

Social grounds for democracy

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In the interval between ancient Greece and advent of capitalism, democracy was somehow absent from the political scene and it reappeared only in recent times as a result of antagonism against the absolute monarchic rule in Europe. The return of democracy to political scene of societies and its representation along with capitalism and evolving liberalism through the 17th and 18th centuries gave it a new meaning. Liberalism was based on recognition of free individual choice, and the materialising of this principle was through its emphasis on democracy. Even today, the liberal perception prevails over democracy, despite the fact that it has encountered conceptual changes over time.

These political changes of the 20th century caused the spread of democracy from the West to other parts of the world, although there were no democratic traditions in those parts. Today, democracy is a dominant concept and we can rarely find a political system which is not engaged with democracy. Nevertheless, the only common item of such systems with democracy is the dominant theme which prevail the perception of democracy.

Finding multiple meanings for democracy is not strange. That is the direct result of basic theoretical changes in political science and presentation of modern definitions for main changes associated with democracy, which are people, power and government. Today, it is not possible to understand 'people' in an Athena democracy description. In other word, the modern and classic definitions of the term 'people' are different both qualitatively and quantitatively.

But what differentiate ancient democracy from the modern one are social conditions, political structures, social organizations, expansion and complexity of systems, variety of structures and, most important of all, divisions of social classes in modern societies.

Democracy with its new meaning has been the product of the French Revolution and its theoretical and political consequences. The thoughtful founders and political philosophers at that time, such as Montesquieu, John Jacques Rousseau and Alexis Detouquille, revived the forgotten tradition by referring to and reviewing ancient democracies, and the said tradition changed into a modern meaning in the field of European political changes. Therefore, European societies, due to Athena political traditions and heritage, once again emerged as the basis for democracy, although that took a long time.

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Political involvement and its characteristics and causes have been among the core and principal subjects of political science. Throughout time, since the very beginning of the formation of human communities and civilizations, the minds of many thoughtful and wisdom-seeking people, and all who were interested in their own fate as well as the future of their political society, have been engaged in these issues.

Looking for the roots of such issues, addresses many basic and elementary concepts and terminology discussed in political science, including governance and government – in their traditional and classic sense – political reigns and systems and their kind and type, the role of social forces in political life, sociological schools and models and, finally, issues like political development. Furthermore, the core concept of the present discussion is, inevitably, political power.

Anyway, what is actually furnished in this research is a review of historical development of the idea of political involvement in the West, the cultural realm where the idea appeared first, and the way it developed within the present political systems of this realm; study of the limits and shortages; and also a comparison between the idea and reality.

In general, since we mainly try to draw the curve for the idea of political involvement and its developments, the issues discussed cannot be limited to a specific period of time. But the scope of the study includes the main and best known democratic political systems, which constitute the origin of the idea.

Theoretical basis of the research

The key question is: How did the formation of the prevailing models of political involvement proceed in democratic systems?

Consequently, the following questions will be addressed:

1. What was the process of growth and development of political involvement idea in the social and political history of the West?
2. What is a democratic political system? What are its characteristics and methods, and what are the accepted criteria for their evaluation?
3. What does political involvement mean? What are its prevailing patterns, and what relationship does it have with political development?
4. How is democracy evaluated in recent political theories and approaches?

Assumptions

1. In the West, political involvement fostered from historical roots.

2. In reality, political involvement has been visualized relatively.
3. Since democracy is an abstract concept, different approaches reveal different objective perceptions of that.

Presumptions

1. The original pattern of political involvement has been formed in the context of numerous historical developments affected by different structural, cultural, economic and social factors.
2. The best known aspect of a democratic political system is the presence of an accessible mechanism for change in political power and the possibility of placing a part of civil society in government.
3. Realization and visualization of political involvement in society is one of the main criteria for evaluating the level of political development in any political unit.
4. Regarding the norms of civil societies, political involvement fluctuates between applications and legislation.

Variables

In discussions and examinations of this study, political participation will be regarded as a dependant variable, and numerous historical developments will be considered as independent variables.

Methodology of the Study: This research deals with the subject according to the historical analysis method and theoretical deduction.

Economic grounds for growth of democracy in Western countries: compromise between liberalism & democracy

Democracy in the past (before the French Revolution) meant the reign of ordinary people. That is, the greatest governing power of the social class which was the deprived class. Therefore, all literate persons, owners and those who appreciated civilization were hateful of democracy. Plato rejected democracy in the 5th century B.C., and similarly in the 17th century Cromwell also rejected it. Even during the Civil War in England, those Cromwell leftist unions (Levellers) which were separated from Cromwell due to their have voting rights, rejected democracy. They could not even imagine that the voting right would be given to two-third of the country's population who lived off charity or were wage-earners or both. The members of this class depended upon others without any possibility to consider any political role or effect for themselves. Even John Stuart Mill, who was the main propagandist of liberalism in the 19th century, proposed a voting system in which there would not be a maximum and effective role of the working class.¹

In present liberal democrat governments, there would not be any acceptance of democracy without the creation of a liberal base. All liberal democratic

governments which we are familiar with today, at first changed into liberal and in the next stage into democratic ones. On the other hand, before democracy entered the Western world, each given society and its government were considered liberal. The liberal government did not lose its basic nature by accepting people into the partial competitive system. It opened the politico-economic competitive way for those who had been trained in competitive market. The liberal government maintained its logic and did not destroy itself. Rather, it but enforced itself and, in fact, by making liberalism democratic, liberalized democracy.

1: From the city-state era to the Middle Ages

A. Ancient Greece & its political institutions prior to the establishment of the first city-state

The most glorious era of the Greek civilization is known to have been between the 4th and 6th century, BC. This is the period in which the Greeks' genius and great talents reached their highest levels and the achievements of the civilization of ancient Greece conquered the world. The 7th century was a period of great changes in the "City State" of Greece. The main reason for these changes was the development of business and foreign trade by the Greeks.²

Eventually, at the end of the 6th century, especially with the help of Spartans (in that period of time Sparta was the best city in ancient Greece), some compromise was made between the old and the new social classes which were deeply divided as the result of changes. The totalitarian regime, or as the Greeks used to call it "Tirani", which had formed as the result of the wealth distribution, was abolished. That led to the creation of the famous "City State" in Greece. The governmental establishments that Solon created for the Athena Citizens could be considered as the first democratic regime of its own kind.

B. Athena's democratic government & the citizen's participation

To discuss how people participated in political affairs of the City-State of Athena, one should only understand the concept of "Citizen" and its legal entity. After abolishment of the council of elderly, which was the main foundation of the government, the new council of citizens was formed. The main function of this newly formed council (in which all citizens participated) was enactment of laws, appointment of missionaries for public duties, declaration of war and to enter into agreement with other Greek cities.

The principles used by the democratic government of Athena were as follow:³

- 1- Each citizen could rule.
- 2- Direct participation of citizens in judicial and legislative affairs.

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- 3- The authority and power of the government centred in the citizen's council.
- 4- The citizenship and the right to vote limited to men of over 20 years of age.
- 5- The scope of government power and authority comprise all public affairs.
- 6- No special privileges would distinguish officials from ordinary people.
- 7- In general, the selection method of the candidates for official positions consisted of direct selection, drawing lots and rotation of official positions.
- 8- The period of holding official positions was short and equal for all candidates.
- 9- The economy based on slavery was such that citizens had free time to perform public duties.
- 10- Deprivation of women from citizenship and political rights (i.e., the right to vote) provided more time for men to perform their public duties.

In general, the distinct characteristics of the City State of Athena were its unity, solidarity, participation and its limited citizenship system (political freedom). The citizens participated not only in activities such as running governmental affairs, military service, law enactment, judicial services, religious ceremonies and festivals, but also had the duty of supervising and controlling the majority of people who could not participate in government.⁴

C. Decline of Athena's golden era & fall of the city-state

In 431 BC, when Athena was at its peak of its power, Sparta and its allies in the Peloponnesian unions started a war against Athena in the fear that the balance of power was tilting in favour of Athena. After a series of shaky and unstable peace and compromises as well as defeats and victories, this long-lasting war ended with defeat of Athena in 404. The downfall and decline of the golden era in Athena, which was the origin of Greek's spirituality and pioneer in philosophy and political ideas, was thus caused by the Spartan. As a result of attrition caused by these wars, the Greek civilization slowly became weak until finally it transmuted in Roman Empire in 146 BC. Ancient Greece lost all its sovereignty and independence, and then it was the Roman Empire that emerged as the sole heir to Western civilization.

