International Journal of Applied Social Science
Volume 6 (4), April (2019) : 988-1000
Received : 25.02.2019; Revised : 10.03.2019; Accepted : 25.03.2019

RESEARCH ARTICLE
ISSN : 2394-1405 (Print)

Totalitarian Anti-Thesis and Liberal Democracy: Reflections on Twentieth Century Political Discourse

SAROJ R. JHA
Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India)

ABSTRACT

Interplay between the notions of liberalism, democracy and totalitarianism dominated politico-philosophical discourse through much of the course of the Twentieth Century. The concept of totalitarianism was initially devised to make sense of extremist ideological movements and anti liberal-democratic regimes that emerged onto the political scene in the first half of the previous century. It, however, was later employed as a theoretico-political tool to analyse and critique those dispensations that either were in reality or were presumed to be deviations or anti-thesis to the idea and practice of liberal-democracy. The concept, in consequence, escaped a specificity of definition or meaning. Adherents of liberal-democracy condemned it as its 'other', to be opposed, critique and rejected. In consonance with this idea and practice, Benjamin Barber had long opined, "the concept is used by different writers in a confusing multiplicity of often incompatible meanings which render its application idiosyncratic and arbitrary".[1] Its becoming a tool in the hands of American foreign policy through much of the Cold War period, too, did not do much to enhance its prestige and reputation in the annals of academic theorisation. Rather it brought dispute as well as disrepute to the concept and contributed much in relegating it to the realm of insignificance. On this note, Frederic Fleron argued that the notion had become much of a "boo word" to be invoked and resorted to when there was a need to "boo regimes". [2] This brings us to the question that is there an axiomatic core to the idea of totalitarianism. And if there is one theoretically then to what extent such a thing became an existential/real possibility in regimes that were characterised as totalitarian in their orientation and practice.

Key Words : Democracy, Dispositif, Totalising, Disenchantment, Rhetoric, Autocracy, Dictatorship, Syndrome, Discourse, Cold war, Anomie, Atomisation, Ideology, Dissent, Oxymoron, Prepotence, Prepollent

INTRODUCTION

The Totalitarian Problematic: Attempts at theorising the counter-factual:

Totalitarianism, as the concept, was envisaged had in its essence the desire to understand the structure, functioning and manifestation of certain movements and regimes that apparently stood in either deviation or juxtaposition to liberal-democratic understanding of politics and society. Accordingly, efforts made in the direction to have an intellective understanding of the phenomenon varied in approach, orientation and conclusion. Thus, if for Friedrich von Hayek the 'origins' of its lied in collectivist thinking whether they were of fascist or socialist variant, for Arendt such was not the case. Before we venture onto Arendt's take on the issue, necessary it is to posit that totalitarian thought is not an essence of collectivist thinking as Hayek would have liked us to believe. Certainly, when perceived as the counter-factual of *laissez faire* economics, 'collectivism' appears as the most problematic and satanic of ideas. However, must it be said that the collectivist thinking in its very being is no host to either anti-liberal democratic thinking or that of totalitarian tendencies. In fact, it is this aspect along with counter-factual historical developments in Nazi Germany and Soviet Union that made Hayek's argument read as

How to cite this Article: Jha, Saroj R. (2019). Totalitarian Anti-Thesis and Liberal Democracy: Reflections on Twentieth Century Political Discourse. *Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci.,* **6** (4) : 988-1000.

extremely weak and facile. This lacuna also made it appear as an apologist thinking for free-market economy.

Given the limitations of early attempts at understanding the phenomenon notable of them being the Hayekian argumentation and taking cue from the study of Franz Neumann, for Hannah Arendt, must it was to differ in approach and subject the phenomenon to a historico-archaeological investigation, objective of which was to comprehend the idea as a manifestation of the antinomies of modernity. In her imagination, the coming into being of 'mass society' characterised by weakening of either 'class consciousness' or the given fragility in the realisation that one belongs or is affiliated to a class formed the essential ingredient for the emergence of these movements and regimes. However, paradoxical as it may sound, but her equating of the ideas of 'mass society' with that of 'class society' albeit with much reticence rather form the Achilles heel of her, otherwise, powerful argument. Also her emphasis upon the role of ideology and terror in totalitarian dispensations were not exempt of inherent problematic. It is so because totalitarian rules were not limited to being 'police states'. The phenomenon transcended from being mere representatives of hostility to liberal ideas of 'freedom' and 'rule of law' to that of becoming an instrument with the objective to regiment, regulate and constitute a society of conformists albeit with 'areas of separateness'[3] always present in them, mostly operating as silent sites of resistance, opposition and rejection of the prescribed narratives of the totalitarian order.

It is this nature of the totalitarian behaviour that made Herbert Marcuse apply the concept to an analysis of liberal-democratic regimes premised upon capitalism as a mode of production and economic philosophy of life. For Marcuse, arguing on the contrary to other theorists but not in axiomatic disagreement with them, totalitarianism indeed stands for being an anti-thesis to liberty and freedom of thought. Its putative, however, to mark a society and system is most plausible in those contexts where 'freedom' seemed to be and operate at its maximum. In this analysis, too, the preponderant underlying argument was to assess the problematic as a manifestation of the crisis of modernity. The disrupting experiences of 'alienation, atomisation and anomie' that modernity was inherently resident to was considered to be the causal source of its 'aberrations' and 'irrationalities'. And must, in consequence, for such as effort was to subject the 'modern experience' to a critical assessment wherein embedded was a presumed investigation of processes that constitute 'instrumental reason' and 'sociological rationalisation'.

