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Introduction to the Special Symposium Issue on Public Administration in Russia

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Writing and publishing about Russian public administration (PA) and public policy is a big challenging task, a task that takes time, deep and comprehensive knowledge of the country with a span of over a thousand years, as well as of the highly complex systems of institutional and governance arrangements, plus the deep cultural and socioeconomic features so unique and ubiquitous to Russia. Unless one knows and considers fairly well the depth beneath the surface, writing would become sketchy and superficial. Russia is the largest country in the world with a long political history, eleven time zones stretching from the West in Europe to Far East next to Alaska and Japan, virtually half the world in the Northern hemisphere, extreme cultural and ethnic diversities as well as climatic conditions, and a wealth of natural assets and highly educated human resources. And as a world military superpower, it is also a resurging, and growing economic and political power with a veto power at the United Nations Security Council. Modern public administration (PA) as studied and developed in the West, however, is fairly new to post-Soviet Russian governance system, and takes time to be totally digested and institutionalized as such.

This Special issue on Russia was conceived after the Editor-in-Chief of IJPA, Professor Ali Farazmand had visited Russia as an honorary-guest presenter for the April Conference at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow and then lectured at Lomonosov Moscow State University in 2016. Dr. Farazmand saw the opportunity to present research on public administration in Russia to the world. Publications on Russian PA do not frequent in English language journals and are predominantly written by those who emigrated from the country long time ago. Yet, it is important to expose the peculiarities of Russian government administration to expand the borders of PA as a field of study and practice. As noted above, Russia has many ubiquitous characteristics with regard to its

history, territory, climate, and multiethnic populations. All these features complicate administration of public services in the welcoming South, inscrutable Far East, and severe Arctic North or sparsely populated Siberian territories of Russia. Besides, historically Russia has experienced major tectonic political shifts that had left many scars on its immense body. Russia shook the world twice in the twentieth century—first with the historic October 1917 Bolshevick Revolution ushering the world's first Soviet Socialist politico-economic system, then with the collapse and disintegration of the USSR by 1991 end. These two sea changes should and will be the subject of endless scholarly research and analysis for a long time to come.

The Soviet Union (former Russia and a group of 14 other countries) was the country that declared total equality among people in terms of rights, material possessions, access to free education, medical care, and other important services the society produced and provided. The Soviet political system evolved from the earlier military communism, which was a necessity in the face of vicious foreign interventions by Western capitalist countries from 1918 to 1921. A total of 14 countries, including the United States, were involved in that intervention against the new government of the Soviet Union, or the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Since then, the country was governed with inclusivity and diversity but also with strict disciplines that would show little or no tolerance toward those wishing to become rich at the expense of millions and conspiring to overhaul or overthrow the system. During the seven decades of socialism, Soviet Russia experienced an immense growth of industrial and military power, as compared to the rural Russia before the revolution of 1917—Soviet Russia emerged not only as a political and military but also an industrial superpower. Among the socialist achievements were high-quality education, total access to medical services, equality of women and men in all sectors, and full employment. However, absence of private property

institutions in the economy was considered by some as a force that would hinder economic development, while others considered a fuller enforcement of socialist principles with economic and political openness to broaden and expand public values in the face of relentless Western anti-Soviet propaganda as well as an unprecedented military investment by the United States. The ensuing dynamics in the East–West competitions as well as political dialogues to ease tensions and achieve social reforms toward the end of 1980s led to rising expectations with inept political leaders unable to steer the ships in the storm of changes—mistakes took place and taken advantage of by the adversaries against USSR. The Soviet Union needed rain but received a flood by force; it asked for reforms but received disaster and total destruction.

The most recent history had begun in 1990 when Boris Yeltsin was elected as the Head of Supreme Council of Russian Federation, only one of the soviet republics within the Soviet Union. Then the Supreme Council declared the independence of Russia from the Soviet Union and Boris Yeltsin was elected as Russian President. Later, after the victory in the political competition with Mikhail Gorbachev, Yeltsin and his team had started the transformation of the economic system from socialist to capitalist and the change of socialist governance into the “western-like” democracy. The majority of the population had poor understanding of capitalism and the fancy word of democracy. People preferred a gradual transition and, thus, voted against the revolutionary change. During the referendum that was held on 17 March 1991, the lion’s share of population (about 70%) voted to keep the Soviet Union.

