THE TERM 'DEMOCRACY' AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPING WORLD

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The 21st century revered the word 'democracy' as the key companion of civilization and modernization, while associating it only with liberal democracies. Other systems of governance were perceived as non-democratic despite this specific term being their intrinsic component.

This article has tried to evaluate whether 'democracy' and democratic norms suit other systems or not; could there be ample reasons for the pursuit of non-democratic governance for the developing countries which associated their development with only 'certain types' of democracies, while remaining oblivious to finding similar democratic norms in so-called non-democratic models, and failing to pace up their development. The arguments produced here are based upon the comparison of four basic democratic values: freedom of speech, human rights, accountability of leaders (within electoral processes) and participation of masses between democratic and non-democratic systems. During these comparative studies of achievements of these two systems during a century long struggle, it was found that these values of democratic systems are either working at par with other so-called 'non-democratic' systems or dysfunctional in both systems equally. The article also rounds up a catastrophic picture of developing world, which resulted in a bid to join the "democratic" club of the world. In conclusion it is suggested for developing countries that it is the right time to emancipate from the fever of 'democracy' of one particular system; rather, its' understanding is needed to be more inclusive of other alternatives as well. Otherwise, should they not miss out on the fruits of development in this century as well?

Keywords: democracy, China, developing countries, development, alternatives

The mantra of democracy is receiving high attention on the global horizon and to some extent it has been considered an inevitable phenomenon of the 21st century for all the countries of the world. However, it has a special significance for developing countries so that they can also align themselves with those countries or states which accolade themselves with medals of civilization modernity and prosperity by adopting *democracy* first.

Most of the developing countries have embarked on this journey of democratisation some half a century ago. While many countries were in transition to inclining towards this "boon", the new events started taking place around the globe. These happenings started the fresh debate about the meanings of democracy and provided an opportunity for scholars, especially from developing countries, to scrutinise the word 'democracy' with its deeper and more adaptable meanings in conjunction with their cultures and norms.

The people of developing countries of the world have been indoctrinated with the word *democracy* associated only with liberal democracies prevailing in western capitalist societies, and it has been assumed that the desired process of democratisation is exclusively meant to furbish this particular ideal across the board. Therefore the word *democracy* has become an alias of the western liberal democracies and has become incompatible with other systems though it has served as prefix in many countries'

systems, for example, Participatory Democracy of Venezuela, People's Democracy of China, etc.

Until the second decade of the 21st century, the success of *other democracies* became pronounced and turned out even superior, which led to a provision of an opportunity for the people of developing and Islamic world to probe their direction and reflect upon the fact; 'have they not been chasing a wild goose? In a bid to find the answer, this discourse is providing an opportunity to reflect upon the understanding of the functionality of democracy beyond the word *democracy* and the relationship of *democracy* with the developing world. Firstly, analysis has been made on the measures of functionality based on generic outlined values of democratic governance. Finally, a comparison of the socio-economic output of *democracy* versus *others* is established to determine the fate of the underdeveloped, including Islamic, world intertwined with democratization.

Although literature is in abundance with the

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depiction of characteristics of democracy, but for a comprehensive study, United Nations Development Programme (2014) provides four cardinal principles of democracy: people have their say in decisions making and implementing (participation & inclusion), fundamental human rights, freedom of speech, and accountability of leaders (electoral process etc.) [1]. The first part of this discussion provides an opportunity to determine the functionality of these values in comparison to democratic systems (liberal) and alternative concomitant governing systems (*non-democratic*).

There are various *other* models working in different countries and societies. However, amongst them the most pronounced is China's path of *People's Democracy*, which serves as a good example for contrast studies. Therefore, this path underpins principle of socialism for establishing the state system of a People's Democratic Dictatorship by the working class [2, p. 93] - a different bastion of democracy.

PARTICIPATIONS AND INCLUSIVENESS

First of all, we examine the core values of *inclusiveness and participation*, in which liberal democracy takes its pride. The advocates from liberal democracies present the argument that masses utilize their right to vote to elect their own representatives, thus practice their participation primarily by making a government elected by themselves. Such rhetoric can now be eclipsed by an in-depth analysis of the term 'participation' and examining it beyond voting and elections. For example, in the constitution of the People's Republic of China, which has always been painted as *totalitarian,* the article 29 emphasises the inclusion of local citizenry in all level of enterprises, rural areas, government bodies, schools, research institutes, communities, social organizations, companies of the People's Liberation Army and other basic units, for building the primary party structure [3]. This shows that this kind of direct participation provides an opportunity to participate even at higher degree than just casting vote.

To understand this contrast of participation, Arnstein's typology [4] for participation seems quite helpful for weighing. In this topology the level of participation is determined by the degree of partnership and inclusion which the citizens of these two types of systems enjoy. This topology sets the minimum mark of direct participation at 'partnership' level, where masses are at least encouraged to become partner with the ruling class.

