

DRAWING THE LINE BETWEEN POLITICAL CONTROL AND POLITICIZATION: AN ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION THEORY

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1. ABSTRACT

The standard model of Weberian bureaucracy gives a central place to creation of a professional, apolitical civil service, selected based on merit, which has considerable independence from political control. This model is challenged in two directions: in the Western democracies by increased stress on the importance of political control of bureaucracy as essential for democracy, and, on the other hand, in the CEE and in other developing countries, by what is termed politicization of the civil service, i.e., political leaders controlling or at least influencing appointments to government positions. While the former approach is often portrayed as positive, the latter is generally seen as undemocratic and as leading to lower levels of technical competence. This paper begins with an overview of the scholarly literature on political control and on politicization, showing that they are to a great extent mirror images of each other, with the politicization literature highly critical of political appointees while the advocates of greater political control see the problems presented by an entrenched and unresponsive bureaucracy. I then examine three possible approaches to the challenge of drawing the line between legitimate and illegitimate use of political appointees and end with a call for striking a reasonable balance between the two.

2. INTRODUCTION

The genesis for this paper and, indeed, for panel as a whole, was the series of discussions held at NISPAcee meetings over the past several years, which, simplifying only slightly, consisted of a collective wringing of hands, bemoaning the inability of almost all of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to develop and support a civil service characterized by neutral competence. Indeed, much of the scholarship about human resources in the region echoes this discussion, focusing on the extent of politicization of the public service (See, for example, Vass, 2006; Iancu, 2013; Spirova, 2012). Politicization has almost universally been seen as negative, especially in its impacts on both government efficiency and citizens' trust in government. There is, however, a second lens for viewing the relationship between political and career civil servants: the literature on political control of bureaucracy, which emphasizes the risks to democracy of giving excessive policy-making power to career civil servants and sees political control, including appointments of top administrative leaders, positively -- as essential to democracy.

Reading these two literatures can give one a mild case of vertigo, as they present close to mirror images of the potential problems caused by political appointees or by career civil servants. On both sides, the literature is sometimes, but not always, grounded in empirical research, but it

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consistently takes a strong normative position and is often linked to calls for political or administrative reforms. This paper begins with a brief summary of the two literatures, comparing the assumptions of scholars about the two groups: their competence, their responsiveness, and their appropriate roles. It then examines three approaches to drawing the line between legitimate and illegitimate use of political appointments: formal systems, qualifications, and motivation.

3. POLITICIZATION

The literature on the CEE and on transitional and developing countries has for some time focused on politicization and the problems it creates. In the succinct definition of Peters and Pierre (2004: 2), politicization is “the substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the public service.” Those political criteria can be ideological, with the goal of ensuring compliance with the administration’s policy, or based on patronage, whether electoral (rewarding loyal supporters and generous donors) or organizational (patronage used to strengthen political parties’ organizations [Kopecký and Mair., 2012]). My focus here is primarily on selection and also on the respective roles of political and career senior officials.

There is an extensive literature on politicization, and it has been a common theme of studies of CEE countries. (For a very useful overview of politicization across several countries, see Peters and Pierre, 2004. For a somewhat different perspective, with a focus on patronage, see Kopecký et al., 2012. Meyer-Sahling’s Sigma study (2009) provides detailed information on the level of politicization of senior civil servants and the degree of protection for civil servants across the CEE countries.) Most work on politicization portrays a positive image of independent, professional civil servants selected based on merit and a negative one of political appointees, who received their positions primarily through patronage appointments. They are often portrayed as amateurs, “short-timers” (Ban and Ingraham, 1990), who are sometimes not only inexperienced but incompetent. And there is concern with the sometimes all-too-direct link between patronage and out-right corruption, which can shade from senior appointments given to donors of major campaign contributions (common in the United States) to outright sale of jobs, often at lower levels “in exchange for both up-front payments to purchase the position and bribe-sharing arrangements” (Azfar, 2007). As Dahlström et al. (2012: 656) put it, “the extent to which [public employees] are dependent on their political masters [is] essential for understanding why some states have been able to establish noncorrupt institutions while others are stuck with corruption and bad government.”

