The journey we have begun: How democracy could bear fruit for all?

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Article Info	Abstract
Research Article Received: 29 December 2023 Revised: 22 March 2024 Accepted: 22 March 2024 **Keywords:** *Democracy,* *Ethnicity,* *State of nature,* *People and government*	*This article delves into the fundamental questions of whether democracy, when left unchecked, can provide the best form of governance and whether a minority can exploit it to suppress the rights and freedoms of others. By examining these questions in detail, the article offers insights into refining democratic systems of governance, which prioritize the wide participation of the populace instead of allowing a select few to dictate the nation's affairs. Drawing from practical examples involving racial and ethnic diversity, such as the United States, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Ethiopia, the paper argues that democracy can be co-opted by a particular race or ethnicity to advance its interests, often at the expense of marginalized groups. Addressing this issue practically is more feasible than resolving it theoretically, as theoretical approaches tend to overlook the complexities of race and ethnicity in democratic systems.*

1. Introduction

With the rise of populism, the globe experiences the flaws of democracies. It is mind-boggling that a country considered to be a trailblazer of democracy would experience such a horrific incident as the 'besieging' of the Capitol on January 6th, 2021. This raises the question of whether democracy can provide the best form of governance when left to its own devices. Moreover, can democracy be a tool that a handful of the population could exploit to suppress the freedoms and rights of others? This paper addresses both questions and mentions ways to refine our democratic governance systems. Since democracy is a system that encourages broad participation of the populace rather than being controlled by a select few, it is crucial to explore avenues for improvement.

When a territory full of people becomes independent or has an epiphany in its years of struggles with how best the people must be governed, it turns to democracy. It is common sense to have such a turn. In a democratic regime, everyone presumably contributes to the territory's governance, not just a handful of intelligent heads. In a democracy, no one is above the law (or so it must be); therefore, people are accorded the same respect and treated equally. But who knows what democracy looks like? Or what it is. If it were to be mentioned in the scriptures, there would not be many scuffles over which country is democratic and which is not. Perhaps Providence would have given man a checklist of what constitutes democracy if democracy found its way into the holy books, but nay! With Providence's unparalleled wisdom, we would have measured up with what is ought of us in terms of democratic means to understand who is trailing the path of democracy and who is not. Every country claims to be a suitor of democracy, but democracy has claimed nothing. In fact, who speaks on behalf of democracy? How do we know one country is democratic while the other is not?

Can democracy exist in opposition to people? hypothetically, or not? Since democracy is the government or rule of the people as its Greek etymological origins suggest, "*demo,"* meaning people, and "*Kratos*" meaning to rule, the question posed investigates whether the inclinations of democracy could be at all opposed to what the people want. The people might want *A,* and the gears of democracy want *B*. Is this possible? The paper will answer in the affirmative. That is what the French political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville, after his diagnosis of the new American democracy, warned against the "tyranny of the majority" (more on this later). To give the question a practical flesh, we will say because of the availability of races and ethnicities, making the workings of democracy

very difficult, democracy could be hijacked by a race (the case of the US) or ethnicity (the case of most developing countries) to advance its cause and oppose some people within the country, like the white against blacks (and of course other race like Latinos) in the US or the Malays against other ethnicities in Malaysia or Indonesia, Oromo against other ethnicities in Ethiopia. From this practical point of view, the question becomes simpler to tackle; if it remains in its theoretical form, it becomes almost impossible to answer. Unfortunately, one of the failings of theoretical work in democracy literature is the primary philosophical diagnosis without factoring in the issue of race and ethnicity. Political theorists like John Locke, Rousseau, Hobbes, etc. spoke about the "*state of nature*" as the foundation of the emergence of civil government without even considering the bonds between humans, the issue of ethnicity, race, tribe, etc. It will be difficult for humans to look beyond their affiliations (or so it seems) in the context of civil government. If the question is answered in this light (without considering affiliations), it becomes problematic, for the question to be tackled would be, what is the meaning of "people" in the question in the first place? Is it everyone, a group, a race, ethnicity, etc.?

