9

BUREAUCRACIES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling

Introduction

The establishment of modern, professional bureaucracies has been a major objective of post-communist transformation. Indeed, administrative transformation and reform have been instrumental for the success of the political and economic transformation and the integration of Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans into the European political, economic, and security structures. Linz and Stepan (1996), for instance, list a ‘usable state bureaucracy’ as one of six arenas of consolidated democracy. The quality of a country’s bureaucracy is also widely recognised to affect the prospects of economic development (Evans and Rauch 1999), the management of EU accession (Hille and Knill 2006, Zubek 2008) and the implementation of EU policies (Falkner and Treib 2008).

The debate on the reform of public bureaucracies in post-communist Europe has centred on three major themes: (1) the trajectories and outcomes of reform; (2) the drivers and obstacles of reform; and (3) the consequences of emerging administrative structures and practices for political, economic, and social outcomes.

For the most part, debate has focused on reform pathways and the type of public administration that has emerged in the region, in particular, whether the communist legacy of public administration has been overcome, the extent to which public administration has come to share features of the main Western models of bureaucracy, or whether a new, distinctly post-communist type of public administration has emerged in the region.

Today, the question ‘which model’ in and for post-communist Europe remains as topical as ever. Vigorous debate continues over the suitability of the Weberian, new public management (NPM), or mixed models such as the Neo-Weberian State model for the post-communist context (Dan and Pollitt 2015, Drechsler and Kattel 2008, Randma-Liiv 2009). In empirical terms, attempts to classify public administration in the region have been largely futile. There is by now a general agreement that public administration in the region is characterised by diversity and the absence of a singular model of post-communist public administration. Yet public administration also retains a number of region-specific features such as persisting institutional instability, informality and the personalisation of institutions, a discrepancy between formal rules and administrative practices, and widespread politicisation of personnel policy and administrative decision-making.
The second major theme has been concerned with the determinants of public administration reform and practices in the region. Explanatory accounts have favoured middle-range theories that focus on identifying the causal effect of particular variables or the explanation of specific features of post-communist administration such as institutional instability or the politicisation of the civil service. The most prominent explanations have focused on the role of historical legacies, political parties, Europeanisation, and more recently, the global financial and economic crisis.

Third, more recently, the debate has shifted towards the performance of post-communist public administration and hence the study of public administration as an independent variable. Studies of corruption, the transposition and implementation of EU policies and fiscal performance represent the starting point for this line of research. However, many of the big questions regarding the performance of bureaucracies remain unanswered, in particular, the relation between bureaucracy and democratic and economic developments in the region.

Trajectories of public administration reform in post-communist Europe

The field of comparative public administration in Western established democracies is, by and large, thematically organised. Comprehensive overviews that cover several components of reform such as Pollitt and Bouckaert’s (2011) study of public management reform in Western democracies are rare for Central and Eastern Europe (Bouckaert et al. 2011, Nemec 2010) and have not yet been conducted for the Western Balkans. This section therefore begins with the debate surrounding the transformation of public administration after the end of communism. It then discusses in more detail the areas of civil service reform and politicisation followed by prominent public management reforms such as the establishment of independent agencies, performance management, and public financial management. The section concludes with an attempt to characterise the outcomes of administrative reform in post-communist Europe.

Administrative transformation after the change of regime

Initially, research on public administration in post-communist Europe focused on the task of administrative transformation. It defined the main features of the ‘real-existing socialist administration’ (König 1992) to identify what it takes to make public administration compatible with constitutional democracy and a liberal market economy. Accordingly, the focus was on the need for eliminating the leading role of the communist party in favour of multi-party democracy and to bring public administration under the rule of law; to abandon the principle of democratic centralism for far-reaching decentralisation and the introduction of local self-government; to overcome the unity of politics and the economy by engaging in large-scale privatisation and liberalisation, and by reorganising government ministries and agencies to account for the radically altered role of the state in managing the economy; and to replace the over-politicised cadre administration and nomenclature system with a professional civil service that is formalised by law and independent from political interference.

