Government Matters More Than Ever: Toward Respect for Government in an Increasingly Privatized World

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This article argues that, in our rapidly changing, increasingly complex world, government matters. It always has and arguably now matters more than ever largely because of the context within which we live - a context in which more than two decades of government bashing have taken their toll on pride and capacity in public service, leaving an emasculated public sector to deal with the immense challenges of today's world. To make this argument the historical shifts of perspective on government and the marketplace are described along with the changes occurring so rapidly in our world. Second, the impact of the recent shift to a pro-marketplace bias and the impacts of globalization, interdependence and increased tribalism on governments and on public administration are described. Finally, some key challenges facing public administration as a result of these changes are discussed.

Our Rapidly Changing World

Government vs. Marketplace: Historical Context

Debates about the respective roles of the public and private sectors have been waged for most of history. In today's world, there is general agreement that the public sector is responsible for protecting citizens by providing for national defense, a police force, and now airport security, as well as providing other public goods and services, such as
pollution control, legal and regulatory infrastructure, building roads, bridges, ports, and some aspects of healthcare and education (McMillan. 2002. pp. 158-162). This article will focus on one aspect of the debates – the respective roles of the two sectors in relation to the economy.

Throughout human history, the role of government in relation to the marketplace has shifted with changes in world conditions, major technological innovations, and political perspectives. Most of these shifts can be characterized as a pendulum swinging from either strongly pro-government/anti-marketplace, or vice versa. In recent history, we have largely treated the public and private sectors as competing in a zero-sum game - one of the sectors wins at the expense of the other.

What is either being forgotten or ignored is that both government and markets have essential roles to play for social systems to work and desired outcomes to be achieved. The reality is that neither government nor markets are an end, they are a means.

Prior to World War I, national governments had little effective control over their economies (Gilpin, 2001, p. 375). Economies were governed by the classical gold standard of fixed exchange rates, and governments were limited to "the efforts of central banks to maintain the value of their currencies" (ibid.) World War I changed the role of governments vis à vis the economy dramatically.

Daniel Yergin, in The Commanding Heights: The Battle Between Government and the Marketplace that is Remaking the Modern World, traces the shifts since the First World War in the role of government in relation to the marketplace. Yergin describes how, during the 1920s, "The market system had not performed anywhere near adequately in many countries, and, during the 1930s, it failed massively" (Yergin, 1998, p. 22). With the onset of World War II, governments in Europe and the United States took over their economies and ran them efficiently and effectively in the service of the war effort (Gilpin, 2001, pp. 375-376).

After World War II, Western European nations were devasted. Because of the experience with capitalism in the 1920s and 1930s, and because of the effective performance of government during the war, the European nations and the United States looked to government to rebuild their infrastructure and economies and ensure sufficient food and jobs (Yergin, 1998, pp. 22). And government delivered.

It is hard to imagine now, in a world that sees markets as far superior to government, but, at that time, capitalism was completely discredited. It was seen as both totally ineffective to deliver economic growth and a decent life, and morally bankrupt - in Yergin's words, "it appealed to greed instead of idealism, it promoted inequality, it had failed the people, and - to many - it had been responsible for the war" (Yergin, 1998, p. 22).

The record of economic success in Western Europe in the postwar years was extraordinary. Governments delivered a standard of living and a way of life that could not have been anticipated, or even imagined, at the end of World War II (ibid., p.45).

State control continued to advance through the 1960s and 1970s. The basic rationale for government's central role was perceived failure of the market to move nations toward secure futures. Government was seen as the solution to market failures.

The seeds of a shift in views of government and markets were planted in the 1960s and 1970s when inflation began to creep up. The oil "crisis" of the early 1970s and the economic slump that followed shocked the system (ibid., p.129). Government policies that had worked for 30 years and produced economic growth proved futile and counterproductive. Confidence in existing arrangements (i.e., central control by government) eroded. There was general acceptance that government's role in the marketplace had to be reevaluated.

