



## Modern Political Analysis of Democratic Theory

Dr. Irsad Ali Khan

Lecturer, Political Science, Government Bangur College, Didwana, Rajasthan, India

### ABSTRACT:

Democratic theory is an established subfield of political theory that is primarily concerned with examining the definition and meaning of the concept of democracy, as well as the moral foundations, obligations, challenges, and overall desirability of democratic governance. Generally speaking, a commitment to democracy as an object of study and deliberation is what unites democratic theorists across a variety of academic disciplines and methodological orientations. When this commitment takes the form of a discussion of the moral foundations and desirability of democracy, normative theory results. When theorists concern themselves with the ways in which actual democracies function, their theories are empirical. Finally, when democratic theorists interrogate or formulate the meaning of the concept of democracy, their work is conceptual or semantic in orientation. Democratic theories typically operate at multiple levels of orientation. For example, definitions of democracy as well as normative arguments about when and why democracy is morally desirable are often rooted in empirical observations concerning the ways in which democracies have actually been known to function. In addition to a basic commitment to democracy as an object of study, most theorists agree that the concept democracy denotes some form or process of collective self-rule. The etymology of the word traces back to the Greek terms *demos* (the people, the many) and *kratos* (to rule). Yet beyond this basic meaning, a vast horizon of contestation opens up. Important questions arise: who constitutes the people and what obligations do individuals have in a democracy? What values are most important for a democracy and which ones make it desirable or undesirable as a form of government? How is democratic rule to be organized and exercised? What institutions should be used and how?

Once instituted, does democracy require precise social, economic, or cultural conditions to survive in the long term? And why is it that democratic government is preferable to, say, aristocracy or oligarchy? These questions are not new. In fact, democratic theory traces its roots back to ancient Greece and the emergence of the first democratic governments in Western history. Ever since, philosophers, politicians, artists, and citizens have thought and written extensively about democracy. Yet democratic theory did not arise as an institutionalized academic or intellectual discipline until the 20th century. The works cited here privilege Anglo-American, western European, and, more generally, institutional variants of democratic theory, and, therefore, they do not exhaust the full range of thought on the subject.

**Keywords:** *democracy, theory, political, modern, analysis, social, economic, foundations, moral, empirical, western*

### Introduction

Schattschneider believed that political parties “created” American democracy out of a “small experiment in republicanism” by drawing the masses into political life. Despite this achievement, Schattschneider complained, political theorists were at the founding, and remained a century and a half later, silent on parties.<sup>1</sup> The founders of the American republic tried to create institutions in which parties and “factions” would wither; yet parties appeared when American democracy was still in its infancy, just as they have reappeared in every democracy on earth. Later normative theorists, many of them no less skeptical than Madison or Jefferson of parties as promoters of the public good, seem to regard political parties as an unpleasant reality, a hardy weed that

sprouts up in what would otherwise be the well-tended garden of democratic institutions.[1,2]

Among positive theorists and empirical students of democracy, regard for political parties is higher. Early postwar political scientists in the United States yearned for a strengthening of parties that would allow “party government”; their aspirations are echoed today by observers of new democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America who blame the shortfalls of these democracies on the absence or weakness of political parties. Perhaps because their normative world is ordered not around notions of the public good but around the effective representation of inevitably conflicting interests, positive democratic theorists are more likely to view parties not as a weed but as a necessary microbe lodged deep in the digestive tract—not pretty, but vital to keeping the body politic in good health. In one view, parties promote interests that are partial (note the common etymology) or extremist; in the other, parties are the link between citizen interests and government actions. In addition to inducing governments to be responsive to citizens, parties are reputed to give order to legislative processes, reduce problems of multidimensionality of the issue space, and permit voters an object to hold to account. The debate over political parties—are they an inevitable evil? Are they what makes democracy democratic?—remains unsettled. It will not be settled until some agreement is reached about the nature of parties—what their objectives are and how they are structured. In this review, I outline the competing positions in this debate and suggest directions for empirical research that may help settle it, or at least move it to a fully normative plane. I turn to that task in the second section. In the first section I review prominent currents of research about political parties in postwar political science.[3,4]

