



## DEMOCRACY IN DE TOCQUEVILLE THEORY AND NEW ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS

Vahid Amani Zoeram<sup>1</sup>

Lee Yok Fee<sup>2</sup>

Mohammad Agus Yusoff<sup>3</sup>

Fakhreddin Soltani<sup>4</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

*Since “Democracy in America” was written, theories of democracy have experienced a vast array of diversity and changes. The real value in reviewing Tocqueville’s theory, however, is its simplicity and practicality in comparison to other contemporary complex theories. This theory’s popularity in non-western countries, with their unique values and historical heritage, is attributable to these features. This study reviews Tocqueville’s theory of democracy with the aim of demonstrating its relevance to the current state of affairs in the Middle Eastern countries which are in the midst of a tourbillion of new democratic movements. The leaders of these movements are seeking democracy without liberal values as a result of their attempts to dovetail a democratic state with Islamic principles.*

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**Key Words:** De tocqueville, Democracy, Equality, Freedom, Middle-east movements

### INTRODUCTION

De Tocqueville’s well-known book “*Democracy in America*” is a classical work in comparative sociology which compares the societies of France and America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “*The Old Regime and the Revolution*” is one of first books in historical sociology which deals with and analyses the French Great Revolution. De Tocqueville is the son of the crisis era of collapses,

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia, **E-mail:** [zoeram82@yahoo.com](mailto:zoeram82@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Government and Civilization Studies, Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia, **E-mail:** : [leeyokfee@putra.upm.edu.my](mailto:leeyokfee@putra.upm.edu.my)

<sup>3</sup> School of History, Politics, and Strategic Studies (SOHPASS), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia, **E-mail:** [agus@ukm.my](mailto:agus@ukm.my)

<sup>4</sup> School of History, Politics, and Strategic Studies (SOHPASS), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia, **E-mail:** [fakhreddinsoltany@gmail.com](mailto:fakhreddinsoltany@gmail.com)

disorders, degradation of people's beliefs, and the instability of revolutionary French governments. As an aristocrat, he witnessed the decadence of his class which occurred as a result of the powerful trend of the advocates of democracy of which he himself was an affiliate. Such social and political circumstances motivated him to search for a solution to these disorders and a way to establish a stable democracy in France. Hence, he departed to New England and, while visiting the American society, he formulated a theory of democracy based on his experience using a comparative method.

Tocqueville is not much interested in general philosophical discussions on humans and the world and, although his moderate individualistic philosophy is manifested in his works, his books lack detailed philosophical discussions. None of his works deal with distinguished discussions on philosophical concepts of human, society, history, or even the significance of establishing a government. As a social intellectual, his method in *Democracy in America* is a comparative method based on experience and direct observation of the social phenomena. In *The Old Regime and the Revolution* his main method is analysis of the historical evidence in the framework of a sociological review of the pre-revolutionary social situation in France. Simplicity and experimentality are the factors which made *Democracy in America* a groundbreakingly timeless sociological work. This book simply demonstrates the superiority of democracy to other forms of government and simultaneously warns of the consequences of egalitarianism. In other words, although he speaks of the value of public ideas, he is not ignorant of the repercussions of extreme populism, which was popular in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Reviewing and rereading the ideas of Tocqueville in a world where traditional and modern dictatorships are fading into oblivion offers pearls of wisdom to those who seek a more effective and appropriate form of leadership in society.

The core underlying theme which permeates De Tocqueville's works is democratic government as the only viable solution for revolutionary French society, in preference to an aristocratic government. This study is an effort to interpret the concept of democratic government and its theoretical and experimental features within the parameters of Tocqueville's ideas.

## **THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY IN TOCQUEVILLE'S IDEAS**

In Tocqueville's works, one is hard pressed to find a clear and precise definition of *democracy*. To begin with, he considers the term democracy tantamount to the inclination for eliminating the inequities and establishing equity in all affairs of society (Tocqueville, 1968). This concept is De Tocqueville's central estimation of democracy, which he refers to and investigates from a multifaceted perspective throughout the course of all his works. Sometimes he substitutes the concept of nation, particularly the masses, with democracy regardless of any popular social discipline and order. Indeed, by nation he does not mean the whole nation, but he considers the nation and the majority equal, which is why he considers democracy to be the synonym of majority. In addition, in some cases, he utilizes the term democracy for the sake of regulating the public elections, development and advancement toward equality and equity, and eliminating the

