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DEMOCRACY: AN INSTITUTION WHOSE TIME HAS COME — FROM CLASSICAL GREECE TO THE MODERN PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

Nicholas N. Kittrie*

FROM THE ACCUSERS OF ATHENS

The . . . most basic charge brought by the philosophers against democracy is . . . expressed by Aristotle in his characteristic terse . . . style: "in such democracies each person lives as he likes; or in the words of Euripides 'according to his fancy'. This is a bad thing."

* * *

Plato . . . complains that under a democracy "the city is full of liberty and free speech and everyone in it is allowed to do what he pleases". He then enlarges on the deplorable results . . . that the citizens are various, instead of conforming to one type, and that foreigners and even women and slaves are as free as the citizens.¹

FROM THE DEFENDERS OF ATHENS

Never before or since has political life, within the circle of citizenship, been so intense or so creative. This corrupt and incompetent democracy is at least a school: the voter in the Assembly listens to the cleverest men in Athens, the juror in the courts has his wits sharpened by . . . sifting of evidence, the holder of office is molded by executive responsibility and experience into deeper maturity . . . "the city," says Simonides, "is the teacher of man."

* * *

This aristocratic democracy is no laissez-faire state, no mere watchman of property and order; it finances the Greek drama, and builds the Parthenon; it makes itself responsible for the welfare and development of its people, and opens up to them the opportunity "ou monon tou zen, alla tou eu zen" — "not only to live, but to live well." History can afford to forgive it all its sins.²

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1. ARNOLD HUGH MARTIN JONES, *ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY* 43-44 (1957).
2. WILL DURANT, *THE LIFE OF GREECE* 266-67 (1939).

Joshua Muravchik, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, argues that democracy is today America's central political idea, and that promoting democracy worldwide will fulfill the country's historical destiny.³ As United States' exports of food stuffs, automobiles and technology have been declining, taking a second place to the products of more efficient and less labor-costly Japan, Korea and Taiwan, many might view the exporting of this political ideology and the tools for its implementation as a particularly appealing way of maintaining American prominence in the twenty-first century.⁴

It is evident that democracy is indeed the new "buzz" word of world politics. The Eastern European countries previously allied with totalitarianism and the dictatorship of the proletariat are all now eagerly recasting themselves as democracies. In Africa and Latin America, military juntas and authoritarian regimes are on the decline, and the long exploited masses are clamoring for democratic rule. To benefit from "Most-Favored-Nation" treatment in their trading with the United States or Common Market countries, some of the most oppressive regimes of yesteryear now seek certification as adherents of the democratic ideal and process. With a few exceptions, including Iran and mainland China, there is no longer any country that seeks to have itself designated as anything other than "democratic." Since the recent collapse of Marxist-Leninism, it has become unfashionable for political philosophers and practitioners to speak out in favor of class or military dictatorship, or any other form of tyrannical government.

Why should the United States or its allies seek to export democracy? Has democracy demonstrated sufficient viability and merits through humanity's early and recent history? Has this political idea proven its beneficence to America and the democratic camp? Finally, is democracy likely to bring the same benefits to other people?

Of the ancient civilizations of man, few knew democracy. Neither ancient Egypt, Phoenicia, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia nor Rome attempted or advocated a democratic system of government. Even the Israelite Bible, committed to the pursuit of justice, truth and charity, failed to advance the democratic idea as a means for attaining these high objectives. Only Athens of ancient Greece instituted and practiced democracy as a form of governance, probably beginning with the Constitution of

3. JOSHUA MURAVCHIK, EXPORTING DEMOCRACY: FULFILLING AMERICA'S DESTINY 10-11 (1990).

4. See *id.* at 204-20 (discussing the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy).

Solon in 593 B.C., and continuing intermittently for a total of less than one hundred years between 463 B.C. and 378 B.C. The Athenian experiment, however, was short lived.

After early democracy in Greece, the next two millennia rarely encountered attempts to include democracy among the means of governance. Tribal chieftainships, feudal fiefdoms, dukedoms, oligarchies, monarchies, tyrannies ruled as the predominant institutions throughout the world. Such dictatorial domination survived until the concept of democracy was reborn during the American Revolution.