Fundament to this project was to suggest that 'modernity' stood in opposition to the naturalness and spontaneity of life. In cue with this idea, it was further argued that the 'regimented' existence of the modern times is a product of the unqualified faith in the presumed redemptive abilities of restrain and regulation, discipline and pre-meditated calculation as well as instrumental collegiality. This unqualified belief, nevertheless, it was suggested paradoxically had become the detested fount of inescapable epistemic tyranny and intellective subjugation of the modern human subject. From this was derived the argument that the instrumentalisation of reason in conjunction with the absolutist faith in the redemptive possibilities of 'objective knowledge' was the provenience from where had emanated the very processes and techniques responsible for the annihilation of human agency and its critical being as well. Modernity, in accordance, became the provenance, which increased the possibilities of subjugation and domination of the human subject. In words different, this was to say that the belittling and reduction in the freedom of the human subject stood in direct correlation with the technological advancement of a given society.

On a cautious note though, Marcuse and his fellow Frankfurt School theorists suggested that the manifestation of the above does not come about in simple and linear ways. As posited above, domination, for them, find maximum realisation in those contexts where the subjects do not have any reason to suspect otherwise. To articulate it differently, it is to argue that surreptitious tyranny operates at the level of utmost extremity where there is otherwise a high semblance of freedom and liberty. Thus, an absence of ability on behalf of the subjects to discern the techniques and technologies that the ruling ingredients of state and society invoke in order to perpetuate their rule does not mean that domination, control and subjugation are absent in such orders. On the contrary, must it be acknowledged that political and ideological ignorance contribute in substantial measure to the constitution of conditions wherein authority may find itself encouraged to indulge in the practice of most naked and tyrannical form of domination. Deductive from this line of reasoning, thus, becomes the distilled understanding that western liberal-democratic orders instead of being aggregations representing freedom,

rationality and liberty are rather orders wherein is practised the most advanced levels of subjugation albeit surreptitiously.

The idea of democracy operating through popular sovereignty, therefore, is no check against the call of domination and was, in fact, just a cloak to perpetuate the illusion of societal and economic harmony amongst the contesting groups and classes. The reality, nevertheless, as Marcuse understood it was just the opposite of what was being propagated. The liberal-democratic orders that he studied were host to unceasing and relentless struggle between the antagonistic classes. Thus, material prosperity, too, was no guarantee against societal conflict. Also, as a response towards the management of the same, these systems resorted to propagandistic and sophisticated ways of control and subjugation. In such situations, there became a necessity to create a charade of freedom and liberty to spectacle the people into manumission and restrain. Under the spell of this illusion, subjects in these systems develop a proclivity towards habitual compliance through a submission of their critical agencies, latter contributing in considerable measure towards the constitution of their politico-ideological impotency.

The critical component of Marcusian engagement had as its objective an investigation of the issues that informed the dynamics of power in modern state and society with reference to the epistemic and structural functioning that ideology performed in such systems. The conclusion that the theorist drew from his endeavours was that the modern liberal-democratic dispensations are, in actuality, not only bereft of openness and plurality but is hermitically sealed as well. Further to it, they are monolithic as well, by the virtue of the fact that as politico-economic aggregates, they strive towards developing a concord among their subjects on the objectives that collectivity as a whole should pursue. And the axiomatic elements of the said agreement were made of a concurrence around the idea for an augmentation of economy contributing to an increase in the standards of living symptomatic of which was an increased consumption of material comforts perceived of as a product of modernity. It has been argued that there is a class of people who actively participate in the processes involved in manufacturing the consensus amongst the masses with the objective to draw benefits. The said assertion though has been problematized as an intangible speculation without concrete evidence to sustain the asseverate in the ingrained argument. Reasoned doubt has been cast at the idea arguing for a residence of oppressive enforcement in the 'consensus' that the system under the regulative control of certain influential classes works to develop. In spite of such reservation, it is nevertheless true that elements of coercion are, indeed, a permanent and indispensable ingredient in the administration of the subjects in advanced industrialised liberal-democratic dispensations. Only its manifestation, with time and the advancement in conditions, become more surreptitious and veiled.

For Marcuse, thus, functioning of totalitarianism in these systems is such that it succeeds in effectively making itself 'intangible, unfelt, and invisible'. Liberal-democratic regimes, analysed on this note, thus become potent carriers of active as well as putative totalitarian objectives in their wake. Nonetheless, it is this diagnosis of the totalitarian question that separated its progenitor from other theorists making an attempt at the comprehension of the same. For in Marcusian understanding, it is the philosophical foundations of the discourse that go into the making of rule which is important and not the technical differentiation between the concepts of state and society and the relationship that connects the two. In course of doing so, it does acknowledge in concert with others, the relative modernity of the totalitarian phenomenon along with its ideological character embedded within which is the objective of total prepollence. However, the concept, here, gets delinked from being a particular agenda of a movement or political organisation and is rather conceived of as an all pervasive totalising idea operating as foundational bedrock prompted upon which is the totality of socio-political order itself. Thus, it is not a simplistic narrative of conflict between the diverse and varying within a state or society but is a reasoned enquiry into the totalising discourses and their complex trusses that entangles the state, society and its constituent elements in a relationship, highlight of which is the denial of the humane along with suppression of the 'real' and legitimate'.

It is in the context of the above that Louis Althusser's ruminations over the concept of ideology and its myriad functioning in the context of state and society become pertinent. For him, the process analysed above, is not limited to an interpretation of the techniques through which the ruling ideology finds its manifestation in the operative procedures of the Ideological State Apparatus. Neither does an analysis of the class struggles that is inherently

resident within the latter help in having an epistemic grasp of the procedures that define the Ideological State Apparatus as a site of high stake and contestation. Given the limitations though, it is true in equal measure that Ideological State Apparatuses also form both the method and medium through which the actualisation of the ideology of the ruling class undergoes a process of crystallisation. In equal measure, it is to be acknowledged that it is through this very process that ideology of the ruling class embarks upon an epistemic assessment of the form and the putative possibilities of confrontation of the ideology of the subservient/ruled class for ideologies do not have their conception in the workings of the Ideological State Apparatuses but they emerge from the social classes locked in contestation of class struggle. In words different, ideologies are expressive statements of social classes and accordingly germinate amidst the conditions of existence, practices, experiences and struggle that exercise a defining influence upon the former.