In response to grave economic problems in Great Britain in the 1980s - in part due to government's overreaching - Margaret Thatcher embraced privatization and a greatly reduced government role. She sought to replace the
Nanny State" with the "enterprise culture" by drastically cutting government spending, by massive privatization, and by restricting the power of trade unions (ibid., p. 108). Other nations followed Britain's example. By the 1990s, there was general agreement that Margaret Thatcher had established the new economic agenda around the world (ibid., p.123).

The marketplace had become the solution for the economic problems attributed to 30 years of government 'mismanagement.' This economic agenda was emulated by industrialized countries as well as emerging nations, and continues to prevail to this day. In our field, The New Public Management has endorsed and promoted these views of the relationship between government and the marketplace. Thus, in today's world, government is frequently seen as the problem, the private sector as the solution, or even the savior in the face of the 'mess' made by government. Market forces allowed to range freely are seen as superior to intervention of any sort, especially intervention by government. The growth of globalization during the past decade has reinforced this bias toward the private sector.

Globalization, Interdependence, Diversity

In addition to the pro-private sector bias that pervades the United States and much of the world today, we are also struggling to understand and address the forces unleashed by globalization, increasing interdependence, and increasing tribalism.

Globalization

Although the argument can be made that globalization has been around for at least 100 years, there is general agreement that, today, the number, degree, speed, and intensity of global interactions and transactions are much greater, and extend to many more parts of the world (Bosworth and Gordon, 2001, p. 3).

Defined

There are as many definitions of globalization as there are people writing about it. I find one by Joseph Stiglitz in his latest book, Globalization and Its Discontents, to be very helpful:

[T]he closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) people across borders. (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 9)

Ali Farazmand (1999) describes six meanings of globalization that are related to public administration. Specifically, he discusses globalization as: internationalization: an increase in cross-border relations; border openness; a process - "a continuing process of capital accumulation in modem capitalism that has been going on for centuries" (p. 511); ideology, embodying values of "freedom, individualism, free enterprise, plural democracy" (ibid.); a cause-and-effect phenomenon in late capitalism; and, as both a transcending phenomenal process.

Causes

Robert Gilpin, in his book, Global Political Economy, states that "the end of the Cold War provided the necessary political condition for the creation of a truly global economy," but the driving forces have been major economic, political, and technological developments (Gilpin, 2001, p. 8).

Thomas Friedman, in The Lexus and The Olive Tree (1999), argues that what he calls 'the globalization system' resulted from the same forces that toppled the Berlin Wall and led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, namely changes in how we communicate, how we invest, and how we learn about the world. He calls these, respectively, the democratization of technology, the democratization of finance, and the democratization of information (pp. 39-58).
Farazmand cites as causes "economic factors of surplus accumulations" (ibid., p.512): global marketing, global production, global commodification, reorganization of corporate structure, global money and financialization, global state and administration, domestic economic downturn in the 1970s, rising human expectations, innovations, and United Nations agencies (ibid., pp. 512-514).

**Consequences**

The changes allegedly caused by globalization - both positive and negative-have been well documented. Stiglitz argues that "Globalization itself it neither good nor bad. It has the power to do enormous good, and for the countries ... who have embraced globalization under their own terms, at their own pace, it has been an enormous benefit ... But in much of the world it has not brought comparable benefits. For many, it seems closer to an unmitigated disaster." (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 20). On the one hand, globalization has stimulated rapid economic development in countries that would not have grown as quickly (ibid., pp. 4-5). As a result, many people are better off, live longer, and have a higher standard of living. The interconnectedness of the world today means that many people in developing countries have "access to knowledge well beyond the reach of even the wealthiest in any country a century ago" (ibid., p. 4). That includes knowledge about democracy and civil society (ibid, p. 248).

On the other hand, most analysts agree that globalization is not working today for many of the world's poor (Bosworth and Gordon, 2001, pp. 4-5). They have lost jobs, their standards of living have sunk even lower, and they have seen their cultures homogenized (Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 248-249; Bosworth and Gordon, 2001, pp. 4-5). In addition, the world's environment has not fared well under globalization as pollution levels have increased with economic development.

