

# **The Contraction and Detraction Thesis**

## **A Theory of Power and Values Conflict in Democracies**

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The alternation of contraction and detraction processes in public administration is linked with long-term tendencies in the political system. From the last quarter of the 19th century the influence of the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament) increased, but later the executive power has been strengthened. This is a tendency discernible in all modern industrialized states.

The contraction and detraction phenomena can be related to the amount of controversial political issues in the society. It would seem justified to assume that when the amount of conflicts is great, a political contraction will take place. Then, it is important what values the bureaucracy realizes. Conversely in a period of strong values community there will be a political detraction, since the need for an autonomous bureaucracy can be met at a smaller risk. Also, an autonomous bureaucracy functions best in a state of values community and will, moreover, tend to simulate a community of values and ignore conflict. It is in the interest of the autonomous bureaucracy to soften political and social conflicts. Such conflicts can, precisely, be signs of an outbreak of new values systems threatening the autonomous civil servants' roles. Therefore, an autonomous bureaucracy will be a conservative element. This point of view implies consequences for the idea of the ever-increasing bureaucratization of society, in the sense that bureaucracy will steadily fortify its dominating position in society. The condition for such a bureaucratization is that the production of new values in society comes to a halt. If this is the case, the power chances of bureaucracy will increase: In the long run, professional civil servants can realize established values far more efficiently than can amateurs and voluntary forces. The result will be a biased distribution of information and influence in favour of bureaucracy. As soon as there is a crack in the values community, the civil servants roles will be redefined towards a greater dependence of political authorities (Jacobsen 1964: 259-260).

Knut Dahl Jacobsen developed this theory on transfers of power in a democracy in his doctorate thesis on the politics of agricultural administration in Norway, published in 1964

(Jacobsen 1964). The law - referring to stable features in a place- and time- determined institution - the public administration of agriculture in Norway - is based on three premises:

- 1) Democracies, as we know them, have elected, democratic as well as appointed bureaucratic institutions. Modern democracies therefore contain non-democratic and pre-modern institutions.
- 2) There are constantly disjunctions, disagreements and strife between democratic and bureaucratic institutions.
- 3) Bureaucracies are expansive on behalf of expert knowledge and regulations, while the elected state organs (let us term them parliaments) are expansive on behalf of national will and representation (even though groups, especially party groups in the parliaments may have more limited and even conservative ambitions, opposing an "expansion of representation").

The law on contraction-detraction can be formulated as follows: Bureaucracies will typically expand when there is "peace" or a values community in the society. Parliaments on the other hand will increase their powers when there is a plurality of conflicting values in the society, and particularly when new values assert themselves and obtain a majority representation in the parliaments. Then, parliaments will endeavour to assert their powers and gain control of the public bureaucracy. Such control can alter the recruitment criteria to positions in the bureaucracy, making knowledge of and respect for the new values such a criterion. The core of the contraction and detracting thesis (the CD thesis) is simple:

Values conflict → contraction

Values community → detracting

It can be seen as a law of the transfers of power in democracies, from parliamentary rule based on new popular values developed in struggle to the rule of bureaucracy based in (real or assumed) value consensus and implemented through the application of rules and established knowledge. The law is a departure from the idea that in established democracies the parliament-bureaucracy relation is stable, with parliaments always 'on top'. It purports that the two institutions are independent of each other and function on different principles. There is a struggle for power between them, bureaucracy winning under certain conditions and parliaments under others. Jacobsen found those conditions in society, in the dynamics

between economic and political organization, in the struggle between new and established ideas and in the degree of values conflict. The law is a specification of the dynamics between state and society in a modern democracy. Capitalism impels class division, profit as value and market as economic necessity. Dahl Jacobsen sees this emergent process in the altered composition of the Storting in the 19th century. Representation in Parliament, the identities of the elected members changed from "local (territorial) representation" to "class (social) representation" (Jacobsen 1964: 192). Economic changes are reflected and reproduced in political institutions and are developed further and modified through political activity. The theme of the law is the relation between parliament and administration as affected by characteristics of politics over time. The analytical focus is on the professional bureaucrats, how they develop their relations to political authority, to science and education and to their 'clients'. Emerging capitalism creates class- and rural-urban divisions. The new social classes express themselves in interest organizations (e.g. the Farmers' Union and the Society for the Benefit of Norway, Jacobsen 1964: 179-180) and in political parties (e.g. the Right and the Left parties created in the 1880's). The CD theory defines an aspect of how these organisations relate to the interplay of elected institutions and bureaucracy in democratic states.

The CD thesis highlights the dynamic and shifting relation between parliaments and bureaucracies and contains a theory of modernization. The local is absorbed into and transformed in the national. The new economic order of capitalism is propelled and modified by the state. The dynamic of bureaucratic meritocratic and hierarchic authority and democratic elected authority is functional for emergent capitalism, because the dynamic combines active representation of interests with effective and legitimate implementation of decisions. In this way the CD-thesis captures two tensions: (1) between the old and the new society, between patriarchy and traditional authority and emergent democracy or popular authority and (2) between elected authority (in parliaments) and appointed authority (in bureaucracies) in the new society, suggesting that the power of democracy is dependent upon a vital values plurality (often spoken of as a struggle between ruling regime and its opposition). The new society is the specialized society with distinctions between state and society, between social classes, between public and private spheres and between politics and administration. It is these new structures that assign such importance and centrality to the contraction-detraction process.

