in line to the throne and hope of the Bourbon monarchy, led to a renewed surge of radical monarchism, uniting those who believed that the former revolutionaries had been dealt with too leniently. Louis XVIII's succession by his more intransigent brother Charles X (r. 1824–1830), made the moderate and depoliticising Restoration experiment all the more difficult. Charles' appeal to *ancien régime* traditions and customs helped alienate large parts of the French population and revived the revolutionary and

[34] Lok, *Windvanen*, 66, 69, 99, 113, 154, 284–285.

[35] Idem, "'Un oubli total du passé?' The Political and Social Construction of Silence in Restoration Europe (1813–1830)", *History and Memory* 26, no. 2 (2014), 40–75; Kroen, *Politics and Theater*.

[36] Emmanuel de Waresquiel, *Cent Jours: La tentation de l'impossible, mars-juillet 1815* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 1–20.

Napoleonic sentiments, eventually leading to the revolution of 1830 and the downfall of the Bourbons' older branch.[37]

Juste Milieu as Depoliticisation (1830–1848)

In the Revolution of 1830, the reign of the older branch of the Bourbons was replaced by the more recent Orléans branch in the so-called 'July Monarchy', named after the month the dynasty came to power.[38] Instead of Charles X's title of 'King of France by the grace of God', the new king, Louis-Philippe (r. 1830–1848), called himself 'King of the French' as a gesture to those sympathetic to the revolution. In many ways, the July Monarchy was founded on the claim that this was a return to the original constitutional foundations of the moderate monarchy as it had been established in 1814. Its official doctrine was finding a *juste milieu*, or middle way, between the revolutionary legacy and the counter-revolutionary opposition.[39] The regime's strong man was François Guizot (1787–1874), a Protestant scholar and former professor of history. He had briefly served as secretary-general of the Ministry of the Interior in 1814 but lost his position after the Hundred Days. During the second Restoration, Guizot occupied several posts but had to leave public service as a result of Decazes' fall from grace, with whom he shared many ideas. Out of office during the 1820s, he wrote his influential *History of Civilisation in Europe*, published in 1828. In this book, he argued that liberty was not a new idea; rather, it had been part of European civilisation from its earliest beginnings.[40]

[37] Idem and Benoît Yvert, *Histoire de la Restauration, 1814–1830: Naissance de la France moderne* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 433–476.

[38] Sylvie Aprile, Jean Claude Caron and Emmanuel Fureix (eds.), *La liberté guidant le peuple: Les révolutions de 1830 en Europe* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2013).

[39] Michael Broers, "The Quest for a 'Juste Milieu': The Restoration as a Silver Age?" in Reinhard Stauber, Florian Kerschbaumer, and Marion Koschier (eds.), *Mächtepolitik und Friedenssicherung: Zur politischen Kultur Europas im Zeichen des Wiener Kongresses* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2014), 33–46; Vincent Starzinger, *The Politics of the Center: the Juste Milieu in Theory and Practice, France and England, 1815–1848* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991). According to Emmanuel de Waresquiel, the term *juste milieu* was not often used in France before 1830 (oral communication).

[40] François Guizot, *The History of Civilisation in Europe*, translated into English by William Hazlitt (London: Penguin, 1997).

During the July Monarchy, Guizot was able to implement his so-called *doctrinaire* liberal ideology into administrative practice as Minister of Education and as Prime Minister. *Doctrinaire* liberalism was characterised by a positive view of the state, as long as it was led by rational and capable (male and middle-class) administrators.[41] Only the well-educated and socially elevated classes were deemed to possess the required 'political reason' and ability to control their emotions. The inability to control emotions was regarded as one of the main causes of destructive polarisation. The academic Guizot himself purportedly embodied this ideal of rational administration as a solution to the in his view excessive political polarisation that had plagued France after the Revolution of 1789. As in the other examples in this chapter, however, this project of moderate and scientific government quickly evolved into a more authoritarian rule by a strong state or was at least perceived as such by a large part of the population. Guizot was blamed for not being able to solve their economic problems and hardships. His 'middle way' government was increasingly seen as aloof and reactionary, leading to a new revolution in 1848 and the end of the July Monarchy.

The concept of a monarchical *juste milieu* was not confined to France but spread to other parts of Europe during the 1830s. The ideology was adapted to new national contexts, often acquiring new contents.[42] In 1836, for instance, the influential nineteenth-century German historian Leopold von Ranke published 'A Dialogue on Politics' (*Politisches Gespräch*) in his journal *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*. This lengthy article consisted of a fictional Socratic dialogue between a philosopher and a public servant on the best way to achieve a *juste milieu* between the forces that were, in the author's view, tearing Prussian society apart at that time: the supporters of the French Revolution and its legacy on the one hand and their reactionary opponents on the other.[43]

The philosopher, who represented Ranke's own views, was critical of the state official's attempt to maintain a mere balance between the two parties along the lines of the French model as the way to put an end

[41] Pierre Rosanvallon, *La monarchie impossible: Les Chartes de 1814 et de 1830* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); Aurelian Craiutu, *Liberalism under Siege: The Political Thought of the French Doctrinaires* (Lanham: Lexington, 2003).