superiorities, especially political ones. In fact, here he considers the mechanisms and procedures of achieving democracy as the definition of this term. De Tocqueville believes that from one point of view, democracy is a form of government, in that it exhibits such characteristics as liberality, freedom, religious freedom, decentralization, etc. and governs through special mechanisms. From another point of view, democracy is an attributive for a kind of social structure which manifests itself as a social life style, the quintessence of which being American society, which could be considered the very antithesis of aristocratic France prior to the French Revolution. Defining democracy as a method of ruling the country from De Tocqueville's point of view is the central aim of this study, which shall be presented in two parts: the theoretical principles and experimental principles of a democratic government.

## **THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES**

### **Democracy as a Form of Government**

Tocqueville commences his introduction to *Democracy in America* with a sentence which underscores his genuine vehemence about this phenomenon in American society:

“Among the interesting things I saw in America no one was so impressive as the equality and equity in enjoying the facilities. Soon, I understood that this factor has such a huge effect on social affairs and it is due to this equity that society has followed a specific path, the rules were received in a special way, governments gained new experiences, and individuals came into special opinions”(Tocqueville, 1968, p. 59).

He considers the liberality and equity as blessings of God, asserting that it was invariably “God’s will” that all historical events were in line with developing such qualities, along with various other phenomena like religion, civilization, science, trade, art, knowledge, urban societies, rules, etc.. He maintains that these laid the framework for eliminating the exclusion of power in society and consequently setting the stage for more equality. He believes that human desire for equality is one of the features of the human instinct and that it is even more powerful than the liberality instinct. He maintains that ensconced within the deep recesses of human nature there is a strong and legislated love which leads everybody to gain the power and making others respect him/her. On the other hand, the desire for equality is innately present in the human heart and the weak are perpetually endeavouring to bring the strong down to their level. “As a result of these two desires, humans have arrived at a level at which they prefer slavery accompanied by equality to liberty accompanied by non-liberty” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 140).

From De Tocqueville's point of view, this strong desire for equity is amplified when the first obstacles of inequity are eliminated and continues up to the point of complete equity (which is essentially impossible). The important noteworthy point here is that this desire consists of two opposing elements: inferior people desire to make themselves equal to superior people and in doing

so invariably attempt to raise their status on the one hand; in other cases, when inferior people are unable to raise their status, they may attempt to achieve balance by diminishing the other's degree of status through decadent means such as slavery. This would serve as a sort of equalizer between them and the powerful class.. Achieving political equality is possible in two ways: a dictatorial rule by one all-powerful leader or the rule by the citizenry at large, from which the American people chose the latter and, "in America, in fact it is the nation which rules" (Aron, 1985).

A point that is worth mentioning is that De Tocqueville considers democracy as equity of conditions and in his point of view, a society is democratic when the distinctions of religion and class no longer exist and all members of society are socially equal. Equality through social equity is defined as a situation in which heritage differences do not socially exist and all occupations, opportunities, and honours are available for all. De Tocqueville considers the American society an instance of such a society:

"[...] American servants are not ashamed of their job because everybody around them works; they are not ashamed of getting paid because even the president of the US works to get paid, he gets paid to rule, as other Americans who get paid to serve. In America, jobs are more or less difficult and more or less profitable, but never superior or inferior, all respectable jobs are honourable" (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 152).

It goes without saying that the disadvantages of such equity were not overlooked by De Tocqueville's. The first disadvantage is that there is a general tendency for inferior people to try to bring the powerful class down to their level, the major drawback here being the aftermath of equity. Furthermore, the second disadvantage of equity is that political systems ruin peoples' freedom of in that "when all people are equal, defending independence and individual rights when it is threatened by the governments will be difficult because it is impossible for the individuals to act against the governments and in order to maintain the liberty they should inevitably combine their powers" (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 140).

Of greater significance than the two aftermaths mentioned above is the abjection and ethical degeneration, which are the aftermaths of equity in society. "When the classes fade out and all people become equal, since the chance for success becomes equal for all members of the society, all people feel anxious and wary" (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 629). Such anxieties set the stage for the fascistic and communistic movements in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Freedom**

From De Tocqueville's point of view, freedom is a positive and generative factor in a human's life. The sole motivating factor behind De Tocqueville's interest in freedom was not his hatred of slavery or the materialistic advantages of freedom. He believed that freedom is in and of itself a blessing which should be looked for eagerly, all the while accepting all dangers and difficulties

involved therewith. In *The Old Regime and the Revolution* he states that whoever looks for something other than freedom from freedom is born to be slave (Tocqueville, 1990).

