

TWO CONCEPTIONS OF GLOBAL DEMOCRACY: THE OPTIMAL AND THE IDEAL

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ABSTRACT

The author presents a distinction between two conceptions of global democracy: a broad and a narrow one. The broad conception encompasses any theory that aims to establish a global order capable of safeguarding individual freedom and addressing global risks. Within this broad conception, global democracy is compatible with various approaches to determining which model of political power is legitimate under the existing conditions of global governance. By contrast, the narrow conception of global democracy entails a cosmopolitan and institutionally robust model. In light of this, the author contends that while the narrow conception of global democracy is the ideal, there are reasons to prioritize the broad conception as it offers the optimal approach in times of disagreement.

KEYWORDS

global democracy, broad conception of global democracy, narrow conception of global democracy, theory of transition

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1. *Introduction* – 2. *The Idea of Globalization and The Ideal of Global Democracy* – 3. *The Broad Conception of Global Democracy* – 4. *The Narrow Conception of Global Democracy* – 5. *Grounds for Adopting the Broad Global Democracy Conception*

1. *Introduction*

Most people are aware that the world is facing new, unprecedented global challenges – a phenomenon that some have described as a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene (DRYZEK, PICKERING 2018) – and that these changes are being amplified by globalization. As a complex phenomenon, globalization has many and varied impacts on our lives. Some of them are generally seen as very positive, for example global trade. But there are other consequences of globalization (such as the spread of the 2008 global economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic) that are paradigmatically negative. Aside from magnified global risks, globalization also has negative implications for individual freedom. Globalization poses a challenge to individual freedom. However, one defines globalization, it's clear that it has changed the geography of international relations. It is causing a social reorganization of actors and relationships that challenges the traditional international legal relationships between states and international organizations, international non-governmental organizations, standard-setters, and other hybrid regulatory bodies, among others. Globalization enables traditional and novel non-traditional actors to interact and produce decisions, rules, or norms.

In a globalized world, most decisions and rules created by global actors have some impact on our lives, though they are mainly created without any participation or control by the people. Other decisions are made by traditional actors, such as states, but their impact goes beyond their borders and interferes in the lives of people who are not their citizens. Of course, globalization does not have exclusively negative effects on freedom. For one thing, it increases both the factual and economic opportunities to exercise our freedom of movement. Many scholars of political philosophy strive to deal with the negative effects that the circumstances of global domination¹ have on individual freedom. The challenges that globalization poses to our world lend a new sense of urgency to debates on global democracy, as the need for global institutions capable of addressing profound political issues becomes evident.

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¹ The *circumstances of global domination* is an idea adapted from Waldron's discussion of the “circumstances of politics” (hereafter CP), which is itself an adaptation of Rawls's discussion of the “circumstances of justice” (CJ): «The circumstances of justice are those aspects of the human condition, such as moderate scarcity [CJ₁] and the limited altruism of individuals [CJ₂], which make justice as a virtue and a practice both possible and necessary (RAWLS 1971, 126-130). We may say, along similar lines, that the felt need among the members of a certain group for a common framework or decision or course of action on some matter [CP₁], even in the face of disagreement about what that framework or decision or course of action should be [CP₂], are the circumstances of politics» (WALDRON 1999, 102; emphasis removed). While the circumstances of justice and those of politics come in pairs, there are three circumstances that give rise to global domination: (1) a globalized world, (2) an unequal distribution of power among various global actors, and (3) the coexistence of non-dominating democratic actors and dominators. See KRISTAN 2022.

The literature on global democracy is vast and complex. Within this complexity, however, most scholars agree that the solution, if any, lies in implementing a democratic model of global governance that could effectively protect individual freedom from the negative effects of globalization, and provide some form of governance capable to deal with global risks². Beyond this agreement, however, there is an important and ongoing debate that draws from a variety of issues and positions about global democracy. The debate ranges from statism to cosmopolitan proposals, with several subdivisions – monism, pluralism – therein.

