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Democracy Status: Declining Values and the Need for Updates

حالة الديمقراطية: تراجع القيم والحاجة إلى إعادة التحديث

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Abstract:

The political transitions towards democracy that occurred in Eastern Europe, which sparked waves of violence in Armenia, Macedonia, and Azerbaijan, and the spread of violence in Africa, as seen previously in Algeria and Nigeria, reflect a premature generalization of the success of liberal democracy. This concept strays from general moral judgments about its effectiveness in resolving political issues and political competition. Additionally, the Western world has shown the proliferation of extremist movements, represented by far-right ideologies, and the growing phenomenon of populism. Furthermore, there has been a resurgence of nation-state arguments manifested in ethnic, national, linguistic, religious, and cultural conflicts. The democratic concept has become inadequate in accommodating diversity and contradicts the coexistence arguments promoted by Western democracies as a universal civilizational concept. Through this research paper, we attempt to discuss the challenges facing the traditional concept of democracy and its vulnerabilities.

Keywords: Political Change, Western Democracy, Values, Post-Democracy.

الملخص:

عكست التحولات السياسية نحو الديمقراطية التي حدثت في أوروبا الشرقية، والتي أثارت شرارة موجات من العنف في أرمينيا ومقدونيا وأذربيجان، وانتشار العنف في أفريقيا كما رأينا سابقا في الجزائر ونيجيريا، تعميما سابقا لأوانه لنجاح الديمقراطية الليبرالية. ويخرج هذا التصور عن الأحكام القيمية العامة حول مدى فعاليته في حل القضايا السياسية والمنافسة السياسية؛ إضافة إلى ذلك، عرف العالم الغربي انتشارا للحركات المتطرفة متمثلة في الإيديولوجيات اليمينية المتطرفة، وتنامي ظاهرة الشعبوية؛ كما كان هناك عودة إلى ظهور حجج الدولة القومية التي تجلت في الصراعات العرقية، اللغوية، الدينية والثقافية. لقد أصبح المفهوم الديمقراطي غير كاف لاستيعاب التنوع ويتناقض مع حجج التعايش التي روجت لها الديمقراطيات الغربية كمفهوم حضاري عالمي. نحاول من خلال هذه الورقة البحثية مناقشة التحديات التي تواجه المفهوم التقليدي للديمقراطية ومكان من ضعفه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التغير السياسي، الديمقراطية الغربية، القيم، ما بعد الديمقراطية.

1. INTRODUCTION

After two centuries of the French Revolution, the world witnessed a major political event, represented by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. This event had profound effects on the political systems related to this union. The socialist totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries collapsed in an attempt to transition towards democracy. There was a wave that swept across all continents, including the Philippines, Argentina, Brazil, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. This wave, which Samuel Phillips Huntington called the "third wave of democratic transition," followed the same prediction made by Alexis de Tocqueville over a century and a half ago, that "democracy is the revolution that progresses century after century, and the democratic moment cannot be resisted.*

In his book "The End of History," he declares at this moment that we have reached the summit in the ideological evolution of humanity, and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.¹

The concept of the democratic moment in Tocqueville's philosophy claims that Western democratic theory can solve all issues of power and governance in any society it encounters.

Has democratic theory proven its compatibility with all societies, with their different characteristics, and established the practice of democracy according to its Western standards at all times? Many critics

have acknowledged that political experiments, especially after the widespread diffusion of the third wave of democratic transition, have revealed shortcomings that have led to the failure of these experiments. This has raised two hypotheses:

- The failure of democratic experiments in non-Western societies is attributed to the universalization of Western liberal democratic standards into rigid templates.
- Environments that are not prepared for the concepts of liberal democracy have undermined the transition to democracy in non-Western societies.

We are attempting through these two hypotheses to test the validity or invalidity of the existence of fixed standards that conflict with the prevalent values outside of Western social and political frameworks, or whether societies are not ready to transition to new contemporary patterns of governance that are distant from traditional frameworks.

2. The limitations of the traditional concept of democracy:

Western political scientists are inclined towards expanding the concept of democracy to encompass all the challenges that democracy faces in its classical philosophy, which represents one form of popular rule, in various denominations such as constitutional democracy, representative democracy, and parliamentary democracy, in order to achieve democratic consolidation, which is the ultimate form of stable democratic practice.²

The application of the traditional

model of democracy, after being put into ready-made organizational templates, has shown an inability to recognize and contain the symbolic arrangement of social relationships and interactions in societies outside the Western system, and to respect the differences that come from outside into Western societies.

The traditional concept of liberal democracy expresses popular sovereignty under the rule of law determined by the popular majority, while respecting individual rights. However, this concept has remained incapable of transitioning to other concepts that ensure coexistence and political diversity. In other words, the differences that arise between classical democracy and modern democracy are not differences in size and spread as much as they are about accepting pluralism in its various political, social, and cultural concepts. This concept forms the basis and reality of modern societies and represents a challenge and an end to the idea of a synonymous relationship between liberal democracy and the good life.

