Supplementary Materials

Impartial Administration and Peaceful Agrarian Reform:

The Foundations for Democracy in Scandinavia

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Alternative explanations

Expanded assessments of the major alternative theories of peaceful agrarian reform

This section provides elaborated discussions of the major alternative theories of peaceful agrarian reform, as outlined in the section on "Assessing existing theories" in the main paper. It treats each theory in turn, providing discussions of the theoretical logic and supplementary evidence. Finally, I summarize by reflecting on the logic of comparison between the five cases.

I identify agricultural productivity, rural inequalities, and the strength of absolutism as the major alternative explanations because they dominate the existing literature and because they represent structural or institutional conditions with the potential to explain variations in peaceful agrarian reform across countries (see the overviews in Tuma 1965, 167-168; Albertus 2015, 151-152).

Agricultural productivity

The starting point for any socioeconomic reform idea and the ease with which it is implemented can be traced to the basic need for it. The literature points to lower agricultural productivity as such a scope condition, which, particularly in a context of high rural population growth, predicts a willingness, at least in the long term, to reform but also higher levels of rural conflict in general and in the process of reform (see Tuma 1965, 173; Jones 1990, 330-331). On the other hand, the short-term redistributive losses of reform for the landed elites would likely make them fight it (Ansell and Samuels 2014). Moore (1966, 19-20) took a step back, looking at how agrarian economies were organized, and proposed that the early commercialization of agriculture and manorial systems made it possible for peasants to become self-sufficient 'yeomen,' thus decreasing the total amount of peasant grievances and the costs of reform (see also Paige 1975, 11-12). Thus, there are mixed expectations regarding

the effect of agricultural productivity, but it is likely essential in explaining cross-country differences in peaceful agrarian reform.

According to Allen (2000, 19), 18th century Germany and France were 'predominantly agrarian economies' in which agricultural productivity was initially relatively low and sank in response to comparatively high levels of rural population growth. The noble seigneurs in France never entered into commercial agriculture prior to the revolution but lived off peasant obligations and only increased taxes and labor dues in an effort to deal with bad harvests and general recession in the 1770s and 1780s (Moore 1966, 53; Skocpol 1979, 121). Likewise, the feudal manorial estates system in Prussia, while very different from the French system, meant that landlords constantly acquired the best arable land and destroyed free enterprise (Clark 2006, 161-162). This traditional paternalism only gradually eroded during the 19th century's capitalist transformation (Berdahl 1988, 4-5).

While Allen (2000) does not consider the Scandinavian countries, similar information from other studies suggests placing the Scandinavian countries in the same group as France and Prussia. Based on the first nation-wide census in 1764 and parish records, Jones (1990b, 335) estimates that Sweden's population rose by 61 % over the 18th century, and that the rural population share amounted to 80-90 %. By all likelihood, based on parish records and the preliminary census of 1769, these figures were similar in Denmark (Lassen 1966, 140; Hansgaard 1981, 24) and Norway (Drake 1965, 99) with around 50 % population growth rates. Researchers of Scandinavian history in this period unanimously point to staggering rural growth in predominantly rural populations (e.g. Barton 1986, 19; Gustafsson 1994, 30).

The Scandinavian agricultural economies were generally backward in European perspective (e.g. Oakley 1990, 363-364). Apart from restrictions on peasants' free use of their lands in

Denmark, the village system of common fields, common across Scandinavia, was highly ineffective in delivering food for the expanding rural populations through the 18th century (Østerud 1978, 77-83; Oakley 1990, 367).

Rural inequalities

Higher rural inequality, i.e. where peasants' property rights were fewer and manorial dues more extensive, created more intense grievances and thus stronger motivation for engaging in violence (Jenkins 1982). Likewise, higher landholding inequality would limit reforms because it raised the stakes and thus landlord opposition and reflected higher capacity to suppress demands for reform (Ansell and Samuels 2014).

A large literature documents that landholding inequality in 18th century France was among the lowest in Europe, and the peasants escaped serfdom at an early date in comparison with most of the rest of Europe (Bloch 1966; Jones 1990b, 336). Peasants owned about a third of all arable soil on the eve of the revolution, and these freeholders were protected (Hazan 2014, 16-17).

