

Understanding Politics and Administration

Pre-reading questions:

- 1. Do you know politics-administration?
- 2. Have you heard theories of politics-administration?
- 3. What are the differences between politics and administration?



Understanding Politics and Administration

	Administration lies outside the proper sphere of politics.
-	Administrative questions are not political questions. Although
	politics sets the tasks for administration, it should not be
	suffered to manipulate its offices.
	Woodrow Wilson
	Politics-Administration
	An examination of early trends in the study of public administration
	reveals two interesting although somewhat contradictory streams of
	thought. There is the view that public administration is made distinctive by
	its relationship to the governmental process and that this relationship
	requires that special attention be paid to such normative concerns as
	justice, freedom, and responsibility. There is also the view that after
	decisions are made in a democratic manner, their implementation depends
	on the same managerial techniques employed in private industry. The
	eventual ascendancy of the latter view point is represented by the
	politics-administration dichotomy, whose symbolic importance cannot
	be overemphasized.

As is often the case, however, the symbol somewhat exceeds

the reality. Many who have commented on the earliest writings in public administration have placed far too much emphasis on the politics-administration dichotomy as a key to the early theoretical writings. For example, Howard McCurdy described it as "the holy writing of American public administration." (1977: 19) True enough, the politics-administration dichotomy was mentioned by a number of early writers. Yet it was hardly "holy writ." Moreover, the dichotomy was never as sharply drawn as many later commentators like to believe.

Especially at the local level, where the council-manager form of government as signed the policy role to the council and the administrative role to the city manager, a fairly sharp distinction seemed to be proposed. Yet, even here, areas of responsibility are often overlapped. Surprisingly, the interaction of politics and administration actually characterizes two formal works usually cited as advocating a strict politics-administration dichotomy: Frank Goodnow's *Policy and Administration* (1900) and W. F. Willoughby's The Government of Modern States (1936), both of which take a more carefully reasoned position than is generally attributed to them. In fact, Goodnow's argument can be read as fundamentally opposed to the separation of governmental functions into the executive, legislative, and iudicial branches.

Reconciling Theory and Reality

Goodnow's book is first of all a critique of the formalist view of government, which holds that the study of the Constitution or other legal requirements is sufficient to understand the operations of government actors. To the contrary he argues, the strict separation of powers contained in the United States Constitution has been violated many times and for good reason. Specifically, the theory of assigning to the legislature the role of making policy and to the executive the role of carrying it out is not reflected in the actual practice of government. Therefore, it is appropriate to rethink the formal theory of separation of powers so that our theory might more closely match our practice.

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True enough, as Goodnow points out, it is possible to distinguish, for analytical purposes, those operations of the state that are essential to the "expression of its will" and those necessary to the "execution of that will." (1900: 15) Politics is concerned with the expression of the will of the state in policies; administration is concerned with the execution of that will. But, "while the two primary functions of government are susceptible to differentiation, the organs of government to which the discharge of these functions is entrusted cannot be clearly defined." (1900: 16) Although one organ of government, the legislature, is primarily concerned with expressing the will of the state, it is not the only organ of government to do so, nor does that activity preclude its acting as well to affect the execution of that will. Similarly, agents of the government charged with executing the will of the state often have enough discretionary power that they may be said to express the will of the state.

Goodnow's comments on the relationship between central and local government responsibilities are also instructive. He notes that legislative centralization is often accompanied by administrative decentralization. In such cases, the local administrative agency may "change the will of the state as expressed by the body representing the state as a whole and so adapt it to what are believed to be the needs of the local community." (1900: 50) Although Goodnow specifically recommends somewhat greater administrative centralization (accompanied by greater legislative autonomy for local governments), his analysis of this point is again in direct contrast to a strict separation of politics and administration. His point is clear: the formal legal bases for the division of governmental responsibilities, both horizontally and vertically, are substantially altered by governmental practice.

