

## People VS Bureaucracies in the 2020's

Amos Avny<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** The world of 2020's differs significantly from the previous century. It is natural, therefore, that people will call for changing also the Public Administration and all the governance establishment. The paper below discusses some paradigmatic changes required for improving the existing system. Further, it explores the direct and non-direct democratic way of representation, which can be improved by using the new advanced communication technology. Later the Author shortly discusses the E-Government future potential. He also emphasizes his recommendation for making public service a much more people oriented and human centric system. Finally, the Author suggests to introduce into the existing bureaucracies **a mandatory by-pass mechanism** that will enable circumventing most of the system's unnecessary built-in obstacles.

The mandatory by-pass mechanism will be built of two levels exceptional committees, one at the field level and one of the appeal one and will be staffed by current and retired employees.

**Key Words:** Bureaucracy, Public Service, Democracy, People's wish

### Introduction

The general feeling of many Europeans is of discomfort. This mood was even enhanced due to the recent concerns about Greece's membership in the EU. As an international issue it was a matter of general knowledge that also was amplified by the international press and the global media, known to lay people abroad. The Author, therefore, did not pay too much attention in documenting properly this low mood that is used here as an opening assumption. .

At the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century **the socio-economic** environment indicates that **something fails to function** in many liberal democratic Nations. This malfunctioning situation could appear between the government and the general public, may surface between the traditional democratic institutions and their electorate and may emerge between the State's Agencies and the people. Less sensitive observers may reject such a claim and will argue that this is the normal course of democratic life. They may also claim that such ups-and-downs are normal in politics, similarly to the business cycle. The Author of this paper argues that these changes symptomize a more significant move - **a deep and a genuine desire of young people to establish a different kind of relationships between them and their Governments.**

## 2. The Issue

The complex situation in Europe and the economic difficulties young people face today in many countries cause them to look for new avenues for political-economic activity. They tend to think that the traditional democratic institutions and the running

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Amos Avny Senior Management and Strategy Consultant, **OmniDev International, Israel**

administrating patterns fail and are unable to meet their needs. Many feel that the older systems cannot meet any more the present challenges set before them by citizens in developed nations. Thus, desires for finding different courses of action and demands for a renewed governing practices are openly expressed. For exploring the issue, some theoretical assumptions are shortly discussed before some suggestions for change are further detailed.

### 3. Public Affairs Theoretical and Practical Foundations

#### 3.1 The Traditional Perspective

The traditional paradigm of public service rests on four major building blocks: The French Revolution declaration, the British Imperial Civil Service practices, the German Max Weber's Theory of Bureaucracy and the American Public Administration early writers.

Over time some of these symbols lose their relevancy. The French Revolution calls for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity eventually came true when people were liberated, attained political equality and democracy. The British Civil Service that originally was designed for meeting the Imperial needs had lost most of its power along with the de-colonization process. And so, at the beginning of the 20th Century two major schools of Public Administration remained: the American and the German ones. The German believed that they were offering a new and a better type of government. Max Weber (1946) believed that "**Modern officialdom functions**" have "**specific manner**" (p.50). He offered his **Theory of Bureaucracy**, which endorses and promotes the ruling of the able and the qualified. Woodrow Wilson (1887) in his "Study of Administration" summed up his approach by saying that "**Clerks could arrange after doctors had agreed upon principles (p.11)**."

The above quotes clearly demonstrate the approach of many schools about the nature of the civil service. Whereas the French held that the Civil Service should serve the "**Republic**", the British believed that it should swear loyalty to the "**Queen**" (or the King). On the other hand, the Germans held that the state is run by the "**Bureaucracy**" and the Americans demanded loyalty to the "**Constitution.**" In short, it is quite obvious that notwithstanding all the popular declarations and the transcendental intentions, very few state-persons demanded that Civil Service will be directed to serve the people and to meet their needs.