Opponents of politicization often see bureaucratic professionalism as the bulwark protecting government from corruption, so they tend to support continuation of a Weberian merit-based approach to hiring and promotion (Dahlström et al., 2011). This has been true particularly in the CEE countries, which were subject to considerable pressure from both the EU and the OECD (which was helping to shape EU policy), during the negotiations leading to accession, to pass laws and put in place merit systems (Dimitrova, 2005), but the focus of the EU was more on passage of laws than on actual implementation, and, since accession, there has been concern about the extent of backsliding (Dimitrova, 2010; Ban et al., 2012). In fact, a number of studies point to the gap between formal civil service systems and actual practice, reporting that politicization remains a serious problem, so that dismissal of civil servants is common, leading to

high levels of turnover after elections, “making a mockery of formal declarations of permanent tenure” (Randma-Liiv and Järvalt, 2011: 42 See also Verheijen, 1999). From this perspective, then, the policy recommendations are generally to go further in protecting a Weberian model of a merit system with strict protection of career civil servants and with a relatively minimal number of political appointees.

4. POLITICAL CONTROL OF BUREAUCRACY

There is, however, a second way of conceptualizing the role of political appointees and their relationship to career civil servants, one that focuses primarily on the need for greater political control. The importance of political control over the bureaucracy was central to the earliest development of the field of public administration in the United States. Woodrow Wilson, in his seminal article (1887), advocated adopting the European model of bureaucracy, justifying its appropriateness for the American democracy on grounds of improved efficiency, given the increased complexity of the work of government, without harming democratic control by arguing that the role of the bureaucrat would be limited to carrying out policies arrived at through the democratic process. As he states repeatedly, “administration lies outside the proper sphere of *politics* (Wilson, 1887: 210). In short, the newly created career civil service, established in 1883, would be protected from politicization; it would provide technical expertise but would not set policy, and it would remain under control of appointed political leaders. In the US system, the line between political and administrative roles was strengthened by passage of the Hatch Act in 1939, with the official name of “An Act to Prevent Pernicious Political Activities,” preventing career civil servants from taking an active role in most political activities beyond voting.

Wilson’s view of the career civil service, grounded in a Weberian model, was strongly positive: a stable body of civil servants, neither appointed politically nor easily removed when leaders changed, would ensure competence and would serve the broader public interest. But the US has historically been characterized by a high level of suspicion of government, and the negative stereotypes of government employees were fed by several trends in the academic literature. First, scholars began to apply public choice theory to the political arena and portrayed civil servants not as nobly serving the public interest (or, in more contemporary terms, driven by public service motivation), but rather as self-serving and utility-maximizing, engaged in such internal organizational politics as competition over turf or empire building (Downs, 1967; Wilson, 2000). Second, critics charged civil servants responsible for regulating industry with capture by the groups they were regulating (Wilson, 2000). Third, politicians running against the bureaucracy fed the popular stereotypes of bureaucrats as lazy, over-paid, and over-protected.

By the 1960s, one of the leading scholars was expressing concern that the increasing professionalism of the civil service was a potential threat to democracy, in that members of a profession would act based on professional norms, and there was likely to be tension between “politically appointed officials and the elite profession..., especially if the political leaders are not members of the profession” (Mosher, 1968: 121). He feared that professionally trained civil servants would have a stronger allegiance to their profession than to their political leaders or to the citizens and asserted that “It may well be that the political executives are *the* crucial element in the maintenance of democratic control over a public service which is increasingly professional and “careerized” (Mosher, 1968: 166).

In short, while the traditional Weberian/Wilsonian model of political control fits well into the model of principal-agent relations implicit in Weberian and Wilsonian approaches to the civil service, there was increasing concern over the extent to which civil servants were becoming increasingly independent and harder to control politically. This anxiety is reflected in the literature on street-level bureaucrats, those who meet directly with the public and who, by their exercise of bureaucratic discretion, actually determine how policy is implemented and interpreted (Lipsky, 1998). The social upheavals of the late 1960s and 1970s were reflected in the call for a New Public Administration, in which the civil servants were charged not with even-handed application of the rules but rather with advocating for and interpreting policy to represent the interests of the most needy in society (Frederickson, 1971), and empirical work explored the existence of active representative bureaucracy, finding that women and minority group members, when they could exercise some level of bureaucratic discretion, did, indeed, make decisions favoring their group (Selden, 1997).

