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Elite Circulation in Russia from the  
Russian Imperial Era to the Soviet Era

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## **Elite Circulation in Russia from the Russian Imperial Era to the Soviet Era**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper contributes to Elite Theory within the context of regime change, focusing on Imperial Russian Aristocrats post-1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Utilizing a survey on ancestry conducted by the Levada polling institute, this study investigates the persistence of power structures and their constituents across regime shifts. The analysis reveals a covariation between noble origin within ancestry and occupying high-ranking official roles in the Soviet Union, providing empirical support for Pareto's notion of elite circulation. A proposed causal pathway rooted in Wilfredo Pareto's theory suggests that elites, aiming to preserve their elevated status, can harness adaptability even amidst regime changes. These findings shed new light on the history of the Russian Revolution.

### **Keywords:**

Elite Theory; Regime Change; Imperial Russian Aristocrats; Bolshevik Revolution; Power Structure; Pareto's Elite Circulation; Soviet Union; Adaptability Capacities; Russian Revolution; Nobility and Power; Persistence of Individuals in Power

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

‘If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.’ Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, 1958

This paper contributes to the research on Elite Theory in times of regime change. This paper focuses on the empirical case of Imperial Russian Aristocrats after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution to find persistence in the structure of power and the individuals that compose them before and after regime change. In this research, I employed a survey on ancestry conducted by the Levada polling institute and commissioned by Lankina, Libman, and Tertytchnaya for their own research (Lankina, Libman, 2021). My analysis reveals that noble origin among the ancestry covaries with high ranking official role in the Soviet Union. This provide empirical and quantitative backing to Pareto’s concept of elite circulation. I propose a causal pathway to explain this counterintuitive permanence of individuals in power grounded in Vifredo Pareto’s theory of elite circulation: in order to maintain their high status part of the elite can leverage adaptability capacities even in times of regime change. These findings cast some new light on the history of the Russian Revolution.

In the revolutionary context, the fate of the elite of the ousted regime always is the object of distorted and ideologically loaded discourses. Depending on the political agenda of the opinion emitter, they can either be the cause of the turmoil because of the suffering their rule engendered and as such they would deserve their fatal destiny. For the instance of the Russian October Revolution which is researched in this paper, it is easy to think of popular imagery spread by propaganda organons such as the arrogant and

scornful officers in the *Battleship Potemkin* from the Soviet director Eisenstein who are forcing the sailors to eat rotten meat. Inversely other voices emphasize the victim status of the ousted elite whose existence contradicts the views of aggressive ideologists. A book like *Former People - The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy* by Douglas Smith (2013) represents this historiographical trend as it follows in a chronicle fashion two of the most prominent Russian aristocratic families the Sheremetevs and the Golitsyns and in doing so gives heartbreaking first-hand accounts of young aristocratic children overtaken by fateful historical development. Thus, in approaching those events, the researcher must try to bring clarity to a topic where caricatural and polarized views are prevalent.

The fate of the Russian aristocracy beyond death and exile after the Revolution and under Soviet rule has been the subject of research of important works recently. Some authors have approached them through the prism of collective memory (Tchouikina, 2009 – P73), others led qualitative interviews and revealed the ability of some nobles to ‘become Soviet’ and fit in the post-revolutionary society (Rendle, 2008 - P4). others have found some permanence in the noble landowning structure of the pomeschchiki during the NEP time (Channon, 1987 - P576). Yet a quantitative approach to the outcomes of nobility origins in Soviet society seems to be missing from the body of research.

Other authors have studied the Soviet time legacy of other imperial statuses than the nobility with good success. In the field of Autocracy Research, Libman and Lankina in their article *The Two-Pronged Middle Class: The Old Bourgeoisie, New State-Engineered Middle Class, and Democratic Development* (Lankina, Libman, 2021) demonstrated with the help of quantitative analysis that the estate of meshchane which corresponds to the urban middle class was associated in later generations through and after the Soviet era with greater democratic competitiveness. This paper draws inspiration from this work and

focuses on another estate than the meshchane: the nobility, the most elite estate of Imperial Russia

In this regard, this study is inspired by and contributes to the field of Elite Theory and most notably to the Italian school of Elite Theory cofounded by Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. These authors built a history reading framework around movements and transformation among the elite members of societies. They make what seems like polarised ideological conflicts resulting in social unrest and regime changes nothing more than the contest between a governing elite and non-governing elites. Such ideological conflicts can be traced historically to: Catholicism and Protestantism in the 16th and 17th century, Republicanism against Constitutional monarchy and Absolute monarchy in the 17th to 19th, and Communism against Liberalism and Fascism in the 20th century (Owen, 2010). Elite Theory goes against the emancipation narrative that prevails about those conflicts both among the people who initiated them and their heirs as they often constitute part of the origin story of the remodelled regime. Interestingly enough, if Pareto's economics work is based on data, his sociological work around the elite pertains more to philosophy as it is written in the form of a treaty (Pareto 1916, *The Mind and Society: Treatise on General Sociology*). As such this paper constitutes an original attempt at testing some of the Elite Theory views empirically and quantitatively.

Succinctly, in this paper, I argue that nobility estate under Imperial Tsarist Russia affects positively the likelihood of belonging to the elite of the Soviet regime that emerged from the revolution. This can be explained by mechanisms described by Pareto in his framework of elite and class circulation. This paper is structured as follows. I first ground my assumptions of the nobility as an elite challenged by regime change by reviewing the literature on the composition of the nobility before, during, and after the Revolution. Then I introduce and discuss the concept of elite circulation and its influence on the Elite



Theory perspective of regime change. I provide illustrations with examples of how it could apply in the Russian context. In the third part, I propose hypotheses and a causal pathway for noble conversion in the Soviet era time inspired by Elite Theory with the help of a directed acyclic diagram. In the last part, I introduce the data and use it in a statistical analysis to test the hypotheses.

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## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. RUSSIAN NOBILITY BEFORE THE 1917 REVOLUTION

The goal of this subpart is to assess the position of the nobility as occupying an elite position in society on the eve of the 1917 Revolution. I will show that this situation was questioned and challenged from inside and outside the nobility. This will provide justification to apply Elite Theory views in a later part of this paper.

In Imperial Russia before the 1917 revolution, the nobility was stratified into different ranks and classes. The nobility First Estate accounted for about 2% of the society and was commonly referred to as 'dvorianstvo', a term that can be interpreted as either 'nobility' or 'gentry.' Prior to the Revolution, Russia was a blend of feudal elements, characterized by rigid, caste-like social classes known as estates with distinct rights and privileges and modern societal traits that theoretically conferred equal rights to all (Wirtschaftler, 1997 - P118). In Russia under the four-estates paradigm defined by the *The Code of the Law of the Russian Empire of 1832*, the divisions in society were among the nobility, clergy, urban residents (primarily merchants and meshchane), and rural farmers.

There wasn't a strict demarcation between the titled aristocracy and the general gentry as Russian titles were inherited and merely symbolic. The nobility enjoyed privileges and held significant social and political influence in society. In Imperial Russia, the nobility status stemmed either from the heredity (customary) or from the service (legislated) (Wirtschafter, 1997 - P23). The hereditary nobility held titles such as prince, duke, or count and were considered the elite of Russian society. They enjoyed extensive privileges, including land ownership, exemption from certain taxes, and the right to hold high-ranking positions in the government and military.

The *Charter to the Nobility of 1785* describes the six ways that could have granted a family the nobility status: 'real nobility' was directly granted by the sovereign, nobility attained by servicing a high rank in the military, nobility attained by servicing a high rank in the civil service, nobility due to foreign noble status, title nobility and 'ancient wellborn' (untitled). On top of that diversity of origins, it is important to stress that these preconditions could have evolved in a great diversity of different ways of life and occupation. The main distinction was, for example, the opposition between landed serf-owning hereditary nobility and landless bureaucratic nobility, yet even that distinction was, in reality, more complex (Wirtschafter, 1997 - P27). In that respect, the Russian nobility, in spite of its shared elite status, did not have a simple agenda of interest.

The nobility in imperial Russia had a destiny closely bound with that of the State as they existed in common defiance toward the lower strata of society. This is particularly true since the Russian Empire often exercised a mere formal power over its vast provinces that often enjoyed practical local self-rule, unlike the way power had been built in the French or English Monarch (Wirtschafter, 1997 - P8). In that setting the nobility and the clergy were key. because in their legal-administrative status they served the government directly and as such were an extension of the Tsar's authority (Wirtschafter, 1997 - P21).