D. Views of Aristotle & Plato on democracy & citizens' participation in government

He categorized political systems into "Timarchy", "Oligarchy", "Tyranny" and "Democracy", and provided an example for each. What he meant by Timarchy had the same properties that the Spartan society possessed in which whatever the individuals possessed was transmuted in patriotic life and they sacrificed everything for their country. He described Oligarchy as a government

in which power was in the hands of a small minority, and wealth was a symbol of political influence and power. On Tyranny, he held the opinion that this kind of regime or government was the product of agitation and conflict caused by the metamorphosis of democracy. In the opinion of Plato, the totalitarian and tyrant rulers were initially national figures, but as an excuse to counter anarchy and quell social disorder, they took full and exclusive control of power and followed the path of totalitarianism.

Aristotle, in his classification of political systems, considered Democracy as a system that did not seek prosperity and well being of people. But, he believed that democracy, as a tool for the rule of majority, was much better than dictatorship. In his opinion, the people might individually lack knowledge and merit, but as a group they could render better and fair judgement on different issues in comparison to single individuals.

Aristotle admitted that some people are against such an idea and for talk about the necessity of skills and knowledge and experience in the affairs of government. These people say that just as only the physicians should prescribe medicine, the running of the daily life of government and country should be handed over to the politicians. For this purpose, the ordinary people must not have the right to select their own rulers, but the selection of government and rulers should be the responsibility of the experts.

From the Middle Ages to the age of democratic revolutions

A. Political participation in the Middle Ages

In the 5th century, the German emigrants inflicted the final blow to the eroded body of the Western Roman Empire and caused its overthrow and downfall. With the downfall and destruction of the Western Roman Empire, its entire territory, which included vast part of Europe, fragmented into numerous small countries; and feudal system was established throughout Europe. Because of increased racial and ethnic disputes, the possibility of bloody battles and wars between these territories enhanced. The Roman Catholic Church was a uniting force throughout the Christian countries. For this reason and for the lack of separate sovereignty among these countries, the expansion of the Church's domination over the whole of Europe took place with ease.

Since all Europeans were considered as one nation of Christianity, any discussion about citizenship rights as well as political and fundamental rights of people had no meaning whatsoever. No part of mankind was considered noble and no political sovereignty originated from the will of people existing as a political unit.

B. European Renaissance & vigilantism

In moving towards Renaissance, the European society gradually woke up from sleep and neglect of the Middle Ages and many changes took place in the social life of the Europeans. One of the distinct characteristics of modern civilization was the tendency to scientific identification of issues and phenomena in the field of humanities and experimental science. Mankind has this ability in itself to recognize and identify the environment in its true sense and to bring it, more than ever, under its own will and command. Renaissance caused considerable changes in the European society, and slowly, science, techniques, politics, philosophy, art and literature found new dimensions and meanings. The scientific approach flourished, and it became evident that without implementing the scientific approach, arriving at truth about everything would be impossible.⁵

Anyhow, what is certain is that between the end of the 15th century and the middle of the 16th, European art, literature and industry flourished considerably. This flourishing which occurred in the field of literature, industry and art is called Renaissance, and its main aim was to return to the era of art and literature. The origin of the Renaissance was Italy from where it spread to other parts of Europe.

Here we would like to mention the new thinking of the modern era called Humanism because one of the most important factors in the appearance of Renaissance was the rise of Humanism in Europe. In Humanism, nobility is given only to the human and he is considered as the legislator, executioner of law and the final arbitrator. A humanistic human is the one who claims to be a god and does not recognize any rules and laws except the one he prefers. The new thinking of the new era of Humanism in fact creates a new human who, by rejecting the old values, starts to create and innovate new and unique values. These values would distinguish the position and status of the human of the modern era and granting him every right and privilege.⁶

C. The religious movement & its political & cultural consequences

In the medieval age, whatever was taught to the others by the Church were the sciences related to the Church. The Scholastic was the head of them all. The Church officials held that religion and faith took priority over the common sense. When religious reform started, it spread among those princes who were looking for freedom and wished to be released from the Church and its empire's domination and influence.⁷

1. The emergence of the Protestant movement within Christianity

Luther, after setting forth many questions regarding the legitimacy of the Church's actions, published a book in 1530 in which he openly went to war with the Church. He proposed that theocracy (God's rule) is inside the people and thus Pope's claim that he rules over the people on behalf of the Lord is false. He concluded that any mediator between the human being and the God should be removed. Gradually, as Luther's thoughts

and proposals became logical, his followers increased in number. In 1529, the Pope established a council that reached certain decisions against Luther's followers. Luther's followers objected to these decisions and thus they are called Protestants.

Calvin was a fanatic Protestant who formulated rules and principles of Christianity. In 1536, he moved to Geneva, where the religious reforms were already accepted, and made this city the centre of the Protestants. According to Max. Weber, Protestantism in general and Calvinism in particular represent the essence and basis of today's capitalism. Calvinism instructed the people that if they acquired wealth, that should be considered as a gift from God; and after paying religious taxes, to take full control of it. In the Protestant belief, becoming rich and accumulating enormous wealth are considered signs of salvation of individuals. Max Weber described that in detail.⁸

2. *The emergence of national churches*

As a result of the promotion and development of new ideas and thoughts, other movements also began. When the Pope's and Roman Church's relations with the entire Christian society weakened, the path for establishment of national churches opened and that was considered as a very important and great move in the history of Europe. The establishment of a national church in any country helped the political independence of that country.

3. *Religious wars & the emergence of national governments*

Upon the emergence of the movement for religious reform up to the Augsburg peace in 1555, gradually Europe divided into two wings: ideological and religious. That meant that Catholics and Protestants confronted each other. The Augsburg peace was concluded following fruitless attempts of Carol Quintal, the emperor of German-Rome. The purpose of the agreement was to prevent the expansion and promotion of Protestantism in Europe. Based on that, it was agreed that each prince could, within the sphere of his rule, promote any religion he wished. Thus, in the Augsburg peace accord, the division of Europe into two blocks, Catholic and Protestant, became official.

But this accord proved to be a preface to religious wars that involved entire Europe. In general, the religious wars between the Catholics and Protestants can be divided into two eras: one religious civil war and the other one international religious war or 30-year-war which lasted from 1618 to 1648. What is considered important from axial discussion point of view of this thesis is that in both periods we confront the concept of the nation-state or national governments. The old international structure

was collapsing, and in its place, a new structure was emerging which was based on new political units enjoying political independence and freely exercising sovereignty within their respective territories.

D. Feudalism & its role in the formulation of the principle

Upon the collapse of the centralized political system of the Roman Empire and after a period of conflict and turmoil, the agricultural society emerged in Europe. The people now looked for ways of governing so as to defend themselves in that chaotic world. Individuals and especially farmers were looking for someone who could defend them. When they found the protector, the individuals and farmers in exchange for protection started supplying agricultural and other products to their protector. They would even deprive themselves of ownership of their lands in order to take advantage of tenant rights. In analyzing the feudalism of those days, it should be said that the Western feudalism possessed special features which distinguished it from other social features and provided the ground for democratic growth and expansion. The best feature was the growth of the concept of immunity of social groups or individuals against the totalitarian power of leaders as well as the growth of the concept of the right to resist the oppressor.

E. The role of capitalism & the middle class in setting up of the new order

New geographical exploitations, the collapse of economic relations of the feudal era, the establishment of national churches which were no longer under the domination of Rome, the scientific revolution which caused many changes in different aspects of human thought, different technical inventions which led to an increase in wealth and growth of population, the invention of the printing press which extended the range of cultural promotion further and, finally, the combination and unity of earlier societies and centres which had no boundaries and their conversion into independent countries with specified boundaries – all were factors that caused the emergence of new political views.

Following three centuries of conflict and war, the Europeans created a society which was new to those who had experienced the Middle Ages. The foundation of new society was the rise of a new theory on relations between individuals. It was observed that following the emergence of a new society and for full utilization of new production processes, none of the old institutions and ideas was of any use. In the late 14th century, the thinking style of capitalism penetrated considerably in the minds of individuals. As a result, wealth collection and becoming rich became the main motivation for the activities of mankind. Until the 16th century, the economic motivations were overshadowed by church ethics, but after this

period people realized that the church instructions regarding economic relations would create obstacles in full utilization of production sources.