Also, in terms of major negative consequences, the increasing interconnection of national financial systems is undermining the stability of the global economy (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 214). The world economy is increasingly vulnerable to the "size, high velocity, and global scope of financial movements" (Gilpin, 2001, pp. 262-263; Friedman 1999, pp. 7-11), so that today, "financial crises are a recurrent feature of the international economy" (Gilpin, 2001, p. 263).

Finally, there is concern about what globalization is doing to democracy. Stiglitz and Farazmand argue that the way globalization is being done, in particular by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), means that poor and less-developed nations must follow the dictates of these organizations regarding fiscal, monetary, and other structural policies if they are to benefit from much-needed loans (Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 247-248; Farazmand, 1999, p. 516). Farazmand calls this "a negation of local democracy" (Farazmand, 1999, p. 516). Indeed, many in developing countries observing the United States' role in globalization, and our war on terrorism, are convinced that sustaining American democracy requires the repression of democracy in the rest of the world (Goldfarb, 2002).

**Increasing Interdependence/ Increasing Tribalism**

All of the forces driving globalization are also driving an increasing interdependence of nations, organizations, and individuals, while at the same time promoting new forms of differentiation. In a world that is more and more connected, we often seek the shelter of "familiar, distinctive identities" (Lipman-Blumen, 1996, pp. 4-6). "As a result, even as diversity evokes independence, separatism, tribalism, and individual identities, interdependence pulls in a different direction, promoting alliances, collaboration, mutuality, and universalism" (ibid., p. 6).

Samuel Huntington makes this case in The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996). Huntington argues that the forces of
integration in the world today are very strong and are "generating counterforces of cultural assertion and civilizational consciousness" (ibid, p. 36). He posits seven or eight civilizations primarily defined by a common religion, and argues that conflicts between civilizations (as opposed to conflicts between tribes and nations within a civilization) pose the greatest dangers for stability in the world.

**Government Matters More Than Ever**

The impact of all of these changes on governments and on public administration are profound. Balance is the answer to gaining the advantages of globalization and avoiding as much as possible the disadvantages as well as managing interdependence and diversity. Balance between the public and private sectors. Balance between the systemic nature of a world that binds us together and our need for distinctive identities. It is largely the job of governments, both national and international, to achieve this balance.

**National Government**

At the national level, countries must find a balance between what Friedman calls the Lexus and the olive tree. Olive trees, Friedman argues, symbolize "everything that roots us, anchors us, identifies us, and locates us in this world" (Friedman, 1999, p. 27) - family, community, tribe, nation, religion, home. The Lexus represents "an equally fundamental, age-old human drive - the drive for sustenance, improvement, prosperity, modernization" (ibid.). "A country without a Lexus will never go far. A country without healthy olive trees will never be rooted or secure enough to open up fully to the world. But keeping them in balance is a constant struggle" (ibid., p. 36). Stiglitz argues that the pace of globalization is very important - "a more gradual process means that traditional institutions and norms, rather than being overwhelmed, can adapt and respond to the new challenges" (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 247).

As a result of all of these changes, and in spite of the marginalization of government that prevails today, government matters more than ever. Stable, functional political, economic and regulatory institutions and systems are critical to a nation's ability to participate in the global economy and achieve the balance necessary to protect indigenous cultures and thrive (Gilpin, 2001, pp. 169-170; Ink, no date, pp. 2-3).

Key to nations' effective functioning in today's world are quality legal, regulatory, tax, and financial systems and quality economic management (Stiglitz, 2002). All of these systems are currently largely under the control of governments (Gilpin, 2001, pp. 3, 129). Also key is transparent, accountable government, free of significant corruption. The higher the quality of these institutions and systems, the better able a nation will be to get the most out of participation in the global economy while protecting itself from the worst excesses of globalization (ibid., p.12).

On the other hand, weak and/or incompetent national governments have hurt both stability and growth in their countries (Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 54-59; Gilpin, 2001, pp. 264, 367-369). Stiglitz cites a lack of adequate regulation of the financial sector as a cause of the Asian financial crisis. He attributes Mafia capitalism in Russia to "a failure to enforce the basics of law and order" (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 220). And, he notes that privatization "without the necessary institutional infrastructure ... [has] led to asset stripping rather than wealth creation ... [and] privatized monopolies, without regulation, were more capable of exploiting consumers than the state monopolies" (ibid.).