While social norms of feudalism were particularly strong in France, actual landholdings and peasant emancipation prior to the 18th century mostly resembled those of Sweden and Norway. Feudalism and serfdom never took hold in Sweden and Norway (Tilton 1974, 565), and their pre-reform shares of freeholders were extraordinary by European standards, just like the French counterpart (see Tønnesson 1981, 193; Aronsson 1992, 42). Moreover, Swedish peasants, although worse off in the Eastern parts and Skåne, were legally independent subjects and economically autonomous in much the same way as in France, while Norwegian peasants were the most free in Scandinavia by all measures (Østerud 1978, 108; Barton 1986, 24; Gadd 2000, 76-77).

We can bundle together Prussian and Danish lord-peasant relations at the other end of the scale. Peasant landholdings in 17th century Denmark were small even by European standards, probably ranging between 1 and 2 % (Tønnesson 1981, 192). Peasants on Zealand, Lolland, and Falster were serfs since medieval times, regulated by *Vornedskabet* (Hvidtfeldt 1962, 10). Abolished in 1702, *Vornedskabet* was replaced by *Stavnsbåndet* in 1733, applying serfdom to the whole country, excepting only Amager and Bornholm. By any criterion, peasant life in Denmark was nasty and brutish, reflecting some of the most unequal lord-peasant relations in Europe (Løgstrup 2015, 451).

The manorial estates in Prussia worked much like in Denmark. In fact, the Danish system was originally inspired by the medieval East-Elbian institution of *Herrschaft* (Løgstrup 2015, 43). The Prussian peasant was not a serf because his rights were not tied to land, and a substantial proportion of peasants were free tenants with hereditary rights or waged labor as well as a small group of privileged peasants with status as *Bauern* (Clark 2006, 162; Byres 2009, 48). Nevertheless, the great majority of peasants were under the lord's repressive command, with extensive mandatory labor services, non-fixed and therefore often increasing rents, and maximum wages (Clark 2006, 62; Byres 2009, 47). The proportion of land in noble hands in the 18th century is estimated at about 40-60 % depending on the exact period of investigation, and the peasant landholding share was most likely very small east of the Elbe (Harnisch 1986, 45; Clark 2006, 155).

Strength of absolutism

More absolutist monarchies should deter opposition to reform because this particular regime type involved a minimum of accountability, including a lack of veto power on the part of landlords. This would clear the way for large-scale change, thus strengthening the prospects of peaceful agrarian reform (Scott 1990, 1; see also Albertus 2015, 1-6).

Danish-Norwegian absolutism was introduced in 1660 by Frederick III and codified in the King's Law in 1665. This law annulled the coronation charter and thus the king's dependence on the Council of the Realm. From this point, Denmark-Norway was a hereditary monarchy in which the king was, formally at least, only responsible to God. The old nobility was stripped of all its former political powers (Jespersen 2007, 61). This system has been termed the most centralized and absolutist in Europe (Gustafsson 1994, 18). While the regime evolved into bureaucratic absolutism with greater roles played by the colleges and the Council of State during the 18th century (Hansgaard 1981, 22), the royal prerogatives continued even under the sick King Christian VII (Kjærgaard 1994, 216-217).

Absolutism in Prussia emerged in the 17th century. The foundation was laid by Frederick William 'the Great Elector' (1640-1688), who centralized political powers around the person of the king and stripped the local diets, the *Landtäge*, of their privileges in law-making and taxation. The sovereign prince became the source of all law (Rosenberg 1958, 35-39; Clark 2006, 88). From around 1740, under Frederick I, a system of bureaucratic absolutism equivalent to the Danish one became dominant. His successor, Frederick II 'the Great' (1740-1786), consolidated this regime internally and externally. Yet, in this regime, the Prussian king had also become more dependent on the local political powers of landlords than what ever existed during the Danish absolutism (see Behrens 1985, 57-62).

