

A review of classical thoughts on contemporary public administration in developing countries

1 | INTRODUCTION

For international readers, we suggest three books in this review that are genuine representations of the history of Brazilian public administration, because they deal with its operations and ideology from the period of the monarchy up to the beginning of the 21st century. The books are *The owners/holders of power: the formation of Brazilian political patronage* by Raymundo Faoro, *State reform and managerial public administration* by Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira and Peter Spink, and *Administration and Brazilian context: an outline of a general theory of administration* by Alberto Guerreiro Ramos.

Since the arrival of the Portuguese royal family in Brazil in 1808, studies have reported attempts to implement a public administration to address issues of government and the consolidation of the Brazilian State. King João VI initially brought the entire collection of administrative documents from Portugal to establish the monarchy in Brazil (Costa, 2008). Then in 1889, Brazil became a republic. The court was sent back to Portugal, and a new state was formed. The first measure adopted was to call elections for a constituent assembly. The Constitution of 1891 established the republic as the form of government, and federalism as the departmentalization of the executive power that would function under the presidential regime, and which is working to this day.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, and the beginning of the 21st, public administration in the Brazilian State has been characterized as patrimonial, bureaucratic, and managerial, and today it is seen adopting a stance that focuses more on accepting the participation of society in its major decisions. This trajectory is complex and requires very sophisticated analytical treatment by the academics and practitioners of public administration. The Brazilian State has had moments of patrimonialism, bureaucracy, and managerialism, but observers can find evidence of all three of these characteristics in Brazilian public administration even now. The purpose of this review is to present examples of some of the attempts that have been made to understand the complex reality of the functioning of Brazilian public administration in three books.

For international readers, we suggest three books in this review that are genuine representations of the history of Brazilian public administration, because they deal with its operations and ideology from the period of the monarchy up to the beginning of the 21st century. The books are *The owners of power: the formation of Brazilian political patronage* by Raymundo Faoro (2021), *State reform and managerial public administration* by Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira and Peter Spink (2015), and *Administration and Brazilian context: an outline of a general theory of administration* by Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1983). While the first book addresses the historical and cultural aspects that helped shape Brazilian public administration, the second outlines a perspective of the administrative reforms that have shaped public administration today. The third book adopts a different perspective, and presents an outline of how administrative theories are used in public and private organizations in Brazil. The first book has a rich historical narrative that deals with the beginning of public administration history; the second is an attempt to introduce new public management in the country; and the third was written by one of the most important thinkers, its contribution being that it proposes a theory of Brazilian administration.

2 | THE OWNERS OF POWER

Raymundo Faoro was born in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in 1925. He graduated in Law from the Federal University of Rio Grande dos Sul, and had a legal and journalistic career, collaborating with several newspapers in Brazil. His work, *The owners of power*, was initially published in 1958 in Porto Alegre in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, while the second edition was published in 1975 by the University of São Paulo. It is considered to be an upgrade of the previous edition, and an acknowledged source for those interested on the formation of the Brazilian State (Mota, 1999).

The book is divided into 15 chapters that trace six centuries of Brazil's economic, political, and administrative formation. This starts from describing the origin of the Portuguese State and ends by presenting the period known as the "Old Republic". What makes the book so remarkable and important for public administration is that it presents the colonial period (1500–1822) as being the source of corruption in Brazil. The explanation lies in the idea of patrimonialism, which, in a nutshell, meant power being exercised by a social group that dominated the political-administrative state in the country, and took advantage of this for its own purposes and for the crown. Faoro calls this "Brazilian political patronage" (Faria, 1975), where public administration evolves. The Brazilian public administration evolves from aristocratic to bureaucratic, but the power always remains in power and keeps its benefits (Souza, 1999). According Costa (2008), there are virtually no boundaries between private property and public property in patrimonialism, which leaves the State at the mercy of private interests (patronage). The book argues that despite the change from a colony to an empire and then to a republic, the Brazilian State was unable to rid itself of patrimonialism, which became part of the nation's culture and explains several of its current ills, such as corruption and bad politicians.

3 | STATE REFORM AND MANAGERIAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The book *State reform and managerial public administration* is a collection of texts on state reform that was initially written in 1998 by two professors from the São Paulo School of Business Administration of the Getulio Vargas Foundation. One of the organizers, Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, was Minister of Federal Administration and State Reform in the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The book recounts the effort to implement a managerial public administration in Brazil as the result of the structural reforms that were implemented in the country due to the stabilization of the economy with the introduction of the Real Plan. This effort, called the Master Plan for the Reform of the State Apparatus, is considered by other authors as the third major administrative reform in Brazil: the other two were the bureaucracy reform of the Getulio Vargas government in the 1930s, and Decree-Law 200 in 1967 during the military dictatorship.

