

Chapter 15

In Search of the Shadow of the Past: Legacy Explanations and Administrative Reform in Post-Communist East Central Europe

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Legacy explanations have been prominent in studies of democracy and democratisation in post-communist East Central Europe (Ekiert and Hanson 2003; Linz and Stepan 1996).¹ They claim that ‘resource endowments and institutions that precede the choice of democratic institutions have a distinct impact on the observable political process under the new democratic regime’ (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 12-3). The legacy of the past has also played a prominent role in discussions of public administration reform in East Central Europe. In particular, the legacy of the ‘real-existing socialist administration’ (König 1992) has often been identified as an obstacle for successful reforms in the post-communist context.

In the communist system, the organisation and functioning of public administration was largely determined by the status of the communist ruling party as the leading force in state and society. There was basically no distinction between state and society and between state and market (Bunce 1999). The leading role of the party implied the subordination of the rule of

law to the ideological goals of the party (Pakulski 1986). There was no proper distinction between party and state and thus between politics and administration. The ‘over-politicised’ nomenclature system was the main principle of personnel organisation (Goetz and Wollmann 2001; Scherpereel 2004). In the nomenclature system, career progression took place on the basis of political and ideological reliability, and it was the party that selected and/or approved the appointment of officials to the state administration (Csanádi 1997).

Against this background, it is not surprising that in both academic and non-academic discourses communism was ‘the legacy that had to be overcome’ after the transition to democracy. It largely determined the first generation of reforms that the new democratic governments had to implement (Hesse 1993). Privatisation and liberalisation policies redefined the relations between state and market and changed the structure and organisation of public administration as well as the tasks of state officials. The establishment of constitutional democracy meant that the relation between politics and public administration had to be re-defined, that public administration had to be brought under the rule of law, that a sphere of autonomous local self-government had to be carved out and that a professional, de-politicised civil service had to be built on the ruins of the communist nomenclature system.

The legacy of communism is also commonly associated with delays and defects in the process of administrative reform (Nunberg 1999; Verheijen

1999, 2001). The first generation of research assumed that East Central European administrations would undergo a process of gradual Westernisation (Hesse 1998), but the actual reform progress turned out to be much slower than expected. For example, Hungary stood out in adopting civil service legislation between 1990 and 1992, but most other countries only adopted their first laws ten years later. Where laws were adopted, they were not necessarily implemented. The Czech Republic, for instance, adopted a first civil service law in 2002 but has not yet fully implemented the Act. And even where laws have been both adopted and implemented, politicisation and party influence over personnel management have often remained widespread (Dimitrov et al. 2006; Goetz and Wollmann 2001; Meyer-Sahling 2006a).

Civil service politicisation, discretionary personnel management and a discrepancy between formal rules and actual behaviour suggest that, at least in the area of civil service governance, the communist tradition of public administration has not been broken. Yet, we have to be careful to infer a causal effect of the legacy of the past by simply identifying broad similarities between the past and the present. In fact, the logic of legacy explanations suggests that we have to consider at least three steps. First, it is important to specify which legacy of the past matters in the post-communist context, that is, what are the features as well as the temporal boundaries of the historical periods under scrutiny. Second, it is necessary to investigate how the legacy of the past connects to the administrative reform outcomes in present day East Central Europe: what are the causal

mechanisms? And third, legacy explanations require attention to the interaction of the legacy of past with other factors that are temporally more proximate to current administrative reform developments. For East Central Europe, this means in particular the impact of the post-communist politics and the role of European integration.

First, discussions of legacy effects in East Central Europe tend to refer to the impact of some kind of 'ideal' communist legacy that comes closest to the period of Stalinist rule in the 1950s. This perspective ignores, however, that the legacy of the past in East Central Europe is a very multi-faceted beast. It is thus more appropriate to speak about many legacies of the past. First, communist rule itself was not static but changed considerably over time. Forty years of communist rule in East Central Europe can easily be distinguished into three, four and more intervals such as the establishment of communist regimes, the heydays of Stalinist rule in the 1950s, and the long period de-Stalinisation that includes phases of reform and subsequent decay until the breakdown of the regimes (Schöpflin 1994).

