

What is Islamic Public Administration and why should we study it in the "Second World"?

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ABSTRACT

This essay argues that, although for an important part of the "second world", Islam is a key paradigm both historically and currently, Islamic Public Administration studies have been neglected in the region. This is highly problematic if there are, as is proposed, (at least) three paradigms of governance and especially public administration: Chinese, Western and Islamic, and if we arrive more easily at good public administration if we realize that there are different contexts and thus, potentially at least, different ways thither, as well as legitimately different goals. After the development of a model, the essay deals with Islamic Public Administration and then specifically with that of the Ottoman Empire, as this had both a highly sophisticated administrative system that is often underrated and forms the main legacy of most "second-world" Islamic countries. In conclusion, pros and cons of such a perspective are discussed, and a research program is suggested.

Keywords: Islamic Public Administration; Non-Western Public Administration; Global Governance; Ottoman Empire; Central Asia; Western Balkans; Modernization, Westernization.

1. The Second World and Islam

Since the end of the Cold War some quarter of a century ago, the "Second World" – the designation for the Soviet Union and its involuntary affiliates in Europe and Asia – is a concept that has gone out of use, and rightly so. Occasionally, however, it is still useful, as it describes, by and large, the Eurasian countries with a post-socialist legacy. In Public Administration (PA), this group of countries is even institutionalized, as it forms the constituency of NISPAcee, the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe, the region's academic PA society and main catalyst of PA identity.

(See Vintar et al. 2013) In spite of the name, this has always included the Caucasus and Central Asia.¹

Quite a large part of the Second World consists of countries we may call “Islamic” in the sense that they have a Muslim majority and thus a Muslim heritage and context as well, never mind how secular or not they currently are. This part includes, as of now, ten countries, covering an enormous land mass, for the most part in the South of the region:

1. Albania
2. Azerbaijan
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina (or at least the Federation)
4. Kazakhstan
5. Kosovo
6. Kyrgyzstan
7. Tajikistan
8. Turkey
9. Turkmenistan
10. Uzbekistan

In addition to Turkey, these are the five countries of Central Asia (the “Stans”), Azerbaijan (an atypical case as it is very Shiite and very secular), and the three Muslim ones of the (Western) Balkans. Many other NISPAcee countries were influenced or indeed administered by Islamic empires for centuries, even half-millennia, as well. From a European perspective, however, not only are many NISPAcee countries Muslim-majority, but *all* countries that could by any stretch of the imagination be called European and who are Muslim-majority at the same time are situated in the “Second World” – or more precisely, in the NISPAcee region. We also know that Central Asia is actually the classical case to show how resilient local – and that is, largely, Islamic – culture was to outside modernization events, viz. the Soviet one, last time around. (Classically Massell 1968)

One could think, therefore, that studying the legacy, context and practice of Islamic PA in the region would be a major topic of Second World, or NISPAcee, research. But in fact, so far, this has not been the case – rather, there is almost no research on Islamic PA at all, as looking at the proceedings, the publications and the journal will attest.² If it happens, then usually the Islamic times and institutions,

¹ The overlap is not complete, as one could argue that Cuba was part of the Second World, and certainly Mongolia and the German Democratic Republic were. On the other hand, Turkey was not, but it was only admitted late to the NISPAcee countries, on 23 May 2012.

² The argument of this essay is not that there is no research on Islamic PA in the Second World – there may be some in the local languages – but that there is none in the crucially important context of NISPAcee, its conferences and publications, which is arguably the main gateway to Global PA for most of the countries concerned. The most important NISPAcee publications can be accessed at <http://www.nispa.sk/press.php>; they are all in English. This is also the reason, if not the excuse, to stick to English-language sources in this essay as much as possible.

indeed the entire context, are seen as obstacles to modern PA and to Europeanization, as stumbling blocks on the way to good PA; usually, they are cavalierly dismissed in a footnote.

However, this may not be the best way of looking at the issue, and this attitude may cause both scholarly and policy problems for the countries in question. Islamic PA may be neither a negative presence in the region, nor necessarily a negative legacy at all.

2. The problem and the paradigms

The framework for an alternative look must be that there are different paradigms of governance and especially PA. This means that there is not one global best (practice of) PA, but that what we call global PA is actually Western³ PA – and, today, that means to a large extent Anglo-American PA. (Cf. Raadschelders 2013, ix, 216-217; de Vries 2013b, 108, 123; Pierre 2013) If PA has two dimensions, ethics (goals) and performance (mechanics), linked though they may often be, “good PA” is both well-working and ethical by its own standards. And paradigms may not only be real-existing, but also potential, historical or theoretical forms of what we can call Non-Western PA (NWPA) – we may also say possible epistemes.