I restrict my discussion to political parties in democracies [i.e. political systems in which important governmental posts are decided by fair, competitive elections held on a regular schedule, freedoms of association and speech are protected, and the franchise is extended to nearly all adult citizens]. For discussions of parties in nondemocratic systems. Space limitations force me to ignore some streams of research, in particular the burgeoning literature on the behavior of legislative parties. For a sampling of recent contributions. [5,6]

## Discussion

Political Sociology studies the relationship between, man, society and the state. Consequently, it embraces a diverse field of topics that range from that the impact of taxation on the arts to the separation of church and state. Political Sociology has no fixed boundaries for issues. Differences of opinion among experts in the field are broad and there is no single approved way to go about studying political sociology. Political Sociology was not an explicit science until the late 19th century, when men such as Barrington Moore Jr., Max Webber and later Christopher Dawson began to examine the complex interactions between state and society. What started as a semi-philosophical inquiry into the combined nature of government and society gradually evolved into narrower focuses upon particular issues of civic reform.[7,8] As of the early 21st century, very few political sociologists engage the discipline as a theoretical study, preferring to evaluate and interpret statistical data. Although not an explicit study until the late 19th century, political sociology’s roots stretch back thousands of years. Classic texts in politics, such as Plato’s ‘Republic’ and Aristotle’s ‘Politics’, examine the relationship between man and the state, but principally with a concern as to the ordering of the state. Later texts, such as Niccolo Machiavelli’s ‘The Prince’ and Thomas More’s ‘Utopia’, likewise examine the relationship between society and politics, but in a more explicit manner than their Grecian predecessors. Finally, works such as John Locke’s ‘Two Treatises on Civil Government’, Jean Jacques Rousseau’s ‘Social Contract’ and ‘The Communist Manifesto’ of Karl Marx concern themselves principally and predominately with the establishment of just relations between society and government. In the early 21st century, political sociology narrowed its scope to particular issues of wealth, ethnicity, gender, cultural pluralism, totalitarianism, legislation and representation, insofar as each of these issues play a role in the interaction between society and government, the role within and influence over society that any government ought to have, and the extent of a government’s responsibility to society.[9,10] In studying the relationship between politics and society, many circumstances need to be considered: the histories of the government and society, the influences upon society that are independent of government, the foundational principles of the government and the issues of conflict within the government and within the society. Many

conservative sociologists, such as Christopher Dawson, have expounded the necessity of a broad perspective in any sociological study, while more progressive proponents, such as Max Weber, advocate specialization. The end purpose of political sociology, as a scientific study, is to better inform the student about the complex relationship between society and politics. Oftentimes this is confused with political activism, the finding of ways for social and political improvement through effective socio-political methods. Genuine political sociology aims at the comprehension of cause and effect in the frequently convoluted dynamic between society, a product of cultural force, and the governing and legislative political force of a country or political body.[11,12]

An approach, in simple terms, may be defined as a way of looking at and then explaining a particular phenomenon. It provides a framework for explanation and prediction of political problems. Political Analysis may be broadly classified into two categories- Normative and Empirical. While the former is said to be 'value-laden', the latter is known for being 'value-neutral'. In other words, while normativism is the hallmark of the former, empiricism is that of the latter. Fact value relationship is, therefore, the basis of our classification in this regard. On this basis, we may say that while traditional approaches lean to the side of 'values', the latter do the same for 'facts'. The result is that 'fact-value-dichotomy' (a difference between two completely opposite ideas or things) becomes the determining factor.[13,14]