## **Background**

Professor Knut Dahl Jacobsen was born in 1925, in Kristiansand. He worked as a journalist before going to Oslo to study political science, and was one of the first in the new specialty to obtain the Master of Science degree. His masters thesis, *Politics and Administration. The Ranking of some Loyalties among Public Servants*, was presented in 1955. The American sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Allan Barton, who were in Norway in connection with the Marshall Aid, inspired the work. He did research in an interdisciplinary environment comprising jurisprudence specialists Thorstein Eckhoff and Torkel Oppsal, sociologists of law, Nils Christie and Thomas Mathiesen, the sociologists Vilhelm Aubert and Yngvar Löchen, the historian Jens Arup Seip and the political scientists Henry Valen, Stein Rokkan and Thomas Wyller. Later and especially through Johan P. Olsen, American organization theory in the Herbert Simon and James March tradition became important. In his doctoral thesis (Jacobsen 1964) the CD thesis was formulated for the first time. It was later developed in several publications). In 1965 he was appointed to a professorship and became Norway's first professor of political science. Having obtained a new professorship of Public Administration and Organization Theory at the University of Bergen, he left Oslo in 1969. His pleasant, masterful and inquisitive manner attracted many students and researchers to the "Bergen School". Dahl Jacobsen did administration research in the historical sociology tradition and contributed a number of publications to studies of the welfare state. He contributed original research on the importance of science and the professions for leadership cultures, for political thinking and for the development of organizations.

Dahl Jacobsen worked for the interests of social science in the Committee for Norwegian Research ('Hovedkomiteen for norsk forskning'), supported the introduction of the study of politics and administration in colleges and high schools and was a member of international professional networks. Between 1972 and 2000 some 550 masters students and some 30 Phd students completed their degrees under Dahl Jacobsen's inspiration and guidance. In this way the discipline of administration and organisation theory as an empirically based science became an important source of knowledge for a broader public and a 'working knowledge' in public administration, in organizations and enterprises. Knut Dahl Jacobsen died suddenly in 1999 at the age of 74.

### ***Eisenstadt's contribution***

Shmuel Eisenstadt's theory of bureaucratisation (Eisenstadt 1959) provided some of the paradigmatic ideas of the CD thesis. Three of them seem important:

- When modern society separates into competing collective participants, these will fight for influence in the public bureaucracy. The competition forces the bureaucracy to develop an ideological/normative basis of its own, in order not simply to vanish into the power sphere of any one of the participants. The bureaucracy must at the same time adapt its purpose, structure and culture to keep in pace with new political developments and to have influence (p. 307).
- A bureaucratization takes place when the power and decision models of bureaucracy pervade into fields of private activity. Instances of this are private enterprises made public property, and private organizations or parties making their members "employees", or universities making researchers advisers to others (p. 312).
- De-bureaucratization is when private organizations, elites or persons take over public tasks or institutions. Instances: Parents taking on the management of public schools, or private capital appropriating public railways, power stations and telecommunications (p. 312.).

### ***Order in a class divided democratic society. The role of knowledge.***

The CD theory elucidates the interaction between new classes and knowledge production. The class division created a values plurality in politics. The 'new plurality' of specialised knowledge facilitated insight into how different values could be realized. In this way knowledge specialists invested the class position with "body and character" and developed both class specific and more common (integrative) action models. Knowledge production became a force of innovation, both within class positions (within for example labour and industrial and agricultural capital) and 'above' them (in the form of knowledge of democratic organisation, of how autonomous professions could be trusted across class and nation boundaries). The professions, through their development and control of knowledge models were important actors in the 'operationalisation of political decisions' in the organization of

public administration. The struggle between professions for positions in the public administration was in this way part of the political struggle. Political science developed knowledge about collective institutions and the conditions for common participation in them (like mutual respect and trust). The CD theory elucidates the tension and the movements between the bureaucratic and political positions and between the common institutions and the specific interests in society. In the modern world class struggle and knowledge struggle -each of them independent processes- were intertwined. The complex political field thus created was the basis of the movements of power between state and society, between parliaments and bureaucracies. The shifts could, in some periods, be of a conservative nature, in other of an innovative nature, in some periods brought about by class power and in others by the power of knowledge administered by professionals and bureaucrats. The CD thesis captures some of the flexibility and therefore durability of democratic states. Central to Dahl Jacobsen was the relation between political institutions and class interest in the democratic society.

... what is, to me, problematic in a moral and political sense is related to the effects of knowledge transfer going beyond the mere transfer of knowledge. One issue is the class-related effects of the forms of knowledge transfer chosen...

(Jacobsen 1964 : ii).