Ancien Régime France can be described as an incomplete version of absolutism. In contemporary Europe, it was seen as the symbol of absolutism. However, French politics until 1789 was a patchwork of old seigneurial political privileges, most importantly centered in the 11 *parlements*, which not even staunch monarchs such as Louis XIV could break. Although royal authority was officially absolute, it proved impossible to induce the *parlements* to accept the ideology of absolutism and the king's council (Behrens 1985, 47; Parker 1997; Tocqueville 2011, 39-40).

The Swedish political system was at times very different from the other four, most notably during the so-called Age of Liberty (*Frihetstiden*, 1719-1772). On the one hand, the role of the king in Sweden, as published in the Instrument of Government (*Regeringsform*) from 1719, was the exact opposite of the Danish king: The king appointed a Council of the Realm, which was accountable to a diet consisting of four estates (nobility, clergy, burghers, and peasants) with long-held rights of representation. The diet formed deputations and committees on a running basis to draft policies (Gustafsson 1994: 48-51).

On the other hand, currents of hierarchical rule from Europe in the late 17th century mixed with representative traditions even during the Age of Liberty. In turn, the 18th century was a constant battle between the nobility and the king for control over the diet and policy prerogatives: The 1720 constitution replaced years of strong monarchical rule under Charles XI; then followed the Age of Liberty; the coup d'état by Gustav III in 1772 reinstated absolutist monarchy by which the king could ignore the Privy Council but had to take its advise; finally, this system continued until Gustav IV was deposed by a group of nobles in 1809, thus establishing a modern-day parliamentary system (Möller 2011: 24-27). Thus, in certain periods, Sweden's absolutism resembled that in Prussia and Denmark-Norway while in others its constitutionalism resembled the weak absolutism of France. Yet, although absolutist monarchy prevailed before and after the Age of Liberty and the legacy of the diet was probably less pronounced than hitherto assumed (Almbjär *forthcoming*), the contrast to Denmark-Norway is clear (Gustafsson 1994, 46).

Logic of comparison

In sum, as summarized in Table 1 of the main paper, the Scandinavian countries are not completely different across the three major explanatory factors. Denmark and Norway shared a strong, absolutist regime; Norway and Sweden shared low levels of rural inequality; and all

three shared low levels of agricultural productivity. Likewise, the Scandinavian countries are not completely similar to France and Prussia. Denmark had higher rural inequalities and stronger absolutism than France; Sweden had lower rural inequalities and weaker absolutism than Prussia; and Norway most notably had lower rural inequalities than Prussia. Despite these patterns, the point is that none of the three factors were similar across Scandinavia while being absent in France and Prussia (see Mahoney and Goertz 2004; Slater and Ziblatt 2013, 13). They are thus insufficient for explaining the variation in peaceful agrarian reform across the five cases.

Indeed, the logic of comparison rests on two principles, which serve to reject rival hypotheses and probe the likely importance of my proposed explanatory factors of state control and meritocracy: First, to explain the similar outcome of peaceful agrarian reform across Scandinavia, I search for common factors that might explain this similarity. Only low levels of agricultural productivity qualify. Second, I search for factors that were shared in Scandinavia but absent in France and Prussia where other factors made peaceful agrarian reform possible. On this basis, I can also exclude agricultural productivity, which was low in France and Prussia as well.

In turn, I treat low agricultural productivity as a necessary (scope) condition for reform rather than an explanation of the variation in extent and peacefulness of reform. Rural inequalities and strength of absolutism varied between Scandinavia on the one hand and France and Prussia on the other but also within Scandinavia. Thus, they are both unnecessary and insufficient for explaining the variation in peaceful agrarian reform.

The theoretical role of petitions and representative courts

An alternative explanation of peaceful agrarian reform focuses on people's opportunities to seek influence in the policy-making and implementation phases through either of two channels: petitions to the administration and the king and by being represented as jury members in courts. Recent contributions of Boucoyannis (2021) and Carpenter (2021) highlight that petitions and representation at the king's court played positive roles for law enforcement and abidance in the early-modern world and later worked as preconditions for stable democratization by instilling norms of the rule of law and providing the means to constrain the political executive. In addition, petitions and representative courts were part of what Møller (2015) has termed the 'medieval roots of democracy,' which also strengthened the prospects of building well-functioning bureaucracy in the early-modern period. In this way, petitions and court representation are alternatives to state control and meritocracy in terms of explaining peaceful agrarian reform and, later, stable democratization because they paved the way for bureaucracy and worked as bottom-up factors with ordinary people as key actors rather than top-down factors with state officials as actors.