National governments must also constantly balance the roles of the public and private sectors in order to manage the impact of globalization and other major changes in the world. They must be careful not to implicitly cede control over commerce and finance to the private sector in an effort to gain the benefits of globalization. Bernard Barber makes this case well in an op-ed piece in the New York Times in July of this year entitled, "A Failure of Democracy, Not
Capitalism." In the article he is discussing recent egregious corporate conduct:

[B]usiness malfeasance ... arises from a failure of the instruments of democracy, which have been weakened by three decades of market fundamentalism, privatization ideology and resentment of government.... Capitalism is not too strong, democracy is too weak. We have not grown too hubristic as producers and consumers; we have grown too timid as citizens, acquiescing to deregulation and privatization ... and a growing tyranny of money over politics .... [The] problem is not that they [citizens, president, Congress] may have once been complicit in the vices of capitalism, but that they are today insufficiently complicit in the virtues of democracy" (Barber, 2002).

William Greider, in One World, Ready or Not: the Manic Logic of Global Capitalism, develops the general theme of balance between the sectors a little differently. He charges that "in the advanced economies, most governments have become mere salesmen, promoting the fortunes of their own multinationals in the hope that this will provide a core prosperity that keeps everyone afloat" (Greider, 1997, p. 24). Greider argues that the cost of this posture is mass unemployment, or declining real wages, or both.

Greider also cautions governments to guard against corruption that results from a revolutionary atmosphere, such as globalization is creating, and where "law always suffers" (ibid., p.35). He holds out little hope that the private sector will help: "Global business and finance seem to be astride a giant contradiction: while they campaign to dismantle legal restraints in one part of the world, the wealthiest societies, they are simultaneously urging poorer nations to adhere to the 'rule of law' .... The laws they urge the underdeveloped nations to adopt are mainly ones that will protect private property from political interferences" (ibid., p.34).

In spite of the credibility of the argument that quality government is critical to nations' success in today's world, the prevailing public perspective is that the market place is the vital component. Efforts by industrialized nations to help developing countries improve their situations largely focus on economics, not on government. Building local stock markets and entrepreneurs are seen as the proper focus of development efforts, not building government institutions or a broad-based private sector (Ink, no date, pp. 4,7). Belief in the rosy futures that would be spawned by efficient markets is strong (Friedman, 1999, p. 131).

**International Government**

Obviously, there is no world government to manage and oversee the globalization process as national governments can do for their individual countries. Stiglitz says that, instead, "we have a system that might be called global governance without global government, in which a few institutions - the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO - and a few players - the finance, commerce, and trade ministries, closely linked to certain financial and commercial interests - dominate the scene, but in which many of those affected by their decisions are left almost voiceless" (Stiglitz, 2002, pp. 21-22).

Gilpin cites Richard Cooper's 1968 argument for improved international governance of the world economy as prescient (Gilpin, 2001, pp. 377-378). Extending Cooper's argument, Gilpin asserts that "Neither domestic economies nor the increasingly integrated world economy can rely on markets alone to police themselves. An international governance mechanism is needed to assume several functions in the new global economy: in particular, it must provide certain public goods and resolve market failures" (Gilpin, 2001, p. 378).

In the September 2002 special issue of Public Administration Review dedicated to the victims and heroes of the September 11, 2001 attacks, O'Toole and Hanf (2002) explore the impact of international governance on public administration. After providing a very useful description of the multiple networks,
actors, and policies involved in international governance, they conclude that public administrators have major roles "in making sense of the implications of transnational governance for the systems of participating nations."

**Implications for Public Administration**

If we accept John Kirlin's view of the role of public administration as a profession and a field of inquiry that must be of service to the society at large, then the implications for public administration of these changes and the resulting challenges for government are profound.

