

WHY ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE IS NOT A REPUBLICAN BUT A LIBERAL

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ABSTRACT

The search for the ideal form of the relation between the individual human being and the community surrounding her has always been the question at the center of political thought. This article is interested in two of these alternatives: the liberal and the republican. What is interesting about these two is that while they traditionally have been rivals to each other, there have always been attempts to bring them together. An analysis of the complex relation between them provides fertile ground for those who are eager to hunt their own answers. This is what this article hopes to do with an eye on one of the most influential political theorists, de Tocqueville. In this article, I aim to show why it is more appropriate to cite him as a classical representative of liberalism rather than republicanism. Hence, the contribution of this article can be formulated as follows: It will present a comparative overview of the main tenets of liberalism and republicanism; by highlighting the points of conjuncture and disjuncture between them, it will illustrate the background of the notion of liberal-republicanism; third, mainly through quotations from Democracy in America, it will reveal that de Tocqueville, because of his ideas on state-society-individual relations, is the founding father of modern liberal-individualist-pluralist hegemonic concept of civil society.

Keywords: Liberalism, republicanism, Alexis de Tocqueville, civil society, liberal-republicanism, state-society-individual relationship

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE'İN NEDEN CUMHURİYETÇİ DEĞİL DE LİBERAL OLDUĞU HAKKINDA

ÖZ

Birey ve içinde yaşadığı topluluk arasındaki ilişkinin ideal formunu aramak Antik Yunan'dan bu yana yüzlerce yıllık siyasal düşünce tarihinin en önemli konusunu oluşturmuştur. Bu makale bu konudaki çok sayıdaki farklı yaklaşımdan ikisini, cumhuriyetçi ve liberal yaklaşımları, inceleme konusu yapmaktadır. Bu yaklaşımları ilginç kılan, devlet-toplum-birey ilişkisine ele alışları bakımında ikisinin aynı anda hem birbirlerinin kuvvetli rakipleri olarak görülmeleri hem de liberal cumhuriyetçilik olarak adlandırılan üçüncü bir yaklaşımı mümkün kılacak kadar ortak nokta barındırdıklarının söylenmesidir. Bu çalışma, ikisi arasındaki bu çok yönlü ve karmaşık ilişkiye dair düşünmenin, zihinlerimizi meşgul eden temel meseleye dair kendi yanıtlarımızı aramak ve bulmakta yardımcı olacağı inancından hareket etmektedir. Bu tartışmayı en etkili siyaset teorisyenlerinden Alexis de Tocqueville'in Amerika'da Demokrasi adlı eserinde ortaya koyduğu yaklaşıma atıfla somutlandırmaktadır. Çünkü de Tocqueville bazen liberal, bazen cumhuriyetçi bazen de liberal-cumhuriyetçi olarak kategorize edilmekte, bu çalışma ise onun liberal gelenek içinde anılması gerektiğini öne sürmektedir. Sonuç olarak burada şu şekilde katkı sunmak hedeflenmektedir: liberalizm ve cumhuriyetçiliğin devlet-toplum-birey ilişkisini kavramsallaştırma biçimlerinin epeyce özet şekilde de olsa karşılaştırmalı bir analizini sunmak, böylelikle günümüz siyaset teorisinde geniş ilgi uyandıran liberal cumhuriyetçiliğin arkaplanını ana hatlarıyla göstermek, ve de Tocqueville'in bugünkü hakim liberal-bireyci-çoğulcu sivil toplum anlayışının kurucusu olduğunu ortaya koymak. Vurgulamak gerekirse, asıl soru yüzyıllardır değişmediği için, burada esasen amaçlanan kendi cevaplarımızı arayıp bulmaya vesile olmaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Liberalizm, cumhuriyetçilik, Alexis de Tocqueville, sivil toplum, liberal cumhuriyetçilik, devlet-toplum-birey ilişkisi