However, Boucoyannis (2021) also points out that petitions and court representation were used by rulers to stabilize their rule, implying that petitions were allowed to exist and function rather than forced upon rulers. In fact, state strength and impartiality to a significant extent determined the effect of petitions and court representation. For instance, petitions could not be aggregated from local to national level and thus could not be used by the king if there were no strong administrative structures to connect center and periphery. Moreover, as Carpenter (2021, 28) demonstrates, petitions could be either rejected, opposed, or supported by officials and officeholders depending on the nature of representative institutions and administrative structures. For instance, more bureaucratic administrations would likely treat petitions more equally

(see Rothstein and Teorell 2008). Thus, following these arguments, the positive effect of petitions and court representation on peaceful agrarian reform do not undermine the importance of state control and meritocracy. Rather, the impact of state control and meritocracy conditioned this positive effect.

Below, in the section on "The 'Early-Modern-Roots' hypothesis on Scandinavian democratic exceptionalism," I examine petitions and court representation as an alternative explanation empirically by considering whether local peasant participation rights, including rights of petition and court representation, explain the variation in peaceful agrarian reform across the five cases (see Table A1). I conclude that they do not, mainly because these rights were quite weak in Denmark and weaker than in Prussia and France already from the 1500s, i.e. before the onset of modern state-building, and continuing through the 18th century. Rather, what I show in the analysis of policy-making and implementation around agrarian reform in the main paper supports that the positive effect of petitions and court representation depended on an impartial local and central-level administration. Only in Scandinavia, where both state control and meritocracy were prevalent, did petitions and courts effectively represent both peasant and landlord interests.

The 'Early-Modern-Roots' hypothesis on Scandinavian democratic exceptionalism

One of the most dominant, traditional explanations of Scandinavian democratic exceptionalism may be summarized in the so-called 'Early-Modern-Roots' (EMR) hypothesis, which argues that the stability of present-day Scandinavian democracies can be traced back to an unbroken pattern of consensus-oriented and peaceful politics and societies from around the 16th century. This argument is mostly associated with the Swedish case in what is referred to as its *Sonderweg* to modern democracy (see e.g. Castles 1973; Tilton 1974; Aronsson 1992; Österberg 2008; Trägårdh 2010; Möller 2011, 23; for a review, see Bengtsson 2019a), but it is also

presented as relevant for Denmark (e.g. Østergaard 2018), Norway (e.g. Eckstein 1966), and the Nordic countries as a whole (Stråth 2012; for a review, see Nielsen 2009).

Although these EMR-accounts emphasize different aspects of Scandinavian (notably Swedish) developments, they share two claims. First, consensus politics in Scandinavia was particularly strong already from the early-modern period, i.e. including the 18th century where agrarian reforms took place, resulting from an unusually extensive pattern of peasant participation in administration and politics at the village and parish levels. Second, the same culture and institutions of local peasant participation transferred into national democratic systems in the 19th and early 20th centuries through various mechanisms, most notably by creating a politically powerful and resourceful peasantry pushing for liberalization and democratization and by conditioning the emergence of auspicious state-society relations.

These claims have been deeply criticized (e.g. Linde 2000; Nielsen 2009; Mikkelsen, Kjeldstadli, and Nyzell 2018; Bengtsson 2019a; 2019b; Bengtsson and Olsson 2020). On a general note, notions of the deep roots of social equality, trust, or peasant participation in local government from medieval or Viking times rest on thin evidence that is often contradictory across the three Scandinavian countries (Bagge 2014, 169-171). Likewise, the positive role of petitions rests on limited evidence of contemporary attitudes and questionable assumptions (Almbjär 2019). In the following, I outline how my explanation of Scandinavia's stable democratization in the 19th and early 20th centuries aligns with parts of these criticisms.