Following this introduction will be several parts tackling the issue of democracy working in opposition to "people." First, the paper considers the foundations of government, both with its theoretical and practical cloak. It turns to the issue of who gets to define the term democracy. It will then consider the practical issue of the workings of democracy in opposition to "people", with historical examples such as the US case where women and blacks were denied voting rights. Significantly, it will turn to some means of refining democracy to ameliorate the inner failings of contemporary democratic methods by mentioning deliberative and agonistic democratic procedures. To avoid making this paper bereft of practical contemporary examples, it will consider one of the unique examples of a country with a seemingly strange democratic government, Lebanon. The paper chose the US and Lebanon because of their similarities in demographic and political diversity despite the differing nature of this diversity. Both nations are melting pots: in the U.S., diversity is primarily racial, encompassing groups like Native Americans, Whites, Blacks, and Latinos, among others. In Lebanon, it is largely religious, with groups such as Shia and Sunni Muslims, Maronite and Catholic Christians, Druze, and more. At the heart of democracy is the principle of aggregating a diverse populace's views through the country's governance. This racial or religious diversity poses unique challenges to democratic governance. Therefore, both the U.S. and Lebanon provide pertinent case studies to explore how democracy might be manipulated by a select few, leading to a scenario where the mechanisms of democracy could potentially function contrary to the interests of the general populace. The paper concludes with how democracy could be strengthened and the way forward.

2. Methodology

All responsibility belongs to the researchers. Ethics committee approval is not required as this study did not collect data on humans using experiments, methods, practices, etc.

This study employs a comparative and interdisciplinary approach to examine the efficacy of democracy as a system of governance and its potential exploitation by minority groups. Drawing from practical examples in nations such as the United States, Lebanon, etc., the research investigates how democracy interacts with issues of racial, religious, and ethnic diversity. Primary data sources include historical records and empirical studies on democratic governance and minority rights. Qualitative analysis techniques, including thematic analysis and discourse analysis, will be utilized to explore patterns and themes in the literature on the studies of democracy. Additionally, this study will incorporate insights from political theory and philosophy, particularly the works of Locke, Rousseau, Hobbes, and other relevant thinkers, to contextualize the findings within theoretical frameworks. Overall, this methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for refining democratic systems to prioritize widespread participation and protect the rights of marginalized groups.

3. Foundations of government

"Man was born free but everywhere in chains," the first sentence of Rousseau's text Social Contract (1762, p. 1), gives the idea of forming what we have now as civil government. In their foundational works, 'Social Contract' (1762) by Rousseau, 'Two Treatises on Government' (1690) by Locke, and 'Leviathan' (1651) by Hobbes, these political theorists delve into the concept of the *state of nature* as a key element in the development of civil political societies. This *state of nature* represents a time in human history when there was no established authority over individuals, allowing each person the freedom to live according to their judgment and preferences. This is the natural state of being unless Providence appoints an authority over man; man had no power or obligation to subject another man to his authority or the obligation to perform a deed out of fulfilling the requirement of belonging to a society (Locke, 1690).

The phrase, Man was born free,… captures this understanding. It uses the auxiliary verb "*was*" in the past to mean that freedom was once available, i.e., in the *state of nature*. If it chooses to use the present tense "*is,*" it *suggests that newborn children are free* during birth until they consent to join political societies. However, this exegesis is an overstretch since the child does not get to choose where to be born and is automatically under the political society where his or her parent birthed him or her.