Extending the Branches of Government

Many of the same comments apply to W. F. Willoughby's examination of the various functions of government. In an earlier book (Willoughby and Willoughby, 1891: 42), he comments that "the

duties of the executive are to enforce and apply the laws of the nation after they are made by the legislature and interpreted by the courts." However, by the time of his 1919 text (revised 1936), Willoughby recognized certain difficulties in this position. Here he contends that there are not just three branches of government, as generally conceived, but instead five classes of governmental powers: the legislative, judicial, executive, electorate, and administrative branches. In addition to the three traditional branches, Willoughby argues, the electorate should be recognized, because the source of authority in a democracy shifts from the ruler to the people. Also, the electorate has its own "definite and distinguishable functions." (1936: 217) Similarly, the administrative branch should be recognized, since there is a "difference between the function of seeing that laws are enforced and that of actually doing things the law(s) call for." (1936: 219) To Willoughby, "the executive function is essentially political, (and) the administrative function is concerned with putting into effect... policies as determined by the other organs." (1936: 220) While arguing against the traditional separation of powers, Willoughby does recognize a distinction between policy-making and policyexecuting activities, although that distinction is not absolute.

The Interaction of Policy and Administration

A more persuasive practical and theoretical understanding of politics and administration is presented in Leonard White's classic text Introduction to the Study of Public Administration (1948b). While acknowledging that a certain separation of policy and administration is implicit in his definition of public administration. White also recognizes the interaction between the two spheres. He finds particularly noteworthy an increasing trend toward "executive initiative in public policy," which occurs both as administrators exercise discretion in carrying out vague or general legislation and as the advice and counsel of permanent civil servants are sought in the development of policy recommendations. Importantly, White points

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out the special advantage of employing administrative personnel in policy formulation, recognizing that their impartiality and technical skill may equip them to make especially good recommendations. At one point, White even comments that bureaucrats may be in the best position to make policy: "Administration may be the best-equipped branch of government to make genuinely public policy free from overwhelming favoritism to one particular pressure group." Although this point is not elaborated and specific mechanisms for enhancing the policy potential of the bureaucracy are not explored. White does open the possibility that "democratic administration" might parallel "democratic policy," presumably overlapping with each other in many instances.

Administrators as Significant Policy Actors

In any case, the emerging orthodoxy—that administrators are fully implicated in the policy process—was summarized in the late forties in a series of lectures by Paul H. Appleby (1949). Appleby begins by noting the tendency of many academicians and practitioners to view policy and administration as separate activities and, in turn, to see administrators as having little or no policymaking role. To the contrary, Appleby argues, administrators are significant policy actors who influence the policy-making process in several ways, most importantly in the exercise of administrative discretion: "Administrators are continually laying down rules for the future, and administrators are continually determining what the law is, what it means in terms of action." (1949: 7) In addition, administrators also influence policy through recommendations to the legislature. As a result, according to Appleby, "public administration is policymaking." (1949: 170) What is perhaps most distinctive about Appleby's formulation, however, is his philosophical tone-for administrators to be involved in making policy is perfectly appropriate in a democratic society, where "there is always more of politics." (1949: 27) Such involvement is to be expected in a democratic society, but it does raise again the need to examine the relationship between administrative action and democratic governance.

The Lingering Influence of Politics-Administration

A reading of Goodnow's and Willoughby's original formulations of the distinction between politics and administration indicates that their treatment is far less rigid than many, even now, have assumed. Both in fact, argue against the formal, legal view that government operations follow the constitutional separation of powers into the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In contrast Goodnow and Willoughby argue that the relationship between such governmenta functions as policy making and policy execution is much more complex than was previously realized. They are indeed preoccupied with the relationship between politics and administration, but they are no preoccupied with the distinction between politics and administration The role of the bureaucracy throughout the policy-making process was soon not only recognized but emphasized. One might well wonder then, how the politics-administration dichotomy gained its remarkable symbolic power and, even more to the point, how it continues to guide the study of public administration.

