Introduction: public administration and international relations – converging on a new research frontier

Soonhee Kim, Shena Ashley and W. Henry Lambright

There is now a vast collection of global and regional institutions, non-governmental organizations, ad hoc groups and advocacy networks engaged in activities to advance policy goals across a broadening range of public issues. With the rise of this new ‘governance architecture’ (Biermann and Siebenhüner, 2009) and its associated bureaucracies, there is a new crop of global public professionals – largely hidden from public view – working to formulate and implement public policy in a transnational context. Together, these groups are active in global governance, a term defined most broadly by Finkelstein (1995, p. 369) as ‘governing, without sovereign authority, relationships that transcend national boundaries . . . doing internationally what governments do at home.’ This definition of global governance makes it clear that it is an area suitable for the study of public administration since there is leadership and management of public-serving organizations and implementation of public policy.

With the growth of international organizations and bureaucracies, an important task lies before public administration theorists and researchers to describe and examine the purposes, values, legitimacy, authority and accountability of these institutions. The global governance arena presents a unique opportunity to contemplate how the nature and practice of administration is transformed in a context where the role of the state is changed and where the lack of a formal government means global public professionals are not directly accountable to elected officials and citizens. Research is also needed at the level of operations to understand and inform the structure, functions and activities within these organizations. This is still largely uncharted territory in need of theoretical and empirical inquiry. As it stands, we are lacking a systematic, generalizable body of knowledge about how international organizations and bureaucracies make decisions and the factors that affect their performance and responsiveness.
Additionally, there is unmet demand in international organizations for core public administration skills and knowledge, particularly in the areas of management and accountability to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

To meet this new frontier opportunity with the broad perspective that is needed, however, requires bringing together knowledge that has, heretofore, been isolated in different disciplines. Our ability to study and inform the practice of public administration in global governance will be best served by cross-communication and interdisciplinary theory building between the international relations and public administration disciplines. This book lays the foundation for bringing together scholars from both disciplines toward mutual engagement in the study of public administration in global governance.

A slow convergence of public administration and international relations around public administration in global governance is already occurring. Growing interest in questions of administration and management at the global and transnational levels has created a point of convergence for public administration and international relations scholarship. These questions are being taken up in a sub-field in international relations that is bringing attention to the role of organizations and organization-level dynamics in global governance. Here, a base of scholarship is burgeoning under the terminology of international organizations, international public administrations and international bureaucracies (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999, 2004; Ness and Brechin, 1988; Nielson and Tierney, 2003; Weiss, 1975).

The majority of international relations scholarship (across neo-realist and neo-liberal dividing lines) is focused on the state and state interests as the central focus of analysis. The dominant perspectives differ on how broadly they characterize state interests and whether or not to include non-state actors as agents of state interests, but by and large states are the common driving force. However, a sub-group of international relations scholarship has emerged that emphasizes an organization-centric focus. Their interest is to redirect energies toward understanding administrative decision making and behavior. They promote the view of organizations as actors with agency and not as empty vessels controlled and incontestably responsive to states. This is a similar perspective on administrative organizations espoused by scholars like John Gaus in the 1930s, Paul Appleby in the 1940s and Dwight Waldo in the 1960s (Lynn, 2001). Traditionally, political science assumed a passive bureaucracy (Meier, 2007) and was primarily interested in the political control of public organizations. Instead, early public administration scholars held the view that public organizations and their managers have their own motivations and objectives and that they play a vital role in shaping how policy is administered. Now,
having their own turn to take a fresh look at issues of administrative authority and bureaucratic governance, international relations scholars are drawing attention to timeless issues that harken back to foundational public administration research from scholars such as Simon, Gullick and Wilson.

Simultaneously, scholars in the public administration discipline are beginning to expand their lens of inquiry to include multinational and transnational organizations and are taking a renewed interest in the subfields of comparative and development public administration in light of globalizing forces (Brinkerhoff, 2008; Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Although the majority of public administration scholarship maintains a domestic focus, there are burgeoning efforts toward internationalizing or globalizing public administration scholarship that are developing along three trajectories. The first is focused on establishing a body of generalized propositions about administrative behavior that can transcend national boundaries (Gulrajani and Moloney, 2012); the second is interested in fostering greater inclusion of different country, cultural, regional contexts in public administration research (Farazmand, 1999; Riggs, 1980; Verhoest et al., 2011); and the third is concerned with extending core public administration insights to emerging governance institutions and networks that are actively engaged in public policy at the global or transnational scale (Martinsen and Beck Jorgensen, 2010).