On the other hand, freedom cannot be based on inequity. Therefore, freedom should be established based on the democratic reality of equitable conditions and by use of the institutions whose models were set forth by De Tocqueville in America. The first element which constitutes the concept of freedom is avoiding arbitrariness. The solution to this is for power to be exercised according to the law to keep people safe from arbitrariness. From De Tocqueville's point of view, it is only freedom that

“Can save the members of a society from isolation; the isolation in which an individual is only busy with its own personal affairs and pay no attention to others. That is because it is the freedom which makes people contact each other and gives them the feel of active membership in society. In the society of free citizens, everyday it is reminded to all people that they should have meetings with other citizens, listen to them and exchange ideas with them to come to an agreement on the public interests. It is only freedom that is able to lead humans to a level beyond mere materialism and individualistic insular worrisome which is visible in the atmosphere of the daily life and alert them in each moment of their lives that they are tied to a wider existence; the existence which surrounds all of them and is flown beyond their individual existence i.e. the national land. It is only freedom that in some critical moments substitute people's inclination to materialistic welfare with a more powerful and more valuable goal and provide them with goals other than becoming wealthy and shed a light under which all people can view and evaluate their real wickedness and merits” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 14).

De Tocqueville believes that freedom is one of the basic instincts and permanent demands inherent in humans: he went so far as to assert that even dictators and aristocrats are among those desirous for freedom, the caveat being that such people want freedom only for themselves and not for all. De Tocqueville mentions two reasons for the maintenance of freedom in America: one is the superior power of religion in America, inasmuch as religion, the two being mutually strengthening and inextricably intertwined. The second reason is official decentralism against political centralism.

### **Religion**

De Tocqueville maintained that the success of American civilization is grounded in non-interfered cooperation of religion and social freedom:

“religion looked at social freedom as one of the holy human tasks and considered politics as an opportunity bestowed by God to let him manifest his talents and aptitudes and since he was free and completely powerful in his realm and seemed satisfied of the job assigned to him, he was aware that his governance over the hearts will be deeper and permanent if it is independent to and without political government's help. Freedom also looked at religion as a support and associate and

hopefully looked for its support and help. Freedom considered religion as a cradle and as the source of its own divine rights. Freedom assumed that religion, as the guardian of ethics and rules in the society, is the guarantee of its existence” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 123).

In considering the relationship between religion and the form of government and society, De Tocqueville focuses on an intrinsic factor in each religion, i.e. in the framework of its principles and verdicts, each religion believes in a particular kind of relationship between religion and politics. In view of this fact, the impact of that religion on politics and the government of a society is assessable. He believed that “when the will and the thought of the human is let free to look for its wants, humans will put the political society and the divine world in order in similar ways” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 584).

Therefore, the religious characteristics of a people play a major role in establishing their society. The initial habitants of North America (New England) “did not accept any religious superior power and in this way they set the stage for establishing the Democratic and Republican governments”(Tocqueville, 1968, p. 587).

It is worth mentioning that from all the groups of Christians, De Tocqueville believed that Catholics were more appropriate than others for establishing equity and equality of the opportunities for members of the society. On the other hand, De Tocqueville considers the indirect role of religion in America significantly more important because “although religion is silent about freedom, teaches people the art of being free in the best way possible” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 594).

De Tocqueville believes that in their minds, Americans mingled the principles of religion and freedom in a way that it is almost impossible for them to understand one without the other. It can be ascertained from this astute observation that democratic republics need religion more than any other form of government (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 597).

The reason is that “when the political limitations are eliminated, if ethical limitations are not established, how the society will be saved from abjection and degeneration? And how it is possible to get along with a society which is ruling its existence and has absolute power but is not obedient to God?” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 599).

De Tocqueville believes that religion is the supporter and guardian of society in the era of the collapse of the aristocratic class. He also believes that democratic society not only needs religion, but is also dependent on it, a fact to which the modern Western world may be growing ignorant. De Tocqueville found out that in American society at that time, religion was the foundation of democracy and freedom. The reason he mentioned is that:

“[...] they generally believed that calm governance of religion in America is due to the fact that religion and government are separate and I can absolutely claim that in all the period I lived in America I did not see even one person, priest or non-priest that disagree this idea. This fact reminded me of another point which was overlooked by me. After my research and studies on the role of priests in politics surprisingly I found out that no priest is found in official system. No priest is member of legislative parliaments and regarding others, their habits and customs forbidden their interference in politics” (Tocqueville, 1968, pp. 600-601).