Limiting the Field

In my view, there are three reasons for the continuing influence of politics-administration. The first two derive from an interesting and very important shift in administrative studies that occurred with Willoughby's 1927 text, Principles of Public Administration. Where earlier studies had seen administration as a function that occurs within various governmental settings, including the legislature and the judiciary, Willoughby defines the study of public administration as concerned with the "operations of the administrative branch only." (1927: 1) This distinction is extremely important in at least two ways. First, attaching administration to a particular institution, a particular branch of government, does in fact imply a politics-administration

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dichotomy, at least to the extent of saying that administration can be studied apart from the political process. Second, as Marshall Dimock (1936) soon pointed out, such an approach confirms an interpretation of administrative studies as concerned only with improving the managerial efficiency of highly structured organizations.

Despite or perhaps because of these features—features that are examined more closely a little later in this chapter—the shift from a process or functional definition of public administration to an institutional view was soon confirmed. A very influential text by Simon, Smithburg, and Thompson contains the following statement (1950; 7): "By public administration is meant, in common usage, the activities of the executive branches of national, state, and local governments; independent boards and commissions set up by Congress and state legislatures; government corporations; and certain other agencies of a specialized character." Subsequent texts did not focus so distinctly on the executive branch but did make it clear that government employees or government agencies were their primary concern. For most purposes, public administration came to be government administration, mainly the operations of the executive branch.

Beginning with Willoughby's institutional definition of public administration, we find a confirmation of the politics-administration dichotomy without any discussion of it. All the academic and practical discussions of the issue during the first half of the twentieth century pointed out the interdependence of policy and administration. Many writings were serious and sustained attacks on the supposed dichotomy. As a theoretical matter, the politics-administration dichotomy was soon dead (although it is perhaps more accurate to say that it had never been alive). As a practical matter, however, because Willoughby and later writers directed their works to the practical problems of a specific audience—administrative personnel—the politics-administration dichotomy lived on in an institutional definition of public administration. And to the extent that public administration is still defined in institutional terms, the dichotomy survives.

Words and Expressions

trend n. 趋向; 走向; 时尚, 时髦 reconcile vt. 便和解; 使和好; 使一致; 使和谐 centralization n. 集中; 集中化 autonomy n. 自主权; 自治, 自治权;

自治国,社区,或集团等;人身自由 branch n. 分支; 树枝; 部门,分科; 支流

counsel n.建议;协商,讨论;策略;法律顾问,辩护人 vt. 劝告,建议;提供专业咨询

enhance vt. 增进;提高……的价值(或

价格);用计算机增强(照片等)
orthodoxy n. 正统;正统性;正教;正统版的观念(学说、做法等)

philosophical adj. 达观的;哲学上的,哲学(家)的;冷静的,沉着的;明达的

rigid adj. 僵硬的;严格的; (规则、方法等) 死板的; 刚硬的,顽固的

bureaucracy n. 官僚主义;官僚机构;官 僚政治

derive *vt*. 得到,导出;源于,来自; (从·····中)提取

dichotomy n. 一分为二; 二分法

资料来源:[美]罗伯特·B·登哈特(Robert B. Denhardt). 公共组织理论(第五版)[M]. 扶松茂,丁力,译. 竺乾威,校. 北京:中国人民大学出版社,2011.

Exercises

- I Please answer these questions about the text,
- 1. Will you explain the conception of "politics-administration"?
- 2. What is the main idea of Goodnow's book?
- 3. What is the "lingering influence of politics-administration"?
- 4. According to Willoughly, how many classes of governmental powers?
- 5. What's the relationship between central and local government responsibilities inGoodnow's view?
- 6. Say something about the contribution of Willoughby, Goodnow and Appleby to politics and administration.
- 7. Why does politics-administration have the continuing influence?

I Translate the following paragraph into Chinese.

A more persuasive practical and theoretical understanding of politics and administration is presented in Leonard White's classic text Introduction to the Study of Public Administration. While acknowledging that a certain separation of policy and administration is implicit in his definition of public administration, White also recognizes the interaction between the two spheres. He finds particularly noteworthy an increasing trend toward "executive initiative in public policy," which occurs both as administrators exercise discretion in carrying out vague or general legislation and as the advice and counsel of permanent civil servants are sought in the development of policy recommendations. Importantly, White points out the special advantage of employing administrative personnel in policy formulation, recognizing that their impartiality and technical skill may equip them to make especially good recommendations.

I Discussion.