Problematic as Model: Conceptualising Totalitarian Phenomenon as Function of Regimes:

However, returning to the problematic at hand, if for Frankfurt School theorist the call of the task necessitated the concept to be problematized not only at the level of discourse but context as well, for Carl J. Friedrich, Zbigniew Brzezinski and later Leonard Schapiro and others, the challenge was to develop the notion into a theoretical model for comparative purposes. However, before that could get materialised in actuality, the thinking on the 'problematic of totalitarianism' came to be punctuated about by yet another realization. In the post-Second World War period the concept became part of a dichotomy between the ideas of democracy and totalitarianism. Second World War had thrown in its wake intellective problems of difficult kind. Not only was it, now, necessary to make causal sense of great human and material destruction that the war had caused, in equal measure, political theory, now, woke up to the realization in the pantheon of its thinking that where and how should it, now, situate the vitriolic ideas of race, genocidal thinking, dictatorial tendencies and militaristic expansionism. The situation became more complex with the realization that such negativistic antinomies were operating in the midst of that civilizational space which had hitherto prided itself as the beacon of humanism, reason, rationality, enshrined liberties and enlightenment thinking. This realisation attained the proportions of a paradox wherein now became the subject to ponder upon the idea that how could societies like that of Germany and Italy with much advanced traditions of humanist experience and philosophico-scientific maturity permit themselves to become hapless subjects of wanton lawlessness and anti-human spirit, thereby becoming sources of pain, misery and devastation at an unprecedented scale. In cue with this understanding, the academic community that followed the Second World War let their imagination of totalitarian phenomenon be much laced with the experiences of Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany and also that of Stalinist Russia. It can, thus, be argued that if the engagement with the theme in the pre-World War II period primarily belonged to its proponents, in the post-War period it began to galvanize the attention of its critics and opponents.

The developments, analysed above, were also punctuated by the changing 'world order' in the wake of the Second World War. End of war ushered in a triumphant and resilient Soviet Union with having politico-economic control over almost a third of humanity. Appeal of and attraction towards the call of socialism, much supported and trumpeted by Soviet Union and Chinese Revolution of 1949, was an existential force to reckon with in the vast territories of the world marked by countries that had just been de-colonized. This was also the period, which saw the demise of the idea of a multipolar world in global polity and the replacement of the same with a bi-polar arrangement informed with the hyperventilated conditions of the Cold War. Such a context, in consequence, adversely affected if not vitiated the new approaches to the study of the totalitarian phenomenon. The 'new theoretical turn' in the post-War period came to be laced with concerns whose origins lay in the hopes and fears of an ideologically divided and mutually antagonistic world situated in the midst of a conflict between the 'socialist East' and 'capitalist-liberal-democratic West'.

Given the context above, the task for Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski was to conceptualize the phenomenon as a version of autocracy with modernist origins. In cue with this understanding, as mentioned earlier, they strived to develop it as a model with distinct features to be used as a reference to analyse 'deviations' of regimes from the prescribed principles of liberal-democratic orders. The 'Six Point Syndrome' as the model came to be known about encapsulated within its ambit the following features:

1. An official ideology consisting of an official body of doctrine covering all vital aspects of man's existence, to which everyone living in that society is supposed to adhere at least passively; this ideology is characteristically focused in terms of chiliastic claims as to the "perfect" final society of mankind.

2. A single mass party consisting of a relatively small percentage of the total population (up to 10 %) of men and women passionately and unquestioningly dedicated to the ideology and prepared to assist in every way in promoting its general acceptance, such party being organized in strictly hierarchical, oligarchic manner, usually under a single leader and typically either superior to or completely commingled with the bureaucratic governmental organization?

3. A technologically conditioned near-complete monopoly of control (in the hands of the party and its subservient cadres, such as bureaucracy and the armed forces) of all means of effective armed combat?

4. A similarly technologically conditioned near-complete monopoly of control (in the same hands) of all means of effective mass communication, such as press, radio, motion pictures, and so on?

5. A system of terrorist police control, depending for its effectiveness upon points 3 and 4 and characteristically directed not only against demonstrable 'enemies' of the regime, but against arbitrarily selected classes of the population; such arbitrary selection turning upon exigencies of the regime's survival, as well as ideological 'implications and systematically exploiting scientific psychology'.

6. A central control and direction of the entire economy through the bureaucratic coordination of formerly independent corporate entities, typically including most other associations and group activities.[4]

In this effort, embedded was the attempt to subject almost the whole of recorded human history to a comparative political framework. This was evident in the argument of the authors when it was suggested that totalitarianism as a manifestation of autocracy "has been with us over long periods of mankind's history."[5] Following the proclamation of this 'theory', there emerged a raging debate among scholarship regarding the efficacy of the application of it either exclusively to crimes of Nazi Germany or to expand its ambit in order to bring Soviet system into it. This debate was, further, punctuated with the criticism emanating from the scholarship on the Left, which argued that there was an absolute need to bring about a differentiation between fascism/Nazism and Soviet 'socialism'. In consequence, they strived hard to sift the said 'theory' in the 'academic' discourses of the time.