During the 1760s, Catherine aimed to prevent peasant revolts by bettering the serfs' conditions and restricting the power of their masters. However, when confronted with the dilemma between maintaining control over the serfs in a potentially abusive manner or eradicating these abuses risking loss of control, Catherine opted for the former. This led to the establishment of a new partnership between the government and the nobility, fueled by a shared apprehension of peasant rebellion and initially evidenced in the regional reforms of 1775, culminating in Catherine's *Charter to the Nobility in 1785*. Her Charter committed the government to maintain serfdom and uphold the conservative traditional regime. (Jones, 1973 - P138).

Yet, in spite of this shared doubtful stance toward the lower classes, prior to the 1905 and 1917 upheavals in Russia, the monarchy found itself devoid of a firm backing of its nobility. The financial and social strategies of 'counter-reforms' pursued by Alexander III and Nicholas II were not just rebuked by the liberal nobles, but also by numerous conservatives. The nobility's position and influence began to decline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the Russian nobility was marked by uncertainties in front of emerging capitalism and attempts at modernization.

The Emancipation Reform enacted in Russia in 1861 was a landmark moment in the country's history and is representative of this uneasiness in Russian society from that era. Its primary objective was to terminate serfdom and confer freedom upon the serfs. The reform, executed by Tsar Alexander II, drastically transformed Russia's socio-economic and political canvas. This reform was driven by escalating discontent and unrest among the serfs, who were essentially bound to their noble landowners and lived under harsh circumstances, with restricted rights and burdensome labor duties. The intent of the reform was to redress these complaints and drive Russia's societal modernization.

Over 20 million serfs were liberated through the 1861 Emancipation Reform. This endowed them with personal liberty, permitting marriage, and participation in economic pursuits. To contrast this though, the collective land tenure system referred to as the peasant commune was given a legal status over a simple customary one, limiting individual land possession (Taitlin, 2015 - P144). While the land was reallocated amongst the peasants, collective ownership by the commune was maintained, and individual peasants received plots for personal use.

The consequences of the reform were twofold. Positively, it marked the cessation of serfdom and bestowed personal freedoms upon millions. It sought to enhance peasant living conditions and open economic advancement avenues. For some authors, reform's economic repercussions were significant as it sought to modernize agriculture and boost industrial growth (Gregory, 1982 - P55) even if other authors invite to question the quality of the data which collection was itself political (Stanziani, 2017 - P23). Nevertheless, the reform encountered obstacles and constraints. The process of land redistribution was complicated, sparking frequent conflicts between peasants and nobility. Often, peasants were left with smaller and less fertile lands, while the prime lands remained with the nobility. This triggered persistent rural tensions. Moreover, even after the emancipation limited property rights and freedom such as freedom of movement continued to cripple the peasants political existence (Mironov, 1996 - P323).

The 1861 Emancipation Reform formed part of the 'Great Reforms' by Tsar Alexander II, which aimed to modernize Russia and tackle the country's socio-economic dilemmas. Nevertheless, the reforms met resistance from conservative Russian society segments especially represented in the courtiers surrounding the Tsar, who pushed back against change and sought to uphold traditional societal structures (O'Rourke, 2011 - P596). These shifts in strategy weakened the agrarian nobility, paving the way for

capitalism. As a result, the noble and gentry classes underwent economic and structural changes. Some transformed into capitalist landowners while others faced financial ruin. Many of these struggling landowners relocated to urban areas, transitioning into 'bourgeois' professions and merging with the urban middle class. The high aristocracy wasn't immune either, as even the wealthiest families experienced financial downturns, prompting them to diversify their income sources, including investing in resources or the civil service. The era's economic challenges also disrupted traditional family structures, leading to changing marital dynamics and blending between the nobility and emerging elite classes.

The rise of revolutionary movements and the growing discontent among the lower classes led to calls for social and political reforms. Consequently, during the tumultuous period of 1905-1907 which foreshadowed the 1917 upheaval, the government faced significant challenges in quelling popular unrest. The nobility was then not only concerned at the ineffectiveness but also at the timing of the reforms, which according to some authors led the gentry to stop supporting the monarch (Hamburg, 1977 - P328). In summary the transformations from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century left some dissatisfaction and division both inside and outside of the nobility. The nobility before the revolution was a questioned and divided elite that started to differentiate itself from the autocracy.

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## 2.2 THE 1917 REVOLUTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE RUSSIAN NOBILITY

This subpart brings insights on the nature of the 1917 Revolution and its different causes according to the literature. It is a prerequisite to understand the Russian use case when introducing the concept of Elite Circulation later in this paper.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was caused by a combination of various factors, including social, political, and economic conditions. The tension between traditional norms and modern ideals didn't inevitably cause the revolution but created the conditions that made a revolution possible. The actual triggering factors were the challenges of wartime and the power struggle between the opposition and the ruling monarchy. One of the key structural factors was the impact of World War I, which decimated Russian society and created conditions for revolution. The war led to economic hardships, food shortages, and high casualties, which fuelled discontent among the population. Additionally, the liberal-parliamentary regime that followed the resignation of Tsar Nicholas II in February 1917 resisted withdrawal from the war and created ascending conditions for the Bolshevik. The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, capitalized on this discontent and successfully seized power in November 1917 (Breslauer, 2021 - P45).

The October Revolution resulted in the overthrow of Kerenski's regime and the establishment of a socialist government led by the Bolsheviks. This threatened the Russian nobility in several ways. The Revolution created a climate of social and political upheaval, which directly threatened the position and privileges of the nobility. The Bolsheviks aimed to dismantle the existing social hierarchy and redistribute wealth and power to the working class. As a result, the nobility, who were traditionally the ruling class in Russia, faced the loss of their land, wealth, and influence (Breslauer, 2021 - P45). A period of great instability and a Civil War succeeded the seizure of power were arbitrary arrestations and killing from mobs. (Smith, 2013 - P25). The regime, which emerged after the Revolution, targeted the nobility as part of their efforts to establish a classless society.

Indeed the nobility was seen as a symbol of the old regime and was subjected to persecution and discrimination. The overthrow of the monarchy had resulted in the loss of power and influence for the nobility, as their privileged position was closely tied to the monarchy in a unique Russian fashion that transcended the tension between oligarchy and absolutism found in the West (Rowland, 2020 - Chapter 13). Many members of the nobility were arrested, executed, or forced into exile. This hostile environment made it difficult for the nobility to maintain their social status and influence. The nationalization of land, which meant that the land owned by the nobility was seized by the state and redistributed to peasants and workers. This resulted in the loss of land and property for the nobility, further weakening their position even if some landowners managed to preserve their estate during the NEP years (Channon, 1987 - P576). Overall, the Bolshevik Revolution was an environment susceptible to lead to the annihilation of the Russian nobility and the dismantling of the traditional social hierarchy in Russia.

With the October Revolution, members of the nobility became classified as *lishenets* which can be translated as disenfranchised. *Lishenets* were a loose category composed of different groups perceived as a threat to the regime. Electoral commissions systematically disenfranchised certain groups, including the old nobility, gendarmes, White Army officers, and religious functionaries, as well as traders and those considered 'exploiters' who were those who lived off unearned income or hired labor (Alexopoulos, 2018 - P13). In practice, in the early stages of the Revolution and civil war, actions taken against 'class enemies' were conducted in an atmosphere of extreme lawlessness. These actions ranged from confiscation of property, the taking hostages, and summary executions. Additionally, there were *ad hoc* implementations of revolutionary decrees, resulting in measures like expelling individuals from cities or imposing compulsory labor. However, as the tumultuous period of war subsided during the 1920s, social discrimination took another form with the denial of voting rights.

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## 2.3 THE NOBILITY AFTER THE REVOLUTION

This subpart complements the last one in introducing the consequences of the Revolution on the nobility according to the literature. It also reviews the existing literature on nobility's fate and survival strategies after the Revolution. This reveals that a quantitative approach on the question of success in survival strategy is missing. This paper is an attempt at filling this gap.

