

LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SECTOR  
REFORM IN ASIA

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# LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM IN ASIA

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# CHAPTER 1

## LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS IN ASIA: AN OVERVIEW

Evan Berman

### ABSTRACT

*This introductory chapter explains why public sector reforms matter and why a focus on Asia and leadership is needed. It also provides an overview of highlights, lessons and conclusions in this book. Cases of successful public sector reforms usually show leadership by central agencies, with support of the office of President or Prime Minister. While laws and rules are commonly used to further reform, cases show that more is needed to ensure success and sustainability. A range of strategies include heightened accountability, personnel changes, supporting change leaders in departments, reform through capacity development, and learning from innovations other jurisdictions. Conclusions include suggestions for further research.*

This book examines public sector reforms with a focus on Asia and leadership. This introductory chapter explains why public sector reforms matter for meeting many public policy challenges, and why a focus on Asia and

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leadership is needed at this time. This chapter provides an overview of highlights, lessons and conclusions from the chapters that follow and summarises the highlights and arguments of each. We also offer thoughts for further research.

## **WHAT ARE PUBLIC REFORMS? WHY DO THEY MATTER?**

Public sector reforms are changes in government processes or structures that help to better achieve key public policy challenges. Some processes are directly linked to citizens, such as when they use new digital processes to obtain government services quickly and which are free of corruption. Other reforms are less visible to citizens but are no less salient to those working ‘on the inside’ of government. For example, when cross-border pollution is noted as an issue, countries may increase their cooperation and collaboration by sharing information, sometimes in real-time, and by setting up trans-national working groups to address specific concerns. In short, public sector reforms are ‘deliberate changes to (the structures and processes of) public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better’ (Pollitt & Bouckeaert, 2011; United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2006).

The case for public sector reforms is that they provide public managers with the opportunity to improve processes and produce better public sector results. The issue in question is not necessarily that the machinery of government is broken and needs fixing, though improvements often are needed. Rather, public sector reforms usually involve system-wide changes that touch the many thousands of programs which make up government. Public sector reforms open up new opportunities for thousands of public managers to improve how their programs work and what targets for performance and impact can be set, thus providing leverage across manifold programs.

There are many examples of public sector reforms. The following list shows some of the many ways in which governments have improved how they work in the last 20 years or so. Jurisdictions vary on how fast and deep they take to public sector reforms but few may ignore what their neighbours are doing. Hopefully, some of the following examples readily come to mind for many readers:

- Decentralization reforms that build up local government and central government programmes in local areas (e.g., improvement in local health care services, school, roads and agricultural support services).

- ‘Joined up’ efforts in decision-making or programme delivery that cut across departments (e.g., coordinated approaches to crime, welfare or business development).
- Reorganization that aligns priorities with efforts and capability (e.g., building new pollution control departments).
- Strengthening anti-corruption oversight and implementation (e.g., new laws and increased independence and capacity in investigations).
- Public–private partnerships (e.g., delivery of welfare service, rocket launches and highways).
- Digital government (e.g., one-stop shopping and integrated/real-time data).
- Transferring functions to new semi-autonomous agencies (including corporatization of higher education).
- New performance management frameworks (e.g., increasing accountability and performance through new reporting standards, also for leadership development).
- New procurement processes (e.g., increased transparency or access by minority vendors).
- New structures or programmes for transnational cooperation (e.g., Association of Southeast Asian Nations, migration and regional pollution).

Public sector reforms are not always at the centre of heated public policy debate but they do matter. Many semi-autonomous agencies work quietly but successfully on health care promotion and infrastructure development, for example. At times, public sector reforms do make headlines, such as on matters of privatization or anti-corruption, or when they are launched by leading elected officials. However, many public sector reforms fly a bit under the radar of public consciousness, and hence the media, certainly beyond any initial launch. They often are driven by senior public leaders and involve specific concerns or opportunities. This not to say that citizens are not grateful for them or that they don’t make a difference or lack accountability – many of today’s governments work vastly more effectively and efficiently than they ever did.

Yet, even the most casual observer may note very large differences in the use of these reforms across countries and jurisdictions within them. Some agencies and cities are clearly on the cutting edge of adopting reforms, whereas others are locked into the ways of yesteryear. This is not to say that tried and true bureaucratic routine and rules are necessarily bad – predictability and accountability are important values for government – and many public sector reforms are built on well-established processes because they work. However, a need also exists for responding to changing citizen needs, incorporating

changing global expectations and taking advantage of increased capability. As the following chapters will show, leadership is needed at many levels to help bring public sector reforms into reality.