Friedrich and Brzezinski's formulations, it be noted, did have its vulnerable aspects. The duality that it embarked upon to create was rather simplistic as it only engaged itself with positing totalitarianism as just merely an anti-thesis to democracy. Furthermore, the model lacked dynamism and was rather static in nature. Paradoxically, it strived to extend explanatory narrative to a dynamic system in the form of static features. It endeavored to stretch its ambit to an unmanageable scale wherein effort was made to fit into it, right from Nazi Germany to that of collectivist regimes of east-central Europe. It should be remembered lest it be forgotten that these regimes not only had diversity of contexts but also that of differences in functioning and orientation as well. At the theoretico-philosophical level too, the 'duality' that the authors tried to create suffered from inherent limitations. It was argued, in the Aristotelian tradition, that the trinity of autocracy, oligarchy and democracy[6] had greater intellective meaning both historically and particularly more so in the context of the diverse varieties of Twentieth Century political orders than the antithetical juxtaposition between totalitarianism and democracy.

Reservations towards Friedrich and Brzezinski's propositions led to, if not complete rejection than further refinements, in the 'six-point syndrome' model. While standing in substantial agreement with the broad contours of the 'comparative model', Leonard Schapiro nevertheless differed with his predecessors by putting emphasis upon the inclusion of the idea of mobilization along with the techniques employed in achieving that objective as a significant essential of the totalitarian phenomenon.[7] He, further, argued for a serious engagement with the element of the presence and use of coercive instruments of the state as mandatory for the perpetuation of totalitarian rule. Schapiro's intervention in the debate regarding the totalitarian question attains further significance by the virtue of the fact that not only did it incorporate opposition and criticism of the 'classical attempts' at theorisation of the phenomenon but, in equal measure, it responded to them with a constructive proposition as well. In conjunction with the opinion of Michael Curtis and Benjamin Barber,[8] he went on to argue that the applicability of the concept of totalitarianism may have elemental validity built into it in the context of

an assessment of German conditions under the Nazi rule and to some extent that of Mussolini's Italy, its extension to the extent of including pre and post Stalinist Russia was an overstretch.[9] It was also pointed out that the presence of rigidity in the said 'theory' that is its unwillingness to acknowledge the dynamics of change in the form of internal opposition and resistance, failure of the hitherto designated totalitarian systems to deliver on the promises or the expectations of the people, rendered the enterprise a limited endeavour.[10] After all, as these scholars pointed it out, these systems were not closed monads without any influence from outside but on the contrary there indeed were avenues and occasions wherein the ideas, opinions and influences from the outside 'world' did penetrate their otherwise seemingly impenetrable 'sealed' systemic 'box'.[11]

Broadly speaking, on a technical ground, the new scholarships or attempts at revivalism of the concept as it was christened later, subjected Friedrich and Brzezinski's 'theory' to following criticism. Their first point of argument was that the 'model' fell short of differentiating different regimes that it attempted to categorise as totalitarian. Thus, objections were raised in clubbing Nazi and Soviet systems together or putting Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal in the same category with that of the former. Secondly, it was suggested that the presumed dichotomy between totalitarianism and democracy was in need of problematizing than being approached and accepted with simplicity of belief. Dissatisfaction was also expressed with an absence of fixity of meaning or definition of the concept of totalitarianism. It was, further, argued that the said model was either inept or fell short of incorporating socio-political changes that marked both the Soviet Union as well as east-central European 'socialisms' in the wake of Stalin's exit from the helm of affairs. It was pointed out that there was a need to acknowledge the fact that "reality [had] outgrown the concept".[12] Critics also posited the opinion that the very concept of totalitarianism had, now, lapsed into becoming a cornerstone of American counter-ideology towards Soviet socialism in the hyper agitated context of the Cold War.[13]

Twilight of Totalitarian Discourse: Fall from Prime and Fade into Obsolescence:

As is evident from the above narrative, the phenomenon of totalitarianism lost much of relevance and fixity of meaning when we advance deep into the second half of the Twentieth Century. Not only its validity, now, came to be challenged but the concept also received spirited criticism in terms of its proclivity to be all encompassing in its approach. This marked the decline of it from the primary pedestal of academic discourse. The debate, however, did not die out completely. Now, was witnessed the coming into intellectual discourse contributions from a gamut of theoretical and academic positions. Scholars situated at variance from the positions of both the Marxists and their opponents saw in this moment the possibility to deny rationale to the concept itself. Further, some scholars also chronicled the use and misuse that the concept had been subjected to for prejudiced and pejorative reasons during this period.[14] A new development was being witnessed at the horizon which was incorporative of the suggestion that instead of the old dichotomous idea of liberal and totalitarian binary, there was, now, a need to develop a trinity of formulation namely capitalist, socialist and fascist and the last should exclusively be reserved to describe the 'nationalist' totalitarian experience.

While approaching the relative end of the previous century, there came into being an idea that has broadly been explained as 'convergence theory'. Through it was made the effort to comprehend and explain the developments in the Soviet sphere of influence beyond the category of totalitarianism that had hitherto been applied for the purpose. Objective of this effort was to pay due attention to reform and change in this system with reference to the arguments of industrialism; latter attempted to be understood as a ubiquitous and coalescing experience. In conjunction with this thinking, there emerged yet another opinion which posited the concept of 'post-totalitarianism'[15]. A need was, now, felt to broaden and wide-base political typologies. There was a requirement for them to be more elaborate and flexible. The new approach made efforts to fuse totalitarianism with concepts like authoritarianism. In consonance with this belief, Juan Linz applied the latter concept to study Spain under the rule of General Franco. There, however, still persisted a differentiation between the model/ideal totalitarian dispensations from that of the authoritarian ones. Latter were observed to be often marked by an absence of the existence of a party driven by explicit ideological concerns along with the hampered ability of the said regimes to mobilize people as well as their attitude of relative tolerance towards dissent and opposition along with the presence of institutional pluralism. With reference

to these differentiating characteristics, it was often argued that authoritarianism lied in the middle of political spectrum otherwise marked by the extremities of totalitarianism and democracy.[16]

In spite of the given caution inbuilt in the approach of Juan Linz, it, nevertheless, did not relegate the idea of totalitarianism to the realm of either insignificance or absolute meaninglessness. What it did was that it expanded the domain of comparative assessment of regimes to include the changes in east-central Europe in the post-communist period along with that of the ones habituating Latin American geo-political space. He argued that the concept of totalitarianism be approached as that of being an intermediate phase in between the break with democracy and that of the emergence of authoritarianism. Incidentally, this had also been the opinion of Leonard Schapiro regarding the issue earlier. Linz's expansion of the comparative horizon subjected the concept to sub-divisions such as 'ideal totalitarianism', 'arrested totalitarianism' and as mentioned earlier 'post-totalitarianism'. This, thus, made him an inhabitant of both the worlds of totalitarian as well as authoritarian discourses on the theme.