Locke further differentiates between the *state of nature* and the *state of war* to provide a deeper understanding of how the formation of civil government came into being. Suppose a man is in a state of nature where no one man has authority over the other. In that case, there will always be the propensity for the strong to subjugate the weak under their authority without the explicit consent of the weak. This struggle between the weak and the strong, one escaping being subjected and the other endeavoring to overpower the other, puts them in a state of war. Locke (1690, p.108) sums it up as follows;

> *Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them, is the state of nature properly. But force, or a declared design of force, upon the person of another, where there is no common superior on earth to appeal to for relief, is the state of war.*

According to Rousseau (1762), there comes a time when the strength of the individual man in the *state of nature* cannot subdue the vagaries and obstacles of life. Therefore, joining forces together to achieve a significant collective goal becomes essential. This goal at once preserves the individual's life and property and does not dissipate the individual's rights and liberties. From this, political societies are birthed. Locke and Rousseau share similar opinions on the necessity and the raison d'etre of civil societies, i.e., preserving individual rights, freedoms, and property. These civil societies give obligations to the individual and give voice to the majority in the fold of carrying out decisions for the benefit of the collective or general will, as Rousseau calls it. The individual or private will is now subjugated to the general will of the newly-born civil society. Even before the creation of civil societies among men, the family was considered the first unit of government or the embryo of civil societies. The word *Economy*, the management of the state's resources, as its contemporary meaning suggests, comes from the two Greek words, "*Oikos,*" meaning house, and "*nomos,*" meaning law, "originally meant only the wise and lawful government of a household for the common good of the whole family," Rousseau (1999) mentions. Therefore, it is a fair assessment that the growth of a civil government began with the family.

Regarding the question of the forms of the commonwealth (or government, as it is broadly understood), according to Locke (1692), since the majority within the newly created community moves the levers of power in terms of legislating and executing laws, it is consistent with the purpose of the commonwealth, this form of doing things is known as Perfect Democracy. When authority is vested in a few individuals, it is known as an oligarchy, while the concentration of power in a single person is termed monarchy, among other forms.

Who would not want a perfect democracy? That is the pinnacle of the democratic system of government. Here, everyone participates (eligible members) directly in governing the affairs of the commonwealth (the commonwealth is the independent community formed after eschewing the *state of nature*; it has no form of government yet). The concept of Representatives (deputies), which Rousseau (1762) abhors, has now become the familiar practice of the contemporary political arrangement of the state. "The weakening love of country, the energy spent on private interests, the immense size of the state, conquests, and the abuse of government, have suggested the idea of having deputies or representatives of the people in national assemblies." And, "through being lazy and having money, they end up with soldiers to oppress their country and representatives to sell it," Rousseau (1762) mentions. For him, "sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason it cannot be transferred: it consists in the general will, and the will cannot be represented" (Rousseau, 1762).

Whatever it may be, for good or worse, the globe is replete with representative democracies now. It is implicitly assumed in such a system that every eligible person has a stake in the state in which he or she lives and by choosing a representative, since it has become the necessity of our time given the sizes of states, delegate and vest in their representatives the power to legislate (in the case of the assemblies) and execute (in the case of the executive arm of government) laws of the state.

3.1. Governing (democracy) in practice

The foregone pages dealt with the foundations of government as it is considered in the political theoretical knowledge of statehood and governance. However, a huge unfortunate disparity exists between theory and practice regarding statehood and governance. One glaring failing of the political philosophical exegesis mentioned is the silence on the issue of affiliations in terms of race or ethnicity. The obvious affiliation recognized is that of the

family; nothing else is mentioned. It is assumed that humans will be sensible, consider themselves equal, eschew all affiliations, and respect the General Will or the good of the Commonwealth. Rousseau (1762), however, touches a little bit on the affiliation issue when he mentions the "corporate will" of those in the servitude of the government. That is, government officials have three wills: the private will, the corporate will, and the General will. Unfortunately, this is just it. It does not touch on ethnicity or difference in race. This is understandable because the rise of pluralism, or the multicultural form of the state, is a much later phenomenon. Therefore, failing to capture the idea of multiculturalism in the aforementioned theory on statehood and governance.

To illustrate this more clearly, consider the findings of Schwartz and Jaquelyn from Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health (2020), which indicate that Black Americans face a 3.23 times higher risk of police-related fatalities compared to White Americans. The situation is even more stark in Chicago, where Black residents are over 650% more likely to be killed than their White counterparts (Schwartz & Jaquelyn, 2020). Additionally, a separate study by Vikram (2023) highlights that in the UK, Black individuals are seven times more likely to die after being restrained by the police compared to White individuals.