### ***Knowledge in politics***

Jacobsen studied the knowledge models developed within three basic types of professions. The classic, normative professions (priests and lawyers) saw to it that the established values were complied with in practice. The ideal was one stable system managed by the elite (patriarchy) incorporating all (all under one God, all laws developed from a given set of tradition-bound values). The technical professions (like doctors, engineers and military officers) studied and organized processes aimed at an efficient achievement of specific objectives. The social professions that emerged together with the socially responsible state (the welfare state), like economists, sociologists, trained social workers and political scientists, were regulating professions, suggesting how the state could intervene in society to realise political objectives. Jacobsen demonstrated that the professional groups were important both in the development of political programmes and decisions and in their operationalisation and implementation. It was when professional groups developed

knowledge of relevance for weak groups in society indicating ways of increasing the political power of weak groups that weak groups organised and, when a democratic constitution was in place, demanded a space in power-wielding. Under that condition the established society and its elites put up resistance usually by strengthening the bureaucracy and demanding that it be loyal to government elites. With more self-confidence weak groups would move to increase their representation in parliaments. With success their leaders would demand parliamentary control of the bureaucracy, even demanding a radical reorganisation of the bureaucracy. So there was under such conditions a double contraction of power: contraction of power in the bureaucracy around the established elite and contraction of power in parliaments as the new mobilising, earlier weak groups gained positions there. In this way new values made their way into politics, into the state. The relevant professionals were favoured and elaborated administrative systems for their implementation. Bureaucracy was forced to accept political leadership. The new knowledge was used to reorganise the bureaucracy.

In phases of detraction the political-administrative process was different. A new regime was in place and the value struggle in society had subsided. The earlier rulers were defeated. Their voice was no longer heard. The public administration was reorganised and the earlier marginal professionals had taken up leading positions in a reorganised public administration. In that situation the production of new knowledge and innovation was less important. The power of professional bureaucracy expanded. The power of parliaments was reduced. Detraction meant the expansion of the technical ends –means- efficiency thinking and routines. It was only when the values underlying the power of such an autonomous bureaucracy were contested that a new mobilisation process could arise.

In a situation where there is agreement on policy and the values structure is stable, the end-means relations will be in focus, and the specialist knowing best these relations, his appreciations will, on the whole, be accepted simply because he is the specialist. Reversely, his specialist reputation will suffer a steep decline as soon as these fundamental values become controversial in his field. Being a specialist on rejected ideas is relatively unimportant (Jacobsen 1964: 13).

## ***A new discipline***

The CD thesis contributed to the studies of organizations and public administration as an independent discipline of academic empirical research. It brought together organization theory, law and role sociology, history and political science. Bureaucracy and professions were living institutions with political influence. Theories of organization cast light upon the inner life of the institutions. Law sociology and criminology investigated how the rules both empowered and established limitations, how the rules drew dividing-lines between the normal and the deviation, between the legal and the criminal. Historical research provided insight into the conditions of domination and subordination, and what is needed of forces, resources and time to gain acceptance for new values. Political science provided insight into the operation of formal institutions, their power, their inertia, and their ruptures, confusions and ambiguities apt to weaken them and open them to change. Dahl Jacobsen contributed to the hermeneutical turn in political science. What defined the "structures" of society was the distribution of interpretations of reality and attitudes. Thus, political structure (as an explanation of action) was defined as follows:

What I have put together under the notion "political structure" are such features of the attitude to technical reform work and to the extent, nature and forms of public activity existing in the administration, the clientele and the political authorities (Jacobsen 1964: 10).

### ***Formalization – a model of the value-power relation***

In its simplest and most general form the law purports that in democratic societies when the level of values conflict increases political power is concentrated in the institutions of the power elite. The state administration is placed under political control and the opposition movements struggle to concentrate their power in parliaments making them ever more representative of their interests. By decreasing conflict over values in society and increasing community of values, power is disseminated, -not primarily downwards in the hierarchy to another level (for example to counties), but horizontally, from political to bureaucratic institutions (detraction - by the established elite) and from society and the bureaucracy to parliament (contraction - by new rising movements and their leaderships). It is when the contraction struggle subsides in success that detraction can set in. Values are in place. Bureaucrats and specialists are given wider space and power of discretion. Penetrating the



reproductive juridical power of bureaucracy the scope of work for the empirical regulatory professions is enlarged. The contact points between client and administration are multiplied, but not necessarily in a way making the particular problems of the clients better understood or their interests complied with.