The oldest approach to the study of Political phenomena is philosophical, that is also known by the name of Ethical approach. According to Von Dyke, the word "philosophical" refers to thought about thought. So this type analysis is idealistic, normative, speculative and deductive in nature (from general to particular). They observe and study different facts and then comes to certain generalizations. This approach concerned with 'what the state should be' or 'what the state ought to be' rather than 'what it is a state'. Philosophical approach is generally identified with value preferences. The emphasis is on moral and rational premises. This approach is based on the view that values are inevitable and essential for evaluating political phenomena. Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Bosanquet, JS Mill, Sidwick and Leo Strauss are some of the exponents of this approach. Almost all the political thinkers, who wished to organise an ideal state, adopted this method. Thus the philosophical

period is noted for its general trend of setting standards based on values like justice, freedom and happiness.[15,16]

Second important approach of studying political phenomena is historical. This approach stands for an attempt at understanding political process through a historical account of political thought of yester years. The distinguishing feature of this approach is focused on the past or on a selected period of time as well as on a sequence of selected events within a particular phase so as to find out an explanation of what the institutions are, and are tending to be, more in the knowledge of what they have been and how they came to be, what they are than in the analysis of them as they stand. Montesquieu, Seeley, Maine, Freeman, and Laski are some of the eminent exponents of this approach. The best example for historical approach in political science is George H. Sabine's 'A History of Political Theory'. History serves as a best kind of laboratory for political phenomena. It is the store house of incidents pertaining to human life. It keeps in secret the record of the progress and downfall of human civilization and culture. The origin of every political institution can be traced in the pages of history. The historical approach stands on the assumption that the stock of political theory comes out of socio-economic crisis and the reactions they leave on the minds of the great political thinkers. The conditions of ancient Greece created Plato and Aristotle; likewise the conditions of the 17th century England produced Hobbes and Locke; the capitalist system of the 19th century created Mill and Marx. Obviously in order to understand political theory, it is equally necessary to understand clearly the time, place and the circumstances in which it was evolved.[17,18]

Legal approach stands for an attempt to understand politics in terms of law. This approach treats the state primarily as an organisation for the creation and enforcement of law. It focuses its attention on the legal and constitutional framework in which different organs of government have to function and their powers and procedure which makes their actions legally valid. For instance, legal approach to Indian politics will proceed to analysis legal implications of various provisions of the Indian Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court of India, procedure of formation and legal position of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies, procedure of elections, powers and position of the President, Prime Minister, Governors etc. The view was that the formal institutions were more than the

individuals. It is worthy of notice that the institutional and the legal approaches in politics are complementary and not contradictory. They are closely related to each other.[19]

## Results

### Theoretical dogma of democracy was gripped into several criticisms.

1. The Athenian democracy was limited only to a small fraction of population. The male citizens above the age of 20 could take active part in the affairs of state. The female citizens, irrespective of their qualification, had not the liberty or right to participate in the policy-making affairs. So the classical democracy was the democracy of the male citizens or patriarchs. The women had no civil or political rights.
2. Large numbers of Athenians were also unentitled to participate in the proceedings of the city-states. They were immigrants and slaves. In Athens, large numbers of immigrants lived and their contribution to Athenian culture, development etc. was not negligible at all. The slaves in Athens constituted a major part of the whole population and the Athenian economy and development rested on their labour. But they were not permitted to take part in the offices and other branches of the state. The treatment meted out to slaves and immigrants does not prove the existence of rights and equality in Athenian society.
3. All inhabitants did not get equal status and all the opportunities were not open to all.
4. Many scholars stated that Athenian democracy as the oppression of the minority.
5. Held has said that various aspects of the classical democracy can legitimately be questioned.

### Aristotle's explanation of Democracy:

According to Aristotle, "The foundation of democratic constitution is liberty. People constantly make this statement implying that only in this constitution is there any share in liberty at all". Every democracy has liberty for its aim. "Ruling and being ruled in turn" is one element of liberty.

Aristotle believed that only in democracy ruling and being ruled in turn take place. It is absent in a state which is not democratic. The absence of the opportunity to rule is the symbol of slavery. He also asserted that in his democracy equality is to be interpreted numerically and it is not based on merit.[20]

### Principles of Democracy:

Aristotle has postulated certain fundamental principles of democracy. These may also be called the basic features of democracy.