Second, the legacy of the past can refer to intervals before and after communist rule in East Central Europe, including the inter-war period and the period before the end of World War I when most of the East Central European countries were part of the Habsburg, Russian, German or Ottoman Empire at one end and the period of transition at the other end. In fact, chapter 16 by Verheijen in this volume suggests that the period leading to EU-accession has the potential to become yet another legacy that

will help to explain post-accession developments (see also Sedelmeier 2006).

This short summary of legacy candidates quickly suggests that the administrative history of East Central Europe differs from most Western settings, in that it is characterised by discontinuities and major ruptures, making the study of legacy effects a good deal more complex. First-glance hypotheses can easily produce contradictory expectations. For instance, Hungary is usually identified as the country that most actively pursued policies to modernise public administration since the 1970s. Emphasis on the late-communist legacy would therefore lead to the expectation that Hungary has been in a good position to professionalise her administration after the change of regime. This contradicts the expectations that the days of heavy-handed Stalinism undermined the prospects of administrative professionalization after transition.

The inter-war and the imperial legacies also suggest first-glance expectations for East Central Europe that do not fit well the cross-national patterning of post-communist civil service developments (see also Verheijen in the next chapter). The administrative tradition of the Habsburg Empire, for instance, suggests a strong role for a professional, autonomous and legally entrenched civil service for countries such as Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia. By contrast, the Russian and the Ottoman administrative traditions resonate more with a patrimonial type of bureaucracy. This would suggest a strong role for patronage relationships

and less emphasis on the legal entrenchment of the civil service in the Baltic States and a country such as Bulgaria. Yet, the ranking of countries presented by Verheijen (see Figures 16.2-7, Chapter 16) suggests that only Bulgaria fits this expectation. By contrast, the Baltic States have gone furthest down the road of professionalizing their civil services, while the Czech Republic is among the main laggards in the region.

Before dismissing legacy arguments about administrative development, however, we need to take the second step in the logic of legacy explanations, that is, to specify the causal mechanisms. Kitschelt (2003: 62) distinguishes between two general types of mechanisms: first, cognitive processes assume that individuals can preserve and pass on their knowledge, skills and experience from one generation to another, which in turn shape political outcomes in the post-communist period; and second, ‘political practices and institutional arrangements’ (see also Yeskilat’s conceptual distinction in Chapter 11 between ideas and institutions as elements of an administrative tradition). Especially, these latter ‘interaction-based’ (Ekiert and Hanson 2003) mechanisms are well known from historical institutionalist research on path dependent developments (Pierson 2004). Distinguishing between these different mechanisms of ‘legacification’ makes it possible to compare the effect of different kinds of legacies on post-communist administrative reform developments.

In the third step, legacy explanations of administrative reform in East Central Europe need to address the potential relevance of other

determinants that are temporally closer than the legacy of the past. In fact, the diversity among civil service systems in East Central Europe suggests that the legacy of the past is unlikely to be the only driver of post-communist reform developments. Moreover, research that has so far sought to account for *variation* in administrative reform trajectories across East Central Europe has focused on factors such as the European Union (Dimitrova 2005) and the structure of party political competition (Grzymala-Busse 2003; Meyer-Sahling 2006b). It is therefore important to investigate alternative explanations and, in particular, to examine potential interaction effects between different determinants (such as the legacy of the past, European integration and domestic political competition) when seeking to explain public administration developments in East Central Europe.

The remainder of this paper explores these general arguments with respect to the case of civil service governance in Hungary. The paper examines first the institutional reforms of the civil service and the reform outcomes with respect to the patterns of politicisation that have emerged at the level of central government ministries since the first democratic elections in 1990. In the second part, the paper discusses in more detail the impact of different legacies of the past on the first civil service reform of 1990/92. Subsequently, the paper turns to a broader discussion of reforms that were passed between 1997 and 2006 in order to examine the extent to which (and how) legacies of the past have retained long-term relevance for civil service governance and how the legacies have interacted with other causal factors.

Civil Service Governance in Post-Communist Hungary

Since the first democratic elections in 1990, Hungary has actively and continuously pursued the reform of her public administration. This is especially true for the reform of the civil service system. During the 1990s, Hungary stood out among East Central European countries as the region's frontrunner in the area of civil service reform. After 1990, at least five major reforms of the civil service can be identified. Each of the reforms was developed in the context of a more or less comprehensive public administration reform programme and each led to a change in the formal-legal basis governing the civil service and the subsequent implementation of legislation.