For most foreign readers these facts are little known. Having such abrupt transition that was experienced by Russian people is hard to imagine without experiencing such radical changes. In Russia, these changes had come as a moral and physical shock to regular people, who lost their jobs, savings, and social privileges overnight. The process of sweeping privatization of the former commonly owned resources, such as land, industries, and farms, was grossly unjust and painful. Millions of people lost their jobs, inflation achieved the unimaginable size of 2000%, and deep psychological plunging took over among millions. As it frequently happens in the history of many countries, the common people took upon themselves the hardships of that transition period, many plunged deep into depression and died, while others began to stand up to start over again.

Today, the majority of population may possibly agree with the idea of political irreversibility. Russia lives under the capitalist economic system supported by the institution of private property and inequality.

The declared form of rule is democracy. The people and the leadership have finally agreed on building a capitalist society with democratic politics and process with a good degree of socialist values in major sectors. However, democratic governance is illusive and hard to achieve goal. The history of governance in Russia, its past, culture, and traditions are hard to change. For example, until today, many Russians consider the word “individualism” as having a negative connotation because they believe that individualism feeds to selfishness and a lack of care for others. Russians are compassionate people and today they know that they need to develop their own form of social capitalism. In some instances, western theories of public administration may work well, while in many other cases sometimes such borrowed approaches create social and economic problems beyond repair, which need to be avoided by a strategy of “adoption with caution.”

While selecting the material for the Special Issue on Russia for the IJPA, the Russian co-editors faced a difficult task of choosing a limited number of high-quality articles that would present the main pressure points of today Russia’s social, governmental, and administrative development at times of economic and political paradigm change. Starting from 1991, Russia had commenced the economic transformation, but social change takes a long time. Having entered the course of reforms, the country’s leadership started transforming the economy and society to adapt to contradictions of the transition period. Dramatic changes in political structure, new economic conditions, and the pushback from international competition have pressed the Russian public administration system to reinvent its identity while trying to overcome deviations of new economic and political order.

Many experts agree that Russian reforms have obtained new dimensions that are interesting not only to the specialists in “Slavic studies,” but also to a world research community as well. In order to include the articles in the Issue that describe wide spectrum of theoretical and practical approaches, the guest co-editors selected those works that give a clear idea of cause and effect of Russian government legislative, administrative, and managerial decisions that might help PA professionals from other countries to elaborate optimal solutions in their own domains.

The first reforms after the disintegration of the Soviet Union aimed at establishing new PA and governance systems to foster development of market economy and democracy. However, social consciousness of Soviet people resisted the idea of inequality. Therefore, reforms faced psychological and moral resistance. New

government had no recipe for rebuilding the socialist society, which required change from the principles of equality to the principles of inequality. Therefore, Western economists came up with the program of “shock therapy¹” proposed by western architects.

Altogether, nine selected articles for the Special Issue on Russia discuss four distinctive stages of government reforms, which fit four transitional periods. The years from 1990 to 1993 include the construction of new constitution, the establishment of new legislative and governance systems. The years from 1993 to 2000 saw the implementation of new elements of democratic governance including the independence of regional and local governments. That period was marked by turbulent government reforms. Some regional governors contemplated a separation of the regions from Russia. Yet, in 2000, the newly elected President Vladimir Putin outlawed the separatist decisions, has limited the independence of regional powers, and established the institution of central control over the local political leaders’ decisions.

The years from 2000 to 2010 witnessed the institutionalization of PA through the adoption of new laws on PA and Civil Service. During that time, important changes took place in the structure of federal government and the new electoral system was established locally. These years had seen the final stage of the creation of new economic and social order in Russia: socialist economy was completely replaced by capitalist economy, and the fundamental institutions of democratic governance were established. However, the process of its fine-tuning and improvement continued.

The guest co-editors of the Issue selected articles to provide information about various government and nonprofit initiatives and procedures to acquaint the audience with the current Russian experience. Today, we see the emerging preconditions for the reformation of government institutions and practices in Russia. The continuing debate on the essence of public service transformation in Russian Federation has activated the public participatory attitude and behavior with a desire to put pressure on Russian government and elected officials to support positive democratic changes on a comprehensive scale.