In this paper I will argue that there are in fact two conceptions of global democracy. On the one hand, a broad conception that aims to include any theory that seeks a global order capable of protecting individual freedom and dealing with global risks. Under this broad conception, global democracy is compatible with different answers to the question of which model of democracy makes it possible to legitimize political power under the current conditions of global governance. On the other hand, the narrow conception of global democracy implies a cosmopolitan and institutionally robust conception. This distinction, which has important implications for the design of global democracy, is intended to claim that the legitimacy of global democracy, which makes a weak claim to its institutional form – identify with a state-centric approach –, may rest on two distinct grounds. These reasons can be described as follows: (1) any normative theory that seeks a global order capable of preventing or reducing global domination, and thus aims to keep it under the ultimate control of those governed by, is committed to the ideal of global democracy, regardless of its institutional form; (2) in times of urgent need, it's important to emphasize the commonalities and shared goals of the various proposals, rather than the disagreements among them. As I'll explain, a consequentialist view, however intuitive, cannot lead us to adopt the broad notion of global democracy for which we need the theoretical elements of ideal and non-ideal theory.

2. *The Idea of Globalization and The Ideal of Global Democracy*

The circumstances that currently shape the international sphere are changing significantly due to a profound transformation process: globalization. Globalization is a world-changing phenomenon. Recalling David Held

«Globalization is a process (or a set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power» (HELD et al. 1999, 16).

This definition reflects the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomenon it denotes.

Due to globalization, the world no longer resembles the circumstances that existed at the time of the creation of the Westphalian international order in the 17th century. These circumstances have changed as the aforementioned effects of globalization focus on the ability of states to be relevant decision-makers, while at the same time it's clear that other actors, distinct from states and international organizations, are regulating more and more aspects of our lives. This raises the following question: Is it (still) possible for people to retain some capacity for influence and control? Normative debates about freedom have mostly remained limited to the context of the state. The world as it is, however, isn't just about states (ARCHIBUGI 2008). Rather, it is also about the global

² Global risks – or new global risks, as Beck (BECK 2011) called them – are «nuclear risks, ecological risks, technological risks, economic risks created by radicalized modernity and insufficiently regulated financial markets, and so on» (BECK 1998, BECK 2011). The global aspect of risks means that they cannot be limited to one territory. It is not possible to limit risk X to territory or state Y.

governance of private organizations (CORDELLI 2020), corporations, international organizations, hybrid global actors (LATORRE 2023), and their interactions. As the number of these transnational institutions has increased with globalization, so has their capacity to exercise authority (ZÜRN et al. 2012). In short, the governance in the world has become much more complex than it used to be.

Against this background, global democracy aims to make the global political system more democratic. It addresses the question of how global and transnational decision-making processes can be legitimized and who should be entitled to participate in shaping global rules, laws and regulations. In this sense, an idea of global democracy can be identified with an idea of the legitimacy of the global order that depends on its ability to prevent or reduce global domination³, – that our world is characterized by undemocratic global governance⁴ (PETERS 2010) – which in turn requires the democratization of this global order in the sense that it remains under the ultimate control of the people.

With this definition in mind, the view that individuals should collectively rule themselves not just in the state but also beyond it, is shared by scholars with different positions regarding how global democracy should be implemented. To the extent that decision-making power migrates beyond the state, democracy should follow. However, even if scholars are aware of the problem of global domination and global risks, the realization of democracy is a valuable task in the global political arena and share the value of self-government they differ on how global democracy is understood and designed.

These different views on how to understand and shape global democracy are mainly represented by the statist and cosmopolitan versions of global democracy. On the one hand, statist hold a view under which supra-state decisions are subject to demands for democratic legitimacy. However, they understand that the best design institutional framework to meet those demands is not one based on the direct participation of the people, but focuses on the role of the state as the representative of individuals. The most detailed version of this “statist model” is the scheme that Thomas Christiano and Philip Pettit call “voluntary association of States”. On the other hand, cosmopolitans go one step further by advocating that in making global democracy a reality, the creation of representative international institutions, directly elected by world citizens – as global parliamentary assemblies – is in place. Different versions of this proposal come from authors like David Held (1999), Daniele Archibugi (2008, 2012, 2021), Samantha Besson (2009), James Bohman (2007) or José Luis Martí (2010).

In the following sections, I will introduce two conceptions of global democracy: the broad global democracy and the narrow global democracy. The advantage of introducing these conceptions is that they clarify the implications of this distinction for shaping global democracy. A key implication is that the legitimacy of global democracy, which makes a weak claim to its institutional form, can still be defended as I will explain in Section 5.