Another line of thought that demarcated the public sector in the capitalist world was the tendency of separating it from the business sector. Proponents of the public sector usually argued that it should be managed differently due to the fact that in contrast to private business they are a not-for-profit enterprise. This tendency led to a situation where in many Western Democracies two courses of action, public and private ones, were running in parallel throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. But, despite this theoretical separation, the public sector had adopted some of the worst characteristics of the Capitalist regime. Many times it felt and behaved like a cartel – a strong and mighty organization that dominates a non-competitive operation. The single common person stood frequently weak, incapable and helpless vis-à-vis the

representatives of the Queen, the Republic, the Bureaucracy or the Constitution. Frequently, administrators pretended and forced citizens to believe that they also knew what is right and wrong. After allowing citizens to materialize their voting right by the general elections they were asked to let the doctors, the administrators or the bureaucrats to run the government. This in fact is, and still is, a very exclusive process.

As the sole factor in charge or the single agent around **public employers lack the basic feature of the business world, which is meeting the consumer's demand**. The public service's founding fathers detached themselves from the people's wishes and desires and claimed that they knew better what is needed. The ideological discourse on the Government' size, carried out vividly during the 1980's, was mainly about economic ideology and relatively less about the people's right to choose.

Toward the end of the century, with the ending of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Doctrine, the world faced a significant changes At that time, Democracy became the world winning form of government and many felt themselves free to look for new challenges. Generations of struggle for freedom and political and social rights came to end. People were ready and willing to better their material life. These desires were strongly supported by advanced technology, communication and media, which have boosted significantly and inspired people to look for new horizons. The existing arrangements failed to meet young people's expectations. The 2008 financial crisis, first in the US and later in Europe, has added a very poor prospect to the world youngsters. It was clear to many that the old traditional greedy Capitalisms should be changed and the whole political-economic paradigm should be revised. Naturally, Public Service and people-government relations, which are indispensable parts of every regime, should also be redesigned.

### 3.2 The Required Paradigm Shift

Due to the domination of the Capitalist perspective, **competition** was and still is one of the buzz words which characterizes and represents the core of free market regime. The effect of this term is so strong that concealed and unconcealed powers are assigned to it and its influence is almost unbeatable. Competition is perceived by many orthodox and non-orthodox capitalists as a panacea for all socio-economic maladies. This perspective has also infiltrated into the public sector and its agencies.

The 2008 financial crisis and all the outcomes that followed this event well demonstrated how bad and even dangerous this type of rat race competition could be.. Many countries in Europe, in addition to the US, unfortunately felt the effect of such an uncontrolled and brutal competition. The fact that the last economic-financial crisis occurred in the developed world and most of it happened in nations that followed the rules of the free market capitalism indicates that **something wrong is hidden in the current capitalist practice**.

Despite all of its disadvantages the competitive approach also infiltrated into the public sector and it affects and steers many of the public approaches. Thus, studying the 2008 crisis may be used as an opportunity for examining other modes of political-economic thinking as a leverage for improving social life. The Free Market ideas and the orthodox belief in the efficiency of the market assigned unbelievable strength and almost a miraculous power to these factors. Unfortunately, many of these former policies disregarded people and failed to care for their wellbeing. In the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century most economic structures and large parts of government support systems were directed toward maximizing capital owners' profits. Most of these capitalists forgot or disregarded history. They failed to remember that most grand human undertakings, from the ancient Egyptian pyramids to NASA's space missions were carried out by collective efforts of many participants. Many exceptional large undertakings, like space, oceans and underwater research, or medicine and physical explorations are carried out today by groups of devoted individuals who chose working together. There is no good reason why things should be different in the coming years.

However, capitalist competition has created an even a more dangerous situation. It fostered a deep feeling of citizens' mistrust. The ugly competition caused more and more youngster to confront the prevailing institutions. The greedy search for easy money increased citizens' criticism of the running establishment. The combinatory arrangements and complicated capital-government linkages had boosted public distrust and questioned the legitimacy of many of the existing arrangements. It is fair to sum up and claim that in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, deep public distrust, wide social dissatisfaction and a genuine change in expectations epitomize public feeling of large parts of the European society. Reshaping the capitalist political-economy regime and increasing transparency of government-capital connections are among the elementary steps needed to be introduced in order to reestablish public trust. This challenge is the one that fosters the Social-Capitalist paradigm and directs its course. Only a new type of social relations, only a readiness to examine and installing reshaped social models and administrative practices, only such a sincere effort could lay the foundations for a better and more promising world symbolized by the **Social-Capitalism paradigm** that rests on **trust**, transmits **confidence** and promotes **cooperation**.

