

## THREE PARADIGMS OF GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION: CHINESE, WESTERN AND ISLAMIC<sup>1</sup>

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This essay argues that there are (at least) three paradigms of governance and especially public administration: Chinese, Western, and Islamic – paradigms understood here as potentiality and theory rather than reality and practice as observed today. It then discusses classical Chinese, i.e. Confucian, and Islamic, specifically Ottoman, public administration, from this perspective. The guiding question is whether 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.

**Keywords:** non-Western public administration, global public administration, Chinese public administration, Islamic public administration, Ottoman public administration

**JEL-codes:** F54, H11, H83

<sup>1</sup> This lecture was delivered on the occasion of my being awarded an honorary doctorate in the social sciences by Corvinus University of Budapest on 22 February 2013, for which I am humbly grateful. I also presented it later at the Public Management Institute of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Catholic University of Leuven on 11 March 2013. The lecture style was to some extent retained (such as concerns *ductus*, personal perspective and selectivity of sources, which are not meant to represent a survey of the topics covered), which is also suitable for a more discursive, conceptual topic like this. The essay uses parts from several earlier works, all referred to in the text, especially from Drechsler (2013a 2013b), which deal with related sub-topics. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank my most important interlocutors regarding non-Western public administration during the last two or three years: Aleksandr Aidarov, Daniel A. Bell, Evan M. Berman, Geert Bouckaert, Marleen Brans, Michiel de Vries, Ingbert Edenhofer, Korel Göymen, Chung-Yuang Jan, György Jenei, Rainer Kattel, Aziz Klebleyev, Andrew Massey, B. Guy Peters, Tiina Randma-Liiv, Allan Rosenbaum, Sor-Hoon Tan and

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The title of this essay is programmatic: I will attempt to suggest and tentatively conceptualize that there are (at least) three paradigms of governance and especially public administration (PA). Briefly put, this means that there is not one global best (practice of) PA, but that what we call global PA is actually Western<sup>2</sup> PA – and, today, that means to a large extent Anglo-American PA. If we follow Bouckaert's (2011) suggestion that PA has two dimensions, equity (goals) and performance (mechanics), inextricably linked though they may often be, we call this global PA “good PA” if it is both “working” and “ethical”. With paradigms, I first of all mean the potentiality and theory – we may also say possible epistemies – rather than reality and practice as we observe it today of forms of what we can call non-Western PA (NWPA). It is the availability of the potential that, in light of the reality as it exists, may make this topic relevant.

## 2. THE PROBLEM AND THE THREE PARADIGMS

In many social sciences and humanities disciplines, to say something like that would hardly be novel, and even in economics, amazingly enough, globalization has apparently not led to convergence (Boyer 1994). But in PA, this is a very unusual observation – 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, but even more so in PA reform (*Public Administration Review* 2010). In other words, countries and places that do not adhere to or at least move towards the global-Western standard (even if this includes significant regional variations)<sup>3</sup> are somehow remiss; they do not provide optimal PA and thus governance (of which I would say PA is the implementational side; I will not delineate the relation of the two concepts any further). The only excuse they may have is that they are laggards, in transition, but they are expected to eventually arrive at good global(-Western) PA.

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Rustamjon Urinboyev. I am also grateful to the Leuven audience for a very animated discussion that led to some minor but important revisions. Finally, I most sincerely thank the Corvinus University of Budapest, especially Rector Zsolt Rostoványi, Dean László Trautmann, and again György Jenei, for the magnificent honor and for the event that caused this lecture to be developed.

<sup>2</sup> With “West” and “Western”, I mean in this PA-centered context Europe as embodied by the core EU, North America, and Australia and New Zealand, with its Greco-Christian-Enlightenment-Scientism legacy plus both production and consumer Capitalism.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding Asia, see Cheung (2012) and Berman (2010).

Contrary to this, what I would like to suggest is that there indeed are PA solutions to problems that arise from the nature of PA itself, which in turn are based on the fact that, commonly in time and space, more human beings live in society than can be coordinated personally and directly. However, in different contexts, there are also solutions to common problems that are different but not worse, and very likely at least some of them are even better. There are adequate, good, indeed excellent solutions that completely depend on the context – understood here as *Lebenswelt*<sup>4</sup> – that is neither 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 precisely not all levels of life, of globalization.

The two potential partners of global-Western PA as largely independent paradigms are, I would suggest, Chinese and Islamic PA (Painter – Peters 2010: 3, 19). For the few people dealing with these questions, it is highly contentious whether there may be more, and what the other models might be,<sup>5</sup> but I would single out these two for now because they, and only they, share a few significant features:

- a large body of theoretical literature;
- centuries of practice;
- strong relevance today;
- most controversially perhaps, a basically unique theory and governance background; not a primarily derivative system.

