The Future of Government and its Study of Public Administration: Accountability for Democracy[1]

Yönetimin Geleceği ve Kamu Yönetimi Çalışmaları: Demokrasi için Hesap Verebilirlik

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> Where the laws are not supreme, there demagogues spring up. (Aristotle, Politics, book iv)
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> A democracy differs from other forms of government in that it does not and cannot distinguish the welfare of the state from the welfare of its individual citizens. (Croly, 1914, p. 35)
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> ... the right to freedom of speech is no license to deceive, and willful misrepresentation is a violation of its principles. (Lippman, 1955, p. 128)
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> For me democracy is an abuse of statistics. (Jorge Luis Borges, quoted in Salinas 2016, p. 108)

Growing up, I had no idea that it was in a democracy. We celebrated liberation day in the Netherlands on May 5th, the end of national-socialist occupation in the country of my birth and nationality. In our family, it was celebrated even though the young ones, me included, did not know about the holes in my mother's legs because of oedema

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during the winter months of 1944/45, and did not know about my father being shipped home from a German labor camp after 2,5 years of work because he could no longer walk. Is ignorance a bliss? Yes, for the young ones regarding almost all issues, lessons, and challenges of life. The only exception for those young ones is that they will learn, actually: will have to learn, that caring for and sharing with others based on a sense of reciprocity and fairness is central to the survival of humanity. Obviously, that is done through example and through challenges and issues big in the eye of the child. What about democracy and its rule of law? Is that too big of an idea for a child? Is it even too big of an idea for an adult? Is democracy in general such a big idea that we are only beginning to understand about what it takes to succeed? What can and should we do to assure that citizens understand the position and role of government in democratic societies and why that position and role are different from most historical governments? Being a professor, you will not be surprised that in my view education is indispensable about what it means to be a citizen in a democracy, rather than a subject in an autocratic system. Education in civics and ethics at universities is good but not sufficient. Fortunately, a curriculum has been developed for grades 1-12 by the Educating for American Democracy Initiative (EAD, 2021) that is very useful for any democracy. Education in civics and ethics is as important as reading, writing, and arithmetic (Raadschelders & Chitiga, 2021).

Allow me to go back to that comment about caring for and sharing with others as important for the survival of humanity. Indeed, collaboration is so important that it is deeply embedded in humanity's genetic and psychological make-up. In fact, without these we most likely would not have survived amid mammals with greater speed, or with more fearsome teeth, or with longer claws, and who have the advantage of proceeding on all fours rather than being bipedal which exposes our most vulnerable body parts, i.e., the trunk (from the genitals to the throat). We survived through collaboration and encephalization and

thus we developed the capacity to accumulate experiences and pass them on to the next generation.

Just consider this fact. While our species exists for 200,000 to 300,000 years, it is only about 6,000 years ago that the need was felt to institutionalize formal arrangements for governing the imagined community people had become part of. A few were considered, or considered themselves, as leaders; the rest followed like herd-like animals, as subjects. It is puzzling that after a few hundred thousand years of some degree of egalitarianism, humanity so quickly shifted to hierarchically organized social relations. Even when Pericles, in his funeral speech in 431 BCE, mentioned democracy, it was only a political dream in ancient Athens relevant to adult males, not to women or slaves. It was certainly never conceived as something that could be possible in jurisdictions with multiple cities, let alone in large territories with layered jurisdictions from the local to the (upper-) regional level.

And yet, almost 2,500 years later the Atlantic Revolutions, a phrase coined by American historian Joel Palmer, and they were revolutions, not prolonged transitions, and people in the United States and France established the basis for an experiment in large-scale democracy. I say 'experiment' because, despite all our assumed intelligence, we have not quite figured out what it is that makes democracy successful and how we can protect it from those who lust for power. After the Second World War it appeared democracy was on the rise across the globe, and these decades also happen to be the years that income inequalities declined significantly for the first time in history (Fourastié, 1979; Piketty, 2014). By the time that Fukuyama (1992) declared democracy to be the pinnacle of what civilization could achieve, its decline had already begun. With the rise of populism and populist parties on the right and the left in many democracies, and with its concomitant emphasis on populist politics that pursues policies aimed at harnessing one party's raw power by exploiting and fanning the voters' fears and prejudices rather than developing a responsible politics that pursues

policy with an eye on the needs of the people at large, we must wonder why democracy appears so fragile. Mettler and Lieberman (2020, p. 25) identify four threats to democracy: political polarization, conflict about who belongs in the society (prompted by influx of refugees/immigrants), rising income inequality, and aggrandizement of the executive over the other two branches of government.

But, I am getting ahead of myself. So far, I think, several necessary conditions can be identified that are important to democracy's success. I have not found in the literature, nor in my own boundedly rational thoughts, anything that comes close to being a sufficient condition. For lack of a sufficient condition, I'll proceed by suggesting to you a few necessary conditions, offer some definitions of government, and then I will focus on one condition as it concerns the need that people have for government and governance when living in imagined communities.

Some necessary conditions for democracy to thrive, include:

1. Self-restraint: on the part of individual and on the part of government (Locke); this could be a sufficient condition, but it depends on all individuals, organizations, and institutions exercising self-restraint and trusted not to advance their own interests; in reality, we know that some people and organizations will not exercise such self-restraint;
2. Recognizing that the individual can only thrive as part of the community of people (cf. De Tocqueville "self-interest properly understood"; cf. Mandela's *Ubuntu*)
3. Accepting the authority of government as a neutral arbiter in individual, organizational, and institutional conflict and tensions;
4. Expecting knowledge about position and role of democratic government in modern societies (in authoritarian societies knowledge about this is not required, only operational knowledge and administrative skill is expected);

5. Citizens accepting and expecting government as acting upon the interest of all (is not expected in authoritarian systems) (and, as far as democracy is concerned, questioned by the Argentinian poet and author Jorge Luis Borges, see epigraph at beginning of paper);
6. Accepting and expecting that citizens will accept government's lead (assuming they are informed) in the realm of governance;
7. Knowing that all public authority is negotiable;
8. Knowing that those acting in the public's interest can be held accountable.

In this listing three important concepts require definition: government, governance, and accountability.

A few years ago, Richard Stillman and I came up with a definition of *government* that encompasses all formal public institutional arrangements during the time that people lived sedentary lives, whether authoritarian or democratic:

> Government is an institutional arrangement that people develop once they start living under sedentary conditions and with growing populations, so that they can be assured that internal and external order and safety are maintained as best as possible even though they live in imagined communities (Raadschelders and Stillman 2017, p. 1).

Then I came to realize that a little more specification was needed since people in imagined communities do not all carry or share the same responsibilities:

> Government is an institutional arrangement that *some individuals develop* and *others accept* once people at large start living under sedentary and urban conditions and with growing populations, so that they, *i.e., those with political and economic power*, can be assured that internal and external order and safety are maintained as best as possible despite the fact that people live in imagined communities (Raadschelders, 2020, p. 215).

This definition is relevant to most of historical governments, and is still relevant for authoritarian political systems today. When then considering how government's position and role could be defined in a democracy, the definition became:

> Government in a democratic political-administrative system is an institutional arrangement that *citizens* develop and maintain in and for the entire jurisdiction (i.e., urban and rural), so that they are assured that not only internal and external order and safety are guaranteed by means of police, justice and military functions, but that also their *well-being* is advanced through the provision, production, and governance of so-called welfare functions and services (Raadschelders, 2020, p. 216).

We can see that various definitions of government are possible, each emphasizing an important point. Now, when differentiating government from *governance* it becomes clear why only government is the public actor with the authority to make binding decisions for all living in the jurisdiction, while governance refers to all those actors in society that contribute to society's governing, i.e., the public, the non-profit, and the private sectors. There are various organizations and institutions in society that are not public yet contribute to the governance of society. I'm sure you can easily find examples in Turkey, but consider, among others, organized religion, labor unions, political parties, guilds, etc.

The last concept that requires attention in democratic political systems is that of *accountability*. This has the same etymological root as accounting which means

a) to produce a count of properties or money left in someone's care, and

b) being answerable, liable to be called to account to who(m) and/or by what.

You will have noticed how in the above I distinguish between three main ages of government (Raadschelders, 2020), and each can be

related to accountability. For most of our existence during prehistory and the very early sedentary stage this was a 'government' among people in a physical community, and accountability was possible because of direct face-to-face interaction between all members of the band.

