The 1998 administrative reforms in China provide a pregnant context for comparative analysis of the "reinventing government" movement. Described in some detail, the reforms are compared with the recent administrative reform experience in the United States. Significant similarities are illuminated using the prisms of ideology, politics, history, bureaucracy, and economics. Insight emerges on the role of experience, leadership, and technical-political expertise in administrative development. The analysis concludes that the art and science of global public administration can be advanced through increased comparative analysis of non-Western developing systems with the more developed Western administrative states.

REINVENTING GOVERNMENT IN CHINA A Comparative Analysis

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In a foundation-setting piece for the study of Chinese public administration, Worthley (1984) argued that similarities with the development of American public administration were and would continue to be a prominent feature of China's administrative development. This comparative perspective has been pursued with insight over the years, notably in Mills and Nagel (1993), Burns (1987, 1994), and Tsao and Worthley (1995, 1996).

The current reform in Chinese public administration—an effort we will contend is aptly described as a "reinventing government" phenomenon—offers another significant opportunity for comparative study toward pushing our margin of understanding how administrative systems develop. Drawing from our on-scene research in China during the 1997-1998 reform activities, this article describes the major elements of the current Chinese administrative reforms, analyzes them in the context of reinventing government theory, and compares them to the reinventing government reforms in American public administration spanning the Reagan and Clinton regimes.

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CURRENT CHINESE REFORMS

Chinese President Jiang Zemin (1997) set the stage for reinventing Chinese government in his September 1997 report to the 15th National Congress of the Communist Party of the People's Republic:

In accordance with the requirements of a socialist market economy we need to alter the functions of the government and separate them from those of enterprises so that enterprises will be truly given the power with regard to production, operation and management. Following the principle of simplification, uniformity and efficiency in the reform, we shall establish a highly efficient, well-coordinated and standardized administrative system, with a view to improving its service to the people. The departments in charge of comprehensive economic management should shift their functions to macroeconomic control, and specialized economic departments should be reorganized or reduced. We shall improve the work of departments supervising law enforcement and cultivate and expand social intermediary organizations. We shall deepen the reform of the administrative system, statutorily delimiting the structures, functions, sizes and working procedures of the state organs and ensuring that their sizes are kept within authorized limits and their redundant personnel are reduced. (p. 34)

This report suggested the general direction and principles of reform, namely, privatizing enterprises, streamlining government organizations, and downsizing staff. The National People's Congress (China's legislative body), in March 1998, took several measures to implement these principles ("News Reports," 1998c; 1998d, p. A12). First, 11 of the 40 ministries and departments of the State Council were to be eliminated. Second, half of the 32,000 civil servants with the State Council would be transferred or discharged. One million central and local government civil servant positions were to be cut within 3 years.

Third, 15 commissions and departments previously responsible for managing the economy were to be abolished. They were products of the Soviet model planned economy designed to manage the economy in minute detail as well as to set targets and quotas for business enterprises. Other units involved in economic management were to be downgraded from commission and ministry status to departmental status. Their powers and functions were to be significantly curtailed and limited to three major missions: (a) macromanagement, (b) guidance in structuring industry, and (c) facilitation of fair competition within business sectors. They were specifically prohibited from intervening in the direct management of enterprises. Fourth, the hierarchical status of ministries and commissions would be modified to better conform with international norms. Traditionally, in China, the more important state offices were named commissions, the highest hierarchical level in the State Council, with ministry, department, and bureau following in importance. Reflective of international practice, the most important offices would now be called ministries, followed by commissions, departments, and bureaus.

Fifth, the formerly powerful State Planning Commission, which had micromanaged the economy since the 1950s, would be redesignated as the State Development Planning Commission with responsibility only for macromanagement functions of regulation, long-term development planning, and maintenance of general economic equilibrium. Market forces, not administration mechanisms, were to guide economic planning.

Sixth, the Organization Laws of the State Council, a product of the 1950s, would be revised to provide for more flexibility in regulation. Furthermore, the Organization Laws of the Localities would also be revised to give localities more discretion in implementing central government policies, including those related to economic planning.

