THE POLITICS OF CIVIL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN DEVELOPMENT—EXPLAINING WITHIN-COUNTRY VARIATION OF REFORM OUTCOMES IN GEORGIA AFTER THE ROSE REVOLUTION[†]

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SUMMARY

This article examines the role of politics as a determinant of civil service and administrative (CSA) reform outcomes in Georgia. The majority of existing studies on CSA reforms face several methodological challenges, which make it difficult to understand the influence of politics in more detail. Based on literature review findings, the article proposes a model for within-country comparisons that allows one to control for a number of variables such as context and policy design.

Comparing CSA reform outcomes in the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs in Georgia after the 2003 Rose Revolution through a matched case study, the article shows that certain countrywide legal adjustments, anti-corruption measures and context variables are necessary but insufficient conditions for successful reform. While in general Georgia has achieved considerable success in its CSA reform efforts, the President's leverage over reform implementation, leadership at the ministry level and the politics of foreign aid have led to significant variation in reform outcomes across the analysed institutions. In addition to this, institutional constraints reflecting inherent differences between policy sectors explain another part of the variation in outcomes in Georgia. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

KEY WORDS—civil service reform; administrative reform; administrative quality; Georgia; within-country comparison; politics of governance reforms

INTRODUCTION

In the past decades, a growing consensus has emerged that an effective civil service is a crucial pre-requisite for sustainable development (Scott, 2011). However, the results of countrywide civil service and administrative (CSA) reforms in development have been mostly disappointing (World Bank, 2008; Brösamle, 2012; Andrews, 2013; Repucci, 2014). Recognising this problem, donors and scholars have begun to question their previous approaches and have acknowledged the importance of politics in this process (World Bank, 2012a; DfID, 2013). Despite this recognition, there have been few attempts to develop methodologies that systematically analyse the politics of CSA reform in developing countries. In general, the 'evidence-base for understanding what works and why' in this field remains 'poor' (Brösamle, 2012; World Bank, 2012a).

Against this background, the article at hand examines countrywide CSA reform outcomes as a dependent variable and argues that within-country comparisons offer a solution to overcome previous methodological shortcomings. Analysing CSA reform implementation in two institutions in Georgia after the Rose Revolution in 2003, I demonstrate that three political factors are significant drivers of within-country variance in reform outcomes, namely the central authority's leverage over reform implementation, leadership at the ministry level and the politics of foreign aid.

Through a literature review of studies on CSA reforms, this article first shows that the current lack of understanding in the field stems from several methodological challenges. Based on the review findings, I argue that

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within-country comparisons represent an appropriate method to analyse the politics of reform implementation more rigorously, as this allows one to control for several other variables such as context and policy design. I then develop a number of hypotheses on the influence of politics on within-country variation in CSA reform outcomes based on political economy (PE) approaches. Analysing reform implementation in Georgia after the 2003 Rose Revolution through a matched case study of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA), I demonstrate that certain countrywide legal changes, anti-corruption measures and context variables are necessary but insufficient conditions for successful reform. Several political variables are crucial factors explaining within-country variance in CSA reform outcomes. Finally, the limitations of these findings are discussed and a conclusion is drawn.

DETERMINANTS OF CIVIL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM OUTCOMES: TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA SHIFT?

Civil service and administrative reforms in development: definition and literature

In this article, the term CSA reform refers to cross-institutional policies affecting the structures and rules of the civil service and of the administrative system within a country. Although this definition goes beyond the scope of civil service reforms, it is often used in development administration as many reform approaches in developing countries combine measures on the administrative structure and the civil service (Evans, 2008). However, there is strong disagreement over definitions of different aspects of CSA reforms and the measurement of their outcomes (Brösamle, 2012), which reiterates the lack of coherent methodological approaches in this field (Evans, 2008). Accordingly, in order to analyse the role of politics in CSA reform in development, it is necessary to first gain a better understanding of the determinants of reform outcomes in general.

A systematic review of the particularly scattered literature on CSA reforms in development conducted by the author of this article[1] (Rinnert, 2014) shows that the factors used most widely to explain reform outcomes are policy design and context, both mentioned in the majority of analysed studies.[2] More than half of the studies also find political commitment, bureaucratic heritage and administrative capacity to be main determinants of reform outcomes. There are several implications from the existing literature for deriving an analytical model and hypotheses on the influence of politics in CSA reforms.

First, one of the major remaining issues in the literature is the question of how to measure CSA reform outcomes adequately, with the majority of reviewed studies looking at initial reform goals and subjectively stating whether or not they were achieved at the end of a reform episode. This problem is arguably influenced by a lack of data availability (Brösamle, 2012), but some more recent studies (Raballand and Rajaram, 2013) look at possible solutions, such as mixed methods approaches combining quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Second, adequate measurement of reform outcomes is related to further methodological gaps identified in the literature. Most existing studies analyse single CSA reform episodes ex-post in one country only and do not examine differences across institutions or compare reform results to other countries. While some of the studies employ a convincing methodological framework, there seems to be a need for further thoughts on the appropriate unit of analysis (Brösamle, 2012).

Third, there is a need to narrow down the focus in the analysis of CSA reform. The majority of analysed studies on CSA reforms in development mention five or more determinants of reform outcomes. As a cross-cutting issue, CSA reforms are so complex that it remains difficult to take into account all determinants sufficiently, avoiding simple, long 'shopping lists' of possible factors and simplified conclusions on causality (Repucci, 2012).

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[1]A systematic review is a metadata analysis tool that can be defined as a literature review aiming at 'comprehensively identifying all relevant studies to answer a particular question' while 'assess[ing] the validity of each study' (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006: 40). In the systematic review carried out by the author, 52 studies matched the initial search criteria and were assessed based on textual narrative synthesis (Spencer *et al.*, 2003; Hannes and Macaitis, 2012). Based on 15 criteria developed by Spencer *et al.*, the paper quality was assessed as 'high', 'medium' or 'low'.