The dynamics in the movement of power between democratic institutions and bureaucracy at the threshold of modern society are different from those observed when the modern society is established. In early modernization the contraction of power in the parliament was important for leaderships of rising classes (entrepreneurs, workers and peasants). When a modern regime has been installed, the process turns to detraction. The administrative power is enlarged. When the values conflict is once again intensified, e.g. by sharper and deeper class divisions created by industrialization and socialist movements demanded power (in Norway 1870-1920) a new contraction will take place. The regime pulls power together in the public bureaucracy (Gran 1994). The broad popular socialist movement gained power in parliaments. But it did not succeed in the interwar period as the liberal left movement had succeeded in the 1880's. It was first when the labour movement had a social democratic leadership that it gained government power (1928, briefly, 1935 a stable regime). That regime was, however, not eager to concentrate power in parliament. Rather it developed corporatist structures of government. (co-operation between the state bureaucracy, labour unions and employers' organisations). In that way a new consensus emerged in 1945 around the concept of 'organised capitalism', political power and control of the welfare state to the labour movement and control of capital production in private hands. That consensus led to a detraction of power, a movement of power to professional bureaucracy at all levels of state. After 1945 we see a doubly detracted regime: power to the corporative elite and power moved from parliaments to professional administration. Looking to the future we might ask how a new more global movement demanding sustainable modes of production might revitalise the value struggle within nation states, and how such a struggle might affect the relation between politics and administration and between the national and regional/continental organisations of political power.

We might ask, can the detraction-contraction processes lead to change beyond democracy? Can the conflict level become so high or so low that it threatens the democratic order? In figure 18.1 I have illustrated three different deductions from the law, focussing on possible development trajectories within and beyond the democratic order.

INSERT fig. 18.1: Values plurality/conflict level and transition of power in democracy.  
Thresholds for "democracy breakdown" or transition to other State forms.

In this figure I consider contraction and detraction as movements on the vertical power axis: contraction upward and detraction downward, regardless of starting-point on the axis. The horizontal axis is the value axis, conceived the same way: movement to the right, a movement toward value plurality and conflict, movement to the left toward value consensus. The B curve (straight line) describes the basic content of the law. When values plurality and conflict increases powerful elites may contract power in the political institutions they have access to. When values plurality and conflict (in a configuration) decreases toward value homogeneity, another, different and reverse movement, termed detraction, takes place. Power is moved to bureaucracy and the administrative services.

On the extreme points of curve B democracy breaks down. We can there speculate that other types of state emerge. When the values community becomes uniform and politics, through detraction, has been reduced to administration in the extreme, we have a "Communist Utopia" (often historically of course, a really existing communist dictatorship). When the values plurality is great, or division between existing political cultures is deep and the conflict level high, a transition to dictatorship can take place.

If curve B described the dynamics of the law in a democratic regime in general, curve A describes a variation. That curve indicates that a considerable contraction can take place as a consequence of a small increase in value conflict. It indicates that full or maximum contraction can occur relatively early in the development of value conflicts. The curve can be said to describe an unstable democratic regime, a regime of perhaps low legitimacy, what we might call a "politicians' regime". By that I mean a regime that is in strict control of the bureaucracy and expert knowledge despite the fact that value conflicts are relatively low. Examples might be neo-liberal regimes that are threatened externally and that are ideologically committed to 'reduce bureaucracy'.

Curve C describes a democratic regime managed by the bureaucracy, allowing a high value plurality and a high conflict level. Contraction is slow relative to movements on the value axis. The curve presents a regime we might suggest that is taken by surprise. Conflicts

suddenly appear to it. Because the regime has been run by a stable, legitimate administration (despite the conflicts), when the conflicts become manifest or threatening inexperienced politicians are thrown into the centres of power, and contraction is rapid and comprehensive (the far right side of curve C).

The three curves describe three different democratic regimes, all of which can break down in their extremes of value conflict and detraction-contraction. Detraction can in all cases turn to 'administrative dictatorship', as contraction can lead to authoritarian rule. The field of relatively stable democracy is the central field in the figure, where a moderate process of contraction and detraction is taking place and where the turns between the two occur before extremes of either have been reached (low velocity oscillation). Under that condition the democratic society is stable, but with inherent "threats" of going too far along both diagonal axes. Jacobsen emphasized how detraction could threaten democracy, and how bureaucracy could "stop the production of new values". In his preface to the 1964 text, this danger is expressed as one of the motives of the study.

...another issue is related to the social role of knowledge transfer and the risk that society is transformed into a despotism of good-will where there is no further production of new values (Jacobsen 1964: ii).

In the extreme sectors of figure 18.1 democracy breaks down due to the disappearance of the dynamics in the movement of power. Either movement goes uncontrolled to its extreme. In the upper left corner the contraction is completed in the leader ruling on behalf of "all". In the upper right corner the conflict is "solved" by means of dictatorial administrative (military) power. In the lower left corner class dynamics as well as the tension between political leadership and administration have been dissolved (in a Communist Utopia), and in the lower right corner there are conflicts everywhere, but no collective leadership (anarchy).

I have given a specification of the general theory in two directions: i) the relation between contraction and detraction is "serial" and "linear". Power dissemination to the administration takes place *after* successful contraction. Detraction is usually a linear extension of the values of the ruling regime, only rarely generating a *movement against* the value-power system created by the contraction. ii) detraction means a transfer of political power in democracies from the parties and parliaments to professions and bureaucrats. Detraction does not

necessarily mean a “real” community of values: A low level of manifest conflict is sufficient. Detraction then is usually an increase of the bureaucracy's own power after establishment of a certain political order, caused by a successful contraction. Bureaucracy can blur and suppress conflict and block innovation. A new contraction (more often than not) comes about on the basis of genuinely new values, defined and defended by a new social mobilization, a new social movement.