First, the importance of local consensus politics for agrarian reform in the 18th and early 19th centuries does not stand a systematic examination in which we compare the three Scandinavian countries with Prussia and France. While recent evidence (e.g. Berglund 2018; Mikkelsen 2018; Sandvik 2018; see also Linde 2000, 27) suggests that Scandinavian societies were less peaceful than suggested by, for instance, Österberg's (2008) writing on Sweden, there were clearly more violent rebellions in 18th France, notably in relation to frustrations among the rural

population over the lack of agrarian reform and eventually during the revolutionary years (Skocpol 1979, 125; Jones 1988, 67-68; for comparisons with Scandinavia, see e.g. the recent analyses by Sandvik 2018, Berglund 2018, and Mikkelsen 2018). Also, while evidence on peasant attitudes regarding state authorities and politics in the 18th century is thin, there is relative agreement that consensus, including during agrarian reforms, was stronger than elsewhere, especially contrasted by France (for Sweden, see Linde 2000, 26; Berglund 2018, 280-281; Viitaniemi 2021; for Denmark and Norway, see Gustafsson 1994, 81-82; Bregnsbo 1997; Johansen 2006, 163; Mikkelsen 2018, 17-18; Jørgensen 2019, 416-417; Dørum 2011; 2021, 321).

However, comparisons also demonstrate that the relative Scandinavian peace and consensus were not results of the power of peasants to influence political-administrative matters through local bodies. Neither do peasant participation rights explain the pattern of state-building from the 16th and 17th centuries. From medieval times, but most pronounced from the 1720s, Swedish peasants had comparatively strong access to voicing their concerns and getting influence on local- and national-level issues through parish meetings and local courts, and more so than in Norway and Denmark (Oakley 1990, 369). This involved settling of local disputes in a kind of democratic politics, rights of consultation with the estates assembly, and opportunities for petitioning to the central administration (Nielsen 2009, 152; Viitaniemi 2021). From medieval times, Norwegian peasants were in an intermediate position due to the weak aristocracy and traditional peasant-led communes, which nevertheless did not transfer easily to the national level as a consequence of Denmark's superior position in the union (Imsen 1997, 21-22; Dørum, Hallenberg, and Katajala 2021). Yet, since the 1500s and even more so in 18th century Denmark, peasants lacked institutions of voice. Danish villagers only met to distribute communal obligations and settle disputes while the village landlord was entitled to intervene. More-

over, there were no institutional means by which peasants could make significant political proposals other than petitioning the king directly (Jørgensen 1985, 67; Dørum, Hallenberg, and Katajala 2021). Thus, in contrast to Sweden, opportunities for peasant participation in local administration and politics were limited in Denmark.

While strong social hierarchies dampened their de facto influence, the rights of villagers in France resembled those in Sweden, with *laboureurs* (the most powerful tenant farmers, who managed their own plow team) having preponderant influence in village assemblies (Mousnier 1971, 27). Also like in Sweden, the French villages were organized and administered independently of the lordship; since medieval times, they elected their own representatives among villagers, and they maintained these rights throughout the 18th century (Tocqueville 2011, 51-53).

Table A1: Adding local peasant participation rights as alternative explanation

	Sweden	*Denmark*	*Norway*	*France*	*Prussia*
Local peasant participation rights	Strong	Medium-Weak	Medium-Strong	Medium-Strong	Medium-Strong
Agricultural productivity	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Rural inequalities	Low	High	Low	Low	High
Strength of absolutism	Medium-Low	High	High	Medium-Low	Medium-High
Peaceful agrarian reform	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

From medieval times and continuing into the 19th century, the participatory rights of Prussian peasants are better compared with those of France and Sweden than those of Denmark. At the village level, peasants were considered a group with corporate rights; besides being able to petition the king and later appeal to higher courts, they were entitled to elect and depose the

priest, collect and distribute tithes, administer hunting and fishing rights, and take part in legal affairs of the village (Sabean 1976, 355; Hagen 2002, 424).

In sum, as shown in Table A1, this part of the EMR-hypothesis does not explain satisfactorily the variation in peaceful agrarian reform between the five cases. Notably, the participatory rights of Swedish peasants in local affairs were not as superior as is often claimed, and participation rights were certainly less pronounced in Denmark than in France and Prussia.