In fact from De Tocqueville's point of view, the reason of the success of religion in accomplishing such a special task in developing democracy is complete separation of religion from politics, along with the fact that religion merely governs the hearts of the people and does not interfere in political affairs. In his opinion, if a religion bases its dominance on the will and tendency that equally exist in people's hearts, it can be accepted and received by all people of the world. But when religion is united with political government, it has no choice but to accept principles that are practicable only for some nations. It can thus be stated that when religion is united with a political government, although its power and dominance over a specific group is amplified, it should not aim to govern all (Tocqueville, 1968, pp. 603-604).

Even he believes that the politicization of religion results in its decadence: “when religion is tied to the transient earthly powers, it shares their fate and by elimination of the interests which hold the government, its power is also eliminated” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 605).

This was the fate experienced by Christianity in Europe, as it was united by earthly powers, and now that such powers have long since collapsed (19<sup>th</sup> century), it is buried in their ruins. Therefore, if religion is to avoid the same fate, it must be kept away from such powers. Two examples of such societies would be America and France. In France, the conflict between the spirit of renaissance and the spirit of the church, which is an obstacle to liberal democracy, and in contrast. In America, the close connection between the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom has forged the foundation of American society, because it is only a dictatorship which does not require belief.

### **Decentralism**

Centralism is the new covering for obedience, and it is killed by freedom, the very freedom which is adored by De Tocqueville. He wonders aloud how that the men who oust a kingdom sporadically and belittle the kings, could surrender to an agent indecisively. What is centralism really? In order to define centralism from De Tocqueville's point of view, the two types of centralism based on his standpoint should be distinguished: one is the official centralism which was practiced in the special affairs of an area and the other is the centralism of the political power governance which was related to public affairs of the society and included the common interests, and is necessary for the vitality and provision of welfare of the society. In contrast to centralism of the government, which

boasts numerous advantages from De Tocqueville's point of view, official centralism is very harmful and the only time that it is justifiable is in times of war. In this regard, he states that

“official centralism has no effect but making the people which are enslaved by it angry and annoyed, because it always results in weakness of the spirit of interest and inclination to the land and country [...] in other words, official centralism can be effective for an individual to achieve transient majesty, but never provides a nation with permanent and stable welfare and comfort” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 201).

De Tocqueville believes that even when an official system claims to be aware of all details of the people's local lives, it is not able to do so and this claim is only a form of deception; no matter how insightful and aware a central power is, it is not capable of being aware of all details of a nation's life, as such a claim would be beyond the realm of human capability. If it solely acts to achieve such a goal, it has no choice but to establish several complex systems and should weather satisfy itself with the outcomes of such systems or degenerate itself with a high amount of effort (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 207).

In his opinion, the worst situation is when these two governances merge, as summed up in the following statement: “it is known that if government centralism and the official one merge, a power of such magnitude will be created so as to gain an enormity of dominance over people, a dominance that will seize the will of the public and make them addicted to indecisiveness. Such a power, not only defeats and enslaves people, but also subjugates them through addiction and habits”(Tocqueville, 1968, p. 200).

### **Sovereignty of People**

The sovereignty of the people, **according to** De Tocqueville's ideas, is sometime synonymous with the people's will, and in addition to freedom, he also names it as the foundation and base of American democracy. In defining the sovereignty of people he firstly criticizes inappropriate interpretations of this concept and states that sometimes “a group buys the votes of people and names it the people's will and others interpreted the silence of a nation as their will and assumed that obedience of people gave them the right to rule. It took a long time until the heads of the public positions were selected by the vote of people and all people gained the right to vote” (Tocqueville, 1968, pp. 142-144).

Therefore, De Tocqueville defines the sovereignty of people as the public right to vote and states that sometimes issuing the rules is done, as in ancient Athens, in public squares with the entire citizenry in attendance. At other times, it may be manifested in the form of the representatives which are selected by the people and their votes and govern in the name of the people and under the direct supervision of the people. Hence, in response to the question as to who governs in a democracy, De Tocqueville believes that the answer is neither an individual nor a class nor all of



the people. In fact in the governance of people, it is not the “all” which governs, but a part of this all which is called the “majority”. Indeed, their government is absolute: “democratic government naturally necessitate that in the society the majority has the absolute sovereignty, because in the realm of democracy there is no resistant power against the majority” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 508).