### Following are the fundamental principles:

1. Officials of the city state will come through the elections and all citizens are eligible for all posts or offices.
2. A common rule will operate throughout the state and this rule is rule over each and each by turn over all.
3. All the citizens are eligible for all posts excepting the posts which require special qualifications or experience.
4. No tenure of office dependent on the possession of property qualification.
5. The same man not to hold the same office twice. A man will be allowed to hold office only for once in his lifetime. However, in the field of warfare this principle will not hold.
6. Aristotle prescribed short tenure of office.
7. Jury courts will be chosen from all the citizens and will adjudicate on all.
8. The Assembly (in Greek it was called Ecclesia) will have the sovereign authority over anything except minor matters.
9. Payment services in assembly, in law courts and in the offices shall be regular.
10. Good birth, wealth and culture shall be the marks of the rule of the few. The opposite shall be the rule of the many.
11. Perpetual tenure of office is not favoured by democracy.[18]

Recent accounts of democratic backsliding neglect the cultural foundations of autocracy-versus-democracy. To bring culture back in, this article demonstrates that 1) countries' membership in culture zones explains some 70 percent of the total cross-national variation in autocracy-versus-democracy; and 2) this culture-bound variation has remained astoundingly constant over time—in spite of all the trending patterns in the global distribution of regime types over the last 120 years. Furthermore, the explanatory power of culture zones over autocracy-versus-democracy is rooted in the cultures' differentiation on "authoritarian-versus-emancipative values." Therefore, both the direction and the extent of regime change are a function of

glacially accruing regime-culture misfits—driven by generational value shifts in a predominantly emancipatory direction. Consequently, the backsliding of democracies into authoritarianism is limited to societies in which emancipative values remain underdeveloped. Contrary to the widely cited deconsolidation thesis, the ascendant generational profile of emancipative values means that the momentary challenges to democracy are unlikely to stifle democracy's long-term rise.[19]

Political theory is one of the core areas in Political Science. From ancient Greece to the present, the history of political theory has dealt with fundamental and perennial ideas of Political Science. Political theory reflects upon political phenomenon, processes and institutions and on actual political behaviour by subjecting it to philosophical or ethical criterion. Weinstein considers political theory as an activity which involves posing questions, developing responses to those questions and creating imaginative perspectives on the public life of human beings. It has been probing into questions like: nature and purpose of the state; why one should prefer a kind of state than the other; what the political organization aims at; by what criteria its ends, its methods and its achievements should be judged; what is the relation between state and the individual. Political theory has been engaged in these age old questions from Plato onwards because it is concerned with the fate of man which depends upon his ability to create a kind of political community in which rulers and ruled are united in the pursuit of common good. It is not necessary that political theory can provide answers to all questions but it can at least tell us how one should go about the solution. Political theory is the categorization of social thought by a group or by the persuasion or beliefs of a geo-political mass. Many political theories are founded as critiques toward existing political, economic and social conditions of the theorist's time. Political theory can also be considered as a critical tradition of discourse that provides a reflection on collective life, the uses of collective power, and resources within a collectivity. The emphasis of political theory changes over time. There are many different elements that create the foundation for theoretical analysis towards political science. Since the ancient Greek period, political theory analyzes and interprets the foundations of political life and evaluates its principles, concepts and institutions. Political theory is the study of the concepts and principles that people use to describe, explain, and evaluate political events and institutions.