When the modern version of democracy first emerged in the United States of 1776, fewer than one million individuals made up the electorate in a country of approximately two million free persons.⁵ By 1850, Belgium, Switzerland and, to some extent England, joined the United States on a short list of democratic nations.⁶ By 1900, this list grew to include England, France, Italy, the low countries and Scandinavia.⁷ By 1950, all of Western Europe, except for the Iberian Peninsula, and the former British dominions, Japan, India, Israel, and Lebanon could be designated as democratic nations.⁸ Now, nine years short of the year 2000, democracy has spread throughout most of Eastern Europe, Latin America and much of East Asia.⁹ According to the reports of Freedom House in New York City,¹⁰ the largest percentage ever of the world's population now lives under democracy.¹¹

Because of democracy's relatively new arrival, it cannot recommend itself by pointing to its past attainments and lasting historical success. It is true that democracy has demonstrated great strength in the United States and Western Europe since the end of the eighteenth century.¹² In these countries, democracy has been accompanied by unparalleled economic growth and the continuing erosion of social barriers. Yet, democracy's expansion from a few modern Western European bastions

5. *Id.* at 73. Only male persons who owned property could be members of the electorate. *Id.*

6. *Id.* at 79.

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.* at 79-80.

10. *Freedom in the World — 1990*, FREEDOM AT ISSUE, (Freedom House Report, New York, N.Y.) Jan.-Feb. 1990.

11. *Id.* at 7. Thirty-nine percent of the world's two billion people now live in democratic nations. *Id.*

12. See MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 72-74 (outlining attempts at democracy in European and Latin American countries through revolutions).

to other continents and people has been quite slow. The French Revolution failed to produce a truly democratic government, as have the liberation wars in Latin America against the yoke of foreign powers.¹³ The European political unrest of 1830 and the subsequent revolutions of 1848 similarly produced constitutional reforms but without democracy.¹⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century, less than one dozen nations could be counted in the democratic camp.¹⁵ At the commencement of World War I, fewer nations could designate themselves as republics or democracies.¹⁶ The era between the World Wars proved to be catastrophic for democracy, as communism, fascism, Nazism and other totalitarian or authoritarian beasts gobbled up the fragile democracies that had come into being after World War I. Against this background, why is the idea of democracy suddenly being met with such great enthusiasm in contemporary politics? What accounts for democracy's appeal to contemporary men and women?

Reviewing the records of history, one is compelled to conclude that despite democracy's unprecedented appeal, there is a dearth of historical evidence which supports democracy on the basis of its past successes or its demonstrated applicability to people of diverse cultures, backgrounds and needs. Any attempt to assess democracy's future potentials and its long-term viability would merely yield uncertain predictions.

In a way, the new draw of democracy is due to the contemporary climate of rebellion against traditional institutions of authority. The American and French Revolutions drastically challenged the divine rights of kings. Likewise, the role of religion has declined in the past two centuries. The traditional authority of the family, as well as the power of elders, has also receded. Modern man is not willing to be governed by rulers anointed by divinity or put forward by considerations of status or wealth. Modern man demands participation in the selection of his own rulers. Accordingly, the democratic idea and process responds to the new demands of popular opinion by making the "people" both the rulers and the ruled. This duality appeared to be puzzling, and contradictory at best, for early political thinkers. For the men and women of modern society, however, it is natural.

It would be a mistake to ignore the increased currency of the democratic idea throughout world markets, making democracy an idea whose

13. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 73.

14. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 73-75.

15. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 79.

16. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 79.

time has come. Democracy's increased appeal is due, not only to the contemporary climate of rebellion, but also to the devastation brought upon world politics by the totalitarian ideas which dominated Europe and the globe in the earlier part of the twentieth century — totalitarian communism and totalitarian fascism.

If "divine rights" can no longer supply legitimacy, and monocratic rule and totalitarian regimes are no longer to be tolerated, what remains as an acceptable formula for political rule other than oligarchy or democracy? In the traditional and stable societies of the past where respected and well-to-do families maintained their positions of power uninterrupted over long periods of time, oligarchal rule supplied an appealing form of governance. In less static societies, where class distinctions are not permanent, and where individual fortunes frequently rise and fall, oligarchy cannot supply sufficient stability. Particularly in modern and secular societies, with blurred class distinctions, and education, mobility and individual talents supplying constant avenues for economic and social advancement, nothing less than a broad commitment to political equality can satisfy the mood and expectations of the people.