Note that the above examples of bureaucratic discretion, while they present potential challenges to political control, are not necessarily based on party or ideology. But bureaucrats, particularly when given considerable autonomy, are often seen as threatening political control because of their ability to play an independent role in policy making and to impede or actively subvert implementation of policy changes introduced by political leaders. Because of their expertise and experience, and, especially in the U.S., because of their direct relations with legislative leaders and with interest groups (Peters, 2001), they are in a position to shape policy quite directly or indirectly, through the technical information they provide (or withhold from) policy makers. They also shape implementation by moving new programs forward with energy or dragging their feet or, again, by withholding information or passing it up the chain of command selectively. In extreme cases, passive-aggressive behavior can move to a far more active effort to undercut policy – to outright sabotage, or what O’Leary (2006) terms “guerrilla government. Patricia Ingraham and I recognized that political appointees were justified in expecting and asking of the career civil servants they directed not only technical competence and managerial competence but also responsive competence (Ingraham and Ban, 1986).

The need for political control has been a major issue in the U.S., particularly after presidential elections that shifted party control, especially when Republicans took power. The civil service system created in 1883 was small, covering only about 10 percent of the civilian workforce. Its growth was a reflection of the dramatic increase in the size of the government workforce as a result of the New Deal programs of the 1930s and of World War II. When Eisenhower was elected in 1952, he was the first Republican president in 20 years. As Mosher (1968: 85) reports, there “was a considerable degree of mutual suspicion between the incoming political appointees and the career officers whose activities they were presumed to oversee...Many of the newcomers doubted that the incumbents would change their behavior in accordance with the objectives of the new administration.” Eisenhower concluded that the merit system had gone too far and introduced what was termed Schedule C, comprised of staff positions deemed policy-determining or required to handle confidential information, which were exempt from the merit system. The level of mistrust was even greater for Nixon, who exemplified the old expression, “Even paranoids have enemies.”

But it was actually a Democrat, Jimmy Carter, with his focus on efficiency, who succeeded in passing a major reform, the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978, one of the central parts of which was the creation of the Senior Executive Service, an elite corps of top managers, 10 percent of whom could be political appointees, who were intended to be effective managers who could easily be moved where needed and who were enticed to give up much of their civil service protection in return for the chance of increased financial rewards (Ban et al., 1982; Ingraham and Ban, 1984; Marzotto et al, 1985).

CSRA preceded and had a significant effect on the reforms that began in New Zealand and the UK in the mid-1980s (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011: 208), leading to the diffusion of values and models falling under the broad rubric of New Public Management (NPM). It is beyond the scope of this paper to review the whole sweep of reforms in administration and governance over the past thirty years or more, but one strand of that cycle of reform was clearly an expansion of political control of bureaucracy, although as AuCoin (1990: 115) points out, the “need to reestablish the primacy of representative government over bureaucracy” was only one strand in NPM, which was at odds with what he termed the “ ‘managerialist’ school of thought, [which] focus[ed] on the need to reestablish the primacy of managerial principles over bureaucracy.”

5. Politicization versus Political Control: Mirror Images and Policy Implications.

These rather brief summaries of two different perspectives make clear the conflict. Each side is concerned with asserting, protecting, and even expanding its own power, and each tends to criticize and even demonize the other. This does not, of course, mean that, in most cases, they are in a state of continuous conflict. But it does mean that building trust and acceptance of the legitimate role of the other is often difficult. And, as we have seen, that is most likely to be problematic when political leadership changes, especially when the incoming leader espouses dramatically different policies.

The question, then, whether it is possible to reconcile the two or, at a practical level, whether they can both accept the fact that both political leaders and career civil servants have legitimate roles to play and can reach a reasonable balance of power between the two groups or roles.

6. Drawing the Line: Three Approaches

Where do we draw the line? First, we must acknowledge that there is no one right place to do so, as where to place the line needs to reflect the current state of affairs in a specific country. If we visualize the balance between political dominance and strong bureaucratic independence, while some countries remain for extended periods at one end of the continuum or the other, in other countries, we see a pendulum swing, in which repeated reforms shift the balance, and perceived problems created by such changes lead to attempts to rectify the balance. To focus again on the American example, while successive reforms introduced in the second half of the 20th century moved the balance towards more power in the hands of political appointees, we may have reached such an extreme in politicization that the costs of what Moynihan and Roberts (2010: 572) termed “the triumph of loyalty over competence” in the Bush administration were unfortunately very clear, and the Obama administration has not been a great improvement, given his propensity to give high-level appointments to major donors.