Kirlin asserts, "Public administration is a central part of the grandest of human endeavors - shaping a better future for ourselves and those yet unborn" (Kirlin, 2001, p. 142). He goes on to argue that the results of public administration have worldwide impact: "The institutions crafted to achieve human aspirations require administration .... [T]he measure of success is ... its enduring value not only to those in a particular nation, state, or city, but worldwide to all who aspire for improved lives" (ibid.).

Taking Kirlin's inspirational words to heart, I believe that there are four issues we need to address as a community that is committed to excellence in public service.

First, we need, in the words of George Frederickson (1997), to reclaim the 'spirit of public administration.' It is time we put the passion back into public administration and public service. We have allowed our field to be captured by the sterile, technocratic forces that tout economy and efficiency above all, and we have forgotten why it is important to be economical and efficient. It is time to remind our colleagues and ourselves that public service is about delivering democracy.

Frederickson makes this case by reminding us of the special relationship that the founding fathers envisioned between public servants and citizens in a democracy. It was the founders' intent that all public servants view the processes of government as a 'moral endeavor'; "theirs is not just to administer but to assist in bringing the ideals of democracy (liberty, justice) into existence" (ibid., p. 205). The founding fathers saw public servants as both moral philosophers and moral activists - "guardians and guarantors of the regime values for the American public - both idealistic and practical" (ibid., p. 205).

We are a long way from the idealism and passion that these views inspire. We need to refocus on what public service means in a democracy and work to instill (or revive) the resulting passion in our students, staff, and colleagues. Once we have done that, we can proudly identify ourselves as members of and advocates for the public service and take on the next big issue.

The second issue we in public administration need to address is balance between the sectors. We must do our part to bring balance to the public and private sectors in our societies. The costs are too great to all of us to allow the pendulum swings of pro- and anti-government to continue unchallenged. It is tempting, now that major private corporations are self-destructing before our eyes, to take our turn at bashing them - a little payback for decades of public sector bashing. We must resist that temptation and take the moral high ground. Such a posture will have the public service/public administration community leading the way to valuing both sectors in our societies.

Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne, Jr., argued in his Fourth of July column this year that respect for the contributions of both sectors is the American way:

[I]t's worth remembering that the United States is both a commercial republic and a popular democracy .... [T]he two traditions embedded in our political culture have served us pretty well. Our commercial side has made us a rich nation. Our democratic side has made us suspicious of the abuse of wealth, and of the power that wealth brings. The interaction between these traditions has
led not to stalemate but to a dynamic process of self-correction (Dionne, 2002).

We all know that business is not all good, and government is not all bad, although the prevailing biases would persuade us otherwise. We know that each sector has its place in a balanced society (Mintzberg, 1996). On the costs of devaluing one sector, Henry Mintzberg says, "Societies get the public services they expect. If people believe that government is bumbling and bureaucratic, then that is what it will be. If, in contrast, they recognize public service for the noble calling it is, then they will end up with strong government. And no nation today can afford anything but strong government" (ibid., p. 83, emphasis added).

We also know that learning is not one-way. Business can learn from government and government can learn from business. Many in public administration have been making that point recently in reference to the Enron, WorldCom and other scandals (Gross, 2002, p. 10). We need to continue to emphasize, with specific examples-and not just when the private sector is being bashed-that both sectors are important sources of good practices and good ideas for management.

We must also do our part to restore pride in public service. Again, Mintzberg has the right words for this argument: "We need proud, not emasculated, government. Attacks on government are attacks on the fabric of society" (Mintzberg, 1996, p. 83).

To return to the original point, above all we need balance among the different sectors of society. One example of where we can push for balance is privatization and outsourcing. If we are scrutinizing government to determine what doesn't belong, in Mintzberg's words, "shouldn't we be equally diligent in considering what doesn't belong in business? ... Let us not forget that the object of democracy is free people, not free institutions" (ibid.).