Democracy, totalitarianism, and authoritarianism – the new triad that came into being, now, was not being worked out to create a new binary between the first two concepts and project the latter as the antithesis of the former but the actual objective of the whole endeavour was to develop a typology or point of reference to differentiate between non-democratic dispensations; primary among them being the phenomena of mass/monist mobilizations and that of bureaucratic/pluralist types. Furthermore, the effort was to suggest that the last leg of the triad, otherwise situated between the first two, was less dangerous than the second one.[17] Also, posited in this approach, was the submission that instead of being in search of essence or fixity of meaning in the concept, the approach should rather be informed with the understanding that the model be dynamic with a fluidity of structure and putative of alternative. Suffice it is to say, now, that interventions on behalf of Linz, Barber, Stepan and earlier Schapiro prevented the idea of totalitarianism from lapsing into inconsequence as well as irrelevance through the 'lean' decades of 1980 and early 1990.

A 'resurgence' or a 'new-found interest' was witnessed in the study of the concept as the reality of the collapse of Soviet Union and other 'socialist' regimes of east-central Europe dawned upon the realm of academic discourse towards the closing years of the Twentieth Century. Now, was engineered a twist wherein the idea of authoritarianism was critiqued of being inadequate to analyse hitherto existing political systems in these newly 'democratised' countries and a call to, once again, rehabilitate totalitarianism to the position of the primacy of discussion was given. 'Suffering' and the 'lived experience' under communist dominance were presumed to be best described by the totalitarian model rather than any other political category. Rejection of 'authoritarianism' was conducted upon the grounds that not only did it surreptitiously extend an element of legitimacy to these regimes but had also been working as 'apologia' for the same. Reasons for the rehabilitation of the old 'spectre' of totalitarianism was best echoed by the French historian Francoise Furet who opined 'I am well aware that this notion is not universally accepted, but I have yet to discover a concept more useful in defining the atomised regimes of societies made up of individuals systematically deprived of their political ties and subjected to the "total" power of an ideological party and its leader. Since we are discussing an ideal type, there is no reason why these regimes must be identical or comparable in every aspect…'[18]

Such impassioned defence of the call for 'rehabilitation' though could not cut much ice with the academic discourse, which had otherwise run its course with an engagement with the concept. It was cited that such efforts lacked systematic argumentation and were, in equal measure, also informed by incoherence. Furthermore, the coming of the 'third wave' of democracy in the form of the democratisation of ex-Soviet space and that of the countries of east-central Europe had now created conditions wherein the dominant idea in political discourse had become democracy and democratisation processes rather than the ideas that had traditionally been representative of anti-democratic discourses. It, nevertheless, remains to be critically analysed that whether the much trumpeted talk about democracy and the democratization processes through most of the end of the Twentieth Century and the early years of the following had substance resident in them or were just rhetoric escaping the actuality of the harshness of reality.

Triumph of Democratic Rhetoric: Euphoria, Prophesy, and Euphemism:

On a triumphant note with much hope and glee,

following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Francis Fukuyama had announced that the said event had heralded 'the end point of mankind's ideological evolution' as it in its wake had established liberalism and liberal-democracy as the supreme form of ideology and form of government. Lest it be forgotten, it should be noted that the nomenclature of Fukuyama's text 'The End of History and The Last Man'[19] was deliberately designed to sound prophetic and exulted. Prophetic because it strived to invoke and declare, though with a limited and constrained meaning drawn mainly from an angled/motivated reading of Hegel through the interpretations of Alexander Kojeve[20], that the essential character of man is acquisitive, consumerist and individualist. He went on to argue that man's primary motivation to operate in society was due to his desires and notions of self-preservation and honour and it is primarily the latter that adds epistemic meaning to the world that he inhabits in and the social interactions and activities which he enters into and consequently indulges in. Paradoxical, as it may seem, he does not locate these ideas in the cultural contexts and specificities but attaches a universal appeal and value to them. Nevertheless, written in the backdrop of the crisis and collapse of the socialist regimes of east-central Europe and Soviet Union symbolizing the 'end [of] one of the most ambitious attempts at utopian social engineering in human history'[21] and beginning of a process of liberalization and democratization in that part of the world, euphemistically termed by many as the 'Third Wave' of the expansion of Democracy[22], made Fukuyama's assertions attain a language of triumph and pride.