Second, the EMR-hypothesis implies that farmers played a uniformly positive role for democratization across Scandinavia. Although peasants in Norway and Denmark were clearly leading in successful reforms towards liberal constitutionalism and parliamentarism and as (at least partial) supporters of universal suffrage, recent research, based on the Swedish case, shows that this assumption is untenable for the whole of Scandinavia. After the 1809 constitutional reform in Sweden, Swedish farmers were for long most interested in economic improvements, but in the 1840-1841 assembly (known as *den store Riksdagsopposition*), a significant portion of the peasant estate became the first to propose radical liberal reforms for extending the suffrage and introducing a unicameral, parliamentary system (Christensen 2006, 728). Nevertheless, despite continued efforts to introduce a two-chamber system in 1848 and, once again, a unicameral system in the early 1860s, the farmer radicals were defeated by an alliance between conservatives in the noble estate and wealthier freeholders in the peasant estate. The result, the 1866 reform, did constitute a step towards democracy by introducing regular elections in a two-chamber system abolishing the estates-based voting restrictions, but it was also a more conservative reform than most contemporary reforms in Europe and Scandinavia due to very restrictive suffrage rules enfranchising only around 6 % of the total population (Christensen 2006, 743-744; Bengtsson 2019a, 136-143; 2019b, 10-11).

On balance, the peasant estate in Sweden eventually contributed vitally to introducing parliamentarism, but only with a conservative first chamber, and it remained staunchly opposed

to broadening the suffrage. Thus, the agrarian reforms in Sweden did not create a unified class of independent farmers with strong ideas of political liberalism as in Norway and Denmark. Rather, it served to split the interests of the wealthy freeholders, who had acquired most lands through the enclosures and liberalization of property rights, on the one side and smallholders, tenants, and those with medium-sized farms on the other (Bengtsson and Olsson 2020, 575).

In sum, my explanation of stable democratization in 19th and early 20th century Scandinavia differs from the EMR-hypothesis in two key respects. First, peaceful agrarian reforms in Scandinavia came about due to relatively high levels of state control over local administration and meritocracy – not local participatory rights of peasants, which were in fact weaker in Denmark than in the rest of Scandinavia as well as Prussia and France. Thus, my account emphasizes top-down rather than bottom-up mechanisms of governance. Second, rather than any legacy of early-modern consensus politics, which was, as seen, not particular for Scandinavia, the high levels of state control and meritocracy best explain the different trajectories of 19th and early 20th century democracy in Scandinavia compared with Prussia and France. I have identified a clean break in development, emerging in the 16th and 17th century warring period, which forged unusually penetrative bureaucracies in Scandinavia with greater emphasis on and ability to impartially implement rural-economic modernization. Going into the age of mass politics after 1789, this empowered the peasantry to create autonomous associations and more auspicious state-society relations with positive effects on the stability of democratization.

My explanation therefore contributes with a novel perspective, not only to the international literature, but also the Scandinavian-based one. By conducting a systematic comparison between and beyond the Scandinavian countries, my explanation emphasizes a bureaucratic and impartial state from early-modern times rather than any pre-1789 legacies of voice and accountability. It also emphasizes that Scandinavia's stable democratization in the long 19th century was shaped by peaceful agrarian reforms and auspicious state-society relations, rather than

structural-institutional features or social group dynamics that are idiosyncratic to each Scandinavian country.

State-church relations as alternative explanation

I consider here religious factors – specifically, the strength of church autonomy vis-à-vis the state and religious composition of the population. The strength of the church and the religious composition of elites and society have been highlighted as important factors in Europe's early-modern state-building (e.g. Gorski 2003). Some of the basic propositions emerging from this literature emphasize the importance of the Reformation, i.e. that the more complete the Reformation, the more power was lost by the Catholic Church, which in turn enabled rulers to subordinate the peasant and city populations as well as ecclesiastical and landed elites to their territorial and bureaucratic state-building projects. Through 'confessionalization,' the people and the clergy were subjected to secular authority. Later, this development could have been relevant for the propensity of state elites to suggest agrarian reform because of the often intimate relationship between religious faith and Enlightenment ideas (see e.g. Weber 1978; van den Berg 1999), and it could have determined peasant grievances around (the lack of) agrarian reforms due to the appeasing role of priests in local governance (see e.g. Stenius 2010).

