

**Public Administration, Poverty Alleviation and Democratic  
Governance: a Necessary Interface***Administración pública, mitigación de la pobreza y gobernabilidad  
democrática: una vinculación necesaria*Demetrios ARGYRIADES<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract**

We are witnessing the emergence of a new *profile of poverty* in several parts of the world. Beyond the known symptoms of poverty, whether absolute or relative, many countries are confronted with phenomena of exclusion, rising privilege, inequality, insecurity and the marginalization of poverty-stricken residents and immigrants alike, on an alarming scale. The effects of these phenomena are still hard to forecast but generally point to a visible surge of extremism, religious and political, with ominous forebodings.

Keywords: profile of poverty, exceptionalism, populism

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## **Resumen**

Asistimos al surgimiento de un nuevo perfil de la pobreza en varias partes del mundo. Más allá de los síntomas conocidos de la pobreza, independientemente de si estos conocimientos son absolutos o relativos, en muchas regiones se enfrentan los fenómenos de exclusión, aumento de privilegios de unos cuantos sobre los muchos, inequidad, inseguridad y marginalización de residentes afectados por la pobreza e inmigrantes en una escala alarmante. Estos fenómenos son todavía difíciles de predecir pero en general apuntan a un visible aumento del extremismo, religioso y político, con presagios ominosos. Sólo tenemos que mirar hacia las áreas de conflicto armado que cada vez están más cerca de casa.

Palabras clave: perfil de la pobreza, excepcionalismo, populismo

*“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity; it is an act of justice.”*

*Quoted from Nelson Mandela*

## **Introduction**

The world is in turmoil ... we often see our leaders throw up their hands in despair. Wrong move, one might well add for, to remember Shakespeare, our fortunes and our destiny are not up in the stars but in ourselves. In offering a glimpse of an upcoming volume of the IAS, which bears this very title, I'll try to demonstrate that any shortfalls or failures in poverty alleviation, during the past decades are due not to the crisis, which hit six years ago but in severe shortcomings in both our patterns of governance and public administration. What the upcoming volume and today's presentation will suggest is that such grave shortcomings may be primarily due to a serious *disconnect* between the prevalent trends towards globalization, on the one hand, and the parochial habits of nation states, both large and small, whose practices in governance, administration and politics have not adequately evolved to reflect this new state of affairs. Brought into sharp relief by the successive crises of the past fifteen years, this striking disconnect is reflected in the dissonance between reality and rhetoric between, that is to say, the evolving facts on the ground and how political leaders try to present those facts to their respective peoples and to the world. Occasionally brave men stand up for what is right, refuse their governments' orders or even blow the whistle on stealthy violations of law and the comity of nations (Rudoren, 2014: A6; Cochrane, 2013: A27; Cohen, 2013: A5).

That symptoms of misgovernment and maladministration have been proliferating during the past three decades in several parts of the world can hardly be an accident. To a large extent, it is due to the rapidly increasing complexity, as well as scale of challenges with which the world is faced. In theory and in practice, such issues of complexity and scale ought to have prompted governments to strengthen their *capacity* and firm up the institutions that seek to address contingencies not simply in an *ad hoc* but rather in a thorough, strategic and holistic fashion (Dror, 2014; Dror, 2001).

In our forthcoming book, which bears this title, we ventured to suggest that, in the USA, this precisely was the approach adopted by FDR and his democratic successors. It slowly pulled the country out of the Great Depression, prepared it for the War, which broke out both in Europe and the Pacific Ocean, after 1939, produced the Marshall Plan for Reconstruction of Europe, built the United Nations to ensure enduring peace, and paved the

way for de-colonization and socio-economic development. It comes as no surprise that this enormous drive demanded capacity reinforcement on an enormous scale. Specifically, it required major institution-building, and human resources development in order to complete the process of creation and consolidation of a truly merit-based public service profession. Such novel approaches to governance and public administration were intended to replace the highly inefficient and corrupt, as well as undemocratic spoils system of the past. Of course, they were not limited to the United States, but made strides both in Europe and other parts of the world.

