

**Public Administration Identity in CEE: A neo-institutionalist account.  
The case of Hungary**

*Gajduschek Gyorgy*

*Corvinus University of Budapest, Dept. of Public Policy and Management,  
Faculty of Economics, Budapest, Hungary*

*Gyorgy Hajnal, Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary*

**Abstract:** Public Administration systems of CEE countries typically followed two European models before the communist era: the Germanic or Napoleonic model (Painter-Peters 2010: 21-23) The communist period forcefully unified the administrative models following a Soviet administrative system. After 1990, undoubtedly the global neoliberal ‘zeitgeist’ and its manifestation for public administration, namely New Public Management (NPM), had a great impact on the formation of post-communist administrative models. NPM is generally considered an administrative innovation, which was deeply rooted in the Anglo-American ‘public interest’-type administrative arrangement and culture – vis-?-vis the Rechtsstaat arrangements of both the Napoleonic and Germanic models. (Pollitt-Bouckaert 2017: Ch. 3.) Elsewhere (Gajduschek-Hajnal 2022) we concluded that by the 2000s most CEE countries seem to gradually return to their pre-WW.II. orientation.

The theoretical ambition of the paper is to interpret the above dynamics within the frame of a historical institutional approach. The collapse of communism may be considered as exogenously generated critical juncture, at which certain countries could – and did – broke up with their past moved on to a path substantially differing from the ones they historically followed. Empirically, the study sets out to investigate another critical juncture: the case of Orbán-era Hungary. As a (small) part of the illiberal transformation agenda of the consecutive Orbán governments a wholesale re-design of the PA academic and education field started in 2010, with the National University of Public Service (NUPS) as a centerpiece of the endeavor. Structural-institutional changes included (i) legal monopoly granted to NUPS; (ii) direct centre-of-government supervision of NUPS; (iii) merging civilian, military and police education; and (iv) vast resources to the new entity (mostly from EU funds). Content-wise, the changes included (a) re-establishment of „State (and Legal) Sciences” (in style, if not in substance, similar to the “Staatslehre” o the pre-War era) as a degree program, and (b) creation of new academic forums (e.g. journals), providing huge research funding to in support of the new discipline. Whether and how the critical juncture created by Hungary’s illiberal transformation was / could be used to change public administration identity is scrutinized on the basis of available (limited) evidence.