[42] Broers, "Juste Milieu".

[43] Leopold von Ranke, "Politisches Gespräch", *Historisch-politische Zeitschrift* 2 (1836), 775–786.

to the country's political divisions. According to him, the 'middle way' should not simply consist of a middle position but rather represent a positive spatial and institutional ideal. Ranke equated this positive ideal with the German nation and the Prussian state as the ideal synthesis between order and individual freedom. Moreover, ideological polarisation was to be replaced by impartial scientific knowledge produced by scholars such as Ranke himself. Again, the historian drew a direct line between the aims of countering radicalism and the right kind of depoliticisation through political moderation and the authority of the state and scientific knowledge.[44]

In many ways, Guizot's government and Ranke's ideas echoed the project of the *idéologues* of a rational government based on scientific principles as the solution to a society torn by intransigent ideological struggles. In contrast to Thermidor, however, in the post-Napoleonic decades the constitutional monarchy was regarded by its proponents as the indispensable bastion of a moderate and depoliticised administration. As yet another history professor, Arnold Heeren (1760–1842) of Göttingen University, put it in his essay on the so-called 'monarchical principle', moderate and constitutional monarchy was seen as the solution to the perennial ideological struggle between the Revolution and its enemies.[45] Ranke's work similarly demonstrates an amalgam between the principles of strong monarchy and rational policies, in his case embodied in the Prussian monarchy he served as an academic and publicist.

Technocratic Counter-Revolution (1848–c. 1870)

Ultimately, the depoliticisation efforts of the Restoration and July monarchies proved unsuccessful in containing the renewed political tensions springing up across the continent in the 1830s and 1840s, culminating in the revolutions of 1848–1849. Counter-revolutionary politicians during and after these revolutions became convinced of the necessity to adopt modern ways of government and administration. After the 'failed' liberal

[44] Similar ideas were voiced by, for instance, the Prussian statesman and historian Friedrich Ancillon (1767–1837). Friedrich Ancillon, *Du Juste Milieu ou du rapprochement des extrêmes dans les opinions* (Brussels: Haumann, 1837).

[45] Arnold Ludwig Heeren, "Über die Entstehung, die Ausbildung und den praktischen Einfluß der politischen Theorien und die Erhaltung des monarchischen Prinzips in dem neuern Europa", in idem, *Historische Werke* I (Göttingen: Röwer, 1821), 365–451.

and radical revolutions and notwithstanding the conservative backlash of the 1850s and 1860s, self-proclaimed moderates from both sides looked to impartial technocratic rule and an enhanced authority of the state to circumvent the polarisation and bitterness left by the 1848 revolutions. In this new era of technocratic governance, economic expansionism, and self-proclaimed pragmatism, many depoliticising elements of the previous periods returned in a new form.[46] The rhetoric of 'realism' emerged as a modern middle-of-the-road position and as an alternative to ideological polarisation, focusing instead on positivist, purportedly nonpolitical, practices of decision-making.

This search for depoliticisation in the 1850s and 1860s took different forms in different European countries in the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions, although in all cases the trinity of the pursuit of moderation, impartial science, and state authority can be found. In France, the 1848 revolution resulted in a new Napoleonic imperial regime. Emperor Napoleon III (r. 1852–1870) once again presented the Bonapartist option as an alternative to both radical republicanism and reactionary monarchism. But this Napoleon, in contrast to his uncle, put more emphasis on economic and social modernisation rather than military victories. This time, his authoritarian version of political moderation was not implemented by soldiers but by technocrats and state officials as well as entrepreneurs.[47]

The combination of realist rhetoric, pragmatism, and an appeal to technocracy can also be found in the writings of Prussian politicians such as Ludwig von Rochau (1810–1873), Josef Maria von Radowitz (1797–1853), and Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), as has

[46] Clark, *Revolutionary Spring*, chapters 8 and 9; idem, "After 1848: The European Revolution in Government", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (2012), 171–197; Amerigo Caruso, "In Medio Stat Virtus? The Adaptability of the Moderate Project of Politics in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Europe (1830–1870)" in De Haan and Lok (eds.), *The Politics of Moderation*, 115–127; idem, *Nationalstaat als Telos? Der konservative Diskurs in Preußen und Sardinien-Piemont 1840–1870* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017); Jonathan Sperber, *Europe, 1850–1914: Progress, Participation and Apprehension* (London: New York, 2013).