To examine this participation, firstly we take a look at liberal democracies. For this purpose the recent Australian elections provides a good opportunity to develop an understanding about such partnership. By listening to the voters' sentiments it can be concluded that this level of participation decreases at the stage at which citizens hear the controlling authority and are heard as well. Voters describe their experience as follows: "politicians approach them, note their advice, and send letters to them confirming that their voice was heard, but when it comes to the action it is empty" [5]. Issues related to the inclusion of minorities also provide a point of reflection on one of the democratic norm of partnership. It is an irony that despite their louder chants Australian Muslims (minority) are excluded from the society (in a liberal democracy) [6]. The situation tells the lack of the act of participation in the process of execution. A famous US scholar and public policy developer, S.R.Arnstein places such level of participation at the fourth rung which he describes as a 'Tokenistic participation' without muscles and unable to shatter the status quo [4]. Which means citizens just live in an illusion of being included with 'haves' but in fact they are not.

On the other hand when we analyse the aforementioned *people's democratic* systems, which work beyond the voting democracy as it was made evident in the article 29, such institutional right is a demonstration of Partnership, a higher rung of participatory ladder set by Arnstein [4].

ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Liberal democracy nurtured the slogans of human rights, which it perceived as an advantage over its rivals. But it has been seen that this jewel of democracy (liberal) is being disparaged as well, by the very humanitarian organisations of the countries, who pampered or promoted the phenomena of human rights. One of such examples is the recent amendment in Citizenship Act, upon which Amnesty International (2015) utterly showed its disappointment and declared it as incompliant to the country's commitment with International Human Rights' obligations [7].

Such frailty is hard to hide and does get seen across and causes reduction of the swagger against the rivals. Some time ago when Australia wanted to raise concern on human rights issues with Chinese authorities, they shrugged it off with laugh [8]. After the recent wave of conservatives clinching to power, this criticism has become arduous. One of the human

rights reports issued by Columbia Law School suggests, "The US should look in the mirror before pointing fingers or casting blame on other countries for their problems" [9].

On the one hand, the issues of commitment to these 'self-devised' human rights are teasing and, on the other hand, its incompatibility can also be seen within liberal democracies themselves as well. They are also hesitant about the complete adoption of this 'boon' within their own boundaries. According to academia, Australia does not have any national law of rights. Which itself speaks of the preference given to this particular issue within the liberal democracies [10].

Secondly, the issue of the lack of consensus on the overarching human rights has also been seen as a hump for getting the recognition of this 'sanity' as a universal value. A major hurdle in accomplishing this task is rich and powerful Southeast Asian nations' voices, who wants to articulate their cultural and social rights as well, while asserting the rights of state's sovereignty and weaving it directly to the individual human rights. Asian nations are raising question on the sources of these human rights values and consider it as a tool for endangering the regimes' sovereignty [11, pp. 16-20]. Therefore these core values of liberal democracy have lost its attractiveness and exposed for its fierce nature in the past few years. If an endeavour was made for promoting the democracy that harboured human rights, its charm would not remain intact.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Another characteristic which caused liberal democracy to flourish was the bourgeoisie's open criticism of monarchy and autocracy, which paved the way to gain more and more control over the resources and perpetuate its control in the early 17th century [12, p. 16]. It is likely that later this triumph became an intrinsic measuring value of liberal democracies, and became a matter of pride for its superiority and defining characteristics.

It was this acclaimed triumph, which later evolved as words like 'liberty of press' and 'freedom of speech' and strengthened its bases for bashing other comparable social and political systems and established its superiority over them by shaming them with accusation of either snubbing the voices of the masses or acting as an agency of the government, thus emulating them with the ancient autocratic norms. Liu Hong describes China's government control of the newspapers as a father-daughter relationship. All newspapers were reportable to the Communist Party [13, p. 203]. Such rhetoric seems to be built upon viewing end result of a government's action by ignoring the process. On the other hand, when we dive deep and examine process of liberty of speech in the liberal democratic world, we find it squared with any other 'autocratic' government. Therefore, it becomes difficult to claim that a certain system is better despite its processes being harsher and probably based on a certain type of tyranny regardless of its better and more acceptable results.

The process of deceiving the general public's words can be understood by Habermas' terminology of "Public Sphere", which has become a process of extending the bourgeoisie realm's opinion to the overwhelming majority of the masses [12, p. 18]. This essentially leaves an impression that these are not voices of ordinary people but rather words of the minority bourgeoisie class. The argument seems quite realistic while observing events of the Iraq War closely, where Rupert Murdoch's concentrated media was in favour of the war more than the Pentagon itself [14, p. 36]. In such a way the public opinion was tuned in favour of war and became one of the reason for pushing the US into war. Also, in the recent years concentrated ownership of press by large industrial groups [15, p. 16] does raise the question: is it not that "Public Sphere" is orchestrated by corporations in their own vested interest, thus compromising the ordinary people's voices?

