

POLITICS

UDC 321

DOI 10.36074/2663-4139.12.04

EXAMINING DEMOCRACY: WHICH OF ITS TWO CLASSIC FORMS – LIBERAL OR DIRECT IS BETTER SUITED FOR SETTLING THE PRESENT-DAY DEMOCRATIC CRISIS?

Galyna MANDRA

Student at the Department of Politics and International Relations
University of Southampton

UNITED KINGDOM

Abstract. Democracy represents an increasingly fragile construction, which, in the contemporary ultra-globalised political environment, is constantly faced by an amalgam of challenges and threats, both merely social, rather economic and mixed — socio-economic. As of the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, democracy is undergoing a particularly complex period, in which political traditions find themselves disposed to systematic reconsiderations driven by steady conversions in civilian interests and values, as well as irregular perils of explicitly global significance, including the rise of populism and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Concentrating upon the conditions of the current democratic crisis, the given article provides a comprehensive evaluation of the applied viability of the two classical forms of democracy — liberal and direct.

Keywords: *democratic crisis, forms of democracy in comparison, civil and political rights, direct and liberal models of democracy, expression of civilians will.*

There is consensus among most political scholars that democracy represent a thoroughly reasonable political regime when it comes to preserving human dignity under the constant combat on enduring global issues, including overcoming inequalities, upholding human rights, managing economic instabilities and many others. Although the democratization practice has already been successfully adopted by the majority of developed states, over the past decade, its further spread and reinforcement have been considerably complicated by such obstacles as the rising political dissatisfaction and protest among civilian populations, citizen misinformation and widespread lack of political literacy coupled with waning credibility and integrity of governments worldwide. Accordingly, despite its long-standing evolution, democracy itself still remains a highly fragile formation, which for the avoidance of severe constitutional fracturing requires constant review and completion. By discussing their pillars, main characteristics, downsides and prospects, this essay will evaluate and compare the two classic democracies – liberal and direct and will argue that



© Мандра Г., 2020

© Mandra G., 2020

<https://ojs.ukrlogos.in.ua/index.php/2663-4139><https://doi.org/10.36074/2663-4139.12.04>

while none of those forms alone stand for the ultimate panacea for international stability, a sensible combination of their elements could become instrumental in managing the unfolding democratic crisis.

Liberal democracy, accentuating the personal dimension of public system, relates to the pivotal recognition of personal liberty as the universal societal goal. It is part of the liberal conception that the individual mind embodies an ultimate political priority, resulting in the fundamental proclamation of imprescriptible and inalienable human and citizens' rights and freedoms coupled with individual's autonomy with regard to a given group, society or the state [1], [2], [3]. The underlying premise of this model is, thus, singling out and placing undue emphasis upon the courage of conviction in the irrefutable legality of human independence, individuality and self-actualisation. Furthermore, it draws upon the juridical basis of civil law that suggests that all citizens shall enjoy equal right for inalienable private property, allowing them for the scope of activities independent from the state superiority. Thereby, along with individual freedom, liberal democracy recognises equity of fair opportunities, as well as equality of all before the law, which has predetermined the foundational clauses of its doctrine. These mainly include: (a) the right of each citizen to participate in the political life of their state through electoral mechanisms; (b) inherent lawfulness of private ownership as the guarantees of citizens' civil rights and freedoms; (c) on the political front, an increased degree of openness and transparency afforded by an inclusive competition among various political forces and objectivity of independent information sources such as the non-State-controlled media and NGOs; (d) the pursuit of an adequate consensus with due regard to the concerns and rights of minorities, especially in the event of opposition's electoral defeat [4], [5]. Having been repeatedly protracted by additional elements, this ordinance paved the way for the modern division of state authority into three coordinated offshoots: the legislative, executive and judicial forces, consolidated and exerted on the principle of appropriative checks and balances. Designed to defend liberty at the price of the governance structure efficacy, that is where the state's actions are restricted to law and order preservation.

