

## **Question**

Minimalist theories of democracy are somewhat reduced conceptions of democracy that abandon the pre-determined goals of classical democratic doctrines. Currently, these theories are considered mostly as definitions that separate minimalist conceptions from more exacting theories of democracy, and the value judgments attached to them are little more than functional conveniences. However, minimalism has potential to exist as a normative theory in its own right, since it provides democratic government the ability to accommodate a wider range of traditions and ideals as it expands over the globe. The question, therefore, is: Is a minimalist conception of democracy better suited than more demanding theories when it comes to promoting normative outcomes within a given democracy?

## **The Nature of the Problem**

The difficulty approached is not so much a problem to be solved as it is a perspective to be added. The problem is that little attention is paid to minimalist theory's normative potential, so therefore a predominantly negative existing connotation of minimalist conceptions of democracy diminishes these approaches' potential role. These conceptions often originate under the auspices of a demand for observability and an idea of the least that can be expected from democracy. This approach has prevented minimalist theories from being considered as something thought of as not only adequate, but beneficial.

This problem is normative in that I will seek to establish the normatively desirable qualities for which minimalist theories provide. Yet, it has an empirical aspect in that these benefits are received within the empirical realm, due largely to minimalist conceptions' origins as accommodating observability. Also, there is the simple fact that the argument concerns how the application of a minimalist conception would improve tangible politics, rather than serve more abstract theoretical ends.

Although there is some interplay between normative and empirical approaches, there is no empirical analysis as of yet, since the overall nature of the argument is hypothetical. It is not a measure of theory's impact, since a minimalist conception is not quantifiable: minimalism is more of an approach to democracy than a type of government to be instated. Therefore, the argument suggests the benefits to be derived from the fulfillment of this approach.

As in Adam Przeworski's Democracy and Development (2000), attempts have been made to quantitatively classify democracy along minimalist criteria. However, the problem with these classifications is that they are a much better example of a minimalist definition than a minimalist theoretical approach. As a result, these "minimalist democracies" are little more than countries which satisfy a set of minimal criteria supplied for democracy. Through these means, democracies are distinguished from dictatorships, but little is revealed concerning how a minimalist conception compares to a thick conception within a given democracy. The full thesis will examine what is available or not available in terms of empirical analysis, but the presence of data is unlikely, since "minimalist democracy" does not exist as a category within democracy, and any attempt to set it as such would be highly subjective.

The significance that comes from addressing the problem is found both within and across countries. Within a country, a minimalist approach is a means to finding ideal policy in a way that is determined through authentic popular sentiment, and is also changeable through time. Across countries, minimalist conceptions of democracy allow democracy to be accessible to countries abandoning dictatorships. Of course, these are related in that these nascent democracies partake in the significance afforded within a country.

### **Literature Review**

My question is based on the premise that the normative potential of minimalist democratic conceptions is only partially explored by the authors who propose them. My overall comment on the existing minimalist literature is that it utilizes minimalist theory mostly as a definition, which is to say it is not assigned its share of benefits or drawbacks in itself as a theory. Instead, it is treated as a definition that is acceded to in order to draw a functional division between democracies and non-democracies. What I would like to do is project the outcomes generated by a minimalist conception of democracy in order to argue that minimalist theory is not only a way to define democracy, but also a means to enhance its quality as well by allowing different electorates to further their varied, changing interests.

The first author to be considered is Adam Przeworski, who put forth his minimalist conception in Democracy and the Market (1991) and "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense" (1999). In these works, Przeworski simply defines minimalist democracy as "a system in which parties lose elections."<sup>1</sup> He compares this approach to consensus-based theories of democracy and states the infeasibility of the

latter, whether they are based on *a priori* rationality or deliberation, with the weak point of both means to consensus being the simple presence of irreconcilable differences in society.<sup>2</sup>

This point relates to what Przeworski regards as the value of a minimalist approach, that value being the peaceful transfer of power, enacted through regular elections. Przeworski comes to this conclusion by asserting that minimalist theory provides for compliance in a social choice scenario.<sup>3</sup> In cases where a party loses an election, it gains higher utility by accepting the results than subverting the system. Also, a victorious party is better off holding the next scheduled election rather than canceling or postponing it.