Once formal institutional arrangements for government were established, it became a government above a society with the people as subjects living in an imagined community. The state was perceived as a property (*patrimonium*) of the ruler and the supporting ruling elite and people were subjects. This started about 6,000 years ago and lasted at least until 1,800 CE. After that some territories experienced extensive reform of their public institutional arrangements that resulted in a government in a society by, for, and with the people as citizens. The state, at least in terms of political theory, became the property of the people. In practice, though, it still is to large degree controlled by the economically wealthy and politically powerful. So, in the first age of governing, accountability was based on direct social control, and characterized by reciprocity, sharing, and a strong sense of fairness. These characteristics are deeply embedded in our primate DNA and psychological make-up. In the second age of government subjects were held accountable as taxpayers; those who ruled could only be held accountable via popular uprising prompted when the tax burden had risen above the eyeballs. For most of history, people were governed by a ruler who was supported by a governing elite drawn from the aristocracy who occupied leadership positions in military, priesthood, trade, and bureaucracy. The state and its government were literally the property of the ruler; sovereignty was physically embodied in the person of the ruler. From the early 17th century on, scholars came to see government less as an instrument of power in the hands of some, and more as a container and enabler that would advance the common weal of the population (Raadschelders, 2022).

In the third age of governing, that of democracy, all actors in society can be held accountable: citizens as taxpayers and as sovereign, elected officeholders as representatives and as trustees/guardians of the common good, and career civil servants as experts and as servants of the people and as servants of those elected in political office. That is when accountability becomes a much more complex phenomenon for various reasons.

From whose perspective do we look at accountability: as citizen, as elected official, or as career civil servant? A citizen should ask: are you (political officeholder, civil servant) competent, honest, and act with integrity? An elected official should ask: will you (citizen, civil servant) accept/respect my leadership knowing that I will act in good faith? And a civil servant should ask: do you (political officeholder, citizen) trust my professionalism?

In the study of public administration there are ample ways of assessing accountability:

a) focus on output: short-term, measurable, reckoning with electoral cycle,

b) focus on outcome: longer-term, less measurable,

c) focus on what, when, how, and also focus on why, and

d) focus on balancing the three E's (efficiency, effectiveness, economy) with democracy (equity, fairness, due process, etc.).

Citizens are accountable to each other, but for public servants accountability is more complex. To who(m) and/or what can public servants be held accountable? In one of his farewell lectures, Dwight Waldo (1980, pp. 103-106) listed several things and people to whom public servants are accountable: the people; the Constitution; law; God; self; family; democracy; humanity; highest executive officer (President, Prime Minister); highest organizational executive officer (Secretary, Minister, Director, Administrator); the profession. That's quite a list,

and it is conceivable that public servants emphasize some and have less consideration for other elements. Fortunately, although admitted: not assuredly, there are controls in place to hold democratic governments politically and administratively accountable.

Internal controls or mechanisms include policy evaluation (fiscal ~, process ~, and program accountability); financial, compliance, economy and efficiency, and performance audits; financial reports; termination of service or organization (is it still needed?); and oversight of career civil servants by colleagues and by elected officials. External controls include citizen oversight (e.g., especially at the local level: Library Board, Parks & Recreation Board); direct involvement in decision making (e.g., participatory budgeting, especially at local level); elections; ombudsperson; public opinion surveys; ethics codes and standards of conduct.

These external controls are characteristic for democracy, which as large-scale experiment was not tried until America's founding fathers institutionalized (a) the separation of powers so that public authority is not concentrated in one hand, (b) checks and balances so that each branch of government serves as control of the other two, and (c) protections against government overreach. This effort can only succeed under respect for human rights, respect for the rule of law, acceptance of free and fair elections, and acceptance of political and market competition (i.e., no concentration of power or money).

What has happened to democracy since the 1980s? People in general have short attention spans, and Covid-19 may have disrupted the world, but it is only a suddenly emerging natural phenomenon that can be treated with medication and appropriate behavior. More disrupting, but also much more insidious, is the anti-democratic sentiment that has crawled from under the rocks in many countries. It is amazing to see how quickly democratic institutional arrangements for administration and governance can be placed under stress by the rather crazy actions of one person who seeks to hold on to power, by politicians who wish

to secure power by any means (but lack the "charisma" of the "leader"), and by political leaders and parties fueling and feeding on sentiments of anger and uncertainty among citizens. Regarding country leaders, on the right side of the political spectrum we can think of president Putin of Russia, prime minister Orbán of Hungary, former and current Israeli prime minister Netanyahu, former Brazilian president Bolsanoro, prime minister Modi in India, former American president Trump, and of the challenge of Marine Le Pen in the French run-off with President Macron. On the left side of the political spectrum we can find, e.g., former President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela (Ocampo, 2019, p. 46) and former and current president Lula da Silva of Brazil.

What connects right-wing individuals is that they

1) reject, in words or action, democratic rules of the game,

2) deny the legitimacy of opponents,

3) encourage or tolerate violence,

4) indicate a willingness to curtail the civil liberties of opponents, including the media,

(Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018, pp. 21-22), and we can add to this

5) engage in promissory politics, and

6) seek to create a following that adoringly accepts anything from the 'leader' (in German: *Führer*).

I am not aware of left-wing individuals going so far as to fully embrace these six features. Regarding political parties, many democracies have seen the ascendance of populist, right-wing parties for various reasons, but certainly including the sense that the influx of refugees and immigrants leads to a greatly changed demographic that challenges – in the eyes of some – the identity of "their" country. It has even been argued that there is a global struggle between autocracy and democracy (Goodsell, 2022).

As for the USA, for a long time Americans perceived their country as the "city upon the hill," the first country to experiment with large-scale democracy. However, Americans became – to say the least - complacent about the strength of their democracy. Then, in 2009/10 there was the emergence of the Tea Party, drawing the old GOP further to the right (a process, as we shall see later in the paper, that had started decades earlier). This was followed with the election of Trump in 2016, who, during his term of office, challenged American democracy and strained the relationships between democratic countries. Then there was January 6, 2021 (and a similar event on January 8, 2023, in Brasilia), seared in the minds of many. This was not only an event where democracy's strength in the USA was put under severe stress, it was also one where democracy was claimed to be protected by those who wished to hold on to power. What is amazing is that in the last five decades some Republicans have moved away from the fact that democracy can only survive by exercising self-restraint (in all fairness: some in the Democratic party have done so in the past as well). Instead, they have been unabashed and unashamed in their pursuit of power by various "legal" and extra-legal means such as redistricting, limiting voting access, packing courts at all levels with conservative judges, supporting lies and innuendoes about the security of elections, destroying safeguards of free and fair elections by placing like-minded individuals in key election oversight positions, and by embracing the independent state legislature doctrine that denies state courts oversight over elections. Some of these efforts have led those embracing right-wing conspiracy theories about stolen elections and deep state to threaten election officials and quite a few are leaving their positions. Who will fill these positions remains to be seen.

President Trump pursued politics simply for personal interest, and it is astonishing to see the extent to which political officeholders in his own party support his lies simply because he has such a large voter base and seemingly assures access to ample campaign funds in the pursuit of

politics for power (although he does not share with the GOP much of the funds he received from individual donors). This voter base of people who feel threatened by this sense of "losing their country" helps perhaps to understand the "pussyfutting" of Republican party officials around anything that concerns Trump. We need distance in time before we can evaluate what Trumpism did to democracy, but there are already several studies and ideas available (Eisen, 2022; Kettl, 2020; Rivlin et al., 2022; West, 2022; Wright & Thomas, 2023; Richardson, 2023).

It is scary to see how easily power grabs for personal interests can outclass policy pursuits for the benefit of all people. Does this mean that the democratic institutional arrangements are not strong enough to withstand authoritarian power grabs? The coming years will tell. Generally, the coronavirus pandemic had resulted in strong increases in government power, and in various cases undermined democratic rights in the effort to assure appropriate response to the health challenge (Democracy Index, 2022, p. 87). Specific to the USA is that existing political tensions have been exacerbated by the Covid-pandemic, but one could also argue that the Covid-pandemic has been used to drive existing divisions in society deeper than ever before. It is these political tensions that helped rank the USA among the so-called "flawed democracies" since 2016 (Democracy Index, 2022, p. 14, 57); Turkey is ranked 103rd as a hybrid regime (i.e., in-between democracy and autocracy).

How can we understand this political sectarianism in American society, and this openly hostile, anti-democratic behavior on the part of the GOP at present (and of the democratic party in the past)? If there is one thing that many citizens in democratic political systems have learned during the past five years, it is that they cannot take democracy for granted. In fact, a variety of authors have noted that democracy appears to be in retreat (e.g., Bauer et al., 2021; Democracy Index, 2022; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Zielonka, 2018). What it means to be a citizen and grow

up and live in a democracy is something that is generally not taught in schools beyond – if even that – the civics that focuses on how a bill becomes a law and the three branches of government (Raadschelders & Chitiga, 2021).