3. *The Broad Conception of Global Democracy*

The broad conception of global democracy is identified with a superficial understanding of the normative ideal of global democracy, with the ideal of making the global political system more democratic. This conception is the one that is compatible with very different understandings of global legitimacy, whether statist or cosmopolitan. What both conceptions have in common is the

³ See MARTÍ 2010.

⁴ Anne Peters (PETERS 2010) explains that global governance is undemocratic even by modest standards. The deficits, she argues, lie in the institutional design of international organizations and bodies themselves, they result from the way states are integrated into the system of global governance, and finally, they concern the relationship between citizens and international institutions.

core idea of global democracy that supra-state decisions are subject to demands for democratic legitimacy, but the statist approach is less demanding in terms of global governance innovation.

According to this broad understanding of global democracy, the legitimacy of the global order depends on how democratic this order is, in the sense that it helps prevent or reduce global domination while remaining under the ultimate control of the people, without presupposing yet which is the most effective way of articulating both the prevention of global domination and that ultimate popular control.

It should be noted at the outset that global democracy as an ideal is generally defined in two steps, by saying (a) that it is a democracy (whatever the authors mean by ‘democracy’), and (b) that it extends to the whole world or across state borders or beyond states, etc. I shall elaborate on this briefly first.

(a) As far as the first step is concerned, I shall rely on the definition elaborated by Thomas Christiano (CHRISTIANO 2018, 2), according to which democracy is a «method of group decision making characterized by a kind of equality among the participants at an essential stage of the collective decision making». By saying that democracy is a method of group decision making, this definition emphasizes that democracy (i) concerns collective decisions that (ii) “are made for groups”, e.g., families, voluntary organizations, business enterprises, states, transnational or global organizations, and (iii) “are binding on all the members of the group”. Moreover, by saying that democracy is characterised by a kind of equality among participants, this definition is intentionally vague. Indeed, it is meant to cover everything from conceptions of formal equality of “one-person, one-vote” in the process of selecting representatives to make decisions about group laws and policies to conceptions of substantive equality of participants in the process of deliberation or coalition building. Finally, it is important to note that Christiano’s definition, as he says, “does not settle any normative questions” about the desirability of democracy and is therefore quite compatible with the view that in some particular contexts (like families or business enterprises or the entire world population, for example) such a method of group decision making is to be avoided.

(b) Apart from saying that global democracy is a democracy that extends to the whole world, or across state borders, or beyond states, etc., it is important to note that this definition is, again, intentionally indeterminate as to the composition of the “global collective”. In other words, the definition remains neutral in respect of the disagreement between the statist and the cosmopolitan proposals, among others. Accordingly, it does not precise whether the group in question is composed of individuals or cities or states, etc. And it does not even say whether it is composed homogeneously of individuals, cities or states only, or whether it is heterogeneous, that is, whether the participants are of different kinds.

With this definition in mind, we can see that while “democracy” is primarily associated with the sovereign state, which is bound to a clearly defined and singular demos (DRYZEK 2008), “global democracy” is associated with the process of democratizing global governance, with the aim of giving the participants a say in decisions affecting their lives in a complex, multi-layered context where the influence of actions extends beyond state borders, and thus keeping global institutions under the ultimate control of the people⁵.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this paper, there is a myriad of global actors⁶ who exercise their power in ways that influence or even determine our lives. So, the idea of global democracy is, in a first approximation, the idea of a democracy that extends beyond state

⁵ Scholars such as Richard Falk, David Held, Jürgen Habermas and Ulrich Beck trace a path regarding the idea of democracy beyond borders (BECK 2018). Of course, many remain unconvinced that democracy can be applied beyond states and consider the idea of a global democracy an unattainable dream (DAHL 1999) or, worse, think that its proponents are barking at the moon (DAHRENDORF 2001).

⁶ By global actors I mean actors that operate beyond domestic borders.

borders (HOLDEN 2002, 2). Global democracy therefore includes the idea of democracy as “rule by the people”, even if understood in its more minimal sense of ultimate control, which means that it extends the terms “rule” and “people” to the global sphere⁷. However, it is still compatible, with different understandings of the rule of the people, whether it should turn for instance into something like the rule of the peoples, in plural, and thus assuming that the main actor in a legitimate global order should still be the state, or whether it should rely on a global, single demos composed of all individuals, as the cosmopolitans assume.