## WHY THIS BOOK?

This book acknowledges that present day knowledge about public sector reforms in Asia is quite scattered and seldom focusses on the challenges of leadership. Given the current state of global knowledge on public sector reforms, as well as the needs of scholars and public managers working on reforms, more knowledge is needed about reforms in Asia and the leadership that is required.

Asia is a fascinating region for focussing on public leadership, including reforms. Specifically, this book focusses on the Asia-Pacific region, defined as roughly East and Southeast Asia in which about one-third of the world's population, about 2.3 billion people, live. This area is hugely diverse. Governments include democracies (e.g., Australia or Japan), one-party states (e.g., China and Vietnam) and unstable systems (e.g., Thailand). They have a broad range of cultural legacies such as Confucian (Japan and Vietnam), Buddhist (Thailand) and Western (e.g., Australia) and vastly different levels of economic development (e.g., Singapore and Indonesia). The region includes countries with the least corruption (e.g., Singapore) and those with high corruption levels (e.g., Vietnam). The region includes the world's most populous country (China) as well as some of the smallest states (e.g., New Zealand). In the Asia-Pacific states, governments typically play leading roles in social and economic development (e.g., Malaysia and China), yet by measures of expenditures or civil servants per capita, most are among the smaller ones in the world. The country cases, identified above, reflect this great diversity.

Public sector reforms are very relevant to these countries and their leaders. Matters of food supply, housing, education, public health and national security are key priorities. In Asia, strong governments are needed and valued to ensure these; weak governments are associated with public suffering and a lack of governability. The quality of government planning and execution is important to economic development and political stability. Public sector reforms to increase government effectiveness, assist leaders to achieve their policy aims and are often picked up in government agendas and as executive priorities.

Our interest in this book is to explore what is known about these reforms with an eye towards helping leaders responsible for such reforms. Clearly,

there is a very large variation; some Asia-Pacific countries are leading in public sector reforms, while others are surely not. This is not only a matter of understanding as to which factors are associated with success and failure, as many scholarly studies are apt to do, but it is also to further our understanding about what leaders might need to do to be successful. If a strong (or at least effective) government is sought, then leaders are needed who know how to realize the effective use of public sector reform, as well.

The global literature on public sector reforms, which is fairly extensive, has not been particularly focussed on this leadership matter, to which this book adds. Generally speaking, studies of public sector reforms often discuss broad paradigms of reforms and their content, such as New Public Management, New Public Governance and Neo-Weberian State, which are reflected in the above examples (e.g., [Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2015](#); [Laegrid & Christensen, 2013](#); [Wong, 2015](#)). Other reform studies describe specific reforms, such as public-private partnerships, e-government or personnel reforms, focussed on specific countries and programmes or policy settings (e.g., [Berman, 2015](#); [Phua, Ling, & Phua, 2014](#); [Wu, Ramesh, & Yu, 2017](#)). Some studies assess reform outcomes, although often qualitatively as quantification is not easy and often limited to narrow measures of specific reforms in specific settings.

Of most relevance to the theme of leadership are past studies that describe how reforms emerge. While some focus on broad trends of, say, technology (e.g., e-government and energy trends) or social change (social media and transparency) as driving factors (e.g., [de Vries, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2016](#); [Pollitt & Bouckeaert, 2011](#)), almost all studies also note the role of political elites and bureaucratic actors in leading or picking up reforms and realizing them (e.g., [Choi, 2010](#); [Sobis, Berg, & Vries, 2012](#)). This book builds on the latter, focussing on the leadership of political executives and bureaucratic actors.

The chapters that follow examine the strategies and contexts of reform leadership. Authors were instructed to focus on the following matters in their chapters; identifying the locus and drivers of reforms, the extent and manner that leadership is seen to further reform efforts, how leaders address resisting actors inside organizations, overcome public distrust, address relations with the authorizing environment; and how leaders build operational capacity to succeed reform implementation and making reform efforts sustainable. Authors were also instructed to provide one or more cases illustrating the above practices of leadership. The chapters are informed by cutting edge interests in these areas.

The results of these efforts are contained in the following pages. The following section brings together some of the main highlights.