It seeks to understand, explain and analyse the political phenomena and prescribe ways and means to rectify the shortcomings. Political theory is a complex subject. Numerous political theorists are engaged in this field. Because of the diversity and changes in the socio-economic circumstances, there have been substantial changes in both the subject matter of political theory and the methods of studying it. For the purpose of study, political theory is divided into distinct streams such as classical, modern and empirical. Classical political theory was dominated by philosophy and dealt with the description, explanation, prescription and evaluation of the political phenomena. However, empirical political theory claimed to be a science and has been primarily concerned with the description and explanation of the political reality. On the other hand, contemporary political theory has tried to blend the theoretical and practical aspects.[20]

### Conclusions

First, the *socioeconomic patterns* of many liberal democracies have changed substantially. For one, population growth in liberal democracies is declining in spite of heavy immigration of citizens from other regime types. Furthermore, the number of younger cohorts is decreasing, while the sizes of older cohorts are increasing. Regarding the occupational structure, both the overall numbers of unemployed citizens and the proportion of female participation in the labor force are also increasing. Moreover, industrial employment is in decline, whereas the public and private sectors of the economy are growing. In light of these changes, the rise of political and socioeconomic inequality has dramatically challenged contemporary democracies. Not only in Germany but all over the democratic world, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Marginalization of the “have-nots” has led to ideological divergence from the democratic mainstream as well as to alienation from the established parties and other political institutions.[19]

Second, as a consequence of the socioeconomic inequality and the growing of new social cleavages, various liberal democracies are challenged by *new forms of populism* that have emerged on the right and the left sides of the ideological spectrum. On the one hand, right-wing populism has existed for more than 20 years in all major liberal democracies as a reaction against neoliberal economies, immigration policies, and international (global) political actors. It defends a right-wing national cultural identity and the

revitalization of the nation-state. On the other hand, conservative left-wing populists also favor the nation-state by defending a national welfare policy as well as domestic production sites. Both populist movements are organized in political parties. Right-wing populist parties exist in nearly all European democracies, while populist parties of the left exist particularly in Mediterranean countries (e.g., MoVimento 5 Stelle in Italy, Syriza in Greece, and Podemos in Spain). Their electoral success has fundamentally challenged the party systems as well as party governments in several parliamentary democracies at different times

The single articles in this special issue implicitly refer to one of the major challenges to contemporary democracies or to reforms and innovation processes for the future of democracies. In doing so, they describe and discuss a variety of new theoretical and empirical findings that significantly contribute to the debate about the “frontiers of democracy.”

In the second article of this volume, *Hanspeter Kriesi* discusses the controversial question of whether or not democracy is “in crisis.” He provides empirical evidence that there is reason to be concerned about the development of liberal democracy but no reason to dramatize. His assessment is based on four perspectives: long-term trends revealed by quality of democracy measurements, citizens’ attitudes toward democratic principles and democracy in their own countries, the rise of populist challengers, and the elites’ perspective. Based on a variety of data sets, the author claims that despite widespread political dissatisfaction, liberal democracies will remain stable. This holds true even with populists in power because institutional constraints, partisan constraints, international market constraints, and constraints imposed by the citizens will hinder wider electoral success of right-wing populists. Thus, the existing hypothesis of contemporary democracies being in crisis is seen as largely exaggerated.[18]

The third contribution examines the political impact of new populism on voting behavior in liberal democracies. *Hanna Schwander, Dominic Gohler, and Armin Schäfer* confirm the hypothesis that neither left-wing nor right-wing populist parties’ success alters the relationship between economic inequality and voter turnout. Analyzing aggregate data on 296 parliamentary democracies in 31 European countries between 1970 and 2016, the authors show that there is neither a direct nor an indirect effect of populism on voter turnout. Furthermore, the authors show that economic inequality exacerbates participatory

inequality since right-wing populist parties mobilize in particular those “poor” citizens who would usually abstain from voting.

