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# WHAT LINKS LACK OF MERITOCRACY TO CORRUPTION?

A study of the public administration in Kosovo

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## **Abstract**

The organization of the public administration has been a subject of debate since the time of former US. President Woodrow Wilson (1887). The focus has been on whether the civil servants should be politically appointed or recruited based on their merits. Existing research has shown a correlation between meritocracy and corruption, more specifically that a higher level of meritocracy is associated with a lower level of corruption (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al, 2012). This thesis aims to study the proposed causal mechanisms that is suggested to explain this correlation. By taking a qualitative approach with informant interviews, this study gets an in-depth look into how the mechanisms function in practice. The thesis examines the public administration in Kosovo on the municipal level. The results show that all the mechanisms proposed by existing literature are prevalent, but they do not all play out as anticipated. As expected, there is an alignment of interest between the politicians and civil servants due to the political influence over the civil servants' carriers. Moreover, esprit de corps seems to be non-existing overall, nonetheless some aspects seem to be in place, such as civil service laws. Surprisingly, the mechanism called competitive salaries does not play out as expected. The salaries in the public administration are higher than in the private sector and they are sufficient to live an ordinary life, which should prevent informal payments, but in the case of Kosovo, informal payments are still being made.

*Keywords: Meritocracy, Corruption, Public Procurement, Causal Mechanisms*

**Table of contents**

**Abstract** ..... 2

**1.0 Introduction** ..... 4

1.1 Aim of the thesis..... 6

1.2 Research questions ..... 6

**2.0 Literature review** ..... 6

2.1 *Corruption* ..... 6

2.2 *Meritocracy* ..... 8

2.3 *The correlation between meritocracy and corruption* ..... 9

**3.0 Theoretical framework** ..... 10

3.1 *Separation of interest* ..... 10

3.2 *Esprit de corps* ..... 11

3.3 *Competitive salaries* ..... 12

**4.0 The case of Kosovo** ..... 13

4.1 *Low meritocracy and high corruption* ..... 13

4.2 *Public Procurement in Kosovo* ..... 14

**5.0 Method**..... 16

5.1 *Informant interviews* ..... 16

5.1.1 *Interviewees*..... 17

5.1.2 *Evaluating the information*..... 18

5.2 *Interview guide* ..... 19

5.3 *Covid-19* ..... 20

5.4 *Ethical problems* ..... 20

**6.0 Results** ..... 21

6.1 *Meritocracy or politicization?* ..... 21

6.2 *Public procurement and corruption risks* ..... 22

6.3 *Separate or aligned interest?* ..... 23

6.4 *Esprit de corps* ..... 26

6.5 *Low salaries, but competitive* ..... 28

**7.0 Conclusion**..... 30

**8.0 References** ..... 33

**9.0 Appendix** ..... 38

A. *Overview of the mechanisms in place*..... 38

B. *Interview guide* ..... 39

## **1.0 Introduction**

The organization of public administration has been a subject of debate since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thinkers like Friedrich (1940) and Finer (1936; 1941) have been on opposite sides of the debate. The former argued that public servants should be appointed by their expertise and merits while the latter argued that politicians should appoint public servants. This could be seen as whether the bureaucratic ideal (Weber, 1987) should be followed or not.

A problem with a politicized public administration is that corrupt behavior is more feasible and occurring. Studies by Rauch and Evans (2000) and Dahlström et.al (2012) have tested the relationship between meritocracy and corruption and have found that higher meritocracy in a country correlates with lower corruption. This contribution to the scientific community has shown that a more meritocratic public administration is associated with a better outcome in the form of quality of government i.e. a less corrupt country. Although the studies have shown an existence of this correlation, it is still unclear how the proposed mechanisms function. In the literature three mechanisms are being suggested and these are separation of interest, esprit de corps, and competitive salaries (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al, 2012). All these mechanisms are suggested to be sprung out of meritocracy and to cease corrupt behavior in the public administration. The main purpose of this thesis is therefore to study these proposed causal mechanisms.

As mentioned above, it is unclear how these mechanisms function in practice. The reason for this is that there has been a lack of detailed case studies with this entry point. Quantitative studies cannot with certainty explain what kind of mechanisms link the independent and dependent variables. With a qualitative approach, which this thesis takes, one can study what mechanisms take place and how they work in practice.

To study these mechanisms an approach with informant interviews will be realized, in order to get a deeper understanding if these mechanisms work in practice. The thesis will examine the civil service of Kosovo on the municipal level. The mechanisms presented earlier try to explain why higher meritocracy correlates with lower corruption. When studying these

mechanisms this thesis will take place in a context where there is low meritocracy and high corruption. The reason for this being that it is easier to observe and study the mechanisms where there is an outcome, i.e. corruption, rather than no outcome in the form of no corruption. Hence, there is possibility to see the interplay between how the level of meritocracy can affect corruption.

In Kosovo there is a low level of meritocracy and a high level of corruption. According to the theoretical framework (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al, 2012) the mechanisms anticipates that higher meritocracy will curb corruption, but when meritocracy is low and corruption is high, the mechanisms are likely to play out differently. To exemplify, instead of a separation of interest there should be common interests between public servants and politicians since the former are more likely to be politically appointed, which could potentially lead to more corruption. A deep dive in if and how these proposed mechanisms work in practice will contribute to the understanding of the relationship between meritocracy and corruption.

Corruption is a broad field of study and the focus of this thesis will be the public procurement processes. Although public procurement is only one aspect in which the public administration is involved in, it is nevertheless a process where these mechanisms can take place. Public procurement is a process where there are corruption risks and where both politicians and civil servants are involved, and this is shown by Fazekas et.al (2018). Moreover, Charron et.al (2017) have shown that higher levels of meritocracy make public procurements processes more competitive i.e less corrupt.

This thesis proceeds as follows: In section 1 the aim of the thesis will be further discussed and the research questions introduced. In section 2 a review of existing literature will be given. In section 3 the theories will be presented. Section 4 will present the case of Kosovo. In section 5 a presentation of the method will be given. Section 6 will present the results of the study. In section 7 conclusions will be made. Section 8 will consist of the reference list. Section 9 shows the appendix.

## **1.1 Aim of the thesis**

The aim of this thesis is to study the proposed causal mechanisms that links meritocracy and corruption. Moreover, it will try to contribute to the literature which has shown that higher meritocracy is associated with lower corruption (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al 2012; Cho et.al 2013; Oliveros & Schuster, 2018; Brierley, 2020) and that higher meritocracy leads to lower corruption risks (Charron et.al, 2017). These studies have found a correlation but there is still uncertainty towards how the proposed mechanisms work in practice. The study focuses on Kosovo, a context where there is low meritocracy and high corruption, and by studying what mechanisms prevail in this context will lead to a greater understanding of the relationship between meritocracy and corruption. To clarify, this thesis aims to study if the mechanisms from existing literature can be found in the context of Kosovo and if not, what other mechanisms are in place instead. To focus this thesis on studying the mechanisms that links meritocracy and corruption will contribute to a better understanding of this correlation.