What, however, does democracy consist of? First, democracy embodies the right of people to be directly involved in determining their destinies. It stands for power sharing and a recognition of the right of those affected to participate in decisions pertaining to their common well-being. The essence of this right to participate in decision-making was captured by the call of the American revolutionaries — "no taxation without representation." Thus democracy stands for the people's participation in the exercise of power, as well as the people's freedom from decisions in which they take no part. So perceived, democracy is a symbol of liberty, an expression of the people's power over government and the ability to dictate governmental objectives and procedures compatible with the people's needs and wishes.

This was the primary meaning of democracy when it was first instituted in Athens. Democracy manifested popular discontent with traditional and unbridled authority and a departure from earlier regimes of kings, oligarchies, and tyranny. Yet, only a small segment of the total population of Greece directly enjoyed the benefits of democracy. In Athens, only men participated in shaping the policies of government. Women, foreign residents and slaves were excluded from the governing process. Less than 20,000 males over twenty years of age were given the opportunity to run the affairs of a community which may have con-

tained 400,000 people.¹⁷ For members of this select group, democracy meant direct individual participation in the legislative process by taking part in the deliberations of the Assembly which met forty days a year. Five hundred Athenian citizens were chosen annually by lot to serve in the Assembly.¹⁸ Fifty men from each of the tribes or wards of the city served on the Council of 500, which met every day and was described as the "administrative lynch-pin of the constitution."¹⁹ No person could serve on the council for more than a total of two years.²⁰ Many of the citizens were given the additional opportunity to become magistrates and administrators of particular enterprises through a lot casting process.²¹ Only the highest ranking officers of Athens, ten generals, one from each tribe, with authority over the administration of military affairs, were publicly elected by the Assembly.²² While Athenians considered the casting of lots to be democratic, the elective process was perceived as aristocratic.²³ This was largely because only those of noble birth, fame and wealth usually attained office through this method.²⁴

The Athenian democracy has been criticized by both ancient and modern commentators. Its process of choosing public functionaries, mostly by lot and rarely through election, has been described as a "preference for democracy over efficiency."²⁵ Plato complained that in its workings, democracy "distributes a kind of equality to the equal and unequal alike."²⁶ Later Greek philosophers charged that democracy meant the rule and exploitation of the rich minority by the less wealthy majority.²⁷

Two other accusations against Athenian democracy have been directed against its economic base. The first alleged that the system could not function without an elaborate system of compensation to the masses of

17. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 76-77.

18. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 3.

19. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 3.

20. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 105.

21. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 100. No person was permitted to stay in office for longer than a brief, designated period. *Id.*

22. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 104.

23. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 104.

24. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 104.

25. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 107.

26. PLATO, THE REPUBLIC bk. VIII, 1. 558c (Allen Bloom ed., 1991). *See also* JONES, *supra* note 1, at 45 (discussing the views of Aristotle, Demosthenes, and Pericles on the inequalities of the Greek democratic system).

27. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 54-55.

Athenian citizens who took part in the governmental process.²⁸ This payment system relied on the tributes paid to Athens by its allies in the Delian League, thus making Athenian democracy a parasite feeding on the empire.²⁹ The second accusation alleged that Athenians had the "leisure to perform their political functions" because the system was supported by slavery.³⁰ Both of these charges present serious challenges to the potential role of Athens as a model for contemporary civilization and politics. A part of these accusations is exaggerated, part is correct, and another part is irrelevant. However, since the limited space in this essay permits no adequate treatment of this topic,³¹ I will proceed to explore the less controversial lessons to be drawn from Greece's early experiment with democratic government.

Present day historians describe the Athenian democracy as having been stable and conservative.³² The stability came from the fact that practically all those with a stake in the community and its productive resources (excluding women, slaves and non-citizens) were given the opportunity to take part in the running of the city-state.³³ The conservatism of Athenian democracy similarly stemmed from the fact that all those in power had some other vested interest. Thus, the assembly had little incentive to redistribute the land or abolish the obligation of debts.

Athenian democracy must be viewed as power-sharing by only a small segment of the community. By excluding the majority of the inhabitants, Athenian democracy is more accurately described as a broad oligarchy.³⁴ Furthermore, while the Athenian formula emphasized the liberty of those with franchise rights, thereby proclaiming the political equality of all members of the Assembly, it directed little attention to questions of social and economic justice and equality.³⁵

In its American reincarnation, democracy similarly started out as a government by a wide oligarchy. Women, slaves, and people who could not meet property and poll tax requirements were excluded from political power. As in Greece, those vested with political power under the American republic constituted a minority of the population. This minority control continued throughout most of the American republic's history.

28. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 5.

29. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 5.

30. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 5.

31. See also JONES, *supra* note 1, at 45.

32. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 91-92.

33. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 91-94.

34. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 41.

35. JONES, *supra* note 1, at 44-46.

Not until nearly a century after America's independence was slavery abolished and blacks accorded civil and political rights. Not until 1920 and 1924 were American women and Native Americans, respectively, given the right to participate in the political process.

During the early history of the United States, many political philosophers considered universal suffrage to be unnatural and an abuse of both the divine and popular will, in the New World as well as the Old. It was considered preposterous by many that men and women, regardless of origins, educational background, vocational placement, proprietary interests and demonstrated ability to contribute to the public treasury through taxes, should be given an equal voice in the political arena. James Kent, president of New York's Court of Chancery and a leading American constitutional scholar warned in 1821 against bowing before "the idol of universal suffrage."³⁶ Yet, the notion of universal franchise finally won out. Ironically, it is this manifestation of an all encompassing political franchise which is generally being thought of when one discusses the contemporary institution of democracy.

Once political democracy expanded to encompass participation by a majority of the population, regardless of race, gender and property qualifications, new pressures began to mount to extend the goals of democracy beyond political freedom and into the social and economic realms. One manifestation of this shift is dramatically embodied in the triple goals of the French Revolution: *liberte, egalite, fraternite*. However, the new republic's "Reign of Terror" eventually consumed the Revolution's proclamations of liberty. The other goals of equality and fraternity, unattained by the French Revolution, soon became the rallying cry of modern socialism. In their writings, Marx and Engels argue that political democracy cannot be attained so long as class distinctions continue. Viewing class conflict as a primal force in history, Marxism claimed that only the abolition of socio-economic inequality through the emergence of a classless society would bring an end to political injustice and warfare.³⁷

While communism engulfed several nations, seeking to bring an abrupt end to economic inequality by means of violent revolution and

36. THE TREE OF LIBERTY: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF REBELLION AND POLITICAL CRIME IN AMERICA, 112 (Nicholas N. Kittrie & Eldon D. Wedlock, Jr. eds., 1986).

37. See generally, GEORGE V. PLEKHANOV, FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF MARXISM (1969) (examining the doctrinal and philosophical underpinnings of Marxism).

proletarian dictatorship, less militant forces calling for greater social and economic equality were being heard in the more traditionally democratic countries that followed in the American and French revolutionary paths. In fact, the debate of what balance needs to be struck between political and socio-economic objectives under democracy has been continuously debated³⁸ and remains one of the more complex and controversial issues of the post-Cold War era.

Contemporary democracy, newly professed by such diverse countries and regimes as Albania and Yemen, the United States and former Soviet Union, Mongolia and Yugoslavia, has become a many-splendored thing. It can function as a constitutional monarchy or as a republic. It might assume a presidential modality or a parliamentary format. However, modern democracy, in its many manifestations, shares a few common denominators. Typically, it reflects widespread popular participation in the affairs of government, whether legislative, executive or judicial. Unlike its Greek ancestor which favored direct participation, modern democracy relies primarily on the concept of representative government under which the people themselves rarely take part in the actual articulation, administration or adjudication of public policies. Direct democracy has ceased to exist, having been replaced by a host of governmental functionaries in possession of what could be described as the people's "powers of attorney." Another common earmark of modern democracy is an insistence on a strong and independent judiciary and system of equal justice, seeking to overcome racial, ethnic, gender and economic handicaps in the adjudication of conflicting claims.

What the growing crowd of newly professed democracies does not necessarily share are uniform or similar commitments to socio-economic justice and equality. Accordingly, a commitment to principles of distributive justice and to affirmative action is stronger in some democratic nations than in others.³⁹ While some democracies, like classic Athens, continue to be stable and conservative, others might be described as volatile and experimental. Finally, some countries, such as Sweden and India, might describe their forms of democracy as democratic socialism, while others, including the United States and the United Kingdom,

38. See generally HAROLD J. LASKI, *LIBERTY IN THE MODERN STATE* (Augustus M. Kelly 1937) (examining the tensions between socio-economic objectives and political authority in the Western World).

39. See generally Frederick A. Hayek, *THE CONSTITUTION OF LIBERTY* (1960) (examining political philosophies of developing democracies and their application to some of today's critical social and economic issues).

might refer to their formulas of governance as democratic capitalism.