Adopting the broader conception of global democracy allow us to put together the efforts of those scholars that are committed with the ideal of making global governance legitimate and, by consequence, non-dominating. Indeed, we can agree that scholars that hold a moral cosmopolitan view – normative individualism, universality, and generality – in the sense that they believe that every moral agent has the same claim to freedom as non-domination, can differ, however, in terms of their institutional proposals: not all who agree with the moral cosmopolitan view are institutional and political/legal cosmopolitans. This difference affects how global democracy is understood and designed. For example, one of the problems that the circumstances of global domination present for individuals is that they cannot shape and reshape the rules that affect them, and that this situation leads to domination. I also mentioned that global democracy is fit to avoid domination. But the specific institutions that characterize an ideal legitimate world order will differ greatly depending on whether or not we subscribe to institutional cosmopolitanism. Those scholars who disagree with institutional cosmopolitanism generally advocate a statist approach, that is, they rely primarily on the state's association ability to prevent global domination rather than on a multi-level system of global democracy.

As it was mentioned, the broad conception of global democracy can apply to both statist and cosmopolitans. The reason is that most statist approaches to such a legitimate global order presuppose, ideally, that states in a multilateral system of association should be representative or democratic. A global democracy broadly understood is a democracy that extends to the whole world, or across state borders, or beyond states, etc.

In this superficial and broad understanding, global democracy is compatible with different answers to the normative question of which model of democracy makes it possible to legitimize political power under the current conditions of global governance.

4. *The Narrow Conception of Global Democracy*

In contrast to the broader conception of global democracy, the narrow conception of global democracy is more demanding in terms of institutional change because it implies institutional cosmopolitanism. Within a cosmopolitan approach global democracy aims to extend global governance at different levels in a democratic direction to prevent global domination. Proposals for the institutional forms of global democracy require creative thinking to extend democracy across borders while expanding people's representation.

In this context of preventing global domination, it is worth to remember that those who embrace moral cosmopolitanism are compromised with the believe that every moral agent is entitled to the same claim of nondomination (RONZONI 2019, 322; LOVETT 2016). However, that does not imply that they are institutional cosmopolitans as well (CANEY 2006). Alluding to republican theory, Ronzoni (RONZONI 2019, 320) explains that:

⁷ This does not mean that the implementation of a global democracy will be parallel to domestic government, as two different democratic tracks, instead different actors shall be articulated as a network. See CASTELLS 2010, CASTELLS 2015, SLAUGHTER 2017, DRYZEK 2012, and KUYPER 2014.

«different republican institutional blueprints are a reflection of a disagreement about what it takes to best guarantee the claim to nondomination of all moral agents, not about who has such a claim against whom in the first place. Thus, republican statist concede that there is a deep sense in which we have the same fundamental obligations of justice to all moral agents (whether or not they are fellow citizens): they are all entitled to non-domination. They simply believe that a state system is the best way to honor such obligations».

In this sense, the difference between the statist and the cosmopolitan approaches lies primarily in the role of the state. While for statist the state is and must remain the main actor in the creation of international law, the cosmopolitan approach requires a thicker global democratic framework. In short, while some scholars argue that honoring the ideal of freedom as nondomination requires some global institutions, not all think so. Not all moral cosmopolitans subscribe to institutional cosmopolitanism⁸. As I explained in the previous section, all who embrace moral cosmopolitanism defend global democracy broadly understood. Contrary to this definition the narrow global democracy implies a commitment to a particular institutional form that lead us to our second conception of global democracy.

This conception involves a narrower and more robust understanding of global democracy, which is equated with cosmopolitan democracy. Only cosmopolitan republicans would endorse such a view, leaving out the advocates of a voluntary association of states. The narrower conception of global democracy implies, then, a cosmopolitan and institutionally thicker conception. “Global democracy”, in this particular version, is

- (a) A democracy,
- (b) That extends to the whole world or across state borders or beyond states, and
- (c) Concerns decisions on global politics or, more precisely, decisions on issues of global relevance made by a system of – centralized or decentralized – global institutions authorized to enact global norms that allow ultimate popular control under conditions of political equality, deliberative contestability, and protection of human rights (BESSON, MARTÍ 2018).