Despite the enormous task, studies were initially positive in relation to the process of transformation, as they expected a gradual westernisation of public administration. For instance, Hesse (1998: 170–171) suggested that public administration in post-communist Europe would gradually move through stages of transformation, consolidation, modernisation, and ‘adaptation towards the state of the art of public sector performance as observed in Western environments, as well as towards the pressures brought about by the preparation for EU membership’.
By contrast, studies of administrative transformation that appeared in the late 1990s and early 2000s were more sceptical. Taking stock, these studies emphasised delays in many areas of reform, incomplete and contradictory legal frameworks, implementation gaps, a major discrepancy between formal rules and administrative practice, and widespread political interference with personnel policy (Nunberg 1999, Verheijen 1999, 2001). The reform record raised questions with regard to the type of public administration that would be emerging in post-communist Europe. Goetz and Wollmann (2001), for instance, asked whether we are witnessing the emergence of ‘defective administrations’ in the region or a new, specifically post-communist type of administration that differs from types of administration that prevail in the West.

Research on post-communist public administration since the early 2000s has qualified the sceptical evaluations. It is characterised by a growing differentiation along prominent themes in the field of comparative public administration such as the institutionalisation of core executives (Dimitrov et al. 2006), the agencification of public administration (Koprič et al. 2012, Randma-Liiv et al. 2011, Van Thiel 2011), civil service reform and politicisation (Meyer-Sahling 2009, 2012, Randma-Liiv and Järvalt 2011), performance management (Peters 2008, Verheijen and Dobrilyubova 2007), and the co-ordination of EU policies (Dimitrova and Toshkov 2007, Lippert et al. 2001, Zubek 2008). The next section focuses on civil service developments in order to illustrate the trajectories and outcomes of reform across the region in more detail.

**Civil service reform and politicisation**

Studies of civil service reform and politicisation cover a wide range of civil service management functions in most Central and Eastern European countries and, more recently, the Western Balkans (Meyer-Sahling 2009, Randma-Liiv and Järvalt 2011). Moreover, they compare institutional frameworks, the quality of their implementation and the support of civil servants for different models of bureaucracy.

The research shows that institutional reform pathways have varied considerably across countries. Focusing on the initial adoption of civil service laws as the key step towards the professionalisation of the civil service, Hungary was the first among the Central and Eastern European cases to adopt a civil service law in 1992. Latvia and Lithuania followed in 1994 and 1995, respectively. However, in both cases the implementation was incomplete, leading to the adoption of new laws in Lithuania in 1999 and in Latvia in 2000. Estonia passed the first civil service law in 1995, to come into force in 1996. Poland adopted a law in 1996. However, the implementation was suspended after the 1997 election when it had become evident that the outgoing government had used the law to freeze political appointees into permanent civil service positions. The civil service law was revised and a new law was passed in 1998.

Romania (1999), Bulgaria (1999), Slovakia (2001), and Slovenia (2002) adopted civil service laws in the context of preparing for EU accession. The Czech Republic also passed a civil service law for the first time in 2002 but, apart from a very small number of provisions, it was not implemented. It took the Czech Republic until 2014 to pass a new law that is by now also applied in practice. All the other countries have significantly amended their first laws and indeed most have replaced them at least once over the last twenty-plus years. In other words, diverse pathways of reform have gone hand in hand with institutional instability and problems of implementation, albeit to different degrees.

Looking at the level of professionalisation across the region, the evidence suggests that the Baltic states have progressed further than the other Central and Eastern European countries, in particular, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia. The differences are best captured by studies of senior civil service politicisation (Meyer-Sahling and Veen 2012, Kopecký and Spirova 2011).
They show low levels of politicisation for Estonia, Latvia and, with qualifications, Lithuania. By contrast, Poland and Slovakia come out with the highest levels of politicisation, while Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia are in an intermediate position yet closer to Poland and Slovakia. The evidence for Romania and Bulgaria is not fully comparable but suggests high levels of politicisation similar to Poland and Slovakia (Volintiru 2015, Spirova 2012).