[2]Policy design refers to the de jure measures of civil service and administrative reforms, such as the legal details of recruitment procedures or promotion. Context includes all factors influencing the administration that are external to it, such as economic factors.

Fourth, and related to the aforementioned aspect, some of the most widely used independent variables related to political factors are often not specified and thus have limited explanatory power. The literature is full of appeals to take into account the 'catch-all categories' (Raballand and Rajaram, 2013: 8) context and politics in a given country, but there are few examples of how this can be carried out in detail (Scott, 2011).

Fifth, many of the reviewed studies see assistance by donors as a major factor in determining reform outcomes. This re-emphasises the relevance of differentiating between CSA reforms in developing and developed countries. Furthermore, the fact that the reforms analysed in the reviewed studies are all relatively similar in their form and goals confirms previous claims of a strong influence of best practice models in CSA reform in development (Andrews, 2013).

Despite the outlined shortcomings and problems observed in the existing literature, the review helps to understand more systematically the main variables that are considered to influence CSA reform outcomes. Grouping the most frequently mentioned determinants, we obtain a comprehensive set consisting of four groups of independent variables (Table 1). Building on this, we can now move on to discuss methodological possibilities on how to better analyse the politics of CSA reforms in development.

Towards within-country comparisons: a methodology for the analysis of politics in civil service and administrative reforms

Building on the conclusions from the literature review, I am putting forward a research agenda that aims to enhance internal validity by overcoming two of the outlined methodological shortcomings in the literature, namely the problems related to the unit of analysis and, linked to this, the challenge of the number of independent variables used to explain CSA reform outcomes.

First, in light of the literature review findings there is a strong argument for a small-n research design analysing the effect of CSA reforms on two or more public institutions *within* one country. In almost every developing country, CSA reforms are whole-of-government reforms, but in most cases, there is considerable variation in performance *within* the country (Brösamle, 2012; Raballand and Rajaram, 2013). This variation is not accounted for in the majority of reviewed studies or in existing indicators on administrative quality.[3] However, it is one of the

Table 1. Grouped determinants of CSA reform outcomes

| Variable groups	Variables (detailed)
Dependent variable: CSA reform outcomes	Administrative quality
Independent variable 1: context	Economic welfare External shocks Cultural context
Independent variable 2: bureaucratic heritage	Historical origins of public administration Earlier CSA reform paths
Independent variable 3: political factors	Political commitment to reform implementation Reform leadership Level of patronage within public administration Capacity of agencies (civil servants) Public support for civil service/public administration Politics of donor aid (type, scope and focus of assistance)
Independent variable 4: policy features/de jure institutional features	Reform design (model of administrative reform); existing civil service regulations Scope of reform Existence of monitoring and evaluation tools for CSA reform assessment

CSA, civil service and administrative.
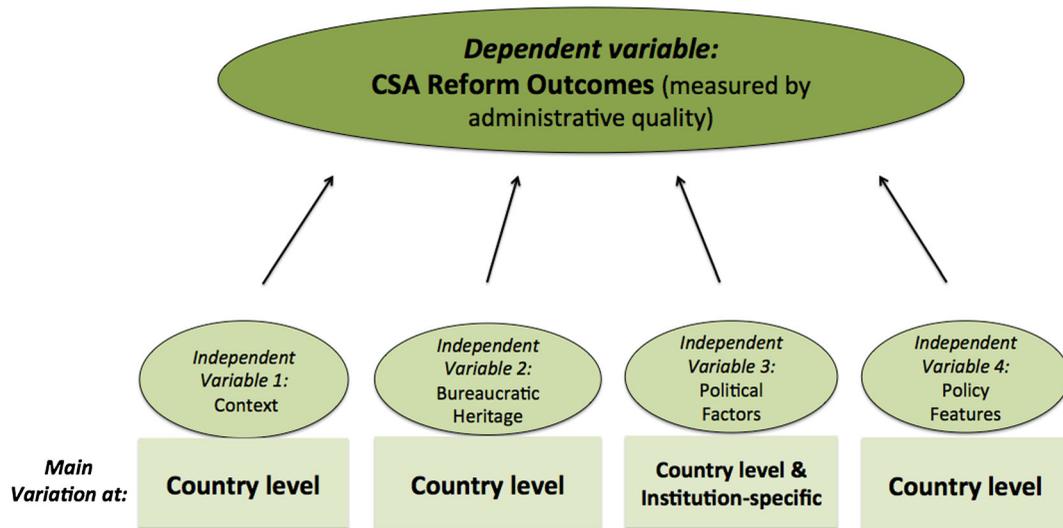
Figure 1. Variation of determinants of civil service and administrative reform outcomes at different levels.

main reasons for a lack of analytical clarity on the independent variables, especially with regard to the role of politics. As Banarjee and Duflo have argued, it is useful to know whether there is political will for governance reform in a given country but 'it is (…) even more useful to know about specific capabilities of specific institutions' (Banarjee and Duflo, 2013: 35). Many of the studies analysing outcomes of single reform episodes at the national level do not specify which methodology they use to aggregate data in a given country. At the same time, cross-country comparisons of CSA reforms fail to indicate why and how outcomes can be compared despite the large differences in context. As Pollit and Bouackert have argued 'to reduce the danger of comparing apples and pears, (…) there may be a case for coming down from the level of national comparisons either to sector comparisons or to more particular comparisons of individual [institutions]' (Pollit and Bouckaert, 2003: 14).

Second, and related to the first point, a focus on particular independent variables determining reform outcomes is likely to lead to more insightful research results than looking at a large list of different factors that are inter-correlated. The small-n design proposed earlier also helps in this regard, as matched case studies allow controlling for a number of variable groups, thereby focusing on those factors leading to divergent outcomes *across* institutions. Building on the set of determinants derived in the literature review, one can argue that cross-institution comparisons within a given country would control for the majority of (i) context factors; (ii) bureaucratic heritage; and (iii) policy features (if the CSA reform is a country-wide endeavour).