Here, I do not need to specify here what is of global relevance and what is not. We can leave it open. But just to give an example, we can assume, at least hypothetically, that a decision about street parking prices in Barcelona is not considered globally relevant, but a decision about climate change targets definitely is⁹. In this case, it would be incompatible with our idea of

⁸ Ronzoni (RONZONI 2013, 159) argues that «[i]t is, for instance, perfectly consistent to endorse moral cosmopolitanism and yet be wary of both global political action and supranational institutional building. One can, for instance, believe that our moral duties towards others are universal in scope, but that they are best discharged through forms of personal conduct, such as donations or voluntary work. Moreover, moral cosmopolitans can be skeptical towards the establishment of global institutions with sovereign powers, on the grounds that these might be difficult to hold accountable, are necessarily undemocratic, and are prone to becoming exceedingly technocratic or even positively oppressive».

⁹ Other definitions of global democracy that are present in the recent literature are those of Mathias Koenig-Archibugi and Thomas Christiano. Koenig-Archibugi says the term «refers to a range of conceivable institutional systems» that share seven characteristics. More precisely, he says they (1) encompass all regions of the world; (2) empower supranational bodies to make binding decisions on a range of (enumerated) issues of global relevance; (3) ensure that the members of those bodies are representative of, and accountable to, groups of citizens, through electoral mechanisms or other formal and transparent relationships of political delegation; (4) promote the equal representation of all world citizens in conjunction with other principles such as a balanced representation of the constitutive territorial units and possibly forms of functional representation; (5) allow the supranational bodies to take decisions in accordance with a variety of decision rules, but exclude veto rights for small minorities, except when they are based on legitimate and impartially determined vital interests; (6) empower independent supranational judicial bodies to resolve conflicts in accordance with constitutional rules; and (7) include robust mechanisms for promoting compliance with decisions and rulings, possibly, but not necessarily through the centralized control of the means of coercion. See KOENIG-ARCHIBUGI

global democracy if the decision on the price of street parking in Barcelona was to be taken in some kind of global parliament. In other words, such a decision would be illegitimate, because the local price of street parking in Barcelona is not globally relevant. The principle of subsidiarity might be an excellent criterion to decide which decisions possess global relevance and should consequently be allocated at the level of global institutions. But there might be other acceptable criteria. As I said, we can leave this open.

With this definition in mind, “global democracy”, in this particular version, is associated with the process of democratizing global governance by a centralized or decentralized system of global institutions. Its aim is to give individuals a say in decisions affecting their lives in a complex, multi-layered context where the influence of actions extends beyond state borders, and of course, to create an institutional infrastructure capable to deal with global challenges.

Those who defend institutional cosmopolitanism¹⁰ introduce some argumentative strategies on its favour, which are variants of the narrow conception of global democracy. Caney (2005) distinguishes three approaches to institutional cosmopolitanism which are not incompatible with each other: (1) the intrinsic approach; (2) the right-based approach and (3) the instrumental approach. The intrinsic approach (POGGE 1992) claims that moral cosmopolitanism should include a commitment to the right to self-government. It comprises two versions, the individualist approach (WELLMAN 1995) and the collectivist approach (POGGE 1994). The former infers from the right to freedom of association that people should be able to choose by whom to be governed; while the latter, the collectivist approach, argues that people should be free to choose who should be part of the political system, and to choose the type of political authority that will govern them¹¹.

Up to this point I have introduced two different conceptions of global democracy. Under this view, global democracy can be encompassed from the superficial broad conception, as well as from the narrow thicker conception, even though there is not consensus in the literature about the preeminence of one position. The reconstruction of the debate about global democracy under the broad and the narrow conception allow us to deliberate adopt the broad definition of global democracy.

In the next section, I will explain why pursuing a consequentialist perspective does not lead us to accept the broad version of global democracy, but to defend the best-equipped theory for implementing global democracy (MARCHETTI 2004). I will argue that the distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory provides a foundation if we consider our question to be in the realm of non-ideal theory.

5. *Grounds for Adopting the Broad Global Democracy Conception*

What grounds do we have for adopting the broad definition of global democracy? Or, to put it another way: why should those who believe in the merits of the narrow conception of global democracy deliberately compromise with the broad conception of global democracy? The decision

2010, 522. By contrast, Christiano understands global democracy as «a centralized democratic decision-making process for solving global problems. These processes would involve a global legislature directly elected by the world’s adult population. It would operate in a roughly majoritarian way within certain limits grounded in basic human rights» (CHRISTIANO 2012, 73).