Conventionally, the public administration system is supported by three key elements: institutions (formal and informal norms, and public laws), processes (PA and public management, top-down organization of

activities), and resources (foremost, the national wealth, state property, and taxes). The main challenges of modern days equally important for developing and developed nations are associated with several key elements: sustainable development, accountability and anti-corruption laws, social welfare and justice. Hence, the co-editors of the Special Issue focused on these key elements of ongoing reforms. Consequently, the decision was made to focusing on the works on current Russian PA and Civil Service systems. Selected articles reflect the progress and the problems in the following areas: intergovernmental relations, public servants’ ethics, legal and practical measures of corruption control, public associations, state and private co-production, public procurement, budget and financial management.

The Special Issue starts with the legal questions of federalism, interregional, and intergovernmental relations. The first article presents a profound legal analysis of Russian intergovernmental system and discusses the division of powers between Russian central government and provinces of Russia. Federalism in Russia is an interesting legal phenomenon that grasps attention of legal researchers. Russian Federation presents unique challenges to PA practice because of its large territory, administrative division, and multiethnic population. As noted earlier, Russia is the largest country in the world (17.1 million sq. km.), with more than 190 nationalities from diverse ethnic backgrounds with different languages and confessions, 85 regions with different laws, varying types of treaties and agreements between federal, regional, and municipal governments. The article presents comprehensive reports on contemporary intergovernmental legislative tools that shape the structure of intergovernmental relations in Russia. The most intriguing feature of the article is the history of the intergovernmental relations. The author divides the text in two logical blocks that describe the history of federalism in Russia and the new era of modern legislation. The interpretations of laws are presented in table formats.

The second article determines the factors that influence ethical decision-making by civil servants in Russia. The anti-corruption regulation started appearing in government agencies in early 2000s. Russian Duma (the Parliament) adopted “The Civil Servants Code of Conduct in Russian Federation” in

¹Jeffrey Sachs from the World Bank has proposed the program of “shock therapy” for former Soviet citizens in 1993. The idea of the shock therapy program was to make reforms fast and irreversible, by releasing market prices instantaneously and initiating the privatizations program. This program has been labeled by Russians “theftization” to reflect the illegal national property acquisition or “theft” by the few.

March of 2002. However, the institutionalization of Ethics Codes by government agencies proceeded slowly and unevenly. Some agencies that adopted the Ethics Codes failed to organize ethics training of the personnel. The article studies Russian public servants' ethics reasoning of morally dubious cases in management. It determines several demographic and political factors that distinguish between two groups of respondents by using ANOVA difference of means procedure.

The third article discusses the anti-corruption legal instruments. The article provides a comparative analysis of the anti-corruption laws in three countries: Russian Federation, Republics of Moldova, and Kazakhstan. The author compares preventive legal measures and legal acts aimed at stimulating responsible behavior of bureaucrats. The article analyzes the instruments of national laws aimed at decreasing corruption risks, and discusses effective and ineffective federal laws. It assesses the effectiveness of legal acts in Russia, Moldova, and Kazakhstan with regard to corruption risk identification.

Articles 4 and 5 were included in the Issue to acquaint the international researchers with nonprofit experiences in Russia. Article 4 analyzes the incentives to founding professional and business associations in Russia. The study provides the list of key functions performed by business associations in developing market economy such as advocacy, service delivery, and community building. The study of associations is continued by the fifth article describing parents' association for the purpose of enhancing their children's educational experience. Since the beginning of the economic transition to capitalism, Russian government started dramatically decreasing funding for secondary education. This trend together with other social, legal, and economic changes incentivized the creation of voluntary parents associations. The purpose was to provide financial support for the learning process and to develop other developmental activities, which led to collective coproduction in schooling.

Another group of articles deliberates on the conflict of legislative and procedural tools to promote innovative procurement in public organizations. The authors of article 6 determine that highly centralized decision-making in Russia has negative influence on high-tech products procurement. Besides, reduced competition increases the risk of collusion among government officials and private suppliers. Data analysis reveals typical bureaucratic patterns and tricks to bypass established competition arrangements to create conditions for offerings and tributes. The authors provide recommendations on

how to improve regulations to enhance procurement efficiency.

Article 7 goes into public procurement procedures and considers the contradiction between the requirements for innovative procurement and the strict anti-corruption rules. The study classifies a range of provisions in innovative procurement legislation in Russia. Yet, the authors determine that applicability of innovative procurement is strongly limited by anti-trust and anti-corruption requirements. The study evaluates the barriers and opportunities for innovative procurement and suggests corrective legislative and procedural action to law-makers and procurers in Russia.