The absolute certainties in the concept of democracy have started to decline, and it has become a relative concept that seeks modification. This has given hope to societies outside the Western system to search for new and alternative models and concepts. The profound transformation in the symbolic arrangement of social relationships and the reality of diversity in pluralistic societies, especially culturally, has led to an extremism in differences, conflict, and a tendency more towards individual and collective freedom for groups rather than seeking coexistence.³

Cultural and social diversity has imposed itself widely in societies, in various

forms to the extent that the concept of democracy with its traditional character is spreading. Therefore, it has become necessary to deal with this reality as the true foundation of social structures, rather than treating it as an exception as is done in the traditional concept of democracy.

It is evident that the element of homogeneity in societies is almost disappearing, and liberal democracy deals with contemporary societies based on a general homogenized pattern. The challenge is to recognize the reality of diversity and to quickly address it by finding measures so that the realm of public discourse remains open. Political competition in the new concept becomes illegitimate, leading to the collapse of the concept of coexistence and stability within Western societies.

The rapid social transformations in their interactions and relationships seek flexibility in the objective and institutional aspects of democracy, as some concepts like freedom of belief have made the societal structure "axiological" and transformative. It is expected that democratic institutional structures should embrace these changes in their foundations and expand to seek consensus and move away from exclusion.

3. Traditional democracy: The dualistic of diversity and exclusion:

The concept of traditional democracy, built on majority rule, has tended towards voluntary assimilation of social structures, leading to a form of practiced exclusion. Over time, antagonism has become a characteristic among social components for decades. This prevailing situation, especially in countries with centralized institutions, has placed the democratic concept under objective questioning regarding its ability to

deepen and guarantee democratic practice within the bounds of constitutional mechanisms and limit the exclusion practiced by political institutions under the guise of legal legitimacy. However, the essence in democratic systems is to ensure rights and achieve maximum legitimacy for individuals, according to John Stuart Mill.⁴ Practiced exclusion outside of the constitution among social components may lead to the rejection of political structures and their outcomes.

This situation has led to the search for a new pattern in forming the relationship between the concept of non-fragmented power in the traditional sense, and how to adapt it to the modern concept, in another form of power while preserving liberal democratic values.

According to John Stuart Mill, democracy cannot succeed unless its citizens share a common national identity, and this situation is more entrenched in the more divided pluralistic societies. Citizens feel obligated to a single political authority that may neglect the interests of secondary groups, and they have the motivation to bear the burdens of establishing self-rule.

However, this proposal may have a reverse and disturbing effect on divided societies that seek to transition from conflict to democracy.⁵

There are obstacles that prevent the peaceful and smooth access to democratic institutions, namely the unifying national identity in the presence of two competing concepts: city identity and ethnic identity. The difficulty that stands in the way of individuals in divided societies is the balance and the need to recognize competing ethnic identities with the need to create

comprehensive civic loyalty to the state.

Ethnic pluralism is a major challenge for political institutions, as ethnicity is an extremely complex phenomenon, and there are many approaches that have attempted to study the phenomenon. The two main approaches are primordialism, which relies on kinship and descent in the formation of groups, and constructivism, which studies all objective aspects in the formation and interactions of ethnic groups, especially as societies become more diverse and interactive. Attempting to understand the sources of ethnic conflict and how individuals view their groups, and whether groups are considered competing with the national group or complementary to it, are important factors that political engineers must take into account in generalizing political institutions that ensure the success of political and democratic transformations in diverse societies. Robert Dahl considers the essential values of equality and personal independence to be the essence of the democratic process, while applying these values in divided societies is not easy to implement due to the difficulty of formulating them in a way that ensures political equality between conflicting and distinct groups, and achieves social and cultural self-determination. Political equality depends on ensuring political rights, especially in its democratic political circulation component, which goes beyond the concept of size in groups and achieves satisfaction for all groups.⁶

At the same time, countries composed of ethnic groups that rely on majority rules, in governing and ignoring social differences and divisions, have ultimately led to the complete collapse of the system with the first attempt at political transformation.

Countries such as Libya, Syria, and Sudan have experienced this security and social collapse, which remained cohesive until recently, raising questions about the success of democracy with differences in these countries. Democracy succeeds in some social contexts and fails in others, despite the similarity between the social structures and their constituent components.