Explanations focused on state-church relations are, however, challenged both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, the relationship with early-modern state-building and 18th century agrarian reform in Europe is ambiguous. It is not clear from the literature whether state-church relations before the warring period of the 16th and 17th centuries should be considered as important causes of state-building outcomes, such as levels of state control and meritocracy, or whether church subordination was an integral part or result of the state-building process itself. Moreover, there are no clear arguments for why state-church relations would affect the likelihood of peaceful agrarian reform. As noted by Weber (1978) and van den Berg (1999),

Calvinism was clearly connected with Enlightenment reforms, and economic modernization projects in particular, but other varieties of Protestantism emerging in the 18th century, such as Pietism, represented conservative reactions. Likewise, institutions of the Catholic Church were in fact important building blocks in the creation of modern bureaucracies and norms of the rule of law (Møller 2019), which are plausibly connected with the emergence of impartial administration.

The same kinds of ambiguity are evident empirically when considering state-church relations in the five cases. Before the dissolution of the Kalmar Union and the Reformation, church strength varied across Scandinavia. In Sweden, communication of the church with Rome was disconnected in 1536 and a Lutheran state church installed in 1571. Yet, as one estate among four, the church was initially strong and thus managed to get smaller concessions in jurisdiction and taxation in the early state-building processes of Gustav Vasa (Hallenberg, Holm, and Johansson 2008, 251; Liliequist and Almbjär 2012, 10). In Denmark-Norway, the church also became a state church early on, following the Reformation of 1536, and the resulting diarchy regime involved a relatively more subordinate church than in Sweden at the moment when state-building was initiated (see Jespersen 2007, 54-61).

Regarding the role of the church in the early state-building episodes, Prussia resembles Sweden with a strong church privileged as estate, but then transformed into an instrument of royal authority and the state. As Gorski (2003) has shown, subsequent Hohenzollern princes and kings succeeded in a disciplinary revolution that unified the church to a Lutheran (and later, Calvinist) confession and subordinated it by integrating the clerical hierarchy into the administration of the state. Priests acted as civil servants, as informants of state policies to local communities, and as teachers of rural populations. This Calvinist revolution from above was supported by a Pietist revolution from below from the 18th century. Thus, as Gorski (2003, 136, 142) concludes, Sweden (and Scandinavia more generally) and Prussia ended up on the same

path as some of the most complete bureaucracies and protestant countries. Østergaard (2018, 37-38, 52-54) makes a similar point in his analysis of state-building in Denmark-Norway when noting that the secularization of the church combined with a strong and homogenous integration of Lutheran ideas among state elites and the population at large is what unites the Northern countries with the North-German princely states, including Prussia.

France, by contrast, never saw a full-fledged Protestant reformation during the Wars of Religion (1562-1598) but rather an uneasy Catholic restoration in which the king, Henry IV, finally embraced Catholicism while guaranteeing religious toleration of the Huguenots. In turn, the church remained a strong pillar of medieval estate society, undermining state-building until the French Revolution (Skocpol 1979, 52-53; Parker 1997, 175).

Thus, Catholicism in France overall played a negative role for state-building when compared with the other four, primarily Protestant cases. However, state-church relations before the state-building era varied substantially between Sweden and Prussia on the one hand and Denmark-Norway on the other, and only converged in the process of state-building. As argued in the main paper, the differences between them mainly regarded whether landed elites kept a stake in local administration, which they did in Prussia but not in Scandinavia.

In line with the importance of state-church relations, Catholicism in France has been noted as one of the major obstacles to agrarian reform prior to 1789 (see e.g. Scott 1990, 32-33). Yet, does the subordination of the church in largely Protestant societies then explain peaceful agrarian reform in Scandinavia? While Lutheranism still dominated among state elites, monarchs, and peasants in Prussia and Scandinavia during the 18th century, imbuing themselves and their subjects discipline, loyalty, and hard work (Gorski 2003, 96), Østergaard (2018, 61) holds that the participation of the rural population in local governance and its respectful cooperation with state priests were particular of the Scandinavian countries.