For the moment, I would suggest that this is most clearly the case with *classical* Chinese, i.e. largely Confucian, and *classical* Islamic PA. Because of the “classical” part, we will have to look more at history than is usual in PA – not because of simple notions of legacy and context,<sup>6</sup> but because my concern, as indicated, is potentially more than current realization and recognition in contemporary scholarship, which certainly is global-Western. It is, basically, about the honest basis

<sup>4</sup> *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; for a general philosophical discussion of this question, see Drechsler 1997a: 67–69.)

<sup>5</sup> The usual contenders would be Russian/Soviet, Hispanic/Latin, Indian or Japanese (see also Painter – Peters 2010: 19–30). Even though this will not be agreeable to all readers, I will suggest that the former three are basically Western, the latter is basically Chinese.

<sup>6</sup> Going beyond these, see Painter – Peters (2010: 3–16, 237) and Yesilkagit (2010), with a very nice heuristic distinction between legacy ideas and legacy structures.

for a convincing narrative, or convincing narratives. Regarding the empirics, this is therefore more of an agenda, rather than being based on research already.

But why would that be interesting? 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 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.<sup>7</sup> Assuming that often 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 (as long as we assume that Westernization is either impossible or at least very difficult or not that desirable). It may then easily be that countries which do not follow the global-Western model are not laggards but rather pursue their own paths towards good PA.<sup>8</sup> In that case, policy recommendations (often linked to financial incentives) to move towards Western PA benchmarks might be not only misguided, but may turn out to be highly counterproductive.

But interest vested in the global-Western paradigm is very substantial, both in policy and scholarship, and always has been. Almost 300 years ago, Christian Wolff (1679–1754), the most eminent Continental European philosopher between Leibnitz and Kant and also one of the candidates for the title of founding father of Public Administration as a scholarly discipline, was ousted from his chair at the University of Halle in one of the most celebrated academic dramas of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By decree of the King of Prussia, initiated by the Pietist Divinity faculty, which saw in Wolff a dangerous rival and an enemy of the faith, Wolff had to leave Prussia within 48 hours or be hung. The immediate cause had been his farewell address as vice rector in 1721 (Wolff 1985), in which Wolff describes Confucianism quite critically, but still more or less as ethically viable. One could, he thus implied, be ethical without being Christian, and indeed without being West-

<sup>7</sup> If one sees democracy and global democratization (Diamond 2013) as Western and Westernization, then the discourse becomes more complicated, of course, and hinges even more on the performance aspect of governance.

<sup>8</sup> A nice 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 – 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 – 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 – Kattel 2009.)

ern.<sup>9</sup> Today, the situation is, of course, much more relaxed; penalties for anti-Westernism are much lower, and in many areas of scholarly inquiry there is actually even the opposite, perhaps even to the point of what has been called “Occidentalism” (Buruma – Margalit 2004). But as mentioned, in PA, this is certainly not the case.

However, during the last half decade or so, two phenomena have weakened the assuredness in and of the West 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), and another is the re-emergence of China, with a different and altogether, internationally speaking, successful mode of governance (see Fukuyama 2011: 17–18; Jacques 2011).

Specifically for PA, it is important that this occurs at a time in which it is difficult to offer a cohesive PA paradigm, because there really is none. After the demise of the NPM as the ruling one (see Drechsler 2009b; Drechsler – 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, and Weberian-plus ones, such as the Neo-Weberian State (see Pollitt – Bouckaert 2011). So, what is it that the West can responsibly sell?

### 3. THREE WAYS OF LOOKING AT PA

Altogether, all this would mean that *there is such a thing as NWPA*, and that this can be good PA, not an aberration or an atavism. But again, there seems to be also a core of good PA that all systems share, and there are plenty of grey zones in between. In order to somehow clarify this vague-sounding scenario, I would (again preliminarily) propose three possible models of trajectories to good PA: Western, Multicultural and Contextual, the latter being what I suggest as most helpful.

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 have to eventually converge into the development trajectory of this or else be not just different but worse. One may or may not allow contextual

<sup>9</sup> Wolff immediately found refuge at the Hessian University of Marburg. As one of the most popular and fashionable teachers in Europe, he increased university-wide matriculation figures within five years by about 50%. Wolff returned to Halle in 1740 after the ascension of the new King of Prussia, and admirer of his, Frederick II (the Great) (regarding Wolff, see Drechsler 1997b).