Hungary passed and implemented the first civil service reform in 1990/92. Already in 1990, shortly after the investiture of the first democratic government, the Act on State Secretaries redefined the structure of the most senior positions and sought to establish a formal separation between politics and administration. The 1992 Civil Service Act established a boundary between civil servants who were employed at the central, regional and local state administration, private sector employees who continued to be governed by the (reformed) Labour Code, and other public servants such as uniformed personnel and public employees in the education and health sectors.

The Act established a personnel management system that looked much like a decentralised, closed career system. Administrative reformers sought to set up an institutional infrastructure with predictable careers, merit standards and procedures for the recruitment of civil servants, promotions by seniority, a transparent and uniform remuneration system, and restrictions on involvement in politics and business. These measures aimed at reducing the potential for political interference with personnel management, while seeking to ensure the professional ethos, political impartiality and neutrality of civil servants (György 1999). At the institutional level, the first reform therefore sought to establish a fundamental break with the communist type administration. Yet, as we will see below, the aims of the first reform were only partially reached.

The subsequent reforms in 1997, 2001, 2003 and 2006 introduced numerous changes but they did not fundamentally transform the building blocks of the civil service system established in 1992.² The second reform of 1997 and the third reform of 2001 both further differentiated the structure of the civil service, for instance, by introducing the possibility to establish ministerial cabinets and by establishing a senior executive service under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Both reforms introduced performance-based elements such as performance-related pay. Moreover, the reform of 2001, which arguably produced the greatest overhaul, further sought to rationalise the recruitment procedure, to strengthen the professional requirements for entry into the civil service and to alter the

career structure by providing more incentives for young graduates to start a civil service career.

The most recent reform that was prepared in the run-up to the 2006 parliamentary elections differs from previous reforms, in that it concentrates on measures to enhance the efficiency of the civil service and, in particular, to reduce the numbers of civil servants by introducing personnel cuts of up to 30 per cent in central government ministries. Reform talk shifted from an emphasis on Weberian principles towards a new public management agenda. The first measures in this set of reforms were implemented in the autumn of 2006. At the senior level, for instance, reforms cut the positions of Political State Secretary (part of the political leadership of the ministries), Administrative and Deputy State Secretaries (nominally, top two levels of the permanent civil service) down to two new positions of Senior State Secretary and State Secretary below the level of Minister. The number of state secretaries has been further restricted by law, but both state secretarial posts have also been made political appointments whose tenure is tied to that of the government. The formal structure of the ministerial top looks more similar to the late communist period than at any time since the investiture of the first democratic government in 1990.

Indeed, politicisation of the civil service has been one of the main features of civil service governance in Hungary, suggesting that the communist practice of personnel management has been stickier than the institutional

foundations. Both the Act on State Secretaries and their successor Acts as well as the Civil Service Act sought to establish a separation between politics and administration, but the laws incorporated a number of discretionary instruments, which ministers could use to politicise civil service policy (Meyer-Sahling 2006a; Vass 2001). As a consequence, four changes of government in 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2002 between centre-right and centre-left coalitions produced in most instances almost a complete substitution of Administrative and Deputy State Secretaries, who were nominally part of the permanent civil service. Moreover, governing parties showed an increasing appetite to replace Heads of Departments at the next level of the ministerial hierarchy.

To be sure, the replacement of top civil servants is not unusual in Western executives such as Germany and France. However, the Hungarian pattern differs, in that it classifies as a ‘mode of partisan politicisation’ (Meyer-Sahling 2007) because a large proportion of outsiders is usually appointed to the senior ranks of the ministerial bureaucracy. Many come from the private sector, academia or have worked for a political party. Moreover, the three government changes of 1994, 1998 and 2002 attracted many outsiders who had worked in the state administration at an earlier stage of their career. These officials left the ministries when ‘their’ party was voted out of office, bridged the out-of-office period somewhere in the private sector, academia, directly at their party or in the wider periphery of their party, and returned to office when their party was voted back into government.

It is worth recalling here that the interweaving of careers in the ministerial bureaucracy, the communist party and in other sectors of the economy and society was one of the hallmarks of communist nomenclature system (Kornai 1992). The confirmation of the Socialist-Liberal government at the 2006 somewhat surprisingly had the result that a considerable proportion of officials (even if smaller than in previous election years) were changed, bringing in younger 'new blood' from the private sector. Advocates of this recruitment policy emphasise the benefits of infusing a younger generation into the ministerial bureaucracy as well as the transfer of business methods from in order to enhance efficiency. Yet, this 'management talk' effectively disguises the continuing politicisation of the civil service in Hungary.