Civil service reform and politicisation in the Western Balkans shares many features of the development in the new member states (Meyer-Sahling 2012). Civil service laws have been adopted in all countries, but compared to the Central and Eastern European cases reforms were delayed due to the wars of Yugoslav succession. Most of the story of reform therefore begins after the end of the wars and the beginning of the Stabilisation and Association Process with the EU. Albania and Macedonia were the first countries to adopt civil service laws in 1999 and 2000, respectively. At the state level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a civil service law was passed in 2002 following the imposition of the law by the Office of the High Representative. Montenegro and Serbia passed their first civil service laws in 2004 and 2005, respectively, and hence still during the life of the State Union of both states. Kosovo was the last country that adopted a law in 2010, that is, two years after declaring independence in 2008. Like in Central and Eastern Europe, laws have been amended and even replaced in several countries, suggesting again that trajectories of reform differ but stability has not yet been achieved.

Civil service developments in the Western Balkans are further characterised by a major discrepancy between formal rules and actual practices of personnel management. Most puzzlingly, despite the presence and enforcement of professional civil service rules such as merit standards and procedures, there is a widespread perception that non-merit selection criteria such as political loyalty, family and clan relations, and ethnic belonging are more important than professional qualifications (Doli et al. 2012, Elbasani 2013, Meyer-Sahling et al. 2015).

There is so far no study of politicisation that is directly comparable to Central and Eastern Europe. However, preliminary evidence suggests that politicisation reaches deeply into the administration – in particular in Macedonia, where it can reach four to five levels down the hierarchy, and hence deeper than shown for Poland and Slovakia in the mid- and late 2000s. In addition, it appears that the quality of politicisation differs from Central and Eastern Europe. Old-style patronage based on clientelist exchanges of jobs for votes and services are entrenched in many countries, especially Kosovo and Macedonia.

The question remains as to whether reform outcomes in post-communist Europe differ from patterns that prevail in Western democracies, particularly Western Europe. There is an emerging body of literature that explicitly compares reform developments in East and West. These pan-European studies suggest that the Baltic states align more closely with the cluster of low politicisation cases in North West Europe, while Hungary is more similar to the Central European neighbours such as Germany and Austria (Bach et al. 2015). The proximity of the Czech Republic and Hungary to Germany and Austria also emerged from studies of party patronage (Kopecký et al. 2012).

Inevitably, the comparison of politicisation in East and West sheds doubt on the ‘differentness’ of public administration in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. In terms of theoretical and methodological approaches, the emerging body of research indicates a normalisation of public administration insofar as the East is increasingly integrated into broader debates in comparative public administration. Substantively, the findings point towards the emergence of new ‘families of administrations’ in Europe (cf. Castles 1993) as a result of transformation and Europeanisation over the last twenty-five years. However, many of the core attributes of post-communist public administrations such as institutional instability are usually not adequately captured by the East-West comparisons that have been conducted so far. Moreover, the question
remains whether the conclusions for civil service reform and politicisation hold for other areas of public administration reform.

**Agency reform, performance management, and public financial management after the crisis**

Research on other areas of public management reform tend to by and large support the findings for civil service reform and politicisation. First, research on the establishment of executive agencies finds considerable variation in the number, type, and tasks delegated to agencies across the region. Comparing to Western Europe, agencification in the 1990s and early 2000s is characterised by a 'larger scope' and 'higher speed' (Van Thiel 2011).

Starting in the mid-2000s and, in particular, after the beginning of the global and financial crisis, Central and Eastern Europe embarked on a U-turn that started a process of de-agencification (Randma-Liiv et al. 2011). In addition to evidence for instability resulting from continuous agency reform, there has been frequent reference to the politicisation of formally independent agencies (Beblavý et al. 2012, Randma-Liiv et al. 2011). Moreover, evidence for the Western Balkans, including Croatia here, indicates problems of management that stem from inadequate legal frameworks and a lack of capacity in terms of both resources and the expertise of agency personnel (Koprič et al. 2012).