As Figure 1 shows, holding these variables constant allows focusing on the politics of CSA reforms within a given country. This model can be tested using a matched case study design comparing reform outcomes (operationalised as the change in administrative quality[4]) in two or more institutions at point *t* before reform implementation and at point *t* + 1. We can then look at the determinants of the difference in outcomes. This research design builds on Mill's method of difference (Yanow *et al*., 2008), positing that two study populations (here: ministries) are subject to the same treatment at a given point in time (here: CSA reform implemented at point *t*) and then develop differently on certain dimensions (here: administrative quality) afterwards. If the treatment is

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[3]See, for instance, the World Bank CPIA 15 indicator (World Bank, 2011).

[4]In this paper, the dependent variable will be measured through experts' perceptions of an institution's administrative performance (defined here as the degree to which institutions achieve their objectives). As outlined in 2.1, there are several challenges around measuring administrative quality. While solving these methodological challenges is going beyond the scope of this paper, Chapter 4 addresses this limitation and implications for future research.

[5]There are a number of assumptions underlying this design, such as the parallel trends assumption (in the absence of the CSA reform, administrative quality in both institutions would have developed similarly), which will be discussed in the case study in Chapter 3.

the same and the outcome differs, at least one other factor must be different. In line with the argument earlier we posit this to be political factors.[5]

Which political factors drive within-country variation?

Having proposed a methodology for within-country analysis of CSA reform outcomes, this chapter derives hypotheses on variation in administrative quality for the case study from PE theory. PE approaches underline the importance of elites' vested interests in certain administrative structures. PE theory postulates that the elites' opportunities for rent seeking in the public sector are a decisive factor for any reform success. As such, PE approaches provide useful explanations for why reforms are or are not introduced in the first place, but they only partly account for within-country variation of reform outcomes.

Adapting especially the PE approach for the proposed within-country methodology, we can assume that if a government has passed CSA reform, it will have some vested interests in the implementation process. Recently, Andrews (2013) has hypothesised that one of the main reasons why governments in developing countries adopt cross-institutional measures such as CSA reforms is that they want to send 'signals' to their own constituencies and to donors 'to gain short-term support' (Andrews, 2013: 26). Accordingly, we can assume that especially a country's central leadership (such as the Presidential office) is most interested in supporting widely visible, 'signalling' and 'easy-to-achieve' success stories in a small number of institutions at the least cost. We can thus hypothesise that (i) *if an institution is picked for 'signalling' a success story of CSA reform by the central leadership, its reform outcome is likely to be more successful.*

Based on PE theory, one can assume that high-level officials in each ministry will have their own vested interests in the CSA reform implementation process. However, if a government of a given country has agreed on reform measures in the first place, we can also expect lower levels of opposition to the reform by individual ministers. Rather, as proposed by authors such as Moore, if a reform has been passed then ministers' and heads of agencies' leadership capacity becomes an important factor of a successful outcome (Moore, 1995). More specifically, rational leadership theories outline that during the implementation of governance reforms leaders are important 'institutional entrepreneurs'. As such, they influence reform outcomes through convincing sceptical civil servants of the importance of actual adherence with new laws (Andrews, 2013) or through 'unleashing' the potential of pro-reform-minded civil servants (Kelman, 2005). Based on this, we posit that (ii) *the more active leaders are in facilitating CSA reform implementation through various means, the more successful its outcome will be in a given institution.*

In the development context PE theories also point at the politics of aid in governance reforms. We can assume that donors, like the central leadership of a given country, are interested in visible results of their funding. In line with this, theories on 'pockets of effectiveness' in administration argue that donors focus on specific 'champion' institutions because well-targeted aid would increase administrative capabilities more effectively (Leonard, 2008). Indeed, there is some evidence that governance reform implementation has been more successful in those cases when donors supported particular mechanisms in specific institutions (Andrews, 2013). We thus postulate that (iii) *the more technical and financial assistance donors target at CSA-related projects in a given institution, the more likely reform implementation is to be successful in this institution.*

THE POLITICS OF CIVIL SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN GEORGIA AFTER 2003: A MATCHED CASE STUDY

Why Georgia and the Ministry of Justice/Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs? Reasons for the choice of the case study

There are several reasons why the MoJ and the MoLHSA in Georgia serve as a meaningful matched case study to test our hypotheses. First, Georgia has put strong emphasis on reforming its public administration, especially after the Rose Revolution in 2003. Countrywide changes of the civil service system allow applying the aforementioned model, controlling for several variables throughout the country and thereby focusing on the political factors in

reform implementation. Second, contrary to many other developing or transitioning countries, Georgia was repeatedly heralded for its successes in its administration, primarily thanks to a significant reduction in corruption in the civil service. The MoJ and several of its agencies, such as the Civil Registry, is mentioned as a prime example of success, with visible improvements in service delivery, anti-corruption measures and thus in administrative quality (World Bank, 2012b). On the other hand, there are a number of public institutions in Georgia that were not able to replicate these successes. Among them, the MoLHSA is still criticised for its low performance after the Rose Revolution, despite being subject to the same CSA reforms as the MoJ. Finally, because of Georgia's extensive reform efforts after 2003, international donors have significantly scaled up their support, also allowing for a more detailed examination of the politics of aid.

To examine the cases at hand, in addition to secondary literature and analysis of official statistics, data were gathered through 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews with (former) high-level public officials and academics working in the area (see Appendix for an overview of interviewees; at their request some names were anonymised).

A success story? Georgia and its administration in light of the Rose Revolution

Before analysing the MoJ and the MoLHSA in more detail, this chapter sheds light on those determinants of reform outcomes we can isolate in the matched case study, most importantly context, bureaucratic heritage and the CSA policy design.