While the politicisation of the civil service has been a major issue of debate in Hungary ever since the transition to democracy, it has to be emphasised that not all areas of the central government ministries are subject to the same patterns of politicisation. In particular, Ministries and units that have been involved in the preparation and negotiations of EU accession and that have since accession been at the centre of the process of EU policy coordination tend to be more stable, more professional and generally less politicised (Ágh 2002).

In sum, while Hungary has been the frontrunner in the area of civil service reform after the transition to democracy, the practice of politicisation has persisted in many areas of the central government apparatus. But we have to be careful not to jump to premature conclusions based on the

identification of some similarities between a general communist past and a broad post-communist present. Taking the case of politicisation, next section will trace and explore the extent to which the legacy can contribute to an explanation of Hungary's status as a reform frontrunner in the region, the content of the institutional reforms and the reform outcomes.

'Goulash Communism' and the First Civil Service Reform in Post-Communist Hungary

Even if the first civil service reform led to the establishment of considerable institutional change, the reform provides evidence for the influence of various legacies of the past as well as for different mechanisms that connect the legacy of the past and the reform outcome. First, the reform discourse at the time commonly identified the communist legacy as the legacy that had to be overcome. Administrative policy-makers as well as the first generation of post-communist politicians had first hand experience of the communist days and rejected the over-politicised communist administration as the 'anti-model' of administration.

At the same time, there were regular references to Hungary's inter-war period as a positive inspiration for reform, even if there seems to be an element of myth-making in the characterisation of the inter-war administration as a professional, de-politicised bureaucracy. The first Prime Minister Antall often associated the notion of a strong civil service with a professional ethos and respect for the rule of law. He was born in 1932 and

had little first-hand experience of the inter-war years but he could rely on the experience passed on to him by his father who was himself a senior-ranking official.

Second, the dynamics of path dependency reaching back into the communist period are important for the explanation of Hungary's status as a regional frontrunner in the area of civil service reform (Meyer-Sahling 2001). From a narrow perspective, the first reform can be traced back to the administrative reform efforts of the early to mid 1980s. From a broad perspective, the reform reaches back further to the economic reforms of the late 1960s. The introduction of market elements into the socialist economy drew increasing attention to the need for managerial, technical and professional skills (Balázs 1993). In this context, the government set up the National School of Public Administration in 1977.

In the 1980s, two attempts were made to modernise the personnel management system. Even the introduction of civil service legislation that would separate state administrative personnel from other employees was discussed. But it took until the last Socialist government led by Prime Minister Németh between 1988 and 1990 for the civil service reform efforts to gain momentum. Németh appointed a number of reform-minded officials to the top ranks of the ministerial bureaucracies, including academics from the National School of Public Administration, to prepare the administrative reforms that would become necessary in the context of the transition to democracy and a market economy. When the Round Table

Talks between the ruling socialist party and the representatives of the democratic opposition parties were convened in 1989, these reform proposals were discussed. After the first democratic elections in the spring of 1990, the Antall government ‘invited’ many of the former top officials to serve as Administrative and Deputy State Secretary in the new government, even though they had been appointed during the late-communist regime. In particular, the first Administrative State Secretary in the Ministry of Interior, Imre Verebélyi, must be credited with the initiative to push forward the reform of the civil service as well as other administrative reforms such as local and regional government reforms. Verebélyi and colleagues had a background at the National School of Public Administration, they had also benefited from the relative openness of the communist regime in Hungary, which provided them with access to Western debates and exchange, and they could therefore rely on a stock of administrative reform expertise that was unusual for East Central Europe at that time.

A civil service reform shortly after the change of regime would not have been possible without the institutional context of a ‘pacted transition’ in Hungary that brought together moderate forces of the communist regime and the democratic opposition (Meyer-Sahling 2004). The Round Table Talks provided an institutional setting for the emergence of mutual trust between, on the one side, officials that had already served the communist regime but had experience as managers in public administration and, on the other, the new political elite. The pacted transition made possible continuity

in personnel in several policy fields and thus the fast-tracking of reforms in areas such as public administration reform.