In the remainder of this presentation, I will offer you a conceptual framework with which we can assess government's capacity to provide citizens with needed policies and services under the situation of an eroding, or at least: challenged, democracy. First, I will focus on the observation that the psychological and emotional make-up of human beings is rather conflicted and reflective of that of our primate cousins. It is therefore reflected in how we govern. Next, second, attention shifts to various parts of the overall institutional superstructure of the public sector. No time will be wasted on describing this structure in detail. Instead, I will look at the fact that there are many, many individual, organizational, and institutional actors swirling around in this cauldron of democracy. Then, third, I will shift to discussing features and weaknesses in the ideational substructure of democracy, with some emphasis on the USA, and I invite you to consider to what extent these are relevant to Turkey. It will become clear that holding someone, a group of people, or even major organizations and institutions accountable becomes quite difficult especially in a healthy and strong democracy. It is important, fourth, to remember a time that governing capacity in the emerging democracies of the late 19th century was strong. Thus, I will step back in time and briefly describe the unprecedented demand in the latter part of the nineteenth century upon (local) government, and the unbelievable administrative and governance capacity that developed on the fly. I do so because I think that such a capacity is still there assuming that actors can be held accountable. What, fifth, does accountability in a democracy require? We could even ask: is accountability easier to shape and achieve in an authoritarian system? How influential are misinformation and the willful distortion of scientific facts and of human actions? At the

conclusion of this presentation, I will recap the conceptual framework for assessing the governing capacity of governments, and then especially when democracy is under stress.

Artificial and Imagined Communities: Chimp, Bonobo, and St. Augustine

Society and community are artificial as Bertrand Russell (1932), Herbert Simon (1969), and Benedict Anderson (1984) pointed out, and so the institutional arrangements for governing are artificial. They reflect human nature as was aptly pointed out by Madison in *Federalist 51*. Most – perhaps even all - analyses of democracy focus on the (re)actions of institutional actors in the public, private, and nonprofit realms. But, given that the institutional arrangements within which these responses manifest themselves are artificial, i.e., human-made, the responses themselves are human. Therefore, we must first pay attention to the nature of society and its people.

For most of their existence on earth, i.e., somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 years, *Homo sapiens* live in *physical communities*. These communities are the size of bands with 50 up to, perhaps, 150 members who all know each other. In a physical community you know who to go to for food, who to go to for protection, and who to go to for mediation in a conflict between members. It is assumed that these prehistoric communities were, to lesser or larger degree egalitarian, but we'll never really know. They continued to be somewhat egalitarian for a while when at the time of the agricultural or neolithic transition (it was no revolution for it took at least 10,000 years), when people somehow learned how to domesticate some animals and some grains. Domestication made them to settle down, although archeologists found examples of human communities domesticating after settling down. The causality does not matter, what matters is that for millennia humans continued to live in small communities with little social stratification as is illustrated by an excavation of a hamlet with single-room houses in Džejtun (nowadays in Turkmenistan) (Bernbeck &

Pollock, 2016). But then, some 6,000 years ago people started living in larger and ever-larger communities, to the point that they became an imagined community where no one knew everyone else. It was then that people became stratified in rulers, priests, clerks, soldiers, traders, craftsmen, farmers, and slaves. It was then that formalized institutional arrangements for governing emerged so that mediation, food gathering, and survival could continue now that the face-to-face interaction of the hunter-gatherer lifestyle was no longer possible. At least one evolutionary psychologist and one anthropologist argued that the human mind is exceptionally well developed for living in small-scale, physical communities. In their words: "Our modern skulls house a Stone Age mind." (Cosmides & Tooby, 1997, pp. 10-11; see also Bolhuis et al., 2011, p. 1). Our closest primate cousins, chimpanzees and bonobos, also live in physical communities, and they fission when the group size gets too big for maintaining social relations that are established and maintained through grooming between all members of the band.

Today, human beings still live in physical communities, such as a nuclear and an extended family, a sports club, a church denomination, a labor union, a neighborhood association, etc. However, these physical communities are embedded in much larger, *imagined communities* such as a city, a province, a country. It is in these imagined communities of increasingly sedentary populations that formal institutional arrangements for governing emerge. In imagined communities, social stability cannot rely on the direct social control that individuals in physical communities exercise upon each other.

To understand the challenges of institutional arrangements for governing we must first look at the emotional and psychological make-up of human beings (cf. *Federalist 51*). Doing so, clarifies that these institutional arrangements are grounded in a rather conflicting set of instinctual and intentional behaviors the origins of which may well be with the common ancestor of *Panini* (bonobo and chimpanzee) and

Homo. In the words of Prüfer et al., (2012, p. 527; emphasis added) that common ancestor "may in fact have possessed a *mosaic of features*, including those seen in bonobo, chimpanzee, and human." To understand what this means, we must step back in time, some 2 million years in fact.

Some 2.1 to 1.9 million years ago, in the Congo basin in Western Africa, a small stream emerged that became wider and deeper (today it is the deepest river in the world) to the point that the *Panini* north and south of the Congo River were separated and no longer interacted. North of the river the *Panini* (we now call them chimpanzees) had to compete for food resources with gorillas and they became male-dominated societies with strong checks and balances. Individuals are aggressive and cheat. South of the river the *Panini* we refer to nowadays as bonobos, did not have to compete with gorillas for food resources. They became female-dominated societies characterized by empathy, caring, cooperation, and sexuality for both pleasurable and conflict-resolving reasons (De Waal, 2005; Reich, 2019, p. 46; Rilling et al., 2012; Takemoto et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2017; Wrangham & Peterson, 1996).

Human behavior, instinctually triggered or intentionally motivated, is still characterized by a mosaic of features as St. Augustine noted in the fifth century CE (Hundert, 1992; Manent 2013, pp. 279-280). Human beings are torn between conflicting forces, and these are expressed in: collectivism – individualism; egalitarianism – hierarchy; submission - domination; cooperation – aggression (conflict); conformity – uniqueness; community – competition; altruism (honorability) - selfishness (manipulation: deceit, under cover, covert, cheating); compassion – cruelty. We could add to these impulsive (emotional) versus rational (deliberative) behavior (Ariely, 2012, p. 98; Panksepp, 1998; Panksepp & Biven, 2012; but see Naess, 2008, about how emotion and reason ought to be intertwined) and revenge (Daly & Wilson, 1989) versus forgiveness (McCullough, 2008). Against this background it is easy to imagine how these conflicting inclinations can be steered one

way in physical communities and in the opposite direction in imagined communities.

Especially the organization of chimpanzee bands merits attention as there are two types of alliances between individuals that we see mirrored in human institutional arrangements for governing. In the so-called *rank-changing alliance* one male depends on supporters to get into and hold onto a position of dominance. This helps understand why Kim-Jung-Un can stay in power. However, should the dominant male consume more resources than needed, and thus harm the group, a *levelling alliance* of several lower-ranking males will form a coalition that restricts or even deposes of the dominant male (Gintis et al., 2015, p. 331). This has happened with plenty of monarchs, dictators, and leaders throughout history. So, a rank-changing alliance is what keeps authoritarian rulers in power; a levelling alliance is what brings them down. The human institutional arrangements for democracy are characteristic of a *levelling alliance* (also known as a *reverse dominance hierarchy*; see Boehm, 1993, 1999, p. 66) which balances the need for hierarchy with an equally important need for checks and balances between fragmented sources/branches of power. What differentiates the rank-changing alliance from the levelling alliance is that public, nonprofit, and private actors in the latter can access, participate in, and have influence upon public policy making. Thus, politics and governing in autocratic and authoritarian systems are characterized by high centralization and therefore hierarchy, while democratic systems are characterized by a politics and governance where a variety of institutional, organizational, and individual interests swirl around one another in a cauldron of preferences. In the next section I will mainly focus on democracies.

Multiple Moving Parts in and around the Institutional Superstructure of Public Organizations

There are several moving parts in and around public institutions and organizations. In this section I will single out three of these: institutions

and organizations, human actors and agency, and political party system. The comments below will especially concern the USA, but some comparative observations will illuminate the overall argument.