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 times to come.<sup>10</sup>

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 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 there are entirely context-dependent as well and generally not linked to one another. Multicultural PA has, again, the advantage of being politically correct in many contexts (outside of PA); 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 that, as mentioned and as any NWPA research will very quickly show, 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 2013b regarding Neo-Confucian China).

The third model, the Contextual one, says that there is something like good PA, and although it may be an amorphous entity and a moving target, some solutions are similar at all or most times (e.g. often managerial ones), some are different (e.g. often state-citizen relations); what is good PA in one context does not have to be in the other; it depends on the circumstances. The key to reaching good PA is to realize where one is coming from at the moment and to be in sync 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 – Kruusenberg 2012; a recent empirical case study regarding China in line with this is Christensen et al. 2012)

This is the model I recently suggested elsewhere (Drechsler 2013b), but this was too simple regarding the label of “good” and misleading by suggesting that, even if moving, there is one such target for PA. First, recalling Bouckaert’s differentiation between equity and performance (2011; see also 2012 about the bridging of the two via trust), I would say that *primarily*, “good” in PA means “fulfilling its purpose in a given context” – PA is good when it does what is supposed to do; like the market in an economy, it does not come *prima facie* with values attached.

<sup>10</sup> *Public Administration Review* (2010), in spite of much sophistication of some of the contributions, and recently Gulrajani – Moloney (2012), basically make this point, both for science and for policy; the latter also provides a handy summary of the theory and practice of comparative “third-world” PA scholarship during the last decades from an Anglo-American mainstream perspective.

(Certain forms of PA have certain effects that from certain perspectives have normative connotations, but not more than that.) And this is crucial for “goodness”:

The Hatter [...] had taken his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily [...] “Two days wrong! [...] I told you butter wouldn’t suit the works!” he added, looking angrily at the March Hare.

“It was the best butter,” the March Hare meekly replied.

As Peter Heath explained this passage from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865),

“Good”, like its superlative, is often a relative term, meaning “good of its kind”, or for its standard purpose, whatever that may be. Failing such a reference, the judgment of goodness is indeterminate, and cannot be applied or debated without risk of confusion. [Thus, the March Hare’s statement is right in that the butter was best] as butter goes, no doubt, but not as a mechanical lubricant (Heath 1974: 68–69).

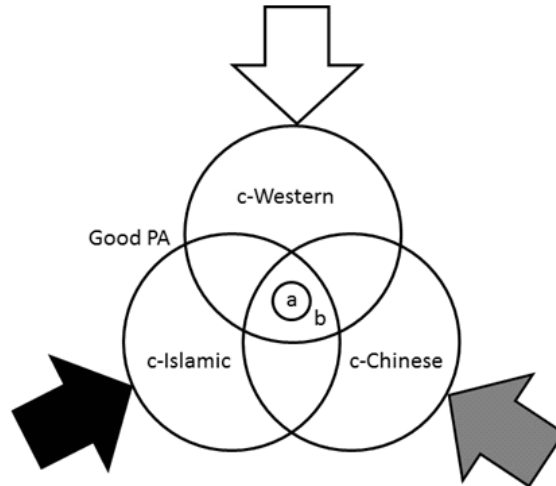
Yet this is not significantly different for ethics, which arguably is set even further outside of PA than performance, which has a direct PA element to it. Especially when we are looking for truly *good* governance (a cliché term which by now clearly begs the question, good for whom? – see Drechsler 2004), it is pivotal to realize this, not least for policy. Aristotle, one of the most quintessentially, definitorially Western philosophers, “*the philosopher*” in fact, and the father, one could say, of Ethics, made 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 is exactly matching 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).

Second, how to metaphorize good, and that is primarily well-working, PA in context – that there is overlap to some extent and to some extent not? 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 reasonably ethical way, that it does fulfill 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 small nucleus of well-working PA that almost always works (a), tiny because it must match all performance and all ethics, and purely empirical, not a normative concept. There must also be a larger one in which such generally valid principles are adapted to the context and thus work (b); and a third level where solutions work well within a given paradigm but not (necessarily) in any other (c), which,

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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 in *Figure 1*.



**Figure 1.** Three paradigms of public administration

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) a certain paradigm each that does not work well, or does not 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 circumstances, PA does its job, or is moving thither.