Centralisation and decentralisation within a bureaucracy is then a separate problem, external to but not unrelated to the problem of contraction and detraction of political power. The bureaucratic leadership can be a strict control and command centre or a unit coordinating-assisting autonomous administrations spread out in the country-region. Centralisation can occur in at least three situations. (1) When bureaucracy makes itself independent of the democratic state institutions, endeavouring to actively increase its own power, in favour of specifically bureaucratic values (power as such and privileges); (2) When a political regime is challenged by an opposition in the parliament. The regime can then have to stick to detraction but might well favour centralisation of power in the bureaucracy; (3) When a regime considers co-operation between labour-capital and the state in the administrative sphere more important than ruling through the regular public administration and/or through parliaments. Then centralisation of power in the bureaucracy might be necessary to uphold and implement not too popular ‘corporative agreements’ made at the national level.

It might seem that Dahl Jacobsen’s theory of contraction is more convincing than the theory of detraction. That rising movements in democratic societies try to concentrate power in parliaments is a strong theory. That value consensus should lead to detraction, to a weakening of parliaments and a strengthening of the bureaucracy is not as obvious or convincing. Why shouldn’t a consensus on values strengthen parliaments and weaken bureaucracies creating a more direct relation between politicians and people? Perhaps detraction of power to the bureaucracy and a reduction of bureaucratic power relative to parliaments can take place simultaneously? Detraction can take the form of less power to the bureaucracy and more power to professionals and organisations in civil society or even in the commercial sphere. The power of normative regulation professions can be reduced, while the power of technical, consequence-oriented professions can be increased. Public services can be replaced by private services. In this sense detraction can take many forms, each form affecting the distribution of power between the public and the private sectors differently. Transfers of power from the

public to the private sector (privatization) can affect the dynamics of the contraction-detraction process, making both the introduction of new values into the public sector and the movement from detraction to contraction of political power more difficult. If this is true the transfer of political power from the public to the private sector has an element of 'irreversibility'.

### ***Generality and testability. Critique***

How can we test the CD law and how fruitful it is in the study of politics outside the Nordic area? If we assume that development in a given democracy is heading toward contraction, the action models of the public servants should be more in conformity with government policies and values or the public servants should feel the pressure for political loyalty more intensely. Their autonomy should be reduced. Contraction should mean a strengthening of parliaments and politicians relative to bureaucrats. The thesis is also testable against alternative theories, e.g.: By increasing values community the power of parliaments will increase relative to the power of professional bureaucracy. Parliaments take on more power because people want to increase their direct self-administration, avoiding costly and often policy distorting interventions by the bureaucracy.

If the CD thesis is valid for Norway it should similarly be valid for other Scandinavian and Nordic countries. It ought not be valid or need radical reformulation if applied in non-democratic or weakly democratic societies (for example in Tanzania and Zimbabwe). We might compare Britain and the US. We could expect radically more detraction in England than in the US under conditions of value consensus, because professions and sector administrations are historically powerful and autonomous in Britain, while public administration is limited and connected to political regimes in the US. In the US the bureaucracy is weak, pragmatic and values-loaded. The political power that is present is located in elected bodies. Leaders in the public administration are politically appointed.

In Africa many new states are a compound of colonial bureaucracy, parliamentary democracy and ethnic-political elite regimes, the compound often called neo-patrimonialism (Medard 1991). The administrative services are often weak and politicized (Appiah et. al. 2004). The expert groups are small, rendering the contraction-detraction interplay insignificant. But a

hypothesis might be that the struggle between politics and representation (contraction) and bureaucracy and management of power on behalf of the established order (detraction) is present inside African political parties and movements.

Jacobsen's work from 1964 can be seen as a precursor of Peter Evan's (1995) idea of how the embedded autonomy of the public administration is important for development in third world countries. The nearness of administrators to clients they are set to serve provides both with realistic information. The condition for such nearness according to Jacobsen is shared knowledge and ideological/cultural identification with the clients. The idea of administrative neutrality and the administrator's identification with "the common interest" can in practice favour resource rich peoples' access to public services. However, distance is also necessary. Closeness to clients can lead to 'privatisation' of the public administration, in the sense of certain client groups gaining control of 'public office'. Autonomy depends on the presence of a common culture, an organisation culture within the public office. If such an 'esprit d'etat' is not in place the same rules can be interpreted very differently by bureaucrats in the same office, power struggles between bureaucrats can hamper decision making and weaken the legitimacy of the office. In Jacobsen's view both autonomy and nearness are dependent upon the education of the bureaucrats and their socialisation into an academic discipline which they master, of which they are proud and which has been developed within specific cultures and/or functional areas in society. Theoretical-methodical knowledge gives professionals distance and autonomy; empirical knowledge provides nearness to 'reality'.