## **1.2 Research questions**

This thesis aims to study if the mechanisms separation of interest, esprit de corps and competitive salaries are prevalent in Kosovo. The theory section of this paper will explain what these are. Therefore, the research questions are:

Are the proposed causal mechanisms prevalent in the context of Kosovo?

- If so, how do they play out?
  
- If not, what kind of mechanisms are prevalent? How do they play out?

## **2.0 Literature review**

### ***2.1 Corruption***

Within the corruption literature there are different explanations to corruption and its outcomes. Corruption is a broad concept, and it can be displayed in different ways, e.g. civil servants taking bribes or politicians using their position for private gain. In this thesis corruption is defined as “the “misuse of public office for private gain,” where the “private

gain” may accrue either to the individual official or to groups or parties to which he belongs.” (Treisman, 2007. p. 211).

Treisman (2007) shows that countries with a developed and long tradition of liberal democracy, freedom of press and a high share of women in parliament are correlated with lower corruption. Countries that are corrupt also show a decrease of capital flow from foreign investments and a decrease in government spending in the public sector (Graf Lambsdorff, 2005).

Corruption can be displayed in different kinds of forms, e.g. through informal payments or in the public procurement processes. The latter has been shown to be effective as measurement for corruption risk (Fazekas et.al, 2018). The reason for this is that other types of corruption measurements such as indexes by the World Bank or Transparency International are based on perception and lacks objectivity (Graf Lambsdorff, 2005; Treisman, 2007) whereas corruption risk measurements in form of public procurement processes is based on objective indicators, for example, the occurrence of single bidding or the number of competitors on the market (Fazekas et.al, 2016). Nevertheless, this does not mean that perception-based measurements are worthless, both objective and perception type indicators work as a complement to each other (Charron, 2015).

When studying the mechanisms, this thesis focuses on the public procurement process for several reasons. First, it is a process that every public institution like municipalities, counties, or states are a part of. These institutions make tenders that goes up for auction where private companies can bid for contracts and the company that bids the lowest and has also fulfilled the criterions for eligibility will usually win. Second, it is a process where both politicians and civil servants are a part of. When studying this in a context where meritocracy is low and corruption is high it is likely that politicians use civil servants as a middle man for corrupt behavior (Loftis, 2015). Third, public procurement is something concrete rather than a more abstract conception of corruption. Corruption is a wide concept and focusing on a specific part of where corruption can occur in the public administration will help to facilitate the gathering of information on what mechanisms are in place in Kosovo.

## ***2.2 Meritocracy***

It is well established in the research community that the idea of meritocracy in public administration is preferable (Wilson, 1887; Friedrich, 1940; Weber, 1987). A meritocratic public administration is correlated with higher economic growth (Evans & Rauch, 1999), higher quality of government, especially in countries with lower level of democracy (Cho et.al, 2013), more competitive public procurement processes (Charron et.al, 2017) and lower corruption (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al, 2012).

Meritocracy in this thesis is defined as “the substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the public service” (Peters & Pierre, 2004. p. 2). To clarify, meritocracy is when the criteria for “selection, retention, promotion, rewards and disciplining” are based on merits rather than political connections.

The most recent measurement for meritocracy comes from the QoG institute expert survey made in 2020 (Nistotskaya et.al, 2021). This survey was based on perceptions by country experts from 115 countries (with at least three experts per country). This survey has different indexes and one of them is the index of “professionalism” which measures how meritocratic a government is. Meritocracy is not to be looked at as a dichotomous measure but rather a spectrum where a country could be more meritocratic or less meritocratic. Even if a country is at the highest level of meritocracy there is still a chance that politicization in the public administration is prevalent. One example of this is Sweden which has a high level of meritocracy (Nistotskaya et.al, 2021) but still has features of politicization (Dahlström & Holmgren, 2017).

Why is a public administration based on meritocracy better than an administration that is based on patronage and is politicized? There are several reasons. First, it leads to a better performance in government agencies. Lewis (2007) shows us that government agencies in the US. that are run by career bureaucrats have better a better score in the PART evaluation program than politically appointed managers. This even though the politically appointed managers, on average, have a higher education and more work experience, including experience in the private sphere. Secondly, a politicized public administration will increase



the likelihood of similar preferences between the principal and the agent. The context in which this can be problematic is when the politician is corrupt. Loftis (2015) argues and finds that when politicians are corrupt and their preferences align with civil servants, the politicians increase delegation to avoid accountability. They use tool of delegation to avoid blame from voters and to get away with corrupt behavior. Meritocracy can therefore cut the bond between the politicians and civil servants and decrease of this kind of blame avoidance. Thirdly, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, meritocracy is correlated with higher quality of government whether it is economic growth (Evans & Rauch, 1999) or the main subject for this thesis, lower corruption (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al, 2012; Nistotskaya, 2021)

### ***2.3 The correlation between meritocracy and corruption***

This field of study is relatively new, but it has made progress over the years. Rauch and Evans (2000) were among the first ones to study the correlation between meritocracy and corruption, and they are the foundation for the studies that came after. Their data consists of 35 different developing countries. Different types of aspects in the Weberian ideal are studied, such as competitive salaries, internal promotion, carrier stability and meritocratic recruitment, and they test these variables with the level of corruption in the countries. Their main finding is that “meritocratic recruitment is the element of Weberian bureaucracy that is most important for improving bureaucratic performance” (Rauch & Evans, 2000. p. 62) whereas internal promotion and carrier stability are secondary.

Dahlström et.al (2012) contributed to the field by collecting a new dataset with more countries which consisted of a mix between developed and less developed ones and a new proposed causal mechanism; separation of interest (more in section 3.1). There is clear distinction being made that it is the separation of carriers rather than the separation of activities that makes this mechanism work (Dahlström & Lapuente, 2011). A separation of activities, where politicians decide on policy and bureaucrats implements it, still opens up for patrimonial public administration where the bureaucrats’ employments are dependent on their ability to act according to the politician’s desires. A separation of carriers on the other hand will make the bureaucrat more independent from the politicians and they can go against the ruling party’s will if needed be. Meritocracy creates this separation of carriers because there is

no need for political connection or aspiration to work in the public administration. The main finding from Dahlström et.al (2012) is that meritocratic recruitment reduces corruption, compared to the other mechanisms that Rauch and Evans (2000) tested.

The same result is found by Cho et.al (2013) and especially in countries where democracy is less developed. In a survey experiment conducted in the Dominican Republic, it was found that recruitment via merit examinations curbs political services and corruption (Oliverios & Schuster, 2018). Charron et.al (2017) found that public procurement processes are less corrupt when the carrier and promotion of civil servants are dependent their merits, rather than political connections. Moreover, Brierley (2020) conducted a survey experiment with 846 bureaucrats across 80 different local governments in Ghana. The main finding was that when politicians are perceived to have more control over the bureaucrats' carriers, more specifically the power to transfer the bureaucrat to another local government, the bureaucrats were more likely to facilitate the politicians' corrupt behavior.