The movement had its sources in 19<sup>th</sup> century Prussia, France and Britain. Indeed, it owed its force to realization that public administration was more than mere routine; that even exceptional leaders, whether visionaries or strongmen, required expert advice and dedicated help from skilled and tried officials. Such was the thought that prompted the development of Public Administration as both a field of research and a great profession. It underpinned the establishment of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), as early as 1930. Significantly, this earnestness regarding matters of governance, coupled with the belief that government existed for the good of all the people, revitalized both politics and public administration. Combined with strong belief in the rule of law and due process, it furnished the foundations of the public service profession. It also influenced the growth of a new class of statesmen, whose scarcity in our days is a cause of deep regret but also some surprise. We've had our "*Great Recession*" (Altman, 2013: 8-13). In terms of its global effects, it has been found surpassing even the Great Depression of 1929 (Greenspan, 2013: 88). We are still trying to cope with its lingering outcomes. Meanwhile new crises are rising, chiefly in the Middle East. But you may ask yourself: where are the leaders of yore? Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Charles De Gaulle, who pulled the world together and out of the Second World War.

### **"An Inconvenient Truth"**

One may also think of Tito and Ben Gurion, of Gandhi and Nehru, Nasser and Ho Chi Minh, in this connection. But other than Nelson Mandela and Lee Kuan Yew, there are few leaders –statesmen that our world has to show for (Dror, 2014). It is difficult to face this "inconvenient truth" without inviting attention to the veritable onslaught on government which started with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan during the 1980s and which did not abate until, in fact, quite recently. Its aftermath, however, weighs heavily on the structures of governance to this day. All institutions suffered on the national, sub-national

and international levels, for this was an attack on the *foundation* of governance and public administration.

A product of neo-liberalism and the New Public Management (NPM), this onslaught on “big government” sought to reverse a course that started with the Enlightenment. It also called into question some of the basic principles and values of democratic governance and public administration. Let us mention just a few:

- the concept that democracy is government by the people and for the good of all, the common people especially;
- the concept of *general interest* that must be secured and defended from encroachments by special vested interests;
- the role that public servants and public officials at large ought to play in promoting and securing the public or general interest;
- the importance of a merit-based, high-level professional corps, selected for their knowledge, technical skills, ability, and dedication to service;
- respect for the independence, professional autonomy and judgement of public servants and for the rule of law under which they should work;
- commitment to research; respect for truth, in fact, as well as science and ethics;
- respect for human rights, nationally and internationally; respect for treaty obligations and other agreements, in general; and
- priming strategic concerns and long-term human issues over tactical expediency.

It must be clear by now that the New Public Management not only showed indifference to principles and values which form the core of the institution of governance but also voiced hostility to such concerns as equity, compassion, fair play, continuity of government, consistency and due process which, in its view, did not contribute directly and might well interfere “with the effectiveness and efficiency of Public Administration in economic terms” (IIAS, 2002:33). It was “results over process” all the way! New forms of “public management” were introduced to serve a State and government which neo-liberal doctrines have tried to hollow out. Remarkably, such policies had little effect on the budget of the armed forces but, in most cases, targeted the social, economic and public welfare fields (Fraser-Moleketi, 2012:192).

It comes as no surprise that countries where these doctrines made deep inroads were also those where poverty continues unabated, where alleviation of poverty made scanty progress if any and where, in terms of income, prospects and opportunities, the middle

classes stagnate. Withdrawal of the State has mostly proved inimical to the welfare of the poor, the weak and the marginalized. Experience has been different in States that are still served by competent professionals; where governments remain at the forefront of the struggle against poverty and exclusion. Though, after seven years into the “Great Recession”, this comes as no surprise, it needs to be re-stated and publicized in some degree of detail. Precisely on this account, *Public Administration, Poverty Alleviation and Democratic Governance* became the theme of a Panel and one of the highlights of the International Congress of the IIAS, at Ifrane, in Morocco, in 2014.

The Panel, in effect, was intended to introduce the forthcoming publication of the IIAS on the challenges, world-wide, of poverty not only in terms of the plight of those who live in dire want but also of its effects on democratic governance. How public administration ought to address this issue and bring corrective action to bear on this global concern was, in sum, the theme and thrust of the Panel. The Panel consisted of six people, all closely associated with the IIAS and its new publication. It included Professor Gaert Boukaert, President of the IIAS; Professor Michiel De Vries, President of IASIA; M. Rolet Loretan, Director-General of the IIAS; Professor Pan Suk Kim, past President of the IIAS and Editor of the book; Mrs. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, former South African Minister of Public Service and now Special Envoy on Gender of the Africa Development Bank; and, finally, Demetrios Argyriades, Rapporteur of the Working Group, which implemented this project.