Seventh, local governments were directed to streamline and downsize emphasizing macro- rather than micromanagement—along the lines of the central government but to do so based on local conditions. Economic and industrial departments of the local governments were to be abolished as soon as feasible in line with the principle of deference to market forces. But differentiation and regional variation would be allowed in the process. Central and Western China, for example, where marketization and development have been slower, would implement the reforms over a longer term (Qian, 1998, pp. 4-5).

EVOLUTIONARY CONTEXT

This rather bold revamping effort has evolved and crystallized over many years and was sparked by Deng Xiaoping (1984). During the period when President Reagan was articulating similar concepts in the United States, Deng presented an ideological basis for what has ensued:

Streamlining organizations is a matter of great importance. In fact, it constitutes a revolution. If we fail to carry out this revolution, if we let the present over-staffed and overlapping party and state organizations stay as they are without clearly defined duties and with many incompetent, irresponsible, lethargic, under-educated and inefficient staff members—we ourselves will not feel satisfied and we will not have the support of the lower cadres, much less of the people. (p. 374)

After succeeding Chairman Mao, Deng had first restored the institutions and organizations that existed prior to the Cultural Revolution (Tsou, 1986). As he instituted economic reforms, the old structures were found lacking. Accordingly, new organizations and departments-such as the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Commission on the Management of Export and Import, and the Commission on the Management of Foreign Investment—were established to deal with rapidly developing external affairs. During 1978 and 1979, 38 new departments and units emerged within the State Council. By 1981, there were more than 100 organizations of the State Council, the highest number in history (Zhang, 1994, pp. 88-89). The following year a major administrative reform was undertaken (Worthley, 1984). The 100 commissions, ministries, departments, and bureaus of the State Council were reduced to 61. The State Council civil service was to be reduced from 50,000 to 40,000 staff members. Measures were taken to increase the professionalism of public administrators, such as increasing from 37% to 52% the number with college education and establishing a retirement system.

In 1988, a second major reform was attempted with an emphasis on functional changes, delegation of power to localities, organization streamlining, and macroregulation of the economy (Wang, 1998b, pp. 101-108; Zhang, 1994, p. 102). New departments and ministries were established toward these functional changes, notably the Ministry of Supervision and Audit and the Ministry of Personnel, which was specifically charged with developing, promoting, and introducing civil service reform. Because of the Tienanmen Square episode, the fall of Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, and fall-out from the Soviet block transformation, this reform effort barely got off the ground.

By 1992, Deng was able to push the reform margin again. In October, when the Party Congress convened in Beijing, the concept of socialist market economy was used as a guiding principle for administrative reform. Under this notion, free-market efficiency values are combined with strong political controls. Twenty-seven ministries and departments were eliminated, including 7 specialized economic departments. Renewed emphasis was put on developing consensus toward streamlining, staff reduction, and macro- rather than micromanagement (Zhang, 1994, pp. 115-116). Finally, in 1993, major civil service reform—stressing professionalization—was instituted (Burns, 1994; Chow, 1993; Liou, 1997; Tsao & Worthley,

1995). A key feature was reintroduction of civil service exams in recruitment. This, then, set the stage for the landmark reforms of 1998.

Notable in this nearly two decade long reform period is the rather brief interval between major reform thrusts and the cycle of expansion-reduction-expansion-reduction that characterizes it (Tsao, 1993). By the end of 1981, Deng's reforms had expanded the administrative branch to 100 government organizations. The 1982 reforms reduced it to 61. But by 1988, the bureaucracy had expanded again to 65 units, then to 86 by 1992, whereupon the 1993 reform reduced it to 59. The current reform brings it down to 29, finally without an expansion intervening. Evident in this is an incremental, stop-and-go process—apparently based on learning experiences in the process—with a net result of very substantial change in government administration.

Of further note is the set of strategies employed by the Chinese in bringing about this significant change. First, rather than abolishing certain government units, the current effort simply downgrades them by reducing their functions, limiting their staff size, and changing their hierarchical status from commission to department, or department to bureau. Gradual rather than abrupt change was embraced.

Second, staff reductions are handled in an ease out rather than elimination fashion. Most civil servants will not lose employment. Either they will be assigned to a lower rank or, after training, to a position in the private sector. Significantly, specific provision was made such that even those who end up with no job retain their base salary or receive unemployment insurance ("News Reports," 1998a, p. A11; Xin, 1998). Stability was consciously sought in this process.