The repercussions of the *lishenet* status for the nobility were serious and threatening. These individuals faced pervasive discrimination: from a theoretical reduced access to employment, housing, and education to higher tax burdens. Furthermore, they remained even after the Revolution more susceptible to arrest, exile, and forced labor. Yet, paradoxically, amidst the pervasive unemployment of the 1920s and clear ideological stances against such class enemies, the nobles found themselves in demand. The post-revolutionary landscape, riddled with widespread illiteracy and chaos, necessitated individuals with education and administrative skills. Consequently, those with even rudimentary abilities to write, calculate, or handle administrative tasks became invaluable assets in the labor market (Rendle, 2008 - P4).

Against this hostile environment, the Russian nobility who stayed in Russia adopted several strategies for adaptation under Soviet rule. Adapting to the new regime was a matter of self-preservation (Fitzpatrick, 1999 – P132). As was researched, when it comes to Collective Memory (Tchouikina, 2009 – P73), the nobility embraced 3 different strategies in order to deal with the new Soviet social order. The Conservative Strategy allowed individuals to navigate the above depicted hostile reality by publicly identifying as Soviet specialist workers while privately retaining their noble heritage. This



approach balanced public conformity with a private adherence to tradition, offering to those former nobles a pragmatic middle path to reconcile the reality of their past with the necessity of the present. In the Progressist Strategy, individuals undertook a total break from their noble origins. They moved to new cities, concealed their noble backgrounds, and embraced Soviet ideologies. With this new identity, they distanced themselves entirely from their noble past, molding their lifestyles to align with Soviet values and ensuring their children were raised as Soviet citizens. Tchouikina lastly evokes the Passeist Strategy which was more reactionary and nostalgic. Passeist is derived from the French word 'passéiste', which means one attached to the past. Passeists sought solace in memories of a glorious past. This approach, mainly preferred by the elderly, involved avoiding Soviet institutions, working in unofficial jobs, and continuing old traditions. They avoided if possible contemporary Soviet influences, and maintained connections with familiar faces from the past, and embraced the airs and traditions of the former regime. Recognizing their marginalized status in this new order, they took pride in it, trying to recreate a world that echoed their once-glorious past.

With the Revolution, the nobility was in an ambiguous position as being conjointly the scapegoated minority targeted by an autocratic regime as well as necessary administrative cogs in a society with low human capital. This ambiguous position left a lot of room open for reconversion strategies among the elite.

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### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ELITE THEORY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION TO ELITE THEORY

The goal of this subpart is to introduce succinctly the main themes of Elite Theory and place them in the literature tradition.

The study of Elite Theory focuses on examining the impactful role and sway of societal elites. This field delves into how a select cadre of individuals, typically denoted as 'the elite', wield a substantial portion of power and influence over political, economic, and societal affairs. Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca are the two most prominent figures in the discourse of elite theory (Giulio, 2021 - P60). An Italian economist and sociologist, Vilfredo Pareto, is known for his exploration into the circulation of elites. He stated that societies are defined by an ongoing power struggle amongst various elite factions. Pareto theorized that self-interest motivates elites and developed from there a depiction of society. His circulation of elites theory asserts that the rise and fall of elites hinge upon their skill in preserving their power against both internal and external threats. Another Italian sociologist, Gaetano Mosca, developed the theory of the ruling class where he posited a binary division in societies: the ruling class and those they rule. In his view, a small elite faction, the ruling class, commands the lion's share of societal power and influence. Mosca's theory underscores the elite's role in ensuring societal equilibrium and stability. In his views the ruling class employs their power to manipulate and dominate the masses, thereby safeguarding their reign.

Both Pareto and Mosca were affiliated with the positivist movement in social sciences. They embraced a scientific approach to studying elites, underscoring the necessity impartial analysis. They were adherents of positivist social sciences and largely incorporated in their work the principle of social Darwinism, which applies biological concepts and, notably, Darwin's findings to elucidate human group behavior (Rogers 1972 - P265). In that regard attempts to interpret society from a biological viewpoint date back to the eighteenth century (Sebastiani, 2013 - P25). More recently research has gradually discarded this biological perspective to explain societal behaviours (Mazrui, 1968 - P69).

In short, the Elite Theory field poses that: that power is concentrated, the elites are unified, people outside the elite are diverse and powerless, elites' interests are unified due to common backgrounds and positions, and the defining characteristic of power is institutional position. (Deric Shannon, 2011 - P19). As an heir of this tradition, Burnham's book *The Machiavellians, Defenders of freedom* offers a recollection of the most important supporters of Elite Theory in particular from the Italian masters including Pareto and Mosca. *The Machiavellians, Defenders of freedom* published in 1943 reviews the work of Machiavelli, Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto, Robert Michels, and Georges Sorel. The subtitle 'Defender of freedom' is essential here: Burnham posits that as a genuine democratic rule does not exist and that the power is always held by elites, this state of fact needs to be acknowledged so that as George Orwell outlined in his essay *Second Thoughts on James Burnham*, 'a ruling class which recognized that its real aim was to stay in power would also recognize that it would be more likely to succeed if it served the common good, and might avoid stiffening into a hereditary aristocracy' (Orwell, 1946 - 4th paragraph).

The summary that Orwell gives through Burnham how what can be squarely framed as the Italian school of Elite Theory holds six characteristics (Orwell, 1946 – 3rd paragraph):

- '1) A democratic society has never existed and so far as we can see, never will exist.
- 2) Society is of its nature oligarchical, and the power of the oligarchy always rests upon force and fraud.
- 3) Politics consists of the struggle for power, and nothing else.
- 4) All historical changes finally boil down to the replacement of one ruling class by another.
- 5) All talk about democracy, liberty, equality, fraternity, all revolutionary movements, all visions of Utopia, or 'the classless society', or 'the Kingdom of Heaven on earth', is humbug (not necessarily conscious humbug) covering the ambitions of some new class

which is elbowing its way into power. The English Puritans, the Jacobins, and the Bolsheviks were in each case simply power seekers using the hopes of the masses in order to win a privileged position for themselves.

6) Power can sometimes be won or maintained without violence, but never without fraud, because it is necessary to make use of the masses, and the masses would not cooperate if they knew that they were simply serving the purposes of a minority. In each great revolutionary struggle, the masses are led on by vague dreams of human brotherhood, and then, when the new ruling class is well established in power, they are thrust back into servitude.'

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### 3.2 INTRODUCTION TO ELITE CIRCULATION

The goal of this subpart is to justify that one of the main focus of elite theory is regime change that Pareto approached through the concept of Elite Circulation. This brings to the theoretical framework of this paper the conceptual tools associated with Elite Circulation on which the causal pathways that I will define later will lay upon.

As it appears from the listed point in the precedent subpart, Elite Theory is to an extent a general theory on regime change. Its authors are interested in the permanence of elite ruling structures and individuals through what appears as historic rupture events: see above the reference to the English Revolution and the Puritans, the French Revolution and the Jacobins, and the Russian Revolution and the Bolsheviks. Elite Theory claims to be looking beyond the 'humbug' discourse that conceals the true challenge for power (Orwell, 1946 - 4th paragraph).

The adjective 'Machiavellian' used by Burnham stresses the self-interest-oriented vision that Elite Theory has of History. In the perspective that 'history is written by the

victors' (the quotation being attributed to Churchill points out that victors get to write the history of a conflict in a justifying teleological fashion that can conceal what was at stake) Elite Theory proposes an alternative reading of history away from institutional historiography. In that respect Pareto resorts to a biology-inspired vision of history he famously qualifies as a 'graveyard of the aristocracy'. The reference to the life and death of aristocracies as populations composed of elite members succeeding and replacing one another while being from the same heritage is telling of a way to approach human history as the repeatable patterns produced by the mechanistic behavior of beings guided by their 'nonlogical' conducts solidified in beliefs and moral codes. (Bongiorno, 1930 - P353).

Pareto puts forward the concept of Elite Circulation, a subset of class circulation on which this paper will give a closer look to. Its study will help to determine a causal path in the mechanisms that determine the survival of elites in a period of regime change. This concept is explored in paragraphs 2050 to 2060 of Vilfredo Pareto's *Mind and Society*. There is a tension in Pareto's writing where the qualification 'elite' refers at the same time to ruling-elites members who hold positions of power (political, military, economic, cultural) and non-ruling-elite members who have better dispositions (*virtue*, intelligence, and social skills) than the other members of society. A movement of 'class circulation' occur between those two groups who are overlapping more or less through time as society evolves.

