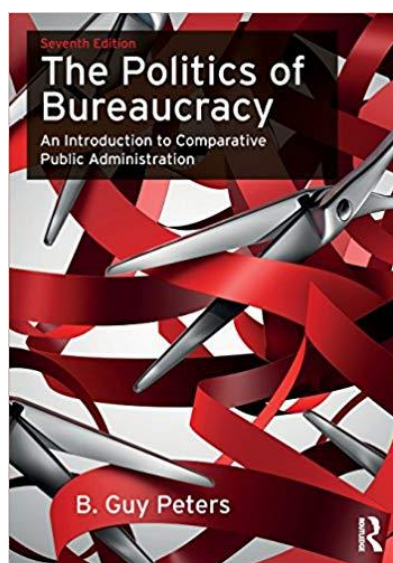


## BOOK REVIEW: THE POLITICS OF BUREAUCRACY

Miro HAČEK<sup>1</sup>

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*The Politics of Bureaucracy, An Introduction to Comparative Public Administration (Seventh Edition). B. Guy Peters. New York and London: Routledge, 2018. 390 pp.*

The conflict between civil servants and politicians has often been described as the basic problem of modern authorities (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman 1981, 252). For this reason, one must understand and thus research the relationship between these two groups of very influential actors in order to understand the governing process. Heady (1991, 448) defined the relationship between bureaucracy and politics using six configurations, later combined into two basic configurations: in one, politicians, in the pursuance of their political aims, dominate civil servants who have lost much of their independence and are only a tool in their hands. In the other, civil servants have maintained a high degree of their independence and power, which they use in the pursuance of their own aims as opposed to those of politicians.

One of the key books, analysing the relations between very different and often conflicting worlds of politics on the one side and bureaucracy on the other, is for the few past decades the book of Guy B. Peters, a leading authority in the field and a Maurice Falk professor of American Government at the University of Pittsburgh, USA. In 2018, Routledge published 7<sup>th</sup> edition of this popular textbook, which provides reader with comprehensive and updated discussion of challenges and recent developments in the field of public bureaucracy. Guy B. Peters is placing modern public administration in its political and intellectual

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<sup>1</sup> Miro HAČEK, PhD, Full Professor, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Editor-in-Chief, JCP. Contact: [miro.hacek@fdv.uni-lj.si](mailto:miro.hacek@fdv.uni-lj.si).

context and is analysing its position and roles in skilful and meticulous manner with insights into the challenges and opportunities of big contemporary government.

The structure of the book remains quite specific and unexpected for the first time reader. First four chapters are in essence a mere foundation of next four chapters, that could be considered as centrepiece of the book. In the introducing chapters Guy B. Peters is analysing and explaining the position of modern public administration in the modern government in its environment and its role in the public policy processes, the influence of different political cultures on public administration, the often neglected and especially in non-consolidated democracies very important question of recruiting public personnel and last, but not least, problems of administrative structure.

Then, in key fourth chapter (chapters from five to eight), Guy B. Peters is examining the relationship of the politics to the conduct of public administration and to the (lack of) policy decision made by administrators. It is sometimes appealing to think about public administration as just management of public policies, but that would be misleading and short-sighted. Especially important, and sometimes sadly neglected, is the story of the relations between the highest ranking civil servants and politicians, and the quest to the finding of the answer to the question of the boundaries between the worlds of politics and bureaucracy.

The book is without the doubt the essential reading for all academics and students who seek to understand the structures and dynamics of the state, government and governance in diverse, comparative contexts. The seventh edition brings us new coverage of public administration in Latin America and Africa, with special emphasis on the impact of New Public Management and other, newer ideas of administrative reforms; examination of the European Union and its effect of public policy and public administration in member countries, as well as exploration of the EU as a particular type of bureaucracy; assessment of "internationalisation" of bureaucracy and concerns with the role of international pressures on domestic governments and organisation in public sector and coverage of the wide-ranging effects of the 2008 global economic crisis on public bureaucracies and public policies, and a varied success of governmental responses to the crisis.

Drawing on evidence from a wide variety of bureaucratic systems, *The Politics of Bureaucracy (7<sup>th</sup> edition)* continues to be essential reading for everyone dealing with the government, policy analysis, politics and international relations.

## REFERENCES

- Aberbach, D. Joel, Robert D. Putnam, and Bert A. Rockman. 1981. *Bureaucrats and politicians in Western democracies*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
- Heady, Ferrel. 2001. *Public administration: A comparative perspective*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. New York and Basel: Marcel Dekker Inc.