**Democratization Problems of Turkey**

***Procedural Democratic Minimum Model***

Dahl’s polyarchy (1971) stands out as the most commonly used model for “procedural minimum” orthodoxy within the democratization literature which stipulates certain amount of necessary procedural conditions in order to constitute the minimum threshold for any political regime to be considered as polyarchy — hence the very term “procedural minimum” (Whitehead, 2002:10). Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that the ‘democratic imaginary’ of the bulk of the democratization literature in general and democratic transitions and consolidation literature in particular is largely grounded on Dahl’s notion of polyarchy. Dahl’s polyarchy has been pervasively replicated or adopted with more extended versions by various scholars as the definition of democracy (Schmitter and Karl, 1991: 80-82; Potter et al., 2005: 3-4; Collier, 1999: 24; Munck, 2009: 38-52).

To begin with, Dahl’s book on polyarchy (1971: 1) defined democracy as “political system that allows for opposition, rivalry, or competition between a government and its opponents.” In return, Dahl (1971: 1) defined the opposite of democracy (non-democracy) as a political system “in which the opponents of the government cannot openly and legally organize into political parties in order to oppose the government in free and fair election”. Hence, Dahl perceived non-democracy exclusively in the form of ‘conventional’ non-democratic regime typologies.

Following his definitions on democracy and non-democracy, Dahl’s (1971: 1) book single-mindedly focused on one of the key characteristics of democracy which he designated as “the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals.” Yet, in order to fulfil this key characteristic, Dahl (1971: 2) remarked that citizens should be capable of enjoying three necessary procedural opportunities.

1. To formulate their preferences.
2. To signify their preferences to their fellow citizens and the government by individual and collective action.
3. To have their preferences weighed equally in the conduct of the government, that is, weighted with no discrimination because of the content or source of the preference.

According to Dahl (1971: 3), these three necessary opportunities could only be fulfilled with the existence of eight institutional guarantees which he listed as: (1) Freedom to form and join organizations, (2) Freedom of expression, (3) The right to vote, (4) Eligibility for public office, (5) The right of political parties to compete for support, (6) Alternative source of information, (7) Free and fair elections, (8) Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

From Dahl onwards, scholars who worked within the premises of procedural minimum orthodoxy have conceptualized democracy as something that can be fixated into a formula by designating a list of necessary institutional guarantees. Due to the primary focus on the “procedures of public decision-making” (Whitehead, 2002 : 12) which then could only be fulfilled with the existence of certain number of institutional guarantees, procedural minimum tends to confine the meaning and the space of the ‘political’ to the formal public institutions. Perhaps more importantly, Dahl’s eight institutional guarantees depict an “institutional blueprint” (Little and Lloyd, 2009) for liberal democracy which is devoid of any minimum standards for social or economic rights. Indeed, one can argue that the prevalent status of procedural minimum orthodoxy within the academic arena mirrors the hegemonic success of the neo-liberal consensus within the global political arena ((Rueschemeyer, 2004).

In this context, one should point out to the fact that “three-quarters of what the most commonly used indicators of democracy have been measuring is variation on Robert Dahl’s two dimensions of polyarchy— contestation and inclusiveness” (Coppedge et al, 2008: 632). Yet, it is crucial to observe how Dahl’s two dimensions (contestation and inclusiveness) are conceptually demarcated by the electoral competition. While Dahl (1971: 7) describes the contestation dimension as the competitiveness of the political regime in the elections, inclusiveness dimension is simply defined as the right of the populace “to participate in elections and office”.

Dahl (1971: 20) does indirectly add a third dimension to his concept of polyarchy when he remarks that “there are the classical liberal freedoms that are a part of the definition of public contestation and participation”. This is simply because competitive elections (contestation dimension) executed at regular intervals with the participation of the adult population (inclusiveness dimension) would not fulfil its underlying promises unless supplemented by the liberal constitutional dimension. Hence, the democracy imaginary created by Dahl is limited not only because it is strongly centred upon competitive elections but also it hints at the “liberalism for the sake of electoral democracy approach”.

***Radical Democracy Model***

In stark contrast to the limited democratic imaginary depicted by the orthodoxy of the procedural democratic minimum, radical democratic theory envisions an extremely broad democratic imaginary, and perhaps, provides the most multi-dimensional concept of democracy that exists within the literature on democracy. Radical democratic theory embraces the principles of ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ as the two “fermenting” or “generative” principles of our modern democratic imaginary (Smith, 1998: 8-9). More importantly, radical democracy theory not only insists on the necessity for the radical universalization of the principles of ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ but also their expansion into every dimension of human life (e.g. political, economic, cultural, social, gender).