Some attribute the difference in the success of countries to the sense of nationalism in any country because it is a basic condition for unifying all members under the same government and state, and when individuals are aware of free institutions, it is considered more vital for institutions in the democratic process, and it may be impossible in a country composed of different nationalities. Among those who lack the sense of difference are those who do not have a sense of difference, especially if there is a clear difference in language, and as a result, there may not be a necessary unified public.⁷

The feeling of nationalism is the characteristic and quality that unifies individuals under the same rule, where the government is a part of those governed who share the same identity. It is also impossible to build stable institutions in societies where individuals feel antagonism and hostility towards each other. John Stuart Mill assumes that national identity is necessary for the success of democracy and that democracy is only possible within the context of a nation-state.⁸ However, these assumptions are considered extreme in their approach because there are several real-life experiences in contemporary countries that bring together more than one secondary national group, expressing deep differences. This perspective aligns with the dominant

national state in previous stages rather than the currently known pluralistic state, with its complex interactions built on a lesser degree of shared national identity and shared political goals.

According to Mill's ideas, the common national identity is attributed to two main reasons. Firstly, the necessity of a shared national identity to succeed in democracy over time, as exercising power is essentially a common agreement between the individuals themselves. However, this element becomes impossible to apply in divided societies, as power tends to serve groups that hold power against other ethnic groups that remain opposed to the classical concept of democracy. Nevertheless, the transformation in democratic political concepts made social division not necessarily against democracy. Models like Switzerland and Canada managed to overcome the obstacle of division to promote an ideal democratic political system. Social and political mobilization around elements of language, culture, and religion do not necessarily conflict with the national cultural whole. The secondary level does not necessarily conflict with the national general level if there is no competition between partial political groups and the general national level. In this case, democracy becomes applicable through integration between secondary and general components within the same entity. There is no threat to power from division, and democratic institutions become a guarantee of fair representation that embodies public power.

The second reason that necessitates a common national identity in a democratic system, according to Mill, is the organization of individuals under collective

bodies to unify their orientations and make shared decisions. Individuals cannot make public decisions on their own, which is why they achieve them through cooperation due to the similarity of goals.⁹ The unification of the group is not in the specific decisions they make, despite the importance of governing public affairs in unifying the group, but in the equal opportunities they have to participate in decision-making primarily. Because individuals within the group develop a voluntary principle, and political equality is necessary even in coercion that achieves similarity among group members. This direction can bring difficult problems in divided societies.¹⁰

All countries impose some demands, obligations, or duties on their citizens, such as the obligation to vote, pay their taxes honestly, and work in different official bodies, in addition to being generally prepared to receive benefits in return for these burdens. On the other hand, absolute monarchy or aristocracy can impose demands by coercion. Despite all these mechanisms, modern democracy tries to use incentives for emulation unless citizens are strongly committed to each other** through a shared political loyalty.¹¹

The call for commitment to a common identity may be impossible in divided societies. Therefore, some political scientists, like John Stuart Mill, have ruled out the success of democracy in fragmented societies and have put forward the conditions of homogenous unity as necessary conditions for the success of democracy. Some of his supporters have gone even further by advocating for complete division between states, by creating more homogeneous and harmonious political entities. This can be seen in the

collapse of Czechoslovakia and the emergence of derived states with more rational friendly conditions. Internal social homogeneity within ethnic composition provides a safer and more rational basis for building democracy. In this division, each ethnic group lives in a distinct geographic area, and democratic institutions are built on political competition, away from politicizing divisions and societal interactions based on ethnicity.

However, it remains that the conditions for achieving this new structuring are difficult and rarely realized in practice. Historical secession processes have often left behind border problems that are difficult to resolve. The border structure that the Soviet Union, Ireland, the Indian subcontinent, and Yugoslavia experienced has caused political and social problems, especially with ethnic groups living on the borders. Some of these groups found themselves on the wrong side of the new borders, particularly with the border structure that involved mass population transfers. There is also the danger of ethnic cleansing and purging of these groups. Divisions, apart from producing politically homogeneous communities, often result in a mere rearrangement of the original divisions, and may even exacerbate the political problems associated with ethnic groups.¹²

This viewpoint is considered extreme in terms of embodying democracy while preserving diverse communities within unified entities. It fails to find political mechanisms for democratic practice, as implied by this opinion that it is practically impossible to achieve. The majority of transitions lack the absolute homogeneity advocated by this approach in establishing

democratic states. Furthermore, there are those whose divisions are latent and not visible, but over time, these differences have become apparent and have a strong presence in social interactions. They have also started to influence political practice after their establishment.