The project was divided in two principal parts: one *thematic* and one *geographical*. The former was intended to explore the major challenges subsumed under the title of poverty alleviation; the latter offered accounts of the experience in waging war on poverty, in all the world’s main regions. Now concluded, this compendium has been complemented with abstracts in the Institute’s working languages. It may appear in print by the end of the year and, hopefully then, be translated into Arabic, Chinese and Spanish, so that it may be accessible to readers truly world-wide.

How shifting ideologies impact the war on poverty was forcefully brought out in the twin presentations of Drs. Pan Suk Kim and Michiel De Vries. They delved into the experience of many a developing nation and of development programmes, in different parts of the world. They noted the success of some emerging countries, China and India especially, which offer a sharp contrast to baffling failures elsewhere, even in parts of the globe that are blessed with abundant resources. Although the Great Recession, which still afflicts the world accounts, to some extent, for an observable slide, most certainly a loss of momentum, the staggering disparities in national performance on the War-on-Poverty front, has raised a number of questions, which certainly defy an easy standard answer.

### Administration and Governance Make the Difference

Conceding that fortuitous or other factors do occasionally weigh in, affecting some countries adversely but benefitting others, both Drs. Pan Suk Kim and Michiel De Vries concluded that sound strategies and an effective government, between them, hold the keys to successful implementation in poverty alleviation. All panelists concurred that public administration and democratic governance represent the weightiest factors, which between them make the difference between success and failure. There is more than meets the eye, on the other hand, and the discussion showed that much, in fact, depends on what we call “democracy”, as well as on the spirit of public administration in any given country, which sets its definitive stamp on the public service profession.

Shifting perspectives and clashes of public opinion on the above-mentioned subjects, throw light on the developments of the past three decades. M. Rolet Loretan, Director-General of the IIAS, described them as amounting to a veritable *paradigm shift*. Professor Gaert Boukaert spoke of the need to recover the essence of democracy itself; the need to embed the principles of the French and US revolutions into the functions and structures of government. Both stressed the pressing need to move beyond a definition of democracy seen purely as *process*; as chiefly majority rule, with periodic elections. It was recalled, in fact that since the early nineties, great hopes had been invested in plebiscitary “rituals”, in several parts of the world. They vanished like the morning mist with the economic crisis, political turmoil and the collapse of government, which still deeply affect vast swaths of the world.

At the root of it all, as Mrs. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi aptly observed, one may discern an instrumental concept of governance and management; government seen as a tool, as little more, in fact, than pure instrumentality, intended for limited purposes. This view, still current today, was introduced by the Chicago School and the New Public Management. A change of terminology induced a shift of focus from *ends* and fundamentals to the *means* and resources of governance. Partly because, “big government”, during the nineteen-eighties, was used as a term of opprobrium, “governance”, an 18<sup>th</sup> century term, was suddenly re-introduced and, later on, “good governance” foisted on public debates mostly in opposition to government itself. Public administration was redefined and *reduced to public management* which, in turn, was reinvented in private sector ways. The public

service profession lost its shine as a result and the concept of general interest also depreciated and deconstructed (Fraser-Moleketi, 2012; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2007:121).

As panelists remarked this “market model” of “good governance” went *in tandem* with a *trickle down* approach to economic development. Promoted by the World Bank and leading international financial institutions, this doctrine held that economic progress and poverty alleviation should properly start “at the top”, “with private-sector led development activity” (World Bank, 1994: xvi). Accordingly, the proper role of government and administration was building and maintaining a business-friendly environment. Regulation and state intervention in the economic sphere were strictly frowned upon. To many, they smacked of “bureaucracy”. The proper role of government, so “minimalists” argued, lay in domestic security, the administration of justice and military preparedness, as well as foreign affairs.

