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## *The fetishistic character of the ideology of democracy*

Sources: Rebellion

The voice democracy is used interchangeably in contemporary theoretical and political debates, but its illusory character and the lack of historical/empirical grips are deliberately omitted to privilege, above all, a perspective of *duty to be*, of aspiration, that is hardly consummated. Perhaps no term used recurrently in public space was outraged in such a way that it was not only emptied of content but lost all meaning to refer to reality. As an ideology, the notion of democracy is used as an instrument of legitimization of the structures of power, domination and wealth. More so when – since 1968 – capitalism was questioned by the middle classes in the face of unfulfilled promises after 200 years of practices and experiences derived from its civilizational process.

If in Europe the nineteenth century was the century of the deeds of the class struggle and the effervescences of social movements opposed to the exacerbated capitalist exploitation, the twentieth century was the century of totalitarianism and authoritarianism in its multiple forms and ideologies. The vertical centralization of power and public decisions was the sign of a century characterized by economic prosperity and long periods of wealth growth; scientific progress, technological innovations and the improvement of the quality of life from their applications; and the relative socio-political stability in Europe, the United States and in regions such as Latin America influenced by the process of Westernization of the world.

The zenith of totalitarian practices was reached with the Nazis and fascisms that stoked the international confrontation of the Second Great War. And although the European continent freed itself from these political ideologies, Latin America, Africa and Asia reproduced throughout the second half of the twentieth century authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships moved by the repression and persecution of those opposition social forces that questioned the pattern of accumulation and political exclusion. Towards the eighties, with the triumph of the ideology of *market fundamentalism* in terms of public policies and with the loss of faith in the State as a device for social transformation, not only was the privatization of it established, but the ideology of democracy was vindicated to rebuild the legitimacy lost since the late sixties. Moreover, the notion of democracy was appropriated in the south of the world as a substitute for the projects of national self-determination.

Thus, the dismemberment of the Soviet Union not only represented the stoning of statism, but also the possibility of erecting ultra-liberal capitalism as an unquestionable reference and form of social organization. In the underdeveloped world, this resulted in the tomb of the developmentalist state and in the questioning of authoritarianism of different ideological stamps. In both processes, democracy was the narrative that defined the new meanings of political praxis and public affairs. But it did so from a strictly electoral and procedural logic, without questioning – rather covering up – the contradictions derived from the new pattern of accumulation at the turn of the century.

Democracy was hijacked by the political elites and by the *technocratic rationality* prevailing in the public sector and in the third sector itself, short-termism was imposed and the long-term and far-reaching projects of the nation were supplanted. At the same time, any possibility of social change outside of electoral procedures and partisan practices was buried. More than a democracy, what prevails to this day is a kind of partyocracy incapable of echoing social urgencies and needs. That is, there is a divorce between that partyocracy and the citizenry because the former was overwhelmed by factionalism and vested interests that thrive on the privatization of the state.

The Achilles' heel of the ideology of democracy – as it has been defined since the late twentieth century – is the cover-up, invisibilization and silencing of phenomena such as inequality, pauperization and social exclusion. Without a slight reference to these socio-historical processes, democracy is a voice devoid of meaning and devoid of any empirical

substratum. As long as underdevelopment persists in the south of the world and the pauperization of the middle classes in the north, the ideology of democracy will generate nothing but detractors who question it.

Incapaz de aprehender las nuevas formas de explotación, las nuevas desigualdades y las nuevas conflictividades, la democracia –e incluso la democratización como su posible materialización– se torna una muletilla que lo mismo justifica el ejercicio de abultados presupuestos públicos (en México el llamado Instituto Nacional Electoral absorbió para el 2021 un presupuesto en torno a los 981 millones 556 297 dólares, y es fecha que esa entidad pública sigue bajo sospecha de fraude al organizar procesos electorales); la apertura de agencias y organizaciones públicas encargadas de sus procedimientos, gestión y vigilancia; la movilización de recursos privados, lícitos o ilícitos, para sufragar campañas electorales y para alimentar la voracidad de los *mass media*; y que lo mismo le da forma a una gran agencia de colocación donde se emplean y movilizan millones de ciudadanos que forman los cuadros técnicos que ejecutan y concretan los procedimientos en torno a la promoción y ejercicio del voto.

La institucionalización de la ideología de la democracia crea andamiajes funcionales a la canalización del descontento y el malestar social. Al tiempo que se estipula desde la Organización de las Naciones Unidas al 15 de septiembre como el Día *Internacional de la Democracia*, se pierden de vista las formas en que se desglosan las relaciones de poder y dominación en los espacios nacionales y locales, y la manera en que la praxis política pierde relevancia ante la emergencia de poderes globales. Sin un análisis profundo de las estructuras de poder será imposible comprender las estructuras políticas que suelen reducirse al efímero partidismo y a la confrontación facciosa que no aborda y resuelve el fondo de los problemas públicos, sino que privilegia los paliativos y la gestión cortoplacista de los mismos.

Like the notion of development – adopted since the late forties of the twentieth century – the voice democracy is a kind of manna with which it is intended – at least discursively – to solve, within certain conventional canons, multiple problems of humanity without paying attention to the specificities of societies and their local communities. The term is so kind that even those political elites who in the immediate past were the cause of public problems and crises, today – appealing to the weak historical memory – return with new

clothes to proclaim that they will solve them (<https://bit.ly/3tg1OKu>). In a logic of "changing not to change" – a kind of gatopardism – the ideology of democracy serves as a trick to deactivate the propensity of societies to organize themselves into social movements that orient their gaze to the ultimate *causes of the great national and world problems*. This cannot be understood without the *unquestionable triumph of hedonistic individualism* (<https://bit.ly/3bi4vB1>) and without the emptying of politics as a transformative praxis of social reality (<https://bit.ly/3xBINRZ>). The privatization of the state also meant the privatization of politics and with it the abduction of meanings and narratives around public problems (<https://bit.ly/3Efn8TF>), as well as the impersonation of critical thinking in public life (<https://bit.ly/3HFOL9g>). Hence the loss of confidence of citizens regarding politics, the State and its vicissitudes; and hence also the emergence and expansion of demagogic leaderships of different ideological signs that exploit the emotions and fears of citizens.

Stripping ourselves of the ideology of democracy in its conventional, reductionist, electoral and utilitarian aspect is an essential condition to vindicate political praxis and to unravel the ultimate and deep causes of the public problems that beset humanity. Without this theoretical and political exercise, there is a risk of postponing the loss of contemporary societies and of leaving the future in the hands of elites who use this voice, while with it they cover up their vested interests, their triviality and the depredation of the public.

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