Topic One: In your opinion, what is the interaction of policy and administration?

Topic Two: Do you agree with Appleby's opinion that public administration is policy making? Why?

What Is Public Administration?

Pre-reading questions:

- 1. What is public administration?
- 2. Do you know the history of public administration?
- 3. What do you think is important in public administration?

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What Is Public Administration?

Notes:	we have already described public administration as the
	management of public programs. But to elaborate on this definition, it
	helps to know a little history. Happily, there is only a little history to
	learn because public administration, at least in America, is a relatively
	young field of study. Of course, people have been engaged in the
	management of public programs for thousands of years. (For example,
	imagine the administrative headaches involved in building the Egyptian
	pyramids!) However, the self-conscious study of public administration
	is a fairly recent development, often dated to the work of French and
	German scholars in the late nineteenth century. Public administration
	as we know it today in the United States began as the study of
1	government administration, and that study began as part of late
	nineteenth century efforts to reform governmental operations. Most
	scholars and practitioners date the beginnings of the self-conscious
	study of public administration in this country to an 1887 essay written
	by Woodrow Wilson (then scholar, later president). While some have
	recently questioned the influence Wilson had on the field, there is no
	question his essay marks the symbolic beginning of American public
	administration.
	Wilson's essay was basically reformist in nature, and highly

practical. It was designed to address the inefficiency and open

corruption that had become a part of government during the late 1880s, and to suggest certain remedies within the administration of government. Wilson argued that while scholars and practitioners ha focused on political institutions(such as Congress or the presidency) too little attention had been paid to administrative questions—th questions of how the government actually operates. The result according to Wilson, was that it was becoming "harder to run constitution than to frame one." (Wilson, 1887: 200) Wilson firs wanted the work of government agencies to be accomplished mor effectively. He felt that such organizations would operate best if the pursued the private sector's commitment to efficient or "businesslike operations. Wilson, of course, wrote in a period during which business, industry, and technology were developing in rapid an surprising new ways. Like others, he admired the manageria philosophies that business seemed to be developing. Among thes notions, Wilson particularly favored the idea of concentrating power in a single authority atop a highly integrated and centralize administrative structure. His recommendation of a strong chie executive has been echoed by writers (and chief executives) even t the present.

The men and women who followed Wilson in discussions of what came to be called public administration were very practical people, concerned with reforming governmental structures and making them more efficient. But they were also quite careful to place these concerns within the context of democratic government. How might the principles of democracy, including such lofty ideals as liberty and justice, be extended throughout government and throughout society? Indeed, Leonard D. White, one of the most thoughtful of the early writers, commented that "the study of public administration... needs to be related to the broad generalizations of political theory concerned with such matters as justice, liberty, obedience, and the role of the state in human affairs." (White, 1948: 10) As we will see, a continued concern for operating efficiently while at the same time operating in a

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way consistent with democratic values marks the field of public administration even today.

Contrasting Business and Public Administration

One issue, however, deserves further comment. As we have just seen, even though work in public and nonprofit organizations is guided by commitments to democratic ideals, it is also involved with management, and, for that reason, public administration is often confused with business management. Indeed, such confusion has occasionally been quite prominent in the field of public administration. (As we have already seen, early writers in the field often suggested that government should become more like business, a phrase heard even today.) Certainly, there are some similarities between business and public administration. Managers across all sectors public, private, and nonprofit are involved in questions of organizational design, the allocation of scarce resources, and the management of people. But most observers would agree that the primary distinction between business and public service is that business is primarily concerned with making a profit, while public service is concerned with delivering services or regulating individual or group behavior in the public interest. All would agree that the context of public and nonprofit management significantly alters the work itself. Three differences are most apparent.

Ambiguity

The first difference between government and business lies in the purposes to be served. In most businesses, even those with service objectives, the bottom-line profit is the basic measure of evaluating how good a job the organization is doing. In turn, the performance of individual managers can, in many cases, be directly measured in terms of their unit's contribution to the overall profit of the company. The same is not true in public or nonprofit agencies, where the objectives of the organization in which one works may be much more

ambiguous and where making or losing money is not the main criterion for success or failure.