Gradually, with the development and expansion of capitalism, which enjoyed more scope for action and manoeuvre under the influence of the religious reform movement, these theories and ideas were set aside. The theory of ownership by society was replaced by the theory of individual ownership. The belief in first acquiring God's blessing in transactions was replaced by the belief that any transaction which possessed profit would have God's blessing. The principle was accepted that if one had more wealth and money, he could better provide and secure his own comfort and needs. The predominance of this theory in society changed people's thoughts like a revolutionary force.

Briefly, in justifying the reasons for victory of capitalism, we should state that the people within old principles and institutions were not able to benefit completely from production capacity. They considered the present political system as the main obstacle in acquiring huge wealth. Thus, with the growth of the capitalist view and economic liberalism, political liberalism started in order to free the producer from the regulations that might impose limitations on him and put obstacles on the way of full utilization of production tools. Finally, economical liberalism opened the way to the rise of the individualistic view, and that the welfare of society would only be possible through the freedom of individual innovations and actions.⁹

The ideal and the aim of liberalism were security. But, the security of the rich was in mind. In fact, liberalism had a harsh and cruel attitude towards the poor. What it meant by people's interest was nothing but the interest of the capitalists and businessmen. Although liberalism accepted free elections and public opinion, as a result of its belief in political right of the owner, this right did not extend to all social classes.¹⁰

F. The special role of the bourgeoisie in political participation

In the period between reform and the French Revolution, a new social class gained the right to participate in government. This new social class, in its attempt to attain power, removed some obstacles. This new class recognized the privileges, except for religion, throughout the social arena as the basis and the root of the social order. It related the right and the ownership to each other and replaced the class tradition with social conventions and called for expansion of individual freedom in order to facilitate the business far from the government bounds. This class is called the bourgeoisie.¹¹

With the growth of business and expansion of commercial cities in Europe, the bourgeoisie emerged as the symbol of rationality and

improvement. In general, from the Western historical changes point of view, the bourgeoisie had an important role in the business boom, establishment of new forms of politico-administrative institutions, rise of nationalism and national sovereignty and the conflict between the church and the state, in favour of setting up totalitarian and absolute rule. In the period between the decline of feudalism and rising of democratic governments, called the age of absolute monarchy, the kings were able to totally destroy and crush big land owners and the feudal to gain independent power.

That happened as a result of their coalition with the bourgeoisie. This social class was more eager for peace and order in society than any other social classes. From the new bourgeoisie point of view, a centralized and strong government was the best guarantee for stability and durability of business and industry as well as promising welfare and prosperity. The monarchs were well aware of the advantages of coalition with merchants and thus their law and regulations were always in favour of the bourgeoisie. The stronger was the bourgeoisie, the stronger was the power of government. The bourgeoisie had a deep respect for the government. It was a clever and well-informed partner, knew very well that for accomplishing its goals it should show some courtesy towards the government. The bourgeoisie would always ask for concessions in a very special and calm manner, and its demands were based on the logic that they were for the good of the people and the government.

It must be said that the role of the middle class and the bourgeois in setting up a democratic society in the West was very important. The actions of the middle class and bourgeois in a country such as France or England were totally different. This difference was in time as well as the scope of actions including their climb power.

G. The intellectual movement & its role in setting up of people's sovereignty

Jean Bodin stated: “the most important characteristic which separates the new stage of political philosophy from the old one in the West, is its emphasis on Sovereignty.”

The other intellectuals who were involved in the theory of social contract are Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and J.J. Rousseau. These individuals have expressed the revolutionary concept of social contract. In general, the theory of social contract has played an important role in the new political theory. The basis of this theory is on the fact that, prior to the formation of government; mankind lived in the state of nature. Some analysts consider the state of nature as a precondition to socialization and others consider it as a precondition to politicizing.

Anyhow, it is a condition prior to the formation of the government institution. In this state, no political power existed and it was only the law of nature which was responsible for determining a human being's actions and behaviors. Eventually, mankind in the state of nature decided to set up a civil society based on a social contract. After that, the law of nature was replaced by the man-made law which was enforced by the political authority.¹²

MONTESQUIEU: He published the "Spirit of Laws" in 1748. This book was the main tool for promoting the liberalism thought. In general, he considered physical, ethical or social factors as the spirit of laws. He considered these factors as being effective in the approval of laws and for the relations which generally existed between laws. The relations as they existed between religion and traditions and customs, the climate and manner in which the government was formed would all create a framework for society that the law must adapt itself to. For classification of government, he distinguished three forms: 1- republic, 2- monarchy, and 3- absolute government.

H. The age of democratic revolutions

The occurrence of democratic revolutions in Europe was itself the result of the war and conflicts between traditional and modern forces. These forces encountered each other as the result of these developments and, finally, with the victory of new forces over the old ones, the government would appear as the political institution which carried the will of the people. In view of the importance and greatness of both the British and the French Revolutions we shall discuss the two in detail. They played a key and major role in the developments of the new era and, at the end, we shall briefly discuss some aspects of the American Revolution.

1. The British Revolution & its role in the generalization of political participation

In this period, there was no strong and centralized government in England, and the aristocratic families were at war and conflict with each other. These wars and conflicts ended with the victory of one of the aristocratic families, the Tudors, which captured power from 1480 until 1600. The most important characteristics of the Tudor era were that they tried to establish relative stability in the country through cracking down on major feudal families. The Revolution and Civil War in England had other reasons; the religious reason goes back to the era of the Queen Elizabeth the first.

During her reign, because of business growth, prosperity, and increase in the wealth of people and aggravation of class differences, the

ethical concept of society declined. Meanwhile, some followers of the Protestant religion, in reaction to the prevalence of lewdness, created a movement called Puritan or virtuous. Their purpose for setting up this movement was on one hand to rescue the Church of England from any corruption, as it was affiliated with the court of Britain, and on the other hand, to encourage the people to improve their behaviour and attitude. In the Charles era, the political crisis caused the advancement of this movement because Charles reacted angrily to this movement and supported the Church of England. As a result, the religious opponents of Charles united with his political opponents and the Revolution of anti-monarchy became known as the Revolution of the Puritan.¹³

As mentioned by Barrington Moore, “the dictatorship and tyranny faced a major obstacle from the very beginning in England. The reason for this was that the aristocratic land-owners had a spirit of making money through business.” He believes that in England the aristocratic land-owners were inclined toward the agricultural business and for this reason their dependency toward the Court was diminished. Thus, the aristocratic business lovers and agricultural land owners, who were seeking to sell their products and make money from it, prevented the dictatorship of Stuart.¹⁴

These people, and the best known among them was Oliver Cromwell who later became the leader of the Revolution, stated that the Court has no right to interfere in the people’s ownership rights (middle classes) and imposition of taxes, and that preventing the expansion of the aristocrats’ lands was contrary to the people’s right to ownership. This conflict was the beginning of British Revolution in which the fight was between the big aristocrats, peasants, and the Court against the aristocrats and the merchants of the middle class. Gradually, Oliver Cromwell emerged as the distinguished representative of the revolutionary forces.

By escalation of the differences and conflicts between these two classes, the royalist army and the independent army of aristocrats under the leadership of Cromwell lined up against each other. Finally, the royalist army was defeated and Cromwell took control of power. The monarchy system changed and the king was executed, and a new era started the rule of the virtuous under the leadership of Cromwell.¹⁵

After the victory of the virtuous under the leadership of Cromwell in 1642, like Charles he also dissolved parliament and, in putting soldiers across the country, he followed the same dictatorship as before. Therefore, upon his death and after a short period of republic, people restored the monarchy and Charles the Second, son of the late Charles, became the king of England. This period is called Restoration. Charles the Second followed the path of his father. During the reign of James the

Second, who became king after Charles the Second, dictatorship reached its peak. People revolted and chose William of Orange, the son-in-law of James the Second, as the new king.