The communist legacy more generally contributed to many of the flaws in the design of the first civil service reform and the subsequent politicisation of the senior ranks of the ministerial bureaucracy. While Prime Minister Antall represented the moderate wing among the parties of the governing centre-right parties, there were other factions, especially, within the then senior governing party Hungarian Democratic Forum, MDF, that opposed Antall's 'friendly take-over' of the ministerial bureaucracy. These factions carried radical anti-communist ideas and demanded a thorough cleansing of the ministerial bureaucracy. They were able to push for the incorporation of discretionary instruments for the appointment and dismissal of officials into the 1992 Civil Service Act and in this way they succeeded in increasingly alienating the senior officials of the Antall government who had already been in office before 1990.

The first reform of 1990/92 is therefore to a degree the child of the events and dynamics that surrounded the transition to democracy and the attempts to modernise the communist administration in the 1970s and 1980s. Both interaction-based and cognitive 'mechanisms of legacification' were at work. In addition, the impact of the late-communist legacy can hardly be classified as an 'obstacle' or as a 'negative' impact. The more reformist and open communist regime in Hungary contributed to the development of administrative reform expertise; the Round Table Talks and the subsequent

appointment of these administrative reform experts to senior positions in the Ministry of Interior provided the institutional preconditions for the preparation and passage of the first civil service reform; and the legacies of communism and pre-communism shaped the preferences and identities of key political actors in the civil service reform process.

Civil Service Governance and the Indirect Effect of the Communist Legacy

It is not too surprising to find that the late-communist legacy mattered a great deal, because the first civil service reform was temporally very close to the this period. However, Kitschelt (2003) would label the dynamics surrounding the transition period as a 'shallow cause'. Important questions are therefore, first, the extent to which other, non-legacy-related, factors were relevant for the first reform of the civil service and, second, to what extent the legacy of the late-communist past remained an important driver of subsequent reforms and especially outcomes such as the politicisation of the civil service.

Other factors did play their part in the first reform of the civil service. In particular, there was some international influence, in that administrative reformers in Hungary examined Western administrative systems in order to gain inspiration. Many of them had already done so during the 70s and 80s. In 1990, Verebélyi, for instance, travelled as Administrative State Secretary to the UK to learn more about the British civil service as the ideal to

emulate and to Portugal as a country that could provide insights for the specifics of a transition-to-democracy-context.³ Dynamics of policy transfer and diffusion were also relevant for later reforms. For instance, the re-organisation of the Prime Minister's Office in 1998 was inspired by the German Chancellery. Moreover, the active participation of Hungarian administrative policy-makers in the activities offered by OECD-PUMA and the European Institute of Public Administration provided settings for policy learning and diffusion, such as performance-related pay methods.

Second, international influence has also been relevant in the form of pressures to prepare and coordinate the process of European Union accession. In fact, in comparison to other East Central European countries, Hungary has been perhaps least exposed to EU pressures for adaptation in the area of administrative capacity building, which included the requirement to establish professional and de-politicised civil services. In particular, countries that had no civil service law were subject to the logic of conditionality that kicked in after the publication of Agenda 2000 in 1997 by the European Commission (Dimitrova 2005). At that time, Hungary had already a civil service law in place. But the need to invest in the training and professionalization of civil servants and the emergence of new complex implementation and coordination problems meant that European integration has become an increasingly important driver of civil service governance in Hungary (Johannsen and Norgaard 2004).

Third, the civil service reforms since 1997 have otherwise been heavily influenced by day-to-day problems of the transformation process. Among these problems were low pay; few incentives for young graduates to pursue a career in public administration; poor incentives for senior staff; politicisation; high turnover and the resulting problems of motivation, expertise and experience; departmentalism; and strained public finances. All required measures that could not easily be solved by referring to the communist past or the inter-war experience in Hungary. As a consequence, the pre-communist and the communist legacy of the past became somewhat secondary in the search for solutions.

For example, the incorporation of some discretionary pay elements into the first civil service reform of 1992 was the result of senior officials in the economics ministries pushing for salary levels that could match the salary levels in the emerging private sector. However, the application of these discretionary pay instruments became widespread only after 1995 and, in particular, after 1998 when standard civil service salaries had fallen well behind the private sector. Ministers did therefore often use the discretionary pay instruments in order to prevent the departure of staff. In other words, what looks like the persistence of communist-style discretionary civil service governance was in fact related to much more immediate day-to-day problems of adapting to external labour market developments.