In *Mind and Society* from Pareto, paragraph 2056 enunciates: 'In virtue of class circulation, the governing Elite is always in a state of slow and continuous transformation. It flows on like a river, never being today what it was yesterday. From time to time sudden and violent disturbances occur. There is a flood—the river overflows its banks. Afterward, the new governing elite again resumes its slow transformation. The flood has subsided, and the river is again flowing normally in its wonted bed.' (Pareto, 1916 - paragraph 2056)

Pareto describes interestingly this movement of class circulation with the image of a river which is reminiscent of Heraclitus from Ephesus: 'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man' (Heraclitus from Ephesus, 5<sup>th</sup> century BC). In the same way that we perceive the river as identical to itself because or in spite of the fact that it has undergone multiple imperceptible transformations as its water flew and its bottom got more shallow, a governing elite continuously transforms and renews itself in two ways. The first way is with the passage of time in favor of new generations as elite members of society teach to their offspring an aristocratic sentiment or 'residue' in Pareto's words while witnessing 'the loss of its more degenerate members' who are not fit for this sentiment. The second way is through co-opted new members '[from] families rising from the lower classes and bringing with them the vigour and the proportions of residues necessary for keeping themselves in power' (Pareto, 1916 - paragraph 2055). In spite of this constant transformation of its member the elite appear as a monolithic top power structure in the social hierarchy.

In *Mind and Society* from Pareto, paragraph 2057 states that: 'Revolutions come about through accumulations in the higher strata of society—either because of a slowing-down in class circulation, or from other causes—of decadent elements no longer possessing the residues suitable for keeping them in power, and shrinking from the use of force; while meantime in the lower strata of society elements of superior quality are coming to the fore, possessing residues suitable for exercising the functions of government and willing enough to use force.' (Pareto, 1916 - paragraph 2057)

The prerequisite of the good functioning of class circulation described by Pareto is a certain level of open society characteristics in the society (Bergson, 1932 - P243, Popper, 1945 - P87). Revolutions that appear as ruptures in the social order occur when societies

become too closed preventing the downward and upward flows of class circulation. Paragraph 2057 describes how when class circulation is interrupted the elite group in power tends to weaken as it cannot eliminate its lower-grade members. Yet the resulting effect is not the suppression of the elite as a structural governing component of society in favor of an organization where the power would be shared more equally among the members of the society. Rather it amounts to a process of elite replacement in favor of a new elite more willing to exercise power - or in Pareto's words 'possessing residues suitable for exercising the functions of government' (Pareto, 1916 - paragraph 2057).

This permanence of a society structured around the elite is important because as such in Pareto's perspective revolutions amount to an accelerated process of Elite Circulation between ruling elites and non-ruling elites. The circulation is not a *quid pro quo* complete exchange of the ruling elites with the non-ruling elites but rather a mixed process of individual ascending and descending destinies depending on which type of residue individuals are animated by. Indeed Pareto distinguishes between two classes of aristocratic residues or sentiments that are to react differently to the revolutionary challenge, later reemployed by Burnham. Class 1 Residues, or Speculators/Innovators, are individuals willing to take risks and change their strategies depending on the circumstances. They are adaptable and open to alterations in their environment. On the other hand, Class 2 Residues, or Conservatives/Tradition-bound individuals, prefer stability, are risk-averse, and are less inclined to adapt to new settings or circumstances. They lean towards the status quo and established norms.

The idea of classifying elites into 'lions' and 'foxes' was modernized from Machiavel by political scientist James Burnham in his book *The Machiavellians*. While he drew inspiration from Pareto's residues, he presented his own interpretation. Lions are similar in nature to Pareto's Class 2 residues (Burnham, 1943 - P188). They are strong but not

necessarily cunning, symbolizing force, stability, and conservative behavior. In leadership contexts, lions are those leaders who rely more on their power and dominance. Foxes, on the other hand, align with Pareto's Class 1 residues. They are characterized by their craftiness, adaptability, and wit. They might not possess the sheer strength of lions but are adept at navigating change and new environments. When it comes to leadership, foxes are the ones who depend on their intelligence, strategy, and ability to adapt. In essence, both the concept of Class 1 and Class 2 residues and the notion of Lions and Foxes serve to categorize individuals or leaders based on their behavior and approach toward change, risk, and strategy.

The distinction between 'lions' and 'foxes' among the elite is important because it allows us to understand which members of the ruling elite will maintain themselves and which will wither away in a revolutionary period. Lions, those animated by Pareto's Class 2 residues, are prone to use force and resist the change frontally by leading reactionary actions against the non-ruling elite revolutionary enterprise. When the reaction fails, the Lions are eliminated. On the contrary, Foxes will leverage an ambiguous position to navigate the revolution and the reaction in order to find themselves on the side of the victorious and maintain their status.

As a consequence, because revolutions are moments of accelerated Elite Circulation, important continuities in the power structure and in the individuals that compose are expected from their outcomes.

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### 3.3 ELITE CIRCULATION IN REVOLUTIONNARY TIME: AN ILLUSTRATION

The goal of this subpart is to introduce an unexpected author to the school of Elite Theory in the person of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, author of the novel *The Leopard*.



A look at the characters depicted in his novel helps to understand the dynamics described by Pareto when it comes to Elite Circulation during revolutionary times.

A compelling description of this revolutionary process with the different behavior among the elites depending on their Class 1 and Class 2 motivation is to be found in *The Leopard* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. This short novel of about two hundred pages was first published in 1958. Its author is a heir of the of the Sicilian aristocracy and the novel was inspired by his own family. The story illustrates a maxim repeated several times by the protagonists: 'If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.' (Lampedusa, 1958 - P21 from the mouth of Tancredi). As the author stated himself in a letter in 1957 before the publication of the novel: 'I would not like you to believe that this is an historical novel!' (Lampedusa, 1958 – P258), the setting of the novel is evidently historical so the author is suggesting that his plot is his vision of politics built on facts that he rearranged to make the vision more obvious. The similarity of vision in regard to elite power concentration, the Italian origin of the author as well as its use of animal figures - the leopard- that are reminiscent of Machiavel's Lions and Foxes leads to consider Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa as a member of the Italian school of Elite Theory.

The novel is set during the 19th-century Italian Risorgimento, a nationalist movement inspired by the French Revolution. Post-Napoleon, Italy was divided into small, mostly independent units, such as Piedmont-Sardinia, or under Austrian rule like Venetia and Napoli. The cause was championed by Victor-Emmanuel II, King of Piedmont-Sardinia, alongside his minister Cavour, with backing from Napoleon III against Austria. They leveraged patriot Garibaldi's attack on the Kingdom of the Sicilies, ultimately halting him before he attacked French-protected Rome in 1862. By 1870, Victor Emmanuel controlled Rome. The ideologies at play in this power struggle for regime change are absolute

monarchy challenged by socialism and constitutional monarchy. The novel unfolds during Garibaldi's 1860 Sicilian landing.

The main characters of the novel belong to the old world order challenged by the Risorgimento movement. The book's title refers to Don Fabrizio Corbera, Prince of Salina, whose family emblem is a leopard he ended up being assimilated with. Don Fabrizio is a still young but tired nobleman full of aristocratic sentiment in his character. His son is depicted as vain and weak. He is not carrying the aristocratic sentiment of his father which denotes a slowing-down in class circulation in Pareto's view: he is to inherit an elite status without having the needed associated quality. The real sentimental heir of the Prince in that regard stands in the Prince's nephew and *protégé* Tancredi Falconeri who stems from a fallen branch of the family but compensates for his degraded status with energy for adventure.

The novel first part is an education of Don Fabrizio in elite theory. A series of conversations debunks to the prince the progressivist discourse associated with Garibaldi's movement to reveal the true stake in power preservation. The Prince scolds his nephew Tancredi for joining the Revolution: 'You're mad, my boy, to go with those people ! They're all mafia men, all crooks. A Falconeri should be with us, for the King. [...]' to which Tancredi answers 'For the King, yes of course. But for which King ? [...] Unless we ourselves take a hand now, they'll foist a republic on us. If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.' (P21). Tancredi appears as one of Pareto or Machiavelli's foxes who has no principles and who's ends justifies the means.