Third, intense bargaining and negotiation characterized the process. This focused on the expected resistance from the "old guard" whose vested interests—both political and economic—favor a status quo. Confronting this head-on, the new premier, Zhu Rongji, personally held discussions with more than 60 leading officials affected by the changes, giving them both political assurances and economic incentives ("News Reports," 1998b, p. A12; Song, 1999, p. 18). Consensus and stability were sought and mechanisms were provided for a gradual, nonthreatening, and protective process. Trade-offs included short-term financial outlays in exchange for long-term gains in administrative and economic development. For example, the Ministry of Communication has instituted retraining programs for its laid-off civil servants, and the China Aerospace Industrial Corporation is establishing a fund of 40 million Chinese yuan to support laid-off employees ("News Reports," 1998e, p. A15).

Furthermore, possible concessions toward political development seem to have been exchanged in favor of administrative and economic reform concessions, perhaps as a short-term strategy for dealing with resistance to systemic change.

THE REINVENTING GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

Is the Chinese reform activity properly described as consistent with the reinventing government movement? This movement, in Kamensky's (1996) estimation, "seems to have evolved during the past 10 to 15 years, largely among practitioners of public administration in different places in the world but with many similar tenets" (p. 248). Those tenets, whether articulated in New Zealand (Boston, 1991), America (Wilson, 1994), or Denmark (Schwartz, 1994), closely resemble the concepts of public choice theory (Savas, 1987). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (1995) and Osborne and Gaebler (1992) suggest that the movement originated simultaneously in the early 1980s as part of national efforts to reposition economies in the face of increased global competition and as strategies for coping with budgetary cutbacks. Whether referred to as reinventing government or as the new public management (Hood, 1994; Kaboolian, 1998), and whether studied in Australasia (Boston, 1991) or America (Lan & Rosenbloom, 1992), the following basic principles characterize this movement.

First, the development of professional management skills is emphasized. Both the stress on college education beginning with the 1982 reform and the establishment of a merit system with the 1993 reform suggest China's embrace of this principle. Second, privatization, contracting out, and competition are preferred over government administration (Nagel, 1997). The current reform in China has continued the major effort at privatizing previously governmental enterprises.

Third, separation of commercial from noncommercial functions, and of policy advice from policy implementation, is sought (Light, 1997). The Chinese reforms have specifically emphasized this principle. Direct control of commercial companies by various ministries is to cease. Even the army is being banned from commercial activities that have been a major source of revenue for the soldiers ("News Report," 1998, p. 1; Xu & Xu, 1997).

Forth, cost-cutting, efficiency, and cut-back management are made hallmarks. From Deng's 1982 admonition to reduction measures in the

current reform, adherence to this principle is evident. Deng (1984) rather dramatically emphasized, "If we don't carry out this revolution [stream-lining government] . . . not only will the four modernizations fail but the Party and the state will face a mortal trial and perhaps perish" (p. 375).

Fifth, the focus on red tape shifts to a focus on results. China's reformers have emphasized this principle frequently. Indicators of performance have been simplified and focused on total cost and output and workers' wages related to performance (Xu & Xu, 1997, pp. 170-180; Yang, 1997, pp. 30-39).

Sixth, reinvention stresses strategic political considerations reflecting internal power struggles between different groups with conflicting interests in the bureaucracy. Over the past 20 years, the power struggles in China between hard-liners and reformers have been manifest, Tienanmen Square being the most notorious episode (Lieberthal & Oksenberg, 1988).

Seventh, reinvention focuses on reform, not merely on restructuring. Although the reforms of 1982 were largely structural in China, the current reforms represent more of the revolution called for by Deng in his 1982 speech in that they address the vested interests of senior officials and organizations (Liu, 1998, pp. 65-122; Shao, 1998, pp. 15-17; Wang, 1998a, pp. 78-79).

Eighth, reinvention entails attention to several types of change: (a) culture—changes involving underlying values, assumptions, attitudes, and expectations; (b) mission—changes in systematically identifying and planning core activities and responsibilities; (c) structure—changes to arrange organizational authority and work responsibilities more efficiently; and (d) process—changes focused on how services and products are produced and delivered. In each of these areas of change, China has made significant efforts (Fang & Zhu, 1994, pp. 28-36; Xu & Xu, 1997, pp. 152-188; Zhang, 1994).