## **TOWARDS A THEORY OF LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS**

In what follows, we draw on the book chapters to highlight matters of leadership in public sector reforms. As the range of constitutional practices varies, we use the term ‘presidents’ to refer to prime ministers (e.g., New Zealand), presidents (e.g., Thailand) and party secretary generals (e.g., China), and the term ‘department head’ to refer to ministers, vice ministers, director-generals and chief executives who lead departments and agencies. We clarify instances where other meanings are used, such as ministers who are not also department heads (e.g., in Westminster systems).

### **WHO LEADS IN INITIATING PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS?**

Public sector reforms, even when not government-wide, typically involve quite fundamental changes in structure and processes that require new policies at the highest levels, sometimes requiring legal or legislative actions as well. In all chapters, these involve the presidents and/or cabinet. Public sector reforms often include parts that are aligned with governance platforms of political parties and their presidents (e.g., privatization in Japan, one-stop shopping in Malaysia and anti-corruption in China), and chapters in this book clearly show that presidents often take a strong interest in leading certain reforms. While public sector reforms seldom arise from voter priorities, in recent years, key policy targets of education, crime, environment, welfare and job creation have led to ‘whole-of-government’ actions in each area and included direct involvement of the president and cabinet (e.g., Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore).

However, public sector reform does not always originate from political processes or platforms. Central agencies such as the treasury, national planning, budget, administration and civil service reform offices also lead the development of public sector reforms. Central offices have relevant mandates, led prior reform efforts, and are well-positioned to lead consultation processes with departments across government. Officials in central agencies often have broad relations with other departments and, in some countries, even come from them, too. The cases of Singapore and Japan show senior officials playing important roles, working together with ministers to formulate specific reform plans and initiatives. In such instances, ‘teamwork’ of high-level officials and ministers is described and is at play.



Thus, the source of initiative of public sector reforms is varied. The case of Thailand also shows societal actors working with bureaucrats over many years dealing with successive ministers (e.g., ‘jazz-based’ model). A concern is that leadership that builds successful support for reform initiatives does not also always generate pathways for success and address barriers that may need to be overcome. The chapters on Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Australia also show instances where reform leadership did not include strategies or conceptualizations for lower level leaders to be successful – which they were not. While this might be seen as implementation, it is also an issue of decision-making that does not thoroughly identify and provide pathways for success. The cases of Singapore and Japan show the use of fact-based analysis and input from senior public managers that may help identify success factors, which no doubt is furthered by involving those responsible for subsequent implementation of success. The use of rule-, law- or ideology-based analysis as frameworks may lead to blind spots about the realities that reform leaders face.

In short, some chapters in this book raise concern about insufficiently adequate (i.e., low quality) decision-making for reform. Also, the case of Malaysia shows the unwillingness of political leaders to address some core challenges, which no doubt is present in other countries too. We raise these matters as suggestions for further research.

## **HOW ARE PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS IMPLEMENTED?**

The nature of the public sector involving high-level policy often leads to a high-level of involvement in implementation. Different practices are reported, usually involving presidents, cabinets or core agencies. The underlying logic is that implementation from the highest levels is needed to ensure (i) implementation across the entire government (all departments and quasi-autonomous agencies), (ii) overcome resistance at the very top layer of the departments and provide senior department managers with tools for implementation (e.g., mandates, budgets and interventions) and (iii) provide accountability and oversight so that reforms proceed and are achieved.

The cases report a range of organizational practices. In Japan, the administrative management agency was established in the president’s office, but various presidents also created advisory councils reporting to them when they wanted support from business and other societal leaders for reforms.

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Administrative Reform was created, and the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission was created in Thailand. In New Zealand, the State Services Commission (SSC) was created that today leads many reforms. In Australia, the Treasury and Public Service Commission leads reform. While the power of these organizations waxes and wanes, there is little doubt that they have the ears of presidents and are involved or lead in implementing reforms. In China and Vietnam, central party congresses are the source of documents and the framework is enforced from top down.

The chapters discuss various tools of implementation. Laws and rules set up new organizations, requirements, processes and accountability, involving privatization, management, corruption and more. Leaders use appointment and promotion to encourage lower level managers to implement reforms, and they remove and replace resisting actors and use audits to ensure compliance. They provide clear policy announcements and training to increase and further accountability and expectations. In the case of anti-corruption, audits are also used to lead criminal investigations and punishment. The above agencies usually provide reports on monitoring the progress of the reforms and call upon ministers and cabinets when interventions are needed. Together, the chapters help piece together what is a pretty clear framework. The chapters on Japan and China, taken together, provide a clear overview that is reinforced and extended by others as discussed below.