In most social sciences and humanities, to say something like that would hardly be novel, and even in economics, amazingly enough, globalization has apparently not led to convergence. (Classically Boyer 1994) The underlying general question is a matter of one’s worldview, and therefore very difficult to access in a scholarly manner: This is the question whether all human beings are basically the same and will eventually converge into one global society with the same values, or whether large cultural differences will remain the same. Implicitly, the former position often extrapolates the Western model as the goal of convergence, and it holds that empirically, globalization is the way thither. In many areas of scholarly inquiry, especially in the humanities, however, the opposite attitude of “one-Western-size-fits-all” prevails, perhaps even to the point of what has been called “Occidentalism”. (Buruma and Margalit 2004)

But in PA, this is certainly not the case – here, it is generally, if tacitly, assumed that there is one good PA, and that this is global-Western PA; it is certainly so in scholarship (see only *Public Administration Review* 2010; Raadschelders 2013, ix; Pollitt 2014), but even more so in PA reform. (Cf. most recently Andrews 2013, *passim*) In other words, countries and places that do not adhere to or at least move towards the global-Western standard (even if this is allowed to include significant regional variations, which is not always the case) are somehow remiss; they do not provide optimal PA and thus governance. The only excuse they may have is that they are laggards, that they are in transition, but they are expected to eventually arrive at global(-Western) PA.

Contrary to this, we may argue that, while there are indeed PA solutions to problems that arise from the nature of PA itself, which in turn is based on the fact that

³ With “West” and “Western”, I mean Europe, North America, and Australia and New Zealand, with its Greco-Christian-Enlightenment-Scientism legacy plus both production and consumer Capitalism.

more human beings live in society than can be coordinated personally and directly, the following can be assumed:

- A. In different contexts, there are also solutions to common problems that are different but not worse, very likely at least some of them even better;
- B. There are adequate, good, indeed excellent solutions that completely depend on context – understood here as *Lebenswelt*⁴ – which is neither necessarily worse than the one for which Western PA is made, nor moving into the latter’s direction (never mind the genuine phenomenon, on many but not all levels of life, of globalization); and
- C. The debate whether for all human beings in time and space, there is or should be one set of ethics, i.e. whether there is a cohesive, unitary set of universal human values and thus also rights that applies to everyone, everywhere, at all times is – although this is largely the purported view of international organizations – not really closed and in fact the elephant in the room, and much depends on the answer, also for PA.⁵

The two most obvious potential partners, or challengers, of global-Western PA as largely independent paradigms are, I would suggest, Confucian and Islamic PA. (Cf. Painter and Peters 2010, 3, 19) For the few people dealing with this issue, it is contentious whether there may be more, and what the other paradigms might be,⁶ but I would single out these two for now because they share a few significant advantages for such a comparison:

- A large body of theoretical literature;
- Centuries of practice;
- Strong relevance today;
- A convincing carrier country;
- A largely non-derivative system.

This is most clearly the case with *classical* Chinese, i.e. largely Confucian, and *classical* Islamic, i.e. what one could perhaps call Caliphate, PA. Because of the “classi-

⁴ *Lebenswelt*, life world in the sense of the existence of the human person in a phenomenological, Continental-idealist or semiotic sense, is “the sum of non-inheritable information” (Lotman 1971, 167), in which the individual persons, and then by extension the groups of persons, live by their own, however evolving and latent, self-definition, and through which they operate – what defines people is what they let define them. To speak with Nicolai Hartmann (who talks about Geist, which arguably is the manifestation of context), “Nobody invents his own language, creates his own science; the individual, rather, grows into what is existing, he takes it over from the common sphere, which offers it to him.” (1949, 460)

⁵ See most recently Winkler 2014; most elegantly, recently Benhabib 2013. That the most serious external challenges to the view that universal human rights are at least to some extent a Western construct, legacy, or view (Kühnhardt: “The human rights topos in the sense of inviolable and innate human rights is not part of the inventory of the history of ideas of non-Western political thinking”; 1987, 301) mainly come from Chinese and Islamic sides is *prima facie* hardly grounds for dismissal.

⁶ The usual contenders would be Russian/Soviet, Hispanic/Latin, Indian or Japanese PA. (See also Painter and Peters 2010, 19-30) The first three are basically Western; the last is partially Chinese, partially Western.

cal” part, we will have to look more at history than is usual in PA – not because of simple notions of legacy and context, but because our concern has to be potentiality rather than current realization and recognition in contemporary scholarship, which certainly is global-Western. (See Raadschelders 2013) The argument is, basically, about an honest basis for a convincing narrative, or convincing narratives; regarding contemporary empirics, it is therefore more of an agenda, rather than being based on research already.