As much as any country's efforts, China's administrative reform efforts consistently reflect reinventing government ideas and principles.

AMERICA'S REINVENTION EXPERIENCE

Although there have been 11 major studies of government reorganization in the United States during this century, the current reinventing government focus can be traced to President Reagan and the Grace Commission of the early 1980s. This was at the same time that Deng (1984) was calling for an administrative revolution in China. Just as China's 1982 reform effort staggered, so too most of the Grace Commission's 2,478 reform recommendations were not implemented. But the spark for change, ignited by Reagan and fueled by President Bush and the Volcker Commission (Volcker, 1989), prevailed, resulting in the National Performance Review (NPR) initiative under President Clinton.

Shortly after taking office, Clinton appointed Vice President Gore to lead an investigation of ways to reduce waste in government, to make it less expensive and more efficient, and to change its culture from complacency and entitlement to initiative and empowerment (Guy, 1997, p. 114). The resulting report, *Creating a Government That Works Better and Costs Less* (Gore, 1993), specifies altering systems, redesigning structures, instilling new values, and changing work habits (p. 44).

Remarkably similar to words used at the 1998 People's Congress in China, the Gore report, as Guy (1997) puts it, "is a significant diversion . . . [that] implies a lean leadership role—a role of setting the stage for market forces to drive government initiatives" (p. 115). In Gore's (1993) words,

Governance means setting priorities, then using the federal government's immense power to steer what happens in the private sector. Governance can take many forms: setting regulations, providing financial incentives, or ensuring the consumers have the information they need to drive the market. (p. 3)

Within months of publication of this report, several measures were pursued by Congress and/or the president: First, a plan was mandated to reduce the size of the federal workforce by 12% over 5 years. Second, the Office of Personnel Management abolished the 10,000-page *Federal Personnel Manual*. Third, several departments announced the closure of surplus field and regional offices. Fourth, initiatives to streamline the budgetary process began. Fifth, efforts to eliminate needless regulations began. Sixth, efforts to reduce red tape for state and local government relations with federal agencies were instituted.

Notable in this American effort is the central role played by career administrators in formulating the Gore report, unlike previous government reform studies that were dominated by business executives. Of further note is the political consensus that developed between a Republican Congress and a Democratic presidency. The agenda first articulated and refined over the previous 12 years by the Republicans Reagan and Bush was now largely being espoused by the Democrat Clinton.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Although comparative public administration has long been appreciated, its significance and scope have been limited. Ferrel Heady (1995) has correctly observed that comparative analysis has been largely restricted to bureaucracies operating within similar political, economic, and social contexts, "The comparisons that are made are almost completely limited to . . . Western industrialized democracies" (p. 54). Non-Western experiences have been little pursued. In Farazmand's (1994) view, this myopia is all the more serious because of the emergence of a global public administration:

The emerging global public administration is based on a number of structural adjustments or readjustments that have been taking place around the globe. These readjustments have been in the forms of redefining the scope and boundaries of public and private sectors, of administrative reforms, of civil service reforms, of organizational reconfiguration and restructuring, and many more. (p. 81)

His observation is well sustained by our review of the reinvention movement in the United States and China. Our analysis, therefore—embryonic though it may be—subscribes to the convincing argument recently put forth by Welch and Wong (1998) that, given the globalization phenomenon, studies bridging the West with the East are essential to the development of the field of public administration.

A comparison of the Chinese and American experiences with reinventing government yields some salient material for further research and theory development. The following several areas in particular seem ripe for probing:

Ideology and values. What is the significance of ideology and value systems to reinvention efforts? During a recent tour of Asia, Gaebler (1997), coauthor of *Reinventing Government* (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), observed, "The value systems of societies around the world have changed" (p. 68). In the case of both China and the United States the role of changed values in government reform is striking. In the United States, the liberal ideology of big government, which perhaps peaked during the Johnson administration, certainly faded with the impact of Ronald Reagan. By the time of Clinton's inauguration, even the Democrats were embracing the conservative values of leaner government. In China, on the other hand, the conservative hard-line ideologues—tied to the big government of

the planned economy—resisted Deng's early efforts at reform. The socialist market economy sobriquet represented the gradual transition in values that preceded the current major reforms. Indeed, the demotion of the conservative Li Peng and election of the liberal Zhu Rongji at the 1998 People's Congress signifies the shift that supported the 1998 reform.