In sum, the correlation between meritocracy and corruption is well established in the literature. The way forward for this thesis is to study the different mechanisms that are said to explain this correlation. In the next section a review of the proposed mechanisms will be given and an explanation on how they could work in practice.

### **3.0 Theoretical framework**

The theory trying to explain the correlation between meritocracy and corruption, i.e. *what links meritocracy to corruption*, can be described by three mechanisms: separation of interest, esprit de corps and competitive salaries.

#### ***3.1 Separation of interest***

An independent public administration that is separated from politics is a position that Friedrich (1940) took. He argued that civil servants are the ones that possesses the expertise and should therefore be the ones to implement and to some extent shape policy. This argument flips the normal notion of the principal-agent theory, i.e. that politicians as principals must use different mechanisms to reduce agency loss towards the civil servants and

get their political will implemented. What does separation of interest mean in the context of meritocracy?

Dahlström et.al (2012) lifts the concept and explains the mechanism called separation of interest. This separation arises when civil servants are hired on the grounds of meritocracy. This does not necessarily mean that meritocratic employees in the public administration have better capacity than politically appointed ones, but that they rather will have different interest. Politically appointed employees, or appointed by other criteria than merit, are bound to follow the will of the politicians because they are the de-facto employer. Servants that are employed based on merit will be more independent and they can therefore listen to their own expertise and judgment when they make decisions. To clarify, the independence from the politicians that the meritocratically employed civil servants possess will decrease corrupt behavior because these servants are not bound to obey corrupt actions from the politicians. This is however a double-edged sword because the civil servants can act in a corrupt manner themselves if there is no political insight. The public administration is thus in need for checks and balances, or in this case a separation of interest (Dahlström et.al, 2012). Meritocracy creates this separation of interest when the civil servants in the public administration are independent from politicians because their employment status is bound to their merit and work, not their political affiliations. Politicians on the other hand will have insight when they decide on the budget and general instructions to the agencies or units.

### ***3.2 Esprit de corps***

Esprit de corps in its simplest form could be seen as the norms of public officials. Weber (1987, p. 959) writes about how a bureaucrat should act in a bureaucracy, indicating that there should be a sense of duty towards the office and the public. The position that the bureaucrat holds should not be used for private gain. Friedrich (1940, p. 12) lifts a concept called “the fellowship of science” and it is used as a mechanism for accountability. This “fellowship” consists of the civil servants in the public administration and these servants possess the expertise that is sought after in their field. With their expertise comes the duty to act as overseers towards each other, a duty towards the office and the “corps”. In other words, there are “shared norms and goals” that bureaucrats share with each other (Evans & Rauch, 1999, p.

752). The shared norms and goals that the bureaucrats possess should be seen as such against corruption.

The mechanism for esprit de corps is used to create stability and longevity in the public administration. Stability and longevity in the workplace will then internalize the shared norms and goals towards each other, rather than having separate ones toward a political patron (Evans & Rauch, 1999). Rauch and Evans (2000) lists three things that create a stability in the public administration: employment via CV and/or test, internal promotion and civil service laws. Employment via CV and/or test works as a barrier for new civil servants to join the public administration. This makes the incumbent civil servants' position more stable because it makes it harder to replace them. Internal promotion creates incentives for civil servants to stay and make a career in the public sector. Two things occur, first, it incentivizes longevity so that the shared norms and goals continues to take place, second, it awards good behavior and encourages the employees to follow the shared norms and goals against corruption. Civil service laws help protect the employees in their work but also helps them receive higher social status. Whether it is laws specified to labor, pensions or other, it creates an incentive to stay in the public administration.

In sum, meritocracy creates shared norms and goals against corruption, it creates esprit de corps. Civil servants that are employed based on their merits have a duty towards their expertise, office and peers to uphold norms against corruption.

### ***3.3 Competitive salaries***

Not having competitive salaries, or insufficient salaries, is the most classical argument when trying to explain corruption. Sundell (2014) studies the phenomenon of informal payments, i.e. bribes, and underlines that these payments occur due to economic reasons. Moreover, studies have shown that lower wages in the public administration is correlated with higher corruption (Van Rijckeghem & Weder, 2001). When a public official does not have a sufficient salary, he or she must take informal payments to compensate for the low income. This opens a possibility for corrupt behavior whether it is a citizen that gets their errand handled quicker or a company that unfairly wins a tender in exchange for payment. Here a civil servant uses their position in the public administration for private gain which favors

citizens or companies that have the capacity to pay the bribe. This in turn makes the public administration not on equal terms for all citizens.

Competitive salaries is a mechanism that prevents corruption, but it does not work if there is no risk in taking bribes. To clarify, if the civil servants know that they will not be detected when taking informal payments, competitive salaries will not work as effectively. It may be that competitive salaries will take away the need for taking bribes but without consequences when bribes are taken corruption will still be prevalent (Rauch & Evans, 2000).

## **4.0 The case of Kosovo**

Kosovo is one of the youngest countries in Europe, declaring their independence in 2008. Although there is a discussion whether it should be acknowledged as a state or not, due to relationship between Kosovo and Serbia, this thesis will for simplicity call it a state. The Kosovo war ended in the summer of 1999 and has since then been a subject to international intervention, mainly from the UN and EU. This intervention has not only been to stabilize the region with troops but also to rebuild the institutions. One part of the rebuild has been a desire to create a Weberian bureaucracy which has not worked according to plan, this because non-merit recruitment still occurs (Tadic & Elbasani, 2018)

### ***4.1 Low meritocracy and high corruption***

The level of meritocracy in Kosovo does not exist in the form of different indexes or measurements presented by the QoG institute (Nistotskaya et.al, 2021). This makes it harder to determine the level of meritocracy in the country, but not impossible. *Carving up the pie: Monitoring report on recruitment process within Kosovo's institutions* (2019) and *Non-merit based recruitment in public institutions* (2020) are two reports by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network and the GAP-institute that oversee the recruitment process in Kosovo. The reports investigate the recruitment of higher positions in the public sector, more specifically the heads and boards of agencies. The positions that are being investigated and monitored are such positions that the government of Kosovo and the UK embassy have agreed upon to be meritocratically recruited through a Memorandum of Understanding (2020). With this memorandum, the UK embassy in Kosovo will help the government to assess which candidates are the most qualified for the positions. Both these reports state that

Kosovo has failed to incorporate and maintain meritocracy in the recruitment processes (Prebreza & Gashi 2019; GAP-institute, 2020).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2020) have conducted surveys where only 19,5% of the respondents deemed that recruitment in the public sector was based on merits and where 80,5% deemed it not to be that way. Whether it is more detailed reports or surveys, they conclude that Kosovo has a low level of meritocracy in the public administration.