But why would that be interesting to begin with? The abovementioned equation, global = Western = good, can also be extended by the addition of “modern”, i.e. global = Western = good = modern. Thus, modernization would equal Westernization, which would be a good thing. But, first, the suggestion that modernization, i.e. any improvement, automatically means Westernization actually delegitimizes the former in those contexts in which Westernization is at least an ambiguous concept for many. Assuming that often, these are contexts which could really benefit from it, to show that the improvement of PA does not automatically mean Westernization, in other words, *that modernization is not necessarily Westernization*, would be a major accomplishment (assuming that the goal is not Westernization in and by itself). It may then easily be that countries which do not follow the global-Western model are not laggards but rather pursue their own path towards good PA.⁷ In that case, policy recommendations (often linked to financial incentives) to move towards Western PA benchmarks might be not only misguided, but they may even turn out to be highly counterproductive.

This brings us to the second point: If the large-scale global effort to improve the world by improving governance and PA were an overwhelming success, some serious arguments would be needed that would speak against such an effort. However, as Matt Andrews (2013) has argued in an important recent book on development, to the contrary, there is “mounting evidence that institutional reforms in developing countries do not work. Case studies and multicountry analyses show that many governments in developing nations are not becoming more functional, even after decades and hundreds of millions of dollars of externally sponsored reforms.” (xi) In fact, as Andrews shows, even if one uses the indicators rightly derided by Fukuyama (2013a), fewer internationally funded development-based public-sector reform programmes were successful (Andrews 2013, 13-15), and according to a World Bank 2008 evaluation, “civil service reforms led to improved quality of public administration in 42 percent of countries borrowing for such interventions” (Andrews 2013, 213), meaning that in 58% of these cases, there was no improvement at all.

Interest vested in the global-Western paradigm is nonetheless very substantial, both in policy and in scholarship, and always has been. However, during the last half decade or so, three phenomena have weakened the assuredness in and of the West

⁷ A parallel are the European countries, which some ten or fifteen years ago were still judged according to how close they were “already” to the New Public Management (NPM) (a great example is Bossaert and Demmke 2003) but which, according to Pollitt and Bouckaert, did not follow the NPM at all but rather their own, perhaps even (and in my opinion certainly) better model, that of the Neo-Weberian State (NWS). (See Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004, 99-100) It is actually observing this phenomenon that gave rise to the concept of the NWS to begin with, which later partially transformed from an empirical to a normative model. (See Drechsler and Kattel 2009)

that its solutions are the global ones wherever one goes, and this has slowly reached PA as well. One is the global financial crisis, which has called the Western system into question both as regards setup and performance, including PA. (See Drechsler 2011) Another is the awareness, in West and East, of the apparently sustainable (re-) emergence of the largely Confucian Southeast and East Asian “tiger states”. (See Drechsler 2014)

Specifically for PA, all this occurs at a time in which it is difficult to offer a cohesive (Western-global) PA paradigm, because there really is none anymore. After the demise of the NPM as the ruling one (see Drechsler 2009b; 2009c; Drechsler and Kattel 2009), what we are facing is a post-NPM *Unübersichtlichkeit* with several “paradigmettes”, such as the old NPM and the new one (a response to the global financial crisis), traditional Weberianism, NPM-plus concepts such as New Public Governance and its varied permutations as well as Public Value Governance, Joint-up Governance, and Whole of Government, and Weberian-plus ones, such as the Neo-Weberian State. (See Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011) Some beliefs that were held to be true very recently have become highly volatile – privatization, say – and some others have recently become very questionable – transparency as a goal may come to mind. (See Han 2012) So, what is it that the West can responsibly sell?

3. Three ways of looking at PA

But even if there is such a thing as NWPA, and even if this can be good, i.e. well-working and ethical, PA, not an aberration or an atavism, there seems to be also a core of good PA that all systems share, and there are plenty of grey zones in between. (See points A. and B. *supra*) In order to clarify this vague-sounding scenario, I would at this point preliminarily propose three possible models of trajectories to good PA: Western, Multicultural and Contextual.

The first one is what I have described as the global-Western mainstream: Global = Western = good (= modern). All other traditions, including Chinese and Islamic, would eventually have to converge into the development trajectory of this or else be not just different but worse. One may or may not allow contextual variations, but in principle, the idea is that we know what good PA is, that good PA is universal, that by and large this is Western PA, and that this will remain so for the foreseeable future.⁸

If one does not buy into this narrative, or at least would like to question it, then the second model would seem to be the obvious, or logical, counter-alternative. This, which we may call Multicultural PA, would hold – it is a theoretical model – that there is no such thing as ideal PA as such, that good PA depends entirely on culture and context, never mind on which level, and that the ways that lead there are entirely context-dependent as well and generally not linked to one another. Multicultural PA has the advantage of being politically correct in many contexts (outside of PA);