The context of the writing helps to understand the first success that the novel gained in Italy as the event depicted in the book mirror those of the post-WW2 Italy by many accounts. Indeed, the novel was written in the early years of the Italian Republic

which came to be as a result of a referendum held on the 2nd of June 1946. The Italian monarchy originating in Victor Emmanuel II's political strategy depicted in the novel came to an end brutally because of its indulgence and support toward Mussolini's fascist regime from 1920 onward. The vote was an important democratic event that engaged more than 89% of the eligible citizen of the time who ended up favoring the Republican regime over the monarchy up to 54%. The vote is reminiscent of the plebiscite in the novel that appears as an epochal event in its dramatic staging of the will of the people which merely concealed a process of circulating elites. 'The despotic voice of the former monarchy has been replaced by the 'money-lenders soapy tone' saying 'You must do as I say because your will is identical with mine' (Lampedusa, 1946 – P35).

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### 3.4 ELITE CIRCULATION IN THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: AN ILLUSTRATION

The goal of this subpart is to try to ground Elite Circulation in the Russian context by retorting to the biographical method. Identifying the motives and the trajectories of some famous Russian personalities in the transition from the Imperial era to the Soviet era will help to define a convincing causal pathway in a later data methodology part.

In this section, I will consider Lenin's use case from a qualitative perspective using the biographic approach. The biographical approach, utilized as a method of qualitative research, offers an intricate understanding of an individual's life. Despite its utility in exploring a subject's life deeply and comprehensively, it has limitations, which may impact the quality, objectivity, and reliability of the derived findings.

This methodology is limited due to the inherent subjectivity of the biographical approach. As it relies on a subject's perceptions and interpretations of their life, it may

lead to potential biases and inaccuracies in the representation of life events, potentially compromising the credibility of the analysis. Another limitation is the lack of generalizability of findings from biographical research. As the conclusions drawn are highly individual-centric, their applicability to a larger population or different contexts is restricted, limiting the scope of this use case.

Lenin's figure is of historic magnitude and cannot be used as a reference point for what would be a unique path for a member of the nobility to end up as high ranking official of the new regime. Yet Lenin's use case can maybe help in underpinning some of the dynamics that could be at play from a lived-life level to relate with Pareto's depiction of group dynamics.

Lenin's father Olya Nikolayevich Ulyanov, from modest backgrounds, became an Inspector of Primary Schools and was awarded the Order of St. Vladimir which made him a hereditary nobleman (Beryl, 2000 - P22). From this perspective, Lenin's situation already appears ambiguous. It is not certain that the young Lenin, in spite of his noble status would have identified as noble in the sense of a supporter of the Tsarist regime. Yet the noble distinction could have conferred him an elite sentiment in Pareto's sense that would have driven his ambition to embrace an important role in society even if against the institutions that granted the title in the first place.

As a member of a noble family, Lenin had the privilege of a comprehensive education. This access to a diverse range of ideas, literature, and philosophies opened doors to his intellectual development. The execution of Lenin's brother, Alexander Ulyanov, played a crucial role in shaping his ideological orientations. Despite their noble status, the Ulyanov family could not protect Alexander from the reach of the Tsar's justice. This experience could have provoked a radical shift in Lenin's perception of the existing

societal order and his family's place within it. On top of that, Lenin's noble status but modest family income offered him a unique vantage point to witness Russia's disparities. Also Lenin's privileged status provided a certain degree of intellectual freedom, allowing him to study and delve into controversial ideologies without the immediate pressures of survival. This freedom paved the way for Lenin to extensively engage with the works of Marx and other political theorists, resulting in the formation of his unique revolutionary standpoint.

Even if from the above, it cannot be stated that Lenin's noble origins caused his embracement of Bolshevism, it is plausible to suggest that the unique experiences and perspectives associated with his upbringing played an instrumental role in shaping his engagement. This analysis of Lenin's aristocratic background provides a nuanced understanding of the factors that contributed to his political trajectory and highlights the complexity of the interplay between personal history and ideological formation.

In contrast with Lenin's case who also was a cause of the revolution, the eminent marshal Brusilov merely reacted to it and adapted in consequence. Few figures embody the such a radical personal transition from the Tsarist regime to the Soviet Union as notably as general Aleksei Brusilov. As an aristocratic member of the Tsarist military hierarchy, Brusilov's affiliation with the imperial powers was explicit. His rise to military acclaim, particularly due to the success of his eponymous offensive during World War I, embedded his stature within the old regime's dynamics. With the tumultuous aftermath of the 1917 revolutions, while many of Brusilov's contemporaries faced exile and persecution, Brusilov's actions took a different trajectory. Despite his deep rooted association with the Tsarist regime, he offered a public endorsement of the Bolsheviks, a strategic maneuver that was reciprocated with his integration into the Soviet system (Cockfield, 2019 - P326). Brusilov's transition highlights the fluidity and adaptability of

political actors during times of significant socio-political upheaval. His ability to realign himself, despite his aristocratic background, demonstrates not only individual pragmatism but also the Bolsheviks' appetite to capitalize on valuable assets from the old regime. Brusilov's story exemplifies the dynamics of power transition and the malleability of political affiliations in revolutionary contexts that Elite Circulation involves.

Apart from the two above examples which can be seen as an illustration of the Elite Circulation thesis in the Russian Revolutionary context. It is worth noting that Karl Marx had anticipated a form of socialism inspired by the aristocracy's desire to maintain their power in the face of rampant capitalism. I could not find any research arguing that feudal socialism played a role in the 1917 events. Yet it is interesting to notice that Marx had anticipated that the socialist ideology could be subverted by the powerful aristocratic minority to preserve its interest and maintain its power in the face of social instability.

In the 'Communist Manifesto,' Marx introduces the notion of feudal socialism. Marx critiques the aristocracies of France and England as these elites, seeing their power challenged, are turning to literary critique against the rising bourgeoisie in the form of feudal socialism (Marx, 1848 - P28). In doing so they co-opt the language of the working class, hiding their real intentions. Marx stresses that aristocracy's criticisms often come off as detached and outdated and their attempt to rally the proletariat conceals real power preservation motives. Marx also connects feudal socialism to clerical socialism where the most social branch of the clergy would also be a Trojan horse in the socialist fight. Both feudal socialism and clerical socialism seem to use Christian values to cloak their self-serving goals. Marx's *Communist Manifesto* positions feudal socialism as the aristocracy's desperate attempt to remain relevant and in that regard their adoption of the working class's concerns are more strategic than sincere. Their critiques are more

about their own declining status than truly about the well-being of the proletariat. Such a strategy corresponds to Pareto's Class 2 residue associated with cunningness.

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### 3.5 ELITE THEORY DISCUSSION

In this subpart I review some research that came after Pareto's to show that his themes and conclusions have an implicit legacy.

Pareto's Elite Theory has faced challenges from various individuals and groups on different grounds. Some authors have identified normative biases in Pareto's theory in spite of his claims for realism as opposed to idealist thinkers (Femia, 2009 - P80). Yet Pareto has a legacy and his views are backed by contemporary research conducted by people outside of the Elite Theory school.

The argument that elites can survive regime change is supported by several references. Some authors argue that elites may be forced to create democracy when the costs of repression are high and promises of concessions are not credible (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2005 - P174). They emphasise how the elite's preservation instinct can lead them to advocate for change that seemingly looks against their interest.

Bourdieu's theory of 'reconversion' describes how certain elite groups try to maintain their social status when faced with potential decline (Bourdieu, Boltanski & De Saint Martin, 1973 - P62). Often, they resort to these measures when regular ways to maintain their position don't work. Within this viewpoint, a person's social status is based on different kinds of resources like relationships, money, reputation, and knowledge. When their status drops, these groups use these resources to try to change and gain what

they're missing. If we see a big drop in a social or job group, it usually suggests many people within it are trying to adjust and change their roles in society.

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## 4. METHODOLOGY

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### 4.1 APPLYING ELITE THEORY IN THE 1917 RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONARY CONTEXT

Within the purview of Elite Theory, it is anticipated that a quantitative analysis would reveal a discernible correlation between possession of Tsarist aristocratic origin and occupying elevated positions within the Soviet administrative hierarchy. Such a correlation would lend credence to the hypothesis that the Progressist Strategy was not only embraced by these elites as a collective memory strategy but also proved efficacious in their societal integration and elite status preservation within the Soviet order (Tchouikina, 2009 - P10). These individuals can be likened to 'Foxes' in Burnham definition -they manifest characteristics synonymous with Pareto's Class 1 residues (Burnham, 1943 - P59). Identifying this correlation would provide empirical substantiation to Pareto's theoretical construct, which posits the resilience and adaptability of elites during periods of transformative regime change.