How then can we find a balance that provides adequate power to political appointees to shape policy while still protecting the positions of career managers and technical experts, especially when they play the critical role of “speaking truth to power”? I examine here three possible foci: a focus on formal structures and rules, a focus on qualifications, and a focus on motivation.

6.1 *Formal structures and rules:* Formal systems are important but difficult to manipulate, and the tendency to export standard models does not necessarily help CEE countries or others seeking to introduce change in finding a model to fit their specific situations. At the broadest level, the Weberian model of a strong merit system is the most effective way of limiting the role of political leaders, but, as we have seen above, it may be easy to pass legislation, but implementation has proven more challenging. Structural approaches to both creating and protecting a merit system have included oversight by an independent civil service body, itself insulated from political control, but maintaining that independence has not always been easy. In the U.S. the independent Civil Service Commission (CSC) was replaced by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), headed by a political appointee and reporting directly to the President, although the appeals and oversight functions of the old CSC were handed off to the independent Merit Systems Protection Board (Ingraham and Ban, 1984). Some CEE countries have also abandoned the model of an independent body overseeing the civil service system.

At the same time, there has been considerable debate over the wisdom of moving directly to a more flexible NPM-type model without passing first through development of a strong and legitimate civil service. In the 1990s, as CEE countries were putting in place new systems of public administration, they of course looked for models to the West, and at that time many Western European countries, influenced by OECD recommendations, were moving away from traditional merit systems and introducing reforms based on New Public Management. Pierre and Rothstein (2011: 127) provide a useful perspective on the renewed interest in Weberianism, particularly in developing countries, which they see as tied to increased concern about the negative effects of corruption and the need to emphasize good governance in order to develop trust in government. They argue that NPM is, in fact, inappropriate for developing countries because it assumes a reasonably high preexisting level of “social trust in a political, social and institutional context where such trust is low [which] is essentially asking for problems.” The alternative strategy, relying on what is now labeled a “neo-Weberian” model, presents, however, its own challenges. “The main problem with that strategy is that it to a large extent requires what is to be the goal of modernization, that is to say firm, coherent and insulated institutions staffed by a trained, professional civil service. This paradox of administrative reform haunts a number of countries in the developing world” (Pierre and Rothstein, 2011: 128).

In short, while formal systems do matter, finding the right one is challenging, and changing an existing system is even more difficult, given the impact of path dependency. If macro change is unrealistic, one can look at various models of more micro-level changes that attempt to strike the right balance. While the Senior Executive System (SES) in the U.S. has had its problems, it included two such micro-level policies. While half of the positions in the SES are reserved for career senior officials, providing the administration with considerable flexibility in where to assign SES members, in fact only ten percent of SES members can be political appointees. Career SES members are selected through a quite formal process, with the majority moving up internally from the career ranks. Second, the SES gave top political appointees the ability to

move SES members into any SES position, including requiring geographical reassignment without the consent of the SES member affected, which greatly increased the power of political leaders. But the law put in place a “get to know you” period, requiring them to wait 90 days before making any involuntary reassignments, a small but significant pause during which new appointees can form a more rounded opinion of existing senior managers prior to making dramatic changes (Ban et al., 1982; Marzotto et al., 1985).

Another example of the attempt both to preserve professional competence and to provide political flexibility in making assignments is provided by Germany, which allows civil servants to play an active role in politics, and where there is “a tendency to recruit civil servants into leading positions increasingly on the grounds of party membership, political loyalty, political conviction, or ostensible sympathy and not solely on the ground of previous professional performance (Derlein, 1996: 149). One of the flexibilities in the German system is the ability to require career civil servants who are not in political favor to be “temporarily retired,” described by Schröter (2004: 56) as “a relatively mild form of partisan politicization, thus balancing the need for political loyalty and the need for professional expertise.”

6.2 Competence: what roles require what skills?

A second approach to improve the balance between political appointees and career officials is to focus on competence, of both sets of actors but particularly of the political appointees. But one cannot approach the issue of competence without first reaching some conclusions about what role each actor is to play. The classic work on the relationships between political and career officials and their respective roles is Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman’s 1981 study, which describes four kinds of role relationships:

Image I: Policy/Administration: This posits sharp role division and fits with the Weberian model and with Woodrow Wilson’s argument in favor of a career bureaucracy, discussed above.