The latter group has embraced coexistence based on the premise of preserving their social and cultural distinctiveness. The principle was accepting common living with a shared political power among them. Hence, the interest of political scientists shifted not only to divided societies themselves but rather to divided societies whose members strive to transition into democracy. Ethnic groups succeeded in embodying democracy in South Africa after accepting coexistence among conflicting groups following the transition. On the other hand, ethnic groups in Sudan and Czechoslovakia rejected coexistence and refused all conflict resolution efforts, leading to separation as a last resort. If there is an initial and absolute rejection of creating a shared sense of national identity, the chances of success for any political solution will remain slim. Contemporary democracy, with its complex mechanisms, succeeds in an environment that is prepared for success and strives to overcome obstacles,¹³ especially when economic and developmental conditions are ideal. Issues related to social and cultural factors affect individuals' willingness to pledge loyalty and participate in a collective identity, with equality and fairness in democratic political practice, particularly in terms of power rotation, after individuals realize that the competitive game can lead them to governance in the future with institutional guarantees.

4. Managing Conflict in Modern Democracy:

John Stuart Mill proposed structural federal solutions for the general national identity issue in divided societies. This is because self-government within a federal state framework is the most practical approach to managing conflict in divided communities. He argued that democracy cannot thrive in a society characterized by division and competition based on social and political factors. Moreover, democracy cannot succeed over time as differentiation increases and deepens.¹⁴

The structural solutions proposed by John Stuart Mill have been proven to be generally ineffective with contemporary experiences. Models like France, the United States, Sweden, Finland, or Poland, as modern democratic countries with established democratic traditions, have experienced long-term stability with quality democratic practices. While stability is a relative and difficult concept to measure, the instability experienced by contemporary nations does not necessarily stem from national divisions, but rather from factors such as social and political inequality, injustice in distribution, class discrimination, regional crises, and terrorism.

John Stuart Mill did not specify the type of nationality to be adopted in the countries he considered to have a unified identity. Is this nationality consistent with the contemporary civic concept that links individual's loyalty directly to state institutions? Or is it an expression of the political concept of the ethnic group that makes up the society? Meanwhile, it is considered that a multi-ethnic nationality state cannot succeed¹⁵. This assumption is true in interpreting some contemporary

cases where nationality is associated with the dominant identity, or the connection of nationality with the inclusive civic concept that aligns with the state, apart from the ethnic identities that make up the society. These two forms are fundamental in contemporary countries. A multi-national state cannot succeed in democratic practice unless there is a reconciliation between national and ethnic identities in a unifying concept expressed through nationality. Meanwhile, a successful contemporary multi-ethnic state has successfully linked the national identity with sub-ethnic identities while maintaining a balance between the two.

The previous perception was that ethnic subgroups, due to their politicization and conflicts with other groups, were seen as a threat to democracy. This perception was based on the analysis that viewed ethnicity as an antagonistic factor to democratic transitions. However, looking at political experiences in Europe, Africa, and Asia, this does not necessarily mean that social and ethnic diversity is inherently hostile to democracy. In fact, effective democratic practices can be achieved through careful political engineering, especially in its institutional aspect.

Ethnic groups like the Welsh and the Scottish in Great Britain, the Basque in France, and the Catalans in Spain, as well as immigrant communities in Canada and the United States, have formed models of coexistence. These ethnic groups are aware of their unique ethnic identity but have shown a desire to live under a democratic system and coexist with other groups. In these societies, ethnicity is not highly politicized, and the cultural practices of these groups largely align with a more

broadly defined civic allegiance to the state.

In contrast to these positive examples, ethnicity is politicized in some socially diverse countries, and sub-identities compete with national identity, such as ethnic groups in Lebanon. In such cases, the ability of institutions to function and the concept of the state itself is called into question. There is a type of resistance and rejection of the concept of the state and contemporary democratic practices. In many societies, the politicization of ethnic groups has become a threat to the existence of the state, such as the Tamil in Sri Lanka, Muslims in Kashmir, Ossetia in Georgia, and the Shia and Sunni Muslims in Iraq.

In these models, sub-identity has become dominant over national identity, and the effectiveness of state institutions is either serving a particular group or diminishing to the point where their existence as official bodies in the state is not established. Loyalties in some groups are directed towards external states, and belonging to the country is often merely geographical. If these groups have social and political dominance, their service to the countries they align with becomes greater than their service to the homeland, to the extent that the sovereignty of these countries in asserting control over their territories and exercising power is diminished.

5. Western democratic values:

The transition from a non-democratic system to a democratic system is considered one of the most complex political processes. The process of transformation carries a lot of risks and uncertainty about the outcomes. The situation becomes more complicated in societies characterized by social diversity, where competition between ethnic-based

parties can lead to the victory of one group represented by a party. In diverse societies, this competition and zero-sum game can be seen as the exclusion of other groups, which can pose a significant risk and increase the likelihood of failure for the political project. In diverse societies, the democratic concept should be based on power-sharing and interests in a way that goes beyond the traditional concept of competition. The success of the transition and acceptance of its outcomes in the beginning is crucial in establishing the concept of democratic nomination in societies.¹⁶

The success of transition in these societies has become a contemporary concept, based on the principle of not negatively affecting the interests of different ethnic groups as a result of the political process. Democracy in these societies is founded on the constant suspicion among groups, fearing exclusion. This is especially true if the institutions are weak and subject to the influence of these groups, making them extremely flexible to the point of weakness. Because qualified flexibility after the transition process can open the door to many amendments that the original transition process is subject to, it can lead to increasing conflicts and weakening of the institutions.