Next, the article 8 is on public-private partnership (PPP). It describes the intricacies of the growing trend of cooperation between government and business in Russia in the field of service provision. This article views PPPs as collaborative projects with imperfect information between the parties. Four UK and Russian cases of PPP projects are analyzed to show how the partnership may become feasible by focusing on the choice of contracts and contributions of both partners.

Article 9 opens the discussion on the efficiency of modern budgeting processes in Russia, raising the question of cost-efficiency and of adequate social planning. This article provides a broad overview of central government budgeting procedures in Russia. The article describes the role of budget authorities in shaping the modern system of public finance in Russia. This work discusses various modern theoretical approaches to budgeting and practical consequences for the budgeting process change. The article analyzes the difficulties of transition from centralized to decentralized budgeting in new political environment. So far, the authors suggest shifting from traditional bureaucratic model toward a managerial model to raise the efficiency of public finance.

By selecting a range of topics, the guest co-editors intended to provide the international scholars and readers with interesting and controversial research readings on Russian public administration. The ongoing academic debate on the goals and the progress of Russian civil service transformation creates the knowledge base that governments can rely upon for making economic and managerial decisions to improve various services for Russian people.

However, to guarantee success in the future transformations, it is necessary to fulfill a number of requirements. First, several articles show that to ensure positive progress of reforms it is mandatory to develop civil society and change the mindset of people. The results of changes are contingent upon the political and social activity of citizens, and their involvement in decision-making process to stimulate the accountability of bureaucrats. Second, the success of many programs in

the sphere of public administration depends on strong anti-corruption measures. The implementation of ethical principles will help to reduce corruption, but it requires serious political and managerial efforts.

The introduction of modern managerial systems and techniques such as performance appraisal, merit pay, personnel certification procedures, career planning, and other important management instruments will help changing the minds and performance of public servants. The articles in this Issue form a logical chain of academic studies representing modern Russian PA and civil service. Several articles in this Issue provide rich contextual and theoretical insights into Russian public administration. To summarize, the co-editors suggest that policy and management changes should be implemented step-by-step, through trial and error correction, through analysis and data-based recommendations. The use of “pilot” projects will help reducing the error on a large scale in a diverse country as Russia and eliminate the unnecessary sufferings of its citizens.

Political actors, academics, and professionals have laid the foundation for the new Russian public administration and Civil service systems, which received a special status, acquired structural support through legislative norms and procedures. The formative agenda had been completed. The modern Russian civil service strives to find solutions to existing social and economic problems, and to become responsive to popular demands and follow political priorities. The principal achievements of reforms of the post-Soviet years are the incorporation of best practices from other countries into Russian public administration with regard to national, cultural, and historical traditions of Russia.

To achieve effective transformation and public administration development, the Russian government needs to eliminate borrowed failing procedures and implement successful practices. Currently, the battle is happening through the pages of scientific journals. Practicing public administration rarely get involved in academic discussions concerning theoretical and practical changes, and a new culture of motivating and incentivizing them engaged in acquiring and reading such scholarly publication is highly needed and recommended. More than ever, the efficient collaboration of researchers, civil society activists, public officials, and politicians is required to achieve better results in public service provision and citizens’ satisfaction.

This Special Issue took about 1.5 years from initiation to publication. At first, 22 manuscripts were received in response to our ads in the International Journal of Public Administration and other platforms as well as major universities in Russia. These articles went through a rigorous blind peer review process. As guest co-editors of this special

symposium Issue, we would like to thank all the participating authors, especially to those whose manuscripts were finally selected and included after several rounds of revisions. We appreciate their cooperation and timely responses to our calls for multiple rounds of revisions.

We also thank all reviewers who took time and efforts to make this project possible. A total of 25 reviewers were involved in reviewing and selecting best articles to guarantee the highest quality of materials presented. Each article had at least two reviewers, while some went through three or four rounds of revisions, with additional final revisions suggested by the Editor-in-Chief of IJPA.

We regret rejecting some interesting manuscripts that were not suitable for this tightly spaced Special Issue.

Further, we would like to thank the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) and Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU) for their administrative support of this project. We hope that a good start would incentivize more Russian scholars to publish internationally to advance knowledge on Russia and continue this new tradition. Finally, we appreciate the publisher of the journal IJPA (Taylor & Francis/Routledge) and its Editor-In-Chief, Professor Farazmand from Florida Atlantic University (USA) for providing us with the opportunity to publish this special symposium issue in a timely manner.

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