[47] Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 155–184.

been explained by Amerigo Caruso among others.[48] Post-1848 Piedmont, where conservative-liberal and centrist statesmen and intellectuals such as Cesare Balbo (1789–1853), Vincenzo Gioberti (1801–1852), and Camillo Benzo di Cavour (1810–1861) tried to find a middle ground (*moderatismo*) between uncompromising revolutionaries and the renewed authoritarianism of many continental monarchies constitutes another telling case in this respect, providing a good example of the way these groups instrumentalised ideas of depoliticised 'technocratic government' to achieve their goals.[49]

Despite national variations, many common elements can be found in the 'realist' policies of the 1850s and 1860s. Clark has argued that a "European revolution in government" took place during these decades.[50] In the aftermath of the continent-wide revolutions, governments all over Europe modernised their administrations. An increased focus on economic development and progress replaced the political aim of destroying the revolutionary heritage and ideology. To quell social and political divisions, governments took an active stance in promoting and developing their economies and societies. Due to state intervention, large infrastructural projects such as railway projects were undertaken, but governments were also active in agriculture and financial markets. Generally speaking, a more holistic approach was taken towards economic policy, which was placed at the centre of government action. Moreover, science—such as statistics—was increasingly used to underpin policy. The growth of universities after 1860 also facilitated the closer integration between academia, industry, and government in the decades after

[48] Caruso, *Nationalstaat*; John Bew, *Realpolitik: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[49] Maurizio Isabella, "Aristocratic Liberalism and Risorgimento: Cesare Balbo and Piedmontese Political Thought after 1848", *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 6 (2013), 835–857; Roberto Romani, "Reluctant Revolutionaries: Political Thought in the Kingdom of Sardinia, 1849–1859", *Historical Journal* 55, no. 1 (2012), 45–73; Sergio La Salvia, "Il moderatismo in Italia", in Umberto Corsini and Rudolf Lill (eds.), *Instituzioni e ideologie in Italia e in Germania tra le rivoluzioni* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987), 169–310.

[50] "The new politics of the decade was characterised by the dominance of pragmatic, centrist coalitions whose rhetoric and outlook marked a clear departure from the ideologically polarised positions of left and right in the pre-March era." Clark, "European Revolution", 174.

1848.[51] Hence, in many ways, government policies in the 1850s and 1860s approximated the ideas first developed by the *idéologues* after the radical phase of the French Revolution, to reconstruct the political system on purportedly rational and impartial grounds rather than political polarisation. Ultimately, however, the technocratic counter-revolution also proved susceptible to renewed political contestation from about 1870 on.

Conclusion

The technocratic conservatism of the 1850s and 1860s was not an entirely new phenomenon that can only be explained in terms of a depoliticising response to the 1848–1849 revolutions, as Clark did. Already during the Directorate, one can observe the first experiments by the *idéologues* to fuse the authority of science with a strong and rational administration as ways to depolarise political debate and to achieve moderation and depoliticisation. Napoleon's authoritarian imperial and technocratic rule was similarly legitimised as a means to 'end' the political vicissitudes of the Revolution. The restored monarchies of 1815 subsequently formed an uneven combination of old regime elites and technocratic officials trained in the Napoleonic imperial civil service. After 1815, state officials like Decazes coupled monarchical moderation in Restoration France with strong centralised rule.[52] The Dutch king Willem I and his Napoleonic-era public servants legitimised their authoritarian rule on the basis of a promise of post-political prosperity. The *juste milieu* discourse was propagated in all its European variety in the 1830s by politicians and intellectuals such as Guizot and Ranke who had academic backgrounds and believed in the spread of knowledge and rule by purportedly rational men as a solution to ideological divisions. Still, the post-1848 'technocratic counter-revolution' was also different in that it put even more emphasis on pragmatism, economic growth, and the use of statistics as the basis for public policy beyond the reach of ideological divisions. Nevertheless, it shared an authoritarian streak with its predecessors.

[51] Clive Trebilcock, "The Industrialization of Modern Europe, 1750–1914", in Timothy C. W. Blanning (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern Europe* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2001), 46–75.

[52] De Waresquiel, *Restauration*; Lok, *Windvanen*, 66, 69, 99, 113, 284–285.

To conclude, this chapter has argued that the politics of depoliticisation in nineteenth-century Europe after periods of strong and often violent politicisation often consisted of a coalescence of three elements: a) the pursuit of moderation, b) government aided by purportedly impartial scientists and rational administrators, and c) the reinforcement of the authority of the state and bureaucracy. Scientific knowledge and rationalism were invoked to legitimise moderation and provide it with a supposedly nonpolitical foundation. This, in turn, served as a basis to increase state authority at a time in which the political sphere and its boundaries were hotly contested. Despite the claims that scientific knowledge and rational administration were 'impartial', these conceptions in fact fulfilled a very political role. This can, for instance, be observed in the cases of the *idéologues* around 1800, of Ranke and Guizot in the 1830s, and of the *Realpolitiker* of the 1860s, but—as documented in recent historiography—also in those of the social liberals around the First World War, those responsible for rebuilding West European democracies in the 1950s, or even in those left-wing liberal politicians criticising populist parties in the late 1990s and early 2000s.[53] While the modern history of Europe is often written in terms of an ever-expanding political sphere, it is, perhaps, better envisaged as a constant back and forth between the promise of politics to liberate its peoples and projects to push back against politics to achieve precisely the same.

[53] See the various chapters in De Haan and Lok (eds.), *The Politics of Moderation*.