Fourth, much of the politicisation of the senior ranks of the civil service has been driven by the constellation of political parties in the Hungarian party

system (Meyer-Sahling 2006b). Among the different political divides, the regime divide over how to deal with the communist past has dominated the structure of political competition since the early 1990s between two blocs of parties: the communist successor party, MSZP, with its liberal ally, SZDSZ, on the one side; and an anti-communist camp on the other side, with the Alliance of Young Democrats, FIDESZ, as the dominant force (Körösenyi 1999). The polarisation of the two political blocs has generated a kind of ‘friend and foe’ thinking in Hungary that makes it very difficult to find meaningful cooperation between them.

The consequence of the low-trust constellations within and outside government has been continuous pressure to replace incumbent officials with trusted personnel after a change of government. As both blocs of parties have developed their organisational infrastructures and their networks, they have created a supply of trusted and skilled personnel from outside administration. As a result, both political camps have succeeded in building their own administrative elite, which they bring to government as they are voted into office. As a by-product of this constellation, parties of both political blocs have also little interest in the establishment of civil service institutions that tie their hands (Meyer-Sahling 2004). In other words, administrative policy-makers have very little room for manoeuvre when trying to increase the professional skill levels of the civil service in the face of partisan pressures of politicisation.

The civil service reforms and outcomes, in particular politicisation of the civil service, can therefore be explained with reference to temporally more proximate factors such as the organisational developments of political parties and the patterns of party competition. But this does not mean that the legacy of the past did not matter for the developments that followed the first civil service reform, because the structure of political competition is itself to a large extent a product of the legacy of the past. First, the very nature of the 'regime divide' is based on the assumption that two political camps disagree over how to interpret the past, i.e. the legacy of communism. The communist legacy has therefore shaped the interests and identities of the key political actors and has played an important cognitive role in shaping their views on civil service governance. This mattered already for the first reform as outlined above and has remained critical ever since.

Second, the electoral system, party strategies and so on all matter a great deal when trying to explain party and party system formation in Hungary (Bakke and Sitter 2004). Yet, features of the communist and even the pre-communist past such as the relatively more open, less repressive, and more reformist character of the Hungarian communist regime (Kitschelt et al. 1999), the 'usable pasts and skills' (Grzymala-Busse 2002) that communist politicians acquired in the last years before and during the period of transition had important legacy effects. These factors contributed to the rapid regeneration of the MSZP and the subsequent emergence of a bipolar structure of political competition between the ex-communist and

anti-communist camps on the centre-left and the centre-right respectively. The resource endowment of key actors and the institutional conditions of the late-communist period have therefore helped to reproduce the politicisation of civil service governance in post-communist Hungary and can therefore be considered as a 'deeper cause' (Kitschelt 2003) for the explanation of civil service governance in present day Hungary.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the relevance of the legacy of the past for the explanation of administrative reform pathways and outcomes in post-communist East Central Europe. It has argued that East Central Europe has numerous different legacies that have the potential to matter for post-communist reforms, that any legacy explanation of administrative reform in East Central Europe is required to spell out the causal mechanisms that link the legacy of the past and the outcomes of the post-communist present, and (as Yeskilgat argues in Chapter 11) that the interaction effects between the legacy of the past and other important drivers of administrative reforms need to be considered.

In sum, the legacy of the past does indeed matter for administrative reforms in East Central Europe. First, formal institutions of civil service governance have been much less resilient to change than the practice of personnel policy, in particular, the politicisation of the senior civil service. Second, the pre-communist legacy but in particular the late communist legacy has

played an important role both for the persisting politicisation of senior personnel management as well as for the institutional reforms in the early 1990s, in particular, Hungary's status as the region's civil service reform frontrunner. The relatively liberal character of the communist regime and the pacted transition provided conditions for the development of reform expertise. They effectively defined which political and administrative actors played an important role during the first reform and shaped the identities and capabilities of the first generation of civil service reformers.

However, the main influence of the communist legacy on patterns of civil service governance in present day Hungary is exercised through the impact of the late communist legacy on the structure of party competition. The legacy of the past has contributed to the polarisation between an ex-communist and an anti-communist political camp in Hungary and continues to shape the identities and orientations of key actors vis-à-vis civil service governance. The legacy of the past does therefore exercise an important, if indirect, influence on the reproduction of politicised patterns of civil service governance in present day Hungary.