These two generative principles of the radical democracy do not only spur the “becoming of democracy” but also make the boundaries of the concept itself to be ever-expansive and thus render it uncontainable within a model of “institutional fix”. After all, it is the radical interpretation of these two fermenting principles (liberty and equality) which requires “extra-postulation” that pushes ‘actually existing democracies’ forward and thus rendering them less exclusive (Little and Lloyd, 2009: 206). Given that, and unlike the orthodoxy of procedural minimum which is keen on providing an “institutional blueprint for liberal democracy”, political space is neither confined to the formal public institutions nor sealed from the economic or social arena (Little and Lloyd, 2009: ?).

In addition to this, post-structuralist accounts of radical democratic theory are keen on exposing and challenging the numerous and somewhat intersectional modes of ‘domination*’* and ‘exclusion’ that pervades human societies (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 153-193; Butler et al., 2000: 11-86; Thomson, 2007: 41-54). For instance, although Mouffe retains and acknowledges the importance of democratic procedures, her theoretical framework is primarily directed towards exposing and challenging the relations of ‘domination’.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Furthermore, and in contrast to the orthodoxy of procedural democratic minimum which tend to focus on behavioural aspects of public decision-making processes, literature on radical democracy incorporates the “radical view of power” into its theoretical underpinnings. Steven Lukes (2005: 144) defines radical view of power (or the third dimension of power) as “the capacity to secure compliance to domination through the shaping of beliefs and desires, by imposing internal constraints under historically changing circumstances”. Although Dahl defines democratic procedural processes in terms of the citizens’ ability to “formulate their preference” or “signify their preferences...through collective action”, he excludes the third dimension of power from his theoretical analysis. The literature on radical democracy, on the other hand, seeks to explore the third dimension of power at work while the citizens seek to formulate or signify their preferences. Given the very definition of the radical view of power, it is impossible to challenge the complex modes of domination and exclusion without incorporating it into the theoretical analysis.

Informed by post-structuralism, radical democratic theory conceptualize space “as an ‘event’, a radical and passing creation, rather than a static background, and place as process, a ‘becoming’, rather than a fixed coordinate.” Moreover; given the “universality-to-come”driveof radical democratic theory, **the sites** of democratic struggles and thus its **spheres** are **infinite** covering every sphere (including every-day life) and range (from micro to macro that is from state or civil society to media, factory, school, and political party etc) that is possible. As Adrian Little and Moya Lloyd in their conclusion section to “The Politics of Radical Democracy” remarks:

…*there is not a singular space* in which radical democracy operates*.* A radical democratic theory must recognise that focusing on one level of political engagement – be that micro, meso or macro- is incomplete because the interactions on any one of those levels are always affected by developments in the others*…* Even if it was possible to clearly delineate the different levels and spaces of democracy (which is highly debatable), these spaces can never be hermetically sealed. Thus, engagements on any level are permanently in flux as they are challenged and unsettled in other spheres of democratic interaction.

Lastly, the incorporation of ‘**radical view of power’** into its theoretical underpinnings is the most revealing aspect of radical democratic literature. Steven Lukes defines radical view of power (or what he terms as third dimension of power) as “***the capacity to secure compliance to domination through the shaping of beliefs and desires*, *by imposing internal constraints*** under historically changing circumstances.” (Power: A Radical View, Page 144, 2005.) It is important to realize how liberal-democratic tradition uncritically hails free, fair and competitive elections as the ultimate expression of citizens’ political preferences and opinions. In line with this traditional perspective, electoral regime occupies the centre amongst the five partial regimes of Merkel’s embedded democracy (see figure 1.1 at page 2) since according to the author the former constitutes the cornerstone of the principle of vertical accountability. *But then what are the processes at work which* ***mould political preferences and dispositions of citizens***?

Just like liberal tradition, radical democratic theory embraces ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ as the grounding principles of modern democratic imaginary. But unlike liberal tradition, radical democracy insists on the necessity for the *radical universalization* of ‘liberty’ and ‘equality’ and their expansion into every dimension of human and social life (not only political but economic, cultural, social, gender etc). This is why Mouffe insists that “The objective of the Left should be the extension and deepening of the democratic revolution initiated two hundred years ago” (Dimensions of Radical Democracy, 1992, page1). In other words, it is not some abstract principle of liberty and equality as such which liberal tradition perceives it as embedded in some natural laws but radical interpretation of this normative and emancipatory dimension (liberty and equality) which requires “extra-postulation” that pushes ‘actually existing democracies’ forward and thus rendering them less exclusive. As Little and Lloyd eloquently summed it up in their edited book “The Politics of Radical Democracy”:

Therefore, it is not only in the whole rejection of liberal democratic institutions that a radical democratic politics can be established; rather the attempt to ***disrupt liberal democracy by unveiling its exclusion can be advanced by direct engagement with the principles and institutions that liberal democracies use to legitimise their structures***….(bolds added- page 201)

1. For the difference between relation of subjugation and relations of domination see Mouffe and Laclau [↑](#footnote-ref-1)