If we delve into the traditional concept of democracy, we find that it does not align with the differences and diversities that arise from pluralistic societies. The conventionally accepted concept is the rule of the people, or in an expanded form, it is a political system that ensures equality among individuals in decision-making through institutions. However, are these two concepts sufficient to encompass democratic practice in societies with all their

diversities?.

Democracy is based on principles that Western societies consider to be universal values, and it may not be achieved in other systems. Individual freedom, economic efficiency, peace, and stability are the fundamental concepts associated with the traditional democratic concept. However, are these concepts unique and unachievable in other systems? Is authoritarian rule, which can achieve these criteria, necessarily a bad form of governance?.

Robert Dahl believes that any discussion on democracy as a global system will revolve around the values of equality as an essential value, and individual freedom, where the individual, regardless of their status, enjoys this value equally with any other person. This extends to political equality between individuals, embodied in the concept of citizenship in rights and duties. These values were widely circulated and practiced within the framework of the homogeneous nation-state, but the issue has become fiercely debated in socially pluralistic countries, which are characterized by social divisions and contain minorities whose members feel marginalized and not equally treated with others.¹⁷

5.1 Deep equality:

Deep equality is considered an independent ethical value for individuals. It is a right of every individual and is part of the moral philosophy that cannot be overridden regardless of changing circumstances and systems. Usually, ethics as a human value is distinguished from contemporary politics as a practice. However, Robert Dahl links ethics and democracy in terms of considering interests on an equal footing.^{***}

Democratic systems are obliged to treat the interests of citizens with equal care. This is the most important entry point for engaging with the principle of ethics in contemporary political practice because the dominant aspect in contemporary political practice is the utilitarian principle, which prioritizes individual self-interests over communal interests.

This principle of inherent equality is often denied in democratic systems more as a philosophical concept than as an embodiment in democratic institutions. The principle of equality encompasses general, superficial considerations that are determined through laws even in traditional democratic systems, and it is difficult to confine them to binding legal texts. The idea of political equality remains subjective among individuals and groups, and each party regards it as essential in a specific context.¹⁸ The concept of inherent equality tends to withdraw more from societies divided into groups than it is ingrained in individuals. This is because the interests of an individual only appear strong within the framework of the group they belong to. It becomes challenging to embody the ethical status of the concept of equality between groups as equality between individuals.

There are some experiences that have managed to ensure inherent equality for groups, such as the Canadian experience, which was embodied in the preservation of the French language and culture for the groups residing in the Quebec province. Institutional measures ensured equal enjoyment of their own culture, to the extent that the wide spread of English schools in French-speaking areas protected their culture.¹⁹

The institutional measures and

guarantees put in place by governments ensure rights and reduce instances of instability and tensions between groups, thereby reducing difficulties in power-sharing. However, it is difficult for the idea of inherent equality among individuals to succeed in all divided societies. This is because the institutionalization of ethnic groups assumes that they are fixed and cohesive, and it overlooks personal differences among individuals within the same group. The institutional approach to dealing with groups treats them as if they are homogeneous units.

At the same time, individuals' core values differ from those determined by institutional measures. Individuals consider their group membership as inherent, and the social distinctions they enjoy are their core values, as opposed to the institutional core values represented by equality and other civic values.

5.2 Individual independence:

Robert Dahl argues that the concept of individual independence may conflict with the inherent equality between individuals in a democratic system - as linking equality with moral values may move the democratic process away from support and opposition to a necessity for general approval, due to it being considered a value close to the sanctification of other values such as freedom of expression and choice.

Inherent equality urges governments to treat citizens with the same level of attention to their issues and concerns, and this principle is difficult to apply because individuals have different interests that may deprive some of them of the details they see as essential, while others may see them as secondary.²⁰

In this respect, Robert Dahl argues that it is necessary to overcome this complex situation by linking the values of inherent equality with the fundamental value of individual independence. This means treating individuals as the best judges of their own self-interests and granting them autonomy to deal with issues in a way that goes beyond general stereotypes and towards general freedom in dealing with issues. The concept of inherent equality is still important in terms of equality in choice and expression, while individual independence remains a way to promote their cultural, economic, and social interests.

Individuals differ in matters of religion and social customs, which makes inherent equality in freedom of belief a positive and sacred value for the religious, while atheists may see it as something not worthy of mention and consideration, falling within the realm of personal freedom.

