

# PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND THE MODERN STATE

ASSESSING TRENDS AND IMPACT

EDITED BY EBERHARD BOHNE, JOHN D. GRAHAM,  
JOS C.N. RAADSCHELDERS WITH JESSE PAUL LEHRKE



# Public Administration and the Modern State

## Assessing Trends and Impact

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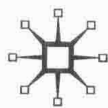
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# Introduction

*Eberhard Bohne, John D. Graham, and Jos C. N. Raadschelders*

The modern public administrator in both the developed and the developing world is facing unprecedented yet similar challenges. They include the globalization of markets, economic and financial crises, the polarization of politics, rapid advances in the technology of communication, a rapid decline of the width of social time (in other words, the time it takes to communicate a message from one person to another), substantial mistrust of the public sector, rising (income) inequalities, a burgeoning nonprofit sector and civil society, new forms of crime and terror, unsustainable rates of resource consumption, global environmental concerns, and rising tensions in multiethnic and multicultural societies. The problems that governments have been expected to address have never been simple, but it appears that many contemporary problems transcend the capacity of government, even when assisted by nonprofit and private actors. They are ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel and Webber, 1973) that, at best, can be “resolved” rather than solved.

Given the scarcity of resources and the growing interdependence of territorial states, the sensible response has been for governments to network and collaborate. Accordingly, public administration literature on network theory and collaborative government has grown rapidly in the past ten years (see, for example, Donahue and Zeckhauser, 2011; Agranoff, 2012). However, that literature focuses on government’s day-to-day operations, whereas we seek herein to bring the state (and government) back into the study of public administration. The purpose of this book is to examine how trends in the modern state influence the normative foundations, functions, structures, and processes of public administration.

Most scholarly studies about the (territorial, national) state are situated in political science, sociology, or anthropology and focus on the

nature and/or the origins of the state. Political scientists initially developed various (system) theories of the state that were grounded in the structural-functionalist framework of the sociologist Talcott Parsons (for an overview, see Chilcote, 1994). In recent decades neo-institutional theory within political science has brought attention back to administrative history (see, for example, Heady, 2001), to world systems theory (Wallerstein, 1979; Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1997), to trajectories of state development (Chase-Dunn and Anderson, 2005), and to questions about the role and position of the state in the modern world as expressed in such concepts as the *active state*, the *hollow state*, the *enabling state*, and *government* and/or *governance*. We develop such themes in detail in the following.

In the following section we discuss perceptions and concepts of the state and their influence on key characteristics of public administration. While it is true that the state is a territorially circumscribed jurisdiction everywhere, how it is perceived and conceptualized can vary with societal culture. Hence we cannot really understand public administration without understanding the state. The subsequent section is devoted to outlining why and how the traditional focus of state concepts on aspects of state authority is gradually shifting to characteristics of the institutional order of the state. This shift is in turn influencing the normative foundations, functions, structures, and processes of public administration. The last section provides a substantive outline of the plan of the book.

## Perspectives on and perceptions and concepts of the state

In the study of public administration, attention to the state is conspicuously absent, despite the fact that it is the territorial and jurisdictional foundation of government. A state is defined as a polity characterized by

- (a) control over a well-defined, usually continuous territory;
- (b) a relatively centralized administration;
- (c) differentiation from other societal associations through the development of permanent and society-overarching institutions; and
- (d) a monopoly over the legitimate use of coercion, assuring that it could pass justice in the name of all (state authority) (Tilly, 1975, p. 27; Dyson, 1980).

This definition identifies the state as a (ad a) territorial, (ad b) top-down, (ad c) autonomous, and (ad d) sovereign entity in which ultimate legal



authority is invested. It is also a definition that was confirmed in the 1933 Montevideo Conference of Rights and Duties of States and which thus dominates international law. In this juridical and Weberian sense, the state is unchanging, its position clearly defined in relation to other states. Yet from a sociological perspective, one that emphasizes much more the domestic side in which the state manifests itself, the state is ever changing and it does so in relation to changes in the, for example, social, economic, political, and cultural environments. A sociological perspective allows us to position the state in the past and the present, and perhaps even in the future.

One of the very few public administration scholars who has carefully considered how the state is perceived in a given society and how that perception influences government and public administration is Richard Stillman. He distinguished four types of state. Table 1.1 displays these and similar conceptualizations of the state and their influence on the key characteristics of public administration.

In the *no-state*, government and public administration are minimal, limited to the traditional roles of maintaining public order and safety and defending the territory against outside aggressors (cf., the night-watch state). With regard to the United States, it was popular for a while to refer to its stateless origins since '[...] the establishment of democratic political institutions preceded the establishment of administrative ones' (Nelson, 1982, p. 775; see also Nettl, 1968, p. 561), but Novak (2008) has convincingly shown that such an image of early America is a "myth." A similar concept, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, is the *hollow state*. Its main characteristic is to outsource public services to private actors (for example, nonprofit organizations) and to replace public administrative structures with arrangements of private networks (Milward and Provan, 2000).

In contrast, the *bold* or *active state* favors an activist government and public administration, exemplified by what is commonly known as the *welfare state*. The state provides security to its people, both against foreign aggression, for which there is the military, and against internal dangers, for which there are, for instance, police and fire departments, the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) in the United States, the BKA (*Bundes Kriminal Amt*; Federal Criminal Police Office) in Germany, and the NCA (National Crime Agency) in the United Kingdom as well as government departments such as the relatively recent addition of a homeland security department in the United States. Additionally, citizens can expect the provision of medical and health care, education, and navigable physical infrastructures (roads, railways, and harbors),