Fukuyama was not alone in harbouring such hyper expectations and hope. Neither was his the solo voice to sing this melody of 'prophesy, exultation and triumph' of liberalism and democracy in the world. Such belief had, in fact, flooded the domain of academic discourse and had found many a willing host. There were many who were basking under the pleasure of having been on the 'victorious' and 'right side' of the Cold War that had otherwise marred much of the second half of the Twentieth Century. Robert Dahl, an influential theorist of democracy, too held similar opinions, if not in exact form then much in substance. He opined, 'the main anti-democratic regimes of the Twentieth Century such as Fascism, Nazism, Communism either 'disappeared in the ruins of calamitous war' or else 'collapsed from within'.[23] According to him 'before it ended, the Twentieth Century had turned into an age of democratic triumph. The global range of influence of democratic ideas, institution, and practices had made that century far and away the most flourishing period for democracy in human history'.[24] Thus, the collapse of non-democratic states and the trend towards the 'universalization of western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'[25] was a subject of much enthusiastic celebration in the Western world. Furthermore, it was suggested that the image drawn by Woodrow Wilson wherein he imagined a world 'safe for democracy' had finally been realized.[26] This was much in contrast to the guarded comment of C.B. Macpherson who way back in 1960s had cautioned that 'liberal-democratic nations can no longer expect to run the world, nor can they expect that the world will run to them'.[27]

This intellectual atmosphere of gaiety, optimism and celebration consequent to the end of the Cold War, however, was much short lived. It has often been argued that exultation and the spirit of self-congratulation widely prevalent in the last decade of the Twentieth Century was rather short sighted and was a result of overt enthusiasm and less of a sedately considered opinion. It remains a critical truth of our times that in spite of such a phenomenal ascendency in the spread and acceptance of the spirit of democracy, regimes and movements antithetical and hostile to democratic principles still continue to exist and rule.[28] Moreover, the situation becomes more complicated when it is realized that the contemporary terrain of international politics is much punctuated by anti-democratic forces of varying typologies ranging from nationalism, fanaticism to that of parochial identity politics of various and diverse kinds. In contemporary and prevalent politico-academic discourse, it is generally held and that too with much conviction that an articulation and assertion of multiplicity of voices and identities have contributed and enriched in different ways the meaning and practice of democracy. In these discussion, it is nevertheless, forgotten that the proliferation in the plurality of voices have in many instances contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of conflict, misinterpretation, misrepresentation and distrust leading to the constitution of a situation wherein is absent social and political cohesiveness. It, nonetheless, remains to be emphasized, though, that a reference and recourse to the language and spirit of democracy has become indispensable to the political regimes and cultures of the contemporary times as the question of 'legitimation

crisis' and deficit[29] has become central to any discussion about politics and society. Robert Dahl also echoes this opinion when he suggests, 'even dictators appear to believe that an indispensable ingredient for their legitimacy is a dash or two of the language of democracy'.[30] Ian Shapiro extends further credence to this spirit when he says, 'the democratic idea is close to non-negotiable'[31] in contemporary times. In agreement with Shapiro, Jeffrey Stout notes, 'nearly every nation makes grand democratic pronouncements nowadays'.[32] This opinion, however, received a critical reception by Henry Richardson when he suggested, 'in all parts of the world, the trappings of democracy abound, yet nowhere is it credible to believe that the people rule'.[33] Fareed Zakaria brought further focus to Richardson's note of caution by saying that though there is much truth in the widely prevalent discussion that the contemporary is an age of increasing democratization, can the global triumph of democracy be equated, however, with merely a triumph of democratic rhetoric.[34]

The Democratic Discourse: Contestations from Within and Challenges from Outside

The status of democracy, hence, in the supposed age of 'the global triumph of democracy' continues to remain a much-contested terrain. Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin in their analysis suggested, 'if six decades of modern public opinion research established anything, it is that the public's most basic political knowledge is appalling by any normative standard'.[35] This brings us to what Anthony Giddens called the 'paradox of democracy'. According to him, 'democracy is spreading around the world…yet in the mature democracies, which the rest of the world is supposed to be copying, there is widespread disillusionment with democratic processes. In most western countries, levels of trust in politicians have dropped over the past years. Fewer people turn out to vote than used to, particularly in the U.S. More and more people say that they are uninterested in parliamentary politics, especially among the younger generation. Why are citizens in democratic countries apparently becoming disillusioned with democratic government, at the same time as it is spreading round the rest of the world?'.[36]

This brings us to harsh truth that the status of democracy appears to be uncertain as, it is generally observed that, the decline in participation in political activities is accompanied by an increase of ignorance with regard to the most essential aspects of the working of democracy and democratic processes. And ironic as it may seem, it should be noted that these conditions are prevailing at a time when the world is witnessing an unprecedented expansion in information and communicative technologies as well as opportunities available at the behest of people to have access to information and news along with hitherto unheard of opportunity to exchange ideas and express opinion. The times are also informed with unprecedented occasions to participate in public discussion and deliberation. Yet, there is an all pervasive feeling which has most aptly been described by Robert Bellah in the opinion, 'since the end of the Cold War, what little seemed to be holding us together is coming apart at the seams'.[37]

Many a recent research in the fields of sociology and political science extends further credence to Walter Lippmann's observation of a bewildered, disconnected, uninformed, and apathetic public.[38] In words different, it is suggested 'nothing strikes the student of public opinion and democracy more forcefully than the paucity of information most people possess about politics'.[39] Thus the technological expansion has not been much of effective service to democracy. On the contrary what has often been observed and suggested is that technological advances might ethically be potent but not self-directing. Hitherto noticed and putative manipulations and abuses have become a possible reality with the development of new potentialities for democratic enrichment. It seems so because it is felt that though the communications technology has the potential to bring into existence an informed, engaged citizenry but it can equally lapse into spreading misinformation, divide, and alienate. Thus, this discussion returns back to a position of cautious concern reflecting in the opinion that is not the triumph of democracy simply a rhetorical triumph.