Przeworski's argument that fallible elected officials must be subject to turnover does hold normative value, yet a number of his conclusions are reached only relatively to thicker conceptions of democracy, and therefore do not stand alone. While Przeworski clearly differentiates his theory from consensus-based approaches, he mostly stops at the point of definition. When he does assign values to minimalist theory, they do not relate to the quality of a particular democracy operating on the premises of minimalist doctrine, but instead they pertain to minimalism's feasibility as a definition or its ability to sustain democratic government.<sup>4</sup> While these are important arguments, they do not make the argument that a minimalist conception of democracy yields a democracy of higher quality.

While much less explicit, Joseph Schumpeter's analysis in Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy (1942) makes points similar to Przeworski's. Schumpeter begins with classical consensus-based democratic doctrine, stating that it lacks both rational unity and

rational sanction; the former meaning it cannot happen and the latter stating its results are not necessarily valid in themselves.<sup>5</sup> Also, Schumpeter states that acceptance of classical doctrine has survived as long as it has only through external political factors, such as social homogeneity, unifying religious beliefs, and politicians' desire to flatter their constituencies.<sup>6</sup>

In opposition to classical doctrine, Schumpeter puts forth his own theory of democracy, which consists of an institutional arrangement wherein individuals acquire power to make decisions by competing for the people's vote.<sup>7</sup> However, Schumpeter neglects normative arguments in favor of a criterion of observability. His arguments on behalf of a minimalist approach's merit are based not its value or even its value relative to classical doctrine, but only on its ability to be observed empirically. Schumpeter states, "The principle of democracy then merely means that the reins of government should be handed to those who command more support than do any of the competing individuals or team."<sup>8</sup> While observability is a worthwhile standard, it lacks normative value. On the whole, Schumpeter is very defensive in tone, wishing only to secure his characterization of democracy without stating its benefits to democracy. He promotes his minimalist view as clarifying discrepancies found within classical doctrine, but he does little to embark on a discussion of minimalism's benefits in itself.

While operating within a philosophical and historical analysis rather than a political one, Karl Popper sets forth concepts of minimalism as well. In The Open Society and Its Enemies (1963), Popper preaches a break from the intellectual heritage left by the "great men" of the past, whom he criticizes as being anti-freedom because of their support of sovereignty.<sup>9</sup> He rejects the concept of sovereignty in favor of elections,

stating that the imperfections and uncertainties of elections are preferable to the prospect of tyranny found within sovereignty.<sup>10</sup> Like Przeworski, Popper sets a major division between democracies and other systems, but while Przeworski states that democracies are made by periodically evicting officials, Popper asserts that democracies are a system wherein one administration can be replaced by another without bloodshed.<sup>11</sup>

Since it makes no mention of popular contribution to government, Popper's dichotomy between bloody and bloodless means of government transition is tenuous in itself as a measure for democracy. Like Przeworski's definition, Popper's has obvious normative value in that bloodshed cannot be considered desirable, but the premise is lacking in many areas. Similar to the previous authors mentioned, Popper's minimalism is mostly presented only in a comparative sense. Rather than advancing minimalist theory into its implications for a particular democracy, he only argues that it is preferable to more demanding theories and will allow democracies to last.

Another comparative work, one that is explicitly so, is William Riker's Liberalism Against Populism (1982). Within a social choice framework, Riker assesses the viability of liberalism and populism. Riker's "liberalism" is a relatively minimalist definition, based on the Madisonian view of a system wherein officials are controlled by being subjected to periodic elections.<sup>12</sup> While Riker's is a highly simplified version of Madison's perspective, it is functional for his purposes. Riker's conception of populism is based on Rousseauian democracy, a system based on citizens' direct participation in policy decisions and the "will of the people."<sup>13</sup> This view is indicative of the classical doctrines rejected by minimalist authors, and Riker's analysis disproves populism's compatibility with social choice theory. While Riker states that liberalism (minimalism,

using Riker's definition) can co-exist with social choice theory, he has no evaluations of it beyond that.