However, as shown in Table A1 in the section on the EMR-hypothesis, local peasant participation rights do not explain the variation in peaceful agrarian reform as they were quite limited in Denmark and much stronger in France and Prussia. In addition, there is no strong reason to believe that religious homogeneity in itself should have been important for building consensus around agrarian reform. Agrarian reforms in Prussia concerned Protestant and Catholic peasants alike and were thus a purely socioeconomic matter (Berdahl 1988; Eddie 2013), and religion more generally did not play an important role in Scandinavia other than indirectly through the priest's role as civil servant (for Denmark and Norway, see e.g. Jensen 1936; Østerud 1978; Løgstrup 2015; for Sweden, see e.g. Barton 1986; Gustafsson 1994; Österberg 2008).

Table A2: Adding state-church relations as alternative explanation

	Sweden	*Denmark*	*Norway*	*France*	*Prussia*
Church subordination	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak	Strong
Religious composition	Almost exclusively Protestant	Almost exclusively Protestant	Almost exclusively Protestant	Mostly Catholic	Mostly Protestant
Agricultural productivity	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Rural inequalities	Low	High	Low	Low	High
Strength of absolutism	Medium-Low	High	High	Medium-Low	Medium-High
Peaceful agrarian reform	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

In sum, state-church relations do not challenge the importance of state control and meritocracy for explaining peaceful agrarian reform. First, the diverging, initial church strengths between Denmark on the one hand and Sweden and Prussia on the other do not explain their

similar state-building experiences. In this perspective, we should describe state-church relations as 'Descriptive Context' rather than 'Background Similarities' (see Slater and Simmons 2010, 890). Second, as shown in Table A2, the way state-church relations developed during the state-building episodes and beyond does not explain peaceful agrarian reform. In contrast to France, the churches across Scandinavia as well as in Prussia were subordinate to the state with priests connecting local with central administrative levels. Also in contrast to France, state elites in Prussia and Scandinavia were almost exclusively Protestant and strong believers of ideas of Enlightenment and/or economic modernization, and the populations were predominantly Protestant. While the share of Protestants was lower in Prussia than in Scandinavia, it did constitute the vast majority, and religion in any case played no significant role for agrarian reform processes. Thus, following religious factors, Prussia should have had peaceful agrarian reforms.

That being said, some aspects of state-church relations were likely important for stable democratization after 1789. In Prussia, where available population estimates suggest a share of 65 % Protestant from around 1815, the state church succeeded in integrating Lutherans, Calvinists, and Pietists, but also grew anti-liberal in its attempt to repress non-Protestant communities and thus provoked opposition from Catholics among others (Gould 1999, 69-70). With German unification, larger Catholic minorities were added to the religious landscape. In turn, conflicts between Catholic and Protestant churches and societies further frustrated the building of cross-cultural and cross-class civic associations and parties in Bismarckian and Wilhelmine Germany (Gould 1999: 86; Blackbourn 1984a: 217). By contrast, the growth of Pietism did not create separate churches in Scandinavia, which in turn remained very much a 'one-norm' society (Stenius 2010: 29). Religion did not become a divisive issue among the popular movements that emerged in late 19th century; rather, Protestant ethics took a particular form where individualism combined with solidarity (Stråth 2012: 28-29).

Nevertheless, religious divisions did not undermine the building of associations or parties among peasants in Prussia. Indeed, just as in Scandinavia, the strong, early movements were primarily organized by bourgeois, enlightened Protestants (Blackbourn 1984b: 195-196; Ohlendorf and Rebenstorf 2020: 69). Rather, the Protestant church was coopted by landed elite and state patronage and thus used its hold on the peasantry to prevent it from organizing in the 1830s and 1840s (Gould 1999: 71-72). Furthermore, it was only after the defeat of Catholic Austria in 1866 that Bismarck launched an attack on the Catholic clergy and society with negative consequences for the building of moderate political societies among industrial workers (see Gould 1999: 23, 86). Thus, a Protestant society and a subordinated church were at most supplementary factors, which partly explained why Prussian industrial workers' associations and parties from the late 19th century became more prone to revolutionary violence than in Scandinavia.

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