Second, performance management is a core component of NPM reforms, which have been viewed sceptically by academic observers for post-communist Europe (Drechsler 2005, Verheijen and Coombes 1998). Yet the evidence suggests that performance management tools have been taken up widely in Central and Eastern Europe, in particular, in the Baltic states (Verheijen and Dobrolyubova 2007, Hammerschmid and Löfler 2015, Peters 2008). In practice, it has been more difficult to make performance management systems work. The validity of performance indicators and the quality of performance information are frequently questioned. In particular, performance information is often not used even when it is produced (Nömm and Randma-Liiv 2012).

Third, it is important to draw attention to the growing literature on fiscal crisis management in Central and Eastern Europe. This work has addressed the impact of the crisis on public administration reform (Kickert et al. 2015) and on decision-making inside government (Savi and Randma-Liiv 2015). It shows that certain cutback measures such as hiring and pay freezes were most frequently applied across Europe.

However, the scale and style of fiscal consolidation varied, primarily, depending on the severity of the crisis. The Baltic states, for instance, applied deeper cuts and did so across public administration rather than in a targeted manner. By contrast, Slovenia took a more moderate approach, as it could benefit from the quicker recovery of the German and Austrian economies. In other words, the fiscal consolidation experience supports the argument that new families of administrations have been emerging in Europe (see also Epstein in this volume).

**Which model of public administration for post-communist Europe?**

What overall picture emerges and how does it relate to the models of public administration that have dominated the debate in post-communist Europe? Overview assessments argue that public administration in the Baltic states, particularly in Estonia, embodies a large number of NPM features, while 'mixed models' that combine Weberian and NPM features have emerged in the other Central and Eastern European and the South Eastern European member states of the EU (Nemec 2010, Bouckaert et al. 2011). It is a matter of debate whether the mixed models amount to the emergence of Neo-Weberian States in the region (Drechsler and Kattel 2008, Randma-Liiv 2009).
No assessments of this kind have so far been conducted for the Western Balkan states. The evidence suggests that they also approximate a mixed model, even though Weberian elements remain stronger for the time being, while NPM reforms have only recently become more prominent in administrative reform programmes (Meyer-Sahling 2012).

The classification of reform trajectories and outcomes along the dominant Western models of bureaucracy allows for broad comparisons between East and West and integrates the study of post-communist public administrations into wider academic debates. Yet features such as institutional instability, informality, and the personalisation of institutions figure prominently in analyses across components of reform in the region but classic models of bureaucracy do not adequately account for them.

The role of politicisation in post-communist public administration also remains puzzling. Weberian reforms in much of Central and Eastern Europe, South Eastern European member states, and the Western Balkans have gone along with (the persistence of) widespread political interference with personnel policy and administrative decision-making. NPM reformers in the Baltic states have experienced less politicisation but are surely not immune to politicisation pressures (Nakrošis 2015). What we observe in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans does therefore point towards the emergence of ‘bureaucracies with adjectives’ rather than plain Weberian, NPM, Neo-Weberian, or mixed models of bureaucracy.

Explaining administrative reform and practices in post-communist Europe

Studies of the professionalisation of bureaucracies point to a large number of political, economic, social, and international explanatory factors (for a comprehensive overview, see Schuster 2015). In the context of Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, the focus has been on the role of historical legacies, the EU, political parties, and political competition. So far there have been virtually no attempts to integrate explanatory approaches nor to build a general theory of post-communist public administration.

First, approaches that stress the impact of the communist-type administration build on legacy explanations of democratisation and administration traditions on public management reform (Kitschelt et al. 1999, Painter and Peters 2010). They stress the stickiness and persistence of institutions, administrative practices, and mentalities from the past. Accordingly, the communist tradition of public administration has often been invoked to explain the politicisation of the civil service and the weakness of formal institutions (Verheijen 2001). Yet there are only few studies that invoke historical legacies to explain variation in administrative reform outcomes. The work by Kopecký and Spirova (2011) on party patronage is an exception. They rely on the distinction of bureaucratic, national-accommodative, and patronorial communism in Kitschelt et al. (1999) to explain differences in politicisation in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

Second, political parties figure prominently in explanations of administrative reform and practices. In the post-communist context, parties had a strong incentive to ‘exploit’ the state rather than to invest in state professionalisation (Grzymała-Busse 2007, O’Dwyer 2006). Parties were new and lacked organisational resources. Providing state resources including jobs in exchange for votes offered a promising strategy of party-building and consolidation. Moreover, the state was seen as weak, as it was associated with the failure of communism and, in particular, it was subject to major structural and personnel change after transition.