⁸ *Public Administration Review* 2010, in spite of much sophistication of some of the contributions, and Gulrajani and Moloney 2012 basically make this point, both for science and for policy; the latter also provide a handy summary of the theory and practice of comparative “third-world” PA scholarship during the last few decades from an Anglo-American mainstream perspective.

it is *prima facie* a good alternative to the erroneous simplicities of global-Western PA. However, the problems with this approach are manifold as well, and maybe first of all, as mentioned and as any NWPA research will very quickly show, that there are actually both problems and solutions that are germane to PA, no matter where one looks, and that solutions may be sometimes different across time and space but sometimes very, indeed strikingly, similar. (See Drechsler 2013c regarding Neo-Confucian China)

The third model, the Contextual one, would say that the key to reaching good PA is to realize where one is coming from at the moment and to be in synch with that, and that means to realize what the context actually is. Of course, one can look at other systems and learn from there, but in this context, that would necessarily be policy learning, not mere policy transfer. (See Randma-Liiv and Kruusenberg 2012) But first, *primarily*, “good” in PA means “fulfilling its purpose in a given context” – PA is good when it does what it is supposed to do; like the market in an economy, it does not come *prima facie* with values attached, as we have gathered from the Fukuyama debate mentioned *supra*. (Certain forms of PA have certain effects that from certain perspectives have normative connotations, but not more than that.)

Yet this is not significantly different for ethics, especially when we are looking for truly *good* governance – a cliché term which by now clearly begs the question, good for whom? (See Drechsler 2004) –, it is pivotal to realize this, not least for policy. When de Vries sums up an empirical study of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) by stating, “Bad governance seems to do as good as, and in times of economic crisis even better than, good governance” (2013b, 122), what meaning does the “good” in “good governance” possibly retain?

Aristotle, one of the most quintessential Western philosophers, “*the philosopher*” in fact, and the father, one could say, of Ethics, makes almost exactly this point in his political *magnum opus*, the *Politika*, when listing the necessary qualifications for members of a government or administration:

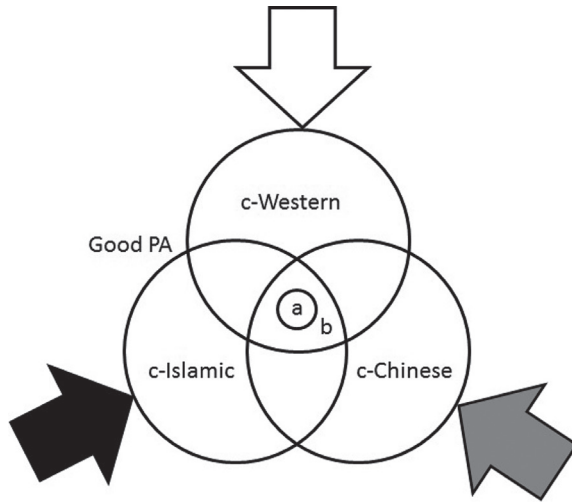
First, sympathy for the constitution as it actually exists; second, competences that are in line with the tasks of their specific office; third, a sense of virtue and justice that matches exactly those of the state in which they live – because, if the concept of justice is not the same in every state, it is obvious that there must be different kinds. (Arist. Pol. 1309a; V 9)

How to metaphorize good, and that is then primarily well-working, PA in context? Let us say that all paradigms as proposed participate in some solutions that can be said to form “good PA” in the sense that it does do its job in a decent, and primarily then in an effective and secondarily in a contextually ethical way, that it does fulfil its standard purpose on any possible level, including institutions, people and concepts, but that in general, these are adapted to context. That means that there may be

- (a) A small nucleus of well-working PA that almost always works, tiny because it must match all performance and all ethics – and (a) is a purely empirical, not a normative concept; then

- (b) A larger one in which such generally valid principles are adapted to the context and thus work; and
- (c) A third level where solutions work well within a given paradigm but not (necessarily) in any other, which, given the high requirements, would be expected to be the most common case.

For our limited model of three paradigms, this would, again tentatively and meant to be overridden, look like this:



Now, (a) is what is generally assumed to be good PA, and the contextualized second nucleus (b) is what the more sophisticated PA research supports today (although it is not the common view), but our focus is on (c), the postulated spheres of good PA with(in) each paradigm that does not work well, nor does it have to, in any other. If this is even partially true, then this does mean indeed that one should not judge, and try to improve, PA on the basis of and towards, the outer (b), let alone the inner nucleus (a), but just ask whether under the given circumstances, PA does its job, or is moving thither.