This event happened in 1688 and is known as the Glorious Revolution of Britain. The British parliament permanently dominated over the King and the Court.¹⁶ Thus, in 1688, constitutional monarchy was established in Britain, and the Court lost all their authority in favour of parliament and became a formal and ceremonial institution. After the 1688 revolution, the constitutional monarchy played a ceremonial role and the actual power was transferred to parliament or the House of Common.¹⁷

The alliance between the bourgeoisie and the business type of aristocrats meant cooperation between the upper class and rural people, as the result of which the ground for emergence of parliamentary democracy was prepared. This alliance for freedom was a unique event in comparison with other parts of Europe.¹⁸ The democratic revolution in England without a doubt has been the first step on installing democratic institutions in the history of Europe after middle centuries. This revolution removed all bounds and obstacles from the path of democracy and capitalist growth in this country and inspired by far the greatest social and political revolution in Europe, The French Revolution.

2. *The French Revolution or the commencement of a new era of political history in Europe*

Some may imagine that the French Revolution suddenly started in 1789 and ended promptly. But the truth is that the seed of this revolution was spread long before, and the occurrence of a chain of events caused a huge explosion in France in 1789. Turmoil and excitement, which followed, continued for half a century, until 1848. So many forces were involved in bringing about the revolution that, intentionally or otherwise, it caused a new era in political participation to begin at institutes affiliated with the power sphere and the government.

In reviewing the causes of the French Revolution, we should refer to various factors such as conflicts between the king and parliament, the inter-class conflicts and discontent of various social classes, imposition of taxes and external wars. The truth is that classification of events during the French Revolution is an impossible task because all these events are chained with each other.

In fact, the French revolution was the product of differences and conflicts that existed between these classes. The compromise and changes that took place between these classes, especially the aristocrats

and the bourgeoisie, formed the main framework of political life in a period of the French history. Before that, the same had happened in Britain. Therefore, the important issue here is to explain the special relationship that existed between the aristocratic landowners and the bourgeoisie, which led to the appearance of an open and democratic society in France.¹⁹

With regard to the aristocratic land owners, we must state that the formation of commercial agriculture caused the dissolution of the rural (peasants) society and led to their transformation to other groups, especially that of city workers. With the dissolution of the peasant society, the aristocrats, who heavily depended on their exploitation source of the peasants, also weakened. The weakening of the aristocratic landowners was the result of the coalition between the court and the bourgeoisie. As mentioned earlier, by imposing heavy taxes on the peasants and interfering in the ownership rights of the people, the court had also turned the aristocrats against itself and the aristocrats became a revolutionary force who asked for a change in the situation.

At this stage, the bourgeoisie had no part in encountering the aristocrats and it was working against the aristocrats indirectly and through provoking the other revolutionary forces. But in the next stage the bourgeoisie would directly encounter the aristocrats and would revolt against those who were guarding the old traditional thinking in order to climb to power. The abolition of the feudalism attempt to burn the root of the aristocrats and the expansion of the city structures and classes, especially through attracting the peasants and villagers to the cities and transforming them into metropolitan productive forces, laid down the foundation for bourgeoisie democracy or capitalist democracy in France.

In general, the classical and bourgeoisie revolutions such as those which happened in France, Britain and America were considered as bloody developments for political change which eventually prepared the ground for the participation of all social classes in the political system. These revolutions eliminated six major institutions of old and traditional society, in order to reach the above goal. These institutions were as follows:

- 1- Feudal exploitation.
- 2- The trade union system.
- 3- Monopoly and concession system of Middle Ages.
- 4- Absolute monarchy.
- 5- Aristocratic land owners.
- 6- Religious institutions.²⁰

The main elements of the democratic system and the bourgeoisie; in other words, the bourgeoisie ideology; also consisted of six elements:

- 1- The right to vote.
- 2- Representation in the lawmaking assembly.
- 3- The existence of rationalistic system,
- 4- Justice for all.
- 5- The security of private ownership and removing its traditional limitations.
- 6- Freedom of speech and the right to hold meetings and freedom of religion.²¹

One can claim that the political structure of the liberal government was the end result of those revolutions. The ideology of the middle class and those capitalists who now by applying new industrial techniques made mass production, was in fact the ideology of the liberal government so they would be free in their economical activities.²²

After the 1848 Revolution, the republic once again being established in France with a new constitution called the secondary declaration of human rights and citizens' rights. This constitution recognized the right to vote for all Frenchmen over 21 years old. This was the first time after the decline of the city states of ancient Greece that the right to vote for all people was recognized and in this way the foundation of the democratic political system was laid down in a form of written constitution and for the first time extended political participation.²³ Although a democratic constitution was written in America long before France, the events that distinguish the development process in France from America were the hardship that the people of France tolerated for gaining their primary and natural rights. Perhaps, they struggled for these rights for more than one century. For this reason, it is called "The Great French Revolution".

3. *The Revolution & Civil War in USA*

About the development that took place in America in 1774 and was called Revolution, it must be said that not every one agrees to apply this term to the developments of the late 18th century. In this regard, Robert Palmer believes that the American Revolution was a political movement which had a tendency toward freedom, unity and power, and many of the ideas and opinions involved in it were not purely American.²⁴ In his opinion, the Americans cannot claim that they were the only ones who had known thoughts about establishing the government through a social

contract or by the consent of the people or to have known about national sovereignty and political representation of people or the separation of powers.

These ideas and opinions were evident and well known in Europe.²⁵ However, what is evident and obvious is that the America Revolution was a conflict between the business interests of Britain and the U.S. that did not contribute to fundamental changes in the structure of society. The main function of the revolutionary forces in that period was to establish political unity among the 13 British colonial states and to separate them from the motherland.²⁶

A. Democracy as the backbone of dialogue for political participation

After the democratic revolutions and generalization of citizenship concept there was no one else but the citizen to manage his own and other citizens' affairs. In this way, a system based on the rule of citizens or democracy was founded in the West. The implementation of this theory faced some difficulties in practice in such a way that resolving them took about one full century. It means the 19th century overshadowed the social and political life in Europe and America. The issues involved here were how to construct a bridge between this ideology that the concept of sovereignty belonging only to the people on one hand, and impracticality of the people's rule on the other hand in a way not to damage the individualistic philosophy that is considered to be the main foundation of democracy, and to solve the contradiction which exists between collective sovereignty and individual freedom. That was the beginning of the attempts which finally in theory and practice led to the establishment of Western democracy and resulted in the rise of the special mechanism of this democracy.²⁷

B. Definition of democracy

The term democracy is derived from the Greek work 'Democratia' in which the prefix 'demos' means people and 'kratein' people.²⁸ Therefore, democracy means the rule of people or people's government. In general, like other sociological phenomenon, the word democracy is interpretable and therefore a common ground and consensus does not exist about it. But the simplest definition of democracy is the one derived from the word democracy. From the historical point of view, as we mentioned in section one, the initial model of democracy dated back to political life in Athena (800 to 500 BC.). From this point of view, democracy considered as a

training tool for the citizens and governmental positions was open to everyone and always.²⁹

Therefore, whatever else democracy might be, without doubt will always carry different forms of participation. In fact, the main characteristic of democracy is participation of people in making decisions for matters related to their fate and destiny.³⁰

C. The principles & basis of democracy

- 1- **INDIVIDUALISM:** This insight is rooted in the fact that the human being is the essence and foundation of all living things.
- 2- **FREEDOM:** The obvious characteristic of the western democracies is the mixture of liberalism and democracy that, on the one hand, is the common point of these different types of democratic systems, such as democracy of masses, and on the other hand, it causes a contradiction between public will and social and individual freedom.³¹
- 3- **EQUALITY:** This means to consider all citizens as equal before law and for them to enjoy equal rights. On the other hand, it means that every citizen has the same opportunity to run the affairs of society.³²
- 4- **LEGITIMACY:** The legitimacy of a political system means it is in accordance with accepted values of a society or, as Morris Dorjeh says: “adaptation of the regime with common accord is the basis of the relationship of political system with society.” Therefore, legitimacy has a direct relation with democracy. The establishment of the voting system, which has a long story, too, put this crisis behind. Granting the right of voting to masses was considered as the main foundation of democracy and guarantying its legitimacy.

