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## Introduction to the Special Issue: Islamic Public Administration: First Explorations in the former Second World (and other Regions)

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## Preface

*Abdillah Noh, Wolfgang Drechsler, Rustamjon Urinboyev*

The current issue of *Administrative Culture* is the first publication of the new NISPAcee working group (WG) on "Islamic Public Administration" (PA), which the co-editors co-chair. The introductory article by Drechsler *infra* explains in detail how we see, and conceive addressing, the topic of Islamic PA; therefore, suffice it here to point there and to briefly explain what is contained in the pages that follow.

Prompted by Drechsler's contribution to the NISPAcee 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary annual conference in 2012 in Ohrid, Macedonia, subsequently published in the *Festschrift*, where he called Islamic PA "the missing dimension of NISPAcee research" (Drechsler 2013), we were asked by the organization's president and executive director to explore the option of forming a WG on this topic – first, as a panel, and after that, as a formal WG. The panel took place at the annual conference in May 2014 in Budapest, Hungary; the next meeting of the WG will be at the one from 21 to 23 May in Tbilisi, Georgia.

For an exploratory workshop with an unusual topic, both the papers presented and the discussions in Budapest were very satisfactory. About half of them were accepted for publication in *Administrative Culture*. Within the NISPAcee region, roughly congruent with the former "Second World", they cover two of the three historically Muslim-majority areas: The Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey (Drechsler, Deligöz) and Central Asia (Klebleyev, Urinboyev); two essays go beyond that region and address Southeast Asia (Abdillah Noh) and the Gulf States (Samier). Unfortunately, the Western Balkans are missing. While this is understandable precisely through the framework of the WG (the Muslim-majority countries there are very secular, and the PA elite is focusing even more than usual on Westernization and Europeanization, which is also their own competitive advantage), this also means that there is a special need for such studies, *a fortiori* due to the tensions there. We hope to have ameliorated this problem already by the time of the conference in Tbilisi; meanwhile, the absence of a piece may serve as an indicator, as a "dog that did not bark in the night."

After the aforementioned introductory essay by Drechsler, the two articles that follow deal with the PA development in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, where Islamic PA legacy was deployed by the ruling powers as a means of state legitimation and for maintaining political stability during the transition period. Analyzing the literature

on the national ideology of Uzbekistan, Klebleyev argues that the Islamic legacy was used in Uzbekistan in order to fill the ideological gap that emerged in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Hence, Klebleyev's essay provides insights when trying to understand how the Islamic legacy is perceived and deployed at the central (macro-)level in Uzbekistan, whereas the essay by Urinboyev, through ethnographic study of everyday mahalla life in rural Ferghana, examines how these macro-level policies are reflected, renegotiated and reconstructed at the local arenas. Urinboyev's essay shows that mahalla, a community-based governance structure originating from Central Asia's Islamic past and administrative traditions, has become an institutionalized feature of Uzbekistan's PA and now partly operates on behalf of the state and increasingly as an informal welfare structure, acting as a pseudo-local-government entity, given the deficits of the existing structures to secure the basic needs of its citizens.

The essay by Deligöz describes the development and legacy of Ottoman-era *vakıf* institutions in order to better understand the continuities and relevance of this Islamic welfare structure within the contemporary social-policy-making framework in Turkey. In so doing, he compares and contrasts the *vakıf* institutions with the post-2001-crisis social-policy paradigm in Turkey, i.e. social-support policies of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). As Deligöz describes it, the legacy of *vakıf* has been used by AKP as a means to address the economic vulnerability of the fragile social classes. However, Deligöz concludes that the *vakıf* institutions cannot provide credible commitment for social insurance during the economic depressions, partially due to the historical arms-length relation with the state, although the quality of political commitment to the lower-income groups has strengthened over the last decade.

Finally, there are the two articles addressing Islam and PA as practiced in parts of the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The article by Abdillah Noh describes how Islam has become an embedded feature of state administration in Malaysia but with qualifications. He describes that the incorporation of Islamic values in Malaysia needs to negotiate traditional Malay customary rights and an increasingly plural and complex Malaysian society. Abdillah argues that the state has deftly dealt with these constraints by choosing a more subtle option of making Islamic behavior readily achievable by invoking a moderation ethos that is more palatable to a plural society instead of legislating Islamic behavior and punishing non-conformance. Eugenie Samier, in conclusion, looks at the issue of Islamic PA from a higher-education perspective, discussing in some detail what a graduate PA curriculum that incorporates this perspective should look like. She does this specifically for Islamic Arab states, particularly the United Arab Emirates, both on the theoretical level – how should curricula like these be shaped anyway, and how have current approaches fared so far? – and on that of specific courses and their content.

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editors would like to thank Ingbert Edenhofer and Andreas Sepp for their editorial assistance and the anonymous referees for reviewing the essays. This issue is just a start, but we do hope that it is an interesting and inspiring one, and we look forward to many multi-faceted further contributions to the discussion of Islamic PA, within and without the “second world”.

#### REFERENCE

- Drechsler, W. 2013. “‘Islamic’ Public Administration: The Missing Dimension in NISPAcee Public Administration Research?” In M. Vintar et al. (eds). *The Past, Present and Future of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe: Twenty Years of NISPAcee, 1992-2012*. Bratislava: NISPAcee Press, 57-76.