But there are historic and contemporary disciplinary and institutional barriers that, despite the synergistic interests, stand to impede or slow knowledge sharing across public administration and international relations disciplines. Although public administration and international relations share a common disciplinary ancestry as subfields of political science, they have developed as separate and distinct sibling fields that are not particularly close. They share in common the feature of both being academic as well as policy fields, and as such, can be both positive and normative. Yet each has its own distinct scope of inquiry that, until recently, has not had significant overlap. Public administration is concerned with the organizations and individuals responsible for government policies and programs with a primary, although not exclusive, focus on domestic government. International relations is focused on relationships between actors (mostly states) on the (presently anarchic) world stage. The historic and once distinguishable domestic/international divide is one of the main reasons for their distance. Another reason for the divide is that both fields have been preoccupied (as is often the case with adult siblings) with their own theoretical debates. The disputes between neo-realist and neo-liberal perspectives in international relations concerning issues of power versus cooperation, interstate versus transnational
relations and state versus non-state group involvement attract significant attention. Similarly, public administration has been preoccupied with discussions of paradigmatic shifts associated with the emergence of New Public Management.

It is highly unlikely – even with these converging interests and shared disciplinary heritage – that a joint conversation would naturally occur. International relations and public administration scholars typically publish research in different journals, are members of different associations and attend different conferences. Some developments that could force the conversation are demand from students and potential employers for management skills relevant to global context. However, it could take a long time for these demand forces to penetrate scholarship.

FORGING A PATH: FROM MINNOWBROOK TO NYC CONFERENCE I

The precursor to this book was a conference in June 2013 designed to jump start this convergence by bringing together some of the top junior and senior scholars interested in public administration in global governance from both international relations and public administration disciplines. The aim of the conference, which we called NYC Conference I, was to break new ground in conceptualizing and clarifying this intellectual space from within the theoretical frameworks of public administration. Participants in the conference were 27 scholars and practitioners from nine countries who addressed themes such as networks and collaboration, autonomy and accountability, conflict and conflict resolution, implementation and professionalism and leadership in government. The conference represented a pioneering effort to understand the intellectual space at the intersection of public administration and international affairs.

NYC Conference I was also a follow-up to the more comprehensive Minnowbrook Conference III held at the Minnowbrook Conference Center of Syracuse University in 2008, where globalism was emphasized as an emerging challenge for public administration research, practice and education but was not addressed in detail or in an interdisciplinary manner. The Minnowbrook Conference, held every 20 years (1968, 1988 and 2008) at Syracuse University’s Conference Center in Minnowbrook, located in the Adirondack Mountains in upstate New York, is one of the most significant academic conferences that analyses the current state and future direction of public administration in the United States (O’Leary et al., 2010). The legacy of Minnowbrook pushes academics, public administrators and public leaders to think about the past, present and
future of public administration in a civil society. The Minnowbrook perspectives also set forth questions and propositions about where the field could be headed in the near term.

The first Minnowbrook Conference took place in 1968. The upheavals of the 1960s, particularly associated with the Vietnam War, were the driving force and context. It was a time of great passion, and the concern among scholars and practitioners was that the field was becoming irrelevant in relation to the great issues of the day that were tearing the country apart.

Minnowbrook I marked the beginning of the ‘New Public Administration’ that emphasized more attention to democracy, bureaucracy and social equity (Marini, 1971). Minnowbrook II was held in 1988, when the Reagan Administration and others were bashing bureaucrats, attacking government and calling for free market approaches. The second conference also marked a moment of sustained reflection on the impact of the New Public Administration and assessed the establishment of the academic professionalism of public administration and public policy (Frederickson and Chandler, 1997).

The third Minnowbrook came in 2008. Minnowbrook III engaged with various themes of public administration, including globalization, managing public organizations, collaboration, deliberative democracy and public participation, teaching the next generation of leaders and remaining relevant (O’Leary et al., 2010). Scholars participating in the Minnowbrook III Conference recognized a need to apply a more global approach to thinking about institutions and the work of public administrators in the context of democratic governance (Bowornwathana, 2010; Hou, 2010; Poocharoen, 2010).