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### 4.2 HYPOTHESIS STATEMENT

I conjecture that the mechanism of Elite Circulation theorized by Pareto would account for the hypothesized covariance between the noble origin and succeeding status of high-ranked officials of the communist regime. We expect noble origin to engender proactive behavior in reaction and at the source of social change among a portion of its members. This behavior would secure that portion of its members an elite status in the reformed society post-regime change. Contrarily the other portion of its members would



resist and suffer from the regime change and be expelled from society by death or exile leaving no progeny. This polarizing destiny increases the odds of findings in the elite progeny members of the new regime elite. In the Pareto elite theoretical framework put in place in this paper, the members of the other classes would overall be witnesses of the social change indiscriminately socially ascending or suffering from it. In this view, I expect to find the absence of covariance between non-noble ancestry (reported ancestry from categories: meshchane, merchants, clergy, foreigner) and high-ranked official of the communist regime status.

To summarize the above, I posit two hypotheses:

*H1:* Pre-communist nobility is positively correlated with high-ranked officials of the communist regime status among progeny.

*H2:* Non-noble ancestry is not correlated with high-ranked officials of the communist regime status among progeny.

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#### 4.3 IDENTIFYING THE CAUSAL PATHWAY: DIRECTED ACYCLIC DIAGRAM INTRODUCTION

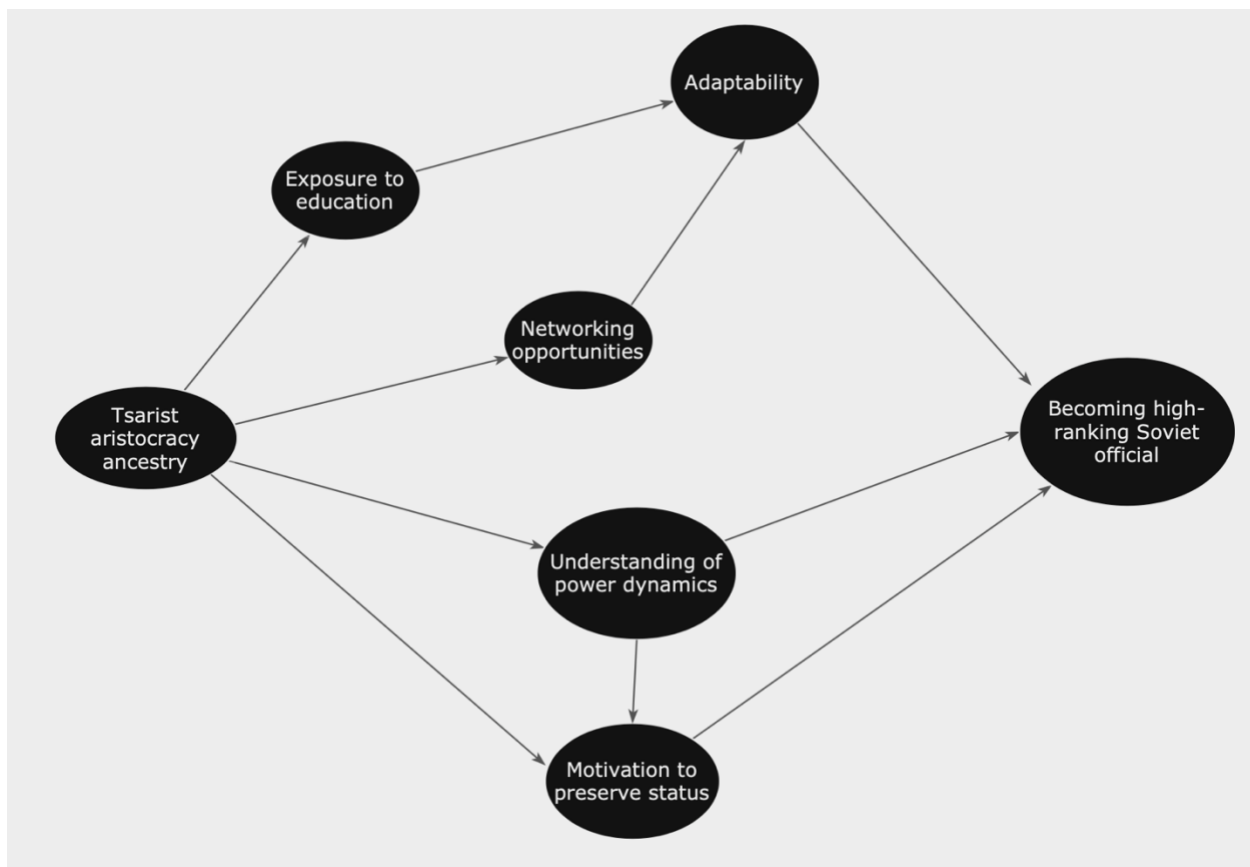
In this paper, I utilize a Directed Acyclic Graph (DAG) to elucidate the potential causal relationships between social origin or past social status among ancestors and the likelihood of holding an elite position under the Bolshevik regime. A DAG is a graphical model that provides significant insights into understanding the structure of causal relationships. This is crucial because it helps visualize and analyze causal pathways.

I constructed the DAG based on the preceding review of the literature about elite survival during regime changes and the Russian Revolution (see part 2 and 3 of this paper). In the DAG, each node signifies a variable, and each arrow or edge illustrates a potential causal relationship between two variables. It's worth noting that any two variables lacking

a direct path between them are conditionally independent, given the presence of variables that lie on all paths connecting them.

It is important to stress that this DAG does not represent a unique fate associated with the fact of having an aristocratic background. Rather, the Elite Theory framework introduced in the precedent section of this paper aims at presenting how some members of the Tsarist elite could have effectively leveraged their background to secure themselves a high status in the Soviet new order. To put it differently, this DAG represents the trajectory of the nobles who adopted the 'progressist' strategy (Tchouikina, 2009 – P73) or who behaved as Burnham's 'Foxes' as they were animated by Pareto's 'class 1 residues' (Burnham, 1943 - P59). This DAG could be doubled with an alternative trajectory that many members of the aristocracy took. This trajectory is the most well-known when it comes to the fate of Russian aristocrats and which amounts to an outcome of death or exile. In the wake of Pareto's work, this research paper aims at studying the polarizing effect of elite status in the context of regime change. In that regard, the fact that the nobility would have been reduced to two diametrically trajectories -death and exile versus becoming a high-ranking member of the new regime- makes sense.

Figure 1 - Directed Acyclic Graph depicting the causal pathway between input variable 'Tsarist aristocracy ancestry' and output variable 'Becoming high-ranking Soviet official'



As illustrated in Figure 1, 'Tsarist aristocracy ancestry' influences 'Exposure to education' as aristocratic families typically had access to quality education and were often fluent in multiple languages, knowledgeable about international affairs, and cultured in various arts and sciences. In a country where illiteracy was prevalent, this conferred them a great comparative advantage over non-educated members of the society as the new regime needed skilled labor for its administrative endeavors. 'Tsarist aristocracy ancestry' also influences 'Networking opportunities' as having family ties to influential people, even if they were from a previous regime, could potentially provide an advantage in terms of connections, alliances, or opportunities. This was particularly double-edged in the Soviet context because the same ties could be a reason for coercion, but accounts of special

consideration from Soviet officials to members of the aristocracy exist. The combination of consideration ('Networking opportunities') and valuable skills ('Exposure to education') foster the intermediate variable 'Adaptability' which amounts to Bourdieu's elite 'reconversion' capacity (Bourdieu, Boltanski & De Saint Martin, 1973 - P62). 'Understanding of power dynamics' is another intermediate variable influenced by Tsarist aristocracy ancestry as growing up in an aristocratic family might expose individuals to concepts of governance, diplomacy, and strategy, making them well-equipped to serve in governmental roles. On top of that, this could have made evident to individuals the existential threat of adopting a reactionary or even passive stance to the revolution. This would influence another intermediate variable 'Motivation to preserve status' which is not only influenced directly by 'Tsarist aristocracy ancestry' -through habit individuals were attached to a certain status they were not willing to give up but also by the absence of alternative -apart from exile- for self-preservation. Thus 'Adaptability', 'Understanding of power dynamics', and 'Motivation to preserve status' would have influenced the outcome of becoming a high-ranking Soviet official'.