The legitimacy of this dominance comes from the fact that the tact and awareness of the collective sum of individuals within society and the view of the majority of the representatives is more acceptable than that of an individual. This is based on the principle of talent equity, and in that sense is hard to be accepted by the minority. That is why this legitimacy should be practiced through the use of duress and coercion in order to make people accustomed to it. The other principle which justifies this legitimacy is the fact that the interests of the majority are preferred to those of the minority. This legitimate dominance encounters a problem when the society has conflicting parties, classes, or groups, because of lack of a powerful majority. However, when that majority gets the dominance, its power will be significant: “when the majority makes a statement about an issue, there won’t be not only a power to hinder it but also a power to defer its implementation” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 512).

After describing such power for the majority, De Tocqueville encounters a paradox and describes it in the following statement: “in my opinion, no principle is more loathsome and illegitimate than accepting that because of their governance, the majority has the right to do whatever it wants. However I believe that the source of all powers of people is the will of the majority of the members of that nation” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 516).

In order to respond to this paradox, De Tocqueville refers to the well-accepted ethical principle, i.e. justice. He believes that in all nations, the basis of right is justice, and a nation will not go astray from the path of justice. In the event that they do go astray, the solution is to return to the government of humans which is superior to the governance of people, as embodied in this statement: “nations are as the jury and as in courts in which the juries are representative of the spirit of the society, the nations also should be the symbol of justice which is the social spirit of the contemporary humans [...] nations are not able to act against the spirit of the human society i.e. justice” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 517). In that case, such a verdict should be questioned.

“There are some people who fearlessly say that since nations never exceed the limitations of justice and logic in affairs which are exclusively related to them, there should be no hesitation in assigning government to the majority which is the symbol of people’s will. But these are the servants’ and slaves’ words” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 517).

De Tocqueville believes that just as assigning total power to an individual in an absolute way is not appropriate, neither is assigning such power to the majority, because the increase in the number of individuals does not change their characteristics. In regard to the mixed government of England, he

does not believe that democracy exists in the general sense of the word, and that the power system in England is also in fact an aristocratic one. He concludes that the absolute power of the majority should be haltered by the law. Power without law which ends in arbitrariness is harmful. "That is why when an absolute authority and power is assigned without any law to a system, whether it is the people, democracy, aristocracy, or republic, the seed of arbitrariness is sowed." That is the problem faced by American society, as explicated in the following quote:

"When an individual or a party experience injustice, which authority it should refer to? The public ideas? Public ideas themselves create the majority. The legislative board? It is also representative of the majority and it was selected by them and it has tools with no will. To governmental powers? They are the majority which shows off with weapons. The jury? It is also the majority which was given the right to issue verdicts. In a number of states, even the judges are selected by majority. Therefore, there remains no solution for the oppressed individual or party. Each individual or party has no choice but surrendering against the injustice and illogical measurements of the majority" (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 520).

The practical suggestion of De Tocqueville for avoiding the spoilage of the rights of the minority in America is that dividing the powers in the constitution should be carried out in a way according to Montesquieu, which is essentially that the power controls the power. He writes in this regard that:

"suppose that a legislative power is established in a way that although it is the representative of the majority, it is not obliged to be the slave of the majority's whims; an executive power which has its own intrinsic power; and a judicial power independent to both of other powers. In such a situation, the government stays in its democratic form without any fear of possible dictatorship or arbitrariness" (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 521).

The question is how the majority's dictatorship is justified and what qualities it has in comparison to the individual's dictatorship.

### **Dictatorship of Majority**

Believing in the legitimacy of the dominance of the majority under the title of a people's government, De Tocqueville expresses his worry of the dictatorship which may be practiced by this group against the minority of the people. De Tocqueville thinks that the power of the majority's dictatorship is significantly more than that of the individuals. The manifestation of this fact is in the effects of this majority's dictatorship on the ideas and thoughts of the individuals.