#### 4. CHINESE AND ISLAMIC PA ILLUSTRATED

One could actually end at this point, but even in the current context, a few brush-strokes sketching out the alternatives to Western PA of classical Chinese and Islamic PA and governance are in order, because otherwise, the thesis may remain too abstract, and also because much of this is so counter-epistemic right now for PA that some examples of both equity and performance might be helpful. I have recently described both the Chinese roots of modern PA principles that seem to belong to the second and even first nucleus (Drechsler 2013b) and the well-working aspects of Ottoman PA that belong specifically to its own, Islamic

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paradigm (Drechsler 2013a), so I will limit myself to a few interesting examples, partially drawn from these texts. (I will not outline global-Western PA here; we all live in it, and it is recognizable, in spite of the variations.)

#### 4.1. Chinese PA

Classical China is not much of a “hard sell” anymore in the West. It hardly ever was for those aware of the sophistication of the culture (think of porcelain, poetry, calligraphy and so on), even less so perhaps than the legacy of Confucian thought (both well-preserved, as less interrupted by destruction than on the Mainland, in Taiwan/R.O.C.), but, coupled with the economic and political eminence of China today, it means that it is on the difficult side, the more one knows the more so, to relegate China to an inferior global place – let alone that of a “developing country”, never mind the not-even 250-year dip in dominance from which it just emerged. If we look at the last period China arguably “led the world”, its name-giver, the Qianlong Emperor (1711–1799), following great Emperors as son and grandson, was not only seen as the most powerful, but also as the most wise, artistically gifted and last but not least just ruler of his time, even by those in the West who could judge (here we remember Wolff). Looking at his private retirement garden alone, his appreciation and collection of antiques, his poetry and calligraphy, next to huge political, economic and military successes, this is a judgment one cannot easily disagree with (see Berliner et al. 2010; as well as Elliot 2009; MacGregor 2011: 587–592; in spite of some odd judgmentalism in the latter two).

For PA specifically, it is once again worth pointing out the features whereby China was clearly leading the West. We can assume that even the modern state itself started in China and not in the West (Fukuyama 2011: 18); that this is a state understood very differently from the Western one (Jacques 2011) makes it even more interesting.

China alone created a modern state in the terms defined by Max Weber. That is, China succeeded in developing a centralized, uniform system of bureaucratic administration that was capable of governing a huge population and territory [...] China had already invented a system of impersonal, merit-based bureaucratic recruitment that was far more systematic than Roman public administration (Fukuyama 2011: 21; see Jacques 2011: 2).

And this state was enormously successful – so successful that it was not challenged until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as regards organization (Fukuyama 2011: 93). “It is safe to say that the Chinese invented modern bureaucracy, that is, a permanent administrative cadre selected on the basis of ability rather than kinship or patrimonial connection” (Fukuyama 2011: 113). What is hard to fathom even for

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someone with a Weberian or French-style *étatiste* background is the importance the state and thus PA had in the peoples' mind and understanding – something that is, if in much weaker form, still present in the Confucian countries today, and these entail not only China, Taiwan and Singapore (even though see Bell 2011), but also Japan, South Korea and Vietnam (Cheung 2010: 40–43; Painter – Peters 2010: 26). In several respects, this is also a list of the most successful countries today, and of course, this might not be an accident.

At the core of the Chinese PA system is the Imperial civil service – and, as the Qianlong Emperor used to say, and as we now again realize, “There is no governing by laws; there is only governing by people” (Elliott 2009: 152). The – not always positive, but generally very respected – image of the Chinese civil servant lives on in his specific Western designation, “Mandarin”, a term which also entered Western PA parlance for its own independent, highly competent scholar-bureaucrat, especially in the Anglo-American context, generally – until very recently – with a slightly negative if awe-inspiring connotation (“Sir Humphrey Appleby”).

As economic history and to some extent present shows, the dominance of the civil service even in the economy was not harmful to the economy, nor to technological innovation – maybe because innovation flourishes best within a regulated framework rather than in a free-for-all tumble –, although how one judges that depends on one's own economic faith.<sup>11</sup> And that even pertains to creativity in the wider sense – MacGregor, in the context of describing the creation of a Han Dynasty lacquer cup, even speaks of Chinese Imperial “bureaucracy as a guarantee of beauty” (2011: 219).

The civil service was created by the famous civil-service exam, the longest-continuing PA exam or probably educational institution generally in the history of humankind and the first large-scale competence-based test for anything, which was abolished in 1904, after altogether 13 centuries, “in the name of ‘Westernization’” (Elman 2000: xxxv; see Miyazaki 1981: 125). It largely consisted of a very open written exam, radically narrowing the group in different stages, which entailed the formal discussion of the great Confucian Classics; it remained largely stable over the centuries and is thus often seen as too formal and abstract (on the exam, see briefly and accessibly still Miyazaki 1981; also now Elman 2000, with a strong sociological bias).