Relatedly, the rise of a popular antigovernment ideology seems to have preceded the reinvention movement in both countries. Guy (1997), in her analysis of American reinvention efforts, notes that Americans "love to hate" (p. 124) their government, suggesting a connection to downsizing measures. In China, a similar antigovernment ideology seems to have developed (Tsao & Worthley, 1996; Shi, 1997, p. 17; Xin, 1997, p. 11; Zhongyang, 1996, p. 119). Reinvention efforts in other countries may indeed depend on similar ideological changes.

Political foundations. How important is politics to reinventing government administration? Lynn (1998) has recently stressed the significance of probing this question. In development administration literature, generally the correlation between political and administrative development has long been recognized and argued (Braibanti, 1969; Heaphey, 1971; La-Palombara, 1963; Riggs, 1970), but with respect to the reinventing government movement specifically, Gargan (1997) is direct: "Within a regime, the relationship between management practices and political variables is causal and the causal order is from political to management" (p. 231). Therefore, he argues with regard to reinventing government in America, "The long-term routinization of NPR [reinvention] reforms is obviously contingent upon the strength of the political management causal linkage and the commitment of future administrations" (p. 231). The case of China would tend to confirm this contention. Over the years, the experience there supports Gargan's conclusion that "the stature of the management practices and administrative structural arrangements . . . is determined by prevailing political regimes and the associated attitudes and ideologies of those holding power" (p. 231). More controversial is the role of the politics of democracy specifically in reinvention efforts. Vice President Gore's (1993) report makes a profoundly significant distinction between citizen and customer, the former being someone with a right to participate in democratic decision making and the latter being someone who receives benefits from services. The reinventing government movement in general stresses the concept of customer and so is not threatening to the Communist Party political regime of China. But Schachter (1997) convincingly argues that "structural change alone will never guarantee effective government" (p. 89). Citizen involvement, she contends, is critical. Tomlinson's (1999) analysis of the Chinese reform concurs. He contends that a key cause of the difficulty facing the new reform effort is the government's failure to fully embrace "the logic of the market," which entails political change as well as structural adjustments. As discussed above, delaying consideration of any political development measures seems to have been a strategy for overcoming resistance to administrative and economic reforms in China. A significant question, then, is whether that logic of the market—unleashed in China with the help of political control concessions—will, in due time, lead to political development as well. Continuing comparative analysis of the American and Chinese experiences in this regard will be instructive.

Economics. Are economic forces the real cause and determinant of the reinvention movement? Contrary to the political foundations argument of Gargan, above, is the causal order rather from economics to politics to management? The American case might appear to support an affirmative answer more than does the Chinese experience. Tsao and Worthley (1995) have argued that interplay between economics and politics-rather than economic determinism-has been a key to the Chinese administrative reforms. For example, China's current campaign for membership in the World Trade Organization has a clear economic agenda, but it also has significant political implications involving increased openness and momentum for the reform movement. Kamensky (1996) and Schwartz (1994) analyze the Western experience as more based in the economy. Kamensky (1996) emphasizes the "massive change underway in the structure of the economy" (p. 117); Schwartz goes further, saying, "The old administrative state is likely to lose further ground to the market-driven state" (p. 73). Supporting this critique, one congressman (Oberstar, 1994) sees the movement as "not reinventing government but abandoning government" (p. 8).

On the other hand, an empirical study of recent state government reforms in the United States (Brudney, Hebert, & Wright, 1999) strongly supports Chackarian's (1996) theory that economic contraction drives administrative reform and economic expansion inhibits it. Over the next few years, the China case will offer interesting experience for testing this theory. At any rate, evidence suggests that the reinvention movement in both China and America has merged economics, politics, and administration in new ways and that a significant research opportunity exists in this area.