Why are these statistics concerning? Because it shows that people suffer not because they belong to the commonwealth but because of their affiliations (here, their skin color depicts their blackness). In some developing countries in the African and Asian continents, people are denied basic amenities because they belong to a certain caste or ethnicity. Once again, they struggle not because of their belongingness to the commonwealth but their affiliations. How does democracy work in opposition to "people"?

Another issue in terms of practice is the obvious issue of whether or not representative democracy is justified. (Rousseau believes it is not). For Rousseau, there cannot be a representative form of democracy. He (1792) goes as far as to advocate for the changing of the seat of government (signifying the center of government, in today's terms, the Capital City) to different regions and provinces within the state to have a fair share of managing the state affairs as far as the General Will is concerned. Rousseau might have been convinced of his ideas when he wrote in his days if only he had lived to see the humongous growth in population and the tremendous complexity with which governance comes; he would have perhaps had second thoughts.

Here is a list of population milestones around the world, according to the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019)

- 1 billion: after an estimated 200,000 years of human history, achieved in the early 1800s.
- 2 billion: attained in 1927, approximately 123 years after 1 billion.
- 3 billion: obtained in 1960, about 33 years after 2 billion; and
- 4 billion: reached in 1974, only 14 years after 3 billion.
- 5 billion: attained in 1987, about 13 years after 4 billion.
- 6 billion: obtained in 1999, approximately 12 years after 5 billion.
- 7 billion: reached in 2011, approximately 12 years after 6 billion.

Moreover, the seat of government is going to be rotated. What will happen to the embassies of foreign countries since they are supposed to be where the current seat of the government (hosting or receiving country) is? If they (embassies) are to rotate as well, would that not cause financial, technical, logistical, or managerial stress? Is it possible at all? It looks like the world (some states definitely) is making lemonades (representative democracy) out of lemons (the size of states, other complexities, etc.) that the contemporary world presents.

4. Democracy and its intricacies

Having left home together, an army of ants encountered a huge creature, to which they all climbed to have a cruise of their life... One after the other, they narrated their experience of the creature after getting to their abode. *"It is very smooth on its surface,"* one bewilderingly mentioned. *"No, it is rough on the surface,"* another objected. *"It is round," "You are mistaken; it is rather flat,"* another back and forth between colleagues ensued… The huge creature was an elephant. The army of ants had experienced the same elephant. Still, on different sides, and due to that, each thought its description of the elephant was the most accurate and acceptable, without realizing that differences in positions and angles on the elephant gave different opinions and descriptions about it.

In the same vein, although democratic governance has a significant semblance from one country to another, it also has significant variance. Moreover, with different sociological makeup comes differences in the manifestation of democracy. Even within the West, democracy does not have a unified singular meaning and procedures. For

example, as it has become a custom of democracy, secularism, where the state is devoid of religious affiliations, plays an important role. In France, this is called *Laicite*. Is there a difference between laicite and secularism? A ridiculous question, one might hurriedly conclude! However, the answer is surprising in the affirmative. In France, the state strictly prohibits religious symbols or other ostentatious religious practices (Siddique, 2022). This is because of France's historical bitter rivalry between the Church and the State. However, in other Western states like the US, although secularism is alive, it does not manifest in the strict or absolute sense as it does in France. The dollar bill is inscribed "In God, We Trust," an abomination in France. In France, no person puts on religious symbols in the workplace, but in the US and the UK, people do. The Senate begins with prayer (sometimes by Muslim clergy or a Christian in the US); this will be a political sin in France. The Premier League allows Muslim players to break their fast during football games, whereas Ligue 1, France's top league, does not (Ryan, 2023).