Contemporary discussions on democracy is marred by concerns such as 'disaffected', 'diminished', 'unrealized', 'at risk', 'frustrated', 'in crisis', and 'on trial' among other things. And, Robert Dahl is not the only figure in his concern for it. Michael Sandel gives articulation to similar opinions through his comments that 'our public life is rife with discontent'[40]; 'our control over the forces that govern our lives is receding'[41], and 'moral fabric of community is unraveling around us'[42]. ThedaSkocpol further opines that 'the great civic transformation of our time has diminished … democracy, leaving gaping holes in the fabric of our social and political

life'.[43] However, it is Jean BethkeElshtain who captures this spirit of disenchantment in its essence when she defines the conditions as 'faltering' and goes on to suggest, 'we find deepening cynicism; the growth of corrosive forms of isolation, boredom, and despair; the weakening, in other words, of that world known as democratic civil society, a world of groups and associations and ties that bind'.[44] In a much similar vein, Roberto Unger voices his concern through the incisive remarks, 'confusion and disappointment…have become the common stigmata of the politically conscious… ordinary working citizens are likely to feel themselves angry outsiders, part of a fragmented and marginalized majority, powerless to reshape the collective basis of the collective problems they face. They find the routes for social mobility for themselves and their children blocked in what is supposedly a classless society. They believe the people who run the country and its big businesses to be joined in a predatory conspiracy. They despair of politics and politicians and seek an individual escape from a social predicament'.[45]

Ronald Beiner adds to the above by saying, 'we find ourselves barbarized by an empty public culture, intimidated by colossal bureaucrats, numbed into passivity by the absence opportunities for meaningful deliberation, inflated by absurd habits of consumption, deflated by the Leviathans that surround us, and stripped off dignity by a way of living that far exceeds a human scale'.[46] Similar is the opinion of Lawrence Cahoone when he claims that 'many of the developed liberal societies of the world, and the United States in particular, are lurching into a future no one can foresee with a long list of chronic social ills to which liberalism seems to have no remedy. We are presented simultaneously with the impression of unprecedented growth and power on the one hand, and incurable social and economic problems on the other, a kind of chaotic stability'.[47] It is, however, in the opinion of FareedZakaria that we find the issue under discussion dealt in its crux when he says, '[Contemporary democracy] has produced an unwieldy system, unable to govern or command the respect of people. Although none would dare speak ill of present-day democracy, most people instinctively sense a problem. Public respect for politics and political systems in every advanced democracy is at an all-time low'.[48] Thus, we observe that from across the academic spectrum there comes a single refrain: democracy must be rethought at the most fundamental levels.

Debate on Democracy: The Emergent Calls:

In the light of the above, it is must for democracy, both as an ideal and practice, to engage itself with certain pertinent questions. Foremost among such issues is the idea of conformism. It has been observed that political systems in general and regimes in particular have an inbuilt natural proclivity to lapse into becoming a remote system desirous of prepotence. Not only do they yearn for conformism from their subjects but also actively work towards arrogating to themselves the 'right' to decide 'a way of life' and 'conditions' attached to the same for people while forgetting in the process that the actual 'sovereign' are the people who have given themselves 'a system' and it is not the other way round. A healthy political system must be a tangible experience and should be tolerant towards disagreement and dissent. It should strive to create conditions for an unencumbered and seamless ambience for debate and disagreement. There is a, further, need for it to be sensitive and attentive towards the ideas of self, identity, community, nation, state, order and ideology. As has been argued throughout this work that an ideologised existence might not stand in direct correlation with the establishment of a 'order' with the tendency to be prepollent. On the contrary, it should be noted that ideology, in itself, is not negative and an ideologised being may rather operate as a putative anti-thesis to the temptations of totalitarian discourse. After all, must it is to acknowledge that all existence is an ideological one and liberalism and democracy are no exceptions to the rule. Rather it has been noticed that the liberal-democratic orders, the supposed anti-ideological systems, may be host to daedalian labyrinths of anti-democratic trends wherein might be the minacious possibility for the establishment of a cantankerous order of totalitarian regulation and dominance. The reference for the evaluation of a functioning healthy democracy though should be its measurement in terms of the idea that how much of 'freedom it gives to its dissidents and not the freedom it gives its assimilated conformists'.[49]

It is an absolute truth that there is no alternative to democracy. However, it, in equal measure, is also true that anti-democratic movements and dispensations find possibilities for germination and growth only in conditions when democracy either falters or fails to perform itself as per the expectations of the people. In words different, when it becomes intangible, remote and downs an appearance for itself wherein is given a call for conformism and intolerance towards conscientious

objection and critique, democracy paves way for anti-democratic ideas and movements. In consequence, in order to avoid misfortunes that have otherwise characterized most of the Twentieth Century, it must have and express the maturity to appreciate and manage change, structural transformation and transitions towards state and society becoming more accountable and humane. It must not fall short of its brief of being tolerant towards disenchantment. Regimes and political dispensations must approach and have the attitude of perceiving civil society as the 'political other' or the 'conscience keepers' of states and powers that be. This, however, is not to argue that the citizenry should not have the onus to not cooperate with law and express 'reasonable restraint' towards issues concerning public life and order. It nevertheless, is equally important to have safeguards wherein the latter idea is not subjected to arbitrary recourse and misuse by the powers of the state. Political systems need to be committed to the thinking that it shall neither falter nor become victims to the trappings of the enticements that may encourage it to traverse the paths which lead to creation of a uniformed and regimented society. Both liberalism and democracy have to respond to these calls.

Mandatory, it is, for liberal-democracies to realize that societies are class-stratified entities. In it is resident with perennial presence, diversity of interests and conflicts. A political system must be responsive towards the perception of a society as an agglomeration of conflicting interests. It needs to be accommodative of and sensitive towards plurality of approaches and opinions, diversity of thinking and variety of styles and attitudes towards the ways in which people intend to conduct their lives. There is, thus, a need for liberal-democracy as a political system, form of thinking and way of life to be sensitive towards these challenges and responsive towards the call of change and transformation. In words different, it is to suggest that it needs to transform itself with reference to the challenges of the time in which we reside and also the one that shall follow the present in future. It needs to guard itself against rigidities, inflexibilities and antinomies that have a tendency to naturally afflict political systems. It can not let itself slide into complacency since many an advocate of it believe that there is no alternative to it as 'history' has come to an 'end' with the 'last [liberal] man'.