D. Mechanisms & models for ensuring democracy

1. Mechanisms that make democracy practicable

REPRESENTATIVE REGIME: Because of the complexity of today’s society, direct rule by people and their participation in decision-making is not possible. Therefore, people have to choose representatives who would represent the will of people and to be the defenders of people’s interests. This solution shows the impracticability of direct democracy. The main debatable issue in the

representative regime is how much power these representatives would have and whether they are allowed to reflect only the client's view. If so, how would this representative be able to receive the view of each client and how would he be able to put these views together?³³

THE RULE OF MAJORITY AS REFLECTION OF PEOPLE WILL: ELECTIONS: Elections play three important roles in Western democracy: 1- choose rulers and decision makers at the national level; 2-determine the general and macro policies of a country; 3-grant or deprive legitimacy to or from public authorities such as the government.³⁴

2. *Mechanisms & models that guarantee equality & freedom*

PRINCIPLES OF POWER SEPARATION: Separation of powers is a method considered in Western democracy for preventing dictatorship and misuse of power. For the first time, Locke presented the idea of separation of powers and after that Montesquieu presented this idea as a political theory. Two fundamental laws (constitutions) in the Western world that were compiled in the 18th century, the U.S. constitution of 1787 and the French constitution of 1793, have emphasized separation of powers.

THE RULE OF LAW: In general, the rule of law is applied against individual dictatorship in which the leader would act with his subordinates in his own way and out of any legal framework would interfere in the private and public life of people.

E. Conventional models of democracy

Generally, democracies have different forms of classification. Here we shall present four common models of democracy and discuss their general conditions.

Polyarchy

Polyarchy exists in almost all of the Western countries and is based on representation. In general, this type of democracy includes: institutionalization of the alienation of participation for the purpose of making decisions about issues related to fate and destiny of people and society. David Held has summarized the main elements of this model of democracy and classified it as the competitive elitism model of democracy:³⁵

Competitive elitism democracy

Explanatory principles

- This is a method for selecting political elite who are competent and well qualified and possessing insight to make necessary decisions.
- An obstacle on the path of over ambitious political leader.

Main characteristics

- Parliamentary system of government with strong executive power.
- Competition between rival political parties and elite.
- Domination of political party's policy in parliament.
- Centralized political leadership.
- Bureaucracy of an independent administrative organization and well disciplined.
- Presence of practical and legal limitations before the effective range of political decision-makings.

General conditions

- Industrial society.
- Piece-by-piece account of political and social conflicts.
- Presence of the selectors with little knowledge or sentimental selectors.
- Existence of political culture which will tolerate difference in opinion.
- Emergence of the layer of technical experts and competent managers.
- Competition among governments for gaining power and superiority in the international system.

1. Pluralist democracy

Individuals like Bentley and Truman believe that the person per se cannot do much and only by becoming a member in various groups, either political parties or other groups, would he be able to express his view and to guard his interest. Group organizations by making connections with lobby will convey their views to the executive power or legislative assemblies or even to public opinion.³⁶ The following model shows an abstract of the positions of pluralistic democracy.³⁷

Collected democracy

Explanatory principles

- Save the government by minorities and in this way secure political freedom.
- An important obstacle to the growth of powerful groups and irresponsible government.

Main characteristics

- Citizenship right including one person one vote, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.
- Presence of a system for control and balance between executive and legislative powers, judiciary and administrative bureaucracy.
- Existence of a competitive election system with at least two parties.
- Extensive variety of similar groups which seek political influence.
- Mediation and arbitration of government between the requests.
- Highly participatory political culture.
- Presence of numerous influential groups and political programmes with the tendency toward trade union power.
- Government and its sections will advance their own interests.
- Statutory regulations in a texture of plural political culture with economical sources which act heterogeneously.

General conditions

- Different groups are involved in society and share power.
- Rich resources and different kinds of it dispersed among the population.
- There is an agreement in political methods, different policies, and the legitimacy of the political system.
- There is equilibrium between active and non-active citizens for political stability.
- Struggle of different groups for gaining power.
- Unequal participation in politics.

2. Participatory democracy

This kind of democracy is in fact a return to the direct democracy that existed in 4th and 5th centuries BC. But, to have democracy of the kind that existed in ancient Greece is something impossible in today's world. Therefore, the supporters of participatory democracy for the purpose of people's participation and the aim of having all members of society share in determining their own destiny and fate, have proposed methods such as non-centralization of power, disposal of power, social control, federalism and managing the affairs of each district by localism.

Today many people criticize this kind of democracy and the main reason for it is the simplicity of this kind of political participation in today's complex societies in which the public life is completely separated from the private life. Thus, participatory democracy will lack necessary efficiency to have interaction with public life.

3. Populist democracy

This is not seen in Western democracies other than a newly-formed democracy which does not have necessary support for setting up a democratic system. In this kind of democracy, the availability of a leader with charisma is a must. The supporters of this kind of government will have no objection to having a powerful central government, but for controlling the central government, will grant some kind of rights to the people. These rights will be granted via referendum and public vote.³⁸

F. Elitism & pluralism

Plurality and diversity of power centres in society is the main view of the pluralists. We have to look at the roots of theoretical models of today's pluralist in the theories of Realistic and Elitism of the beginning of 20th century. Realists and Elitism were expressing some ill feelings about democracy. These critics were Pareto, Mosca, and Michels. They stated that in political societies an elite or a special group would dominate society.³⁹ In their opinion, behind the democratic face of society, there are always a few groups of elite who form the ideological oligarchy and their members are in the waiting list for obtaining important positions in government.⁴⁰

With this view, one can say that democracy is merely a method for forming a political leadership which has nothing to do with its concepts of freedom, equality and rule of majority.⁴¹ The essence of democracy in this theory, i.e., pluralism of the elite and not active and mass participation, is the via media participation of the majority in political life. In this view, democracy means the presence of a few rivals in the political arena.

In the political society of the elite, there is rational and irrational behaviour. The struggle of the elite for gaining power is the rational part, and mobilization of masses for showing support the irrational and emotional part. Victory needs the masses be attracted and to be mobilized by different methods. In this way, the role of the people in is to give their consent, and the presence of disrupted majority will be considered as the precondition for continuation of democracy.⁴² In the elitism view, the plurality of the elite is the optimal aim of democracy and the concepts of democracy will be overlooked and the people will have no real participation but only through elections which will be held occasionally.⁴³

In the political sociology model of pluralism, there is a belief that in the modern society and with increase of complexity of social structure and the emergence of different elite, power will have the tendency to disperse. For this reason, the sources of power will be multiplied and will include wealth, social position, education, information, control over mass media, etc. In their

opinion, this plurality and multiplicity of the power sources will lead to the rise of different and rival elites.⁴⁴

In the view of Robert Dahl, who is the most famous political sociologist in pluralism, political power is a relation carefully assessed in which one party can perform an action in such a manner that it could control the reactions of the other side. He refers to the way political power is distributed in the contemporary capitalist world, especially the U.S.A., and seeks to prove that the pluralistic model is better than other models. In his opinion, the emergence of different elite groups will depend on industrial and economic development and also on the diversity of social structure.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that the elitism model is free of any valuable judgements, its ideology is against democracy, and it is free of any ideological attitudes in favour of democracy. But, logically, they are of the same kind and consider political power to rise from different sources. There is, however, difference in opinion about their concentration in the hand of one or more elite groups.⁴⁵

Theoretical discussion of political participation

A. Overall view of political participation

In this section, our main emphasize would be on political participation that can be considered as the main foundation of democracy. In the previous section we have seen that there is a common point in all definitions and that is participation of people in political decision making. Therefore, political participation is a more meaningful concept than the meaning of democracy. Additionally, there are only a few criteria which can measure the degree of political participation. From this point of view, the definition that can be expressed is relatively simpler than democracy.

In other words, it could be said that political participation means the continuous and free intervention of people within social groups and their participation in concerned political issues of their own society. Based on this special definition of political participation, one can say that the actual political participation is the participation that has legislative and establishment character. That means a kind of participation which is for setting up and establishing frameworks and organizations and not to be inside the framework which will have the executive aspect.⁴⁶ On this basis we can present two different models of political participation or in other words we can consider political participation as having two main forms. In the next section we shall discuss different kinds of political participation from this point of view.