When it comes to corruption, Kosovo has a high level of it according to different corruption measures. Transparency International's CPI, i.e. their corruption perception index, gives Kosovo a grade of 36 and a ranking of 104 compared to Sweden which has a grade of 85 and a ranking of 3 (Transparency International, 2021). The World Bank's index called control for corruption gives Kosovo a level of -0,6 compared to Sweden's +2.1 (World Bank, 2019). In addition to these indexes, reports have been made that investigate the corruption in Kosovo. One example of this is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report called *Corruption in Kosovo, bribery as experienced by the population* (UNODC, 2011), where 10% of the adult population have been in contact with corrupt behavior in the form of bribes. Moreover, the report showed that only 5,5 % reported the corrupt behavior to the local authorities because the behavior is not looked upon as a serious crime, that paying the bribes may favor one's position and that the report would not be taken seriously by the local authorities (UNODC, 2011).

#### ***4.2 Public Procurement in Kosovo***

The public procurement process in Kosovo is one area where corrupt behavior can occur. The definition of public procurement in this thesis is "purchase by governments and state-owned enterprises of goods, services and works" (OECD, n.d). As mentioned earlier public procurement is a process that all the public institutions take part of and where both politicians and bureaucrats are involved in. Both Charron et.al (2017) and Brierley (2020) finds that these processes are less corrupt when the politicians do not have control over the bureaucrats' carriers. Public procurement is also exposed to corruption risks and these risks could happen when there is only one bidder, a short window of time during the bidding process and low

competition in the market (Fazekas et.al 2016; 2018). These processes are essential for the public institutions. Public procurement helps the institutions to be effective with their economy when they want to deliver services to its citizens, when they themselves cannot deliver the service. To exemplify, when a municipality wants to build new apartments, they publish a procurement where private building companies can bid to win the tender and the one who meets the requirements and offers the lowest price will win.

Kosovo is a country that has had, and still has, a lot of problems with public procurement where there is a lack of efficiency due to “political intervention, non-transparency, corruption, a lack of capacity for implementing legislation and managing contracts as well as a lack of knowledge” (Kacandolli-Gjonbala et.al, 2018. p. 87). This is something that has been apparent in Kosovo since its first reform in 1999 after the war, courtesy of UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo). Since then, the country has had several different reforms trying to make the public procurement more transparent and less corrupt. Zejnullahu (2016) gives an overview of the latest reforms, one of which is legal rights for any party involved to submit a request for review when they feel that their rights have been violated during the procurement process. Although these reforms, which de jure seem to be very effective, de facto does not seem to function. Zejnullahu (2016. p. 253) concludes by stating that “reforms will remain only on paper as long as there is no political will to depoliticize and clean up the corrupt practices in public procurement”.

The American Chambers of Commerce in Kosovo published in 2012 a report called *Public Procurement in Kosovo: Challenges of the Business Community* where they surveyed 250 different companies in Kosovo. The survey showed that the businesses had a very negative view on the procurement process in Kosovo. The four most common issues faced during the procurement process were: that the technical specifications favored a specific company, over-reliance on lowest price criterion which makes it hard for higher quality companies to compete, arbitrary cancels of the procurement activity and corruption in the public procurement process (AmCham Kosovo, 2012. p. 11). This falls in line with the literature when identifying corruption risks in public procurement (Fazekas et.al, 2016; 2018)

In sum, Kosovo has a low level of meritocracy and a high level of corruption according to different detailed reports and measurements. In the public procurement process, Kosovo fails to be non-politized, have an adequate level of transparency, implement its laws and it continues to be corrupt.

## **5.0 Method**

This thesis aims to study the mechanisms where higher meritocracy is associated with lower corruption. The context in which the mechanisms will be studied is Kosovo, a country which has low meritocracy and high corruption. There are two reasons for using this context, as opposed to where meritocracy is high and corruption is low. First, it will be easier to see the interplay between the variables because there is an outcome which we can observe, i.e. corruption. Second, every mechanism has a “back side”, meaning that if a mechanism does not seem to play out in the way that is anticipated, it will most likely play out in a different way. In this context, the proposed mechanisms are anticipated work in an opposite direction compared to existing literature (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al, 2012). To clarify, due to the low meritocracy, the interest between politicians and civil servants should not be separate, but rather aligned and lead to higher corruption. The same goes for esprit de corps, where low meritocracy leads to loyalty to the politicians rather than the corps and its common ideas against corruption. Finally, if there is a lack of competitive salaries, the incentive to take bribes increases. Studying how the proposed mechanisms play out in this context will lead to a better understanding of the correlation between meritocracy and corruption.

### ***5.1 Informant interviews***

When tackling a subject that is relatively new in eyes of science and not as developed, informant interviews is a way to get the necessary information. Other studies have found information through expert surveys (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al 2012; Cho et.al 2013) and experimental surveys (Oliveros & Schuster, 2017; Brierley, 2020), but when studying the mechanisms and if/how they work in practice and behind closed doors, informant interviews is a better option due to the ability to get a deeper insight in how they play out (Esaiasson et.al, 2017. p. 272).



### **5.1.1 Interviewees**

The method that has been used when choosing informants has been centrality (Esaiasson et.al, 2017). The purpose for using this method is to get informants that are close to the public administration and in this case, it is civil servants. More specifically, the civil servants are employed at the municipal level. This has been supplemented with people that work outside the public administration but nevertheless has some insight to how the administration functions. This to get information from within and outside municipal administration. These informants are used as experts and the focus of the interviews is what happens in the public administration, connected to meritocracy and corruption, rather than their own opinions and feelings about the subject matter. One problem that can arise when dealing with informants that are based on centrality is that they are hard to replace if problems should arise, perhaps a dropout by an interviewee.

When gathering the informants, I started with two people knowledgeable in the area and they recommended me to their colleagues and acquaintances. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there has been difficulties to contact the informants and get them to participate in the interviews over telephone/internet calls. The main reason for this is that meritocracy, corruption and public procurement are sensitive topics which could incriminate themselves or someone at their workplace. This has led to that a couple of the informants declined to do the interview via telephone but offered to write the answers down instead. It was therefore decided that the questions would be sent to them. Answers that are written do not provide the in-depth answers that oral interviews give, because it is harder to ask follow up questions. But these written interviews could make it easier for the interviewees to be truthful because it is more anonymous.