And the exam had its very good sides: it objectivized and was much better than nothing; it was a meritocratic test and thus potentially the only way to counteract

<sup>11</sup> The neo-liberal “state-hate” worldview is a genuine ideology and will not disappear just because of the cognitive dissonances brought about by, e.g., the global financial crisis or China being the leading export nation globally by 2013.

the nepotism which has always been seen as a problem in China and which is, if one will, a collateral of strong family ties, which in turn is one of the deciding features of the Chinese context. As Fukuyama says, “the natural human propensity to favor family and friends – something I refer to as patrimonialism – constantly reasserts itself in the absence of countervailing incentives” (2011: 17; see Michels 1911: 13–14). In China, this seems to be the case more so than elsewhere – today especially as compared to the West.

And if there had to be standard texts upon which to base the exam, the Neo-Confucian *Four Books* were not the worst choice. The potentially quite subversive nature of these texts towards any oppressive, irresponsible regime is very clear even for the casual reader – especially in the Mencius. (See Gardner 2007 for a handy selection; regarding Mencius, first of all Book 1B6, 1B8 [Mencius 2008: 24, 26].) In addition, the standard canon means that passing the exam was possible by everyone (at least in principle); it contributed to the State being perceived as an “us” and not a “them”; in its objective continuity and transparency, it transported that the process and thus the State was basically not corrupt; and last but not least, it really did result in there being no recruitment problem for the Chinese civil service, upon which the country depended so much.

How incredibly important the civil-service exam was in China is to be seen from the high esteem in which it, and success in it, was held in Chinese life. This is because becoming a civil servant was simply the highest position one could aspire to – “the one and only career that mattered in imperial China” (Elliott 2009: 4), one that granted prestige and wealth both to the individual and to his family, even to his place of origin. That the examination was done with the personal involvement of the Emperor himself, who personally graded the final top essays (see Miyazaki 1981: 81–83), unthinkable in the West, shows its centrality for the state system and the esteem in which the process, and thus civil-service selection, was held.

The centrality of the exam goes so far that there exists, as a perennial topic in Chinese literature, art, opera, and so on the trope of the young hero travelling to the examination and being distracted by some adventure. The 2011 Gordon Chan movie *Mural*, based on older stories, has as its hero a young man whom his true love, the eventual high priestess or queen of a Shangri-La like temple of virgins in a parallel world, sends back to his own because after all, he has to take the civil-service exam and from that he should not be distracted.<sup>12</sup>

Mandarins, in Chinese popular religion and not only in Confucianism (which to a practical extent has turned into a religion, or fused with one, as well), can even become deities, and not infrequently. Perhaps the most famous example, although

<sup>12</sup> See [http://movies.cultural-china.com/movie.php?movie\\_id=18](http://movies.cultural-china.com/movie.php?movie_id=18).

often overlooked, is the group of three men, gods and stars at the same time that many Westerners have encountered in Chinese restaurants or shops. They are called Fu Lu Shou, and they signify happiness or good luck, prosperity, also in the status and material sense, and long life and health, respectively. (See generally Fong 1986.) Both Fu and Lu wear Mandarin garb, Fu that of a more minor or retired official, Lu that of a courtier especially the typical hat with flaps, the *wusha mo* or *zhanjiao fotou*, and both go partially back to, and are now closely associated with, people who were civil servants (Fong 1986: 186–190, 193). It is significant that Fu Lu Shou developed into patron gods not only of the people, but also precisely of the aristocracy and the scholar-officials, and even the Emperor himself (Fong 1986: 190, 196). Significantly enough, Fu – originally Yang Cheng – became a deity not for compliance with the Emperor but for resistance – he dared to oppose the Emperor who had asked for midget children from his province to be sent to the court for amusement as jesters, which Fu refused out of compassion and a sense of genuine duty. Hence probably his association with good luck for (and later through) the family (Fong 1986: 186).<sup>13</sup>

This takes up, not coincidentally but precisely, the strong Chinese tradition, at the very core of Confucianism, that the ruler must deliver, i.e. procure at least peace and food for his people – if not, he does not have the “Mandate of Heaven” (that is the significance of this concept) and can be replaced, even legitimately killed (See MacGregor 2011: 151 for a nutshell definition, and the Mencius references *supra*). That the bureaucracy actually shared the power, in a sense, of the Emperor and the court (Cheung 2010: 38–40), and that over time, ministerial councils established themselves and bureaucratized decision-making (Bartlett 1991: 270–278), is neither surprising nor specific – that is what one would expect in any PA context.