However, new laws and rules are not enough and also contain problems. Many chapters report concerns about lack of conditions, resistance and sustainability over time. In Vietnam, the scope of reform is said to be too broad, the capacity of public agencies and civil servants is limited, and existing monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems are weak. In Thailand, strict and narrow financial rules limit resourcing for reforms. In Indonesia, innovation can cause leaders to tread beyond parameters, resulting in prosecution. Public sector reforms in China too are seen to take many cycles, suggesting many challenges as well. Bureaucratic, rule-based and/or corrupt cultures can be highly resistant to client-focussed and outcome-oriented reforms, and the chapters from Australia and New Zealand raise additional implementation issues for management reforms. Training is mentioned in some chapters, but it needs to be specific and deal with actual situations.

There are other problems as well. There are inherent principal-agent problems; high-level leaders may not get accurate information from subordinate agencies and their leader managers about the implementation of state reforms. Gaming with performance-based reporting is well documented in China. There are also challenges of political turnover in democracies and

leadership turnover in one-party systems. The threat of discontinuity of political or party leadership means that implementation needs to be institutionalized before political change occurs. The Australian case shows that a relatively stable political environment allowed implementation to proceed in the mid-term. The same can be said of reforms in Malaysia and Singapore. With so many problems, it is small wonder that reform outcomes are mixed or take a long time to occur.

## **HORIZONS AND INNOVATIONS IN REFORM LEADERSHIP**

The chapters in this book include practices that also extend beyond the above framework. The case of New Zealand is noteworthy in that it establishes a non-political, professional process that increases accountability for department performance. The performance improvement framework (PIF) provides expert assessment of department readiness for meeting prospective mid-term targets, which include organizational capabilities. The PIF stands alongside traditional democratic and political accountability mechanisms and gains its force by being tied to the contract renewal and performance appraisal of department heads. This not only gives an additional locus for driving public sector reforms but also gives a non-political focus to reform and to priorities that can broaden content when issues are beyond the interest of presidents and their cabinet, such as issues of management reforms and long-term changes.

The Indonesian chapter describes efforts to find and support reform ‘champions’ in departments. The idea is that over time reforms are implemented in cascading sequence and that this process itself creates new leaders who learn to address and overcome obstacles; successive leaders share in lessons. The idea is intellectually well stabled in the organizational development literature. The case shows leaders turning threats into new reform opportunities and engaging in collaboration across departments and jurisdictions in building new coalitions for change and engaging with the authorizing environment. While the success of this strategy is untested, does not address overarching constraints (e.g., corruption), and may initially lead to somewhat scattered progress, it nonetheless aims to build capacity and progress in decentralized systems and one can easily imagine policies and practices in support of these efforts.

Accountability of department managers is taken yet further in cases of Singapore and China. In the case of Singapore, it is reported that managers

get frequent feedback at all levels and strict performance standards are held; promotion is merit based and competitive. The idea is to increase innovation and reform in the appraisal and selection of public managers as well as in dialogue and feedback processes that speak to the organizational culture. In China and Singapore, strict accountability audits keep people on their toes when presidents express clear priorities that are followed by persistent audits and harsh consequences. Leaders show that they mean business when there is accountability. (However, chapters also show that this is not always the case. In theory, double accountability in one-party systems to both government and party officials should keep reform implementation high, yet in Vietnam poor capacity and corruption are said to thwart this.)

The chapters on Vietnam and the Philippines also point to the role of local governments as a source of reform innovation. In Vietnam, local governments are given leeway to ‘break fences’ and inspire new innovation that could be later adopted in other jurisdictions or the national government. The chapter on the Philippines discusses that in spite of the numerous public sector reforms being primary concerns of successive national leaders of the Philippines, massive – and sometimes impressive – reorganization plans have not met their declared objectives. Instead, these authors focus on the role of leaders at all levels of government, including local governments, civil society and universities. Leaders work by developing capacities of themselves and others, by pushing the boundaries of continuous improvement and by focusing on reforms of institutions, structures and procedures that are anchored in behaviour, values and vision. In doing so, these change leaders become the sources of reform.