This is the sample of informants that was gathered:

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Oral or Written</b>	<b>Position</b>
IPO1	Civil Servant	Municipality	Oral	Senior Official
IPO2	Lawyer	Private law firm	Oral	Associate
IPO3	Civil servant	Municipality	Oral	Senior Official

IPO4	Civil servant	Municipality	Oral	Official
IPO5	Civil servant	Municipality	Oral	Official
IPW1	Procurement manager	Private company	Written	Manager
IPW2	Civil servant	Municipality	Written	Official

Note: IP = Interview person, O = oral, W = written

### ***5.1.2 Evaluating the information***

When using informant interviews, contrary to respondent interviews, the information must be looked upon with critical eyes. The reason for this is to validate the information that the informants give. Esaiasson et.al (2017) lists four criteria that should be followed when analyzing the credibility of the sources and these are: authenticity, independence, contemporary and tendency. Authenticity means that another source, such as documents for example, can corroborate what the interviewee is saying. Independence is when the information can be confirmed from two independent sources, i.e. two different interviewees. Contemporary means how present the information is that interviewee presents, the closer in time, the more credible the information is. Lastly, tendency means if the interviewee has any underlying reasons for not telling the truth. In this context, it could be that the person is afraid to tell the truth about the public administration if that information could harm him/her. Here anonymity is important, but probably not enough. There also has to be some form of documentation to corroborate the information. All these criteria go hand in hand and therefore no one can be excluded.

In section 4.0 a review of different papers, surveys and reports was given that will be used when evaluating the information from the informants. To exemplify, if one informant says that there is no political influence in the recruitment process, that information will be compared with information from section 4.0 and other documents. This to evaluate the credibility of the information. In this case all other information indicates that political influence is a factor in the recruitment process and the informant's information does not seem to be correct.

## ***5.2 Interview guide***

The data collection tool of this thesis is an interview guide (see appendix B). Teorell & Svensson (2007) and Esaiasson et.al (2017) mention the importance of structuring the guide, depending on what kind of interview that is sought after. The guide could either be strict or flexible, the former meaning that the space for spontaneity in the questions are minimum and the latter that it could be very spontaneous. The interview guide used in this thesis is a strict one where different themes and questions have been identified to help answer the research questions.

The main themes that have been identified are separation of interest, esprit de corps and competitive salaries. These themes have questions that try to identify if the mechanisms are prevalent in Kosovo. In addition to these, there are two themes called meritocracy and public procurement. The aim for these themes is to establish how the public administration recruits its civil servants and how the public procurement process looks like in Kosovo. The questions in the main themes are formed in a manner which do not explicitly mention the mechanisms, for example, instead of asking the informant if the politicians and bureaucrats have a separation of interest, one question is posed as following; “can the politicians influence the work of the civil servant? If so, how?”. Each theme has about three to five questions each that try to identify what mechanisms are prevalent in the context of Kosovo.

The guide also features one hypothetical question under the theme of separation of interest. This question tries to see if politicians have the influence to dictate the procurement process and is posed as following; “if a civil servant assesses that company X should win the tender while the politicians thinks that company Y should win, which company will end up winning?”. This question focuses on if politicians have such a power to influence procurement processes, a process which has corruption risks (Fazekas et.al 2016; 2018).

To minimize systematic errors and achieve good validity it is crucial to clearly define the concepts that are being used (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). Throughout this thesis explanations have been given over what the subject matter is, existing literature on the subject and the theories that come with it. When reducing the risk for unsystematic errors, i.e. achieving good reliability, the oral interviews are recorded and thereafter transcribed. The reason for this is to

minimize the risk of misunderstanding the interviewee. The interviews are also conducted in Albanian which increases the importance of recordings and the transcriptions, due to that my Albanian is not on the same level as my English.

### ***5.3 Covid-19***

This thesis is written during the Covid-19 pandemic which has made the collection of the materials more difficult. The pandemic has prohibited me from being in Kosovo to conduct the interviews in person. Instead, the interviews have been conducted through the telephone or internet calling services. But this has also led to some informants deciding to answer the questions in writing instead of orally, even when anonymity is offered. This in turn leads to a poorer quality in the information, considering that written answers do not give the same depth as answers given orally. These written answers should therefore be seen as a complement rather than the main source of information.

### ***5.4 Ethical problems***

The main ethical problem is that the subject matter is one that could incriminate the persons or their surroundings. When conducting interviews about corruption and political influence in a country that has a high level of corruption a problem could be to get truthful answers. First, it could be that they themselves and/or their colleagues engage in these actions and therefore do not want to disclose information about the subject. Second, by disclosing information that is sensitive, a fear of someone knowing what you as an informant disclosed could arise, which in turn can lead to you losing your job. To work around these problems' anonymity is given to the informants. The information that is hidden to the readers are the informants' names, municipality and official title.

A second problem that can arise is that I as the interviewer unconsciously affect the interviewees. It could be that I express myself subjectively and add value to if the administration in Kosovo is good or bad. This could lead to that the interviewees try to answer in a way to please my opinion on the matter. To counteract this from happening I always have to be conscious how I express and act during the interviews, putting focus on being objective as an interviewer.

## **6.0 Results**

The presentation of the results will consist of 5 different themes; “meritocracy or politicization?”, “public procurement and corruption risks”, “separate or aligned interest?”, “esprit de corps”, “low salaries, but competitive”. The themes follow the same pattern as the interview guide. The reasoning behind this order is to systematically go through how the informants responded and identify what mechanisms are in place in Kosovo. Appendix A (section 9.0) shows a table summarizing the mechanisms.

### ***6.1 Meritocracy or politicization?***

The recruitment process in Kosovo is somewhat meritocratic, at least de jure. The process consists of three steps; a job ad where interested parties can apply with a CV, a written test and finally an oral test/job interview. IPO2 describes the process: *“First, a job ad is published and then you apply. Thereafter a commission is put in place to choose the candidates. When all the documents have been collected a list of candidates is formed. After that a written test takes place and the candidates who pass gets called into an interview. And the person that is most qualified is the one who gets the job”*.

This is the process which de jure should take place according to the law on employment Nr.03/L-212 and the civil service law Nr.03/L-149. In the latter it specifically states in chapter 3, article 11, first paragraph, that the “admission to the Kosovo Civil Service is done in accordance with the principles of merit” (law Nr.03/L-149). But when asked if there is any need for political and/or family ties to get job, IPO1 said: *“Normally in the last couple of years this has happened, the thing you are talking about. Without any form of contacts, people have been struggling to get a job. Although, this is starting to change [...]. Without any (professional) qualifications it is hard to get a job even with contacts.*

IPO3 adds to this by saying *“It depends on which position, sometimes there is a need for political contacts or connection through family, otherwise it is a problem to get a job. Now in recent years these things have been going in the right direction and emphasis has been on professionalism.*

It seems to be a common notion that merits are important, but political connections cannot be taken out of the equation. There were also interviewees that had a more reserved response, being uncertain if political connections matter, e.g. *“No, not normally. Where I am at (directorate of education) this has not happened yet. You have to fulfill the professional requirements”* (IPO4). Of the informants, only one (IPO2) stated that the process was meritocratic, and no connections were needed. This could be explained by the fact that the interviewee did not work in the public administration and that during the interview they said *“According to the law they [commission] should be independent and without political influence. But if there are cases where this happens, I do not know. I cannot give you an example”* (IPO2).

