Coronavirus Pandemic

Terror attacks

Climate Catastrophe

Partisan Polarization

The China Challenge

Financial Crisis

digital populism

Migrant Crisis

post-Brexit

What’s wrong with mainstream public administration?

• Focus on “middle level” problems of management
• Making agencies “work better and cost less”
• Reaction to political-fiscal crisis of 1970s-90s
• Inattention to relationship between shifting national priorities and architecture of government; “grand politics”
No more simple formulas

• The “single formula for national success”:
  • Free markets and open borders
  • Small government
  • Commitment to policy rules that limit discretion
• Experience of the last twenty years:
  • No simple formula
  • Discretion unavoidable
  • Grand politics matters

First step: Recognize multiple levels

Table 1  Levels of analysis in public administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro-level</th>
<th>Study of the governance strategies that are devised by leaders to advance critical national interests and the ways in which these strategies influence the overall architecture of the state.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mezzo-level</td>
<td>Study of the design, consolidation, administration, and reform of specific institutions—that is, laws, organizations, programs and practices—within the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-level</td>
<td>Study of the attitudes and behavior of officials within the state apparatus and of people who are subject to their authority.</td>
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</tbody>
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From Strategies for Governing

Second step: macro-level framework

• States, leaders, and general goals
  • Internal order and legitimacy, external security and legitimacy, prosperity, survival in office, human rights
• Circumstances: the "governing environment"
  • Demography, geography, economy, technology, culture and institutions, geopolitics
• Leaders define strategies for governing that define priorities and major lines of policy
• The institutional complex of the state as the expression of strategy

Three challenges for leaders

• Making strategy -- hard because:
  • Goals conflict with one another
  • Uncertainty about how best to achieve goals
  • Turbulence: conditions change quickly
  • Limits on decision-making capacity
• Executing strategy:
  • Designing, consolidating, running institutions
• Adapting strategy:
  • Ideational and institutional deconsolidation and reconstruction
  • Hard because institutions and ideas are "sticky"
Some implications of this approach

- Strategies are fragile and variable
  - US: New Dealism to Reaganism to Trumppism
  - China: Maoism to Deng Xiaoping Theory to Xi Jinping Thought
- Moments of strategic shift are prolonged and dangerous
- Top-level decision-making is critically important
  - Personnel, mentalities, structures
- Need for long time horizons, retrospectively and prospectively

Implications for research, teaching

- Teaching
  - One course on big picture and evolution of strategies
- Research
  - Legitimation of macro-level research and appropriate methods
- The Canadian advantage
  - Attention to the long view
    - eg Hodgetts and “great environmental factors”
  - And top-level decision-making
    - eg French, How Ottawa Decides
  - Are we “punching below our weight”?