Image II: Facts/Interests: In this model, civil servants, with their technical knowledge, provide facts, while political leaders articulate values and interests.

Image III: Energy/Equilibrium: This image accepts that “bureaucrats and politicians engage in policymaking, and *both* are concerned with politics...[but] whereas politicians articulate broad, diffuse interests of unorganized individuals, bureaucrats mediate narrow, focused interests of organized clienteles (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman, 1981: 9). As a result, bureaucrats tend to be more cautious and more likely to seek compromise and to see changing the status quo as undesirable or at least unlikely, while political leaders are more likely to push for ambitious change.

Image IV: the Pure Hybrid: This posits “the virtual disappearance of the Weberian distinction between the roles of politician and bureaucrat” (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman, 1981: 16).

Logically, as the roles of career bureaucrats expand from the narrowly technical, they will need not only technical and managerial competence, but also political skills. And if political appointees are placed in operational positions (typically in Image II or IV), as often happens in

the US, they will, in order to succeed, need both technical and managerial skills, which many lack.

In this case, the CEE countries, as well as countries in Western Europe, have been more successful than the U.S. For example, Gajduschek (2007: 355) finds that, while Hungary does not, in fact, have a real merit system, the impact of politicization has been mitigated because:

even where pure political influence prevails, certain professional standards are typically considered and followed. It seems a plausible supposition that political stakeholders usually prefer to choose their administrative ‘allies’ from politically and/or personal loyal civil servants with relevant work experience in public administration and a university degree.

In a similar vein, Meyer-Sahling (2006: 276), also writing about Hungary, sees politicization as an instrument for parties to exercise policy control by “insert[ing] officials who combine political loyalty and expertise...” but argues that “the appointment of potentially incompetent partisan officials to senior ranks in the ministerial bureaucracy may be entirely dysfunctional” (Meyer-Sahling, 2006: 286). Unfortunately, political leaders in the U.S. haven’t grasped that principle, and recent work on the Bush administration details the disastrous effects of incompetent appointments made following the principle articulated in a 2011 report from the Heritage Foundation (an extremely conservative organization) for the new Bush administration that appointees should be selected “based on loyalty first and expertise second” (Moffit 2001, cited in Moynihan and Roberts, 2010: 574).

Patricia Ingraham and I addressed this problem over 20 years ago, in a study of the Reagan administration. Based on both statistical data and interviews with political SES members, we identified three models for the selection of political appointees. The first was the “political pay-off model” (appointment of “representatives of important constituency groups that supported the winning candidate, and to candidates put forward by those with strong power bases in the party, particularly Congressional leaders” [Ban and Ingraham, 1990: 109]). The second was the “shadow government model”, relying on substantive experts, often in-and-outers, who are in positions in universities or think-tanks waiting for their party to return to power, and who are professionals in their fields. In the Reagan administration, this model was prevalent in the Defense Department. Third, we found examples of a “counter-staffing model,” particularly in agencies or programs that were slated for radical policy change. While some of these appointees had significant policy experience, most did not, particularly those whose appointments fit the counter-staffing model. In the most dramatic and humorous case I encountered, a woman interviewed at the General Accounting Office (now renamed the Government Accountability Office) told me that she had chosen to leave her previous post in the Department of Defense and come to the GAO, which is apolitical, because she didn’t respect the political appointee to whom she reported, a Texan who owned a company that sold bull semen for artificial insemination of cows. But the Reagan appointees were consistently “deeply committed to the administration’s ideology or policies.” Their mission [was] to “turn things around” (Ban and Ingraham, 1990: 110). And, not surprisingly, they were the most suspicious and mistrustful of the career staff.

We concluded our analysis with a call for strengthening competence among political appointees, specifically through formal training and orientation programs for new appointees to help them to get up to speed more closely and through selection that required some formal clearance of their substantive and managerial expertise, to be conducted by some group outside of the White House. We specified either the Office of Personnel Management (which already reviews the substantive and managerial experience of new career SES members) or some independent review committee. But we skirted the key question: how to get political leaders to give up the power to appoint those to whom they owed favors or whom they trusted to share their political stance. Not only the Bush administration but also the Obama administration have, unfortunately, appointed all too many people who fit either the political pay-off or the counter-staff models.