"The thought and the idea are invisible and uncontrollable powers which belittle any type of dictatorship. Nowadays, in European countries, even the most absolute regimes are not able to hinder the trend and dissemination of the ideas which are against their power. But in America, this is not the case. Until the majority is in doubt about an issue, people can express their thoughts, but

when the majority proclaimed a final statement on that issue, everybody will turn silent” (Tocqueville, 1968, pp. 523-524).

De Tocqueville believes that although ideas and thoughts are free in America, they are only free within the limitations determined by the society and outside of the limitations determined by the majority there is a kind of invisible dictatorship of the majority: “inside this area, the writer is completely free, but the disaster is when someone dares to step off this limited circle” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 525).

In fact, the majority type of dictatorship is worse than the old individual type and instead of the bodies, it directly attack the souls:

“In democratic republics, the dictator pays no attention to the bodies, it directly attacks the soul and thought of people. The power in a democratic society states that all should think like me, otherwise they should welcome the death. The power says you are free and willing to have ideas against me and no one will threaten your life and your properties. But from the day your way of thinking is unlike me you will be considered as an alien in the society” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 526).

From De Tocqueville’s point of view, in old dictatorships sometime some books were written which criticized the dictators; for instance the plays of Moliere which were criticism of the French kingship. In democratic republics, however, even very slight objections are not tolerated, which is why America does not have any great writer or thinker yet (in De Tocqueville’s time), with even fewer great figures entering the realm of government. These ideas of De Tocqueville remind us of the 20<sup>th</sup> century totalitarian governments.

Ethical degeneration and flattery of the people are other repercussions of the majority’s absolute dictatorship. “In democratic republic villainy and degeneration spread over the soul and thoughts of all members of the society. Democratic republics supply the majority with the spirit and the atmosphere of dictatorship and popularize it among all classes. This is one of the aspects of democratic republics to be criticized and blamed” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 531).

This factor resulted in the uniformity and homogeneity of the thoughts and behaviours of American people. Furthermore, the majority’s dictatorship results in people’s villainy and ethical degeneration, because in democratic systems people sell themselves out by sacrificing their ideas. American ethical leaders and philosophers do not need to cover their ideas and thoughts with implications and metaphors, but they often start their statements with words like “we address a nation whose rank is high enough to not to be infected by the human weaknesses and villainies and never surrender to its carnal desires” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 532). This flattery causes ethical degeneration.

It is thought that democratic and republic governments are always threatened by the danger of collapse and fragmentation due to the variety of parties and groups, but De Tocqueville believes that what makes these governments collapse is not their internal weaknesses, but their overuse and misuse of the power they have gained through their governments. “The chaos which infects such democratic governments is due to their significant dictatorship and their lack of acumen and skill in government and it is by no means related to intrinsic weakness” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 534).

## **EXPERIMENTAL FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY PERSISTENCE:**

### **Village**

De Tocqueville believes that the village is the most natural type of human cooperation, even going as far as to call it the blessing of God; in fact, he bases freedom on the village institution. The function of the village in America is not just an official framework, but also a village spirit which makes its inhabitants love it. They “don’t love their village only because they were born there, but their affection to their village is because they look for a firm cooperation and freedom in which they share and they accept any difficulty in cooperating in its affairs” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 164).

In fact the independence of the village in its affairs is in line with the official decentralism in America. Accordingly, managing unimportant and banal affairs is far easier than managing important ones. It is difficult to detach individuals from their own existence and make them pay attention to the decisions of the government. In this regard, the individual should be informed that there is a relationship between a small governmental affair and his great personal affairs to make him aware of the fact that his private interests are tied to those of the public. On the benefits of such local freedoms, De Tocqueville states that “...local freedoms artificially create completely opposing thoughts and feelings (reciprocity, scarification, and devotion)” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 257).

### **Civil Associations**

De Tocqueville considers the freedom and abundance of the associations as the other factor which results in the firmness of democracy and freedom in America: “people of the US cooperate with each other in affairs related to public security, trade, industry, ethics, and religion, and generally in all type of affairs. When the social power is united with free cooperation of individuals it is possible to do everything and the human will gains such a power in this way that will not fail to do whatever it intends” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 393).

He believes that the basis of establishing an association is at first accepting an idea or theory, which is done in order to achieve a specific goal; its power is even more than that of the freedom of press. In the second step, the members of an association gather together for several small meetings and gatherings. In the third step, the members establish another nation within the nation and another government within the government. “The representatives of these people are symbols of the social

power of a part of the nation, as the representatives of the majority are symbols of the majority of people” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 395).