As with most other post-Soviet nations, Georgia faced many challenges after its independence in 1991. Wars in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the early 1990s, and power struggles among the elite, undermined the South Caucasus republic and its development. The rule of President Shevardnadze from 1995 to 2003 destabilised the country, which in 2001 was described 'as the single most corrupt and reform-prone country in the post-Soviet space' (Christophe, 2005: 1). In 2003, a group of young and mostly western-educated politicians —led by incumbent President Saakashvili—peacefully overthrew the old government in the so-called 'Rose Revolution' (Rinnert, 2012).

The Georgian civil service context before 2003: Bureaucratic heritage

Shortly after taking office, Saakashvili and his cabinet decided to tackle the problems in the corrupt and inefficient public sector, which they saw as one of the major impediments to growth (Bennet, 2011). Georgia inherited most of its civil servants and the system they worked within from the Soviet Union (USAID, 2005). Despite some attempts to reform this system in the 1990s with the help of donors, no effective changes were made (Common, 2010). In practice, the civil service had turned into one of the most corrupt actors in society (Machavariani, 2006). Arguably, the failure to bring about CSA reform was among the main causes for the Rose Revolution (USAID, 2005). At the end of Shevardnadze's rule, the administrative structure was overly complex and the number of civil servants disproportionally high (Machavariani, 2006). Despite some fine-grained differences, all ministries and agencies effectively suffered from similar underperformance and corruption prior to 2003 (Bennet, 2011). Arguably, *bureaucratic heritage* is thus an important factor in the CSA reform process and its outcome in Georgia but can be held constant in the matched case study.

The countrywide CSA reforms under Saakashvili: policy design

Among the first laws Saakashvili signed were two provisions that can be understood as the starting point for the following comprehensive CSA reform. First, the number of federal ministries was reduced from 18 to 13. Second, the civil service law was amended with an article establishing a Civil Service Council and restructuring the Civil Service Bureau (CSB). The Civil Service Council has the mission to elaborate a unified policy on CSA reform, and the CSB was made responsible for implementing the reforms elaborated by the Council and passed by the Parliament (Common, 2010). Additionally, the government implemented a countrywide pay raise for civil servants (USAID, 2005).

From 2003 onwards, a number of further amendments to the civil service law were introduced. Together with Saakashvili's initial bill, they can be understood as the essence of Georgia's CSA reform. Although there was not
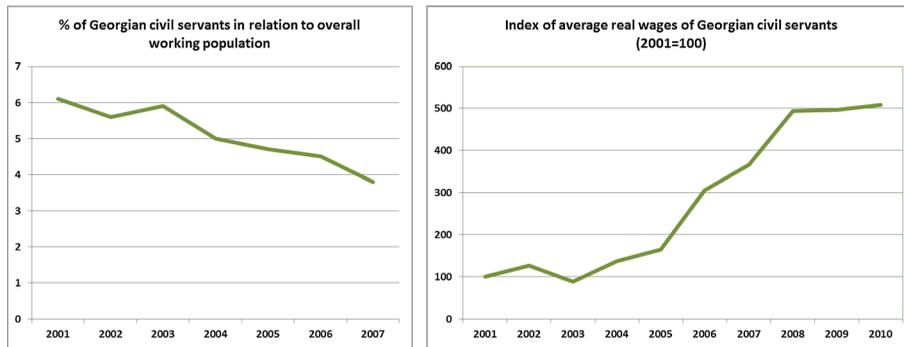
Figure 2. Indicators on the development of the civil service at the national level. Source: Civil Service Bureau of Georgia (2012).

one single law comprehensively reshaping the civil service at once, the amendments that were passed include common CSA reform features seen in other countries, such as increases in civil servants' pay, a new asset disclosure system for civil servants and the introduction of merit-based recruitments. In general, the CSA reform in Georgia has to be understood as a process rather than an event at one point in time. As the reform measures were binding for all ministries in the country, the CSA *de jure policy design* is arguably a constant determinant of the outcomes in this article's cross-institutional case study.

In general, the CSA reform led to a significant downscaling of Georgia's civil service and a remarkable increase in average salaries (Figure 2). According to the CSB, by 2007 the civil service workforce had been reduced by 50 per cent (Abashidze and Schultz, 2007). At the same time, the effect of the initial wave of reforms on corruption was 'dramatic', as in 2010 Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer found that 78 per cent of Georgians felt that corruption had decreased (Bennet, 2011; Bayramov *et al.*, 2013).

Because of these factors, Georgia was widely praised for its CSA reform after 2003. The measures undertaken were far reaching, suggesting strong political momentum. Nevertheless, there has been significant variance in outcomes across institutions with some success stories, but also with a number of failures, which will now be further explored.

One reform, two results: the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs between 2003 and 2013

In order to apply the proposed within-country methodology and test our hypotheses, the difference in administrative quality (dependent variable measuring CSA reform outcome) between both institutions in 2003 and 2013 is explored first before examining the independent variables in more detail.

The dependent variable: both institutions' administrative quality 2003 and 2013

The MoJ is responsible for a wide range of public services aside from its function of overseeing the justice system, among them the registration of citizens and property and the issuance of state documents via its subordinate Civil Registry. In 2003, the MoJ and its agencies were in a dire state in terms of their administrative quality. The capacity and motivation of civil servants was as low as in most public agencies at that time because of a lack of incentives, and corruption was omnipresent. The World Bank estimates that before the Rose Revolution 'officials at civil registry offices paid $5,000–$25,000 to get their job' (World Bank, 2012b). The official fee to obtain a passport at the MoJ's Civil Registry in 2003 amounted to $15 in 2003 prices, but actually citizens had to pay between $100 and $300 in bribes for this service (Samadashvili, 2011). As a consequence, around 60 per cent of the Georgian population did not have valid IDs or passports in 2003 (Vashadze, 2009). Accordingly, in 2001, 97 per cent of the population perceived the Civil Registry as one of the most corrupt public agencies in the country (Vashadze, 2009).