As one observes the diverse expressions of democracy throughout the world, one becomes aware of the great differences in the contents and style of governance permitted under one comprehensive and tolerant democratic umbrella. For some, democracy stands primarily and exclusively for political liberty and equality. For example, a current textbook concludes:

Although the exact 'meaning' of democracy has always been a matter of controversy, there is a large area of agreement among such commentators as Max Weber, A.D. Lindsay, Robert M. MacIver, Joseph Schumpeter, and Walter Lippmann. The distinctiveness of democracy is that the people can choose and change their government The dominant Western view of democracy is thus *procedural*. It is characterized by free elections, free expression, and free parties.⁴⁰

For others, in the opposite camp, democracy is not possible without deliberate, and sometimes even drastic, programs designed to achieve more social and economic equality as well. In a recent debate on human rights, Professor Claudio Grossman argued that "the right to participate in government . . . includes diverse but inter-related components such as free elections, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, economic, social and cultural rights."⁴¹

For those in the first camp, the pursuits of liberty and equality are contradictory and conflicting forces. In his acclaimed, *The Life of Greece*, Will Durant insisted: "Equality is unnatural . . . liberty and equality are not associates but enemies."⁴² For those in the latter camp, liberty and equality are twin and complimentary goals. To some, private property is the foundation stone of democracy and liberty.⁴³ To others, collective and cooperative ownership are the essence of human well-being.

Talking about exporting democracy as Joshua Muravchik does, one might be well advised to be clear and specific as to what type or class of democracy one has in mind. Muravchik believes that democratic ideas

40. COMPARATIVE POLITICS: NOTES AND READINGS 145 (Roy C. Macridis & Bernard E. Brown eds., 1964).

41. Claudio Grossman, Remarks at the Eighty-Second Annual Meeting of the American Society of International Law, *The Human Right to Participate in Government: Toward an Operational Definition*, in 82 AM. SOC'Y INT'L L. PROC., 505, 510 (1988).

42. WILL DURANT, *THE LIFE OF GREECE* 112 (1939).

43. FREDERICK A. HAYEK, *THE ROAD TO SERFDOM* 69-70 (1944).

won the Cold War for America⁴⁴ and now the country has “the opportunity of a lifetime”⁴⁵ to take advantage of weakened structures and decayed will of the former Soviet Union in order to democratize that nation and its former satraps.⁴⁶ He deems this mission to be “by far the highest goal of U.S. foreign policy.”⁴⁷ To miss this chance for achieving a basic political change worldwide would be “unforgivable.”⁴⁸

Yet, neither Muravchik nor the other proponents of democracy seem to realize the complexity and difficulty of the task at hand. The fathers of Islam, as well as the fathers of Christianity, have viewed their mission as simple: to spread their faith throughout the world. Subsequent societies have discovered that Islam can assume many diverse manifestations, Sunni, Shiite and several others, with each representing itself as the only true belief. Christianity, likewise, has been represented not by a unified faith, but by one divided by divisiveness, schisms, and internal warfare. Nearly two thousand years after the birth of Christianity, efforts to increase unity and reduce hostility within the Christian camp have failed to be fully successful. The picture is not much different in the camps of Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. One wonders if similar developments and schisms are not likely to develop within the fast growing camp of democracy.

Muravchik believes that only the democratic idea can consistently deliver what it promises. However, in advocating the cause of democracy, Muravchik points out a deep irony which underscores both the weakness and strength of this ideology: “other ideologies promise happiness; democracy promises only the freedom to pursue happiness”⁴⁹

It is in this very assertion, which represents the belief that democracy is merely a method for decision making, rather than a commitment to a specified just and beneficent outcome, that one might find the seeds of future dissention and conflict within the democratic camp. People who agree on procedures of governance but not on final outcomes are as likely to develop hostility towards each other as are those who profess equal ends but are not committed to similar procedures. Muravchik and other recent writers have alluded to democracy’s special blessings, in-

44. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 1-2.

45. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 227.

46. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 223-27.

47. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 7.

48. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 227.

49. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 3.

cluding the "near miraculous" fact that democracies almost never make war on each other.⁵⁰ But this observation has not stood the test of time and is derived from observations of a world in which democratic nations have constituted a mere minority. There is no guarantee, in a world populated by self-proclaimed democratic nations of various styles and stripes, that international disagreements are likely to disappear. It is often the individuals, groups and nations who profess the greatest affinity toward each other that are also likely to engage in the most bitter and bloody struggles against one another.