The public sector on one hand and the private sector on the second should embrace the Social-Capitalist paradigm that **all of us together can better life on earth and make it safer**. Thus, the first significant change required is a paradigmatic change. Laymen and academic politicians and business persons, members and leaders of democratic nations should realize that **cooperation** is one of the key instruments for future successes. All of us should recognize that a new mode of operation, **working together, synergy and collaboration** should come forth to take the lead and direct public affairs (Avny 2012).

#### 4. The More Specific Changes Required

The basic rationale for all the proposed improvements rests on the call for deepening the relationships between the people and Governments. The ultimate goal of this move is to give citizens better and more meaningful feelings and faith about their participation in the governance process. Achieving this goal should be done in accordance with following the steps.

#### 4.1 Augmenting Direct Democracy as a Representation Form

The old traditional form of democratic regime, where citizens vote every few years in general elections for electing delegates and representatives is losing ground. At present much information is available today for qualified or unqualified citizens that gives them enough data to more actively participate in the public decision making process. People wish to be free in their choices and tend to deny the wish of harnessing their political power to an existing parties. Many incline to minimize dependency on delegates as their representatives. A growing public support appears for increasing the use of different types of public referendum as an additional legitimate institution of the political arsenal. In sum, one would say that today **the glory of Representative Democracy is diminishing while the splendor of Direct Democracy is growing fast.**

#### 4.2 Amplifying People's Involvement in Public Affairs

The tremendous advancements of communication technologies, mobile phones, media and networks made the world a functioning "global village." People all over the globe find themselves, in real time, involved in almost every occurrence. Video and audio techniques, words and pictures bring almost everything to everyone. These communication measures enable and sometimes even invoke individuals and groups to express their opinion. They encourage laymen and intellectuals to actively participate in setting up new and different national and international agendas. It is fair to suppose that **today's sophisticated technology assists in creating the new post-modern agora**<sup>2</sup>. At present people are not satisfied any more with being just passive observers and wish to actively participate in political-economic and other social debates. The 2008 downfall and its outcomes also increased the discomfort and obviously indicated how dangerous the brutal capitalism orientation of the irresponsible administration could be. However, it is a well-known fact that frequently the media itself creates news. Many TV networks seek sensations and bloody scenes or dramatic streets' skirmish. There are many advantages to the new media, but one should recognize the danger of neglecting credibility for the sake of speed. Good responsible reporting still is the basis for professional journalism.

The former status of governments as the exclusive source of information and the sole agent of ruling practices is fading away. The new communication measures, the social networks and all the links provide better means of communication. The general public, and especially those who are interested in increasing their

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<sup>2</sup>**Agora**-The ancient Greek marketplace, where all public matters were discussed-Webster's Dictionary



participation in the administrative process, are demanding more direct influence. Slowly but surely people's demands to be actively involved in cardinal issues, like the EU membership in the UK or the immigration' threats in Europe, grows. More and more citizens in Europe support the idea of more frequent referendums, since they do not trust the Parliament's decisions. Therefore, the practices of governance are much more complicated at present. Governments are required to face confidence votes much more frequently as compared with previous times.

Familiarity with these phenomena and candid support of the democratic form of government, urges us to look for a reshaped model of democracy, which is enhanced by introducing some important changes. Additional practical changes and some twists of the existing paradigm are further detailed.