According to the interviewees, merits are important but political connections and family ties cannot be excluded. This is consistent with detailed reports on the recruitment process in Kosovo (Prebreza & Gashi 2019; GAP-institute, 2020) and survey (UNDP, 2020). The information from the informants and documentation from other sources seem to concur that politicization is prevalent and that meritocracy is low.

## ***6.2 Public procurement and corruption risks***

Public procurement is central to the public administration. It is a process where the public sector buys materials or services from private companies, so that they can ensure service to their citizens. In Kosovo, on the municipal level, the procurement process starts by a need for purchasing material or services from private companies. When the need is identified a tender opens and companies can lay their bids for the contract. Thereafter, when all the bids have been submitted, a commission consisting of three civil servants will evaluate the bids. This commission writes a report and suggests which company should win the tender and the manager of the public procurement office takes the final decision.

When investigating if there are any corruption risks, three risks were asked about; specific requirements, occurrence of single bidders and informal payments. IPO1 said this about specific requirements; *“I can give you an example from when we laid asphalt in my village. We required that the company had to have a couple of different machines to get the job done,*

*here you can have specific requirements so that they fit a company. If we [civil servants] do not give specific requirements, the head of the procurement office can meddle in the process. This is where laws can be broken because the process is not on equal terms, some companies could be favored". IPW2 concurs with this by writing; "Yes there are cases where specific requirements are formed to favor one specific company".*

When it comes to single-bidder occurrence in the procurement process this was said; *"During the time I have been here [municipality], the competition has been good. Normally there have been three or more companies for a tender (IPO3).*

Interviewer: ***Does it occur that only one company bids on a tender?***

IPO3: *"You are allowed to have only one bidder on a tender, but that shows a lack of transparency and not a correct execution of the law on public procurement"*

The question on if there are any informal payments that occurs during the procurement process has contradicting answers. IPO4 firmly states that there are no informal payments being made during the procurement process and points out that all payments that must be made are in the contracts. Meanwhile, IPO1, IPO3 and IPO5 all say that they have either seen or heard of informal payments being made during the procurement. The rest of the interviewers did not know or declined to answer. When analyzing this it should be known that IPO1 and IPO3 are senior officials and due to their higher position, they might have a different insight than IPO4.

According to the informants the public procurement process in Kosovo seems to have the corruption risks that Fazekas et.al (2016; 2018) writes about. What is also lifted in the interviews is the view that the process has improved over the years.

### ***6.3 Separate or aligned interest?***

As shown in section 3.1, separation of interests is when the civil servants are independent, more specifically that their carriers are not dependent on fulfilling the politicians' desires (Dahlström et.al, 2012). Section 6.1 showed that political connections or family ties are

factors that are important in the recruitment process. From an overview perspective, this indicates that civil servants are dependent on being the “right fit” for the politicians during the recruitment process. To get a deeper look into this, questions were asked about how to politicians can influence the civil servants work during the procurement process and what the politicians’ powers are if the servants would go against their will.

When it comes to the independence of the civil servants and if the politicians can influence their work, IPO5 said this; *“They cannot influence directly, but they have an oversight and with that they have influence”*. The mayors in Kosovo appoint their own staff, this staff includes the heads of the directorates/departments. IPO3 said *“Orders come from the mayor’s staff that says to favor this company or that person”*. There were also informants that gave a more detailed view, IPO1 said this about the politicians’ influence.

*“There are events where they tried to influence the work [of civil servants]. There are examples where the civil servants accepted it and where they did not do it.*

**Interviewer: Why does this happen? Are they afraid of losing their job?**

*“If a civil servant has gotten their job with the help of a politician, they might feel a sense of debt towards him [the politician]. Or, what do I know of how they feel, but the politician then has a form of influence”* (IPO1).

Throughout the interviews it is pointed out that politicians can have influence over civil servants, but they make the final decisions, they can choose whether to obey the politician or not. If it should occur that a politician influences a civil servant to engage in corrupt action, it is the servant who will be held accountable. This resembles the research of Loftis (2015) where politicians delegate to civil servants when interests are aligned, to avoid blame for corrupt actions. When asked about the hypothetical scenario about which company would win the tender, where the civil servant thinks that company X should win and the politician wants Y to win, one informant answered, *“There the civil servant decides. He does not dare to do something (corrupt action) if he does not have a strong relationship with the politician. There is a fear of acting in that sort of way”*. (IPO5).



IPO3, which holds a senior position, said this about the scenario; *“The company that the politician wants (laughter). No but realistically they know that there is no legal ground for that. But if both companies have the same qualifications, the politician’s choice will win”*.

There were different answers when we discussed if and what the politicians can do if the civil servants disobey them. Four means were asked about; if a transfer to another part of public administration could happen, if a salary increase could be excluded, if a promotion could be excluded and/or if the civil servant could be fired. Here there were differences between the answers, where the senior officials both stated that a transfer could happen, and it could be harder to get a promotion if the servants disobey the politicians. The informants that were new to the job and had a lower position either said that it could not happen, or they did not know. When it comes to exclusion of a salary increase and the possibility of getting fired, there was a consensus among all the informants that this could not happen due to the regulatory framework. It seems that the low level of meritocracy makes the civil servants carrier dependent on politics, which is in line with Dahlström et.al (2012). The informants that were senior officials have a different view of due to their position. They have been in the public administration longer than the lower-level officials and one of them mentioned that they were politically appointed (IPO3). When thinking about this, they might have seen or even acted in a way where they have transferred or excluded a promotion for one of their employees, which makes their information credible.

To sum up the mechanism called separation of interest, the information that was given states that politicians have an influence over the civil servants’ work, but they are not bound to follow it. In the end the official is the one who makes the final decision and who will be held accountable if corrupt behavior is found. The politicians cannot fire the civil servant or exclude a salary raise, but they most likely can transfer that civil servant or exclude their promotion. This resembles research made in Ghana from Brierley (2020), where corruption was higher when politicians had the ability to transfer the civil servants to another branch or local government. It seems like the politicians have control over the civil servant’s carrier and the ability to influence their work which leads to that there is no separation of interest, but

rather an alignment of interest. According to the theory from Dahlström et.al (2012) this aligned interest is to be anticipated due to the low level of meritocracy.

#### ***6.4 Esprit de corps***

Esprit de corps is the mechanism that creates common norms against corruption among the civil servants. This is done by creating a stability for the employees in public administration, so that they will not be incentivized to engage in corrupt behavior. This stability will also incentivize the civil servants to stay in the public administration so that these norms will continue to take place. Rauch and Evans (2000) lists CV/tests, internal promotion and civil service laws as means to create this stability and longevity.