Corruption, as was mentioned, has always been an issue in China, and remains so (Osno 2012 is a great example); it is even often seen as one of the main obstacles to effective Party rule and thus governance of China today. And while corruption is a cultural-contextual phenomenon, the definition of which thus cannot be easily transferred from one paradigm to the next (Urinboyev 2011), and while, again, in China it is partially the dark side of close family ties, corruption as such is by definition a problem, because it means things are not done the way they should be. But it is a problem that permeates all PA systems, and those we think of as historically particularly non-corrupt – the Venetian Republic, Prussia around 1900 – had to pay their price for it. The point in our context is that corruption in China is not something that has just been noted from the outside, but that was always recognized as an issue, and thus it is something that can be managed and

<sup>13</sup> See also [mi-le-fo.thetempleguy.com/figures/fulushou.htm](http://mi-le-fo.thetempleguy.com/figures/fulushou.htm).

contained from the inside, both regarding equity and performance, ethics and mechanics – the civil-service exam being the primary grand example. Introducing a system that would just “outlaw” family responsibility would hardly be very promising. As regards the awareness, in front of the Beijing Confucius temple, right next to the Imperial Academy, the center of the civil-service examination and one of the most enchanted places of PA history anywhere in the world, there is a cypress that famously kicked off the hat of a corrupt official with a branch, who was thus seen as proven guilty and later executed.<sup>14</sup>

And in spite of all tradition and tradition-mindedness of which classical China has so often been accused, not least by its own Young Turks, as in all PA paradigms, PA reform is a red ribbon going through Chinese history. Wang Anshi (1021–1086), well-known as one of the greatest statesmen of classical China, with his 1058 *Wan Yan Shu* (Memorandum of a Myriad Words; 1935), is one of the first public management authors in the modern sense, if not the first. This is so because Wang addresses still current concerns of civil service – selection, training, motivation, remuneration –, often even by presenting solutions that are completely in line with what they would be from today’s perspective, discussing questions, i.a., of performance pay, benchmarking and managerial trust. But this text is a PA reform program, including large segments criticizing the too impractical civil-service exam. Many of Wang’s changes were implemented, many rolled back, as is usual in PA reform. For the current general argument, it is especially important that he does present an excellent corpus of Neo-Confucian PA, mostly human-resource management, on a theoretically justified, empirically sound, and realistic, contextualized level that penetrates all three spheres of good PA mentioned *supra* (a survey is Drechsler 2013b).

But finally, how important is Confucianism really today in China? Is it the key to understanding the country or just folklore for ill-informed Westerners? Is there even something we can call Confucianism, or are there so many interpretations and hybrids that we cannot responsibly even use the label? If we allot Confucianism at least some significance and cohesion – and my personal experience is that one definitely should do that – the scope of it for current governance is perhaps best expressed by the Confucius statue in Tiananmen Square. Facetiously speaking, sometimes it is there in front of the new museum, sometimes inside in a courtyard; it depends which faction in the government is exercising its will at the moment, and for some old-line Communists, Confucius is reactionary and even anathema (Siemons 2010; 2011; Fährnders 2011). The real Westernizers do not like him very much either – Max Weber, the most important PA scholar ever, belonged to those who blamed China’s “backwardness” on his “reactionary” philos-

<sup>14</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing\\_Temple\\_of\\_Confucius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing_Temple_of_Confucius).

ophy (Weber 1986: 430–458). But the New Confucians do like him, and they are very likely gaining in importance (Bell 2010). What can be said in any case is that the relevance of Confucian governance in mainland China, as well as in all the Confucian countries of Asia, is infinitely larger than that of Confucian PA as embodied, for instance, by Wang Anshi, but that there is no reason for the latter not to be rediscovered and redeployed – a convincing narrative can certainly be developed from a genuine basis. The dynamics of global as well as local time and circumstances surely appear to go into this direction.

#### 4.2.1. *Islamic PA*

Even more immediate in Europe, and certainly in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), is Islamic PA and governance, both because of legacy and presence. And yet, although a significant part of the area shares an Islamic, and that means Ottoman, PA element, studying context and practice of Islamic public administration is totally neglected in the CEE region and beyond (Drechsler 2013a). If it is mentioned, then usually the Islamic times and institutions, 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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup> We could bypass this issue elegantly by only addressing Ottoman PA in the current context, which will be the main focus anyway. And yet, for our current concern, for the third paradigm of PA and governance, and in fact for showing the uniqueness and specific quality of Islamic PA, to talk about Islam as such does, in my judgment, more harm than good because of its larger scope and its applicability, if to a lesser extent, to the non-Ottoman sphere.