## 5. Reshaping the Nature of Governance

### 5.1 Government as a Coalition of the Main Powers

The traditional form of democratic government rests mainly on two factions, which basically are political parties, where one is in power, **the Government**, and the other one is the **Opposition**. This twofold arrangement is based on a periodical general election. In many cases this procedure seems like a **zero sum game** – the majority winning party wins almost all the power while the losing opposition get relatively very little importance. Such dichotomy was justified in the past, when political parties had represented contradictory ideologies, which permanently competed and struggled to be in power.

Fortunately enough this is not the situation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Although few will admit it the ideological differences between the two leading political parties are fading away. They may still appear in public declarations or political platforms, but in practice they are phasing out. So is the status in the **US**, between the **Democrats** and **Republicans**, in **Germany**, between the **CDU** and the **SDP**, in **France**, between the **Left** and **Right** and in the **UK**, between the **Labor** and the **Conservatives**.

Although detailed data is scarce, political sources indicate that in most democracies at present, the differences between the two leading parties are small and frequently even marginal. Rule of thumb indicates that the two main political revivals agree on about 75-80 percent of the main issues. In many cases affiliation with a given political party springs from many indirect influential factors like family tradition, social pressure, public sympathy or antipathy, charisma of the leaders and so on. Even the election that caused a political change and government replacement results only with little significant changes. **Political data indicate that socio-economic regimes' main building blocks remain very similar even when people and parties move from government to opposition and vice versa.** It seems that frequently, many youngsters do not see significant differences between the two leading parties, they worry more and question even more about the justification for the existing forms of the political establishment. Many feel that the

traditional political establishment serves mostly the politicians themselves, some interest groups and conservative academics.

In the US the constitutional balance between the Executive and Judiciary branches of government ensures a permanent check and balances the regime between the two major powers. In the UK, the previous election forced the Conservatives to establish a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. In Germany a Grand Coalition was set up by the CDU leader **A. Merkel** and the SPD. These developments indicate quite clearly that the time is ripe for introducing some changes into the traditional political structure. The outstanding issues and the major dilemmas facing many democracies, like relationships with the EU in UK, the uncontrolled immigration into Europe, which threatens many of the EU members and the healthcare system in US are so significant that they demand national unity and bi-partisan support.

Bi-partisan support and "Grand Coalition" mechanism are preferred and justified also from an ethical perspective. Nevertheless public declarations and despite theoretical or conceptual differences ideology plays today a little role in the European political playground. History indicates that most of the political affiliations occur due to traditional, social and personal preferences. See, for example the political affiliation of Republicans and Democrats in US. Political statistics indicates that only small and marginal differences happened following the changing of the ruling administration. The American form of government basically was established as a balanced system where checks and balances were built in. It was so created because they were afraid of giving all power to one party. In addition to the risk of keeping all powers in the hand of one party **it is also unfair and unjust disregarding and ignoring the opinions of other large segments of the population**. True democracy encourages public debate and a pluralistic society, therefore all possible arrangements should be endorsed for enabling the best form of expression. Thus a more cooperative governance, embracing most of the political actors in addition to a better functioning **Public Private Partnerships (PPP) is among the most promising forms of future government**.

Even if some ideological differences appear here and there, eventually they are phasing out throughout the running practices. In conclusion, it is fair to assume that in the future many will prefer to cooperate and to act together rather than argue about insignificant.

## 5.2 Automatic and Autonomous E-Services

200 years ago, when Max Webber introduced the notion of the **modern bureaucracy**, it was an act of progress, a move for promoting qualified people rather than keeping social affiliated clerical system. But these good intentions did not last long. The British **Civil Service** tradition also lost most of its original vision since many public employees refused perceiving themselves as servants. At present, German bureaucrats, British civil servants, French functionaries and American public

administrators prefer seeing themselves and demand other to accept them as agents, managers, directors and chiefs rather than treat them as service providers.

The present technological developments, the Internet and the mobile phone systems particularly, enable advancing significantly provision of automatic services. The ultimate goal should be minimizing ordinary citizens' dependency on the bureaucracy. With the help of a **Smart Card** every qualified person would be able to receive all the administrative services. Free liberated adults should be able to get all the above services without coming in personal touch with directors, administrators and their assistants.