The contraction-detraction thesis has something to say about the division of modern societies into closed, culture-specific, not communicating or even antagonistic sub-groups, or separate hierarchic pillars (pillarisation theory or the 'verzeuilungs' thesis, Lijphart 1968 and Post 1989). From research into politics in the Netherlands the authors found that society divided along religious lines. Protestants, Catholics and Humanists constituted their respective hierarchic communities or pillars with only elite co-operation across the pillars at the top level holding society together. Pillarisation meant a movement of power from the state to civil society, radically weakening the national democracy. It was when the political parties again gained strength as political movements that power was brought back to the state institutions. Pillarisation could be termed extreme contraction of power, not in democratic parliaments, but in separate elite-managed religious hierarchies, threatening the democratic order as such. Contraction of power in religious communities would allow little room for internal

‘administrative autonomy’, demanding that ‘administrators’ adhere to the religious fiats, subordinating empirical knowledge to those fiats. The mobilisation of ‘secular’ political parties against the power of the religious pillars might be seen as detraction, in the sense that empirical knowledge is given increased importance in political decision making. However, the first step in that process is a detraction of power to politicians, opening for detraction to the professionals in the public administration in the next turn around, when the political parties together have reconstituted the democratic order and reduced the level of value conflicts.

### ***Empirical assessment***

As Dahl Jacobsen’s detraction and contraction thesis is based on Norwegian materials it is there in Norwegian political institutional history it should be primarily tested. However, I will briefly investigate the relevance of the theory in other societies, where democracy has been less developed.

### **At the threshold of modern Norway 1850-1900**

In Knut Dahl Jacobsen’s interpretation Johan Sverdrup’s Left (liberal) regime installed in the 1880’s was a result of a successful contraction of power in the Storting. In the struggle for power between the Liberal movement and Swedish-Norwegian officialdom the successful liberal movement concentrated power in the Storting, not least through the creation of political parties Left (liberals) and Right (conservatives). The parties strengthened the force of movements at the central national level. The new Storting pushed the government officials from political leadership back into the bureaucracy, and placed the Government under the direction of the Storting. The demand that gained currency was that an appointed Government should immediately have the approval of the Storting. When political initiative, ability to oblige the Government and responsibility for the effects of Government activity was concentrated in the Storting, bureaucracy was made a tool of democracy. Bureaucracy was re-organised: a new type of loyal, politically committed and extrovert bureaucrats were placed in leading positions. The old official conceiving himself as being above politics and leading a secluded worklife in the corridors of the administration serving ‘the people in general’ and acting on ‘pure science’, was pushed aside.

In this way the contraction, or the concentration of power in the Storting created a unitary democratic state in Norway, unitary in the sense of the Storting being in control of the whole state system. King, courts and bureaucracy were reduced to autonomous institutions under the legal and political guidance of the Parliament. Through its power over the installation of the Cabinet the Storting exerted influence over organisation and decision-making in the public administration. The parties increased the power of Government in the population, making ruling parties instruments for the dissemination and implementation of public policy.

The increased dependence of (the Director of Agriculture) Smitt on the political authorities was brought about in a period when the Storting increased its power. I will term this a political contraction process, characterized by the concentration of initiative, responsibility and ability to establish obligations in the Storting. An official ideal materialized, emphasising the official's political loyalty, his capability of adapting himself to the shifting purposes of the politicians, his qualities as "the good advocate" (Jacobsen 1964:199).

The conflict between the rising liberal movement in society and the officialdom ruling in the Storting (created in the Constitution of 1814), deepened in the 1840's, as peasant proprietors and town citizens elected 'their own' into the Storting. The officials and their supporters in the Right Conservative Party entrenched themselves in the Government (Seip 1945). The social classes entrenched themselves in the institutions they dominated: farmers and town citizens in the Storting, and the (few) industrial entrepreneurs and public officials in the state administrations and the juridical system. Officialdom was split between "paternalists" representing the culture of religion and patriarchy, and "modernists" bureaucrats wanting to use the state to develop the economy in favour of entrepreneurs, markets and exports. The key success factor for the liberal movement according to Dahl Jacobsen was the ability to strengthen and concentrate state power in the Parliament.

### **Norway after 1945. Detraction of power to the bureaucracy**

It is unclear how Dahl Jacobsen viewed political-administrative developments in Norway in the period from 1905 (when Norway pulled out of the union with Sweden) to 1945, when the



Germans, after five years of occupation, left the country. Gran (1994) argues that the power of the Storting was gradually reduced in this forty-year period, with power being concentrated in the public administration and the corporative network. The leadership of the labour movement had given up on socialism but favoured intuitively I believe, administration and corporate co-operation to powerful parliaments. Dahl Jacobsen suggests that the 1945 – 1960 period was characterised by detraction of power to the public administration.

The contraction process (of the 1880-1900 period) is a thorough contrast to developments in Norway after the Second World War. After the War government has been aimed at spreading initiative and responsibility in the bureaucracy, increasing expert legitimacy and creating a looser obligation of experts to the political authorities. I would term this change, these expectations and concomitant reorganisations, a political detraction process (Jacobsen 1964:199-200).