4. Islamic PA

In Europe, and that means towards the traditional and maybe also future core of the West (see Kimmage 2013), the most immediate alternative to the Western model is Islamic PA and Governance, both because of legacy and presence, although it is *prima facie* less convincing an alternative than its Chinese or Confucian counterpart. (See Drechsler 2014) And yet, as mentioned *supra*, although a significant part of Europe shares an Islamic, and that means Ottoman, PA legacy, studying the context and practice of Islamic Public Administration in this region is altogether totally neglected, and if mentioned, then in a negative way. Ironically, for those who do see a relevant topic here, as with Confucianism, yet even more strongly, the first question raised is, is there such a thing as Islamic PA; is it not already Orientalism to

suggest that there might be? Experts are split on this issue, and many good reasons speak against referring to Islamic anything except Islam itself. (See e.g. Bauer 2011) We could bypass this issue elegantly by only addressing Ottoman PA right away. And yet, for showing the uniqueness and specific quality of Islamic PA, to first talk about Islam as such might do less harm than good.

One aspect that speaks for Islamic PA as such is that by and large, most people in most Islamic countries themselves would say that Islam – Islam as such, whatever their own tradition – matters, and that it matters very much. This often to the chagrin of Western observers who want to bring Western-style democracy to these countries and then note that election victories go to Islamic parties, not to people who think as they themselves do. (Cf. Lerch 2012; Bauer 2011, 401-404)⁹ The hypothesis would thus be that Islam – being such a strong determinant of context, of the world in which people live and the systems that they build there and that emerge – has had, and still has, a non-incidental, important and actually crucial impact on how the public sphere is organized and even managed. As Michael Cook has recently pointed out, Islam simply is the one world religion that has this influence on politics, international relations and the state today. (2014) And as Noah Feldman has pointed out, the demand of relegating history to history in public affairs may be Western, but it is not Islamic. (2008, 4-6) Thus, one of the most important variables for PA – not only governance – in Islamic countries would probably be Islam, not just the national tradition, even (albeit less so) if the society in question is quite secular. (But see e.g. Boroujerdi 2013, 2)

Regarding the substance of Islamic PA and Governance, there is a large traditional and still viable literature on the governance aspect, to be sure. (See only Samier in this issue; ElKaleh and Samier 2013) For instance, the Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092) and his *Siyāsatnāma* (*The Book of State Art / of Governance*) (1960) present us with a specific, workable concept of state administration that may be as different from the usual Western recommendations for improving the governance of the Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries as it may be superior in realism and applicability, in spite of its great age. One important example both regarding equity and performance is the strong emphasis on the absolute non-delegatability of responsibility for those over whom one rules. (1960, II, IV, VI) This was seen as a key feature also of Islamic PA, even in the West, for many centuries, although today it is generally forgotten. (Cf. Hebel in Stolleis 2003, 81-85) Its importance even today lies in creating direct responsibility of the ruler for his subjects, one that is crucial for him and his record, for how he will be judged. The idea is the same as in Confucianism: “an ethical doctrine designed to moderate the behaviour of rulers and orient them towards the interest of the ruled.” (Fukuyama 2012, 19)

⁹ This was most notably the problem for the West with the victory of Mursi and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the reason why initially, the military coup d'état and the establishment of a junta regime was subsequently welcomed. The problem is that for mainstream Western politics and Political Science, democracy is not defined as majority rule, but additional features are needed. This, however, is not the general assumption, and if after elections, a legitimate victory of an undesirable party is defined as illegitimate from the outside because the winning party does not fulfill these features, this in turn easily delegitimizes democracy in these countries as another tool of Western Imperialism. (See Fisk 2013; Dahl 1989; Bell 2014, 8-9) It was, as mentioned *supra*, the same case with the Sovietization of Central Asia previously. (Massell 1968)

5. Ottoman PA

However, we will now focus specifically on the Ottoman Empire, although this is a somewhat historical institution. But only somewhat: Ottoman PA as Islamic PA is a central PA narrative that is about history, but not in itself historical at all. (Cf. Sindbaeck and Hartmuth 2011) And there are many good reasons for this: Because of its centrality for much of CEE, especially in its Western Muslim part, but also in the countries it formerly fought and often conquered, such as Hungary or Romania; because of its sophistication in PA and public policy, especially on the practical level; because its successor, modern Turkey, is becoming, or actually has become, the powerhouse in the former Imperial region again (see just Aras 2012) and is to a large extent the main carrier country of Islamic PA; because of the centuries-long, at best questionable track record of Westernization as well as Western interventionism in the region and in Turkey itself (see Schulz 2011, esp. 487); and also because today's radical Islamicism is to a large extent based on a fundamentalist movement against the Ottomans. (See Kadri 2011, 123-125; Finkel 2007, 411-412; for the opposite of a radical Islamic theology, see Khorchide 2012; 2013)