A crucial merit of liberal democracy is that it postulates the narrow interconnection between the formation of democratic institutes and democratisation of civil societies as such: the efficacy of liberal tactics is reflected in citizen admission of common democratic values. Additionally, liberal agenda proclaims that the paths of democratic stabilisation and democratic thinking fostering can only be achieved in synchrony with the overall strengthening of civilian welfare. In the context of the contemporary democratic crisis, this mainly applies to the material well-being and living standards of populations [6]. In that respect, liberal democracy response embraces socio-economic modernisation, market

facilitation, government branches adjustment and the rule of law promotion. Thus, liberal ideology entails democracy not simply as a form of state governance but as a certain way of life and political mindset of populations.

In the modern liberal democracies, the key social institutions are composed of progressive income taxes and budgetary assistance for the social sector that commutatively provide the fledgling democracies with excellence-based immunity from fast-developing national extremist movements [7], [8].

In contrast, direct democracy represents such form of political organisation and social structuring, which provides for the practice of launching, determination and pursuance of all substantive decisions explicitly by citizens and citizens' initiatives. It entails this practice of direct decision implementation to issues of both general and local dimensions, which intimately evidences for law-making prerogative of the folk [9]. In that regard it is noteworthy that proposals for options and possible future directions for questions raised might emanate from both individuals and community itself by means of dedicated groups, political parties, voluntary and business associations, local governance or public administration [10]. Thus, one defining feature of direct democracy pertains to sustained political involvement with subsequent direct responsibility of ordinary civilian population of the state in the implementation and enactment of laws of varying degrees of importance. Originally, the idea is that the link between the state and non-governmental bodies should intensify the effectiveness and boost the mobility of resolving local and private proceedings - issues framed and scrutinized at the level of informal civil society groups.

Simultaneously, certain forms of direct democracy such as referendums in particular tend to slow political decisions approval and implementation. Although protracted discussions and inclusive negotiations at the law enforcement level can, indeed, be instrumental in ceasing the ambiguities of law-making processes, commonly they bring about quite a reserve non-productive output. For instance, it is fairly unlikely that such conceptions as the idea of European unity or the Germany's New Eastern Policy would have found massive popular support if the legislative power was then exercised by an assembly of people. Moreover, in ambiguous cases such approach proves to be quite risky in terms of the consequences scale and the lack of scope for legal review of decisions taken. Given fast-paced modernisation of politico-economic inter-state relationships and socio-cultural diversity prevailing in the contemporary largely globalized society, political dilemmas have become much broader than ever, meaning that only seldom, if ever, their examination can be kept to the definitive 'yes or no' [11]. Mainly, such issues as the potential accession of Turkey to the European Union, relations Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Kosovo conflict and many others remain enduring matters firmly sparking a massive demagoguery outcry



© Мандра Г., 2020

© Mandra G., 2020

<https://ojs.ukrlogos.in.ua/index.php/2663-4139><https://doi.org/10.36074/2663-4139.12.04>

among politicians and civil public. Another example revealing how unparalleled corollary of direct democracy can be concerns Brexit: the 2016 referendum that endorsed approximately 52 per cent of the votes cast being in favour of UK's withdrawal from the EU has evidently shown how more complex the follow-up realisation of referendum results may be.

Besides, as of 2020, it substitutes another disadvantage of direct democracy that over large territories its applicability becomes fairly problematic, in which the deployment of problems with the progress on their judgement-making and harmonisation is challenged by logistical assets of the state: its computer hardware, mobile communication means and Internet accessibility.

However, even though in the light of the contemporary democratic crisis direct democracy is associated with such a number of drawbacks, this does not mean that as regards to government policies or national legislations, referendums and popular initiatives are invariably condemned to futility and senselessness. Even compared to the liberal format, direct democracy offers extra potential for the effective integration of citizens in the legal realisation of their civil, political, cultural and socio-economic rights, thereby continuing to strive the prioritization of general populations' needs over the interests of commonly corrupt upper classes of modern increasingly oligarchic societies [12]. Direct engagement of civilians in the state's political life offers tangible solutions for qualitative advances in people's perception of the state, active citizenship and government as such. Mainly, this helps to raise their mindfulness concerning civil liberties and duties, as well as to identify optimal modalities of governance in their country [13], [14]. All these again leads to the basic tenet specific to both liberal and direct democracy: only in compliance with personal rights and liberties of all citizens the state can safeguard a sound public administrative system.