Often the objectives of public and nonprofit organizations are stated in terms of service; for example, an agency's mission may be to protect the quality of the environment or to provide an adequate level of rehabilitative services to the disabled. Yet such service objectives are much harder to specify and to measure. What does "quality" mean with respect to the environment? What level of service to the disabled is "adequate"? The difficulty of specifying objectives such as these makes it harder to assess the performance of government agencies and in turn their managers. Moreover, most businesses wouldn't tolerate a money-losing operation in a depressed area, but a public or nonprofit organization, though equally attentive to the money being spent, might well consider meeting human needs more important than the financial bottom line.

Pluralistic Decision Making

The second difference between the work in public service and in business is the fact that the public service, at least in a democratic society, requires that many groups and individuals have access to the decision-making process. As a result, decisions that might be made rapidly by one individual or a small group in a business might, in a public or nonprofit organization, require input from many diverse groups and organizations. Consequently, it is difficult to speak of specific decision centers in government. W. Michael Blumenthal, a business executive who became secretary of the treasury in the Carter administration, described the situation in this way:

If the President said to me, you develop an economic policy toward Japan, Mike, the moment that becomes known there are innumerable interest groups that begin to play a role. The House Ways and Means Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, and every member on them and every staff member has an opinion and seeks to exert influence. Also the Foreign Relations Committee, the

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oversight committees, and then the interest groups, business, the unions, the State Department, the Commerce Department, OMB (Office of Management and Budget), Council of Economic Advisers, and not only the top people, but all their staff people, not to speak of the President's staff and the entire press. (Blumenthal, 1983: 30)

The pluralistic nature of public decision making has led many business executives who have worked in the public or nonprofit sectors to comment that this feature of public service makes public and nonprofit management much more difficult than management in the private sector. But, as Blumenthal points out, "the diversity of interests seeking to affect policy is the nature and essence of democratic government." (Blumenthal, 1983: 30 - 31) Many have also found that this aspect of public service is particularly challenging and rewarding.

Visibility

Finally, managers in public and nonprofit organizations seem to operate with much greater visibility than their counterparts in industry. The public service in a democratic society is subject to constant scrutiny by the press and by the public. Donald Rumsfeld, who has worked in both government and business, once commented that "in government, you are operating in a goldfish bowl. You change your mind or make a blunder, as human beings do, and it's on the front page of every newspaper." (Rumsfeld, 1983: 36) The media seems to cover everything you do, and this may be a mixed blessing. On the one hand, media coverage enables the leaders of the organization to communicate rapidly both to external and internal audiences. On the other hand, the media's constant scrutiny of policy positions and their labeling of inconsistencies as weaknesses can be somewhat limiting to free discussion of issues in their formulation stage. And, of course, the occasional intrusions of the press into even the most mundane personal matters can be excessive; one local newspaper even reported a problem a new city manager moving to the community was having with his refrigerator. Yet, executives in government realize that it essential to a democratic society that their work be visible to th public and subject to the interest and control of the citizenry.

Thinking about Public Administration Today

With this background, we can now think more carefully about how the field of public administration has traditionally bee described and how we might develop an action orientation towar the study of public administration. In terms of definition, many ear writers spoke of administration as a function of government something that occurred in many shapes and forms throughout government. There were obviously administrative activities performe in the executive branch, but there were also administrative function performed in the legislative and judicial branches. Some even note that from time to time any single official might engage in bo legislative and administrative functions.

Somewhat later, public administration came to be viewed merely concerned with the activities of the executive agencies government. In the words of an early text, public administration concerned with the "operations of the administrative branch only. (Willoughby, 1927: 1) By the 1950s, such a perspective was s firmly entrenched that the leading text of that period stated, "E public administration is meant, in common usage, the activities the executive branches of national, state, and local governments independent boards and commissions set up by Congress and sta legislatures; government corporations; and certain other agencies a specialized character." (Simon et al., 1950: 7) More mode definitions of public administration have tended to return to the traditional view, including attention to administrative officials in branches of government and even focusing on those in nonproorganizations.

For our purposes, a formal definition of the field may be less

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