Especially in the last decade or two, the Ottoman Empire has been reassessed by historians and sociologists as “not so bad” in many ways, quite to the contrary of the clichés that various legacies – self-interested, more often than not – have so far promulgated. (See, e.g., Finkel 2007) And these reassessments have occasionally included governance. (See e.g. Barkey 2008; Hanioglu 2008) To use the Weberian term, ironically enough, the Sultan's rule was in general precisely not “sultanistic”, a form of rule that is “*nicht sachlich rationalisiert, sondern es ist in ihr nur die Sphäre der freien Willkür und Gnade ins Extrem entwickelt.*” (Weber 1986, 134; see 133-134; Chehabi and Linz 1998, 4-7) In addition, shifts in how we see governance and PA generally have also contributed to new possibilities of how to assess Osmanian rule and administration. Merilee Grindle's important concept of Good-enough Governance (2004; 2007; see de Vries 2013a for a PA perspective) is one of the most important ones in this context, underlining that very often, governance is about achieving minimal workability of a system against the odds of heavy policy constraints.

Like its Chinese counterpart, Ottoman PA was constantly under reform – perennially modernizing at least since the late 18th century (see Findley 1980; Heper 2001, esp. 1021-1022) – and perhaps the ideal case study for such an effort under such circumstances. The key Westernizing variant of this modernization effort, known as the Tanzimat reforms and even the Tanzimat era (1839-1876), was, however, also a reaction to Western pressure, which partially contributed to its illegitimacy in the eyes of many of the citizens. (Ansary 2009, 285-288) To thus see the successor paradigm, Hamidism (1876-1908), the governance reforms and reactions to outside and inside pressure by the last powerful Sultan, Abdülhamid II, as a less Western but more contextual form of modernization (see Hanioglu 2008, 123-129; Finkel 2007, 488-501) is one of the more recent and controversial trends in Ottoman governance re-evaluation but very likely correct (to be “controversial”, after all, is a good thing). (Examples include the refocus on the Sultan's role as Caliph, the dexterous use of media and communication technology, the emphasis on personal loyalty and the purposeful creation of the ideology of Ottomanism; see already Haslip 1973; generally Reinkowski 2005, 14-29)

These newly apparent aspects of the Ottoman Empire, however, have not made it to PA history yet, let alone PA studies generally. To the contrary: Basically, as mentioned already, the Ottoman and thus Islamic legacy is always seen as bad, because the fight against the Ottomans is an – often the central – identity-creating myth of many CEE countries. Differences in administrative and life quality are still excused today by saying that one part was Western and the other one Turkish. (Cf. Sindbaeck and Hartmuth 2011, 1, 5)

In addition, Islamic-Ottoman PA shares with Confucian-Chinese PA two crucial features for re-evaluation today, one for it and one against: Its promotion primarily via the economic success of the main carrier country and its less than complete enthusiasm for this legacy by the elites in that country. Among all three main intellectually significant Turkish political groupings, Westernizers, Kemalite modernizers and AKP followers, to praise the governance aspects of the Ottoman Empire, let alone of Hamidism, usually meets with incredulity at best. And while there are some tendencies of a re-evaluation of Ottoman history as such among the latter group (cf. briefly Bilefsky 2012; Reinkowski 2011), current Turkish PA and PA reform is not Ottoman at all – structurally, it is basically still Kemalite with the AKP reform efforts on top, to the extent that they are geared towards modernization (whether in the sense of “reactionary modernism” or not), following old-fashioned NPM tenets. (See Filkins 2012, esp. 43; Tuğal 2009, 55-56; Sezen 2011, esp. 339)¹⁰ On the scholarly side as well, PA is dominated by people who have studied in the West, the best ones often with PhD’s from good American universities (Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Florida State and so on), for whom it would often mean a loss of their competitive advantage to admit that what they learned there is neither immediately applicable nor the universally best form of PA.

Principally, however, Turkey is a case for what the Three Paradigms model holds. In spite of the recent authoritarian and violent, truly oppressive actions by the Erdoğan-AKP government, seen as undemocratic and un-Western by most observers from the West and beyond although, at the moment of the writing of this article, the Prime Minister, while losing in popularity, is estimated to potentially win re-election, should there be an election now (cf. e.g. *New York Times* 2013; Peter 2013), Istanbul remains today one of the largest, most dynamic and most innovative cities in Europe – again, and actually one of the three largest municipalities in the world (a fact rarely realized in the West), and the Turkish economic miracle did only occur after post-Ottoman Kemalism was re-matched with Islam. (See Lerch 2012; Gülen 2012; Tuğal 2009; Frankenberger 2014)

The reassessment of the Ottoman Empire is an ideal case study of the potential policy relevance of what merely looks like a shift in academic conceptualization. Once we appreciate that Constantinople had and has a legacy in the governance and PA of CEE that may be different from others but not necessarily worse, this may