These conclusions are not without caveats however. They are based on the cross-temporal study of one country and require further comparative investigation. The mechanism of reproducing civil service politicisation through the structure of party competition has developed in other countries (even if not in all). For instance, in Poland, which is also characterised by deep-seated politicisation of the civil service, events suggest dynamics that

are very similar to Hungary. Despite the political context of martial law, expertise for the reform of public administration had already developed during the 1980s; many of the administrative reform entrepreneurs gained access to government positions during and shortly after the pacted transition of 1989; and the conflict between ex-communist political forces and the anti-communist camp that came out of the Solidarity movement has been one of the defining features of political competition ever since the transition to democracy.

At the same time, there are of course many important differences between Poland and Hungary which help to explain why Poland has had a central civil service office until recently while Hungary has never had one; and why Poland passed its first civil service act only in 1996, failed to implement it and adopted a revised act in 1998. One of these differences concerns a higher degree of government instability in Poland, which led to the failure to pass the first civil service reform by parliament in 1993.

Looking elsewhere, countries such as Romania and Bulgaria had less of an opportunity to leverage the reform initiatives during the late-communist regime, which may well explain their status as civil service reform latecomers in the region. Yet in these two countries as well, high levels of politically motivated turnover and tight political control of personnel management can be traced to the divide between former communists and anti-communist political forces that has dominated political competition.

By contrast, the competition between former communists and an anti-communist political camp has been much less relevant for the Baltic States. The key mechanism for the reproduction of communist-style civil service politicisation that has been identified in this chapter has therefore been largely absent. In fact, Lithuania stands out among the three Baltic States, in that the regime divide between ex-communists and anti-communists only faded during the late 1990s. This political change was soon followed by a significant shift towards the de-politicisation of the civil service. The Baltic States therefore suggest that it is possible to break the communist legacy of civil service politicisation when the mechanisms of reproduction disappear.

The last example also draws special attention to the transformative power of the EU. The exclusion of Latvia and Lithuania from the first round of countries to open negotiations for membership with the EU in 1999, for instance, is said to have created new impetus for administrative reforms in these countries (Reinholde 2004). But it is also conceivable that EU enlargement policy affected the patterns of political competition. It may have thus contributed to a break of the mechanisms for the reproduction of civil service politicisation and has sent a country like Lithuania down another path for the development of the civil service.

The relation between Europeanisation and legacy explanations of public administration developments will therefore require further research efforts. In fact, it is worth recalling here that the importance of external influences on domestic developments can be identified as one of the constants in the

history of East Central Europe (Janos 2000). One of the paradoxes of public administration developments in East Central Europe is therefore that the growing Europeanisation of East Central European administrations could even be regarded as a good fit for a legacy explanation of public administration developments in post-communist East Central Europe.

Finally, the discussion of administrative traditions in this volume indicates that features such as the politicisation of civil service governance are not reserved for East Central European countries. In fact, political influence on civil service management has been on the rise in many Western settings over the last two to three decades (see discussion by Peters in chapter 9 and Peters and Pierre (2004)). Potentially an associated trend in some cases is the rise of the ‘cartel party’ in Western democracies (Katz and Mair 1995). Cartel parties anchor themselves in the state apparatus and deploy party patronage in the form of party political appointments (Kopecky and Mair 2006).

For the present context, the Western perspective implies that the presence of the communist legacy as well as other types of legacies such as the Russian administrative tradition cannot be classified as necessary conditions for civil service politicisation, unless we assume that patterns of politicisation in East Central Europe differ from their counterparts in Western democracies. The pattern of ‘partisan politicisation’ discussed above for the Hungarian case suggests that East Central Europe may have indeed given birth to some new type of executive governance that differs

from most Western traditions (Goetz and Wollmann 2001; Meyer-Sahling 2007). By contrast, the civil service record of other countries such as the Baltic States suggests an emerging overlap between the reform experience of Western countries and at least some East Central European countries. For further developments in the area of legacy explanations of administrative reform developments, it may therefore really be time to bridge the gap between the studies of Western democracies on the one side and the new democracies of East Central Europe on the other.

¹ 'Post-communist East Central Europe' is here politically defined as the ten countries that have recently joined the European Union.

² The Civil Service Act was also amended in 2002 and in 2005. Both amendments largely belong to the context of the fourth reform that was passed in 2003.

³ After return, Verebélyi concluded that the Portuguese system and experience would not be applicable to Hungary.