Finally, it would appear that some path dependency in public sector reforms may exist. It is very hard to succeed in reforms where high corruption and low professional capacity exist. This is supported by the cases in this book, both comparatively and in time. Many current reforms assume transparency and professional orientations in managers’ discretionary authority, and countries such as Singapore, New Zealand and Australia have high transparency rankings. While it may be that building anti-corruption procedures and professionalism is a first or necessary public sector reform at some point, the cases of the Philippines show that reform is possible even in the presence of some corruption.

There is still much that we do not know about leadership in public sector reforms research always has a next frontier. The following are the topics for further research: What are the motivations of reform leaders and senior public managers, and what rewards and opportunities might drive them? What rewards and opportunities encourage those at lower levels who are involved

in implementation? What skills do reform leaders need to have, and how can these be built up at lower levels? How do top leaders remain involved in reform efforts? How do reform decisions avoid or minimize deficiencies in decision-making that trip up subsequent implementation? How can reforms best be implemented beyond central government agencies? How does corruption negatively affect reform success specifically, and how can anti-corruption efforts be integrated to further public sector reform efforts? How can reporting and performance management practices be strengthened to support implementation? How do financial rules and accountability affect reform success? How can reform success be leveraged into creating cultural change in organizations? How does shaping organizational culture affect the success of reform implementation, and what is the evidence that organizational cultures can be shaped? How do jurisdictions learn from each other and how can that be improved? How can the lessons from smaller, reform-minded jurisdictions, either smaller countries or in local governments, be used to further reform processes in larger jurisdiction and national departments that may be lagging? We hope that these frontier questions aid in thinking about the future research.

In sum, public sector reforms vary in the degree of commitment and success. We hope that the above analysis, and the chapters that follow, can help inform and guide the work of reform leaders.

## **ABOUT THE CHAPTERS**

While authors were asked to follow the above-mentioned ‘guiding issues’ on reform leadership, authors used their discretion to highlight themes in their countries and bring forth additional cases and evidence as available to them. The chapters of the book thus bring out somewhat different aspects and themes. These are discussed below for the readers’ reference.

*Japan* has had four periods of public sector reforms since World War II. Masahiro Horie discusses leadership for reform during the occupation period, the high economic growth period, the low economic growth period and the search for a ‘new’ Japan under various present difficulties. Reforms reflect the priorities of the time and interests of prime ministers, whose style also affected how public sector reforms are advanced. During the occupation period, the Administrative Management Agency was established in the Prime Minister’s Office and was responsible for the overall management of national government organizations. It was staffed by civil servants who become experts in their areas. Since the 1980s, furthering privatization, deregulation

and reorganization, advisory councils for the prime minister were also used involving influential business leaders and scholars.

Horie shows that 'political leadership, especially that of the prime minister and minister in charge of administrative reform, is important in deciding on highly political issues, to persuade or direct politicians and administrators to follow the leadership, to inspire and get support of the general public, and to ensure the support or acceptance of those concerned'. Where prime ministers are not directly involved, leadership is provided by professional administrators under the general support of the prime minister and the minister responsible for administrative reform. He describes detailed analyses and notes that reform sustainability occurs through institutionalization, incentives, management and producing meaningful results.

Leadership for public sector reforms in *Indonesia* involves both national level efforts and leadership from local levels that have been empowered by prior decentralization. Eko Prasajo and Defny Holidin focus on reforms by the national government, which have been guided by values of serving the public, increasing efficiency and becoming corruption-free. Although the National Development Agency and the Ministry for Administrative Reform provide central impetus and coordination, reforms are seen as quite fragmented across ministries, with uneven results. The authors are concerned about reform effectiveness and sustainability. Reform leadership is challenged by human capital and legally mandated but inefficient bureaucratic processes and structures, as well as challenges of public distrust and disobedient civil servants. The latter is sometimes dealt with by using patronage to insert allies for reform, and they note leaders gaining leverage from working across boundaries and jurisdictions and by improving their authorizing environment. Prasajo and Holidin describe a strategy of leaders-led efforts that are cascaded through ministries through institutionalization (e.g., of policies) and obtaining support from successive reform champions at different levels and locations. The authors argue for increasing the number of 'champion leaders' who pragmatically, transactionally and successfully get subordinates to commit to reform efforts.