¹⁰ Even Arab PA, i.e. PA as practiced and even discussed in the countries of the Arabian peninsula, where much of the funding to promote Islam globally comes from today and which, partially for this reason, partially because it is the place of origin and thus the original context of Islam, dominates both Islamic discourse and the perception of Islam in the West, is largely Westernized today, as opposed to the culture and governance discourse. For a recent snapshot, see the programme and abstracts of the IIAS-IASIA joint congress in Bahrain in June 2013, <http://iias-iasia-congress2013.org/> See also, e.g., Sultan bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (2003).

eventually give especially the Muslim-majority Balkan countries a freer hand to deal with the possibilities of PA development towards genuine modernization today. In her excellent case study of Albania, Cecilie Endresen has recently shown how a positive Ottoman discourse can and does legitimize even global-Western style progress. (2011, 48-50)

Of course, such a way of thinking comes with costs attached. For Europe and PA, it does go against the principles of the European Administrative Space; it does go against the mindset that still, even from a liberal and not only from a right-wing perspective, defines Europe as “non-Turkey”. (See only Böckenförde 2011) It is clear that the Turkish government’s handling of the “Turkish Spring” demonstrations has brought this sentiment to the forefront of the European *juste milieu* once again, to the point of wanting to exclude Turkey from the formatted Europe of the European Union. (See e.g. Bilefsky 2013; Martens 2013) And that is the general tradition, of course: Not only CEE, but Europe as such is historically often defined by the struggle against the Turks, and against Islam generally, and this “othering” goes on with a vengeance. The Ottomans are still the “quintessentially other”, and Muslims, it sometimes seems, as well – not only in Europe, but for the West generally, especially in the last decade or so, from 9/11 to the Boston Marathon bombings of 2013.

There is one ironic yet profound effect, however, of the approach to define Europe, and by extension the West, by excluding and contrasting it to Turkey, the Ottoman Empire and Islam: If this is so, then surely it is much more likely that there is indeed something like Non-Western and something we can call Islamic PA, because there must then be something specifically Western, rather than global, in our current system. And that, in turn, confirms the Three Paradigms thesis, and thus the feasibility of NWPA, to a good extent.

And the de-Ottomanization of CEE has not led to so much advance of “the Good Life in the Good State”, neither presently nor even historically – World War I was not exactly avoided, a century ago, by Bosnia and later Herzegovina being taken away from the Osmanian Empire and being annexed by the Austro-Hungarian one. (And see Okey 2007) As Karen Barkey concluded her book on the empire,

in using local notables as the basis of indirect rule, the center also recognized and reinforced their distinctiveness, bolstering later claims for more independence. The seeds of empire were also the seeds of its transformation.

Is the conundrum of large-scale rule, or at least controlled co-existence, unsolvable? For the Ottomans, finally, it was, but only after centuries ... So, the questions remain for us now, calling out from the minarets of an empire that once coordinated and enriched a wide array of difference that we have yet to see again. (Barkey 2008, 296)

The Ottoman Empire may be to a good extent a historical specificity and much of its governance and PA not Islamic but specifically Ottoman, but in CEE, Islamic and Ottoman very often mean the same thing. In addition to detailing the specifics of Islamic PA, a careful analysis of the relation of “Islamic” and “Ottoman” will be of great significance.

6. So what do we do?

To sum up and repeat, the question for policy-relevant PA history may to some extent be that of constructing a potentially convincing narrative and not of “what really happened”, especially if the currently paradigmatic narrative creates many problems indeed. Along Grindle’s lines, it may be more pragmatic and realistic at least, maybe also more ethical and promising in the long run, to pick people and countries up where they are, and not where one would want them to be. To look into Ottoman PA specifically and Islamic PA generally and to see whether this is a context upon and through which governance and PA can be improved, i.e. modernized; whether this is a story that can legitimately be told, and not less legitimately than the tales of the “Journey to the West”, seems to be an agenda that is promising, potentially beneficial and thus necessary to be discussed. And that, crucially, is the case also empirically-epistemologically, because I cannot understand an NWS country if I judge it by NPM standards, nor – or so the argument would go – an Islamic one if I judge it by Western ones.

Again, the question of the current deliberation is, do we arrive more easily at good, meaning well-working, PA if we realize that there are different contexts and thus, potentially at least, different ways thither, and are there even legitimately different goals? If we fail certain places, as is so often the case, for not living up to the standards of globalized-Western PA, is this necessarily the problem of the countries in question, or may it also be the problem of asking the wrong questions and setting the wrong targets? This is where the goals debate (*supra* C.) enters, and it is a hard one inasmuch as telling non-Western nations that freedom and democracy, Western-style, are not for them because they have their own traditions may be as wrong and indeed as post-colonialist as trying to impose Western values to others by calling them human, global or universal. This is a debate that is nowhere near resolved.