ACCOUNTABILITY (ELECTIONEERING)

Liberal democracy also galvanised its electoral process, helping develop the notion of respect of peoples' wishes and leaders' accountability. The standard of electing candidates from different parties (in most cases - two parties), and the claims for availability of more choices for masses in comparison to single-party 'authoritarian systems', scarce in available choices for their peoples, can be testified for its functionality. For example, the United States has always been painted as a system where masses can choose between two parties, but according to Gore Vidal, *The United States has only one party - the property party. It's the party of big corporations, the party of money. It has two right wings; one is Democratic and the other is Republican* [16, p. 172].

A recent survey in Australia also suggests that most people believe that it does not make much difference which party makes government as both have same policies [17]. Such revelations suggest that this functionality is no less than the power

struggle of two factions within one party system type of rule (which their rivals claim). Recently it has been described that the president Xi's group in the Communist Party of China defeated their rivals in power struggle, but this would not change the policies and strategies of its rivals significantly [18]. Thus this comparison provides the reasons for nullifying advantage of electioneering and provision of choice by *democratic* forces; over the selection offered by 'non-democratic' ones, where one party rules.

EVALUATION OF EFFICIENCY OF DIFFERENT DEMOCRACIES

Through dynamism in media, critiques are also challenging the claims of efficiency, uttered by liberal democracy, which was concealed for some time from its followers, and it has been found that it is even less efficient than its alternatives. This comparison of the effectiveness of liberal democracy with other systems has long been undertaken. It has been reflected in speeches of *other* states' leaders.

According to Deng Xiaoping, *Superiority of the socialist system is demonstrated, in the final analysis, by faster and greater development of those forces than under the capitalist system* [19], which draws the basis of such competition. It was really difficult to cast any result against or in favour of any democratic system until now, when the parameters has started weighing in favour of one or the other. To elucidate this efficiency in a better way, two comparisons have been sought: one evaluates set targets for its citizens, quality of life in given time; whereas other measures the output (quantity) in given time.

For the first evaluation, of meeting the targets; India and China's approaches have been sought for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Where India is described as working on the principle of pure *democracy* and latter proclaims *people's democracy*. Similarities in attribution of both countries, like comparable land sizes, resources, population and same age of inception provides a basis for such comparison. In the latest MDGs' results it has been seen that the performance of China does lead by gallops in almost all eight MDGs.

Moreover, in the first goal, Poverty Reduction, these results speak for themselves. The poverty in China has been slashed by 94%, four times better than its counterpart over the same time period [20]. On the one hand, the above-mentioned social achievements stand out and, on the other hand, result in economic efficiency (output to tenure),

which speaks in favour of the alternative system. A comparison of Chinese economic performance with the US one was conducted, where former's system equates with the follower in real gross domestic product's target in four times less tenure than later achieved in over 200 years, when Chinese GDP (PPP) surpassed America's in 2014 [21]. Therefore, in numeric inferences, this comparison of systems implies that *alternative democratic* approaches are four times as efficient as traditional democratic systems.

Certainly it was that triumphant efficiency of *alternatives* that stirred the thought in the West as well and generated its admiration for possible alternative systems. Few of such words of praise were uttered by Prof. Bell, who believed that with such a governance problem, the current western democratic system ceased to be a good model for the outside world, which is looking for alternatives [22, pp. 1-44]. The rhetoric also provoked the *democratic league*, which started talking about the need of reinvigorating the charm of democracy [23]. The outfall of both of these arguments sets one thing very clear: even if the triumph has not been conceded fully, at least it is setting minds in the direction and letting scholarship think outside of the box of superiority of one particular brand of democracy.

The 'fruit' of *democracy* is not confined to the financial and social chaos for the world but has resulted in corporal losses as well. From Iraq, Libya, Syria to Pakistan the endeavours of spreading liberal democracy have cost hundreds and thousands of lives in an unending carnage and chaos. It was these results that provided an opportunity for President Putin in a United Nations' address to warn his western partners of spreading these dogmatic ideals across by saying: "Do you realize now what you have done?" [24].

CONCLUSION

So, firstly, from our discussion of analysing the democratic values espoused in freedom of speech, human rights, electoral systems and inclusiveness and participations it has been extracted that these indicators function differently in developing countries, and the set standards are being measured in different ways, which works at par in other progressive systems as well. Secondly, we have also seen that claims of efficiency in association with *democracy* have also been debunked. It is a precursor for dislodging the dogmatic fever of democracy.

Due to the romance with the *democratic system,*

people in developing countries, Islamic world, and specifically Pakistan, have failed to disentangle themselves from (liberal) democracy and align themselves with countries pursuing other types of democracy such as China's, which have been truly making social and economic progress but remained outside their vision for being 'non-democratic'.

These findings provide an opportunity for understanding that there is a need for developing a perception that *other democratic systems* should also be considered equally democratic, maybe in a different context, and are even efficiently capable of raising the standards of people's lives without losing the charm of the word 'democracy'. Therefore, fully justified recognition of these other systems as democratic is paramount at the first place for moving towards alternative development for developing world. Contrarily, they can miss out the bus leading to the road of prosperity, dignity and relief even in this century as well.

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