Developing politicization research through a quantitative enquiry in the Czech Republic with implications beyond Central Europe

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Abstract
The study of politicization of public bureaucracies appears overwhelmingly qualitative lacking in sound conceptualisations allowing for internationally testable hypotheses to center on public bureaucrats instead of external experts. This paper addresses these limitations by drawing on a large-N enquiry into the Czech Republic ministries underlain by formulation of hypotheses, related to specific types of politicization and tested against four ministerial work positions. The enquiry yielded the following findings: Politicizations of ministerial middle and low management as well as rank and file positions are predominantly low. However, politically motivated actions, namely though functional-hidden politicization, are executed by ministerial high management. The limitations in politicization of lower (managerial) tiers are corroborated by minimal reach of partisan politicization to those positions as well as their disengagement from politics. Overall, the enquiry suggests that Czech ministries are moderately politicised at best, showing a lesser degree of direct political influence than generally suspected.

Points for practitioners
Our study shows that there are several types of politicization in practice, not all malevolent. For this reason, it would be proper to stop treating politicization in all circumstances as necessary evil. It would also be a good idea not to rely on proxy indicators but to engage “insiders” to the public administration units (ministries, in our case), represented by officials or politicians, to get a more balanced view of the extent of politicization in public bureaucracies.

Key words: politicization; Central Europe; Czech Republic; ministry; quantitative enquiry