¹⁰ Among them are Brian Barry, Charles Beitz, Simon Caney, Lea Ypi, Onora O’Neill, Thomas Pogge, Robert Goodin and others.

¹¹ The rights-based approach is advocated by scholars such as Held (1985) and Linklater (1998). They believe that cosmopolitan institutions provide the framework for the transition from the current statist international system to a system of cosmopolitan democracy. This argument has an empirical claim and a moral base. The instrumental approach claims that appropriate political institutions are those that best promote cosmopolitan moral ideals. This third approach thus adopts a consequentialist perspective, even though the goals by which institutions are to be judged are the promotion of cosmopolitan ideals of justice rather than utilitarian goals such as the satisfaction of needs or preferences.

to adopt the broad conception of global democracy has the consequence of including any theory that seeks a global order capable of preventing or reducing global domination, and thus aims to keep it under the ultimate control of those who are governed by it. This decision has the major drawback that almost everyone is in some sense a global democrat. However, there are good reasons – apart from the conception’s own merits – to adopt the broad conception of global democracy.

These reasons are identified with making the world a better place where there is no such thing as global domination. To avoid domination, a legitimate global system must be built that allows people to help shape and reshape the rules under which they live. Consequentialism (PETTIT ed. 1993, PETTIT 1997, PETTIT, SMITH 2000, PARFIT 1984) is mainly concerned with the moral rightness of acts. It holds that whether an act is morally right depends only on the consequences of that act or on something related to that act, such as the motive behind the act or a general rule requiring acts of the same kind (SINNOTT-ARMSTRONG 2022). One fundamental question introduced by consequentialism is the question of rightness, of what makes an option right (PETTIT 1997, 92). Under this approach, «the right option in any choice is that which produces the goods, that which promotes expected, neutral value» (PETTIT 1997, 92). The neutrality of these values implies that the fundamental determinants of rightness are the values on the basis of which the property is predicated of options and these values satisfy the relevant version of the universalizability test. As Pettit explains,

«what ultimately makes any option the right one for an agent to take or to have taken is the fact that that option best promotes the neutral values that are relevant in the situation on hand» (PETTIT 1997, 151).

Following the consequentialist perspective, however, doesn't lead us to accept the broad version of global democracy, but to defend the best-equipped theory for implementing global democracy (MARCHETTI 2004). And in this point the literature, as I explained before, is divided between statism and cosmopolitan positions. Since consequentialism thus leads us to a goal-oriented normative theory, is it not satisfactory to explain why those who believe in the merits of the narrow conception of global democracy should deliberately compromise with the broad definition of global democracy?

Here, the distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory provides a ground, if we consider our question to be in the realm of non-ideal theory. However, much of what is proposed about global democracy is presented as a contribution to ideal theory. The latter is the part of political philosophy that distinguishes the principles and values that govern ideal social and political institutions, while the non-ideal theory of democracy is presented as that which specifies a particular institutional design represented by the rights and duties of institutional actors in circumstances potentially remote from any moral or political ideal¹².

In this sense, democratic ideals, in the form of values and principles, should inform the design of institutions in non-ideal circumstances. Ideal and non-ideal theory has developed to encompass a number of quite different distinctions¹³. From here, the question posed above finds an acceptable answer. That is, those who believe in the merits of the narrow conception of global democracy should deliberately compromise with the broad definition of global democracy from a non-ideal perspective, whether or not one adopts the traditional distinction between ideal and non-ideal conceptions of democracy, but especially if one adopts the distinction between a state of affairs as an end- state (as a goal) and a non-ideal theory understood as a “transitional” theory¹⁴. In this sense, the debate over ideal and non-ideal theory focuses on the question of whether a normative political

¹² About this distinction see RAWLS 1971, STEMPLOWSKA 2008, STEMPLOWSKA, SWIFT 2012, SEN 2009, SIMMONS 2010, VALENTINI 2012, among others.

¹³ See VALENTINI 2012.