One aspect that speaks for Islamic PA as such is that the people in the Islamic countries themselves would overwhelmingly say that Islam – Islam as such, what-

<sup>15</sup> In Vintar et al. (2013), beyond my own essay (Drechsler 2013a), which talks about this deficiency, Islamic PA is not mentioned at all, and the Ottoman legacy is dealt with in one other essay, where it is assumed to be negative, based on one earlier unspecific reference (Kostadinova – Neshkova 2013). And this is a book summarizing the past twenty years of PA and PA research in Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus (I was one of the co-editors).

<sup>16</sup> E.g., Thomas Bauer has recently attacked this position with verve as an “Islamicization of Islam”, as pretty much the root, and a primary tool of all evil in misunderstanding both Islam and the countries where this is the faith of the land (2011: 192–223).

ever their own tradition – matters, and that it matters very much – 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 (Bauer 2011: 401–404; Lerch 2012). 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, indeed important and actually crucial impact on how the public sphere is organized and even managed. Thus, one of the most important variables for PA – not only governance – in Islamic countries would be Islam, not just the national tradition, even if (albeit less so) the society in question is quite secular.

Regarding the substance of Islamic PA and governance, there is a large traditional and still viable literature on the governance aspect, to be sure. 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. 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 (Hebel in Stolleis 2003: 81–85).

#### 4.2.2. Ottoman PA

For the purposes of this essay, however, let us now focus specifically on the Ottoman Empire. There are many good reasons for this well beyond specificity, communicability and theoretical validity: Because of its centrality for much of the CEE region, especially in its Western Muslim part, but also in the countries it formerly fought and often conquered, such as Hungary; 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 Aras 2012); because 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: 487); and maybe also because today's radical Islamicism is to a large extent based on a fundamentalist movement against the Ottomans (see Finkel 2007: 411–412; Kadri 2011: 123–125). Not least importantly, reevaluating Ottoman legacies and Ottoman PA in CEE is one of the most controversial topics in this context one could pick up, and therefore it is a

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worthwhile one. The question whether there is such a thing as Islamic PA at all and especially whether it is a good or bad legacy locally largely revolves, in our current regional context, around this subject matter. In other words, even beyond the current search for potentiality, Ottoman PA as Islamic PA is a central PA narrative that is about history, but not in itself historical at all (Sindbaeck – Hartmuth 2011).

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 (a good non-post-colonial introduction to Ottoman history is 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 1922: 134; Chehabi – 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 concept of good-enough governance (2004; 2007) 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, rather than achieving (global-)Western standards (“getting to Denmark”; Fukuyama 2011: 14), assuming that those are actually universally desirable.

Like its Chinese counterpart, Ottoman PA was constantly under reform, too – perennially modernizing at least since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Findley 1980; Heper 2001: 1021–1022) – and perhaps the ideal case study for such an effort under such circumstances. The Westernizing variant of this modernization effort, in its core time 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 Finkel 2007: 488–501; Hanioglu 2008: 123–129) is one of the more recent and more controversial trends in Ottoman governance reevaluation and, I think, very likely correct. (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 Haslip 1973 [1958]; Reinkowski 2005: 14–29)



These newly apparent aspects of the Ottoman Empire, however, have not made it yet to PA history, let alone PA studies generally.<sup>17</sup> To the contrary: basically, as mentioned already, in CEE, 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 (Sindbaeck – Hartmuth 2011: 1, 5). It has however been claimed that the one exception is Hungary: there is a modern monument (also) for Süleyman the Magnificent in Szigetvár – as well as for the Hungarian commander, as both perished in the battle there –; something, it has been said, that would be “quite unthinkable elsewhere in Southeast Europe”.<sup>18</sup>

Ottoman PA shares with Confucian PA two crucial features for reevaluation today: 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 political groupings, extreme 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 reevaluation of Ottoman history as such among the latter group (Reinkowski 2011; Bilefsky 2012), current Turkish PA and PA reform is not Ottoman at all – it is basically still Kemalite with the reform efforts following old-fashioned NPM tenets (Tuğal 2009: 55–56; Sezen 2011: 339; Filkins 2012: 43). Principally, however, Turkey is a model case of what the three paradigms theory holds: Istanbul is today the largest, most dynamic and most innovative city in Europe – again, and actually one of the three largest municipalities in the world (a fact rarely realized in the West), but the Turkish economic miracle that can be witnessed now did only occur after post-Ottoman Kemalism (a form of global-Westernism) was rematched with Islam (see Tuğal 2009; Gülen 2012; Lerch 2012).