Until 2013, the MoJ embarked on a number of sector reforms and at the same time strongly embraced the government-wide CSA reform. Several stakeholders have underlined that the MoJ was at the forefront of

implementing CSA measures such as merit-based recruitment regulations, salary increases and other human resources-related aspects (Welton, 2006). In parallel to this, the MoJ pushed forward the restructuring of its agencies, most importantly of the Civil Registry. In accordance with the central reform, salaries of employees were raised significantly. In 2011, only 1 per cent of Georgians obtaining new legal documents, such as passports, still reported corruption in the procedures (Samadashvili, 2011). At the same time, 92 per cent of Georgian citizens voiced their satisfaction with the quality of official document issuance (EBRD, 2011), which represents a radical shift in perceptions of the service quality compared with the pre-2003 period and is an indicator of a significant increase in the administrative quality.

The development of the MoLHSA's and its agencies' administrative quality over the past decade is relatively different. Observers point at a lack of capacity within the ministry and its numerous agencies, unsuccessful sector reforms in health and social policy and a high level of corruption before the Rose Revolution (European Observatory on Health Care Systems 2002, USAID 2011). Furthermore, as the MoLHSA had only existed since 1999 (when the Ministry of Health was merged with the Ministry of Social Welfare) its organisational functioning was still relatively chaotic at that time. Corruption and low salaries that could be found across all public institutions were also hindering successful policy implementation in the MoLHSA. Interviewees argue that the ministry's agencies were overstaffed and not able to fulfil their mission. One indicator of the MoLHSA's dysfunctionality was the high level of out-of-pocket payments of citizens for all sorts of public health services, amounting to 70–80 per cent of health service expenditures in 2000 (Belli *et al.*, 2004; Gotsadze *et al.*, 2005).[6]

Despite the CSA reform and a large-scale public health reform in 2004, administrative quality did not improve significantly in the MoLHSA and its agencies. While the countrywide changes in the civil service were also applied to the MoHLSA, accountability and performance in the ministry and its agencies remained unsatisfactory compared with other public institutions (WHO, 2009). The available survey data show that citizens' perceptions of and trust in public health institutions has actually slightly decreased between 2003 and 2013 (CRRC, 2014). One interviewee underlines that the MoLHSA has tried to improve its performance ever since the Rose Revolution 'but nobody has seen any results to date' and 'although the structure of the ministry has been reshaped endlessly (…) the situation is actually getting worse' (Interviewee D). Other data reiterate this perception, for example, 'out of pocket payments as a proportion of total health expenditure have remained stubbornly high (71% in 2007)' (OPM, 2010). Finally, another interviewee points to the fact that in 2013, the most important one-stop shop service of the MoLHSA, a large health and welfare service hall in Tbilisi intended to provide citizens with a range of services, is still in a dire state with long waiting times (Interviewee A, 2014). This is another indicator of a low administrative performance in the ministry.

What has led to these different outcomes and why was the civil service and administrative reform measure not equally successful among ministries?

Hypothesis 1: Presidential Leverage and Signalling

Nearly all interviewees, as well as a number of secondary sources, underline that president Saakashvili intended to drastically improve the civil service after 2003, aiming to do so by keeping as much flexibility for each ministry as possible while not losing his own influence in the reform process (Common, 2010; Interviewee D, 2014). Despite *de jure* equality of CSA reform measures across institutions, *de facto* implementation thus differed between ministries and agencies. Public expectations were high following the Rose Revolution, enhancing the president's desire to achieve visible successes in some institutions as fast as possible; in practice, achieving quick success was easier if the CSA reform was handled in a flexible way. As outlined earlier, among those institutions perceived as most corrupt before 2003 were the Civil Registry and several other MoJ agencies. One interviewee argued that this was a key reason for the President's focus on CSA reform implementation in the MoJ (Interviewee A, 2014). Furthermore, as Saakashvili was Minister of Justice himself before the Rose Revolution, another interviewee has argued that he had a particular personal interest in pushing ahead CSA reform implementation in this institution

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[6]Out of pocket payments in health services can be defined as 'co-payments, self-medication, informal payments and all other expenses paid directly by the households for the health services and goods' (Belli *et al.*, 2004).

(Interviewee B, 2014). Contrary to this, Saakashvili made few remarks on the role of the MoLHSA in the administrative and civil service restructuring (Interviewee B, 2014). Saakashvili's interference also led to a relatively weak CSB and a nearly invisible Civil Service Council between 2004 and 2013 (Common, 2010), two institutions that ended up 'on the sidelines of the reform effort' (Bennet, 2011).

The observed pattern is in line with the hypothesis put forward earlier. If there is political will for CSA reform at the highest level of government, it seems to focus on 'easy-to-achieve gains', and 'once the initial, more visible objectives [are] achieved, presidential attention turns to other issues' (Robinson, 2009: 69).