Three-and-a half decades and a Great Recession later the model lost its shine but much damage had been done. The damage has taken the form of a progressive shift away from a needs-assessed and collective provision of welfare. It also took the form of a huge *capacity deficit* (Dror, 2001). This resulted from withdrawal of a *proactive* government from many a critical area of vital concern to the citizenry and from the systematic “downsizing” or dismantlement of public service structures, which underpinned the edifice of the Administrative State. To be sure, we need to avoid any sweeping generalization, speaking of all the world. However, by and large, it has been demonstrated that countries, which safeguarded their core institutional structures and thus also took care of fundamental principles of democratic governance, weathered the crisis better. The point was emphasized and runs as *leitmotiv* throughout the upcoming book.

Arguably, one of the worst and most damaging results of the rampant capacity deficit is the observable decline of public trust and overall public support for the institutions of governance. World-wide, examples abound, especially in activities requiring cooperation between professional cadres and members of the public. Recent cases as with Ebola in West Africa and polio vaccination in Pakistan speak volumes on the gulf of deep mistrust that separates large segments of the people from their government. This gulf and alienation of large segments of the population have surfaced in conjunction with a phenomenal surge of corruption and abuse. The new IAS publication has rightly given prominence to this calamitous trend. It also emphasizes the pernicious effects of corruption in the public sphere, especially on the poor, the dispossessed, minorities, the migrants and other marginal groups.

It is no exaggeration that, as the panel argued and our new book will show, we are witnessing the emergence of a new *profile of poverty* in several parts of the world. Beyond



the known symptoms of poverty, whether absolute or relative, many countries are confronted with phenomena of exclusion, rising privilege, inequality, insecurity, “instability at home and work” (Coontz, 2014:SR1 7) and the marginalization of poverty-stricken residents and immigrants alike, on an alarming scale. The effects of these phenomena are still hard to forecast but generally point to a visible surge of extremism, religious and political, with ominous forebodings. We only have to look to areas of armed conflict but even closer to home. Distrust and disaffection, despair and alienation, the radicalization of major militant groups often take a violent turn, with weapons easily available, thanks to a flourishing arms trade.

We may not like to admit it but poverty and exclusion, coupled with lack of prospects, in the midst of wealth and privilege can be sources of disaffection, which often lead to violence and extremism. Only recently the press, showed a map indicating the countries of origins of “Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq”. Though probably a majority came from countries of North Africa and the Middle East, a very sizeable number hailed from Britain, France and Germany, all of which, as well as Russia and the Scandinavian countries, are home to large continents of non-European immigrants, mostly poorly integrated and living on the margins. According to all accounts, they represent the bulk of the European fighters making their way, through Turkey to Syria and Iraq (Sengupta, 2014: A1 & A8; Yardley, 2014:A1 & A12-13).

### **The Changing Profile of Poverty**

So, what lessons have we learnt? Bridging the past and the future, what may we now conclude and what may we now venture to recommend for action?

As a start, it would be fair to argue that, although absolute poverty, in several parts of the world, has been reduced, pockets of relative poverty persist around the globe even within rich countries, as in North America and Europe. We have not vanquished poverty. Though we have won some battles, the war on poverty is on and poverty persists, though arguably less visible, never far below the surface. But it has been transformed. The days of mass starvation, caused by drought or devastation brought on defenceless peasants by floods or frost, may have receded somewhat as pressure on the land due to overpopulation has also greatly eased, mostly through mass migration. Indeed prevailing patterns of urbanization are rapidly changing the profile of poverty world-wide.

With half of the world’s population living in cities already –52.1 per cent, in 2011, to be precise (United Nations) –, the prototypical poor may no longer be the peasant, as in the past, but rather the slum-dweller. Large metropolitan areas, which are expanding rapidly, in

developing countries especially, may become the breeding grounds of misery and despair, while also being the places of great conspicuous wealth and unaffordable housing. Extremes of wealth and poverty already confront one another with dubious long-term effects on democratic governance and social peace. Famine and the specter of death previously stalking the Earth, may now be giving way to new steady companions of poverty in big cities: squalor, corruption, homelessness, drug addiction, petty crime or, even worse, gang warfare and open rebellion.