However, it is easier to discuss this matter in PA, ironically because here, the debate basically does not happen – in PA, as we have pointed out, the discussion begins and ends with an un-justified, tacit, implicit assumption in favour of the global-Western solution, and that, again, works only as long as this solution is clearly superior, both in ethics and in performance. Yet, even if it still were, this should give PA scholarship reason for doubt, this being the nature of scholarship; but right now, when dusk seems to settle (maybe for real, maybe just due to some temporary darkness), the Owl of Minerva may again spread her wings more easily. What the current situation implies is that simple assumptions, intellectually and policy-wise, are clearly not good enough anymore.

This is all the more important if we look at the context of development, as the Western countries no doubt were until very recently the more successful ones, and that means that the non-Western ones were, and to a great extent are, less successful, and thus, the ones in need of development. The fact that administrative capacity, institutionally as well as personally, is a *condition sine qua non* for development is clear. (Nurkse 1952; 1964; see Drechsler 2009a) That too many developing countries do not have it, yet need it – indeed that this could even define the euphemism of “developing” (whatever that means, and whither), is likewise obvious (cf. [http://](#)

www.unpan.org/, if only for the problem, not necessarily for the remedy). This changed for the reasons mentioned *supra*, especially in the context of the re-entry into the West, even into the European Union, of some countries that one would have to call “developing” by several criteria. In addition, these days many of us see that

problems of implementation are at the root of poor economic and social outcomes all over the world. Governments routinely fail to deliver basic services like education, health, security, macroeconomic stability, or to fail to deliver them in a timely, impartial, and cost-effective manner. This is as true of the United States as of any developing country. (Fukuyama 2013b; see also Mahbubani 2013)

Now, one could see it either way: Developing countries do not have sufficient administrative capacity and thus need to be motivated or forced to move towards global-Western PA, or – either for now or in general – seeing that this ostensibly does not work (in many places at least) or that it may not even be necessary or desirable, they need to develop optimal capacity according to their own governance system and general context. And what speaks for the latter even if one believes in common goals is that the track record of the Westernization especially of Islamic countries, and societies, in PA and otherwise, has not exactly been universally excellent. as pointed out *supra*, in PA today, this is all the more so because the goals of good global-Western PA are moving as well.

But even if we go for the global-Western values – should we not at least look into whether they are perhaps global but not exclusively Western, and whether they could not just be promulgated in a way that is easier to swallow than Western triumphalism, especially as the times make the latter sound quite hollow? (Cf. Steiner et al. 2007, 517-540; Maier 1997, 48-50, but Benhabib 2013) Should we not remember that even if this was a good thing, what chances and costs of such a transformation might be? (Cf. Massell 1968) In other words, should we not ask whether different narratives are possible, even if we believe in common goals and even some common best practices?

And yet, in the end, we will always return to the question, is it not a betrayal of humankind, especially of that outside of the West, if we even question the universality of ethical goals, and of all the great Western accomplishments such as “separation of power, sovereignty of the people, representative democracy” (so Winkler 2011; cf. Diamond 2013)? It is true that part of the Western legacy is to absolutize oneself and proclaim the universality of one’s achievements – in the German historian H.A. Winkler’s words, those of a social-democratic intellectual, “The ideas of 1776 and 1789 [created a process which] has not come to a conclusion as long as the inalienable human rights do not apply world-wide. The West would give up itself if it reneged on that demand.” (2014) But as we have seen and as can be observed daily, in too many a place, this leads to inverted, paradoxical results (see most recently Bell 2014); there is more than just a whiff of post-colonialism in this position (in governance and PA even sometimes of the “White Man’s Burden”); and to question oneself is not only, but decidedly, Western, as is trying to understand the other, at least as an initial move.

To allow different places different narratives is, in the end, more Western today than not to do so. And whatever the possible outcome of the general debate – in PA, even this debate is generally not taking place. Therefore, regarding international PA, following the governance discourse, the truly Western position right now, and the heuristically best position for non-Western stakeholders as well, is to question the orthodoxy that global = Western = good, and to discuss what the NWPA alternatives, both regarding goals and performance, are or could be – in other words, whether one can progress towards the good at least via different paths and perhaps even with different goals, rather than via one way to one destination only. The NISPAcee context, as the one PA framework that unites all the countries concerned, is the obvious one for such an endeavour. And even if the project does not succeed, it is still worthwhile because of its heuristic power vis-à-vis the purely global-Western view, and because to deal with those countries in a more close-up way that focuses on specificities rather than assumed trajectories towards the latter is surely interesting, and important as well, in its own right. Fortunately, it is the younger generation of scholars, typically PhD students, postdocs and Assistant Professors, who push in this direction, even if – sometimes especially if – they have studied or are studying at Western universities. Thus, it does not seem that this push, such as it is, will lessen any time soon (cf. Pollitt 2014), and so we might as well follow a path we surely may call both promising and interesting.

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