The fourth article, by *Marianne Kneuer and Mario Datts*, provides a conceptual framework for grasping the impacts of e-democracy from a spatial perspective as well as an array of examples substantiating the framework. E-democracy tools have been applied at all political levels, from the local to the international. Yet little is known about the differences between these levels. The authors therefore ask whether the effects of e-democracy tools differ according to spatial context (local, national, international). Specifically, they are interested in the effect of e-democracy on political input factors (such as involvement and mobilization of citizens) and output factors (such as responsive policies reflecting citizens’ preferences). The article offers a novel model for grasping these impacts within the respective spatial context.[19]

The fifth contribution, by *Anja Jetschke and Sören Münch*, analyzes the impact of globalization on the “democratic design” of transnational organizations. The authors ask whether states design regional courts and parliaments as a means to exert democratic control over the executive, based on data on 76 regional organizations over a period from 1945 to 2016. Contrary to the expectations, there is no significant correlation between the level of democracy and the existence of regional institutions. Regional courts and parliaments seem to mainly serve other purposes, such as trade and conflict-related functions.

The sixth contribution, by *Daniel Kübler and Su Yun Woo*, discusses the concept and the reality of “democratic innovation” in democratic as well as in nondemocratic systems (such as China). It reviews normative assumptions and definitions prevailing in the research community and examines when and under which conditions innovations serve democratic—or other—purposes. The authors aim to identify the “democratic” as well as the “functional” dimensions of such innovations within different contexts. The contribution provides nuanced and fascinating evidence for reconsidering and rethinking “democratic innovations.”

In the seventh article, *Rainer Bauböck* initiates a theoretical debate on democratic norms and immigration control in the European Union. He claims that the immigration control powers of democratic states exist not because these states are

democratic but because they are independent states. Second, he argues that democratic norms provide clear, positive reasons for promoting free international movement and admission claims for migrants and refugees. Third, he interprets the current disputes over immigration policy in the EU as a result of a conflict between “open“ and “closed” concepts of democracy and suggests that the concept of closure will put the future of democracy at risk.[20]

## References

- [1] Hardin, Russell, "Why a Constitution?", in Bernard Grofman and Donald Wittman, eds., *The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism* (New York: Agathon Press, 1989) 100-120.
- [2] Hart, H. L. A., *The Concept of Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) Held, David, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987)
- [3] Hermet, Guy, *Aux Frontières de la Démocratie* (Paris: PUF, 1983)
- [4] Hall, Kim Quayle, *Democracy in the Fifty States* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994)
- [5] Hirschman, Albert O., *The Rethoric of Reaction* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991)
- [6] Holmes, Stephen, "Constitutionalism", in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1995) 299-306.
- [7] Holmes, Stephen, and Cass R. Sunstein, *The Cost of Rights. Why Liberty Depends on Taxes* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999)
- [8] Holston, James, "The Misrule of Law: Land and Usurpation in Brazil", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 33, n. 4 (October 1991) 38-64.
- [9] Huntington, Samuel, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991)
- [10] Ingram, Peter, "Maintaining the Rule of Law", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 35, n.141 (1985) 359-381.
- [11] Ippolito-O'Donnell, Gabriela, ed., *Welfare State Reform under Democratization: Brazil and the Southern Cone of Latin America* (University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming)
- [12] Jaksi, Iván, Andrés Bello. *Scholarship and Nation-Building in Nineteenth Century Latin America* (forthcoming).
- [13] Janoski, Thomas, *Citizenship and Civil Society* (Cambridge UK: Blackwell, 1998)
- [14] Johnson, James, "Arguing for Deliberation: Some Skeptical Considerations", in Jon Elster, ed., *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 161-184.
- [15] Jones, Peter, *Rights* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) Kelly, J. M., *A Short History of Western Legal Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)
- [16] Kelsen, Hans, *General Theory of Law and State* (New York: Rusell and Russell, 1945)
- [17] Key, V. O., *Southern Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949)
- [18] King, Gary, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994)
- [19] Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, *Mapping Political Support in the 1990s: A Global Analysis*, Discussion Paper FS III 98-202 (Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, 1998)
- [20] Klingemann, Hans-Dieter, and Richard Hofferbert, *Remembering the Bad Old Days: Human Rights, Economic Conditions, and Democratic Performance in Transitional Regimes*, Discussion Paper FS III 98-203 (Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, 1998)