Building a quantitative analytical model comprising all the variables of the above DAG presents great challenges. The first challenge is conceptual. Some of the DAG variables such as 'Motivation to preserve status' present in the causal pathway between our independent variables of interest and our dependent variable are hard to measure in themselves. The second challenge lies in the operational complexity of data collection. The needed data spans several generations since the case of the matter at hand is intergenerational status preservation. Collecting that data would have required an institution to follow a vast group of individuals over several decades while reporting their status and making qualitative assessments of their character and situation. This, of course, did not happen and is purely retrospective imagination. The researcher is left to find a different strategy for data collection. Even in the absence of some of the variables

that constitute its nodes the importance of the introduced DAG above lies in the causal pathway built on a theoretical framework that it proposes. Without it, any relationship identified between the independent variables and the dependent variable would be just a correlation rather than an insight into elite dynamics in the context of Russian history.

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## 5. DATA AND ANALYSIS

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### 5.1 DATA DESCRIPTION AND BIASES IDENTIFICATION

I reuse an original dataset ordered by Lankina and Libman for their work *The Two-Pronged Middle Class: The Old Bourgeoisie, New State-Engineered Middle Class, and Democratic Development* (published 2021, the survey was jointly commissioned and designed the survey with Katerina Tertytchnaya in 2019). In this paper, the authors investigate the democratic role of the middle classes in different contexts. They distinguish between middle classes that emerge gradually during capitalist development and those that are rapidly created through state-led modernization. To support their argument, they use historical district data, surveys, and archival materials related to pre-Revolutionary Russia and its feudal estates. As the authors -successfully- attempted to find some inter-generational permanences in political behaviors, they requested a survey from the Levada polling agency in order to build a table investigating ‘Self-reported *Meshchane* Ancestry and Soviet-Period Occupation of Descendants’ - *Meschane* being a bourgeois middle-class estate composing around 11% of the Russian society (Empire-wide census of 1897). This survey encompassed other ancestry categories, namely: Nobility, Merchants, Clergy, Peasants, and Foreigners. This data can be leveraged in my research as the process of self-reporting ancestry solves the data collection issue identified when I introduced the DAG. Figures X and Y provide a brief description of the ancestry dataset.

The dataset comprises responses from 1602 respondents from a diversity of geographic locations, genders, social statuses, ages, and education levels. Its variable of interest is binary '0' representing the respondent answering 'No' when asked about the presence in his or her ancestry of a particular social category. Inversely '1' represents the respondent answering 'Yes' when asked about the presence in his or her ancestry of a particular social category. It is insightful to compare the proportion of respondents answering to each presence in his or her ancestry of this or that social category with the proportions of each of that category in the 1897 Empire-wide census of 1897 (see figure Z, borrowed from Lankina, Libman, 2021 - P951). It reveals the potential presence bias associated with self-reported data that the researcher cannot shy away from.

Self-reported data is data that is collected directly from individuals through surveys, questionnaires, or interviews, where individuals provide information about themselves or their experiences. While self-reported data can be a valuable source of information, it is important to recognize that there are several biases associated with this type of data. Following is a list of the most common bias associated with self-reported data. One bias associated with self-reported data is response bias. Response bias refers to the tendency of individuals to provide inaccurate or biased responses. This can occur due to social desirability bias, where individuals may provide responses that they believe are socially acceptable or desirable, rather than providing truthful responses (Schwarz, 1999 - P93). For example, individuals may underreport socially undesirable behaviors such as drug use, or overreport socially desirable behaviors such as exercise. Another bias associated with self-reported data is recall bias. Recall bias occurs when individuals have difficulty accurately remembering past events or experiences and may provide inaccurate or incomplete information. This can be particularly problematic when individuals are asked to recall specific details or events that occurred in the past (Bradburn , 1987 - P158). Context effects are another source of bias in self-reported data. Context effects refer to

the influence of the question wording, format, and context on individuals' responses (Schwarz, 1999 - P93). The way a question is framed or presented can influence how individuals interpret and respond to it. For example, the wording of a question about income may influence individuals' responses, as they may be more likely to provide a rounded or socially desirable figure rather than an exact amount.

Such biases are possibly at play in this survey since the share of respondents reporting 'Yes' to desirable high status among ancestry is much greater than the actual share of the population belonging to such social categories. For instance, 8.3% of the respondents of the Levada survey are reporting 'Nobility' among their ancestry when this social category only composed 1.5% of the population of Tsarist Russia according to the census of 1897. Natural explanations for this divergence such as the possibility that nobles had much more offspring than other social categories are unlikely. Response bias - individuals overreporting desirable characteristics- could be at play here since Russian aristocracy is *en vogue* since the 1980s (Tchouikina, 2009 - P64). Recall bias is also likely to have a high influence over the reporting because illustrious ancestry is often more documented and remembered than obscure ancestry from the bottom of the social ladder. It must be that respondents have an important number of ancestors as they are reporting about a period of 3 to 4 generations before them. Recall bias is also likely to be present in our case since a lot of Russians have gaps in their knowledge of their family history (Bertaux, 2004 – P7). In that regard, each respondent is expected to report about 8 to 16 different ancestors. In that regard the 8.3% of respondents reporting nobility ancestry is possible. It is rather the lower categories such as peasants with only half of the respondents reporting ancestry among them when they composed 77% of the 1897 society that appears as underreported due to recall bias. This exposition of potential bias leads me to be careful in the conclusions that we could draw from the coming analysis.

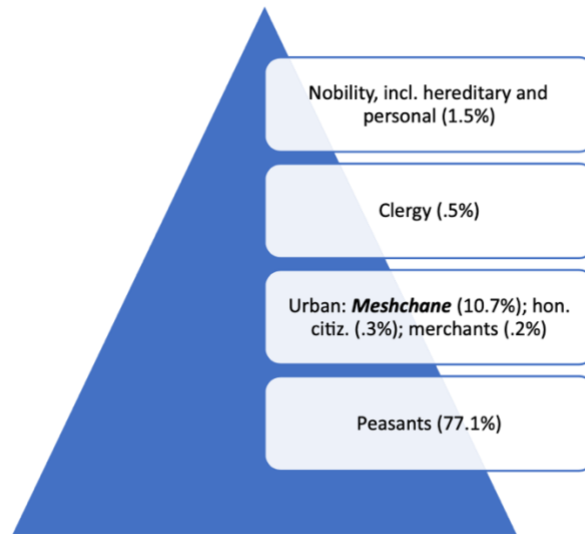
Figure 2 – Data description: overview

Variable description: among ancestry	Nobility	Merchants	Clergy	Meschane	Peasants	Foreigners	High ranked Soviet manager
Variable name	qq11_1	qq11_2	qq11_3	qq11_4	qq11_5	qq11_6	qq13_6
Number of observations	1602	1602	1602	1602	1602	1602	1602
Most represented value	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Frequency of most represented value	1469	1499	1563	1489	822	1593	1547

Figure 3 – Data description: quick look at the variables

Among ancestry	Nobility	Merchants	Clergy	Meschane	Peasants	Foreigners	High ranked Soviet manager
Variable name	qq11_1	qq11_2	qq11_3	qq11_4	qq11_5	qq11_6	qq13_6
Share of respondents reporting 'No'	91.70%	93.57%	97.57%	92.95%	48.69%	99.44%	96.57%
Share of respondents reporting 'Yes'	8.30%	6.43%	2.43%	7.05%	51.31%	0.56%	3.43%

Figure 4 – Imperial Russia share of population according to the 1897 census (Lankina, Libman, 2019)



## 5.2 REGRESSION ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Regression analysis is used in statistics to analyze relationships between variables and make predictions based on these relationships. It helps researchers assess the significance of relationships between variables and determine the strength and direction of these relationships. One specific area where regression analysis is commonly used in political sciences is the analysis of binary dependent variables. Indeed, many phenomena



studied in political sciences involve binary outcomes, where an event either occurs or does not occur. By analyzing binary dependent variables, political scientists can better understand the conditional hypotheses and strategic behavior that shape political outcomes.