The concept of individual independence has a negative impact on the relationship between groups and within social groups in divided societies. It helps institutionalize group identities by incorporating the concepts of freedom and individual independence into legal frameworks, thereby providing more favorable conditions for equality within the democratic process. However, excessive pursuit of individual independence in divided societies may increase extremism among individuals, leading them to cling to and lean towards the political forces they belong to.

6. Democracy and authoritarian power practices:

The international circumstances, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and

waves of democratic change, have helped to spread the Western liberal democratic thought, as predicted by Alexis de Tocqueville. Thus, it has become the dominant system in one way or another throughout the world. At the same time, there were concerns about the deviation of the democratic system through majority tyranny and some distortions that appear in democratic practice.²¹

During this time, democratic practice sought renewal to maintain its global status. Many countries resorted to expanding their powers in various areas, using arguments such as state control over strategic economic sectors and covering areas that the private sector cannot.

The state became a central axis within the country and controlled the margins in which society operated. Power tended to be more centralized in its practice, serving society by establishing a larger social, economic, and cultural life. The relationship between the state and society was based on the centrality of the state, with society being subordinate in this relationship. Nothing was outside the control of the state through its official institutions, and everything that happened occurred within its official framework.

Do these practices of controlling public life indirectly lead to totalitarian rule? Totalitarian systems are known for their almost complete control over society and all elements of the state. Fascist and Nazi regimes in Germany, the Soviet Union, and North Korea worked to expand their control and close the public sphere, making society completely structured behind state institutions. This made these experiences a prior warning to systems that expand their control over society.²² These practices in the

twentieth century became contrasting models to democratic governance. However, it is worth noting that the methods and techniques adopted by democracy, such as mobilizing individuals and groups, politicizing social groups, and exploiting social divisions for political purposes, such as electoral mobilization and ensuring political support for political parties, have led these systems that are described as democratic to exercise a general control over society and its social and cultural interactions.

There are those who believe that the democratic system, through its institutional procedures, prevents the emergence of authoritarian systems. Does democratic practice indeed prevent the potential for falling into authoritarianism?

There are accusations faced by democratic systems, the most important of which is the increasing centralization of state power, which allows for the exercise of inclusive and oppressive practices indirectly or in a subtle and less apparent manner. This occurs when powers are consolidated in the hands of the central authority through legitimate mechanisms, but their content may pose a long-term threat to democratic practice.

The second accusation faced by democratic systems is the oppression of the majority, especially in political practice in systems that rely on majority electoral systems. This leads to the neglect and permanent persecution of minorities through institutional mechanisms.

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There are those who go even further, considering that democracy does not protect freedom but rather serves as a fertile ground for the rise of authoritarianism. Among them is Bertrand de Jouvenel who believes that democracy is the foundation of freedom, but contemporary democracy paves the way for dictatorship.*** It was born to be a

stronghold against absolute power, yet the current practical direction allows power to spread and exert its control over society without restrictions²³.

In the Democratic system, individuals have the opportunity to participate in the political process as voters, elected representatives, or activists in various political parties and institutions. However, after the electoral process, which is considered the mechanism for competition and decision-making in politics, individuals become obligated to adhere to the opinions and orders of the election winners, whether they are individuals, parties, or entire institutions. even if the individual opposes the outcomes of the electoral process.

This becomes even more challenging in countries that rely on majority rule as the determining factor in elections, especially when there are parties that have specific geographic or social representation. In such cases, individuals are often compelled to comply rather than having the option to reject the outcomes of this process. In diverse societies, the ruling power often remains in the hands of a group that is well-represented in governance, leading to a continuous rejection from groups that lack representation. In these cases, democracy through majority-based elections loses its meaning unless it is supported by power-sharing mechanisms, which are considered an adjustment to the democratic system that has lost its ability to accommodate all its differences. Traditional political scholars, who advocate for traditional democracy, see these adjustments as a retreat from the original democratic values. Among these scholars are Robert Dahl and Donald Horowitz.²⁴

There is a dichotomy in democracy

based on prior freedom enjoyed by individuals before the electoral process, contrasted with the subsequent obedience that restricts freedom after elections. This obedience entails the obligation to obey the elected officials, akin to the obedience required by an authoritarian ruler, if we exclude the means by which they came to power. There are highly dictatorial systems that have come to power through elections, thus achieving prior freedom for voters in choosing their candidates. However, this freedom is lost after the authoritarian ruler assumes power, and individuals become subjected to submission and obedience, with the ruler surpassing official frameworks. The system transforms into a dictatorial regime, similar to the Nazi regime in Germany.