B. Spontaneous political participation

This kind of participation refers to participation that is derived from within society and often is well organized. This participation takes place on the basis of high literacy, awareness and because of existence of a well-rooted and strong political culture. In this participation, individuals or groups gather with each other and follow the different interests and issues that they might have in society, and for reaching their aims, they might set up organizations, associations or institutions.⁴⁷

C. Mobilised political participation

This kind of participation, contrary to spontaneous political participation, has not risen from within society and has an artificial and mobilized form. In this kind of participation, governments and regimes will mobilize people to have political participation through provoking them.⁴⁸

In any political system there could be different degrees of political participation, but political participation in democratic regimes is different in nature from political participation in other political systems. The main reason for this difference should be seen in the process of formation of civil and non-civil societies that are in fact two different models of political participation. Before discussing these two societies, which is the main focus of discussion about political participation, it is necessary to discuss factors which are directly involved in the formation of civil or non-civil societies. It should be remembered that some of these reasons are related to political indifference and political participation. Generally, we divide these factors into four groups, which include:

- 1- Ideological reasons.
- 2- Historical and structural reasons.
- 3- Political and cultural reasons.
- 4- Social and economic reasons.

D. Political development & participation

In the opinion of Samuel Huntington, “by each degree that a political system tends to move from simplicity to complexity, from dependency to independency, from inflexibility to flexibility and from diversity to unity, in the same proportion the amount of political development of this system will increase.” According to this writer, the criteria for political development are complexity, independence, flexibility, unity, and pragmatism.

In general, Huntington assesses the concept of political development on the basis of industrialization, social mobilization, economic development, and political participation. He believes that since in the political development process demands for participation and newer role will appear, the political system must

have sufficient capacity and ability for changing the situation; otherwise, the system will face instability and anarchy and eventually political decline. It is possible that the response of society to such instabilities would appear in the form of revolution.

For evaluating and assessing the degrees of development of a system, without doubt we would need criteria and models in order to base our assessment for degree of development or non-development of a political system. But, what we should consider in the development process is the presence of different insights and cultures at world level. For this reason, some countries might find their own special way for development which is based on the current customs and cultures of their own society. Therefore, as mentioned before, it is not necessary for all countries to go through the same procedures and processes that the West has gone through or in other words to become Westernized. The fact is that we have a set of fixed principles that must be created in society so that we can call that society and country a developed country. Whenever this principle is applied in a society, values and customs of the concerned society being preserved and maintained, we can call that society a well-developed society.⁴⁹

The discussion about masses and civil society will make us familiar with the real and non-real models of political participation and will remind us that, whether informed or uninformed, political participation could be there in a political society. By thinking more about the concept of masses and civil society, while we become familiar with two clear and unclear models of political participation, we shall also realize that the tension between the power of social forces and governmental forces will affect the government structure.

E. Civil & mass society – an abstract of political participation

Civil society

In general, in defining civil society, one must say that today's civil society, as a term in social science, is referred in opposition to the government and to a section of the social relationship which is free of any political power interference and involves a set of institutions, organizations, associations and private and public parties.⁵⁰

These associations and organizations will act as a shield between individuals and the government. Since the individuals would not have any power before an organized government, through these institutes they could follow their interests and demands. These mediator organizations will play the adjusting role of government's power.⁵¹

The civil society has a very close relationship with pluralist society and in fact the developed civil society is an example of the pluralist society. In the pluralist society the social groups in the civil society act as a shield between the

government and masses which will prevent the fundamentalists to gain control of power and exert pressure on people. The pluralist system is a democratic system in which the groups will mobilize their power sources. In such a society, the groups which possess sufficient power source will have tendency towards politics and this will apply to the dispersed masses.

In fact, the complex networks of groups in the social relationship and the free competition between various sections of civil society will prevent the authorities from deceiving people, and group participation will replace individual participation in politics. In a civil society that is placed in the pluralist system, there is the possibility of power changing hands on the basis of democratic elections and that is because there is solidarity between groups and organizations. Between the government power structure and the civil society, there exists an organic relationship and thus in such society revolutions never happen in the real sense. The reason for this is that the possibility for revolutionary mobilization is nil.⁵² Political parties are the most conflict-generating forces with regard to civil society. With regard to their relationship with civil society, it has been said that political parties have one hand on civil society and the other on the government. Some writers have used the concept of political society as a section of political parties which is between civil society and the government.⁵³

The civil society will teach a symbolic behaviour to society and the government and in this way will provide a balance to political life.⁵⁴

Mass society

The concept of mass society is opposite to the concept of civil society and is used for the purpose of describing some kind of relationship between the government and society.

Some political sociologists have applied the concept of mass society for describing the situation in which people are in the condition between the decline of traditional solidarity and non-emergence of new solidarity. For this reason, they believe that they cannot consider the traditional society as a mass society because in this society there are group interests and communicational networks despite the domination of traditions and lack of variety in thinking. In this society, the solidarity is based on a meaningful and close relation. But, mass society is a society which will be found in a transition situation from traditional society to modern society.

Participation in mass society is not collective and based on tastes, etc., but mobilized participation. In mass society, the equality of all individuals is guaranteed. One of the most important special features of mass movement is social and cultural suppression and creating necessary symbols for mass mobilization based on unified ideology. Thus, mass society has a pluralist tendency and only those demands are considered legitimate as are related to the

will of masses. The leaders of mass movements try to show themselves as the only alternative and the ones who can fulfil the wishes of the masses.⁵⁵ Because in mass society individuals are isolated against the government, the government will have no one who can really oppose it and the government will attract the support of the masses. Since the masses are not organized, they change easily.⁵⁶

In general, mass society is craving for a mobilization ideology and leadership. It usually will prepare the ground for the emergence of fascist movements and a charismatic leader to make an attempt to revive the lost traditional solidarity by political ideology. In general, the theories of mass society and pluralism will present two totally different social statuses in which different degrees and forms of social structures exist.

Reviewing democracy & political participation

In this research we have examined and analyzed the historical thought of political participation in the West as well as its theoretical basis. In the historical section, we have reviewed the emergence of the political participation phenomenon within Western civilization. We also have shown the evolution phases of the citizenship thought prior to the city-state in ancient Greece until the end of the age of democratic revolutions. Especially, we saw that in the period after renaissance in Europe, a series of developments, all parallel with each other, caused the modification of citizenship thoughts and changed this concept in the West as a perceptive concept. Then, in the theoretical section, we discussed the relationship of political participation with democracy and political development.

What is interesting in these series of debates and discussions is the parallel progress of the political participation phenomenon in the historical subjective developments on one hand, and in the mental ground of socio-political thoughts, on the other hand. In fact, this phenomenon, like other political and social phenomena, shows some kind of dialogue in society. The most interesting of all is that within the same dialectical process, political participation has come under harsh criticism and attack.

In this thesis we tried to examine the formation of political participation models in the democratic political system. Here we face the reality which is evident to everyone, and that is that democratic society is a society which is deeply involved with the democratic tradition and possesses a high civil political culture. Otherwise, if the cultural foundation of democracy and public participation in politics have not been reinforced and developed, the political society would very soon fall. Perhaps, democracy is an excellent example of a political fact that is not attainable but like any other fact we must get close and exploit it.

Political freedoms outlined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran

His Excellency, Seyed Mohammad Khatami, the then president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in his speech delivered at the anniversary of the 2nd Khordad in 1998, referred to two costly experiences that human beings have had. He said that for more than 500 years, church officials had tried to introduce religion as the only remedy for all human problems, but finally agreed to grant freedom and gradually they drove Christianity to the side lines of Europeans life. Freedom and religion are both parts of human instinct and no one can place two distinctive things against each other. Also, no one can either restrict or eliminate one or reinforce the other one.

The president also referred to other experience of man: to grant justice instead of freedom. That happened during the 70 year of the existence of the former Soviet Union. Its Marxist leaders delivered justice to people, who were wanted it, but restricted their freedom. However, once again, that failed, and it was freedom that emerged victorious. That has shown that under no circumstances man would sacrifice freedom for something else.

There is much historical evidence to prove Islam as a democratic and reformist religion within its school of thought. Knowledge and practice of religious jurisprudence, especially in the Shiite school, indicates that Almighty God does not wish Islam to get stuck in times and to fall behind the advancement of man and to lose its followers. This reformist character of Islam has provided it the opportunity to get updated and to be in line with new changes and needs that people face in their lifetime. That is essential for Islam as it guides and leads the human being. Fourteen hundred years ago, Islam emerged by the orders that were passed by God to the Prophet, Hazrat Mohammad (may peace be on him), and has continued since then by the guidance of 12 Infallibles. Islam has shown that it does not overlook any aspect of man's life.