Institutional and Organizational Fragmentation of Authority and Responsibility

Generally, people will think of the national or federal level when hearing the word 'government.' They will much less think, at least not immediately, about the subnational and local levels of government. Furthermore, that concept of 'government' is perceived in monolithic, Leviathan-type terms: government is massive, oppressive, meddlesome, officious, etc. In fact, the term 'government' is often equated with that of 'bureaucracy.' However, when I ask students what it is they are criticizing about government it does not concern the services, tasks, and functions at the local or state level. Instead, it is the pettiness and partisan politics at the national level. Goodsell's (2015) study on the case for bureaucracy has convincingly shown the extent to which citizens are quite content with the quality-of-service delivery when asked about specific services, tasks, and functions of government.

In true democracies public authority and power are fragmented between three branches of government: legislature, executive, and judiciary. In all democracies these three branches operate in a system of checks upon and balances between them. This is to assure that public power and authority are not absorbed by one of the branches at the expense of the other two. That there is no guarantee this always works, depends upon the extent to which one political faction (which I use as a more general term than 'political party') captures majorities in all three. George Washington had it right when he observed in his Farewell Address that the formation of political parties, and the domination of one faction over another, would be detrimental to the republic. In the spirit of Washington, and in the context of this presentation, one can argue that democracies thrive when organizational and individual agents in and around democracy act

based on self-restraint, subjecting their individual preferences to the common good. That *habitus* acknowledges the wisdom of De Tocqueville (2000, p. 501) regarding "self-interest properly understood" concerns sacrificing "… part of […] self-interest to save the rest". This means that (a) individual well-being depends upon the well-being of society at large and, consequently, that (b) individual interests can only be served when the collective thrives.

To what extent are collective interests, services, functions, and tasks provided by public organizations? In democracies, and certainly in authoritarian systems, response to major natural- or human-made crisis is conducted, and at least coordinated, by public organizations at the national level. To varying degrees, public organizations may call upon nonprofit and private actors to help with certain activities. At the subnational and local levels there may be collaboration between public, nonprofit, and private actors for more mundane and common needs (think: co-production, public-private-partnership, collaborative management). The degree to which public organizations conduct collective action on the one hand and coordinate activities between them and nonprofit and private actors on the other influences democratic capacity. The United States is quite unique in the sense that collaboration between these three main institutional actors (public, nonprofit, private) at all levels of government has been a feature since colonial days. This feature has been labelled the *compensatory state* (Durant, 2020). However, I wonder whether there is a difference between the nature of the compensatory collaboration at the local and state levels, as compared to that at the national level. After all, during the twentieth century the American presidency focused increasingly on management and managerialism (Arnold, 1986; Peters, 2003) to the point that it became the single most important institution and individual office in the executive branch at the federal level. We must also consider other political appointees in the executive branch. Finally, we must look at the majority and minority parties in the U.S. House

and U.S. Senate. When assessing democratic capacity, we must include attention for the interplay(s) between the various levels of government and between the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. It is especially this multilevel, policy-field context of which we must acknowledge that holding individual, organizational, and institutional actors accountable is not easy (and good indicators and measures of accountability are not easy in general) (Wise, 2022). However, there are other individual and group actors we must consider.

Human Beings as Individual and Group Actors in and around Public Organizations

A democratic political system is challenging because there are many, many moving parts within and around public organizations that seek to influence, make, and even implement policy. All these actors are both interdependent as well as somewhat autonomous. One can assume that access to decision-making arenas in authoritarian systems is solely determined by those in political office and power. In democratic systems access to decision-making is not determined by government alone and allows a variety of actors to play a role. There are at least three types of actors within the career civil service and at least six other categories of actors swirling in and around the public sector and thus directly or indirectly influencing policy.

Within public organizations the influence and role of policy bureaucrats (Page & Jenkins, 2005; Page, 2012) and street-level bureaucrats (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Cohen, 2021) has substantially increased during the twentieth century. In fact, with the growth of government services, tasks, functions, and regulations, it was unavoidable that career civil servants would increasingly play a role. *Street-level bureaucrats* are known to have and take discretion in the implementation of policy (Lipsky, 1969). They have been described as "policy coal miners" (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, p. 157). As they move up in their career, some street-level bureaucrats may even become *policy entrepreneurs*, actively pursuing new policy, or actively

adapting existing policy with an eye on the well-being of the citizenry (Cohen, 2021). From the start of the career *policy bureaucrats*, hired for their expertise in a substantive area of policy, write policy and it is quite surprising to learn that even recently hired policy bureaucrats may have substantial influence over policy content (Page & Jenkins 2005). They have little to no direct interaction with the citizenry.

Next to these career civil servants, we find temporary employees in the public sector whose tenure is tied to a particular political officeholder. *Policy professionals* are specialized in politics and experienced in the art of policy advocacy but lack knowledge of any specific policy area, and there are *political advisors* who have "multiple and diffuse organizational affiliations" (Svallfors, 2020, p. 18, 126). Their roles can be somewhat formalized as in the case of the French *cabinet ministériel*. Finally, there also may be some *political appointees*, directly appointed by a cabinet minister or secretary, to assure some degree of control over the career civil service. This phenomenon has become especially colossal in the USA (Light, 2019). Next to these three types of temporary functionaries at the apex of public organizations there are several other actors around the public sector seeking influence.

First, there are lobbyists and their numbers have grown exponentially in the past half century (see for the European Union: Hanegraaf & Poletti, 2021). Then there are at the federal level in the USA 3.84 million federal employees (including military and postal service), 4.13 million *contractors* and another 1.29 million *grant employees* (Light, 2019, p. 37). That is sizeable, and the question is whether federal employees could adequately supervise and exercise oversight. Finally, as example of the compensatory state and farther removed from policy influence, there are multiple private entities supplementing public sector services. For instance, in the USA there are 900,000 law enforcement officers and their work is complemented by another 2.7 million private police officers and 1.35-1.8 million security guards (Etzioni, 2019, p. 35).

When evaluating democratic capacity, attention must also be paid to the contribution of a large variety of other actors, including journalists and the media, pundits, corporate business (e.g., big pharma), health care providers, international organizations, and so on, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Multi- and Two-Party Systems

Facing natural or human-made disasters people unite and transcend their differences and social cleavages. During the Second World War the Dutch people united in the resistance against the Nazi occupation. In that effort they transcended what had divided Dutch society for centuries: Catholics v. Protestants. Once the war was over, that social cleavage returned in political and daily life. It was termed *pillarization* by the Dutch American political scientist Arend Lijphart (1968). He distinguished a *majoritarian democracy* (also referred to as the *Westminster model*) from a *consensus democracy*. The former is often a two-party system where one party gains the majority in elections and forms the government/cabinet. The latter is a multi-party system where no party can get an absolute majority in the legislature and where various parties must form a coalition that has a majority support in parliament. Keep in mind, though, that both types of democracy can be seen as ideal-types, since the reality is far more dynamic as Patapan et al. (2005, p. 245) showed in their study of developments in so-called Westminster systems after independence. The multi-party systems of continental Western Europe are also very different, varying along a variety of dimensions (federal – unitary; centralized – decentralized) and change is the normal situation (compare Page & Goldsmith 1987 to Goldsmith & Page 2010).

Most democracies are multi-party systems; New Zealand, the UK, and the USA, are basically two-party or majoritarian systems. Lijphart showed consociationalism as a way through which power could be shared in segmented societies. In the second edition of his *Patterns of Democracy* he writes that in consensus democracies the political elites

across the political spectrum accommodate each other's interests. These consensus democracies "[tend] to be the "kinder, gentler" form of democracy" (Lijphart, 1999, p. 275). They have lower incarceration rates, lower inflation rates, better control of violence, less use of the death penalty, better care for the environment, more foreign aid work, and more welfare spending. As one can expect, the political process is less abrasive in consensus democracies, while in majoritarian systems the chance of "nana-nana-boo-boo politics" (Raadschelders, 2020, p. 239) is much higher. So, the question is: to what extent has partisanship influenced the American democratic capacity?

Features and Weaknesses of the American Ideational Substructure for Governing

Ever since the decades leading up to the American Revolution, Americans have been very distrustful of government (Wills, 1999). The Declaration of Independence clearly identifies the USA as a *society-led state* or a *government by civil society* (Badie & Birnbaum, 1983, p. 103, 121) where political influence fundamentally rests in and emanates from social values. Society rules through government, and it rules to secure the inalienable, individual rights. Thus, in the first subsection of this paragraph something needs to be said about values and beliefs in American society. We can then briefly touch upon the institutional superstructure for governing, which includes both structural features and deeply held ideological convictions. In the third subsection I will discuss some of the challenges to American democracy. The reader should be warned, I can only be impressionistic in the selection of features and weaknesses; completeness is not possible for lack of omniscience, i.e., the burden of bounded rationality.