Still afflicting large swaths of the world, the protracted Great Recession has given us a foretaste of likely future trends; likely, that is to say, unless firm government action were taken to arrest them, avert them or redress them. The author of this paper had a hint of this in Greece where, unable to find work in the sprawling urban centres, people return to the land they had left some years before. They reason that, back home, they may be able to cope, at least in a small way. However, their numbers are small. The option and the prospect of work in rural areas is hardly open to all; not likely to reduce the level of unemployment which, in Southern Europe especially, still hovers between 25-30 per cent (Argyriades, 2013: 81). With the youth jobless rate much higher still in most countries, many other new facets of poverty suggest themselves (Alderman, 2013:A1 & A8). Foremost among these facets are lack of proper schooling, lack of skills, and no employment record worth speaking of. They represent “pre-existing conditions” for a life of implacable poverty and *anomie* on the margins of society.

*Exclusion* is the term that most often now-a-days is used to characterize the predicament of people with no access to centres of power or economic resources and, therefore, wholly unable either to exert some influence on the course that the economy takes or determine their own future in any significant way. With numbers of menial jobs declining or paying very little, the thought that anyone, with a few years of schooling and minimal clerical skills, could land a steady job no longer bears relation to the real world out there. Rapid technological progress makes steep demands on youth, which the educational system and training institutions do often try to meet but often lack the resources to adequately address. Not surprisingly, frustration, anger, apathy, withdrawal and alienation are rampant in some countries, among the youth especially, leading some to petty crime but others to violence and prison. With less than 5 per cent of the world’s population, the United States of America is home to the world’s top imprisonment rate, with one out of nine convicts serving a life sentence. Specifically, it claims a prison population representing fully a quarter of the global total. More than half –58 per cent, to be precise– is drawn from minority groups, all too often school drop-outs or products of core cities, where schooling may leave something to be desired (Blow, 2014: A19; Blow, 2013: A21).

It is hard to escape the conclusion that belonging to a minority and second class citizen status has become archetypical traits of the urban poverty syndrome. They make you mostly invisible, “out of sight and out of mind”, and all too often headed for a career in jail. Compounding the problem of poverty is unequal access to avenues that lead to self-improvement, a life of opportunity and active participation in civic affairs. As two well-known columnists put it: “the greatest inequality in America is not in wealth but the even greater gap in opportunity” (Kristof and Dunn, 2014: 1 & 6SR). To be sure, when seen against the backdrop of slavery and segregation, the status of minorities in the United States does show a significant progress. However, relevant data for one, and deplorable events like the recent death of an unarmed teenager in Ferguson, Missouri would suggest that the road to a more inclusive, more just and equal society remains still very long (*The New York Times*, 2014:A22). Across the Atlantic, however, the EU Member States, which never had to cope with the aftermath of slavery, are also battling painfully with serious minority problems, made worse by the Recession.

Unenviable though life for inner city residents, minorities especially, may seem in the US, as well as parts of Europe, it is infinitely better than the plight of religious minorities or other groups surviving in sparsely populated rural areas of West Asia, where poverty is compounded by lack of law and order, police protection, public administration and the absence of physical safety, security and predictability.

Very largely on this account, large groups of recent immigrants, mostly from Asia and Africa, now form a salient feature of the urban landscape in Europe, where they have come to represent significant minorities of the population. The majority’s reaction to this substantial influx has varied over time and sometimes proved unfriendly. Integration of these groups into the wider community has seldom been successful and as one might expect, the Recession has not helped. The European elections of May 2014 provided the opportunity for parties from the fringes to gain more visibility, as well as broad support from a disenchanted electorate, by venting xenophobic or even racist views directed at immigrant groups. Remarkably, in two leading democracies of Europe, openly anti-immigrant, nationalistic parties were able to move to the top, displacing political forces which had alternated in power for several decades.

Though, once again, it is dangerous to over-generalize speaking of the EU countries, North America and the world, it would be fair to argue that the “*decline of politics*,” of which Professor Dror spoke in 2001, has seldom been as steep and as pronounced (Dror, 2001:31). Public trust in political parties, decision-making processes and government pronouncements is at an all-time low. The reasons for this trend may not be far to seek. Mostly, they lie in the abyss that separates the promises that leaders and candidates make

from the outcomes they deliver. There is a yawning gap between the people's needs, poor people's in particular; between people's expectations and actual dispensations. With growing inequality around the world; with widening differentials in opportunities, assets, income and opportunities, the citizens must cope with an ever-widening abyss between facts on the ground and verbal acrobatics, as rhetoric is stretched to cover this growing distance and disconnect.