It is Civil institutions or, according to De Tocqueville, associations which are a guarantee against the oppression of the majority to people. This task was accomplished by classes, especially the aristocrats, in the aristocracy era. Freedom of associations effectively averts the creation of clandestine associations, thereby minimizing the possibility of plots. This freedom of associations, however is not devoid of problems. This freedom, for nations that have not experienced other forms of freedom, results in chaos. That is why in Europe, which has not yet experienced it, the establishment of such associations is considered as gaining power for a war against the majority and usually ends in aggression. On the other hand, in Europe, the establishment of such associations is mostly based on excitement and passion rather than wisdom. The other factor which plays a role in adjusting social freedoms and stopping the disturbances which result from the development of civil institutions is the existence of the right of the public vote, which is complement of the freedom of unlimited establishment of associations in America. He emphasizes that “one of the other factors which results in adjustment of the disadvantages of unlimited establishment of associations is existence of the right of public vote” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 403).

## **Jury**

Juries are the social institutions which, according to De Tocqueville, play an important role in the democratic education and upbringing of people. Such juries were founded for the first time in England and then transferred to America through the initial migrations, and played a major role in the establishment of freedom and democracy there. It had a significant effect on the behavioural characteristics related to democracy in America: “generally and especially in civil affairs, the jury develops part of characteristics and special habits of judgment in people and this habit to judge prepares people for being free” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 561).

Pursuant to De Tocqueville, this institution is more related to civil than punitive affairs. In addition, the jury reinforces the responsibility, strictness, and political piety of people:

“The jury develops in each individual a kind of judgment habit and makes everybody feel that he is responsible for the society and shares the governmental affairs [...] the jury, unbelievably develop the idea of judgment in people and results in development of the intrinsic culture of people and I think the main advantage of jury is this” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 562).

Therefore, De Tocqueville concludes that the main reason for the political understanding and intrinsic insight of the American people is the long history of applying the jury in civil judgments; in essence, it is the most effective means of educating people about democracy.

## **The Press**

De Tocqueville does not deal with the press from the viewpoint of its direct effect on political life, but he considers the effects of this medium on the customs and habits of the society, which create the political system of a country. He confesses that “my interest in the press is more related to prevention from degenerations not the advantages of it” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 376).

He starts the issue of the press with the more important issues of freedom of expression, thought, and press, and believes that there is no in-between stage between complete independence and the absolute slavery of thought, which is to say that “there is no middle stage between complete freedom and deprivation of it” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 378) because “expressing and writing are outputs of the idea and thought, but not its nature. The authorities may limit and punish the format, but the essence of it will finally escape from between their fingers” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 367).

Neither censorship, prohibition, nor any other type of limitation is effective on thinking. However, the media and the press are not censorable forever, a fact which may have some disadvantages for society overall. Indeed, the press offers certain advantages to society and they are in fact the requirements of government and democratic society because the main basis of the democratic governments is the public ideas and the press forms it.

“It is the press which combines the interests of the society with the principles and form the parties [...] when a great number of the print media step in the same path and accompany each other, they gradually gain an irresistible power and the public ideas which have their own way of thinking, surrender in confrontation of these continuing impacts” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 387).

Furthermore, the press plays a significant role in controlling and supervising the rulers and, like a watchdog, are constantly on the lookout for even the most miniscule of their faults. As indicated by De Tocqueville “it is the open eyes of the press which reveals the secrets of behind the scenes of politicians and makes them appear in the court of public ideas and defend themselves” (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 387).

Therefore, De Tocqueville believes that one of the important principles of a democratic government is the press, but he essentially means any public medium which was more popular than newspapers at that time. Later, thinkers named the press the fourth principle of democracy.

## **CONCLUSION: DE TOCQUEVILLE AND NEW ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS**

De Tocqueville believes that democracy and equity are the decisive fate of all human societies, and when the members of society come to the stage that they should be all free and all should enjoy equal rights, the governors of the society have no choice but to bring the people up to their level. He states that “isn't it appropriate in this stage to consider the gradual development of democratic

institutions and ethics in democratic spirit as not only the best solution, but also the only one. Even if the inclination to democracy does not exist, shouldn't we consider it as a medication and the most proper cure for the present maladies of the society?" (Tocqueville, 1968, p. 637).