In Russell Hardin's Liberalism, Constitutionalism, and Democracy (1999), the author does not lay out a minimalist theory, but his comments on contract democracy certainly hint towards it. Hardin comments, "We think different individuals may have different rights and goods that are all valid. Then why would we expect we would agree? Experience suggests that we would not. Theory so far has had nothing of interest to say on this question."<sup>14</sup> Here, Hardin appears to be suggesting minimalism through acquiescence. Therefore, like the other authors mentioned, minimalism is outlined as something that merely exists as an option turned to when rational consensus cannot be reached, not as a theory that entails its own values and goals.

### **Structure of the Argument**

My view of minimalist theories of democracy is based largely on the work of Adam Przeworski, who, as previously noted, characterizes democracy as "a system in which parties lose elections." However, Przeworski does little to explore a minimalist conception's effects on the quality of democracy, rather than its ability to sustain democratic government. Other minimalist theorists, namely Karl Popper and Joseph Schumpeter, draw a division between minimalist theory and early classical doctrine, but they do little more than state minimalism as a way to differentiate democracy from dictatorship.

Minimalist democratic theory has much more potential than this. The existing literature on the topic of minimalist conceptions of democracy treats it as only a definition to be substantiated or unsubstantiated, but minimalist theories have a normative

aspect that is desirable, considering a number of arguments. These arguments are based on the premise that a single conception of the ideal, which is required by exacting theories of democracy, is unattainable since a given democracy's goals at any time are temporary, not to mention that they vary significantly across democracies. Therefore, minimalist conceptions further the quality of a democracy by making it more effective at measuring and implementing the varying objectives of given societies, namely through valid elections that are fully expressive of popular opinion.

The benefits of minimalist theory can be divided into two main premises: that it is desirable by virtue of being a capacious rule of democracy, and that minimalist theory itself leads to desirable outcomes, achieved through an effective expression of a society's ideal at a given time through elections.

A capacious rule of democracy is necessary to accommodate democracy's spread. The explosion of democracy in the postwar world is a development that holds importance not only to researchers of international politics, but to theorists as well.<sup>15</sup> As democracy gains wider implementation throughout the world, it is influenced by various political traditions, so therefore increased acceptance of democracy is subjected to many interpretations. Norberto Bobbio touches on this point while discussing the differences between "formal" (minimalist) and "substantive" (thick) conceptions. He states, "Every regime is democratic according to the meaning of democracy presumed by its defendants, and undemocratic in the sense upheld by its detractors."<sup>16</sup>

One could argue that this cheapens democracy or weakens its coherence, but subjectivity actually operates in democracy's favor. Democracy should be a system open to interpretation; this makes it both truer to its purpose as popular rule and increases its

acceptance since it is palatable to nations of varying traditions. Democracy, as rule by the people, should conform to the people's view of what their democracy is perceived to be. Therefore, allowing democracy to be capacious is allowing it to fulfill its intention as popular rule. Also, democracy should be constructed as loosely as possible in order to accommodate the pre-existing traditions of nations throughout the world.

Of course, the quality of democracy is important, but it is only reasonable to ask that a nation must come under the banner of democracy itself before it can improve to the point where it can be held to the standards of being a successful democracy. In the transition to democracy, an authoritarian state cannot be expected to become a thriving democracy overnight. It is much more plausible to make the transition to democracy mostly in name, then progress towards a more democratic state over a period of time which can be very long, but leads to a genuine change for the better.

The fear in this conception is that a country's pre-existing traditions could contain values which would be considered thoroughly undemocratic, such as exclusion of women or minorities from the electorate. These issues raise the question of whether a minimalist conception is still normatively desirable in these cases. As stated earlier, it is best at first for democracy to simply be installed without a number of qualifications before it can advance and truly thrive. This way, it can progress to more authentic states of success, rather than having them artificially imposed from the beginning, which leaves the possibility that these external impositions could be rejected by the society, possibly violently.