After carefully considering different methodologies, I decide to employ a multivariate binomial logistic regression to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable, which represents whether parents during the Soviet era hold high-ranked managerial positions (qq13\_6), and a set of independent variables denoted as 'qq11\_x' that corresponds to the different former estates in the Imperial era. My decision stems from the categorical nature of the dependent variable, with two discrete outcomes (parent was Yes or No a high ranked official) , making binomial logistic regression an appropriate choice for analysis. In my case regular logistic regression serves the purpose of this paper adequately.

Running the multivariate binomial logistic regression allows me to examine the joint effects of the 'qq11\_x' variables, including 'Nobility Among Ancestors' in 'qq11\_1', and other relevant attributes in 'qq11\_2' (Merchants among ancestors), 'qq11\_3' (Clergy among ancestors), 'qq11\_4' (Meshchane among ancestors), 'qq11\_5' (Peasants among ancestors), and 'qq11\_6' (Foreigners among ancestors), on the likelihood of having high-ranked manager parents during the Soviet era.

In the course of my analysis, I assess the odds ratios for each 'qq11\_x' variable, providing valuable insights into the direction and magnitude of their effects on the likelihood of having high-ranked manager parents during the specified historical period.

To create the table below (see Figure 5), I used Python with the panda package and the statsmodel module, notably its Logit function.

*Figure 5 – Regression table : self-reported ancestry and Soviet-Period occupation of descendants being high-ranked official*

Dependent variable dummy for	qq13_6 High-ranked officials
qq11_1 Nobility	1.035 (0.383)***
qq11_2 Merchants	0.6011 (-0.448)
qq11_3 Clergy	2.2888 (0.426)***
qq11_4 Meshchane	0.5166 (0.465)
qq11_5 Peasants	-0.0898 (0.301)
qq11_6 Foreigners	1.3449 (1.085)
Constant	-3.6972 (-0.241)***

*Note:* The table reports the correlation between self-reported Imperial ancestry belonging to the nobility and occupation of parents in the Soviet period from the Levada survey. Regression estimated using logit. Robust standards errors in parenthesis. \*p<0.1, \*\*p<0.05, \*\*\*p<0.01

In this examination of the historical backgrounds of families and their impact on societal positioning during the Soviet era, specific ancestral backgrounds have proven influential. Notably, the variable 'Nobility among ancestors' shows a positive correlation with the likelihood of parents being high-ranked managers during the Soviet era. Specifically, for each unit increase in the presence of nobility among one's forebearers,

the log odds of parents attaining high managerial positions during the Soviet period increased by 1.0350. This association is statistically significant, as supported by a p-value of 0.007.

Furthermore, the background 'Clergy among ancestors' is surprisingly even more indicative of such a trend. Every unit increase in the presence of clergy in one's lineage corresponds to a 2.2888 increase in the log odds of parents being situated in top managerial roles in the Soviet era. This relationship is underscored by its high level of statistical significance, demonstrated by a p-value nearing zero. This is a surprise as this could not be anticipated from the theoretical background and the causal pathways we established in the precedent parts. Looking back, it appears that some nodes in the DAG such as exposure to education could be shared between nobility and clergy. This invites to further research on the clergy in the context of regime change.

Conversely, other ancestral backgrounds like 'Merchants among ancestors,' 'Meshchane among ancestors,' 'Peasants among ancestors,' and 'Foreigners among ancestors' were found to lack significant statistical correlation with the likelihood of parents holding elevated managerial roles during the Soviet times.

For interpretation, it is important to note that odds ratios are used to measure the strength and direction of the association between an independent variable and the likelihood of an event occurring (in this case, the likelihood of the binary outcome if yes or no parent was a high ranking official). In a binomial logistic regression, the odds ratio for an independent variable represents the multiplicative change in the odds of the event occurring for a one-unit increase in that variable while holding all other variables constant. If we consider the output from running the model with the variable 'qq11\_1' (Nobility Among Ancestors) having a coefficient of 1.0350. The calculated odds ratio for

'qq11\_1' is 2.82. This means that for every one-unit increase in the variable 'qq11\_1' (Nobility Among Ancestors), the odds of having high-ranked manager parents during the Soviet era (qq13\_6) are approximately 2.82 times higher, assuming all other variables remain constant. If the odds ratio is greater than 1, it indicates a positive association between the independent variable and the likelihood of the event occurring. It's important to note that odds ratios are expressed in multiplicative terms, making them independent of the scale of the dependent variable.

As a result of analyzing this dataset, I cannot reject *H1: Pre-communist nobility is positively correlated with high-ranked officials of the communist regime status among progeny*. These results are providing a quantitative empirical backing to Pareto's Elite Circulation as it seem to have operated in the Russian context of transition to the Imperial era to the Soviet era. Yet, to nuance this statement, I have to reject *H2: Non-noble ancestry is not correlated with high-ranked officials of the communist regime status among progeny* because of the regression results on the independent variable clergy among the ancestry. This opens the door for further research.

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## 6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research paper has sought to provide an empirical and quantitative analysis of a subject traditionally burdened with stereotypical and ideologically loaded narratives—the fate of the Russian aristocracy after the October Revolution. Drawing on the Italian school of Elite Theory founded by Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca, this study elucidates the phenomenon of Elite Circulation in the Russian Revolution context.

This study was inspired by earlier works such as Libman and Lankina's research on the meshchane class (Lankina, Libman, 2021). It contributes to Elite Theory, autocracy research, and Russian History by bringing a quantitative perspective on the aristocracy's fate through the Revolution era. Through rigorous statistical analysis, the paper confirms that being part of the nobility in Tsarist Russia positively influences the likelihood of being part of the elite in Soviet society. This can be understood through the lens of Elite Circulation mechanisms described by Pareto.

In summarizing the methodology, the paper was structured into four main sections, carefully designed to build upon one another. The first section grounded the assumptions regarding the Russian aristocracy as an elite class, doing so through a comprehensive literature review that examined their composition before, during, and after the Russian Revolution. The objective here was to establish the framework within which the nobility functioned as an elite class. In the second section, the paper discussed the concept of Elite Circulation and how it impacted the Elite Theory perspective on regime changes. The purpose was to conceptualize the mechanisms that could explain the endurance or transformation of elites amidst significant political upheavals. The third section presented the study's hypotheses and proposed a causal pathway for the conversion of nobles in the Soviet era. To do this, a directed acyclic diagram was employed to visually represent the causal relationships between variables, thereby enhancing the clarity and interpretability of the theoretical assumptions. Finally, the last section offered a robust statistical analysis aimed at empirically testing the hypotheses.

In this study, I used a multivariate binomial logistic regression analysis to explore the relationship between whether parents held high-ranking managerial positions during the Soviet era and various independent variables, including 'Nobility Among Ancestors' and other related attributes. Given that the dependent variable is categorical with two

possible outcomes, binomial logistic regression was a fitting choice for the analysis. The logistic regression model enabled me to evaluate the odds ratios for each independent variable, giving me valuable information on the direction and magnitude of their impact on the outcome which made the above findings evident. The multivariate binomial logistic regression served as a robust and appropriate methodology for examining the relationship between the independent variables and the likelihood of parents holding high-ranking managerial positions during the Soviet era. This statistical approach enabled me to make a contribution to the understanding of political dynamics when it comes to elite in the specific historical context of the transition from Imperial Russia to Soviet Russia.

This layered approach mixing history, political theory and statistical analysis has not only provided empirical weight to the theories of Pareto but has also offered a nuanced understanding of the Russian aristocracy's fate post-revolution. By adhering to this structured methodology, this paper has sought to illuminate a subject often obscured by ideological preconceptions, adding both empirical rigor and nuanced interpretation to the broader discourse. Future research may well extend this methodology to other historical contexts to examine how consistent these patterns of Elite Circulation are across different societies and political upheavals.

The paper quantitatively verified that individuals and their progeny from the nobility estate in Imperial Russia had a positive likelihood of belonging to the elite classes of Soviet society, thereby empirically substantiating the theories of Elite Circulation proposed by Pareto. Future research should focus on the clergy findings that showed that having clergy members in the ancestry was associated with higher odds of parent holding a prominent position in the Soviet era.

Drawing from the Russian/Soviet example to support Pareto's view, what this essentially suggests is that while ideologies and political discourses may change the underlying framework of elite competition and succession remains surprisingly constant. This conclusion tempers the polarizing narratives that have long surrounded the fate of Russian aristocracy, presenting a more nuanced understanding that neither vilifies nor sanctifies them but instead situates them within a more predictable pattern of Elite Circulation.

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