Grzymała-Busse (2007) shows that ‘robust competition’ mitigated the incentive of governing parties to exploit the state and, instead, to invest in state professionalisation. Robust competition presupposes a critical opposition that is both unified and credible to replace the government.
Under these conditions, the opposition has the capacity to monitor government, which in turn has an incentive to build institutions as signals for transparent, non-corrupt behaviour. Looking across a range of administrative reform areas, Grzymała-Busse (2007) argues that robust competition explains why Hungary embarked much earlier on reform than, for instance, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The main challenge for arguments that focus on institutional reform trajectories stems from the weakness of formal institutions in post-communist Europe and hence the difficulty of making an inference from the presence of formal rules to actual behaviour (Dimitrov et al. 2006). One alternative approach focuses on the explanation of politicisation practices (Meyer-Sahling and Veen 2012). It assumes that parties make appointments for the sake of political control, especially at the top of the civil service. The incentive to make appointments is greatest when politicians have the perception that they cannot control — or trust — the bureaucrats they are meant to collaborate with during policymaking and implementation.

Meyer-Sahling and Veen (2012) argue that the perceived problems of control are greatest when government changes are characterised by wholesale alternations between parties from competing blocs of parties. The evidence suggests that the regular alternations between competing blocs in countries such as Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary create problems of control, which create incentives for political appointments and, over time, lead to creeping politicisation down the administrative hierarchies. By contrast, the long-term dominance in government of centre-right parties in Estonia and Latvia accompanied by partial changes of government provided conditions for the gradual de-politicisation of the senior civil service, growing stabilisation, and competence levels at the top.

The argument travels beyond the first wave of accession countries to South Eastern Europe and the Balkans (Meyer-Sahling 2012). For most countries, two blocs that regularly alternate in power can be identified (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2011). However, the Balkans also indicate that explanations of politicisation practices require attention to more factors than government alternations. The organisation of parties and their modes of mobilisation, ethnic fragmentation, and economic underdevelopment complicate the situation and provide additional incentives for politicisation.

The third prominent explanation of administrative reform and practice has focused on the role of the European Union. Initially, this work emphasised the impact of conditionality before and after EU accession. EU conditionality has been especially associated with civil service reform and studies of agencification. In the case of the latter, Van Thiel (2011) and Randma-Liiv et al. (2011) emphasise the need to reorganise public administration and to build agencies in the context of adopting the *acquis communautaire*. Accordingly, the spectacular rise in the number of agencies has been traced to EU demand for change, mostly specified in annual EU progress reports.

Dimitrova (2005) and Camyar (2010) have developed the conditionality argument further by taking into account the effect of domestic mediating factors. Focusing on civil service reform, Dimitrova (2005) found that ‘all’ candidate countries established or amended civil service laws and developed training programmes in order to meet EU demand for change. However, the effectiveness of conditionality hinged on the degree of misfit between EU demand and the state of reform at the time when negotiations were opened and the presence of domestic veto players. Accordingly, Estonia and Hungary faced fewer pressures for change than the other countries. Furthermore, the failure of the Czech government to implement the civil service law before accession is traced to the long-standing opposition of Czech parties to reform the civil service in accordance with EU recommendations.

The reference to the Czech case also points to one of the main weaknesses of conditionality: the focus on formal rule adoption but limited attention to the quality of implementation.
Bureaucracies and the Western Balkans

and cultural change in public administration. Dimitrova (2010), for instance, argued that EU conditionality-driven changes led to the establishment of formal rules as ‘empty shells’.