One chapter, written by Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira and entitled "From bureaucratic public administration to management", provides a regulatory framework of how the government should act to make public administration more efficient and effective by reducing bureaucratic obstacles and presenting a new role for the Brazilian State. According to the author, the crisis of the 1980s and the effects of inflation on the lives of Brazilian people has imposed a determinant on the agenda of elected governments since the redemocratization of 1985. The author indicates that the crisis experienced by the country in the previous decade was, in fact, a crisis of the Brazilian State, "which is characterized by the loss of its capacity ... to coordinate the economic system in a complementary way to the market." The author proposes a model for replacing the State with private and quasi-public entities for providing public services. The table presented on page X indicates that public administration should be divided into four nuclei: the strategic one, comprising the Legislative and Judiciary branches, the Office of the President of the Republic, and the ministries; activities that are exclusive to the State, comprising police activities, regulation, supervision, promotion, and basic social security; nonexclusive services that could be shared with quasi-public entities, composed of

higher education activities, hospitals, and research centers; and production activities for the market, which should be privatized.

More than 20 years after its initial publication, the book remains a reference in Brazil, and is used as a source of consultation by academics and professionals, and in undergraduate and graduate courses. The authors are still actively producing knowledge, and are human resources teachers on Masters and PhD courses at the Getulio Vargas Foundation. I recommend this book to foreign audiences that are interested in understanding Brazil's public administration during its history as a republic and in its fight against structural crises, such as combating inflation and reducing inequality. In this collection, Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira and Peter Spink present a narrative of the country's history, in which the development of public administration was delayed because of patrimonialism. The book narrates the attempt to improve public services in a country that is rich in natural resources but is unable to transform these resources into quality of life for its people.

4 | ADMINISTRATION AND THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT: AN OUTLINE OF A GENERAL THEORY OF ADMINISTRATION


Alberto Guerreiro Ramos was born in the State of Bahia in 1915 and graduated in Law from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He worked for 20 years in the Department of Public Service Administration, DASP, an agency created in the government of Getulio Vargas as a public service control and development body. Guerreiro was also a professor in the Brazilian School of Public Administration of the Getulio Vargas Foundation, an agency created in the government of Getulio Vargas to form public managers. When he was chased by the military regime that seized power in Brazil in 1964, Guerreiro Ramos moved to the United States where he taught at the University of Southern California from 1966 to 1980. He then returned to Brazil and taught at the Federal University of Santa Catarina until his death in 1982.

Administration and the Brazilian Context is an attempt to address the administrative theories, which had initiated with the works of Frederick Winslow Taylor in the United States, Henry Fayol in France, and Max Weber in Germany, against the background of the Brazilian organizational context. The book is divided into six chapters as follows: (1) the sociological aspects of the theories of administration; (2) the concept of action and administrative rationality; (3) technological development and administration; (4) sociology and the modernization strategy; (5) bureaucracy and development; and (6) formalism and social change. The chapters all have an extensive literature review (Guerreiro Ramos was absent from all his activities to dedicate himself for more than a year to researching the topics covered in the book) and are illustrated by way of cases taken from Brazilian organizations. The approach employed by Guerreiro Ramos in the book is the result of his experience as a civil servant in the Presidency of the Republic, and in DASP. He pursued a social science that was free of fads and foreigners ideas (Júnior, 2010).

5 | CONCLUSIONS

The three works cited here are indicated as proof of what has been written in Brazil over the last hundred years about the functioning and particularities of Brazilian public administration. The choice of these books is an attempt to address what has been focused on as being the influences that have resulted in Brazilian public administration having its current format, and to seek an identity for administrative action in a country that has always suffered from serious acculturation processes. Those who are interested in explaining certain aspects of Brazilian culture, such as corruption, nepotism, and bossism, will be enlightened by Faoro's book, in which the author presents explanations for these phenomena that are based on the cultural formation of Brazil. On the other hand, if the intention is to understand the reforms that were implemented in the country for making public administration more efficient, more effective, and more current, then a good source to consult is the work by Bresser-Pereira and Peter Spink, which

presents the reasons for the implementation of bureaucracy in the country and the attempt to make public administration managerial. For those who would like to know how administration theories are accommodated by and adapt to the functioning of Brazilian organizations (public and private), and those that stand out and distance themselves from other centers because of their peculiarities and cultural aspects, then Guerreiro Ramos's book is the best option. Finally, for one hundred years of public administration history and reports of how this country has undergone two centuries trying to find the best way to manage its resources and improve the quality of life of its people, I strongly recommend you read all three!

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