“Dysfunction” and “Decay” are rampant all around us (*Foreign Affairs*, 2014) and *Populism*, from Right and Left, is its distinctive trademark. It must be a shared concern, the world over, or a conservative journal with known establishment ties would not have published an issue with such a telling cover. Not all of this dysfunction and generalized unhappiness can be tied to the Recession. Even poverty and stagnation, serious as they both are, might rightly be described as only epiphenomena of a much deeper *malaise*. The product of this malaise is right and left-wing populism; it points to a model of governance that has most visibly failed.

### **A Populist Model of Governance**

In the failure of regimes and leaders the world over, we may see the unraveling of a model, now 35 years old, that was sold to the world as “good governance,” and as the key to prosperity, progress, freedom and democracy. Promoted by the World Bank (1994) during the early nineties, it forcefully advocated shrinking the State, downsizing public services and opting for “private-sector-led” development as the path to “poverty reduction” (World Bank, 1994: XVI). While mention was made of the need to equip this model of governance “with a professional accountable bureaucracy”, the model made its mark chiefly through its promotion of *outsourcing*, a neologism, which gained traction throughout the world, around the turn of the century. Although the model promised “a smaller state” (*ibid*), neither the size of government nor that of the budget decreased, in most cases. Simply, funds were redistributed between fields of activity and the responsibility for policy execution assigned, to a large extent, to management consultants and private sector contractors. The former have been tasked with the design of plans and government reforms; the latter with implementation (Caiden and Caiden, 2002).

Comparing this new pattern to the Weberian model and its Wilsonian analog, both of which resulted largely from major 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century reforms, a prominent Conservative in the United States, Francis Fukuyama was led to the conclusion that we have come to a point of no return (Fukuyama, 2014:5-10). Quoting Paul Light, another

well-known scholar and student of administration, he argues that “the system... is less merit-based”; that it has “moved away from the Weberian ideal of an energetic and efficient organization staffed by people chosen for their ability and technical knowledge” (*ibid*). The upshot, according to Light, is that “Federal employees appear to be more motivated by compensation than by mission...” (*ibid*). Both Fukuyama and Light might add that they are describing a trend of quasi-global dimensions; a fact which is hardly surprising since many of the reforms and structural adjustments, from the 1980s onwards, derived their inspiration from the Bretton Woods institutions (Fraser-Moleketi, 2005; Fraser-Moleketi, 2012: 201-204; Argyriades, 2013: 84).

The paradigm, in fact, which revolutionized or, at the very least, deeply transformed the theory and practice of government and administration might be summed up as follows:

- *De-institutionalization*; undoing, in other words, or drastically dismantling an institutional framework which represents the legacy of past decades (Argyriades, 2011:62). Although defended in theory as pursuit of the 4Ds (de-bureaucratization, deregulation, decentralization and downsizing) and, therefore, as a good in itself, it has increasingly taken more surreptitious forms, which for this reason also, are unavowed but dangerous. Increasingly, in fact, we find our leaders acting *sub rosa* and then pretending otherwise, making short shrift of rules or even legal enactments, ignoring treaty provisions or by-passing institutions, which they consider cumbersome or whose willing cooperation cannot be assured in advance (Ackerman, 2014:A31; *The New York Times*, 2014:A30; Cohen, 2014:A23). When one of the structures targeted is the United Nations, we can readily see why such practices, taken either in the name of efficiency and expediency or, indeed, of higher purpose can be damaging to peace. They also help discredit structures and institutions which are needed for *the long haul* to make democracy run and secure the peace, both nationally and internationally (Mazower, 2012; Langrod, 1963).
- *governance without government* or with a minimal presence of government;
- public management with “*public*” in quotation marks, modeled on the private sector, reduced to applied economics (“management is management”) and removed, as far as possible, from the traditional framework of public administration under the rule of law and due process (*état de droit*).