In his chapter on *China*, Jiang Wu and Shao Jingjuin discuss how China's rapid economic development since the 1970s has involved three different periods of administrative reforms, stretching out over seven successive five-year plans. Wu focusses on leadership style, specifically, the thinking that is expected from leaders in each period of leadership for development, open leadership and innovative leadership. Wu discusses that leadership for these reforms comes from the highest levels, the Communist Party of China (CPC), as articulated by successive secretary generals of the CPC, that the reform

purpose is not only to achieve policy goals but also to uphold CPC leadership in China, and that public managers throughout China are assessed by the party as well as the government. Wu also provides an excellent case of reform leadership in anti-corruption that shows how the CPC deals with complex and entrenched issues through education and strict implementation, leading to punishment of 1.2 million people, including senior officials. The case shows senior officials setting the general direction, preserving the role of the CPC and achieving results learned through practice and innovation, trends towards increasing the rule of law and the use of audits.

*Thailand* has continuously had administrative reforms, in spite of periods of military regime and democratic government. Supachai Yavaprabhas describes leadership of administration reforms coming from issue experts and senior civil service officers described as a 'jazz-banded' leadership model of different actors. Political parties pick up reform packages consistent with their policy platforms, while the military looks for ready-to-deliver-policy packages. Supachai discusses the example of education and health care reforms and the role of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC). In Thailand, resistance usually occurs during the implementation stage than at the formulation stage. Supachai discusses OPDC initiatives that were implemented with bonuses of up to 12-month salary for some senior officers and department heads. In health care, success came from concerted efforts of health care experts who promoted their ideas for long periods of time and successfully continued to convince politicians running the Ministry of Public Health. In other instances, however, budget allocations may bump up against financial procedures that are detailed and tight due to anti-corruption practices. In education reforms, teachers were placed at different school districts that lacked commitment. In decentralization reforms, resistance comes from line ministries wanting to secure their authority, although local authorities may be very active. Resistance often requires negotiation of many parties and rarely do politicians step in to overcome and assist.

In her chapter on *Vietnam*, Ha Pham describes how in 1986 public sector reforms became important following the Doi Moi programme. Restructuring of the state-owned sector was regarded as crucial for ensuring the quality of economic growth, and the Vietnamese government placed considerable effort in public sector reforms. The 8th Party Congress (1996) emphasized the urgent need for a more transparent, capable and modern public sector, including efforts to improve law-making process and capacity, reducing burdensome bureaucracy, fighting corruption, increasing leadership by senior officials and improving public service delivery. The government specifies the national Public sector Reform (PSR) master programme, and the Ministry of



Home Affairs coordinates implementation among ministries, central agencies and provincial governments. Local political leaders (party leaders) determine reforms based on the guidelines of the party and the government. Ha Pham writes that in spite of ambitious public service reform programmes and some positive achievements, the quality of the public sector remains poor. The professional capacity of the civil service is low, pay is low, corruption is high and processes and structures seem ill-fitted for the market economy. Reform scope is too broad, the capacity of public agencies and civil servants is limited and existing monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems are weak. In some successes, leaders use appointment and promotion to encourage those at the lower level to implement reforms and provide training to increase understanding. She believes that Vietnamese leadership has become less proactive and vigorous in practicing or embracing bold reform experiments.

In their chapter on *The Philippines*, Alex Brillantes and Lizan Perante-Calina discuss that in spite of public sector reforms being one of the primary concerns of successive national leaders of the Philippines, the ‘massive – and sometimes impressive – reorganization plans have not met their declared objectives.’ They note that intractable and stubborn problems of Weberian bureaucracy, such as excessive rules and regulations, overlapping structures and procedures, inefficient procedures, lack of coordination, excessive partisan politics and corruption, continue. They examine how the leadership can play a pivotal and key role in addressing these problems. Specifically, they argue that reforms should be multidimensional, going beyond reorganization and shifting organizational boxes, and encompassing changes in behaviour, perspectives and attitudes. Using the concept of ‘phronetic leadership’, they examined three cases of a national, local and civil society leader, as well as a survey of university leaders. They conclude that leaders can make a difference by developing capacities of themselves and others and pushing the boundaries of continuous improvement. However, to be sustainable, public sector reforms have to be complemented by reforms of institutions, structures and procedures, and anchored in behaviour, values and a common vision that are communicated well and owned by all.