Although this theory does not lack philosophical principles, it can be stated that it is one of the most neutral theories of democratic company which has the potentials to be implemented in non-western countries. Reviewing the ideas of De Tocqueville can be a solution to the questions of modern Islamists in choosing the method of democratic ruling as a substitute for liberal-democracy of the west.

The simple and practical theory of De Tocqueville is the substitution of arbitrary governments. This theory deals both with the social requirements of democracy, like civil society and the press, as well as structural requirements of the democratic governments, like official and decentralism and the governance of people of their lives. This theory can be a solution for new governments of the Islamic countries, since its implementation is not in contrast with the maintenance of the Islamic values in such societies. Development of the civil institutions, separation of religion from official politics and avoiding misuse of it, as well as maintenance and reinforcement of it in the society, the values of freedom and equity, etc. are all values which are not in significant contrast with a religious society.

Anti-dictatorship movements are spreading throughout some Islamic countries and are setting the stage for democratic political systems with religious values. Protesters' demands in all Pro-democratic movements of the countries include the demand for dictators to resign and allow other parties to hold power as well as for equal rights for minorities and broad political freedoms such as freedom of press and speech. Though "the awakening of Arab youth" was inspired by dominant economic circumstances such as corruption, rampant unemployment, inflation, poverty, devastated living standards and the self-enrichment of the ruling family, the core of these upheavals has been the demand for political reforms and movement towards democratization (Ekhtiari et al, 2012). Leaders of such movements, whether in Tunisia, Egypt, or Libya, promise an Islamic, independent, democratic, and development-oriented government.

Although leaders of such movements have not yet mentioned the form of centralized or decentralized government, all mottos and demands indicate a popular request for freedom beside Islamic culture. The leaders attempt to isolate themselves from radicalism and fundamentalism in order to show a peaceful interpretation of Islamic principles. Like Rashid Al-Qanoushi, they are after a combination of a western democratic government and Islamic values (Khoshroo, 2011), in which the western democratic-humanistic philosophical principles are accompanied by Islamic values. In other words, western democracy is accepted and valued as the method of ruling the country, but its humanistic and anthropological principles are rejected. The passage of time will show how successful they will be in achieving such a combination. It is important for these

movements to avoid an Islamic ideological state in order to distinguish themselves from Islamic ideologies such as the Taliban in Afghanistan. In fact they are looking for a democratic state supported by Islamic values as Tocqueville has explained on American democracy and argued that religion is a foundation for stable democracy and freedom.

Because of having experienced a long term of dictatorship in these countries, there is a great gap between society and government. The concept of jury, as set forth in Tocqueville theory, is the best way to make people more responsible in terms of public issues. Jury involves citizens in the process of governing and aware people in the realities of their society. It engenders an appropriate relationship between governors and citizens. Civil institutions facilitate governance and protect individuals against state power. Outcomes of previous revolutions in different parts of the world indicate that democratic constitution is not enough for a sustainable democracy. In fact, the growth of civil institutions generates a public sphere for participation in common social issues. In contrast with Egypt and Tunisia, the lack of a civil society in Libya in the process of the new movement for democracy led to a civil war. Civic associations, such as NGOs, educate their members on democratic values and encourage them to participate in the public sphere. In addition, increasing the number of non government institutions and civil associations prevents the formation of mass society, which is what most of the aforementioned countries suffer from.

Despite the process of development, many people live in villages and avoid all political issues. The significance of the participation of small societies, such as villages, in a sustainable democracy is that it reminds the leaders of movements that the experience of democracy in everyday life guarantees a democratic state more than legal frameworks do. Although in all of the aforesaid movements the leaders have attempted to change autocratic political systems to democratic ones, Tocqueville's theory reminds us that a democratic system needs a democratic society.

Due to revolutionary backgrounds that have caused dictators to come to power in some countries, new movements' leaders try to control the movements according to old or new legal frameworks. In fact, as Tocqueville mentions, revolution leads to the dictatorship of the majority as well as gradual individual dictatorships. The situation in Egypt and Tunisia shows that when the movement remains within a legal framework, leaders can prevent the dictatorship of the majority, thereby resulting in a peaceful transformation period. Finally, having various minorities is a common denominator shared by most of these countries. Ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity in these countries have impelled them to adopt decentralization policies as a means through which they manage their diversity. Tocqueville's theory offers them something they could benefit from tremendously: an appropriate framework for official decentralization and government centralism.



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