NYC Conference I was conceptualized as bringing some action to the conversations started at Minnowbrook III. Rather than wait another 20 years for Minnowbrook IV, we chose to host the conference just five years after Minnowbrook III to meet the fast-changing pace of the global governance context. Additionally, the change in location to New York City, a global city that is home to a number of international organizations, was intended to symbolize a move toward a more international orientation. Our hope is that future conferences to follow on this theme will be held in different regions of the world.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

In Part 1, ‘What does the global governance context mean for public administration? Theory, practice and research,’ authors explore the big
questions below and provide their insights and suggestions for future research on in a context of global governance: (1) How has globalization affected the theory and practice of public administration?; (2) What major research questions should scholars concerned with public administration in a global context address?; and (3) How should universities with public administration programs better equip students for careers in public administration within this global context?

Leading off in ‘Globalization, global governance and public administration,’ Laurence J. O’Toole, Jr. points out the lack of knowledge about patterns of globalizing public administration and limited research on international organizations, transnational, functionally specific governance arrangements and assorted other forms in the public administration field. Considering the progress of research in the field including performance-management, networked governance, comparative public administration and the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) approach, he proposes developing a theory of context and the ways in which context affects the management-performance linkage within transnational cases. He argues that the theory has to be anchored in the empirics of what has actually developed to date and these empirics include the interesting combination of state systems supporting, or involved with, transnational regimes.

Next, in ‘Toward an “open systems” perspective of global public administration citizenship,’ Rosemary O’Leary first defines ‘transboundary’ issues to include numerous sectors – public, private, non-profit and the hybrids – that manifest themselves today as areas of concern, including economic, political, scientific, ethical, legal and social or cultural, and, of course, geographical localities. To tackle transboundary problems, O’Leary proposes the application of the various lenses of legal aspects: deploying various interdisciplinary approaches; the use of an open systems approach; and even a global perspective on citizenship to the scholars and practitioners in the field of public administration. She also emphasizes that participants in the discipline should keep an open mind concerning interdisciplinary scholarship by reading the various journals of the field from various geographical locales in order to enhance their global understanding of the consequences of transboundary issues and their subsequent implications. Concerning public administration education, she addresses the importance of teaching a variety of theories generated by scholars with a wide variety of lenses and the utilization of cases and simulations that force the students to think beyond their own narrow boundaries.

James L. Perry in ‘Building public administration theory for global governance’ lays out an agenda for pursuing a more global public administration theory. He presents and elaborates on two sides that he argues need simultaneous effort and attention – the substantive and the procedural.
On the substantive side, Perry suggests that the global challenge for public administration scholars is to move toward more beneficial, integrated and applicable theory by pursuing central themes in public administration like leadership, transparency, ethics and trust throughout the world to gain international and contextual perspective. He specifically advocates for the pursuit of middle-range theories to systematize and consolidate empirical and theoretical information as a way to move theory building toward this goal. On the procedural side, he engages in discussion of ways to foster greater international collaboration and encourage more international publications.

In his chapter on ‘Public administration and a changing context,’ Jamil E. Jreisat provides a short historical background of how global interdependence has affected the public administration field in terms of research and professional community building. He points out that the evolution of comparative public administration research has advanced cross-cultural administration knowledge building at the global level. He further assesses that the increased professional activities among global professional organizations in various continents, including the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), International Institute of Administrative Sciences – International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IIAS-IASIA), European Group of Public Administration (EGPA) and other research and professional associations, have created more discourse and opportunity of comparative public administration research. Concerning public administration education, he demands the proactive development of curricula that reflect the new global reality as well as emphasize public managers’ competency in negotiation, facilitation, languages and culture sensitivity.

W. Henry Lambright, in ‘Transboundary leadership in science and technology: the International Space Station,’ provides an analysis of leadership across borders. He uses the International Space Station as a vehicle for showing how leaders of agencies work together to accomplish great tasks. The International Space Station is the largest civilian science and technology project in history, and involves 16 nations. It shows how the United States can lead successfully in an international context. It also reveals how conflict among partners can affect a large-scale international project.

In ‘Global rulemaking and institutional forms,’ Jonathan G.S. Koppell focuses on legitimacy in institutional design and the design logic of global governance. He argues that while public administration has recognized the importance of global rulemaking, it has not embraced transnational rulemaking in the global governance realm in general. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the context of global rulemaking bodies
that generally have no formal sanctioning power to compel obedience. He concludes that the consequences of global governance need to be properly understood and integrated into a full accounting of public administration even though the global rulemaking organizations do not, in some respects, look like the traditional subjects of our inquiry.