If democratic principles are not explicitly outlined in scriptures and there's no single authority dictating its definition, who ultimately defines democracy and for whom? Is it the historically colonizing Western nations? Or the authoritarian-dominated regions of Asia? Perhaps the dictatorial-leaning global South? Or even the US, with its past marked by Jim Crow laws? It's difficult to pinpoint definitively. From a historical point of view, it is assumed that those countries that strengthened their democratic governance did so by tailoring their sociological dimension with the best practices of democracy (Abubakar Siddique, 2023). It took time as well.

5. Democracy in opposition to people

In mentioning the deep variances in a democracy, one country that could easily come to mind is Lebanon. That country has different ethnicities, but it is not the issue of ethnicity that significantly matters in the democratic dispensation; it is religion. In a consociational democracy, political positions are filled on the lines of ethnicities, tribes, etc., i.e., hardcore representation of one's affiliations. When this representation is based on religious affiliation, it is called confessionalism, the kind of practice in Lebanon. Note that Lebanon is a democratic country; it would not accept any description less than that! In Lebanon, the political structure mandates that the President hails from the Maronite Christian community, the Prime Minister is selected from the Sunni Muslim population, and the Speaker of Parliament is drawn from the Shia Muslim community. While this setup guarantees power distribution among the three major religious sects, it has unfortunately exacerbated sectarian divisions within the nation (Siddique, 2022).

Sometimes, in the US, some laws forbade blacks and other people of color from using the facilities that whites used in the country, such as the Jim Crow laws. These were local and state laws that marginalized blacks from the end of the Civil War to 1968. It denied blacks the right to vote, hold certain jobs, get an education from certain schools, and other segregations. The US then would not have accepted any label except democratic governance as its form of governance, although these horrifying laws were manifested. Blacks face death, violence, jail terms, etc., for not obeying these laws.

Before these unimaginable laws, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political scientist, theorist, and historian, after spending nine months in America between 1831 and 1832 and observing the democracy of America since it was much in its nascent stage, published the voluminous work 'Democracy in America', the part that strikingly concerns this present issue of the paper is the coining of the term *Tyranny of the majority*. Here he is in free flow; "*the will of the nation is the only thing that can claim to be sovereign; but the majority that expresses this will is exposed to the same passions, the same vices, and the same weaknesses as the individuals who compose it*" (2000, p.317). He mentions again,

> But no power upon earth is so worthy of honor for itself, or of reverential obedience to the rights which it represents, that it may be safely trusted without being watched and guarded. The more hands have contributed to the oppression of an individual, the more difficult it is to free oneself from their oppression. The tyranny of the majority is still tyranny, the most odious of all tyrannies, because it is not based on the interest or caprice of a prince, but on the impulses and the desires of an entire people." (2000, Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 7, page 318)

To link the two points, the issue of Lebanon's governing systems and the US's and the tyranny of the majority with the issue of democracy opposing "people," it is obvious that anytime the majority sects get their way through passing laws (draconian as it may be for some people), it depicts the issue of democracy working in opposition to "people." When the Jim Crow laws were enforced, they were legal; in other words, it was illegal to not conform to the laws, irrespective of their repulsiveness. These were laws that the majority had their way with, which significantly disenfranchised a significant number of people, stole the liberty and rights of these same people, and unjustly caused the deaths of several. A typical working of democracy in the opposition of the "people."

6. Methods & means of refining democracy

To mention the mechanisms of refining involved in a democratic dispensation is to presuppose democracy is the ideal governing system there is. Is that the case? Could other systems of government supersede democracy in its benefits to the people? Would a dictatorship, authoritarian, top-down government system be a better alternative to democracy? This question would have been difficult to answer had the world stuck in the days before the Cold War, but in the fullness of time, democracy has achieved greater feats than all other governing systems. Indeed, even before the fullness of time, there was the utterance of the "End of History", referring to the collapse of the USSR and liberal democracy coming out victorious against its rival, authoritarian, dictatorial top-down governing system.