The Nature of and Shared Values or Beliefs in American Society

Assessing administrative and governance capacity requires understanding of the kind of society that government serves. A deeply

held value in the US is that of individualism. De Tocqueville observed that:

> Individualism is a passionate and peaceable sentiment that disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of those like him and withdraw to one side with his family, so that after having thus created a little society for his own use, he willingly abandons society at large to itself (2000, p. 582).

In the 17th and 18th centuries many had come to America to escape the European strong states and the limits to social advancement. Colonists were suspicious of public authority and of strong central government (Croly, 1909, p. 14, 1914, p. 40; Samuelson, 1995, p. 152) but at the same time, and increasingly so during the 19th century, they expected government to help develop the country and serve those in need (Mead, 1986, p. 194). Concerns about this struggle between individualism and collectivism had already been expressed by De Tocqueville:

> It is a strange thing to see with what sort of feverish ardor Americans pursue well-being and how they show themselves constantly tormented by a vague fear of not having chosen the shortest route that can lead to it (2000, p. 511).

Consequentially, he observed, they came to place their fortune before that of others, and in the process isolated themselves further from their neighbors:

> Preoccupied with the sole care of making a fortune, they no longer perceive the tight bond that unites the particular fortune of each of them to the prosperity of all (2000, p. 515).

He drove home the cost of the embrace of individualism to society and individual:

> They owe nothing to anyone, they expect so to speak nothing from anyone; they are in the habit of always considering themselves in isolation, and they willingly fancy that their whole destiny is in their hands. Thus, not only does democracy make each man forget his

> ancestors, but it hides his descendants from him and separates him from his contemporaries, it constantly leads him back toward himself alone and threatens finally to confine him whole in the solitude of his own heart (2000, p. 584).

It is thus that he argued that democracy loosened social ties and tightened natural ones (2000, 563). This was further exacerbated by the rather sudden change from an agrarian and craft-based to an industrialized and urbanized society in the second half of the 19th century. De Tocqueville's warning that individualism could lead to selfishness (see also Nisbet, 1969, p. 133) was reiterated 80 years later when journalist Herbert Croly noted:

> The automatic fulfillment of the American national Promise is to be abandoned, if at all, precisely because the traditional American confidence in individual freedom has resulted in a morally and socially undesirable distribution of wealth (1909, p. 22).

This undesirable distribution of wealth was caused by the "…chaotic individualism of our political and economic organization, while at the same time it is inimical to democracy, because it tends to erect political abuses and social inequalities into a system" (1909, p. 23). Instead, he argued for a constructive individualism where people "…wish to serve their fellow-countrymen" (1909, p. 39, 441). The live-and-let-live ideology of Jeffersonian individualism ought to be abandoned in favor of the live-and-help-live ideology of, as he called it, progressive democracy (Croly, 1914, p. 338, 426-427).

We know that what Croly hoped for has not happened. In fact, since the 1970s the inequality gap in the United States has been growing exponentially. Walter Lippman's "acids of modernity" (1929, p. 8, 19, 52; see also Nisbet, 1975, p. 109) referred to the destruction of social order by the combined effects of industrialization and urbanization and we should add the technological and communication revolution of the past 50 years as another acid. The concerns of De Tocqueville, Croly, and Lippmann (see epigraphs at opening of paper) echo in Nisbet's

observation as that American society is one of isolated individuals (1975, p. 79). It echoes in Sykes' diagnosis that the individual is thrown back into her inner resources at the expense of moral and social involvement with others (1992, p. 159), and in the observation of Bellah et al. that modern life has become compartmentalized (1996, p. 43). Is the icon of our own day and age that of individuals on the street, in restaurants, in public transport, in class, at home at the dinner table, and so on, who look at their phones rather than at others? The American concept of individualism is one where the individual is responsible for her own life circumstances. However, federal government policies and programs in the 1960s were pursued from the view that environmental conditions were responsible for the situation of the poor and the disadvantaged. Thus, some people came to be seen or perceive themselves as victims (Davies, 1996, p. 242; Sykes, 1992, p. 11, 22) who could not be held accountable for their difficulties (Mead, 1986, p. 55-56). Has America become a country of entitlement (Samuelson, 1995, pp. 177-184)? Has America's cocktail of individualism, distrust of government, winner-take-all representation, entitlement, and victimization resulted in a society where the common mores of decency and proportion eroded because successive generations have learned they can get away with selfishness?

The Endemic Distrust of Government, of Each Other, of Institutions

In the Western world the acids of modernity not only dissolved to some degree the social ties between people, it also nibbled away at respect for authority of government, of organized religion, of the family, and so on (Crozier et al., 1975, p. 25-27, 104; Lasch, 1978, p. xiii; Nisbet, 1975, p. 76, 82). Others, though, stress that there are few hard data that provide evidence of such loss of authority (Bok, 1996, p. 318). Obviously, loss of respect for authority and loss of trust in government are not synonymous, yet they are related. Data do exist about trust in government's problem-solving ability declining on both sides of the Atlantic (Bok, 1996, p. 7; Mead, 1986, p. 193). In the US several authors

reported a steady decline in trust from 75% in 1964 to 24% in 1996 (e.g. Bok, 1996, p. 7; Dye & Ziegler, 1993, p. 15; Howard, 2001, p. 132; O'Connell, 1999, p. 10). Such numbers exist for European countries as well, distinguishing between trust in government and trust in democracy (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000, pp. 123-126). Recent data from the OECD show overall trust in government (OECD 2020) ranging from 14% (Chile), 34% (UK), 42% (France), 46% (USA), 60% (Canada), 64% (Germany), to between 66-84% (Netherlands and Scandinavian countries). (nota bene: Turkey ranks among those countries that are low trust with regard to public services and government: Ipsos 2021, p. 23).

Regarding the USA trust in government is at an all-time low, with 2% of the population reporting to trust government to do what is right always and another 22% to do what is right most of the time (Pew, 2021). It will be no surprise that Republicans and Democrats trust government more when their party is in power.

Generally, trust in government is high in the stable, consensual political systems of continental Northwestern Europe. Distrust or disenchantment with government appears to be more related to dissatisfaction with the political element in the public sector, such as unstable political coalitions (Italy), a dictatorial past (Greece, Portugal, Spain), the rise of right-wing political parties (everywhere in the Western world), and deep partisan divisions (USA). However, both European and American studies point out that survey data must be approached with caution because macro-level – often stereotypical – perceptions do not necessarily reflect the micro-level experience of face-to-face contact with public servants (Goodsell, 2015).

Nevertheless, and perhaps especially in the USA, distrust of government has since World War Two been compounded by the popular suspicion that special interests and experts dominate public policy (Huntington in Crozier et al., 1975, p. 104; Price, 1965, p. 11; Snow, 1971, p. 76, 99). This phenomenon has found its way into academic jargon as well. For example, concepts such as the military-

industrial complex and iron triangles identify in- and outsiders. Also, an increasing number of people is disengaging from the political and policy processes, feeling that their voice and vote no longer make a difference. Does government make a difference in their lives? That it does is illustrated in various ways, such as in the USA by food stamps, Medicaid and Medicare, unemployment benefits, social security, and so on, but somehow not recognized or remembered.

In the USA, a variety of polls keep track of trust in government. Not only has trust in government declined, but so has the level of confidence citizens have in one another. Some 71% of American believe that interpersonal confidence had declined in the past 20 years. Reasons offered are several: people are less reliable (49%; especially among those who are 50 and older, Republicans, without a college degree, with income less than $30,000, and living in rural areas), a function of some social ill (43%; isolation and loneliness, greed and dishonest, crime, violence, drugs, scams), and polarization and government gridlock (16%) (Pew, 2019). In the Pew 2019-report a 64-year-old female was quoted:

> Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, Western culture has increasingly become more tolerant of selfishness and greed and less respectful of sacrifice and honor. Also, the prevalent reliance on cell phones & computers for short, indirect, and impersonal communication has lessened our assurance that others are presenting information in a sincere and honest fashion. Having a President who lies routinely does not provide the nation with a noble role model.

In the same report a 26-year-old male mentioned how:

> America has divided itself into hundreds of 'special interest' groups whether those are created by race, religion, sexuality, etc. and it has gotten to a point where too many people are offended by what used to be considered common language, and I think it has made too many Americans 'afraid' of speaking and trusting people they don't know. Sometimes offending another person can have serious repercussions

> and it seems like most people are trying to play the 'victim' about everything.