The third issue we in public administration need to address is to ensure that quality government is emphasized in development efforts rather than ignored in favor of building markets and entrepreneurs. Some have argued recently that the United States has lost the moral high ground because of our corporate scandals, and thus has no right to preach quality government - e.g., regulation, accounting standards, etc.-to the rest of the world (Sanger, 2002; Rohatyn, 2002). I prefer a view that Thomas Friedman argued in a recent op-ed column: "What distinguishes America is our system's ability to consistently expose, punish, regulate and ultimately reform those excesses - better than any other" (Friedman, 2002). We are not perfect, but we do have a lack of corruption that other nations find enviable and thus an ability to manage the regulators and licensing officials and property laws and bankruptcy courts that is a model to be promoted while improving it.

The previous discussion about how critical quality government is to a nation's ability to survive and thrive in today's globalizing, tumultuous world need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that we in public administration have an obligation to push this argument and insist that development work in other nations focus on establishing the basic infrastructure that is required for any economic system to work. Quality government is also vital to ensuring that globalization work for the benefit of all, not just the few. If globalization is going to succeed, it must not only maximize consumer choice and stimulate global wealth, it must also protect the environment, safeguard jobs, and reduce poverty. Not just a tall order, a monumental one. However, we in the public administration community can help move in that direction by insisting that quality governmental global institutions and laws be a major emphasis of development efforts.

The fourth issue this community needs to address is inclusiveness. By this I mean bringing citizens back into governing and public service. I was struck in the aftermath of September 11 at how out of practice we in public service are at involving citizens. People from all over the world wanted so much to help, to be part of the healing, to participate in the good that we all know we are capable of, to push back on the concentrated evil we had just experienced. Our
public officials didn't know how to involve us unless we were in official positions in government. So most of us gave money, tried to give blood, and wondered what else we might do to feel part of the solution at this horrible time.

John and Mary Kirlin explore civic engagement after the September 11, 2001 attacks (Kirlin and Kirlin, 2002). They conclude that most responses to September 11 were individual acts within established roles (e.g., giving blood, financial contributions), and that neither those acts nor current responses are likely to increase civic engagement.

I attribute our officials' inabilities to involve us to the pervasive technocratic nature of public service today, and to aping the customer focus of the private sector. The Kirlins explain it somewhat differently: "Lacking intellectual frameworks that encompass citizen engagement, policy instruments to that end, and political commitment to that goal, public leaders have, so far, responded in ways that will not increase civic engagement" (Kirlin and Kirlin, 2002, p. 84). I believe the lack of frameworks, etc., can be attributed to our focus on technocratic fixes and on customers.

Citizens are not customers. They are citizens, and it's time that we treated them as such. Citizens in our society have responsibilities, and we in public service need to hold them accountable for performing those responsibilities. Bob and Janet Denhardt say this well in their 2000 Public Administration Review article promoting "The New Public Service" (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). The Denhardts outline seven principles of the New Public Service. The emphasis in the principles is on service, and they mean service on the part of everyone - elected officials, public employees, and citizens. No one is exempt. Everyone is responsible for "building a collective, shared notion of public interest", and for making the public interest "the aim, not the by-product" of their efforts (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000, p.554).

The fourth of their principles is particularly appropriate for this discussion, "Serve citizens, not customers" (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000, p.555). The Denhardts frame the principle nicely when they argue that "government should not first or exclusively respond to the selfish, short-term interests of 'customers'... people acting as citizens must demonstrate their concern for the larger community, their commitment to matters that go beyond short-term interests, ... " (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000, p.555). It seems that post-September 11, there is much more sympathy for this position, both within nations and among them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in a world that has changed dramatically in the last decade, where we still don't understand the new rules, but have had time to make a lot of mistakes, we are finally beginning to realize that quality government matters more than ever, and that a first, foundational step in making globalization work for everyone is to build stable governments, to replace corruption with rule of law, walls of transparency and accountability, and to replace dependence with responsibility.

We in the public administration community have a responsibility to work together to build the quality governmental institutions that will allow nations to thrive in this new world, and to reclaim the spirit of public administration, rebuild pride in public service, and generate new respect for the role of governments in today's world.

In the words of that great champion of civil society, John Gardner, "Who gave you permission to stand aside?"

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