The argument surrounding the ambiguity of conditionality gained further momentum after EU accession. Because the European Commission has no particular instruments available to sanction non-compliance in non-acquis areas after accession, concerns were raised that governments in Central and Eastern Europe would have an incentive to reverse reforms they had passed before accession under the pressure of conditionality. Yet analysis of post-accession developments revealed diverse pathways in the area of civil service reform (Meyer-Sahling 2011). The Baltic states continued pre-accession reforms by and large until the fiscal crisis required a new course of action. By contrast, the other Central and Eastern Europe countries were more prone to reversing pre-accession reforms. Poland and Slovakia stood out insofar as they abolished central coordinating civil service offices that had been established before accession.

So far, there are only a few studies of the Europeanisation of public administration that focus on other, non-conditionality-based mechanisms. For the pre-accession period, Papadimitriou and Phinnemore (2004) explored the impact of the EU twinning programme on institutional change and social learning among public servants. More recently, Meyer-Sahling et al. (2016) applied theories of international socialisation to show how contact of public servants to EU rules and procedures in the context of their day-to-day work promotes their professional socialisation. The professionalisation of the civil service is hence found to occur as a by-product of the integration of Central and Eastern European executives into the European Administrative Space rather than the direct, top-down effect of EU policies.

While most approaches have focused on historical legacies, political parties and the EU, this is not to say that other factors play no role in explanations of public administration reform in the region. For instance, the debate has recently shifted towards the impact of the global financial and economic crisis. The crisis accounts for both general trends and cross-country variation in crisis management (Kickert et al. 2015). Yet there is still no comprehensive explanation of public administration reform and practices that integrates explanatory accounts comparable to the explanations of capitalist diversity in the region.

Performance of post-communist public administration

There is still much less research on the impact of bureaucratic structures and practices on policy outcomes, as well as political, social, and economic development. To some extent this reflects the trajectory of reform in the region. As Bunce (1997: 162) explains, as long as institutions are in the process of formation and hence unsettled, ‘institutions are best understood as dependent, not independent, variables’. While correct, this does not diminish the importance of the question. To the contrary, it raises additional challenges on how to theorise the effect of precarious institutions and how to design research to assess the performance of institutions in an uncertain, dynamic context.

The relation between civil service reform and corruption has received relatively more attention when looking across the emerging literature on the performance of post-communist bureaucracy. Neshkova and Kostadinova (2012), for instance, show that corruption levels, as measured by the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, decreased after civil service laws were adopted in South Eastern Europe. Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen (2016) qualify this finding. Based on a survey of civil servants in five countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans, they show that the effectiveness of civil service laws depends on the quality of their implementation. Moreover, they find that merit recruitment reduces corruption in the ministerial bureaucracy, while the politicisation of appointments is associated with higher
levels of corruption (see also Heywood and Meyer-Sahling 2013, Kostadinova and Spirova in this volume).

Second, in relation to the Europeanisation of public administration, Hille and Knill (2006) and Toshkov (2008) show that the quality of a country’s bureaucracy is associated with progress of accession as measured by EU progress reports and the transposition of the EU acquis. Zubek (2008) focuses on Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to show how the centralisation of the core executive explains transposition records during the pre-accession period. There is also evidence that the quality of bureaucracy has an impact on the quality of implementation as opposed to transposition records. Extending the research on the implementation of EU policies to old member states, Falkner and Treib (2008) show that the lack of administrative capacity explains why Central and Eastern Europe is conceptualised as a ‘world of dead letters’.

Third, the organisation of the core executive has been examined in relation to the fiscal performance of Central and Eastern Europe. Brusis and Dimitrov (2001) and Dimitrov et al. (2006) examine the impact of the position of prime ministers and finance ministers during the first decade after transition. Importantly, they show that core executive reforms tended to be ineffective in the initial period after their adoption. However, as new executive configurations started to settle, their performance in tackling the fiscal crisis of the late 1990s improved significantly (see Brusis in this volume). Hallerberg and Yläoutinen (2010) extend this argument to show how fiscal governance rules suitable for different political constellations do indeed affect the fiscal performance of Central and Eastern European states.