The Pew report mentions how tribalism is connected to polarization, but this is not new to our time. While admiring the fact the USA is one of the few multi-ethnic states that worked for a long time, Schlesinger expressed the fear 30 years ago that the increasing appeal to ethnicity has a separatist undertone that can only lead to a "…tribalization of American Life." (1992, p. 18). In the same spirit Samuelson argued that when government attempts to conform to deep contradictions in public opinion, America can only become "balkanized" (1995, p. 236). It is fair to say that the USA is no longer alone in facing the challenges of multi-ethnicity. In many West European countries, the immigration of peoples from Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia has led to serious social tensions and increased expressions of right-wing extremism. More specific to the USA is the fact that those at the far right, the so-called "devoted conservatives" (6% percent of the population), and those on the far left, the "progressive activists" (8 percent of the population), dominate the political debate. What is even more startling is that both groups are comprised of those who are wealthy and white (Haidt, 2022, pp. 14-15) and thus not at all representative of the bulk of the American population (MIC, October 2022; MIC, November 2022).

As for individualism, concerns 20 years ago are very similar to those today. In the words of Howard:

> We keep bending over backward to accommodate selfish and antisocial conduct, and then wonder why our social fabric is disintegrating (2001, p. 35)

Twenty years later the same sentiment can be seen in the following remark:

> In certain young people today…I notice what I find increasingly troubling: a cold-blooded grasping, a hunger to take and take and take, but never give; a massive sense of entitlement; an inability to show

> gratitude; an ease with dishonesty and pretension and selfishness that is couched in the language of self-care; an expectation always to be helped and rewarded no matter whether deserving or not; language that is slick and sleek but with little emotional intelligence; an astonishing level of self-absorption; an unrealistic expectation of puritanism from others; an over-inflated sense of ability, or of talent where there is any at all; an inability to apologize, truly and fully, without justifications; a passionate performance of virtue that is well executed in the public space of Twitter but not in the intimate space of friendship. I find it obscene (Adichie, 2021).

With January 6, 2021, in mind, it might just be that it is not just young people who display the qualities which Adichie lists. In fact, one could argue that care for others is diminished among those who refuse to receive a Covid vaccination and justifying that by referring to all sorts of misinformation and conspiracy theories.

While about 25% of Americans indicate that the level of interpersonal confidence is a big problem, and another 50% mention that it is a moderately big problem, many regard institutional distrust as a bigger problem. The Pew 2019-survey distinguishes between low, medium, and high trusters. High trusters display higher confidence in important leadership groups, low trusters are less confident. However, look at the numbers: 75% of low trusters trust scientists (92% of high trusters), 76% of low trusters trust the military (89% of high trusters), 65% of low trusters trust the police (89% of high trusters). A similar range of difference is noted for K-12 public school principles (69-89%), religious leaders (50-73%), college/university professors (62-72%), journalists (47-63%), and business leaders (33-54%). At the bottom are elected officials (27-46%). This, too, must somehow influence government's capacity to deal with Covid.

The Ideational Distrust of the Civil Service and Deep Trust in the Market

Almost 20 years ago Guy Peters wrote that "there are almost no policy areas in which government has a monopoly" (2003, p. 29). Durant's

compensatory state thesis provides ample illustration and evidence of this (2020). Furthermore, any mapping of policy fields will show that many policies involve public, nonprofit, and private actors at the local, state, and federal levels (Sandfort, 2010; Raadschelders et al., 2019). Peters also notes that the American federal system is one where substantial authority is decentralized to respectively shared with state and local governments (2003, p. 30). Despite many efforts to reform American federal bureaucracy, he observes there has been relatively little change because of (a) political suspicion of bureaucratic autonomy, (b) micro-management of bureaucracy by POTUS and the Executive Office of the President, (c) micro-management of bureaucracy by Congress, and (d) conscious efforts to keep the career civil service at arms-length if not out of the loop (Peters, 2003, p. 35, 42, 44-45). Paul Light's "thickening of government," a process that started in 1862 (Raadschelders & Lee, 2005), really came in full swing since the 1960s. Light counted 451 Executive Schedule level positions in 1960; this increased to 2,592 in 2004 (Light, 2019, p. 64). Expanding the number of political appointees in the top of the various departments and agencies was considered an important means to controlling bureaucracy at large and was fueled by distrust in federal bureaucracy.

The political distrust in the career civil service, and especially of its top levels, is perhaps best expressed in the infamous *Malek Manual* (MM). Frederic Malek served as President Nixon's personnel chief in the White House (on a side note: White House Fellow Colin Powell – who became Secretary of Defense after a military career - was his executive assistant). Malek wrote that one "…cannot hope to achieve policy, program, or management control until you have achieved political control. That is the difference between ruling and reigning."(as quoted in MM 1978, p. 430, 508). The reader can see that the 1978 version published in *The Bureaucrat* is referenced, and this quote was on the second page and considered important enough to also serve as the final sentence in the text. Frank Thompson noted that the Malek Manual

(2003, p. 190) is to personnel administration what Machiavelli's *The Prince* is to the study of political science. Did it improve the White House's control of bureaucracy? Not really. While many political appointees had and have quite impressive educational and experiential credentials, they do not necessarily have experience in the policies and programs of the department or agency they lead. Furthermore, they serve as "birds of passage" (average of two years). Would too much appointment authority for the chief executive come at the possible sacrifice of democratic accountability? And, to what extent can and does lack of substantive knowledge and experience of a political appointee affect the response quality of a department or agency? Have we forgotten George W. Bush's praise of FEMA Director Michael Brown's dealing with Hurricane Katrina ("Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job")? Assessing administrative and governance capacity in dealing with Covid also requires attention for these two questions.

Distrust of government bureaucracy has been a staple in American life since before the Revolution. Outright bureaucrat bashing became a "thing" in the 1970s. Both distrust of government bureaucracy and of bureaucrats are expressed in stereotypes rather than realities. Bureaucracy is stereotyped as formalistic, using red tape, officious, while bureaucrats are considered lazy and apparently not good enough for a job in the private sector. Various reforms have been attempted: Carter's Civil Service Reform Act (1978), Reagan's "government is the problem" leading to serious cutbacks in revenue, and Clinton's reinventing government aiming at reducing regulations. The top civil service was increasingly politicized, and in a politicized civil service it is possible that "loyalty [routinely triumphs] over competence in selection, and the displacement of basic decision rationality by political goals in decision making" (Moynihan & Roberts, 2010, p. 573; see also Resh, 2015, p. 149, on the importance of ideological loyalty in the J.W. Bush administration). As Moynihan and Roberts note, politicization corroded control and undermined the Presidency.

This politicization has been driven to breaking point by Trump and his (political) allies via a politics that serves the pursuit of raw power rather than a politics for policies that serve the people (Goodsell, 2019; Box, 2021). Author Barton Gellman observed how distrust in elections had become a new normal and that "Our two-party system has only one party left that is willing to lose an election. The other is willing to win at the cost of breaking things that a democracy cannot live without." (Gellman, 2022, p. 42) Journalist George Packer writes that the Republican party has long campaigned to undermine faith in elections, and those Republicans have been busy in the past year stacking state election offices with partisans (2020, 2022, pp. 18-19). He also writes that the relentless drive for power by authoritarians is a major threat to democracy. There still is a belief that something like Hitler cannot happen in the USA (Packer, 2022, p. 20). How many Americans heard of, or even read the novel (1935) or watched the play (1936) by Sinclair Lewis: *It Can't Happen Here?* How many people know that the motto of Hitler's SS was *Meine Ehre heißt Treue* (My honor is called loyalty)? How many people know that passive passions, as Spinoza called it, feed the anger of some people, and turn them into slaves of these same emotions (Naess, 2008, p. 58). What happened in Nazi Germany, has almost (?) happened here. Any authoritarian feeds upon passive passions, and those gripped by anger diminish their citizenship and reduce themselves to followers. An authoritarian might also present herself as the embodiment of the jurisdiction and its constituency. Consider Harriet Hagerman from Wyoming who won the primary against Liz Cheney. In a campaign rally she said "I am Wyoming." (WBUR 2022 NPR, August 15, 1 – 1.30 p.m.) This sounds eerily similar to Louis XIII's *L'état c'est moi*, or am I reading too much into this?