The hypothesis that an authoritarian governance framework can facilitate economic expansion is a notable concept in political economy. This perspective posits that a reduction in political and social liberties can be a catalyst for steering the economy toward positive development. This notion is encapsulated in what is known as the Lee Thesis, a theory attributed to and named after Lee Kuan Yew, the inaugural Prime Minister of Singapore. However, according to Amartya Sen (the Nobel Laureate in economics), the thesis has little evidence to support the claim. He mentions that the Lee Thesis is "based on very selective and limited information, rather than on any general statistical testing over the wide-ranging data available" (Sen, 1999). On the other hand, democracy can confer enormous political, social, and economic benefits to the people. In fact, according to the research of Amartya Sen into famines around the globe, he concluded: "…it is not surprising that no famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy-be it economically rich (as in contemporary Western Europe or North America) or relatively poor (as in post-independence India, or Botswana, or Zimbabwe)" (Sen, 1999).

It is quite obvious why this is the case; no famine ever happens in a functioning democracy since political leaders in democracies have elections to win, whereas, in authoritarian forms, none exists. Henceforth, there is a lack of incentive to avert famines in authoritarian regimes. Moreover, in democracy, mentions Sen, the informational role in democracies helps to avert famines, which surprisingly Mao Zedong (1976, pp.149-50) recognizes when he said after the famine of 1962 had taken the lives of millions:

Without democracy, you have no understanding of what is happening down below; the situation will be unclear; you will be unable to collect sufficient opinions from all sides; there can be no communication between top and bottom; top-level organs of leadership will depend on one-sided and incorrect material to decide issues; thus you will find it difficult to avoid being subjectivist; it will be impossible to achieve unity of understanding and unity of action, and impossible to achieve true centralism.

Agreeing that democracy will be our best bet for development, let's consider now the curative mechanisms and means of refining and strengthening democracies. The first that comes to mind is deliberative democracy. This labeling is a bit confusing, considering that even in representative democracies, deliberations could be fused. At the hearing of democracy attached to deliberative, one wonders whether it is in rivalry with representative democracy. Both can coexist. Due to this seemingly confusing labeling, deliberative mechanism, procedure, or model will be a suitable term. This method, model, or mechanism ensures that there is consultation with the citizens and consensus is reached in decision-making. Discoursing, deliberating, debating, and dialoguing is at the center of the democratic process as far as this mechanism is concerned (Landemore, 2017). This mechanism traces its roots to Aristotle and Hubermas (Ercan, 2014). Some contemporary writers on this issue have been James Fishkin, Joshua Cohen, etc.

An additional conceptual framework within the realm of political theory is that of agonism, or more specifically, democratic agonism. Agonism, derived from the Greek term *'agon,'* meaning "struggle," is a theoretical perspective in politics and social studies that highlights the constructive aspects of certain forms of conflict. This theory recognizes the enduring presence of conflicts within the political domain, yet it seeks to illustrate how these conflicts can be navigated constructively. Proponents of agonistic theory place significant emphasis on the role that conflict plays within democratic systems. The variant of democratic theory incorporating this agonistic viewpoint is termed agonistic pluralism, which essentially explores the dynamics of diversity and contention in a democratic setup.

Agonistic models of democracy have three elements; according to Wenman, one is constitutive pluralism. The absence of a universal measure of adjudicating between conflicting political values. Second, the tragic view of the world. According to agonists, the world has no place for "hope of final redemption from suffering and strife"; therefore, political conflicts will continue to exist (Wenman, 2013). Third, there is a belief in the value of conflict.

"In a democratic polity, conflicts and confrontations, far from being a sign of imperfections, indicate that democracy is alive and inhabited by pluralism" (Mouffe, 2000). Among the leading writers on agonism are Chatel Mouffe, Samuel Chambers, Bonnie Honig, and William E. Connolly.