While undemocratic aspects of these nascent democracies may be distasteful, they are a short-term sacrifice within a long-term process, and this process cannot begin if the

country in question is rejected as a democratic state at the outset. Bobbio acknowledges this claim on logical grounds, stating, “It is known that the greater the number of connotations attached to a concept, the narrower is the range which it denotes.”<sup>17</sup> Just like the classic example of evolution illustrates a crude eye as better than none, we can see how a flawed democracy is better than a dictatorship, and can come to function fully in time.

As a capacious conception, minimalist theory is therefore desirable because it allows for different forms of democracy to co-exist. The more demanding theories that would wish to define democracy in a specific fashion should be wary of the power of definition itself. If we were so bold as to say that democracy is one particular system, we must be willing to say that no other system can be considered democratic. Instead of taking this attitude, we must be willing to include poorly functioning democracies among the best of them. Democracy is an approach to government that should be encouraged; it is not a selective club with set criteria, as it is in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s famed assertion that a true democracy has never existed, stating that it would require a small state, simplicity in public business, equality among citizens, and an absence of luxury.<sup>18</sup> Rousseau drearily remarks, “If there was a nation of gods it would be governed democratically. Such a government is not suitable for men.”<sup>19</sup>

The argument that minimalist democracy is desirable for its outcomes consists of both broad premises, stating the value of the theory as a whole, and enumerated premises, which state the value of the theory’s parts. The first of the broad premises is that in a minimalist conception, a synchronicity exists between the electorate and political outcomes. The desires of a given democratic society are best reflected in outcomes when

elections define the government. This is so because elections are a direct means of influence on government. As opposed to thicker theories that rely on a mode of rationality, a set of outcomes, or standardized values that are superimposed on society before rule is exercised,<sup>20</sup> minimalist democracy provides for the constantly changing needs and desires of society to find a place in government through elections. Therefore, minimalist democracy possesses a cohesiveness attained through the closeness of the voters and the government, which makes the classical theories seem particularly artificial in comparison.

The next broad argument is that democracy is best defined as realistically as possible. Democratic theory begins from the vantage point of democracy as being preferable, as evidenced by the effort to discover and refine the normative benefits it maximizes. Therefore, one could say that democratic theory's purpose is largely to emphasize its favorable traits and illustrate what it can accomplish. This is why placing theory in the service of abstract principles, as the exacting doctrines do, weakens democratic theory. Theory is better serving ends that are actually within the scope of accomplishment, while still hypothetical. Democratic theory wanes if it is contained within an unrealistic realm, where theory is unable to encourage democracy by stating the outcomes it can maximize. Minimalist theory can meet the demands of being both realistic and aimed towards advancing normative goals, as will be seen in the rest of the arguments.

The first of the enumerated premises is fairness in elections, which is a benefit that is implied, since minimalist authors make no explicit provision for it. This omission is forgivable, seeing as how a government's pursuit of fairness in elections is separate

from its establishment of them. However, fairness is provided for by minimalist theory's very basis in elections. When the people of a democratic nation realize that elections are the sole guiding force of their democracy, the greatest effort will be undertaken to make sure those elections are as fair as possible. Since they are the only criterion of democracy immediately provided, elections are of paramount importance, and when this is made clear to the electorate, it will assign elections a high level of value and seek to enforce their validity.

Of course, the recognition of elections as the primary means to policy leads to incentives among the few to manipulate said elections, but the overwhelming approval of fair elections in the populace will be reflected in the rule of law. As previously mentioned, a minimalist approach's focus on elections assigns them value from the perspective of the electorate, so it would be unreasonable to suggest that those who support fair elections could possibly be anything other than an overwhelming majority. Also, the upholding of fair electoral proceedings is suggested by Przeworski's evaluation of rational choice compliance within a minimalist democracy. He argues that in all but the most extreme cases of continued deprivation, groups would prefer to fairly lose elections in a democracy than to undermine democracy itself, since a debasement of its democratic institutions can lead to repression and arbitrary violence.<sup>21</sup>