The definition of freedom has a common point in all religious rites and speeches and that is: freedom only means to worship God and liberation of people from slavery. Probably, this is the most comprehensive and complete definition of freedom because, through a quick look at this definition, we arrive at the understanding that this definition holds a deep meaning in it. To be worshipper of God means His unquestioning obedience and that will lead to salvation by which man would attain his main objective: to arrive at his soul and to be freed from salvation.

That requires the use of the brain that God has given to man, and that is the main feature that differentiate man from other creatures and gives him superiority over other living beings. The brain is used for thinking and decision making and to prevent the people from becoming the tools of others. That means that man

would be able to determine his own fate and destiny. That is a kind of democracy that has been derived from the new concept that persists in the West.

Islam has permitted and recognised the presence of diversity of opinion in society and it positively assesses the result obtained from this diversity and conflict of ideas. Islam states that from this diversity in opinion a unified idea and opinion will rise. The only things which must be considered carefully are blasphemy and polytheism which obviously are in conflict with the spirit of Islam. Islam also recognises and respects other religions except for those that advocate blasphemy.

Compilation of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Constitution is a legal and political instrument that in fact depicts the political system of Iran which is based on the authority of the leaders and freedom and rights of the nation. To guarantee that, the government will be handed over to people and their elected representatives so that they govern the country based on the Constitution. Democracy movement and the Constitution are two ideal things that have embraced the whole world. More or less, many countries have experienced these two and some countries struggled to achieve them. Iran is such a country that has experienced two revolutions in less than a century: the anti-dictatorial constitution movement in 1945 that caused the downfall of absolute rule for a short period, and the other one was the Islamic Revolution in 1978 that has demolished monarchy in Iran.

Since then, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has become the criterion for political behaviour of Iranian society. Upon the formation of provincial government and with the approval of the council of ministers; a new council, called the High Council for Islamic Revolution Plans, was established and its Articles of Association were endorsed on April 7, 1979. According to Article 12 of these Articles of Association, one of the duties and responsibilities of the said council is to “prepare the constitution draft based on Islamic and democratic principles”.

In a joint session of the Revolutionary Council and the provincial government’s members held in Qum in the presence of eminent religious leader Grand Ayatollah Imam Khomeini, two views were presented. The first view was because of time shortage, the idea of establishing a Constituent Assembly should be abandoned and the draft should be presented for referendum. The other view was that in order to give priority to people, the Constituent Assembly should be formed in which the draft should be discussed and examined.

Finally, after a lengthy discussion and with an overall majority vote of the participants in this meeting and approval of Imam Khomeini, it was decided that the Khobrehgan Assembly (Assembly of Experts) be formed with fewer representatives than anticipated. The duty of this Assembly was to review the

draft and present the amended draft to people for their final approval. Following that, Imam Khomeini issued the following order for the prime minister of the provincial governments on May 25, 1979:

“It is necessary that the combatant nation of Iran grasps the density of the country to attain the objectives of the Islamic Revolution in all social affairs and political systems and to regain their own rights and to implement Islamic justice in all sections of society. Thus, you should complete the Constitution’s draft as soon as possible for presentation to the Revolutionary Council for ratification, and then the final draft should be presented to the public so that the whole nation and the experts are able to express their views on the Articles of the Constitution within a set timetable.

“Based on the decision made in consultation with the Revolutionary Council and the government, the people of each province and every religious minority should elect their representatives, and the number of these representatives should be fixed by the Revolutionary Council and the provincial governments. Such an elected Assembly should examine and review the Articles of the Constitution for final ratification.

“The rights and freedoms of the people should be respected and considered in the final draft, and opportunity for the growth and prosperity and independence of Iranian nation based on the Islamic principles, which guarantee the rights of all people and voted by the majority of the Iranian nation, should be considered. After final ratification of the draft in the said Assembly, it should be presented for referendum so that people would have the opportunity to express their views on this draft by their direct vote.”

Finally, the Constitution, after ratification by the people’s representatives at the said Assembly, was approved by majority vote of the people.

Place of freedom in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Freedom, independence, and Islamic government were the three main slogans of the Islamic Revolution mentioned in the Preamble to the Constitution. The tree of Revolution, after a year or more of continued struggle and being fertilised with the blood of more than 60,000 martyrs and a hundred thousand injured and disabled and leaving behind billions of rials as material damage, finally blossomed among the shouts of “independence, freedom and Islamic government”. This great movement, based on faith, unity and decisiveness of its leadership during the sensitive and critical stages, as well as on the devotion of the nation, embraced victory.

Articles 1 and 9 of the Constitution clearly specify the Islamic Republic as a system of government based on two integral parts of freedom and independence.

Article 1: “The form of government of Iran is that of Islamic Republic which the Iranian nation, on the basis of its longstanding conviction in the rule of truth and justice of the Koran and in the wake of its victorious Islamic Revolution under the leadership of its eminent religious leader Ayatollah Imam Khomeini, who approved it.”

Article 9: “In the Islamic Republic of Iran, freedom, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the country shall be inseparable from each other. It shall be the duty of the government and every single member of the nation to safeguard them. No individual, group or authority shall be allowed, on the pretext of enjoying freedom, to vitiate in any manner whatsoever the political, cultural, economic and military independence and territorial integrity of Iran. No authority shall be allowed to usurp legal freedoms and liberties on the pretext of safeguarding the national independence and territorial integrity, even by enacting laws and regulations.”

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has greatly emphasised the principle of freedom and it has asked the authority to consider seriously the safeguards and preservation of this principle without any excuse. Article 2, following the mention of the five basic principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran (faith in one and only God, the divine revelation, the concept of resurrection, the justice of God in creation and legislation, and perpetual Imamate and leadership) has added the sixth principle and that is eminent dignity and value of man, his freedom coupled with his responsibility before God. That means that from the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s point of view, the principle of freedom of the man has a place beside the basic five principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and it should be considered as a very important principle.

Freedom of religion & belief

Article 23 has permitted the freedom of belief for people. It states that: “Investigation of one’s belief shall be prohibited. No one may be offended or reprimanded simply because of having a certain belief.” This Article guarantees the freedom of any political and religious belief for the nation. According to this Article, no one should be punished or deprived of social privileges simply because of having a certain belief. In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the investigation of one’s belief is prohibited without any pre-conditions and the freedom of belief is fully accepted. It should be pointed out that the Constitution is based on Islamic principles. Therefore, there would be no room for blasphemous ideas in Islamic society and that is forbidden.

With regard to religious freedom, Articles 12 to 14 clearly state the position. According to these Articles, the Iranian followers of Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians as well as followers of other faiths shall be free to carry out their religious rites and practice their religion in personal status and religious conditions. That means that the followers of other faiths are respected and have

freedom of belief. They must be treated with respect and good manners and they must not be subjected to harassment and their human rights be respected and their religious beliefs must not be the cause to deprive them from their social and citizenship rights. It should also be pointed out that to carry out their religious rights and to practice their religion in non-personal manner and publicly, is not anticipated in the Constitution.

Freedom of expression

In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the freedom of expression has been stated in Article 24 under the title of freedom of press and publications. This Article states that: "Publications and the press shall have freedom of expression unless they violate the essentials of Islam or public rights. Its details shall be set forth by law." Despite this, no mention has been made for the freedom of expression in the Constitution. With regard to the position of the membership of the Majlis (the Islamic Consultative Assembly), Article 86 states that the representatives of the Majlis shall be completely free to express their views and cast their votes while carrying out their duties and functions as members of the Majlis. Article 175 states: "Freedom of speech and expression of ideas must be guaranteed at Seda va Seema-e Jomhuri-e Islami Iran (Radio and Television) with due observance of the principles and criteria of Islam and the interests of the country."

Article 86 states: "While carrying out their functions as Majlis members, the representatives of the Majlis (the Islamic Consultative Assembly) shall be completely free to express their views and cast their votes. They must not be prosecuted or arrested for expressing their views in the Majlis or casting their votes while discharging their functions as a representative." Article 24 about press freedom and other articles such as Note 7 of Article 2 related to political and social freedoms, all reflect the constitutional view about freedom of expression with respect to restrictions mentioned in the Article 24 and other Articles.