One might concede a point to Fukuyama arguing against the mistaken belief “that public administration could be turned into an [exact] science” (Fukuyama, 2014:5). But have we not instead fallen into the trap of lightly equating management with economics and of investing the latter with a degree of precision and scientific certainty that it does not possess? Furthermore, while the idea of separating politics from administration may have been carried far by doctrinaire apologists of “administrative science”, the opposite extreme is equally or more dangerous. It leads to Jacksonian democracy, nepotism and clientelism, which we have seen in practice from the late 1970s onwards. Simply put, we have come to accept that it really matter little who staff our public offices or who are tasked to plan and implement the policies of government. In a startling disconnect with this prevalent reality, university degrees in public administration continue to proliferate world-wide, and are still much in demand.

If “any which way is o.k.; if all that really matters is results”, we may all find ourselves perennially caught by surprise. An “unintended” consequence of massive *outsourcing* of major government tasks was the proliferation of management consultants, large private sector firms and NGOs, unevenly equipped to handle complex challenges, which they do by vying for more and trying to enlarge their share of massive government contracts. Quite apart from the issue of control and the fact that supervision leaves much to be desired, outsourcing of government business has also necessarily implied outsourcing power (Stanger, 2009). Since, in his farewell speech, President Eisenhower warned all his fellow-Americans against the rapid growth of the *military-industrial complex*, the practice of outsourcing has spawned a vast array of perilous complicities which seek to redefine the public or general interest in self-regarding terms. The trend has been compounded by the gigantic growth of income inequality entailing as it does a highly unequal access to centres of power and influence. Fukuyama had to admit that “it becomes ... problematic when the economic winners seek to convert their wealth into unequal political influence” (Fukuyama, 2014:10). To his “winners list”, he might well add officials, in the measure that, increasingly, politicians are inclined to turn themselves into lobbyists.

### **Exclusion, Inequality and the Surge of Pressure Group Politics**

To make matters slightly worse, such lobbying is not limited to corn growers and sugar producers. Outsize political influence is playing out, with a view to the Autumn elections, as we speak. It is hard to disentangle the ongoing debates on NATO, Syria, Iraq, Eastern Europe and the Ukraine from related tugs-of-war over military expenditures and

Obamacare. It is also hard to explain why, more than twenty years after the end of the Cold War, the NATO Member States, collectively, spend more than a trillion dollars in military hardware and such other related purposes, far in excess of all the rest of the world put together. Worse still, we have just learned, that a trillion more may be added, over the next three decades, for “atomic revitalization” (Broad and Sanger, 2014: A1 & A12). In light of this pattern, by contrast, it is not hard to explain the proliferation of arms throughout the USA and other parts of the world, where they have found their way into the wrong hands often, as the ongoing debate on ISIS (or ISISL) testifies. Simply put, both profit margins and the rate of obsolescence are extremely high in this trade. Gun lobbies exist for a reason.

A close examination of this pervasive trend sheds light on the exponential surge of populism, not merely in the US and Europe but world-wide. In an article recently published in *Foreign Affairs*, Yasha Mounk cogently argues that “Pitchfork Politics” represent “the populist threat to Liberal Democracy” (Mounk, 2014: 27). Fukuyama, on the other hand, reminds us that “... elites speak the language of liberty but are perfectly happy to settle for privilege” (Fukuyama, 2014:17). It cannot be overlooked that in their majority, lobbies are the defenders of privilege; seldom are they friends of the poor, the dispossessed and people on the margins. Few would dare characterize them as paragons of public virtue. Commenting on this development, Fukuyama had this to say:

*“The explosion of interest group and lobbying in Washington has been astonishing, with the number of firms with registered lobbyists rising from 175 in 1971 to roughly 2500 a decade later, and then to 13,700 lobbyists spending about \$3.5 billion by 2009” (Fukuyama, 2014:16).*