In contrast to the impact that the majority has on the opinions and orientations of the minority, there is a limited influence of the majority on material and social economic issues. This is because individuals give their votes to a few leaders in order to decide on public matters, especially economic and social policies. This diminishes the direct influence of the majority on economic issues and their public affairs, considering that the electoral process does not last more than a few hours.²⁵ Because there are modern and emerging critical issues in which leaders and the elected officials in representative institutions decide without consulting the individuals who delegated them in the first place, modern democracy lacks the fundamental principle of democracy, which is self-governance by individuals themselves.

In addition to the control of the elite over the choices and influencing the individuals, there is a prevalent belief

among the ruling political elite that it is not necessary to consult the electorate or consider the opinions of individuals in addressing public issues. They can also backtrack on election promises with various excuses without being obligated to justify them. This is evident through governments relying on unelected bureaucrats to make decisions and formulate policies, disregarding the preferences of the voters, even in major international alliances.²⁶

At the same time, politicians are being influenced by various forms of pressure and blackmail from informal pressure groups and interest groups. The level of control and influence exerted by these groups may not compare to the weak pressure exerted by voters on their elected officials after the elections. The levels of support are often very weak, as highlighted by studies in Western societies. Nevertheless, this lack of support does not lead to any improvement in the performance of governments.

On the other hand, there will also be no change in government policies even if the level of support for the governments increases. This comparison suggests that the stance of citizens towards governments after elections does not matter to the ruling political elite in changing the policy decisions they have adopted. This distorts the philosophy of democracy in its application based on the contractual relationship between the ruler and the ruled, because the electoral mechanism makes the ruler not accountable to the voters, even if they become the majority after the elections, and cannot be removed through available legal means, even if the majority turns against the ruling party or president.

This situation, which has reduced the power of individuals over elected officials

and politicians, has prompted Western governments to increase the number of members in the bureaucratic apparatus. The expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus reflects the authoritarianism that Western democracies have descended into.²⁷ Because these agencies, by virtue of their possession of information and expertise, have become directly responsible for policy making and decision-making. They are the real responsible for updating regulatory rules and laws and determining the percentage of taxes imposed on individuals and institutions, even though their approval can only be done with laws that are voted on by parliament since the Magna Carta as a global principle to prevent their direct approval by bureaucrats, due to their direct impact on individuals. Nevertheless, the bureaucratic apparatus remains in control of the economic field regardless of changes in governments. It is the main actor in governing society and its trends.²⁸

7. CONCLUSION

We found that Western democracy, despite its attractiveness, suffers from certain shortcomings that contradict its principles. One of these shortcomings is the portrayal of the voting process as the essence of democracy, where individuals are given absolute power to choose their rulers. However, there are those who doubt the validity of this perception, considering it a fallacy that has been marketed to individuals in order to ignore any accountability of rulers to the individuals who elected them.

The marketing of democracy as everyone governing themselves and the boundaries between the ruler and the ruled being unclear due to the nature of power rotation is seen as a mere illusion. This belief has paved the way for Western

governments to gradually seize control over various aspects of people's lives, economically, socially, and culturally. Through this strategy, Western countries have become central hubs of governmental power.

This shift towards authoritarianism and its increasing concentration in the hands of governments was evident in the 20th century through numerous experiments where countries descended into dictatorship and autocracy. Democracy cannot coexist with absolute centralization, and it is also impossible to envision dictatorship with the distribution of powers and its expansion among individuals, especially in areas that are relevant to their daily lives. Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, North Korea, and the People's Republic of China became non-democratic systems after descending into absolute central and authoritarian power, governing every aspect of individuals' private lives. This is because freedom is a relative concept but has an inverse relationship with the centrality and tyranny of power, and the level of democracy is measured on this basis.

Western societies did not become democratic until after internal struggles and battles to establish individual freedom in practicing their lives and economic activities. However, these acquired rights are gradually being seized by governments.

Therefore, the type of indirect authoritarianism practiced in contemporary democracy is not different from the authoritarianism and despotism based on absolute centralization practiced in the dictatorships that emerged in the 20th century. The difference lies only in the degree, which means that continuing in this direction may lead to the same results.

Some argue that Western societies are currently experiencing a form of soft coercion, built through stages far from traditional means of intervention. Western societies have worked on directing and softening the requirements of individuals, making them predictable and controllable through precise and complex regulatory and legal procedures. These societies appear to be completely free, but they are actually covered by a network of official, precise, and complicated rules. Neither individuals nor organizations can break through these rules, which serve the ruling elite more than the individuals in society. These rules do not directly destroy the will of individuals and organizations, but rather work on adapting and directing them. This power does not directly conflict with or clash with the demands of individuals, which may pose a threat to the ruling elite. Instead, it contains, obstructs, and extinguishes any demands that may threaten this relationship built on subordination and containment between society and the ruling elite. The patterns of interaction and the frameworks within which these interactions take place have become organized and regulated by laws and organizational structures that allow governments to control and supervise them. Thus, we find that the relationships of individuals, such as the formation of families, the opening of schools and stadiums, and the formation of charitable associations, are governed by governments through their bureaucratic apparatus, through official rules and regulatory laws, in order not to compete with them and pose a future threat to these governments.