¹⁴ Farrell (FARRELL 2015, 152), explaining the distinction he uses in reconstructing the Rawlsian idea, Simmons points out that «the ideal theory indicates the goal, while the non-ideal theory indicates the path to that goal».

theory should aim to determine an ideal of societal perfection, or whether it should focus on transitional improvements without necessarily determining what the “optimum” is.

In either case, those who hold to the narrow conception of global democracy can accept the argument that the broad global democracy serves not only to prevent domination (on a superficial level, since it doesn't guarantee the participation of individuals in the global sphere) but also to provide the basis for solving practical problems identified with both non-ideal conceptions of democracy. Thus, the ideal theory sets a long-term goal for institutional reform, which in our case would be the achievement of global democracy. The non-ideal theory, on the other hand, asks «how this long-term goal might be achieved, or worked toward, usually in gradual steps»¹⁵.

Leaving aside the discrepancy in logical priority between one theory and the other¹⁶, if our ideal to be achieved is the narrow conception of global democracy, the transition to it involves the acceptance of the superficial global democracy. Taking the ideal/non-ideal distinction between state of affairs as an end (as a goal) and a theory of transition, we can see global democracy in a superficial sense as falling within the latter. Global democracy is thus a long-term challenge that requires a transition from current governance structures to a global governance structure. This shows us that in today's time of urgent needs, it may be important to emphasize the commonalities and common goals of the various proposals, rather than the disagreements between them. From this point of view, the fact that almost everyone is in some way a global democrat is no longer a disadvantage, but a desirable transitional step.

The reasons that explained it can be described as follows:

- (1) any normative theory that seeks a global order capable of preventing or reducing global domination, and thus aims to keep it under the ultimate control of those governed by, is committed to the ideal of global democracy regardless of its institutional form;
- (2) in times of urgent need, it becomes crucial to highlight the shared objectives and resemblances among different proposals, rather than focusing on their disagreements.

Both reasons are grounded in that global democracy should be our political priority if we want to avoid global domination at the time of reducing global risks – such as climate change – of the present and the future of an increasingly interdependent society. If we think that major global challenges can only be addressed effectively at the global level and in a coordinated manner between states and other political institutions¹⁷, the consequence lead us to accept, for the sake of the reasons introduced before, the broad conception of global democracy.

Against this argument, however, one might raise the following objection: The broad understanding of global democracy runs the risk of emptying the concept and making the claims associated with it so weak that they lose any normative bite¹⁸. However, this is not the case since the acceptance of the broad conception of global democracy, instead of being a normative ideal, acts as a common starting point within a transitional theory. In other words, contrary to the potential objection, it can be argued that the acceptance of the broad conception of global democracy is actually instrumental in achieving the ideal version of global democracy. In this perspective, the broad understanding serves as a transitional theory, acting as a common starting point rather than a fully-fledged normative ideal. The realization of broad global democracy plays a crucial role in paving the way for the realization of the narrow conception of global democracy. By starting with the implementation of a broad and superficial understanding, it becomes possible

¹⁵ RAWLS 1999, 89.

¹⁶ See SEN 2009.

¹⁷ Contra: DAHL 1999.

¹⁸ I thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

to bridge the diverse positions about global democracy. The transitional aspect of the broad understanding acknowledges that reaching the ideal version of global democracy requires a process of transformation and adaptation. It recognizes that different perspectives about global democracy have different starting points and varying degrees of readiness to embrace the ideal conception. Therefore, the implementation of the broad understanding of global democracy, albeit superficial, provides a practical framework for advancing towards the realization of a robust and inclusive global democratic order and will act as a stepping stone towards the realization of the narrow conception of global democracy, by encompassing a more comprehensive and nuanced set of normative principles and institutional structures.

To conclude this article, I want to say why we should seek convergence instead of disagreement on the concept of global democracy. Although there are many good reasons, the main one on which this article is based is to overcome stagnation and deadlock. In situations where disagreements dominate, progress can be hindered, leading to stagnation and deadlock. However, if we strive for convergence, we can overcome these obstacles and move forward. By focusing on common goals, we can find common ground and compromise that allows forward momentum even on complex and contentious issues. While disagreement and differing perspectives are natural and valuable for fostering critical thinking and exploring alternative solutions, prioritizing some point of convergence allows us to overcome impasses, find common purpose, and work collectively toward shared goals.

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