One of the important laws which has a close association with freedom of expression is the press law that on one hand guarantees the freedom of expression via the press and publications and on the other hand expresses the legal boundaries related to the freedom of expression which are anticipated in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

After the Islamic Revolution, the first Press Act was ratified by the Revolutionary Council on August 22, 1979, prior to the ratification of the Constitution. This Act proposed that the publication of newspapers and any other form of publications is subject to receiving the publication license from the Ministry of Guidance upon the attestation of the competency of the applicant in a commission formed for this purpose and comprised of publishers and writers' representatives and also representative of the Supreme Court, Tehran University

professors, Qum theological school professors and attorneys. In this Act, the restrictions and prohibitions that press must observe were stated as well as punishment for related offences. The press offences would be tried in the criminal court in the presence of juries. In this Act, the formation of such juries and their qualifications and duties is clearly defined.

After the ratification of the Constitution, a new Press Act was passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis) in 1985 which originated from the same Press Act as approved in 1979. The Press Act guarantees and secures the freedom on the basis of Article 24 of the Constitution as well and lists violations of the essentials of Islam and public rights.

In Article 6 sub-clause 9 of the law, the instances of violation of the essentials of Islam and public rights have been clearly defined as follows:

- Publication of atheistic matters.
- Propagation of obscene and unlawful acts.
- Encouraging dissipation and lavishness.
- To create disputes and differences among people.
- To encourage actions which are against national security and interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- To disclose and publish classified deeds, orders and related matters.
- To offend Islam, the leadership and religious leaders.
- Baseless accusations against people and literary theft.
- Misuse of woman's vision in the press (this has been added recently).

With regard to abuse of Islam and Islamic sanctities, if the form of the abuse is in such that it shows apostasy of the writer, then the apostasy penalty verdict will be issued. Article 26 states: "Anyone who abuses Islam and its sanctities through the press and if it leads to apostasy, the appropriate verdict (death penalty) will be issued for the accused; and if it does not lead to apostasy, other penalties will be considered for the accused. This verdict will be issued by the judge and according to the related laws."

To offend the leader of the country or religious leaders will lead to the cancellation of publication's license, and the person in charge of the publication and the writer will be handed over to appropriate court. That is to be done according to Article 27 of the law which states that if the leader or one of the religious leaders were offended in the press, then prior to the formation of the court, the publication license of the accused must be cancelled. The Article 27 is as follows: "Whenever the leader or council of leadership and/or one of the religious leaders are offended in a publication, the publication license of the accused will be cancelled and the person in charge of the publication and the writer will be handed over to the appropriate court for possible punishment."

In the Press Act of 1985, the formation of a committee was proposed. This committee would be in charge of decision making with regard to the issuance of license and supervising the press. This committee is called the “supervising committee”. According to Article 10 of the Press Act, this committee comprises the press manager elected by the press and the minister of the Islamic Guidance or representative of the said minister. According to Article 11, the said committee is in charge of examining the applications and competency of the applicant and the person in charge of the publication.

With regard to the supervisory function of the said committee, Article 12 of the press Act states: “The supervisory committee would directly or upon the request of the minister of the Islamic Guidance study and examine the violation by the publication. This might lead to handing over of the accused to the court of justice.”

Article 24 of the Press Act states that press offences should be considered in the appropriate court in presence of juries. Article 168 of the Constitution states: “Investigation of political crimes and press offences shall be open and shall be carried out by a court of law in the presence of a jury. The manner of appointment, qualifications and authorities of the jury and the definition of a political crime shall be laid down by law on the basis of Islamic precepts.” In the Press Act of 1985, the formation and election process of the juries as well as their qualifications and duties are mentioned. Therefore, the juries should be formed during court hearing of the press offences according to the Press Act.

*FREEDOM OF POLITICAL PARTIES,
ASSOCIATIONS AND ASSEMBLIES:*

The freedom of political parties, societies and professional associations and holding assemblies and marches are another important symbol of freedom. Articles 26 and 27 of the Constitution have considered these important issues. On the one hand, Article 26 refers to freedom to form any political or professional associations and parties provided that they do not violate the principles of freedom, independence, national unity, Islamic standards and essentials of the Islamic Republic; and on the other hand, emphasises the freedom of individuals for participation and/ or non-participation in such parties and associations.

Article 26 of the Constitution states: “It shall be allowed to form parties, societies, political or professional associations and Islamic or other religious societies of the recognised minorities, provided that they do not violate the principles of freedom, independence, national unity, Islamic standards and essentials of the Islamic Republic. No one may be stopped from participating in them or be forced to participate in one of them.” This article has not excluded anyone or group of people from the right to form political parties or to enter into such parties or associations. Later, the membership of the military personnel and revolutionary guard in political parties has been forbidden by law. The Guardian Council has ratified this law.

Article 27 of the Constitution states: “It shall be allowed to hold assemblies and marches, without carrying arms, provided that it does not violate the essentials of Islam.” In this Article, there are two restrictions on holding assemblies and marches. One is that marchers should not carry weapons and the other is that the march does not violate the essentials of Islam.

POLITICAL PARTIES ACT IN IRAN:

In pursuance of Articles 26 and 27 of the Constitution and for securing boundaries and to set up regulations related to the formation of societies and political parties and provide legitimate freedom of individuals and their activities as well as to secure free marches and holding assemblies; the Islamic Consultative Assembly in 1981 ratified the Act for commercial, political societies and associations as well as Islamic council or recognised religious minorities. In Article 10 of this Act, the formation of a committee is stipulated which is responsible to determine the competency of the applicants for forming political parties or associations and issuance of license. The responsibility to examine violation of the regulations of Article 16 of the law is with this committee. This committee comprises the following members:

- 1- The representative of attorney general.
- 2- The representative of judicial authority.
- 3- The representative of the Ministry of Interior
- 4- Two representatives appointed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly (these representatives might come from within or outside of parliament).

According to Article 6 of the law, the political parties are allowed to be active provided that they do not violate conditions set out in Article 16 of this law. Prohibitions stated in Article 16 are as follow:

- Activities leading to the fall of Iran’s independence.
- To exchange information with foreign embassies.
- To receive financial assistance from foreigners.
- To violate legitimate freedom of others.
- To cite calumny and gossip.
- To violate national unity and planning to disintegrate the country.
- Attempt to set up differences and to transfer these differences to the nation.
- To violate the Islamic essentials and principles and deliver anti-Islamic propaganda, to distribute forbidden publications and books.
- To hide and pile up and carry weapon and unlawful ammunition.

It seems that the lawmakers had considered the violations of the regulations by the political parties and associations, as stated in Article 16 of the law, as political offences and therefore investigation of such offences shall be open and

shall be carried out by a court of law in the presence of jury. With regard to holding assemblies and marches (Article 27 of the Constitution), Note 2 of Article 6 of the law has allowed them, with two conditions: "Holding assemblies is free provided that permission has been issued by the Ministry of the Interior, and marches are allowed provided that the said Ministry is informed, provided that no one carries any weapon in such marches and they should not violate the Islamic principles." The said note states: "It shall be allowed to hold marches without carrying weapons and notifying the Ministry of the Interior, provided that the committee under Article 10 of the law does not consider such marches as the violators of the Islamic principles. Holding assemblies in public parks and open spaces is allowed, provided that the permission is obtained from the Ministry of the Interior."

Some other Articles of the Constitution also contain laws and regulations that guarantee the preservation of freedoms. As an example, we can refer to the following:

Article 25: "It shall be prohibited to inspect or fail to deliver letters, to record and divulge telephone conversations, to disclose telegraphic and telex communications, to censor them or fail to communicate or deliver them, to eavesdrop or to make any other search whatsoever, unless by order of law."

Article 79: This Article prohibits proclamation of martial law, and only in emergency-conditions and state of war, the government shall be allowed to, provisionally, impose necessary restrictions with the approval of the Majlis. This is one of the important arrangements made by the Constitution to preserve freedoms as, needless to say, proclamation of martial law is the greatest factor to prevent and restrict public freedoms, especially press freedom, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression and belief.

Article 79 of the Constitution states: "It shall be prohibited to proclaim martial law. In a state of war or emergency conditions similar to it, the government shall be allowed to provisionally impose necessary restrictions with the approval of the Majlis (Islamic Consultative Assembly). Should such contingency continue to persist, the Government shall be required to seek again permission of the Majlis. However, its duration shall in no case exceed 30 days."

Other arrangements that the Constitution has made to protect legitimate freedoms is the text of the oath of office that the president shall take at the Majlis and Note 2 of Article 156 of the Constitution with regard to judiciary. In both cases, the responsibility to protect and safeguard freedom lies with the heads of the judiciary and the executive.

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