The condition for detraction or power dissemination into the bureaucracy is a values community or the absence of manifest political antagonisms. Detraction is a transfer of power from politics to administration, and thereby also to the professions. The overall picture is that of a society with undisputed values, where the bureaucrats realize the values through administration based on established knowledge. Norway after 1955, solidly placed in the Western sphere, with the economists' circulation models for the open state and national economies as a common stock of ideas and economic-political language, is an instance of detraction of political power, dissemination of executive power to the bureaucracy, with the welfare professions in local community institutions as "public servants at the street level".

### **The transformation of state power to party rule**

Is the CD theory of relevance and of interest in the analysis of politics in states with authoritarian or feebly developed democracies? Dahl Jacobsen's detraction of power took place in the 'values homogenous', rich Western society of Norway. There the capital – wage worker contradiction was relatively appeased after 1945 and an agreement was reached between labour, capital and the state that an independent, relatively strong and socially responsible state was important for a "civilized" development of capitalism, the arrangement as a whole called the welfare state. Historically it might be argued that power was spread in

the highly authoritarian bureaucracy of the czars in Russia and emperors in China. The autonomy of the bureaucrats varied, but was ultimately under the direct rule of the czars-emperors. There were no democratic institutions, so the possibility of contraction of power in Dahl Jacobsen's terms was not possible. In those long histories centralisation-decentralisation is the more relevant dichotomy. After the 1917 and 1949 revolutions there have been brief occurrences of elected power, but the lack of powerful freely elected organs of state, makes the Dahl Jacobsen/Eisenstadt dichotomy relatively uninteresting in the analysis of the "Communist" regimes. The formation of the communist parties from social-political-intellectual movements in "civil society" can be seen as an element of potential democratisation, but developments after their attainment of power, makes the idea of detraction of power to autonomous bureaucrats and experts rather irrelevant.

In Africa liberation from colonialism has traits similar to the revolutionary processes of Russia and China. The formation of the liberation movements was a potential element of democratisation. Their successful struggle against colonial rulers was a definite step in the direction of democracy. The colonial rulers seldom organised bureaucracies deeply into African communities, like those Russia and China historically are famous for. That meant liberation was a radical return to pre-colonial forms of authority, in effect a combination of military bureaucratic and traditional patriarchal forms of authority. Except for their military power, the new "liberated" states have been weak states. A military-ethnic elite has often held state power, with limited ability to tax and deliver services to the population. Detraction of power to an autonomous bureaucracy has seldom been an alternative.

When parliaments are weak in states with a developed capitalist economy, political parties are often stronger. The ability of social movements to create political parties and to contract power in them, may then be an element of strengthening democracy. However their possibility of supporting a detraction process and their role as developers of democracy are ambiguous, also in Western societies. On the one hand parties can mobilize participation in politics and focus the political struggle around a programme. In this sense they can definitely be participants in a democratization process. On the other hand political parties have to prepare themselves to take on overall state authority (if and when they gain the necessary support from voters). In that context party leaders can become more interested in giving form to a "realistic" political programme than in listening to their own members. Fitting the party into the struggles between the political elites can be more important than allowing for party

democracy. Political parties can weaken parliaments, can seek other channels of influence, because parliaments are good arenas for other competing political parties. One instance is Germany and the non-socialist parties of the Weimar republic (Caplan 1988). A weak parliament, the absence of an efficient public administration, international humiliation and fear of the Social Democrats resulted in the non-socialists rallying round Hitler.

1917 Russia and 1949 China are instances of weak parliaments and strong parties conceiving themselves as state. At the time of liberation (1980) Zimbabwe had a weak parliament. The Zanu-pf party conceived of itself as state and cracked down on the opposition. A chaotic, rather dictatorial regime came into being when a new opposition (the Movement for Democratic Change) arose. The party state encountered opposition from two sides: From the MDC and from “association leaders” powerful in their respective pillars in society: farmers, industry leaders, the Shona and Ndebele peoples and the poor farmers in the “reserves” (Gran 2002). Tanzania is another example of this party state syndrome, even though the division into separate “associations” has not taken place in Tanzania, and the Party’s use of force has been at a lower level than in Zimbabwe.

This means that by feeble modernisation or when bureaucracy does not permeate society, detraction in Dahl Jacobsen’s meaning of the term does not take place. Capitalism is often present in urban areas, but has not penetrated the peasant societies. There is then a deep value conflict but common democratic institutions are not there, where democratic movements through negotiations and compromises could transform their power to national policy. Entrepreneurs and professions are hardly present. Party, dominant ethnic group and the leaders of (weak) public administrations unite into a ruling elite, backed up internally by military power. In the values homogenous Tanzania with a strong legitimacy in the international community a certain division between the CCM party, the National Assembly and the public administration has developed. However, Party power is dominant. Opposition is weak. The idea of contracting power in Parliament is therefore not pressing for anyone. Also under Julius Nyerere the Party saw itself mainly as state and only secondly as a democratically mobilizing force. However, CCM might in periods of low levels of political debate be tempted to detract power to the bureaucracy under its control. This could under favourable conditions lead to more local autonomy and to development of real – and loyal – opposition movements and thus a strengthening of democracy.