Hypothesis 2: Leadership and Politics at the Ministry Level

Second, the relatively decentralised implementation of CSA reform measures also led to a greater autonomy of each ministry, which in turn significantly increased the importance of leadership within institutions (Welton, 2006), particularly in the Georgian context where strong hierarchies are pertinent (Interviewee A, 2014). While both the MoJ and the MoLHSA had a number of ministers between 2003 and 2013 (seven each), interviewees have underlined that the turnover of other leaders was significantly higher in the MoLHSA, for instance with more than 20 changes of Deputy Ministers after 2003 (Interviewee C, 2014). Furthermore, driven by several high-level officials, the MoJ was the first ministry to implement a plan for professional development in accordance with the countrywide CSA reform measures (Charkviani, 2012) and the only ministry to set up a training division soon afterwards (Engvall, 2012). After 2008, MoJ staff even trained civil servants from other Georgian ministries (Kotetishvili, 2014). Consequently, the MoJ was one of the few public institutions in Georgia that effectively implemented the new civil service law provisions on capacity development. In contrast, the first MoLHSA ministers after the Rose Revolution 'had no clear vision for HR development issues' (Djibuti *et al.*, 2008) and did not show any intention to implement plans comparable with the MoJ. Interview partners have underlined that today MoJ staff capacity is among the highest in the country (Interviewee D, 2014), contrary to the MoLHSA where there are few skilled civil servants (Interviewee E, 2014). As one interviewee suggested, the post-2003 MoJ leadership was 'particularly motivated' (Interviewee F, 2014) and regularly worked '12 hour days' (World Bank, 2012b: 71) to improve performance. One of the key figures in Georgia's CSA reform implementation, Irakli Kotetishvili, concluded in an interview that ultimately it was the 'capability of the minister who determined the success' of reform implementation, and in the case of the MoJ the ministers had been particularly 'capable' (Kotetishvili, 2014). This is confirmed by a former World Bank official, who states that the *de facto* autonomy in CSA reform implementation 'allowed ministers with a vision and an understanding and support to move forward quickly and successfully; but (…) those [ministries] without a leader of such calibre (…) suffered' (Imnadze in Bennet, 2011: 12).

Furthermore, the specific support of Saakashvili for the MoJ and some of its agencies strengthened these institutions' leadership in CSA reform implementation and management. For example, the President openly supported the radical reform of the MoJ's Civil Registry, including the dismissal of its entire 2200 staff members on one single day in 2004 (Bennet, 2011). Although the former staff were invited to reapply for their jobs, 80 per cent of them were eventually replaced by new civil servants recruited through a merit-based process that was led by new MoJ staff (World Bank, 2012b). At the same time, the head of the Civil Registry and a number of MoJ officials developed a distinct incentive structure that led to a 20-fold increase in *de facto* salaries of the agency's employees (World Bank, 2012b).

This discussion points at another crucial factor determining within-country variation in CSA reform outcomes in Georgia. While official salaries were centrally regulated through the civil service law and were raised significantly after 2003 as shown earlier, they were still not high enough to incentivise particularly skilled people. The main *de facto* financial incentives for higher-level civil servants in Georgia were bonuses that were set by each ministry leadership individually.[7] On top of that, deputy ministers adjusted salaries for subordinated agencies separately. The semi-legal practice of bonus payments and varying pay levels set by each ministry underlines the importance

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[7]Interestingly, the only available statistics on this matter indicate that bonuses in the MoJ were significantly higher than in the MoLHSA in 2012 (Narmania, 2013).
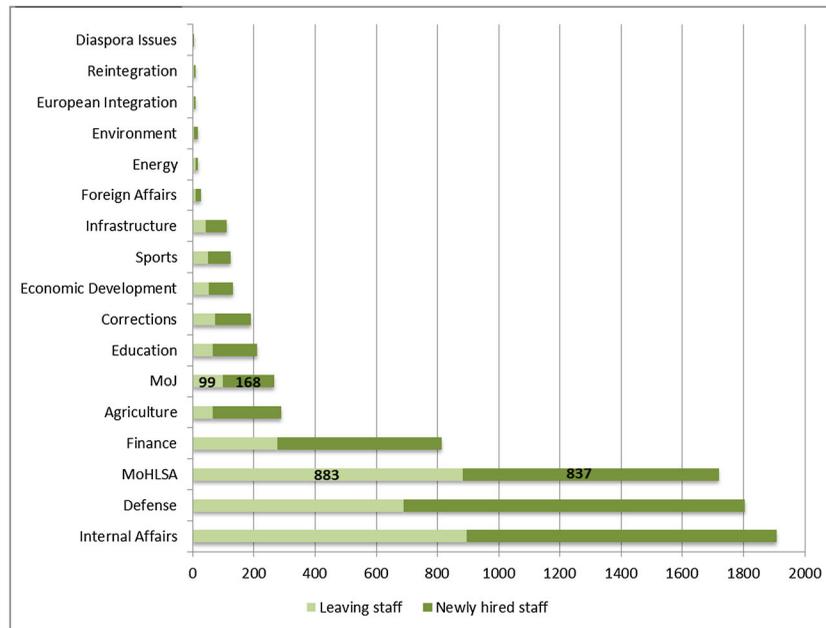
Figure 3. Civil servant posts in central government institutions and their agencies (October 2012–March 2013). Source: Created by author using Transparency International Georgia (2013). MoJ, Ministry of Justice; MoHLSA, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs.

of each institution's leadership for CSA reform outcomes in Georgia, a process also described as 'agencification' of public institutions recently (Lehmbruch and Sanikidze, 2014).

Finally, leadership decisions at the ministry level have contributed to stark differences in staffing practices between institutions despite central provisions. In some Georgian ministries and agencies, large numbers of staff were employed under short-term contracts and were thus subject to possible dismissals in case of political changes. Accordingly, when a new Georgian government took office after the parliamentary elections in 2012, a large turnover in civil servants could be observed in some institutions As apparent from these figures, the MoJ and its agencies were much less affected than the MoLHSA, both in absolute and in relative terms. In the MoLHSA, 110 out of 299 civil servants in the ministry's central office left their positions (with many more leaving in the MoLHSA agencies), whereas in the MoJ's central apparatus just under 30 out of 185 staff were dismissed (Figure 3). Not surprisingly, ministries and agencies 'that experienced fewer turnovers (…), such as the MoJ's Civil Registry, achieved greater success in implementing long-term strategies' (Bennet, 2011: 11). Essentially, despite centralised provisions in the civil service law many agencies followed their 'own set of procedures for hiring and human resource management' (Horoschak, 2011: 5). This shows that even if CSA reform provisions are applicable equally across public institutions *de jure* we can expect *de facto* implementation to vary significantly, depending on the factors outlined in this chapter.