The basic idea of these organizations is that they provide for and share with the state the burdens that the state carries. But in the end, the state, through its regulatory

laws, controls these organizations, increasing the centralization of power. The state has worked on transforming the relationship between individuals into a relationship between the individual and the state, as a fundamental relationship in social and political organization within the state.

In doing so, the state indirectly eliminated social relationships in their social form and the pure form of their social interaction, redirecting them towards making them solely political. The state has continuously tried to destroy informal connections outside of official frameworks. In known dictatorships in the 20th century, the state worked on destroying social organizations through excessive and direct force because they posed a threat to the central authority of the state. However, in contemporary democratic countries, the state has sought to contain these organizations in indirect ways and through stages.

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^{**} It is not possible to control this loyalty or measure its strength and commitment in reality, or the extent to which it is needed for the success of democracy. Loyalty, for example, in structurally divided federal countries is different from the loyalty that citizens adhere to in simple unitary and centralized countries.

¹¹ - Dahl, R, On Democracy, New Haven, Ct: Yale University press, 2000, p 35.

¹² - Horowitz D, Ethnic groups in in conflict, Berkeley, CA: University of California press, 1985, pp. 588- 592.

¹³ - Michael Saward, The Representative Claim, first publication, USA: Oxford University Press 2010, pp. 155-165.

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¹⁵ - Blokland, Hans Theodorus, op, cit, p 288.

¹⁶ - Russell Hardim, Liberalism, Constitutionalism, and Democracy, Second Published, New York: Oxford, 2003, pp. 176.177.

¹⁷ - Dahl Robert, On Democracy, New Haven, ct: Yale University press, 1998, pp. 66-68.

^{***} "The Democratic Process is expressed in the principle of equal consideration of interests- "Achieving political equality is a desirable and feasible goal".

¹⁸ - Dahl Robert, On Political Equality, New Haven, CT: Yale University press, 2006, pp. 16-17.

¹⁹ - Taylor c. «The Politics of Recognition», in a gut Raman (ed): Multi-Culturalism: Examining the politics of Recognition, Princeton NJ: Princeton University press 1996, p58.

²⁰ - Robert Dahl, On Democracy, 1998 op, cit, p 86.

²¹ - Anthony H. Birch, The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy, 2nd edition, New York: the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2001, p123.

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² - Paul Barry Clarke and Joe Foweraker , Encyclopedia of democratic thought, First published, New York: Rutledge, 2001, pp. 216-218.

³ Op. cit, pp. 224-225.

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⁶ - Blokland, Hans Theodorus, Pluralism, democracy and political knowledge: Robert A. Dahl and his critics on modern politics, first published, New York: Copyright, 2011, pp. 30-33.

- Some divided societies have tried to reduce social differentiation by increasing spending on public services. However, there are other models that have collapsed due to the breakdown of agreements between groups because of imbalances in implementation, such as Lebanon, Nigeria, and Sudan. While some countries have achieved relative stability and peace as a result of ethnic groups' adherence to agreements, such as South Africa.

⁷ - Barry, B "Self-Government Revisited", in D. Miller and L. siedentop (eds), The Nature of Political Theory, Oxford University Press, 1983, p130.

⁸ - Mill JS "Consideration on Representative Government" 1861, J Gray (ed) Mill: On Liberty and other essays, Oxford University press, 1991, p 428.

⁹ - Michael Levin, the Specter of Democracy: the rise of modern democracy as seen by its critics, UK: Palgrave Macmillan 1992, p 150.

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**** “Conceived as the foundation of Liberty, it paves the way for tyranny. Born for the purpose of standing as a bulwark against Power, it ends by providing Power with the finest soil it has ever had in which to spread itself over the social field" Bertrand De Jouvenel.

²³ - Scott Gordon, Controlling the state: constitutionalism from ancient Athens to today, the United States of America: First Harvard University Press paperback edition, , 2002, p13.

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²⁶ - Harold Lask, ” Is the EU really run by unelected bureaucrats?”, UK : the London School of Economics and Political Science, 21/06/2016, pp. 02-03.

²⁷ - Academy of Ideas, idem.

²⁸ - Robert Vivian, “Bureaucrats Undermining Constitutional Democracy”, The Journal of the Helen Suzman Foundation, Issue 75 - April 2015, pp. 62-63.

“A founding principle of Parliamentary democracy is that there should be no taxation without representation and that the executive branch of government should not itself be entitled to raise revenue but should rather be dependent on the taxing power of Parliament, which is democratically accountable to the country’s tax-paying citizenry”.