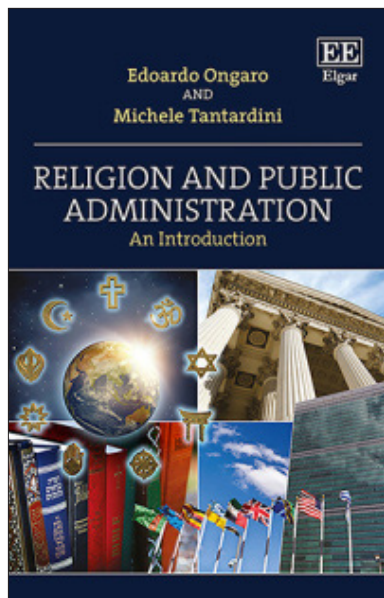


Review



Religion and Public Administration.
An Introduction
Edoardo Ongaro, Michele Tantardini
Edward Elgar Publishing
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Edoardo Ongaro and Michele Tantardini's book titled *Religion and Public Administration. An Introduction* is an original approach to understanding the relationship between religion and public administration in an effort to analyze the 'elephant in the room' (p. 1) of administration studies.

The authors' understanding of religion broadly refers to people's relationship with divinity. It seeks to define a global perspective that attempts to 'conceptualize and theorize the influence of religion in the functioning of public administration systems in all regions of the globe' (p. 3). Their study is intended as an introductory essay for those interested in this topic, an essay that considers the contextual data in which administrative systems operate.

The authors consider that religion can be relevant and influential in the field of public administration in two main ways: at the motivational level and the ideational level. They identify 10 main themes which they address rigorously and analytically, from religion and motivation in public service to the influence of religious beliefs on the behavior of managers and employees in public organizations; from how religion influences the behavior of public service users to how religion affects the mission, values, management practices and performance of public organizations; from religious beliefs and bureaucratic systems to religion as a source of legitimation, accountability and delegation of power in public administration. All these themes

represent a complex and diverse perspective on more or less obvious factors in the functioning of public administration, factors that can be too easily overlooked, despite their importance, in traditional analyses of the functioning of the public system.

The connection between religion and the political systems is not new to anyone and has been the subject of much political, scientific, and conceptual work. Rigorous and systematic analysis of the influence of religion on the functioning of public administration has not been treated as seriously over time, although it is an important strategic factor for understanding the evolution over time and the effective functioning of administrative systems. Although the diversity of contexts and relevant factors is great, the authors manage to draw attention to some common elements, important beyond the specificity of some countries, regions, or administrative structures. As such, their contribution is not only descriptive but analytical, conceptual, and integrative for a relevant and important field for the study of public administration.

The book is an extremely useful read not only for those interested in the religion-public administration connection but for all those trying to understand administrative systems in their complexity and sophistication connected with diverse beliefs, values, cultures, and strategic perspectives. As such, it represents an important source in the process of knowing and understanding administrative sciences.

Calin Emilian HINȚEA

Professor, College of Political, Administrative and Communication
Sciences, Public Administration and Management Department

Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania

Email: hintea@fspac.ro

Tel.: 0040-264-431361