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Historical forces. Is the reinvention movement more a product of broad historical forces that are global in nature rather than a result of narrower economic-political forces specifically? Carroll (1996) poses this question with conviction. Citing the end to the cold war, the growth of the global economy, developments in information technology, popular dissatisfaction with government, corporate restructuring, and other developments, he asks, "Is reinvention a reaction to trends and events . . . or is it at best a jumble of ideas and impulses expressing uncertainty and confusion as the United States moves from one era to another?" (p. 246). Our analysis of China and America suggests that reinvention has certainly been more than a "jumble of ideas." Carroll's answer: "Events will define reinvention as much as reinvention will define events" (p. 246). Supporting this contention is the recent Asian economic downturn that has reinforced Premier Zhu's contention that continued institutional reform is needed to better position China for future regional and global developments.

A narrower historical question with significant comparative implications concerns individual country characteristics, culture, and experience. Both China and America have had a significant history of government reform evolution. But, China's ancient feudal and imperial history certainly contrasts with the more recent democratic tradition of the United States and may be an important explanatory factor in applying the "logic of the market" notion. In addition, the sheer size of the populace to be governed in China (nearly six times that of the United States!) must be recognized in any comparative analysis.

Organizational realities. Finally, are organizational imperatives at the heart of the matter? Can reinvention really change the way that governmental bureaucracies—whether in China or America—operate? Kaufman (1994) is not optimistic. "Bureaucracies are stubborn creatures, with personalities and habits of their own. And while they may jump through a few hoops to please their newest political masters . . . reinvention can polish the surface without touching the soul" (p. 20). Mary Guy (1997) is equally reserved,

Organizational culture, like a stretched rubber band, returns to its original shape when the tension is released.... The transition from rhetoric to reality will be problematic because it involves a culture shift away from that which is familiar to a condition that has yet to be experienced. (p. 122)

Kamensky (1996), on the other hand, is more positive,

Conventional wisdom has long suggested that governmental reform is undertaken largely as a political symbol. But there is a difference between reinvention and the traditional restructuring approach to reform. The former focuses on incentives, the latter on structure. (p. 248)

It is yet to be seen whether the new market-like incentives in China and the United States will prevail over organizational momentum.

LESSONS

Efforts by practitioners to reinvent government in both America and China have been considerable, as have country-specific studies by scholars to harvest wisdom from this experience. Our initial foray into comparative analysis can, therefore, only begin to tap the insights that are ripe for picking. Of the many lessons that can be derived from comparative analysis of this phenomenon, three are particularly salient in our survey. First, as with change in any context, reinventing government takes time and failures and seems to be decidedly nonlinear. The reinvention efforts in America and China have been partially successful. Partial success as an objective is the lesson. Reinvention of government should be seen as a journey, a long journey, because it involves developing a different mindset and modus operandi. As Guy (1997) maintains, "Small improvements are better than none, and one does not turn around the ship of state on a dime" (p. 134). Many efforts over many years have characterized the reinvention experience of both China and the United States, and both have partially changed their government administration. Gregory's (1999) brilliant study of reinvention in New Zealand suggests that partial success also requires adjustments: He argues that efficiency gains need to be tempered with public service concerns over time if genuine administrative reform is to be realized.

A corollary of this is the lesson of patience, which perhaps the Chinese have learned better than the Americans. China, for example, in a measure of considerable, inefficient patience, decided to continue the salaries of downsized government bureaucrats ("Report," 1998, p. 8). In the United States, typically, agencies have been ordered to rush streamlining (Shoop, 1994).

Second, leadership is essential. The parallel between China and America in their reinvention movements is illuminating. Both countries had inspiration from a charismatic leader—Deng in China, Reagan in the United States. Both countries had a politically committed executive pushing the cause—Jiang in China, Clinton in the United States. Both countries had a high-level director of reinvention program development—Zhu in China, Gore in the United States. The role of such pervasive leadership should not be underestimated in reform efforts. Hennessey's (1998) federal government research supports this contention with regard to the United States. A similar study in China might be illuminating.

Third, a rich combination of political and technical expertise is key. Goodsell's observation (1993) about America applies similarly to China: "Governmental reform is obviously not just a technical exercise. It is preeminently a political act" (p. 8). Both countries employed the expertise of in-house career public administrators as well as outside management experts in designing their reinvention measures; both countries exercised strong political leadership and made major efforts at development of political consensus.

Clearly, extensive further research is warranted. Consistent with the contentions of Kaboolian (1998), Lynn (1998), Khademian (1998), and others, our study is grounded in the suggestion that comparative analysis of these two major administrative states offers fertile territory for advancing the art and science of global public administration.

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