Of New Wines & Old Wineskins: Modeling bureaucratic response to the deconstruction of the administrative state

M. Ernita Joaquin
San Francisco State University
To appropriate Norton Long’s (1949) imagery, deconstructionism, circa 2018, is fashioning a bureaucracy that is an “object of contempt to its enemies and of despair to its friends” (p. 257).

As an Association that has a stake in good governance, at the ASPA we must confront this despair, in every way.
Modeling bureau-political response: an attempt

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined.

No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.

— Mark 2:22, Christian Bible
Bureaucratic politics literature
Exit, voice, loyalty?
Working, shirking, sabotage?
Neglect?

Leadership literature
“Administrative conservatorship”
(Terry, 2003)

Combined w/cutback management literature, resulting in an adaptive framework
I. Deconstructing deconstruction

II. Information: weaponization

III. A framework of response for PA
Deconstruction agenda

The first is kind of national security and sovereignty, and that's your intelligence, the Defense Department, Homeland Security.

The second line of work is what I refer to as economic nationalism, and that is Wilbur Ross at Commerce, Steven Mnuchin at Treasury, Lighthizer at Trade, Peter Navarro, Stephen Miller, these people that are rethinking how we're gonna reconstruct our trade arrangements around the world.

The third, broadly, line of work is what is deconstruction of the administrative state. (Bannon, 2017)
Defining “deconstruction” (Merriam-Webster)

- to examine (something, such as a work of literature) using the methods of deconstruction;

- to take apart or examine (something) in order to reveal the basis or composition often with the intention of exposing biases, flaws, or inconsistencies: deconstruct the myths of both the left and the right – Wayne Karlin;

- to adapt or separate the elements of for use in an ironic or radically new way: uses his masterly tailoring skills to deconstruct the classics —Vogue

- destroy, demolish - nations that are deconstructing themselves —Jim Hoagland.
Deconstructing “administrative deconstruction”

- Disinvestment
- Delegitimization
Disinvestment

“occurs when an agency’s administrative capacity to act is severely weakened as a result of deliberate or unconscious actions” (Terry, 2003, p. 116).

The primary causes of weakened capacity are “continuous resource cutbacks, constant manipulation of administrative structure through reorganization; the failure to maintain key administrative processes such as budgeting, personnel, and policy making; and the loss in the strength of relationships among critical actors in administrative agencies” (Lane & Wolke, 1990, p. 4).
Disinvestment

President Trump has fallen behind at filling Senate-confirmable positions at the 15 major Cabinet agencies, a new analysis as of June 23 shows.

- Confirmed
- Sent to the Senate, but not yet confirmed

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Judiciary and non-civilian positions and holdovers from previous administrations are excluded.

Source: Partnership for Public Service

KEVIN UHRMACHER/ THE WASHINGTON POST
Delegitimization

attacking institutional integrity through various means, including weaponization*

of information

An hour-by-hour battle...powered by cable news and a dozen diet Cokes – NY Times
(12/9/2017)

* See Durant, 2008, on weaponizing reforms
Words fuel attitudes, and attitudes fuel deeds”
– Sunstein (former OMB-OIRA chief), 2018
“Weaponized” Tweets

• Conciseness – Emotions packed; easy to remember, repeat (re-tweet), embed
• Self-organizing: Twitter lends itself to mastery over time
• Multiplicative reach – Inter-connection among social media. Tweets can be echoed on the walls of other platforms, multiplying its reach
• Can be manipulated to appear legitimate or majority view
• Presidential weight – monitored by the press and multiplied in the process of press reporting and analysis
• Speed and amount that beat conventional media
• Speed that pre-empts impartiality, triangulation of information that reverberate even as it is discredited
Modeling bureaucracy’s response
What else could they do apart from exit, voice, loyalty?

Administrative conservators: 2 functions

Serve + Preserve/ Conserve agency’s institutional integrity

- Defend distinctive competence; epistemic authority; cohesion; support from unwanted encroachment (Terry, 2003)
Modeling bureaucracy’s response

What else could they do apart from exit, voice, loyalty?

Administrative conservators: 2 functions

Serve +
Preserve/ Conserve agency’s institutional integrity

SELECTIVE ADAPTATION IS KEY
- Response must be calibrated to the threat
A PA Response to Deconstruction

(1) Build it around an administrative value

(2) Identify its key administrative dynamics

Calibrating PA strategies around information

(3) Identify its choice infrastructure
Components of selective adaptation

1. build around an administrative value
2. identify key administrative dynamics
3. identify key infrastructure

Reconceptualize values
Reconceptualize citizenship
Reconceptualize governance
Components of selective adaptation

1. build around an administrative value
   - Reconceptualize values

2. identify key administrative dynamics
   - Reconceptualize citizenship

3. identify key infrastructure
   - Reconceptualize governance

Make **transparency** the centrifugal value

Build trust & cast citizens as mediators

**Reconstitute** lost expertise through networks
Adaptive conservatorship

- in a decimated state

- in the age of weaponized information

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Questions? May email comments to ejoaquin@sfsu.edu