With both deliberative and agonistic models of democracy, the quality of our democratic dispensation is enhanced, although there are numerous critiques of both. Among the critiques of deliberative mechanisms is that they are costly and time-consuming. Those good in rhetoric and oratory will have their way against those fairly weak. There is also the issue of how to reach a consensus since consensus is far more desirable than majoritarian voting. Two main critiques of agonism are the lack of clarity on how and the avenue for transforming antagonism into an agonism, as it is the main agenda of agonism. Second, because agonism is seen as a competitive theory with the deliberative model, it is difficult to comprehend the differences between the two since it relies on the same or similar methods, like the idea of rationalization, etc.

7. Refining models and the idea of democracy in opposition to people

Deliberative and agonism must be considered complementary, mutually dependent, and not competitive, and "a properly understood agonism requires the use of deliberative skills but also that even a strongly deliberative politics could not be completely exempt from some of the consequences of agonism" (Ballaci, 2019). In viewing conflict as a necessary evil for refining our democracies, as agonism posits, we can only deliberate on these contentious issues among ourselves and refrain from resorting to violence. Because the debate, deliberation, etc., comes with sincerity (in the case of a deliberative model) in discoursing, open to changing minds and our minds being changed, and listening to the other side of the argument, there is room for everyone to exist and flourish peacefully. The majority in the state become those with better arguments and solutions and not just the majoritarians based on loyalty to an affiliation or identity.

With both models, our affinity towards identifying as group members based on color, race, etc., will wane gradually. Because there will be room for voicing out our opinions on issues, consensus will be built on arguments, ideas, and solutions that are the best. Policies are thus backed by deliberated sound argumentations and ideas by all and not just voted for by the majority who gets away with anything. The majority of these models are the group with sound ideas. This group is not created based on affiliations but by diverse individuals with bright ideas and solutions. (Of course, this only works when the power of reason trumps our affinity for being part of our affiliation).

Instead of merely voting on issues as they happen during local decision-making, deliberation could enhance the quality of decision-making. Town hall meetings could be replaced with deliberation meetings at the local level. Should public schools be allowed to teach pupils about new research in gender studies? This could be an issue of deliberation that the local community could engage in to reach a consensus. The most beneficial feature of the deliberative and agonistic mechanism is that it allows discussion instead of violence and authoritarianism. It furthers the cause of bonding among citizens of a state (commonwealth). This is, at once, the single most important strategy to break the vice of the tyranny of the majority that opposes a section of people. In other words, for democracy to work for the people instead of against them, this mechanism could be a vital starting point.

8. Conclusion

As was clear throughout the paper, when democracy is left alone, it malfunctions. Efforts must be made constantly and consistently to refine and correct the flaws that the democratic dispensation might show. Democracy can always work against the interest of the general will of the people, especially seen in countries where ethnic differences and their disturbing consequences abound and are weaponized in political dispensation. Ultimately, the issue of democracy working against "people" is a major concern noted in numerous countries and historical periods. While Lebanon has a consociational democracy based on religious connections, which has exacerbated sectarianism in the country, the United States has a legacy of Jim Crow laws that have disenfranchised and mistreated black people for some time. The notion of the tyranny of the majority, developed by Alexis Tocqueville, stresses the hazards of the majority's inclinations and aspirations leading to oppression and injustice, which is still applicable in today's democratic society. The examples in this essay show how democracy can be utilized by the majority to oppress the minority, raising crucial questions regarding the true meaning and practice of democracy. Refining democracy involves integrating deliberative and agonistic models. Deliberative democracy, focusing on consensus and inclusive dialogue, addresses the need for deeper citizen engagement in decision-making. Agonistic democracy, recognizing the constructive role of conflict and pluralism, adds a dynamic dimension to democratic discourse. Despite facing critiques such as efficiency concerns and the complexity of managing constructive conflict,

both approaches are crucial for the ongoing evolution and strengthening of democratic systems. Moreover, they underscore the complexity of governance and the necessity of continuous dialogue and adaptation to pursue a more inclusive, responsive, and effective democracy. The journey towards perfecting democracy is ongoing, and it requires a blend of theoretical understanding and practical application, always to address the evolving needs and challenges of societies.

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