### 5.3 Improved Type of Public Private Partnership (PPP)

Many books and abundant articles were written about government-economy relationships. It is well known that the ideas and the theories expressed there remained the asset of the authors. The diversity between the supporters and the opponents was great and remained so even when actual policies run differently. Every economic position was and still is supported by its own political fraction while realpolitik plays its own crucial role in every decision and action.

When viewing the world at 2014 one can easily observe that there is no one exclusive preferred solution to the above linkage. The two extreme tracks, **Centrally Controlled** and total **Free Market** economies actually do not exist. There is almost no country without some kind of market economy and there is no nation where government does not affect its economy. In the two most populated nations, **China** and **India**, which will be within some years among the world's largest economies, government is very involved in the economic policies and practices. A special mixture of interests exists there that strive continuously to increase individual and national wealth.

The other group of large nations, each with 100-200 million citizens, **Russia**, **Brazil** and **Indonesia**, has a different blend of government-economy interaction and believes that they know their way. Thus, we see that the core of the debate is mainly within the developed liberal democracies that play with upscale theories.

### 5.4. A People-oriented and Human Bureaucracy

When the automation of the public service will take place and most of the ordinary citizens would be satisfied with the automatic systems, many public administrators would be able to concentrate on providing service to those who are most in need.

From the early days of building Public Administration as an academic field, debates were conducted about the duties, the nature, and role of these government employees. Some wish them to represent the core values of the regime, some saw them acting as the people's agents, while others believed that they should be distanced and dispassionate.



Following the idea about maximizing automation and introducing more robots into public service turns the focus toward enhancing humanity in the service. 20-25 percent of the populations, who cannot or are not ready to use the automated or robotic service, need much help. They need someone to see their specific hardships and be attuned to solving their personal problems. Today is a proper time for realizing that whereas advanced technology upgrades and enhances most people's quality of life, it alienates and makes life harder for the minority. While machinery will provide services to the majority, Public Administrators should care for the minorities.

## 6. Introducing a Mandatory New By-pass Mechanism

A new and fresh by-pass mechanism can symbolize the main idea and the leading thought of the recommended change. Within every public agency, government office, municipal bureau, social service or similar activity a new by-pass mechanism will be introduced. This mechanism will set up exceptional committees that will be established as an indispensable part of the core process. Such an exceptional committee will be targeted and qualified to settle and solve all the issues, disagreements or debates that will appear relating to the said function. The recommended mechanism will be built of two levels: the first, the ordinary one will be aimed for weekly meetings while the other one, the appeal level, will meet once a month. The number of the required committees will be decided according the work load. The goal is to settle within one month about 90% of all discords. The remaining 10% will be moved to the appeal level. It is proposed to staff every committee, both at the current level and the appeal level, with five members. Two will represent the said service, two will be retired persons of the same service and one can be a lay person representing the general public.

Like other calls for changes, this proposition will face many opponents. Most of them will prefer to cover their resistance by high level claims like the "Public Good" or "National Values". The truth is that it is merely a struggle of power and influence. None of the running bureaucrats or other parts of the existing establishment will be ready or willing to share their current position with others. "We the People" of the Constitution is still in many cases just a token that very few take it seriously. History teaches us that one can trace the initiation and the first steps of social and political processes, but it is quite impossible to foresee their accomplishments.

## Conclusions

The present proposition intends to upgrade and enhance the nature of public services provided by public agencies to the general public. It is agreed by many that

in the 2020's synergy and cooperation should replace the 1980's greedy and rat racing competition while partnership can promise better fruits. Within this social environment the Western type Democracies will also be demanded to reshape their Government-constituency relations. The following proposition contains three improved channels for executing future public service:

1. Sophisticated and advanced E-service systems for providing automatically all the forms, permissions and other paperwork required for routine government work.
2. A more people-oriented Bureaucracy, centered on meeting human, social and personal needs, and
3. A new, two-level, by-pass set up mechanism of exceptional Committees, which are designed and directed to overcome interruptions, settling misunderstandings and solving disputes.

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