Chapters in Part 2, ‘Administrative dimensions in global governance: autonomy, legitimacy and influence,’ address the management of international bureaucracies or civil society institutions as well as increasingly complex and multifaceted international public administration as global governance actors. Authors in Part 2 further explore strategy and leadership competency for effective implementation of global public policy, including the areas of regulations, economic development and climate change in the context of capacity-building strategy at the domestic as well as global levels.

Leading off with ‘The independent influence of international public administrations: contours and future directions of an emerging research strand,’ Per-Olof Busch explores how the role of international public administration (IPA) (or international bureaucracies or secretariats), as an integral part of international government organizations (or formal, international regimes, such as multilateral conventions, treaties and agreements), has changed from being a tool in the hands of states to independent and autonomous entities, in which IPAs can be seen exercising autonomy and influence on countries or regions or even political agents. The impacts of proactive leadership and the institutionalized nature of an IPA on its autonomy and influence are also discussed. Finally, he identifies several areas of possible research on the subject, including the factors affecting the degree of an IPA’s influence and effectiveness.

In their chapter on a similar subject but with a different twist, ‘The autonomy of international bureaucracies,’ Michael W. Bauer and Jörn Ege focus on the concept of ‘bureaucratic autonomy’ applicable to international bureaucracies and identify the structural drivers of bureaucratic autonomy. They suggest that there are five dimensions of bureaucratic autonomy indicators for empirical measurement to capture the empirical variation of bureaucratic autonomy, including administrative cohesion, administration differentiation, statutory power, administration resources and absence of political control over the bureaucracy. The writers then create a framework for calculating these five dimensions for ten international government organizations, including the European Union (EU), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Labour Organization (ILO), and present the results in their chapter. Considering the limited empirical research investigating the administrative basis of international organizations in the public administration field, the authors conclude
that this kind of research may enhance public managers’ knowledge of how international bureaucracies influence particular policy fields, and how that influence may vary according to their internal structures and resources.

In ‘Collaborative problem solving in a fractured world: a perspective on the role of global-scale institutions and administrations in the context of climate change,’ Paul D. Hirsch asserts that developing global-scale institutional responses to the problem of climate change requires navigating a profound tension. He argues that upholding the values of representative democracy and national sovereignty is essential in parallel with the development of global-scale responses to climate change. This chapter aims to make steps to resolve the impasse between the possibilities for, and problems with, global-scale institutions developed in response to the problem of climate change. To make these steps, the author draws on empirical research to highlight a key distinction between institutions that are geared to help achieve collective impact through an information-sharing and collaborative planning function, and institutions that are designed to exert authority. In its conclusion, the chapter presents the possibility that global-scale institutions for climate governance might be seen as vehicles for the evolution of human culture and civic virtue rather than contentious and even dangerous political renovations.

Next comes ‘Regulation in crisis: reputation, capacity, and limitations,’ in which Martin Lodge shows how a reputation-based perspective on regulatory capacity highlights the limitations and problems within current regulatory strategies and research agendas. Beginning with a discussion of the regulation debate within public administration, he lays out the key questions and tensions at stake. He contends that a reputation-based perspective can help unpack the limitations of academic frames on different types of regulation, such as self-regulation, management-based regulation, performance-based regulation, responsive regulation and risk-based regulation. Lodge concludes that using a reputation-based perspective highlights the crisis of regulatory research and policy failures, and contends that this dysfunctionality is a healthy step toward reform.

In ‘Negotiating and adapting optimal integration: transnational economic integration and the Public Management challenge,’ Ole Gunnar Austvik discusses the scale and scope of nations’ ability to manoeuvre in a transnational economic integration process. Drawing from convergence, integration and international trade theories, Austvik analyses what could be an optimal degree of economic integration. He argues that the optimal degree of integration is to be found in a dynamic process where the marginal benefits of economic, political and social restructuring equal their marginal costs. He further addresses that this may vary across sectors,
countries and time, and depends partly on political choice. Finally, the author argues that neither politicians nor public administrators can, however, fully determine the optimal degree of integration without also making a political choice.