In keeping with fairness is the provision of rights. Of the premises given here, this is explicitly mentioned by Przeworski and Popper, who state that minimalism's focus on institutions leads to provision of rights. Exacting theories of democracy provide for people, outcomes, or policy goals, which are the very things for which rights tend to be sacrificed. The most obvious example of a possible provision of a demanding theory is

equality, which Bobbio notes can be at odds with liberal freedoms.<sup>22</sup> Rights are not a form of policy but rather aspects of political institutions. Minimalist theory is focused on these institutions, namely elections. As Przeworski comments, “[...] while the distinction is not unambiguous, constitutions protect at most rights, not interests.”<sup>23</sup>

A minimalist constitution, therefore, provides for processes that effectively translate popular sentiments into policy through elections, and if this process is to be valid, rights will be emphasized. This is so because political rights are essential to holding effective elections, and as previously stated, elections are highly valued in a minimalist approach to the point where their effectiveness as popular statements of opinion. Therefore, political rights are provided for in a minimalist conception as a means to effective elections.

Even with this resolved, the question of non-political rights is still open. The concern raised by the status of non-political rights is resolved by a minimalist conception’s ability to allow a society to reach its ideal at a given time. If a country’s ideal includes those non-political rights, they will be secured through electoral input. For example, the original draft of the constitution of the United States did not even reach the ratification process because of popular outcry over a lack of a Bill of Rights, and since that constitution’s ratification, addition and expansion of rights has been accomplished through the amendment process, which is directly tied to electoral politics. If a country’s ideal does not include non-political rights, that is a matter of the society’s discretion and values, which is separate from the political process and may only be truly changed through broader avenues, such as public education and simple interpersonal experience over time.

Popper's take on minimalism and rights is found in Conjectures and Refutations, wherein he argues that revolutions destroy the institutional and traditional framework of society.<sup>24</sup> This may sound unrelated, but it should be kept in mind that Popper is here speaking of anti-freedom Marxist revolutions, an overt example of the central planning and ideological guidance intrinsic to demanding theories of democracy. Therefore, the upshot is that minimalist theory provides for rights since it provides for electoral institutions rather than ideologies, and strong electoral institutions are vital to political rights.

The most common concern when it comes to minimalism's ability to protect rights is the prospect of a tyrannical majority: a situation wherein an electoral majority oppresses a minority. While this apprehension is not restricted to minimalist democracy, it is readily associated with it since it is an electoral fault, and minimalism explicitly provides for nothing except for elections. However, a tyrannical majority should not necessarily be associated with minimalist democracy.

Simply because a democracy is minimalist in its definition, this does not mean it is so in its electoral rules and a simple majority reigns in all situations. "A system in which parties can lose elections" is not precluded from enacting safeguards such as judicial institutions or legislative filibuster, so a democracy may provide for minority protections and still be considered minimalist. Therefore, the tyranny of the majority is no larger a problem for a minimalist democracy than it is for any other, and though it remains a valid concern, minimalist democracies may prevent it without betraying their definitional integrity.

While it is true that a minimalist approach is compatible with minority protections, it does not necessarily provide for it in the same way in which a thick conception of democracy would be able. The important point to remember here is that a thick approach to democracy does not necessarily provide for these protections, either. It follows logically that an exacting democracy could exclude them just as easily as include them. Also, in cases wherein rights are threatened in spite of popular support for them, a nation under the minimalist conception can prevent that remission of rights through the strength of elections, while thicker democracies do not have this check. Support for rights under a minimalist democracy is enacted through the genuine support of a country's people, not through the whim of planners.

Another benefit to be derived is increased participation. This is not participation in the Rousseauian sense, but rather a more modern definition of the term which includes activity such as voter turnout, communication with elected officials, etc. In the absence of widespread participation, there stands a situation in which the few choose for the many. This voting minority is easily skewed towards the affluent and educated, leaving the neediest persons effectively disenfranchising themselves and allowing an unrepresentative government.

Minimalist democracy provides an impetus for citizenry to feel concern towards government and seek influence as an individual or within a group. Since elections are seen as the only provider of outcomes, there is no reason for people to feel that they cannot pursue an agenda within government and have some effect. Like the argument concerning fairness, this depends upon a belief in the efficacy of government, which minimalism cannot achieve in itself. Democratic governments need to take extra efforts

to make it known to the people that elections are their means of achieving outcomes in government, but once this is done, fairness and participation follow within a minimalist approach.