South Africa has a dire history of a powerful modern-legally based bureaucracy, giving form to and serving the administration of apartheid (from 1948 to 1990). State power had a corporate form: a corporation between the political and the economic wings of the ruling class managing the whole society as if it was a patriarchal industrial enterprise (migrant labour, pass laws and physical containment of black people and separation of classes and races in the urban areas). A kind of democracy functioned within the ruling class but was absent otherwise. A play of relations between the parliamentary and the bureaucratic powers was, so to speak, ruled out. With liberation and the new democratic Constitution in 1990-1994-1996 the elected, parliamentary institutions, at least at the provincial and national levels, were suddenly in place. ANC, with its long history of mobilisation and struggle against apartheid, took the majority of seats in most of them. But will ANC favour the constructive interaction between contraction and detraction of power? Two problems are obvious. ANC does not consider the opposition parties with histories into apartheid as fully legitimate actors in parliaments. In this sense there is a tendency towards an ANC- party state, with parliaments more as 'executive committees'. ANC is similarly sceptical to large categories of bureaucrats with histories into apartheid. Therefore a detraction of power to the bureaucracy, with the possibility of professionalizing the bureaucracy, is not imminent. At the same time there is a grand irony in ANC's situation as ruling party. While struggling for liberation a socialist-social democratic outlook informed the struggle. With liberation that outlook was seriously discredited both in the east and the west. ANC was either forced/pushed or itself advanced into a neo-liberal programmatic position, giving up the idea of a strong redistributive and regulatory state just as the Party reached Government position. In this sense a detraction of power, mainly to private organisations and administrations may be the actual and unintended outcome of present (2003) developments.

The instances of contraction of political power into parties when parliaments are weak, give form to party states. That leads to political parties giving priority to state management rather than class specific political mobilisation. High level of conflict and weak parliaments can lead party states to dismantle whatever processes of democratisation that were present. Party states can take constitutional arrangements out of the democratic field depicted in Figure 18.1. Knut Dahl Jacobsen's CD theory purports that such deterioration is inherent in democracy itself. Detraction is linked up with community of values, but weakens at the same time democracy as open 'parliamentary' dialogue and confrontations between rulers and opposition. Detraction of power reduces or eliminates the innovation needed for a stable reproduction of

the democratic order. The contraction process, especially when it is directed at the open parliamentary arenas and institutions has this critical innovative capacity. The CD theory specifies that democratic innovation process. New value programmes emerge from society, stimulated by among other things the representation principle of parliaments. Professionals are mediators between new social movements and political power. Culture conscious knowledge production is a key to democratisation. Given the presence of parliaments and the ability of movements to organize politically (contraction), 'socially embedded' professionals provide both language and insights for decision-making in bureaucracies and for policy-making in parliaments.

## ***Conclusion***

The shift between contraction and detraction of political power is the shift between innovation (contraction) and preservation of the democratic order and the normalisation of a regime (detraction). When contraction of power has taken place and a unified system of power management is built around that contraction, there is a tendency to close the parliamentary arena (even weak reform ideas seem unrealistic), to detract power to the bureaucracy and thus to weaken the democratic institutions. Politics takes on a new form: it is hidden as dialogue and decision making between bureaucrats, professions and administrative institutions. When power is contracted to other institutions than openly elected parliaments, that is to public administration, to political parties, to organisations in civil society and in the private sector, the effect on democracy is questionable. Western democracies contain institutions that are immune to public elections: families, churches, bureaucracies and private firms. Democracies therefore systematically contain both formative and destructive forces. The functioning of the detraction-contraction process is important for the normalisation-innovation-opposition dynamic vital for their survival.

Can new social movements become powerful actors in the formation and reproduction of democracies, of democratic rule? They might. If globalisation weakens national states, the importance of international-global social movements may increase. They can vitalise democratic processes. They can become agents that 'contract' power into public institutions (at local, national, regional and global levels). The global movements are, from this point of view, a parallel to the Norwegian bourgeois urban movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, criticizing

officialdom in politics, demanding a separation of state and society that would create a space for private entrepreneurship in markets and rule based elections among “responsible citizens”. At present (2003) detraction of state power to public and especially to private bureaucracies is widespread in the Western world. The detraction policy is being exported to developing countries through a host of Western institutions. The creation of open public arenas and democratic institutions where such do not exist and the contraction of power into them, through empowerment of social and political movements is as important today as it was when Johan Sverdrup, as leader of the liberal opposition movement and the Liberal Party (from 1882) concentrated political power in the democratic institution *par excellence* in Norway, in the Storting. With that concentration a new unitary state took form. That state established step by step the infrastructure for a modern capital-producing economy. With the labour movement the capital-economy was ‘modified’ or ‘civilised’ through the gradual establishment of a public welfare system, a system that the present detraction policy - detraction of power primarily to institutions in civil society - is deconstructing. Dahl Jacobsen would be optimistic I am sure. “New knowledge will be produced, new movements will arise and a new contraction of power in democratic institutions will occur. It may even occur suddenly!”

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