Hypothesis 3: The Politics of Foreign Aid

As hypothesised, we also expect assistance by donors to influence variation in the dependent variable. After 2003, Georgia was a recipient of a particularly large amount of Western aid. In 2012, the state budget lists 88 different aid projects (Ministry of Finance of Georgia, 2012). One major difference between donor assistance in the MoJ and the MoLHSA has been the projects' connection to CSA reform (Interviewee A, 2014). Whereas most of the MoJ-related donor projects explicitly or implicitly included human resource aspects such as salary support, advice on merit-based recruitment or capacity development for staff, the vast majority of MoLHSA projects were focused on technicalities related to specific health issues but did not include civil service law-related provisions. Also, Kotetishvili (2014) points at an interaction effect between hypothesis and the politics of foreign aid, arguing

that thanks to its more active leadership the MoJ has been able to develop much closer relationships to donors and to implement their projects more effectively than the MoLHSA.

Acknowledging the lack of success of CSA reform in many Georgian institutions, donors have effectively ended countrywide civil service projects 'and the money that (…) these institutions had planned to spend on (…) the general [CSA] reform' is now distributed to individual departments or agencies (Welton, 2006: 8). Essentially, this reflects the 'pockets of effectiveness' approach. One of the assumptions of this approach—a later spill over of successful administrative reform experience from one organisation to another—does not hold for the case of Georgia, however.

Explaining within-country variation beyond politics: institutional constraints
Although this chapter has demonstrated that the hypothesised relations between politics and CSA reform outcomes go some way in answering the question put forward in this article, the collected data also reveal that not the entire variation in administrative quality between both institutions in 2013 is attributable to political factors. In addition, some part of this variation can only be explained by the inherent structural differences between the policy sectors.

In 2012, the MoLHSA accounted for 22 per cent of Georgia's budget (GEL1,722 Mio. or £614 Mio., Figure 4), whereas the MoJ and its agencies' budget was much smaller (GEL74 Mio. or £25 Mio.). With a lower budget, institutions such as the MoJ are 'ideal' for success stories of CSA reform implementation as they have a 'focused mandate, with specific, uncontroversial responsibilities' and relatively apolitical functions (AED, 2009).

Furthermore, as the MoLHSA administers the entire welfare and healthcare budget it has considerably more responsibilities than the MoJ, reflected in a higher number of agencies and employees. Accordingly, effective implementation of CSA reform measures and monitoring of staff performance is much more demanding in the MoLHSA. As one former minister bluntly stated in an interview, 'it was a headache' trying to improve staff capacity and performance in a ministry responsible for such large and relatively different policy sectors (Interviewee C,
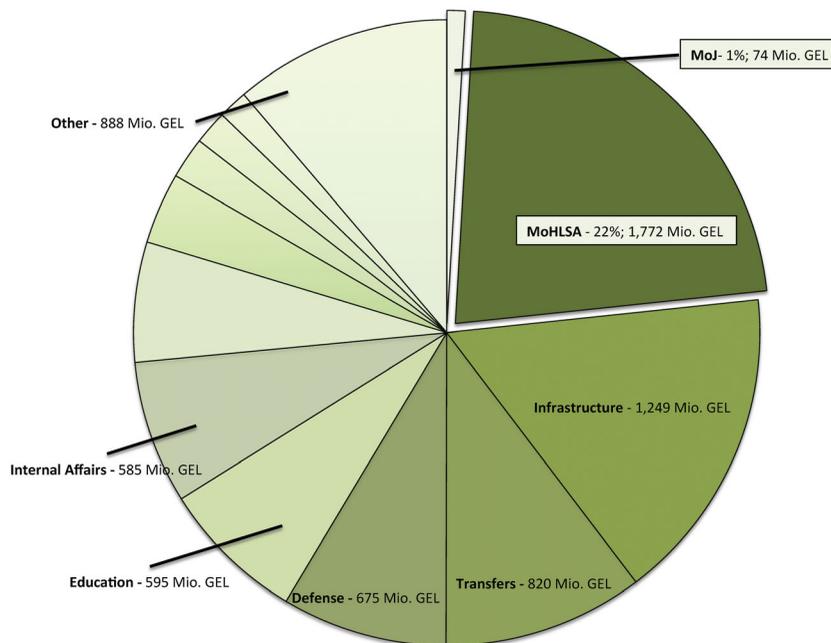

Figure 4. Georgia's State Budget in 2012. Source: Author using Ministry of Finance of Georgia (2012). MoJ, Ministry of Justice; MoHLSA, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs.

2014). At the same time, another interviewee underlined that because of the MoLHSA's scope it would also have been much more expensive to implement CSA reforms as rigorously in this institution (Interviewee D, 2014).

These observations are in line with previous research in institutional sociology theory that postulates a negative correlation between the size of public institutions and their adaptation capacity (Scharpf, 1986; Wilson, 1989). This has not been paid attention to in those studies on CSA reforms analysed in the literature review, as a higher unit of analysis sidelines these differences.

LIMITATIONS OF THE MATCHED CASE STUDY

There are a number of limitations of the case study presented here. First, operationalisation of the dependent variable leaves open several questions. Measurement of administrative quality has been subject to ardent and prolonged academic debate. One of the main reasons for this is the uncertainty about the degree to which administrative quality can be linked to performance of public institutions. Furthermore, existing indices are mostly based on subjective 'expert' opinions and therefore often do not 'proxy bureaucratic quality sufficiently well to justify their use as dependent variables' (Brösamle, 2012: 4). In particular, future research should further investigate to what extent administrative quality is correlated to quantitatively measurable performance outcomes of institutions and to what extent other factors such as sector policies should be considered. As outlined by Goldfinch, 'focussing simply on (…) measures such as "output" as defined by government agencies (…) has severe limitations' (2011: 7).