Accountability is also provided for as a result of minimalist democracy's focus on elections, but not in the traditional sense. Normally, accountability is considered a responsibility of the officeholder, but minimalist democracy allows for a shift in this burden that makes accountability an issue for the electorate as well. This is so because assigning accountability as solely the responsibility of officeholders does not necessarily have anything to do with democracy; leaders who hold office inconsequentially to popular input could also be held to standards of accountability, since accountability is a judgment that can be applied to dictators and popular officeholders alike. When accountability is applied only to the officeholder, a forceful tyrant is regarded no differently as a fairly and broadly elected representative. For accountability to be an aspect of democracy, the people must also be subject to it.

Elections are both the primary focus of minimalist democracy and the primary means in which people direct government. People direct government through the choices that they make, and any choice comes with responsibility for it. Accountability, therefore, is a matter among the people in a minimalist democracy. It is their government and through elections they determine its actions. The power is ultimately in their hands, so therefore the citizen must be accountable to himself and to others in the exercise of this power.

This form of accountability is a necessary quality to be held by the electorate in order to better influence elections, and therefore government. As much as elected

officials can be at fault by not representing or misrepresenting constituents' interests, there is no denying the fact that those constituents put them in office in the first place and retain the power to remove them. No factor other than the choices of the electorate will ultimately be accountable for the actions of government. This signifies that minimalist democracy prods the electorate to maximize the information contained in their choices and responsibly assess electoral decisions in both the short and long-term, since they are aware of elections' centrality.

The final enumerated premise is flexibility, a quality of democracy that will show itself to be increasingly valuable in democracies that are modernizing and progressively diversified. In Principles of Representative Government (1997), Bernard Manin touches on this principle when discussing his theory of "audience democracy." Manin argues that the social cleavages that determine candidates' message are not the steady, unchanging divisions that led to strong party democracy in the past. Instead, they are constantly shifting and often overlapping, and this is a condition with which democracy is forced to cope.<sup>25</sup>

When a government is restricted by nothing but election results, it is free to adjust along with changes in society and opinion over time. Plus, this places no restrictions on what it can accomplish in general. Though it can be argued that this potential applies also to a government's ability for shortcoming, this basically comes down to a matter of confidence in the electorate.

### **Validity of the Premises**

A number of the premises invoked in the argument are established independently. The first of these is the argument for a minimalist approach's favorability as a capacious

conception of democracy. This premise could be considered dependent on others in that democracy is often regarded as something to be exported, which is a valid principle, considering the fundamental assumption of democracy's favorability. However, it is novel to consider minimalist theory's benefits as a means to the spread of democracy.

In addition to this premise, a number of arguments concerning a minimalist conception's outcomes are reached independently, including the synchronicity provided between the electorate and the government, increased participation, and the flexibility over time and countries for which minimalist conceptions provide. The premise of accountability is also reached independently, not only in the conclusion that it results from minimalist theories, but in that a minimalist approach makes accountability a concern for the electorate as much as it is for officials.

The remainder of the premises relate to arguments previously set forth by minimalist theorists. The argument for minimalist theories as a realistic conception of democracy is rooted in previous authors' focus on observability, particularly Schumpeter. However, the purpose of the argument for realism here is aimed more towards the relevance of democratic theory itself rather than the efficacy of a minimalist approach. On the whole, though, the validity of the argument for realistic definition relates to an author's intention: if one's goal is to immediately improve a political state of affairs, is there a better option than realism?

The argument for a minimalist conception's ability to further fairness in elections is independent, but it is concurrent with the provision of political rights, which was put forward by Przeworski and Popper. Their arguments are salient due to the simple correlation between the strength of democratic institutions and the strength of political

rights. While the argument here depends on their premises, it furthers them by addressing concern towards the possible loss of rights, political and otherwise, under a minimalist conception. This is a pattern consistent with the entire argument's relation to the existing minimalist literature. It is not an outright disagreement or contradiction, but it is rather an expansion to include additional benefits that minimalist theories can provide in addition to their definitional strength, as well as address some of the concerns which surround a minimalist conception's implication.