Many government reforms have been pursued based on a deep belief in the free market and in business. The idea that business could provide the principles upon which government should operate dates to, at least, Woodrow Wilson's 1887 essay. This idea has continued to be very

influential, despite the warnings of someone like Adam Smith against the "tribes of monopoly" who not only seek to control the market but also hope to influence public policy in the effort to control the economy more (Smith, 2010, p. 239). Why do people not recognize that the free market can only exist because of government's regulatory constraints and oversight (Polanyi, 1944, p. 130, 141)? Have deregulation, contracting out, and privatization resulted in so much better education, health care, prison administration, cheaper drugs and medications, etc.?

It is instructive at this point to recall the *Powell Memorandum* (PM) written in 1971. Lewis F. Powell, a partner in the law firm of Williams, Gay, Powell, and Gibson based in Richmond, Virginia, and specialized in corporate law, wrote to the chairperson of the US Chamber of Commerce's Education Committee that American free enterprise was under attack from communists, new leftists, and political and economic revolutionaries in colleges, media, and intellectual and literary journals. The same sentiment had been expressed a year earlier in the Rockford College (Rockford University since 2013) lectures (Shenfield, 1970). Powell wrote that under socialist and totalitarian regimes economic freedom is denied and "inevitably [followed] by government restrictions on other cherished rights" (Powell, 1971, p. 33). Following this quote, he writes that "the views expressed above are tentative and suggestive" but the language of the PM clearly suggests an evidentiary basis without providing evidence. Powell merely relied on rhetoric and that is possibly best summarized in this: "The threat to the enterprise system is not merely a matter of economics. It is also a threat to individual freedom." (Powell, 1971, p. 32) Powell went on to become an associate justice in the United States Supreme Court (1972-1987).

Assessing the democratic capacity should consider the contemporary ideational substructure of distrust in government and among people, of high politicization of the public sector, and of strong belief in market

solutions to public problems. Has it always been like this, or had there been a time that it was quite different?

Administrative and Governance Capacity in the Decades around 1900

For millennia administrative capacity concerned the so-called regalian functions of defense, police, justice, and taxation. Some governments provided other services such as irrigation works and granaries. But, all in all, government was small and regarded as the property (*patrimonium*) of the ruler. This persisted well into the 17th and 18th centuries. For instance, James I (King of England and Ireland, 1603-1625; he was James VI as king of Scotland, 1567-1603) noted "I am the husband and the whole Isle is my lawful wife; I am the head and it is my body." (Cohen, 1994, p. 30). Better known is Louis XIII's (King of France, 1601-43) '*l'état c'est moi*' (Dyson, 1980, p. 137). Politics was pursued for power not as policy for people.

The tides start to change from the early 17th century on. Among the first to argue that governments should embrace responsibilities beyond the basic functions is Antonio Serra who in 1613 wrote a small treatise on how a country's economy could be thriving: a diversified economy, extensive trade and connectivity, an enterprising population, and good government (Serra, 2011, p. 119; Raadschelders, 2022). People and their society prosper with "effective government – which […] is the controlling superior cause of all the other accidents, for it can organize, introduce, cause, improve and preserve them." (Serra, 2011, p. 249). Serra does not think about good government as an imaginary individual, but as a pro-active institutional arrangement that assures prosperity through practical policy for people. It is the government that marshals the resources and invest in infrastructure. It is the government that has the capacity to invest in education so that people can get ahead in life. It is the government that provides the guideposts around the "free market," by investing in material (roads etc.) and in social infrastructure (skilled labor). It is government that encourages,

and can even mandate, that profits are reinvested in the community instead of going overseas.

Serra's treatise was not known until well into the 18th century. Some 40 years after he had written it, Ludvig Veit von Seckendorf argues along similar lines (1665), as later do Nicolas DelaMare (1705-1738), Christiaan von Wolff, Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Nicolas de Condorcet. Serra's ideas and those who unknowingly followed in his footsteps revived thinking about the Platonic and Aristotelian eudaimonic or welfare state (see Croly's observation at the beginning of the paper). Changes in thinking about the position and role of government in society were concluded toward the end of the 18th century by two revolutions the consequences of which are still rippling across the globe. The American and French Revolutions established a historically unprecedented set of institutional arrangements for governing that included the separation of politics and administration (e.g., elected v. appointed), the separation of state and church, the separation of public and private sectors, and the introduction of written constitutions (Raadschelders, 2020, pp. 66-71). It is upon that legal-institutional basis that governments a century later would have the ability, capacity, and creativity to respond to the myriad challenges of rapid industrialization, urbanization, and population growth. People as citizens turned to local government for help with issues they could no longer solve based on their self-governing capacities.

It is especially local governments that take the lead in mitigating the worst consequences of industrialization and urbanization through regulations for better housing, less working hours, limiting child labor, construction of public utilities (gas, water, electricity), construction of sewer systems, creation of sanitation departments, public health initiatives, and so on. In fact, it is also at the local level that the modern study of public administration originates. At both sides of the Atlantic Ocean local administrators call for the need of educating the next generation of local civil servants and develop a curriculum for it

(Hoffman, 2002; Raadschelders, 1998; Stillman, 1998). And how could it have been otherwise? The impact of economic, social, political, cultural, technological, etc., developments is first felt and witnessed at the local level. It is again, upon that local experience that from the early twentieth century on a welfare state could be created that was driven by practical policies for all in the territorial state. This came to full expression in the three decades following the Second World War, a period labeled as *Les Trente Gloreuses* (1979) by the French demographer Jean Fourastié. To write that things went south after that is perhaps too strong, but fact is that income inequality has increased in the Western world since the 1970s (Piketty, 2014) and particularly for racial and ethnic minorities. Especially so in the USA where the policies for people have been replaced by the politics for raw power. Principles of honesty, integrity, and working for the greater good seem to have been waylaid by the Republican party.

Accountability in and for Democracy

Assessing democratic capacity is ultimately about accountability. Who can be held accountable for public actions and behaviors? We can only answer this question in the context of the political arena. In the past 50-60 years the term *movement conservatism* has been used to refer to a coalition of libertarians, traditionalists, anti-communists, neo-conservatives, and the religious right. It has captured the Republican party. Economist Paul Krugman (2020, p. 302; see also 2007) defines *movement conservatism* as an "interlocking set of institutions and alliances that won elections by stoking cultural and racial anxiety but used these victories mainly to push an elitist economic agenda, meanwhile providing a support network for political and ideological loyalists." Krugman (2020, p. 307) notes how a second generation of people have grown up in a right-wing bubble where knowledge and understanding are shoveled under the carpet by this movement conservatism. This started in the 1950s as a response to the New Deal and the interventionist administrative state. It has resulted in political

polarization (Krugman, 2020, p. 297), especially fueled by a new generation of GOP politicians and wannabes who are less and less willing to compromise (Turchin, 2013).

One can only hold someone accountable based on truth. Equally important it is to accept that there is such a thing as truth clearly distinguishable from lies. British author of political satire Jonathan Swift wrote in 1710 "Falsehood flies, and the Truth comes limping after it" (quoted in Adichie, 2021; see also Moore et al., 2021). This needs to be balanced with a Dutch proverb: "No matter how fast the lie, the truth will always catch up." As Herbert Simon wrote in his proverbs article in PAR (1946), there is much contradictory opinion and advice. For the moment it seems Jonathan Swift holds the day, but I hope that the Dutch proverb proves to be more applicable to the American situation. What is happening in the Republican party, especially coming to the surface since 2016, is *group polarization* which happens when people speak with one another and end up at a more extreme point than their original positions (Kahnemann et al., 2021, p. 103). We see this shift in how Republicans initially distanced themselves from the January 6 insurrection, while a year later the Republican National Conference describes those events as "legitimate political discourse."

What is truth, what is lie, what is "fake news," is there a "deep state," are questions that people find more and more difficult to answer. Trust in science has declined; trust in one another has declined; trust in political officeholders has tanked. Via algorithms the Big Four (Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google), as Galloway called them, track what we eat, what we are interested in, what we want to hear. In Galloway's (2018, p. 117) words: "Fake news stories are a greater threat to democracy than a few whack jobs wearing white hoods". He further claims that they have hollowed out the middle class, bankrupt the towns, and all this feeds the angry politics of those who feel cheated. This, in turn, supports the rise of demagogues (Galloway, 2018, p. 264; cf. Aristotle, epigraph at beginning of paper). The Big Four exploit

people's knee-jerk antipathy to big government, peddling the 'story' that government threatens capitalism (cf. PM). This rampant distrust of facts is fueled further by the "deep state" concept that assumes the existence of a network of high-level financial and industrial actors who seek to wield power alongside and even with elected government officials (Lofgren, 2016). To Lofgren's distress, in recent years this concept has been used and twisted by right-wing populists to characterize government as a swamp that requires draining (Bernstein, 2018).