6.3 Motivation: Where is the line? What, if anything, can we do about it?

Another approach to drawing the line between legitimate and illegitimate forms of political control through appointments is to look at motivation, by which I mean both the motives of those making the appointments and of those accepting them. We have already made clear that the most common goals or motives for making appointments are to gain control over the bureaucracy in order to advance the administration's policy, to reward those who supported the candidate or party, and to provide positions to groups or parties (especially in coalition governments) whose support is needed. We know less about the motivations of those occupying these positions, but interviews that Patricia Ingraham and I conducted for the study discussed above (Ban and Ingraham, 1990) made it clear that, while some appointees (particularly those in agencies where a counter-staffing strategy was employed) were true believers who were committed to the president's agenda, many were there for a more personal motive, because they saw this as a smart career move that would help them to build their resume and gain useful knowledge and contacts. What one cannot ascertain from interviews is how often the administration making the appointment is going over the line and actually engaging in quid-pro-quo appointments, i.e., paying back those who supported them by giving them jobs or actually selling jobs, and, from the individual level, how many of those appointed use their position for even more personal reasons, i.e., who are engaging in corrupt behavior that provides direct financial benefits to them, their friends or family, or their party or social group.

Most would agree that appointments for policy reasons are legitimate, although they may entail costs in efficiency and effectiveness. And it is clear that outright corruption is illegal, and that governments should have in place oversight systems to uncover it and should deal firmly with offenders. The challenge is the large gray area in the middle, which would normally be classed as patronage appointments. While such appointments can shade dangerously close to direct pay-offs, they are one of the few resources that political leaders have in order not only to reward supporters but to hold coalitions together and to strengthen political parties (Kopecký et al., 2012). Because the focus of this discussion has been on executive level appointments, I have left out of the discussion patronage in electoral terms, as typically that involves providing lower-level jobs in return for votes, often in clientelistic political systems (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007).

In short, motivation may help us in delineating the extremes, but there is no agreement on what kinds of patronage appointments are considered legitimate. And even if one could reach an

agreement, one would still face the question of how, empirically, to ascertain actual motives, or enforce any use of motivation as a criterion for selection.

7. Conclusions

Finding a way to draw a clear line or to hack a path through the thickets of politicization versus political control is probably not practical. We can probably agree on the extremes, although dealing effectively with corruption (especially at a senior levels) is challenging. As a senior police official in Beijing said at a conference I attended, the police are actively fighting corruption, “but if it is at too high a level, of course, there is nothing we can do.”

Rather than looking for simple formulae for drawing the line, it would be useful to end with a brief summary of the argument on politicization made by Terry Moe (1985:239). Framing the issue within the broad context of the logic of institutional development, Moe asserts that the top political leader (in this case, the president) is driven by political goals but working with constrained political resources and power, as well as structural constraints. In this context, “[h]e is not interested in efficiency or effectiveness or coordination per se, and he does not give preeminence to the ‘neutral competence’ these properties may seem to require....He values organizational competence, to be sure, but what he seeks is ‘responsive competence’...and one of the few formal powers he has, in order to reach that goal, is the appointment power, so “to the extent that he has the freedom to move in this direction, the president will find politicization irresistible” (Moe, 1985: 245).

Rather than bemoaning this reality, Moe places it within the broad context of public administration theory and asserts that “the ethos of public administration has always looked favorably on the bureaucracy...[but] the flip side is a jaundiced view of politics...[which] tends to be seen as a corrupting influence on the integrity and competence of formal organization” (Moe, 1985: 265). He recognizes there are disadvantages to politicization (and to the centralization of control in the hands of the president), but asserts that the focus on the negative effects “ignores the potential contributions of politicization and centralization to responsiveness, innovation, and other components of presidential leadership....It ignores the necessary trade-offs that presidents are forced to make in seeking a working balance between responsiveness and organizational competence” (Moe, 1985: 268). Perhaps, then, in judging the US, CEE countries, and others through the lens of a traditional Weberian model, we are misjudging where the line should be drawn, and we need a broader and more political perspective in order to reach a reasonable balance.

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