Apologists of lobbies have argued that this money and all related activity have not resulted in measureable policy changes. However this is implausible, as Fukuyama admits (*ibid*); it only serves to underscore the lengths to which some lobbies may be prepared to go in order to cover their tracks. Populism, both right-wing and left-wing but sadly also invading the mainstream now-a-days, shows how this is playing out (Uardley, 2014: A1 & A12-13). Speaking of Greece specifically, it would be fair to argue that populism is crude. The right-wing is xenophobic, directed against immigrants, but also, secondarily, against gays, Jews and others. The left-wing version of populism consists in making promises, which could not be fulfilled within the Eurozone or which would spell disaster. It is small consolation that other populist platforms, in other parts of Europe, are equally outlandish, egregious and opportunist. The mainstream forms of populism are mostly expressed with *gravitas* and, therefore, sound convincing. While eschewing the extremes of xenophobic nationalism, they go for loud appeals to patriotic fervour and the “defence of freedom”. They also

demonize potential adversaries and thrive invoking perils. “*Hannibal ante portas*” is a favourite of populists and the lobbies which support them.

The perils posed by populists and lobbyists standing behind them are greatly exacerbated in the *volatile environment* in which we live, where they are mostly engendered by the crises-political and economic – with which we are currently faced. Such a volatile environment calls not for histrionics but for prudence, moderation, concertation and consultation; for dialogue in earnest rather than appeals to force. That the voices of moderation and appeals for reasoned argument, letting the other be heard (*audietur et altera pars*) are so frequently drowned by a chorus of indignant, self-righteous calls for action is telling testimony to the power of pressure groups. Imaginary threats are propped up by such groups to divert taxpayers’ money and scarce, much-needed funds from the ends of education, alleviating poverty and serving development goals to arming mercenaries and fuelling an arms race. Yet it was Joseph Nye, former US Assistant Secretary of Defence and later a Harvard Professor who argued that “strength and influence abroad begins with steps ... at home” (Nye, 2011:A23).

What, in the final analysis, we learn from exploration of the chequered development process and the fight to eradicate –or at least diminish– poverty is the pressing need to rethink and *reorder our priorities*. This in turn, is predicated on revisiting a model of governance and management that has so visibly failed. In light of recent happenings, as well as ongoing trends, the prospects for reform do not look very bright. The model currently in force primes tactical maneuvering and propaganda exploits over strategic thinking and looking to the long-term. What is more, in a globalized world, it helps perpetuate narrow nationalist goals, in lieu of the much-needed global perspectives and vision. What we have witnessed lately is the slow but certain decay of public institutions, on the global and national levels, because “they do not serve” –or so pretend their foes, each time that institutions do not promote their goals.

## Conclusion

A hundred years have passed since the outbreak of hostilities, in August 1914. Thus, started the “Great War” with a preemptive strike, that was based on wrong assumptions. Like the Great Depression which followed the Great War, World War I was not the last. The United Nations was founded in 1945 to *maintain* peace and security (Article 1 of the Charter) and, to this end, promote cooperation in both conflict resolution and long-term development goals, like poverty eradication (Mazower, 2012; Langrod, 1963). As set out in the Charter,



the ways of cooperation were those of concertation, negotiation, dialogue, conciliation and compromise. Needless to make the point that such ways cannot guarantee you that you win at every turn. You win some and you lose some. Everybody gains in the long-run because democracy and peace avail humanity at large, the weak and the poor, in particular. However, peace and democracy depend on strong institutions and these must be respected, nurtured and made to work.

This seems a painful task but the alternative is ominous, as the troubled twentieth century shows. Ominously, from the dawn of our century onwards, we have seen a disposition to depart from the ways of the Charter and to “*de-institutionalize*” international relations. We have witnessed the same in governance and government on the domestic level. Invariably, the rationale has been voiced in loud appeals to “pragmatism”, expediency and efficiency. This trend has been reinforced by rapidly growing disparities within and between borders and the attitudes they engender. At one end is *hubris*; at the other, deep resentment. Neither is going away.

Neither bodes well for the future of either peace or democracy. A term that gained much traction in recent years is “*exceptionalism*” (Newland, 2007:24). It says, though not explicitly, that few possess the right to intervene, at will, in others’ domestic affairs. They may promote their interests, in any part of the world, by any means they choose, but will not tolerate it, if any other tries to follow their example.

Hardly new this way of thinking and conducting public affairs harks back to days gone by. It gambles with the future. “*Exceptionalism*” does not go down well either with democracy or with an international order based on the U.N. Charter. We need to address this issue and, in our view, Public Administration, Poverty Alleviation and Democratic Governance show the way.

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