As a matter of fact, the health of the market is sooner preserved via government regulation, by constraining monopolistic opportunities, and by constraining the indiscriminate use of algorithms that lumps people into single categories without stratification. Even more problematic is that algorithms, or weapons of math destruction (WMDs) as O'Neil calls them, assume causation where only correlation exists. Their designers work with data that can be measured and counted, i.e., favor efficiency over fairness. The idea that algorithms are impartial is flat-out wrong; they are written by people and thus not only reflect choices about what is efficient, what is profitable, and what is logistically possible, but also about fundamentally moral issues and ideologies (O'Neil, 2016, p. 21, 95, 162). And this reflects that "mosaic of features" St. Augustine recognized in himself. Facebook, of course, downplays the importance of algorithms. Three Facebook employees concluded in 2015 that "the power to expose oneself to perspectives from the other side in social media lies first and foremost with individuals." (Bakshy et al., 2015, p. 1132) Obviously, they are correct, but this presumes a willingness to be informed by other perspectives. *The Wall Street Journal* developed mid-2019 a fictional profile of a blue and a red woman and reported how Facebook algorithms select information for red respectively blue women. Is Applebaum (2021) right that the autocrats are winning through their use of social media, fake websites, funding extremist parties, and hacked political

communication? Is there any hope for those who believe that truth exists, and misinformation can be countered? (cf. Lippmann at the beginning of the paper) Perhaps there is. Hyper-partisan content appears to be associated with lack of reasoning. Three psychologists recently showed how analytical thinking is mostly associated with "an increased tendency to distinguish true headlines from both false and hyper-partisan headlines" (Ross et al., 2021). Analytic thinking was not associated with a willingness to share in social media hyper-partisan or false headlines (Ross et al., 2021, p. 484). Hyper-partisanship is often rooted in emotional and impulsive feeling rather than in rational thought. It will not be easy to help people balance the strong pull that emotions have over their behaviors and decisions with more reasoned and introspective considerations of their behaviors and decisions.

Assessing Democratic Capacity and the Role of the Study of Public Administration

Earlier in this presentation I mentioned the need for a conceptual framework that would help assess the government, administrative, policy, and governance capacity. I cannot claim to be comprehensive, as no one is omniscient. However, several contextual issues can be considered when assessing the effectiveness, fairness, quality, and speed of policies developed by public officials.

First, the psychological make-up of human beings is rather conflicted. It was noted already by St. Augustine how people harbor contrasting characteristics. Many will succumb to the immediate lure of emotional and impulsive behaviors and decisions; some will embrace analytic reasoning and thus constrain their individual desires and preferences for a greater good. One can argue that human beings' characters are quite fragmented among various types of contrasting inclinations, and that, therefor, people will always have varying opinions about most things. With Naess (2008) one can argue that it might be best to recognize that emotions cannot be disregarded but should be balanced in a reasoned context.

This fragmentation of emotional and behavioral elements, second, is also visible in the institutional arrangements for large-scale democracy that were established a little more than two centuries ago. At the basis of modern democracy is an institutional fragmentation among three branches of government, a severance of different institutional roles (politics-administration; public-private), and a separation of personal roles (one can be a political or an administrative officeholder but does not "own" the job, and certainly cannot hold both simultaneously). That institutional fragmentation is also reflected in the organizational make-up. Historically public organizations were mostly undifferentiated, while modern organizations are both vertically (hierarchical levels) and horizontally (various offices, units at the same level) highly differentiated. The institutional arrangements provide the fence around the arena in which organizational actors operate. So, which organizational actor(s) took or was/were given responsibility in dealing with a particular type of policy?

This question, third, can only be answered when we acknowledge that collective action unfolds in a multi-level environment where public, nonprofit, and private actors interact at the local, regional, and national(federal) levels. Indeed, there are very, very few policies that are the sole responsibility of one organizational actor at one level. Specific to the American context is the shared sovereignty between the federal and state levels of government, and the fact that many collective actions have been pursued since colonial times in collaboration between public, nonprofit, and private actors (cf. compensatory state). Which of these actors took the lead in responding a particular public problem?

Also extreme in the USA, fourth, is the extent to which there are multiple actors in and around government that (seek to) influence public policy. Especially the temporary political appointees in government, but outside the career civil service, deserve to be considered about their role(s) in decision- and policy-making.

Fifth, and admittedly written from a Dutch point of view, the majoritarian political system in the USA does not help effective democratic governance.

Just as the individual's psychological make-up needs to be considered, we also, sixth, need to think about the influence of societal values. America is a country where individualism and free market are celebrated and government intervention is, to say the least, looked upon with suspicion. This suspicion, however, is not only directed against government, but also against many other organizational and institutional actors and against others in general. How does that influence governing response? How does that low-trust society influence the effectiveness of information about government policies?

That question can only be answered, seventh, when we consider the enormous amount of misinformation that people and organizations have willingly allowed to spread, the extent to which people live in information bubbles where they only absorb (if that) information that confirm their beliefs, and the extent to which we rely on efficiency-oriented statistics and data.

Finally, eighth, we need to equip people in their role as citizens with the conceptual ability to understand their position and role in society as well as the position and role of government in society. The modern study of public administration as it emerged in late 19th century was, understandably, focused on operational challenges and administrative skills. Its attention was on making government work more efficient and effective. Until the 1970s the study's focus was on organizational structure, on leadership, on various administrative skills (for personnel management, for budgeting, for program evaluation, etc.), and on law and regulation. It was a study focused on the tools of government. Since the 1970s the scope of the study of public administration expanded considerable, to include attention for representativeness, for organizational culture and ethics, for equity, for diversity, for inclusiveness, for non-profit administration, and for what it means to

be a citizen in a democracy. It is especially in its teaching obligation that the academic study of PA can make a big difference, since it can help people become aware how privileged they are to be citizens in a democracy, and what it requires of them to protect it. It is also important to educate citizen about the contrast the institutional arrangements for governing in contemporary democracies with the institutional arrangements for governing before the 1800s, and compare those with the institutional arrangements for governing in totalitarian systems. It is through education and comparison that people will learn to distinguish facts from fake.

Allow these eight elements to sink in and it will be clear that it is not easy, perhaps even impossible, to hold individuals and organizations accountable for their actions. Assessing the democratic capacity of government is nothing more, nothing less than assessing the behaviors of minor and major actors in a very complex system of intertwined agents and actors. While human beings are simplifiers, not complexifiers, as Herbert Simon argued (1969, p. 53; see also Rockman, 2001, p. 9), we cannot ignore the complex interactions between, for instance, the Covid-pandemic as natural phenomenon and the individual and organizational responses as social phenomena. Natural phenomena are complex, but at least they operate upon some universal principles. Given the psychological make-up of human beings it is clear that social interactions are far more complex, less predictable, and rather chaotic.

Some social systems, such as the legal system, are proportional in that people who steal an apple will be punished differently than those who commit murder (Morçöl, 2012, p. 27). Many social systems, however, are non-linear in that they do not operate upon proportional response. Efforts to develop thoughts about and approaches to understanding the role of change, transformation, chaos, and so on, in the study of public administration emerged in the mid- to late 1990s and then initially in the effort to develop crisis management responses. A good overview of

early literature is provided by Farazmand (2003) who later also pointed out that macro- and micro-levels of analysis must be distinguished when analyzing change (Farazmand, 2009, p. 1008). In this presentation I have chosen to focus on the macro-level of institutional, organizational, and managerial issues, with less attention for the policy issues, and no attention for the various micro-level organizational, managerial, administrative, and technical knowledge and details.

While I do not present empirical evidence of the resilience and response capacity of the democratic institutional arrangement for governing, I do think that in the USA (and in most Western countries) this historically unusual institutional arrangement of large-scale democracy has not only survived but deepened in the past two- to two-and-a-half centuries. The institutional foundations laid around the 1800s were such that they enabled the enfranchisement of the citizenry during the 19th century and allowed for an on-the-fly, yet effective, response to rapid social-economic changes at the local level around the 1900s. Social change is perceived today as more rapid, more chaotic, and more intensive than ever before and that is possibly a function of globalizing interdependencies. But we really cannot know this as we are in the middle of social change, thus blinded by our own experiences, and unable to see or sense how social change in the present is experienced and perceived. Could it be that the turmoil in natural, social, and political life in the 2010s and 2020s will, a century from now, be assessed as an anomaly or as a decisive regression toward authoritarian, hierarchical government where people are reduced to being followers and subjects? Time can only tell.

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There are no conflicts of interest among the authors or in terms of third parties.