To conclude, a strong and sustainable democracy cannot be purely liberal or direct already because those two forms have much in common. Both recognize the citizens' intimate role in the system of state governance through policymaking and both shows potential to boost the level of individuals' civilian self-identification in respect to the government, as well as to encourage the public to view government decisions and legal instruments in place with understanding and due responsibility. Simultaneously, their ideologies include certain discrepancies evidencing that while liberal democracy primarily emphasises values and norms in politics and social society, the separation of powers and the principle of rule of law, direct democracy is more concerned with people's direct engagement in passing executive decisions and making actual laws. These characteristics make liberal and direct democracy quite promising as regards to resolving the contemporary democratic crisis and safeguarding the peaceful civil order in the long run if adopted sensibly in combination with each other and other forms of democracy.



© Мандра Г., 2020

© Mandra G., 2020

<https://ojs.ukrlogos.in.ua/index.php/2663-4139><https://doi.org/10.36074/2663-4139.12.04>

REFERENCES:

- [1] Hammerstad, A. (2010). Population movement and its impact on world politics. In Beeson, M. & Bisley, N. (Eds.) *Issues in 21st century world politics* (pp. 238-251). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [2] Phillips, A. (2010). Transnational terrorism. In Beeson, M. & Bisley, N. (Eds.) *Issues in 21st century world politics* (pp. 136-149). London: Palgrave.
- [3] Wendt, A. (2012). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [4] Berns, W. (1984). *In defense of liberal democracy*. Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway.
- [5] Perry, M. J. (2012). *The Political Morality of Liberal Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [6] Prentoulis, M. & Lasse, T. (2013). Political theory in the square: protests, representation and subjectification. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 12 (3), 166–184.
- [7] Case, W. (2010). Democracy and democratisation. In Beeson, M. & Bisley, N. (Eds.) *Issues in 21st century world politics* (pp. 93-108). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [8] Eatwell, R. & Goodwin, M. J. (2018). *National populism: the revolt against liberal democracy*. London: Penguin Random House UK.
- [9] Haskell, J. (2000). *Direct democracy or representative government? Dispelling the populist myth*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- [10] Altman, D. (2011). *Direct democracy worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Leduc, L. (2003). *The politics of direct democracy: referendums in global perspective*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- [12] Radaelli, C. (2009). How bureaucratic elites imagine Europe: towards convergence of governance beliefs? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(7), 971–989.
- [13] Dryzek, J. (2009). Democratization as deliberative capacity building. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42(11), 1379–1402.
- [14] Della, P.D. (2013). *Can democracy be saved?* Cambridge: Polity.

ВИВЧЕННЯ ДЕМОКРАТІЇ: ЯКА З ДВОХ ЇЇ КЛАСИЧНИХ ФОРМ - ЛІБЕРАЛЬНА ЧИ ПРЯМА, КРАЩЕ ПІДХОДИТЬ ДЛЯ ВРЕГУЛЮВАННЯ СУЧАСНОЇ ДЕМОКРАТИЧНОЇ КРИЗИ?

МАНДРА Г., студентка кафедра політики та міжнародних відносин
Саутгемптонський університет

ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНІЯ

Анотація.

Демократія являє собою все більш крихку конструкцію, яка в сучасному ультра глобалізованому політичному середовищі постійно стикається із сукупністю викликів та загроз, як соціальних, так і економічних та змішаних - соціально-економічних. Станом на початок третього десятиліття XXI століття демократія переживає особливо складний період, коли політичні традиції виявляються схильними до систематичного перегляду, спричиненого постійними перетвореннями в сфері громадянських інтересів та цінностей, а також нерегулярними небезпеками, що мають явно глобальне значення, включаючи зростання популізму та триваючу пандемію COVID-19. Концентруючись на умовах сучасної демократичної кризи, дана стаття дає всебічну оцінку прикладній життєздатності двох класичних форм демократії - ліберальної та прямої.

Ключові слова: демократична криза, форми демократії у порівнянні, громадянські та політичні права, прямі та ліберальні моделі демократії, громадянське волевиявлення.



© Мандра Г., 2020
© Mandra G., 2020

<https://ojs.ukrlogos.in.ua/index.php/2663-4139>
<https://doi.org/10.36074/2663-4139.12.04>