Neither should one overlook the growing trend witnessed at the conclusion of the twentieth century toward the unraveling of the traditional nation-state. The end of totalitarian and authoritarian governance seems to be unleashing a growing tendency for domestic dissention between various ethnic, religious, linguistic, economic and political communities. Athenian democracy flourished briefly within a well defined and homogeneous community. Can modern democracy offer similar stability to more diverse and pluralist nations? Recent evidence raises grave doubts about democracy's current ability to deal with the explosion of pluralistic expectations.

One final thought ought to be offered as an expression of consolation and hope. Even though commenced primarily as a system of political governance and equality, democracy's tendency to reach out to a broad spectrum of the population is likely to serve as a stimulating and active force in fostering socio-economic equality. Thus, democracy is a medium which metamorphasizes into a message. As larger and diverse popular masses are given the opportunity to participate in the political process, the more likely it becomes that greater public attention will be directed also toward the pursuit of greater social and economic justice.

One can well document throughout the outgoing century parallel developments in diverse democratic societies of both the democratic socialist and democratic capitalist camps, which reflect such greater striving for socio-economic justice in the areas of education, health and welfare. If this development continues into the future, one may well forecast the emergence of a world community of nations devoted, not only to similar libertarian procedures, but also to similar egalitarian objectives. In such a world, the historical conflict between nations, classes and ideologies might be greatly curtailed if not totally eliminated. However, this too might not be the end of history. While some seem to be certain that democracy is the political program "most naturally and

50. MURAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 8.

universally adapted to human nature," this proposition might not be all that well proven to others.⁵¹ As the American republic has been celebrating the bicentennial of its founding, many political observers have expressed serious doubts about the successful attainment of the American dream. Serious criticisms of America's accomplishments to date are being increasingly voiced,⁵² stressing critical shortcomings in the workings of American democracy. For example, Slater argues that American democracy has become overburdened with bureaucracy, centralization and other anti-libertarian forces.⁵³ He writes:

Everyone talks about democracy, but few people have any idea why it exists, why it is happening now, or where it will lead. Most people see it as a merely political phenomenon — which is a little like seeing TV as merely an electrical phenomenon.⁵⁴

Dionne argues that both liberals and conservatives have been driving the American people away from politics, because both groups distrust "the people" and want to institutionalize their ideological agendas without the interference of the actual voters.⁵⁵ Ehrenhalt similarly complains that America's political leaders, from town halls to the White House, are essentially self-selected.⁵⁶ He argues that the country is governed by people whose business is running for office, not governing.⁵⁷

As one attempts to assess the recent literature about the accomplishments and prospects of democracy in America, one becomes concerned that in seeking to perfect democracy as a process of governance, the United States might have alienated democracy's prime movers — the electors. Some analysts of the Athenian democracy conclude that Athens' main accomplishment was its ability to maintain the interest of its citizenry in public affairs. Through its resort to the direct democratic

51. MARAVCHIK, *supra* note 3, at 1.

52. See generally, PHILIP SLATER, *A DREAM DEFERRED: AMERICA'S DISCONTENT AND THE SEARCH FOR A NEW DEMOCRATIC IDEAL* (1991) (criticizing authoritarian assumptions prevalent in America's democratic institutions and traditions); E. J. DIONNE, JR., *WHY AMERICANS HATE POLITICS: THE DEATH OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS* (1991) (arguing that the polarization of American politics into trivial liberal and conservative issues prevents the nation from moving forward); ALAN EHRENHALT, *THE UNITED STATES OF AMBITION* (1991) (arguing that the election of politicians in the United States does not reflect the judgment of the electorate).

53. SLATER, *supra* note 52, at 10-22.

54. SLATER, *supra* note 52, at 4.

55. DIONNE, *supra* note 52, at 9-18.

56. EHRENHALT, *supra* note 52, at 5-24.

57. EHRENHALT, *supra* note 52, at 18-19.

process, Athens was able to keep its people involved in the actual legislative, executive and judicial workings. By transplanting the democratic idea to a larger continent with populations in the hundreds of millions, the United States has possibly placed too much reliance on the delegation of powers. Such delegation places much too great a distance between the citizen and his or her government. Unless this distance can be condensed and overcome by innovative techniques of governance, democracy may discover that the proclaimed beneficiaries of its work, the people, will feel too distant and disinterested to guarantee its effective functioning, reform, and even its very survival.