<sup>17</sup> The obverse is, however, also very often true: Historians who deal with PA, from and concerning either context, often seem unaware of the most basic principles of and discussions within PA as a scholarly discipline, and when they are, they frequently seem one or two paradigms behind. In the last decade or two, some cultural historians of the state, such as Barbara Stolberg-Rilinger, have even questioned, for instance, whether it is possible to speak about such a thing as PA regarding “pre-modern” times at all. (See “Tagungsbericht Herrschaft und Verwaltung in der Frühen Neuzeit. 19.10.2012–20.10.2012, Essen” in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 24 January 2013, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=4603>.)

<sup>18</sup> I think that the reason given for this, “because Hungarian nationalism, at times, cultivated historical connections between ‘Hungarians’ and ‘Turks’ because they believed Hungary a part of a wider Eurasian heritage” (Sindbaeck – Hartmuth 2011: 4) is off; rather, I would say this is so because Hungary was self-assured enough that it could afford giving the Sultan his historical due.

#### 4.2.3. *So what?*

But why would this be important? 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 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 almost as non-Turkey (Böckenförde 2011). 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.

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 to some extent.

### 5. WHAT IS WESTERN?

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, as well as 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 all the more important if we look at the context of development, as many Western countries are currently the more successful ones, which was not really the case about Islamic ones except Turkey very recently (and some Confucian

ones less recently). That administrative capacity, institutionally as well as personally, is a *condition sine qua non* for development is clear (Nurkse 1952; 1964 [1953]; 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.<sup>19</sup>

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), *they need to develop optimal capacity according to their own governance system and general context*. And this is especially so because the track record of the more or less forced Westernization of Islamic countries, and people, in PA and otherwise, has not exactly been excellent.

As pointed out earlier, in PA today this is all the more so because the goals of good global-Western PA are moving indeed; some are even highly volatile – privatization, say – and some others have recently become quite questionable as well – transparency as a goal may come to mind (see Han 2012). But again, even if we go for the (“good”) 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 more easily swallowable than Western triumphalism, especially as the times make the latter sound somewhat hollow (Maier 1997: 48–50; Steiner et al. 2007: 517–540)? In other words, should we not ask whether different narratives are possible?

If we even question the universality of ethical goals, however, and of all the great Western accomplishments such as, allegedly at least, “separation of power, sovereignty of the people, representative democracy” (Winkler 2011), is this not a betrayal of humankind, especially of that outside of the West? And even if it were not, is it not a betrayal of “ourselves” in the West? That quintessential European intellectual, Umberto Eco, has recently written:

Trying to understand other people means destroying the stereotype without denying or ignoring the otherness. – But let us be realistic. These ways of understanding the enemy are the prerogatives of poets, saints, and traitors. Our innermost impulses are of quite another kind (2012: 18).

I usually agree with Eco, but here I completely disagree – I even wonder whether this statement is not a ruse. The jump here is way too fast: “other people” are not automatically “the enemy”. To try to understand them is not the prerogative of anyone special, but the duty of any autonomous individual – of anyone who lays claim to the tradition of Ancient Greece, the Enlightenment and Science. If any-

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.unpan.org/>, if only for the problem, not necessarily for the remedy.

thing is truly enlightened Western, then it is trying to understand the other. That sometimes going against one's innermost impulses, rather than with them, in fact going above and beyond them, is what makes Man great, however, is a truly universal value in which Westerners, Confucians and Muslims fully share.

It is true that part of the Western legacy, although perhaps more of the Anglo-American and French variety, rather than the Continental-CEE one, is to absolutize itself and proclaim the universality of its achievements (Winkler 2011), but I suggest that in too many a place, this leads to inverted, paradoxical results; that there is more than just a whiff of post-colonialist problems in this position; and once more, that to question oneself is not only, but decidedly, Western. To allow different places different narratives is, I think, more Western than not to do so, for whatever this is worth.

But even if to constantly question oneself is too high a demand put to everyone, it is not too high a demand for the world of the university with its unique focus on the interplay of theory and practice. That is what the Western university is about (and what makes it different from a functionalist training camp): Trying to understand, questioning what one knows and takes for certain and granted. In academic PA, I would say that truly Western right now, at this point in time, is to question whether global = Western = good, and to recognize that both in equity and in performance, one can probably progress towards the good on other paths as well. That is what I propose, not more, but certainly not less.

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