

IS POST-MODERN DEMOCRACY A FEMINIST?

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Abstract

This paper tries to analyze the latest trend in democratization gained less attention in academic works. In Industrial period, democratization was lead in the direction of secularization, however, in societies which are postmodern or undergoing recent democratization, democracy is gaining more feminist fashion. Genderization of politics or feminist interpretation of democracy is the cornerstone of such analytical attempt. Despite, structural transformation of democracy in advanced democracies, feminist ideas are standing at the core of democracy.

Keywords: democracy, democratization, genderization, feminism, postindustrialism, liberal, illiberal.

Today we are witnessing the transformation of democracy as a theory and as a practice.

The ongoing crisis in advanced democracies which is resulted by clash between right wing politics and minority politics. Theoretically, this division reflects a debate about “liberal” and “illiberal” sides of democracy(Carothers et al., 2007; Krastev, 2007; Marc F. Plattner, 2009, 2015, 2017, 2019;) which creates paradoxical assumption according to which “being democracy” is not enough “to be democratic”! Practically, after ongoing erosion of multy-party system politics, emerging of protest movement politics(Plattner 2019; Krastev 2014) as an alternative to conventional politics, which is supposed to replace it.

Here I am not going to discuss about “liberal” and “illiberal” sides of democracy, other side which has been unnoticed for decades is feminist democracy or feminization of democracy.

The aim of the paper is not discovering a new concept, but discussing a phenomenon of that democracy is turning out more feminist concept than humanistic one. In turn, some questions regarding to this debate are rose. Is democracy male dominant concept? What is the point of having democracy if it ignores a half part of humanity – women? Or are we dealing with an alternative narrative of democracy/democratization? Below I will try to find logical answers to these questions.



What makes me think of it is the claim of that democracy is not a completed process, but still evolving. The claim does originally belong to prominent political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel. They discussed this in their revision of modernization theory. According to them, when society becomes postindustrial, the more democracy becomes female oriented or democratization is lead on the basis of gender equality. Inglehart assumes that:

Today, the trend toward increasing gender equality is pervasive in postindustrial societies. This trend is historically recent, reflecting the fact that democracy is an evolving concept. Gender empowerment has become an increasingly widely accepted attribute of democracy(Inglehart and Welzel 2001).

It seems he is right in this regard. We may see that in line with democratization in terms of shift from authoritarianism to democracy and building modern democratic institutions, feminization of politics and public institutions are occurring. Especially this is very evident in developing countries in which establishing gender equality is tied with a successful democratization. Along with the establishing more open and inclusive public institutions, there are special quotas in national parliaments and public institutions for women, as well as, special national and international programs empowering them and so on. Consequently, every aspect of life is becoming female-friendly and never before women are given more opportunity to succeed. Every national government is declaring its commitment to gender equality in its polices. Widely accepted notion is that “gender equality has become crucial to the quality of democracy”(Inglehart and Welzel 2001). Traditionally, democratization means transition from authoritarian ruling to modern democratic one. Free and fair elections, freedom of speech, human rights, constitution, transparent government were main characteristics of quality of democracy in the past century. Today we are facing different reality which is cannot be measured old principles. If take seriously the idea of that democracy is still an evolving concept, then we can say that democracy gains more feminist nature and have an alternative narrative in interpreting it according to feminist concepts. According to this narrative, democracy is moving toward feminist phase which determines the main principles of democracy. Therefore, democratization must be differentiated on a gender lines. The main task of democratization will be establishing gender equality in a society whether it accepts it or not.

Indeed, rising gender equality is an essential aspect in the strengthening of democratic institutions(Inglehart and Welzel 2001). Let us assume that a certain society established sound democratic institutions what if it rejects gender equality.



Then should we assume that the democratization is incomplete or failed? That's why in most societies including Muslim ones, democratization is failing because of such assumption mirroring the experiences of postindustrial societies with gender equality. Even they accept such type of democratization, this process will be limited to public institutions and constitutional laws. At the societal level, it is facing pushback by population, especially, by women. Despite, polygamy is banned in constitution, female Muslims in Tunisia and Egypt turned out in the streets to protest against such constitutional ruling (Mintner 2019). When Muslim countries surveyed by World Value survey, the data shows that Muslims are tend to accept political values, but not liberal values like women issues, sexual liberalization (Norris and Inglehart 2002). However, some studies reject this claim. In most Muslim societies Muslim women have their own view of gender equality different from western one and feminization is under way. (Kucinkas 2010; Vatuk 2011). Even economically developed countries like Japan, South Korea could not boast in this regard. They showed lower rate in attitudes towards gender equality than other postindustrial societies (Inglehart and Welzel 2001).

In conclusion we may assume that democratization has two dimensions. First deals with establishing a gender balanced or gender-friendly democratic institutions at the institutional level. At this level, democratic institutions incorporate gender equality measures into system. Second dimension is about generating positive attitudes towards gender equality among population at the societal level. Society must accept these ideas not as evil, but constructive communication with a half part of itself in a way without going against traditional values.

As seen at the both levels, gender equality lies at the center of democratization process or democratization is having more feminist fashion.

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