Fourth, most recently there has been an emerging debate on the impact of NPM reforms. Dan and Pollitt (2015) argue that the NPM ‘can work’ in Central and Eastern Europe, thereby challenging the arguments that the NPM is not suitable for the post-communist context. They primarily point to positive evaluations in the areas of performance management and benchmarking (e.g. Verheijen and Dobrolyubova 2007). However, Drechsler and Randma-Liiv (2015) argue that there is still little systematic evidence on the impact of NPM designs and practices to allow for a conclusion as fundamental as this. The emerging debate clearly sets an agenda for empirical research that employs effective designs to assess these kinds of questions in the future.

Conclusion and future research

This chapter examined the development of public administration in Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. Over time, the field of public administration has matured in that it has covered a wide range of areas of public administration reform. Moreover, recent pan-European studies that integrate cases from East and West point to a normalisation insofar as research on public administration in Central and Eastern Europe and, still to a lesser extent, the Western Balkans are concerned.

However, there is no consensus on how best to describe public administration in post-communist Europe, even after twenty-five years of reform. The evidence suggests that public administration in the region has come to incorporate a mix of Weberian and NPM models of bureaucracy. Questions remain whether the mixed models that have emerged amount to variants of Neo-Weberian States.

Despite the importance of Western models of bureaucracy, the chapter has also shown that post-communist public administration continues to be characterised by region-specific features such as persisting institutional instability, informality and the personalisation of institutions, problems of implementation including a far-reaching mismatch between formal rule and administrative practices, and the widespread politicisation of personnel policy and administrative decision-making. Yet the relevance of these features varies across regions.
Future research will have to provide comprehensive empirical evaluations of public administration reform in post-communist Europe comparable to Pollitt and Bouckaert’s (2011) analysis of Western democracies. Moreover, conceptual efforts will be needed to better capture the idiosyncrasies of post-communist public administration in relation to the main Western models of administration.

The communist legacy of public administration has conventionally been the prime candidate to explain the differentness of post-communist public administration. The specifically post-communist nature of party formation, political competition, and EU accession have added to the particularities of reform pathways and outcomes in the region. We might expect that the effect of the communist legacy and the EU accession process diminish over time, creating conditions for the normalisation of the context of public administration in Central and Eastern Europe (but arguably not yet in the Western Balkans).

Domestic political and bureaucratic incentives as well as general pressures of Europeanisation that apply similarly in old and new member states are therefore becoming relatively more important, but it will have to be subject to future study whether they have the capacity to overcome the region-specific features of public administration. Moreover, efforts are needed to explore the role of factors that have so far received little attention in studies of public administration reform. In particular, the impact of ethnic diversity in many parts of Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans calls for closer scrutiny.

The chapter also explored questions of the performance of post-communist public administration. Research on corruption, Europeanisation, and fiscal performance indicate that the quality of bureaucracy does indeed matter for outcomes in the region. However, the performance of post-communist administration remains much less understood. It arguably represents a major area for future research. For instance, there still remains little engagement with the big questions of bureaucratic performance, notably the relation between bureaucracy and democracy and between bureaucracy and economic development. In particular, the role of bureaucracy in promoting and, more importantly in light of recent developments, in preventing ‘democratic backsliding’ (Bermeo 2016) remains unexplored and an exciting agenda for future research.

Notes
1 In this chapter, I refer to Central and Eastern Europe as the countries that joined the EU between 2004 and 2013. The Western Balkans include the six remaining candidate and potential candidate states from South Eastern Europe. When speaking about post-communist Europe, I refer to both Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. The chapter excludes the Eastern neighbourhood of the EU.

2 In this chapter, the term bureaucracy refers to the non-elected part of the executive. The focus will be on the central state administration. The terms public bureaucracy and public administration will be used synonymously.

3 For recent studies of senior civil service politicisation that seek to capture developments over time, see Staroňová and Gajduschek (2013), Nakrošis (2015), and Hajnal and Csengődi (2014).

4 Albania had already passed a civil service law in 1994 but did not implement it in the context of the political and economic crisis of the mid- and late 1990s.

References


Bureaucracies and the Western Balkans