When it comes to CV/test, section 6.1 concluded that CV and tests are used to get a job in the public administration, but political connections are important to have during this process. This makes CV/tests not as functional for creating stability because they do not work as a barrier, it is rather the political connections that is the barrier. This puts the incumbent servants at a less stable position because they could be replaced with servants that do not have the same merits as them and with servants that are more loyal to the politician rather than the corps.

To investigate how the internal promotions function in Kosovo, questions regarding the career ladder was asked. IPO5 said *“You would have to work at your position for about two-three years. The yearly assessment from your boss matters. If you get a good grade your chance increases to move forward in your carrier”*.

IPO1 gave a more detailed view; *“To advance in your carrier you need first and foremost an education. In my department (urbanism) we check how the different projects that the civil servant has been a part of have been handled, for example, if it finished within the allotted time and if the contracts have been fulfilled. This gives you a plus for carrier advancement. [...] If you do not do a good job nobody will help you”*.

There were also informants that said political connections could be of importance; *“Sometimes it depends on the work you do, and sometimes your connection to politics. There are many factors. When there is not a big competition for a new position, then you might not*

*need political ties” (IPO3) and “Advancement in your carrier is possible and this depends on politics” (IPW2)*

As mentioned in section 6.1 Kosovo has a civil service law (Nr.03/L-149). When asked about this IPO2 said that this about the law; *“It tells how the recruitment process goes, selection of candidates, the length of the working day, vacation, etc.”*. When looking at the law itself it has all these points that IPO2 mentioned. This law gives stability in the form of protection, whether it is their rights as employees, their vacation and/or their working days.

During the interviews, the topic of how the civil servants monitor each other and what happens if one sees corrupt behavior being done by their colleagues came up. This to see how the civil servants acts when corrupt behavior arises and if common norms against corruption exists. When it comes to how and if they monitor each other, IPO4 said the following; *“Normally among us, for example, if an unconscious error happens and a colleague finds out, that colleague can then point out the error and ask them to look over the matter again.”*

It does not seem that the civil servants actively monitor each other, but when errors occur, they point it out. If a civil servant is acting in a corrupt manner, for example taking informal payments during the procurement process, the following should happen; *“The project will not take place and the one who has won the tender will not be able to finish their work. The reason for this is that we do not accept this kind of behavior. We can thereafter report to the disciplinary commission and to the police. [...] (informal payments) are not looked upon as normal, it is not right” (IPO1)*

But when asked to give an approximate measure of how often corrupt behavior is reported to the disciplinary commission and other agencies, IPO3 said this: *“It does not happen that often. I would say 80/20, that 20% of the cases gets reported while 80% do not. We are a small municipality here, everybody has some form of connection to each other, either through family or friends”*.

It seems to be a common notion that corrupt behavior is not normal and wrong. Only IPO3 indicated that most of the behavior is not reported and this due to personal relationships with the colleagues. IPO3 also mentioned that when being in a small municipality and where

everybody knows someone that knows someone, it could be hard to report someone that you might have a connection to. There were also other interviewees who has either heard about or seen informal payments happen and they indicated that most of these incidences had been reported. There is not a way to verify this information, but when looking at different corruption indexes (World Bank, 2019; Transparency International, 2021) Kosovo has a high level of corruption which makes it plausible that reports on corrupt behavior does not happen at a great extent, this is true when citizens are surveyed (UNODC, 2011).

To sum the mechanism esprit de corps, out of the three means that Rauch and Evans (2000) lists to achieve stability in the public administration, only one, civil service law, seem to prevalent. CV/tests are in place but the fact that political connections are a factor in the recruitment process makes it not work as planned. The reason for this is that civil servants that are recruited on a political basis rather than merits could be less qualified and be loyal to politician rather than the corps. Internal promotion is a grey area. The informants said that merits are looked at and do matter, but political connections may help civil servants to advance in their carriers. As to if the civil servants monitor each other and the view on corrupt behavior, as in informal payments, are not looked upon as normal or right. Civil servants do not monitor each other actively, but if wrongdoing is found and it is unconscious, colleagues will point out the misdoing. If corrupt behavior is found there are mechanisms in place where the servants can report to the disciplinary commission and to the police. It is unclear how well this works, as informants indicate that corrupt behavior is being hidden. In line with Rauch & Evans (2000), most of the aspects that esprit de corps has is not prevalent in Kosovo due to the low level of meritocracy, the political connections are a factor which can shift the loyalty from the corps and its common ideas to the politicians. There are also some aspects that are in place such as a civil service law and the notion that corrupt behavior is wrong.

### ***6.5 Low salaries, but competitive***

The last mechanism that this thesis studies is competitive salaries. When the salaries in the public sector are competitive to the ones in the private sector and when they are sufficient, there is no need for civil servants to take informal payments. This presupposes that there are forms of consequences when taking these payments, good salaries alone cannot curb corruption. As seen in the previous section, there are forms of disciplinary actions that can be

taken if this behavior is reported, but to the extent as to which this happens in Kosovo is unclear.

When asked about the level of the salaries in the public sector compared to the private sector, the informants said that they were on an equal level. Although they are on an equal level, it is pointed out that salaries in Kosovo are low, as IPO1 said; *“It depends on what kind of work it is. Normally it is at the same level. In some lines of businesses, the private sector has higher salaries and in some the public sector has higher salaries. It is not a big difference. But generally, the salaries are low.”*

IPO5 follows; *“Currently, they are at the same level. The private sector is improving because the salary in the public sector has kind of stagnated. And it also depends on what position you have.”*

According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2019) the public administration has an average gross wage of 584 Euros a month while the private sector has a gross wage of 411 Euros a month. The public administration has therefore a higher wage average which makes them not only competitive but even higher than the private sector. Although they are higher in the public sector, the average annual income in Kosovo is low compared to more developed countries in the world, e.g. Sweden where the average gross wage is 3836 Euros a month (SCB, 2020).

When asked if there is any need for the civil servants to take informal payments, IPO3 said this; *“Normally there is no need because you can live an ordinary life with 400 Euros in Kosovo. But if you want to live a more luxurious life, then the need for informal payments may arise”*. IPO5 follows; *“Like there is no need for it, but there is a possibility where it can happen. But not to a great extent”*

In sum, the salaries in the public administration in Kosovo are at a low level, but they are competitive, even higher than the private sector. This makes it profitable to work in the public administration compared to the private sector. According to the informants the salaries are sufficient and there is no need for informal payments to live an ordinary life. To live a more

luxurious life, there could be a need and a possibility to take informal payments. The mechanism is prevalent in this context which is not to be expected according to Rauch and Evans (2000). There should not be a need to take informal payments due to the competitive salaries, but as mentioned in section 3.3 there also must be some consequences for taking these payments. This is in line with the argument posed by Cornell and Sundell (2020), that decent wages could be necessary but not enough to curb corruption. It could be that the civil servants are more likely to look the other way when informal payments occur and that the citizens do not report to the authorities at a great extent (UNODC, 2011).