In the last chapter of Part 2, ‘Emerging patterns of regional governance in East Asia,’ Sunhyuk Kim frames and analyses the characteristics of regional governance in East Asia. He argues that a regional approach may be more insightful than a global one when finding ways to describe and analyse convergence and interdependence. Looking at the case of East Asia, Kim claims that the forms of regionalism among governments became much more robust in the post-Cold War period. Kim proposes that East Asian regional governance needs to focus more on leadership and partnership, including non-state actors, finding facilitators in other middle state actors and the United States, and using cultural resources to promote conflict resolution among themselves. Finally, the author provides recommendations for public administration research, practice and education based on his findings of regional governance in East Asia.

Chapters in Part 3, ‘Global health: examining the public administration and international relations nexus,’ focus on the theoretical implications drawn from international health policy and administration, the role of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in global health governance and the opportunities and challenges of building collaborative governance capacity through global health policy implementation.

Adrian Kay and Peter Carroll lead this part with ‘A case study of the expanding role of the OECD in global health governance: combining public administration and international relations perspectives to identify internal and external drivers,’ in which they explore why and how the OECD has come to occupy a central role in transnational health policy processes and, moreover, why and how the OECD has come to challenge the authority of the World Health Organization (WHO) as the de facto global health ministry – despite lacking a formal institutional role. This chapter offers a public administration analysis to explain the expansion of the OECD’s role in transnational health policy as a complex conjunction of multiple environmental factors; factors such as member states of the WHO and their changing interests and dissatisfaction with the WHO’s analytical work; and the creation of windows of opportunity for a coalition of officials from the OECD and key member states to promote the health agenda of the OECD. The authors argue that the growth of health-related work in the OECD indicates that change is brought about by a range of factors, both external and internal to the OECD. Kay and Carroll close the chapter by arguing that it is not possible to isolate a single factor
as exclusively powerful or even dominant in an explanation of health policy change in the OECD.

In the next chapter, ‘The emergence of governance capacity in global policy implementation: evidence from managing transnational public health crises,’ Allen Yu-Hung Lai presents the emergence of governance capacity by looking into public health networks in two countries – Singapore and Taiwan – within the context of the A/H1N1 avian influenza pandemics in 2009. He asserts that the context of disease control is construed to include cultural conditions, technological opportunities, environmental constraints and munificence, and goal expectations. Lai’s results show that in the inter-organizational network system, the cross-sector governance structure requires a facilitative leadership. Such leadership clarifies who should do what, organizes joint and individual efforts toward common goals and facilitates decision making in global policy implementation.

Edward W. Malone, Yusra R. Shawar and Jeremy Shiffman examine the linkages between public administration scholarship and global health governance in ‘Insights from public administration scholarship for addressing global health governance challenges.’ In their chapter, they focus on specific insights from research on policy implementation and accountability to advance global governance. They draw on examples from international organizations like the WHO and major foundations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that are active in global health governance. They conclude with a research agenda for global health governance scholars based on lessons from public administration research. This chapter exemplifies the objective of interdisciplinary knowledge sharing, which is the central tenant of this book.

Finally, in the Conclusion, we summarize major cross-cutting themes addressed by the authors in the book. These include: networks and collaboration; conflict and conflict resolution; autonomy and accountability; implementation; and leadership. Further, we point to global challenges ahead for public administration as a field and practice.

CHARTING THE TERRAIN: AN INVITATION TO READERS

With this book, we hope to accelerate the convergence of international relations and public administration perspectives on public administration in global governance. The body of research in this book demonstrates that the seeds are already in place. Our motivation is to catalyse the interchange between the disciplines of international relations and public
administration and to promote awareness of similar interests across disciplines. We highlight scholarship that grapples with some pertinent issues at the frontier by several of the ‘pioneers’ – a group of leading and emerging scholars in public administration and international relations. Given the wide range of management and policy issues relevant to public administration in global governance, we do not make an attempt to be exhaustive in this text. Our objective is to highlight research areas where there is currently an active empirical and systematic research agenda. Further, we offer more than one perspective on each selected theme in order to highlight the complexity and to generate discussion. The emphasis of this book is a civilian side approach to public administration in its global governance context. The editors considered dealing with global military and intelligence issues, including terrorism, but decided not to do so and to focus on non-security-related policy areas. Our ambition is that this collection of research provides direction to the research enterprise on the expanding universe of public organizations and actors in global governance and plants the seed for mutually informed research among international relations and public administration scholars. We invite you, the reader, to join us at this research frontier.

REFERENCES