In the chapter on *Singapore*, David Seth Jones discusses reforms to increase customer-centredness, public consultation (including professional, business and community associations), whole-of-government approaches (and a case of trafficking in persons), increased budget, personnel and procurement delegation to departments and increased role of statutory boards (autonomous agencies). He writes that the driving force behind public sector reforms emanates from the inner core of ministers, and most particularly the prime minister and deputy prime minister, working in close conjunction with senior permanent secretaries,



directors of boards and Government Linked Companies (GLCs). In Singapore, power is concentrated in the hands of political executives and senior levels of civil service; ministers set the policy agenda and make final policy decisions on important issues. The administrative service is the elite service (of about 250 persons) within the civil service that shapes policy, especially permanent secretaries and deputy secretaries. Objections to reforms are anticipated through inputs to the reform process from key stakeholders and experts in the relevant field from inter-ministerial and inter-agency committees and through public consultations. Singapore has achieved an exceptional level of prosperity, and Jones writes that civil service is guided by practices of meritocracy (e.g., in promotion) and strict accountability through audits and anti-corruption efforts.

*Malaysia* has experienced a successful economy at different stages since independence, writes Loo-See Beh. The development of the administration and institution-building phase was followed by reform initiatives, and the 22-year long political leadership under Tun Mahathir Mohamed included accelerating ethnic Malays' participation. Master industrial plans, 5-year development plans and other mid-term plans are used, which included governance and performance management reforms. Today, public service reforms continue to evolve with emphasis on better counter services, 3-government, one-stop clearance centres. Under the Government Transformation Programme launched in 2010, seven national key results areas have been identified (e.g., reducing crime, fighting corruption, improving education and raising living standards of low-income households). Within this framework, the political transformation programme, digital transformation programme, community transformation programme and social transformation programme have been created to advance public sector reforms. Beh writes that while states and leaders remain powerful actors, as public confidence declines in their ability, leaders recognize the need to reform and overcome unethical and inefficient bureaucratic dysfunctions or keep them at a minimum. Leaders manage such problems by using transparency to address problems of vested interests, stringent audits and punishing civil servants for criminal breaches of trust, removal of ministerial control over government-linked companies and removing resisting actors. Yet, allegations of massive corruption persist at the highest level of government, and race relations have regressed. Beh calls for increased value-based leadership that is inclusive at the highest levels.

*Australia* was one of the Anglophone countries that readily adapted to a public management approach, writes John Halligan. Reforms since the 1980s show remarkable breadth, longevity and significance. The reforms acknowledge the failure of the existing approaches and the need to address management deficiencies, fiscal stress and increased complexity. Halligan discusses

four cases, reflecting on leadership from core agencies and executives in other departments. Financial management was pursued by the treasury, which later became a broader managing for results overseen by a senior management committee in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) that conducted specialized inquiries. However, devolution of responsibilities from central agencies did not appear to make managers more accountable. Halligan analyses that the treasury failed to exercise appropriate leadership and that agencies did not integrate management reforms with internal planning processes. By contrast, a one-stop shopping service for welfare was successful, although it later folded in with the Department of Human Services. The DPMC also launched reform process in the 2010s. Although not a priority of the prime minister, some recommendations were implemented that increased public service capacity, such as leadership development and talent management. The Australian case shows that in spite of variable political support and leadership by central agencies, a relatively stable environment (governments serving multiple terms) allowed implementation to proceed in the mid-term, including incentives, to ensure responsiveness at department levels.

*New Zealand* is a small country with a rich history of pioneering administrative reforms. Caroline Rennie and Evan M. Berman describe administrative reform processes emanating from the ‘core agencies’ of the SSC, treasury and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. They describe the new public management reforms of the late 1980s–2000s led by the treasury that restructured ministries (creating more agencies that are single purpose), rewrote policy rules (e.g., the same laws for public and private sector employees) and created accountability from agency heads to ministers as well as SSCs who evaluate and reappoint agency heads. It should be noted that in this Westminster system, ministers provide policy leadership but not executive leadership of the ministries. They describe in detail two reform processes led or administered by SSC since the mid-2000s to increase accountability for the mid-term policy of the ministry and organizational capability targets (PIF) as well as well cross-ministry goals (better public services). These efforts have been evaluated as being quite effective and are noted for their sustainability and improvement over time.

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