## **7.0 Conclusion**

The purpose of this thesis has been to study the proposed mechanisms that links meritocracy to corruption (Rauch & Evans, 2000; Dahlström et.al, 2012). The mechanisms are separation of interest, esprit de corps and competitive salaries and they try to explain why higher levels of meritocracy is correlated to lower levels of corruption. Instead of conducting the study in a context where there is a high level of meritocracy and low level of corruption, this study has done the opposite, i.e. a context where there is a low level of meritocracy and high level of corruption. This context is Kosovo. The main reason for using Kosovo is that there is an outcome which can be observed, i.e. corruption, which makes it easier to see the interplay between the variables. To study the mechanisms a qualitative approach with informant interviews has been taken. The reason for this is to get an in depth look to see what mechanisms are in place and how they play out. The informants consist mainly of civil servants in the municipal level.

The results show that the proposed casual mechanisms are in place, but all do not play out as anticipated in the literature (see appendix A for detailed overview). Separation of interest plays out as anticipated, meaning that due to the low meritocracy, the interest between the politicians and civil servants are aligned. The reason for this is that politicians can influence the carrier of civil servants during the recruitment process and after. Esprit de corps overall plays out as anticipated, but it has some aspects that are not anticipated. On one hand, the influence of the politicians in the recruitment process and to some extent the process of

promotion, makes the civil servants loyal to the politicians and decreases stability in the public administration. On the other hand, there is a civil service law that creates some form of stability and there is a common notion that corruption is wrong. Competitive salaries is the mechanism that does not play out as anticipated. The salaries in the public administration are at higher level compared to the private and there is no need for informal payments to live an ordinary life. Despite this, informal payments are prevalent, and the reason could be that civil servants and citizens do not report this kind of behavior to a great extent.

In relation to existing literature, separation of interest is the mechanism that clearly plays out as anticipated in this context (Dahlström et.al, 2012), where meritocracy is low and corruption is high. The low level of meritocracy leads to the influence over the civil servants and their carriers by the politicians, which means that the interests are aligned between these two actors. The majority of esprit de corps plays out as anticipated by Rauch and Evans (2000) in this context, meaning that there is a lack of independence for the civil servants. There are also parts of this mechanism that plays out and is not expected, there is a civil service law that creates stability and longevity and a common notion that corruption is wrong. Competitive salaries does not play out as anticipated (Rauch & Evans, 2000), meaning that informal payments are being taken despite the fact that there is no need for them to live an ordinary life in Kosovo.

This thesis is a qualitative study which comes with different implications. It is true that the mechanisms can be studied in depth with a qualitative approach, but it lacks the ability to draw general conclusion. To exemplify, the results of this study cannot say that the same results can be found in public administrations all over the world that has low meritocracy and high corruption. Future research should therefore study the mechanisms in different administrations across the world to see if similar results can be found. Nevertheless, this thesis adds to the existing literature by giving an in-depth look into how the mechanisms that links meritocracy and corruption function.

For Kosovo, it seems that the attempts to create a meritocratic public administration has failed. De jure, the legal framework is clear that employment is based on merits, but de facto political and family ties are an important factor in this process. As the mechanisms show, the

lack of meritocracy and the increase of political influence that comes with it, makes the civil servants inclined to engage in corrupt behavior. The low meritocracy is not the source of all corruption in Kosovo, but it is certainly a factor. To combat this Kosovo needs to minimize the possibility for politicians to influence the civil servants. One example for such a step, at least in the municipal level, is to not allow political appointees as heads of directorates. This will eventually weaken the politicians influence on the public administration.



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## 9.0 Appendix

### A. Overview of the mechanisms in place

Mechanism	Prevalence	How?	Description
Seperation of interest	Yes	As anticipated. The interests are aligned due to the low meritocracy	Politicians have an influence over the civil servants' work. Political ties are a factor in the job recruitment process. Politicians can transfer the politician to different departments and exclude promotion.
Esprit de corps	Yes	Overall as anticipated, but some aspects are diverging. Esprit de corps is prevalent but weak.	Loyalty to politicians due to political ties in the recruitment process. Internal promotion is based both on merit and political connections. Civil service laws exist that create stability. Corruption is not seen as normal and right and there are institutions where corrupt behavior can be reported, e.g., disciplinary commission.
Competitive salaries	Yes	Not as anticipated. Salaries are competitive which should curb informal payments. But they are still prevalent.	Salaries in the public administration are at a higher level than the private sector. There is no need to take informal payments to live an ordinary life.

## B. Interview guide

Theme	Questions
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At which directorate are you employed at?</li> <li>• What is your position there?</li> <li>• What are your tasks?</li> <li>• For how long have you been working there?</li> </ul>
Meritocracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you get a job at the municipal level in Kosovo?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By CV? By a test?</li> <li>• Do you need political connections or family ties to acquire a job?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are there differences between the directorates in this aspect?</li> <li>• Are there differences between the government and the municipal level?</li> </ul>
Public procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the role of the civil servant in the public procurement process?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are they managing the process? Do they make the decisions?</li> <li>• What is the role of the politicians?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How is the competition in the public procurement process?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, how many bidders are there?</li> <li>• How often does it happen that only one company bids?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are there clear patterns where companies that have political connections are favored in the process?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does this look?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are there any examples where contracts have been tailor made for a specific company through:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific requirements?</li> <li>• Short time for the tender?</li> <li>• Informal payments?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Theme 1: Seperation of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the politicians influence the work of the civil servants?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, how?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Hypothetical</i>: If a civil servant assesses that company X should</li> </ul>

	<p>win the tender while the politician thinks that company Y should win, which company will end up winning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why does this happen?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the politicians have the power to fire a civil servant?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a civil servant goes against the will of the politician, what can happen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can a transfer of the civil servant happen?</li> <li>• Can wage increases be excluded?</li> <li>• Can a promotion be excluded?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Theme 2: Esprit de corps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a clear career ladder in the public administration? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does it look?</li> <li>• Who decides on promotions?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Are there any special civil service laws in place?</li> <li>• Generally, among civil servants, how is it seen when a colleague does not do everything “according to the books”, for example, taking informal payments or being politically influenced?</li> <li>• Is there any monitoring between civil servants? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you find a colleague acting in a suspicious way, do you as civil servants notice and confront them?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If a civil servant would take informal payments, how would this be looked upon? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would it be normal?</li> <li>• If not, what could happen to them?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do the politicians have any form of insight in the civil servants work?</li> </ul>
<p>Theme 3: Competitive salaries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are the wages in the public sector compared to the private sector? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are they higher or lower?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• As a civil servant, is there any need for taking informal</li> </ul>



	<p>payments from the citizens?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any economic incentives for obeying the politicians, even though the civil servant has a different view on the matter?</li> </ul>
Ending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any questions that I have forgotten to ask, but that are important?</li> <li>• Do you have anything you would like to conclude with?</li> </ul>