Second, the lack of data on the civil service in Georgia limits the robustness of the case study results presented here. This is especially relevant for the period before and around the Rose Revolution, as limited baseline information was available, and interviewees acknowledged that they do not remember events from 2003 in detail. For more robust results, it is essential to monitor CSA reform implementation better from its inception.

Third, while this article analysed within-country variation across administrative institutions at the central level in Georgia, we can expect further differences between central and local levels administration that are also subject to CSA reforms. Recently, first research on the extent of geographical 'slippage' in reform outcomes has been conducted (Krishna and Schober, 2014), which could be integrated into the model proposed here.

Finally, the methodology put forward sidelines a focus on external validity, as it aims at isolating certain variables in one country thereby improving the understanding of the politics of CSA reforms *within* this country. In future research, an approach that would enhance external validity would look to compare the impact of similar CSA reforms on several institutions in two countries and to analyse if the influence of the political factors found for the case of Georgia holds for other contexts.

CONCLUSION

This article has analysed the politics of CSA reforms within Georgia and has demonstrated that countrywide reform efforts are necessary but insufficient for the improvement of administrative quality (Table 2). While overall, Georgia has achieved considerable success in some areas of its administration, the three hypothesised political factors (the President's leverage over reform implementation, leadership at the ministry level and the politics of foreign aid), as well as institutional constraints, have led to significant within-country variance in administrative quality across institutions. The case of CSA reforms in Georgia post-2003 seems to be exceptional insofar as there are very few examples of reform episodes in other countries where we can observe such rapid improvements in administrative and civil service quality in a few selected public institutions combined with opposite developments in other institutions that are subject to the same reform measures.

After the Rose Revolution, there was widespread agreement among the country's new leadership that improvements in the civil service were necessary, not least because of the public pressure following the ousting

Table 2. Summary of case study results

	MoJ and agencies	MoLHSA and agencies
Hypothesis : Central leverage	• Strong support of MoJ by president • Focus of central government on 'visible' successes in administration in the MoJ	• No specific focus by the president
Hypothesis : Individual leadership	• Strong mid-level leadership • Various initiatives by leadership supporting CSA implementation, including strategic capacity development and set-up of a training division • Higher bonuses • Lower number of flexible contracts	• Lack of a visionary leadership with focus on CSA issues • No HR plan implemented • High instability in leadership over time with more than 20 deputy ministers between 2003 and 2013
Hypothesis : The politics of aid	• Aid projects focusing on agencies, strong integration of CSA issues • Pro-active leadership contributed to increased amount of aid projects with MoJ	• Large amount of technical aid projects with very limited integration of CSA-reform related issues
Additional determinant: institutional/sector constraints	• Relatively narrow sector/policy focus • Small budget	• Highly complex ministry covering two of the largest policy sectors • Highest budget of all ministries in Georgia

MoJ, Ministry of Justice; MoLHSA, Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs; CSA, civil service and administrative; HR, Human Resources.

of the corrupt former government. However, as demonstrated with the matched case study, despite a countrywide CSA reform, this agreement first and foremost led to a push by Saakashvili and his aides for a number of easy-to-showcase achievements in smaller public institutions such as the MoJ. The large-scale MoLHSA with its more complex governance arrangements did not receive much attention in terms of administrative and civil service quality. Accordingly, its leadership was much less able to implement the provisions of the countrywide CSA reform effectively. At the same time, in a process of 'agencification' (Lehmbruch and Sanikidze, 2014), *de facto* decision-making power over recruitment, salary structures and other CSA-reform related issues were devolved to sub-ministerial agencies, which further contributed to increasing gaps in administrative quality between public institutions in the country. Donors, many of them equally keen on demonstrating success stories in the administration as Georgia's President, increasingly focused their assistance on a few cherry-picked institutions, such as the MoJ's civil registry, and stopped their support for country-wide CSA measures.

These findings support Andrews' hypothesis that governance reforms in international development are used for signalling (2013). The matched case study in Georgia shows that a reform focus on a narrow group of 'champions' to signal success stories constrains effective countrywide implementation as it concentrates resources and attention on a small number of actors. It remains to be analysed further, however, how and to what extent Andrews' proposed solution—a problem driven and adaptive approach to reform—is applicable especially to civil service-related issues.

Finally, institutional constraints in the MoJ and the MoHLSA also point at much stronger within-institution path dependency of CSA reform outcomes than previously acknowledged in the literature. Institutional sociology theory offers an explanation for this, assuming that informal structures in public ministries and agencies shape 'cognitions and values of individuals' (Kaufman, 2003), thereby highlighting a reverse relation between institutions and individuals compared with political economy approaches.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Name	Institution/position	Date and type of interview
Tamta Tsotskhalashvili	Civil Service Bureau Georgia; Head of Department of Civil Service Reform and Development	19.10.2013/Semi-structured qualitative interview (via Skype)
Brett Barrowman	George Washington University; PhD Candidate	22.11.2013/Background discussion (via Skype)
Nino Dolidse	Georgian Institute for Public Affair; Professor	04.12.2013/Background discussion (via Skype)
Interviewee A	USAID Georgia (public sector and CSA reform)	11.02.2014/Semi-structured qualitative interview (via Skype)
Interviewee B	MoLHSA; Former Advisor to the Minister	14.02.2014/Semi-structured qualitative interview (via Skype)
Interviewee F	MoJ; Former Chief of Administration at the MoJ	16.02.2014/Semi-structured qualitative interview (via Skype)
Interviewee C	MoLHSA; Former Minister	18.02.2014/Semi-structured qualitative interview (via Skype)
Interviewee D	Transparency International Georgia; Public Sector Analyst	21.03.2014/Semi-structured qualitative interview (written answers via e-mail)
Interviewee E	Former Deputy Minister in the MoLHSA	22.03.2014/Semi-structured qualitative interview (written answers via e-mail)
Irakli Kotetishvili	Former head of the Georgian Civil Service Bureau	31.03.2014/Semi-structured qualitative interview (via Skype)