### **Exclusions**

As it is based on hypothetical models and arrangements, any workable research in political theory requires complications to be set aside in the construction of the argument. This section addresses the omissions and simplifications which are necessary for the purposes of this paper.

First, it is important to point out that what is referred to as “a minimalist conception of democracy”, or any similar term, is not a single defined theory so much as it is an approach to democratic theory. The authors cited as having minimalist conceptions contain nuances among them which are worth mentioning, but are not significant enough to prevent them all from being considered as part of the minimalist approach that focuses solely on elections as the criterion for democracy. This theoretical lynchpin provides enough material for discussion, so it is acceptable to set aside minimalist theorists' nuanced differences for the most part. In the full thesis, the particular arguments of each author, as well as their implications, will receive further scrutiny than they do here.

The question of whether democracy is desirable, as opposed to other systems, is not addressed. It is admittedly so that the argument proceeds from a viewpoint that holds democracy to be preferable. Many of the premises are based on the assumption that democracy's spread attests not only to its popularity, but to its validity as being an advanced point in the evolution of government. If at any point the premises state that an aspect of minimalist enhances democracy, as opposed to another system, it is to be presumed that this is a benefit.

It may also seem as though the particulars of the more demanding theories of democracy are not particularly well represented at this point, and there are several reasons for this. First of all, the main impetus for the argument comes from the minimalist literature's shortage of arguments which extol a minimalist approach independently of comparison to thicker theories of democracy. Therefore, thick democracies are not well-detailed here as part of the effort to focus the argument on a minimalist conception's appeal in itself. More examples from thicker theories will be added, but it should be kept in mind that any reference to exacting democratic theories is meant only to be a reference point for minimalist conceptions; a point-for-point comparison is not the intention.

For all the attention given to elections, one may notice that no heed is given to the collective action problems that are endemic to voting. While this is a worthwhile concern, questions of information, coordination, and costs are too large to be tackled within a paper that is addressing different matters. For the purposes of the argument, it is assumed that the costs of voting are zero, so elections are expressions of public opinion that are not marred by other factors.

Similarly to the issue of collective action, there is the question of wealthier parties having a disproportionate effect on electoral outcomes, through such means as campaign contributions or organized lobbying. These influences will be excluded since a certain degree of popular organization can overcome the power of wealth in the electoral arena, making elections and not finances the ultimate arbiter within a democracy.

Neither collective action problems nor the influence of wealth can be considered detriments to the arguments made. The problems they pose are not part of the central conclusions made when the focus of democracy is elections. Rather, they are faults that are encountered when elections are implemented. Therefore, they are flaws in the world, not flaws in the theory. In fact, a few of the premises of the argument, namely fairness and participation, suggest that the total fulfillment of the theory could actually overcome these flaws in the electoral arena.

#### Notes

1. Preworski, Democracy and the Market, 10.
2. Ibid, 15-18.
3. Ibid, 19-29.
4. Ibid, 30, 35-36.
5. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy, 251-253.
6. Ibid, 265-268.
7. Ibid, 269.
8. Ibid, 273.
9. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, Preface.
10. Ibid, 124-125.
11. Ibid, 124. *also* Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, 344.
12. Riker, Liberalism Against Populism, 8-10.
13. Ibid, 11.
14. Hardin, Liberalism, Constitutionalism, and Democracy, 152.
15. *See* Ian Shapiro's The State of Democratic Theory (2003) and John Dunn's Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future (1979).
16. Bobbio, Democracy and Dictatorship, 158.
17. Ibid, 61.

18. Rousseau, On the Social Contract, 100-102.
19. Ibid, 102.
20. Barber, The Conquest of Politics, 193-194.
21. Przeworski, Democracy and the Market, 30-31.
22. Bobbio, Liberalism and Democracy, 33.
23. Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense," 39.
24. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, 343-344.
25. Manin, Principles of Representative Government, 222-223.

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