Eternally and fast changing world pose a reminder of the fact that the world, in reality, is in a state of 'flux' and there is nothing permanent in it except change.[50] It is, thus, an absolute necessity for it to project and engineer itself as a system that is ever more inclusive, deliberative, participatory, responsive and most of all accessible and tangible. That it is informed with sensitivity and dynamism. It shall not be enough for it to remain as a distant dispositif existing exclusively for the purpose of facilitating a structural definition for a political system or order of life. On the contrary, it needs to strive towards being an active and enthusiastic facilitator for greater equity and justice. Liberal-democracies either need to be equally attentive towards both its form and content or more so towards the latter. It is only in the wake of such a development with positive and committed orientation that liberal-democracy, as an idea and institution, shall drive the world towards becoming ever more 'liberal' and 'democratic', in the true sense of its promise and often repeated proclamations. Only then would its promise be fulfilled and it would live to the actual expectations of the people who have made it the most preferred system of politico-economic choice in the contemporary world. Failingly this, it too would suffer the putative to lapse into the same mire of insignificance as other systems in the course of the modern times and especially that of the Twentieth Century have done. Its failure to perform may also create newer avenues and possibilities for a return of a bygone world of authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies laced with ideological struggle and strife.

REFERENCES

1. Benjamin R. Barber, 'Conceptual Foundations of Totalitarianism', in Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), *Totalitarianism in Perspective: Three Views* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishing, 1969) 3-39
2. Frederic J. Fleron, 'Soviet Area Studies and the Social Sciences: Some Methodological Problems in Communist Studies', *Soviet Studies,* 3(1968): 313-339
3. This has reference to the belief that there were domains operating as 'Areas of Separateness' in totalitarian systems. Such 'domains' have been conceptualized as the 'private lives', family, theological realms, world of art, culture and literature wherein people in a suppressed and inarticulate manner continued to harbor disagreement, dissent and opposition against the 'order'. See MostafaRejai, *Political Ideologies: Comparative Approach* (New York, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995) 74
4. Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship,* 22.

5. Ibid, 13
6. Aristotle, *The Politics* (Translated by T.A. Sinclair; Revised and Re-Presented by Trevor J. Saunders) (London: Penguin, 1992) Books III-VI
7. Leonard Schapiro, *Totalitarianism*(New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1972) 20, 38, 45
8. Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), *Totalitarianism in Perspective: Three Views* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishing, 1969) 15, 18-20
9. Schapiro, *Totalitarianism*, 109, 112-13, 115
10. Ibid, 117
11. Ibid, 119
12. Friedrich (ed.), *Totalitarianism in* Perspective, 8-10
13. Ibid, 41
14. Schapiro, *Totalitarianism*, 15, 18
15. Juan J. Linz, and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)
16. Juan J. Linz,*Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Colorado, BO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2000) 159
17. Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic* Transition, 38-9
18. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, 4
19. Francis Fukuyama*, The End Of History And The Last Man*(New York, NY: The Free Press, 1992)
20. AlexandreKojeve, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on Phenomenology of Spirit* (Edited by Allan Bloom)(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969)
21. Richard Sakwa, *The Russian Politics And Society*(London: Routledge, 1996) 3
22. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Oklahoma, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993)
23. Robert Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) 1
24. Ibid, 145
25. Francis Fukuyama, 'The End Of History?' *The National Interest*, 16(1989): 3-18
26. Michel Crozier, Samuel P. Huntington, and JojiWatanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy*(New York, NY: New York University Press, 1975) 2. Also see, Samuel P. Huntington, 'Forward' in Susan Pharr and Robert Putnam, (eds.) *Disaffected Democracies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000)
27. C.B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1965) 3
28. SeylaBenhabib (eds.), *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) 3
29. JurgenHabermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, (Translated by Thomas McCarthy) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)
30. Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) 2
31. Ian Shapiro, *The State of Democratic Theory*(Princeton, NJ:Princeton University Press, 2003) 1
32. Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004) 4
33. Henry Richardson, *Democratic Autonomy*(New York, NY: Oxford University Press2002) 3
34. FareedZakharia, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York, NY:W.W. Norton, 2007)
35. Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin, 'Deliberation Day' in James Fishkin and Peter Laslett, (eds.)*Debating Deliberative Democracy*(New York, NY: Blackwell, 2003) 11
36. Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000) 90
37. Robert Bellah, 'The Ethics of Polarization in the in the United States and the World' in David Balstone and Eduardo Mendieta(eds.),*The Good Citizen* (New York, NY:Routledge, 1999) 13
38. Mathew Weinshall, 'Means, Ends, and Public Ignorance in Habermas's Theory of Democracy', Critical *Review*, 15 (2003) 23-58.Also see, Mathew Crenson and Benjamin Ginsberg, *Downsizing Democracy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2002) 234
39. John Ferejohn, 'Information and the Electoral Process' in John A. Ferejohn and James H. Kuklinski (eds.), *Information and the Democratic Process* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990) 3
40. Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996) 3
41. Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 25
42. Ibid, 2
43. ThedaSkocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civil Life*(Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003)

254

44. Jean BethkeElshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995) 2
45. Roberto Unger, *Democracy Realized*(London: Verso, 1998) 4
46. Ronald Beiner, *What's the Matter with Liberalism?* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992) 34
47. Lawrence Cahoone, *Civil Society* (New York, NY: Blackwell Publishing, 2002) 3
48. Zakharia, *The Future of Freedom,* 241
49. Reference in this context is to the articulation of the American activist Abbie Hoffman regarding the issue of democracy and dissent. (https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/abbie_hoffman_391027) (Accessed December 11, 2017)
50. Karl Richmond Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Vol.1) (London: Routledge, 2002) 7-14

****