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Introduction

Jürgen Habermas' formulation is one of the best summaries of today's most difficult socio-political problem: "the high level of complexity of functionally differentiated societies."¹ Apart from the hardships it causes in practical life, this difficulty is felt at the theoretical as well. On the one hand, there is the uneasiness with the phrases "the society that administers itself" or "society and its self-organization" which implies an "ill-suited ... holistic notion of a social totality in which the associated individuals participate like the members of an encompassing organization."² On the other hand, there is an incessant search for finding ways of handling this complexity. While a stream of contemporary political thought, expressed most vividly by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, maintained that we must come to terms with the ineradicable nature of conflict and focused on the notion of hegemony, another category insists on the possibility of resolution of conflicts. For instance, Habermas believes that the "plurality of competing interests" characterizing today's differentiated societies is to be resolved in a certain manner especially with a view to the "general interest."³

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Indeed, the search for the ideal form of the relation between the individual human being and the community surrounding her has always been *the* question at the center of political thought. It was this search that led to the emergence of the Sophists in Ancient Greece and then to Socrates's famous dictum: "A life unexamined is not worth living." Since then, various alternatives have been formulated to find a way of connecting the particular with the universal. In this article, I am interested in two of these alternatives: the liberal and the republican. What makes these two approaches interesting discussion topics is the fact that while they traditionally have been rivals to each other, there has always been attempts to bring them together. Habermas, for instance, is one of those political theorists who has been arguing that the two traditions are not at odds with each other and elaborating a theory of liberal-republicanism. This discussion about the points of tension and reconciliation between the two traditions is valuable as it has so much to say about the most central themes and questions of political theory such as the individual-society-state relation, and the confrontation

¹ Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere" in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 443.

² *Ibid.*, 443.

³ *Ibid.*, 441.

between core values of liberty and equality, and related with both, the concept of citizenship. Alexis de Tocqueville, stands at the crossroads of all these because he is categorized both as a republican and as a liberal, while some others consider him as an earliest representative of liberal republicanism. In this article, I aim to show why it is more appropriate to cite him as a classical representative of the liberal tradition. In this respect, the expected contribution of this article can be formulated as follows: It will present a comparative overview of the main tenets of liberalism and republicanism; by highlighting the points of conjuncture and disjuncture between them, it will illustrate the background of the notion of liberal-republicanism and point out the problems with this notion; and third, mainly through quotations from *Democracy in America*, it will reveal that de Tocqueville, because of his ideas on state-society-individual relations, is the founding father of modern liberal-individualist-pluralist hegemonic concept of civil society.

Liberalism and Republicanism: Siblings, Friends, or Enemies?

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As John Gray argues, “common to all variants of the liberal tradition is a definite conception of man and society” which has some distinctive characteristics:

It is *individualist*, in that it asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity; *egalitarian*, inasmuch as it confers on all men the same moral status and denies the relevance to legal or political order of differences in moral worth among human beings; *universalist*, affirming the moral unity of the human species and according a secondary importance to specific historic associations and cultural forms; and *meliorist* in its affirmation of the corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements. It is this conception of man and society which gives liberalism a definite identity which transcends its vast internal variety and complexity.⁴

It would be further illustrative to go over Friederich A. Hayek’s work on the determining features of liberalism which follows a parallel line of thinking with Gray. Regarding individualism, Hayek argues that the most important thing upon which there is an apparent agreement is the “demand

⁴ John Gray, *Liberalism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), xii.

for freedom of the individual and the respect for the individual personality.”⁵ Second, he also relates this kind of individualism with a particular type of egalitarianism in liberalism:

while the protection of the law was to assist all in the pursuit of their aims, government was not supposed to guarantee to the individuals particular results of their efforts. *To enable the individual to use his knowledge and abilities in the pursuit of his self-chosen aims* was regarded both as the greatest benefit government could secure to all, as well as the best way of inducing these individuals to make the greatest contribution to the welfare of the others.⁶

As a consequence of such an understanding of equality before the law, Hayek defines the necessary attributes of the “products of legislation”: “they must be general rules of individual conduct, applicable to all alike in an unknown number of future instances, defining the protected domain of the individuals, and therefore essentially of the nature of prohibitions rather than of specific commands.”⁷ This in turn corresponds to what Gray has termed as the principle of universality.

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This stress on equality before the law is closely related with the liberal idea of freedom. Hayek states that “the liberal conception of freedom has often been described as a merely negative conception, and rightly so. Like peace and justice, it refers to the absence of an evil, to *a condition opening opportunities* but not assuring particular benefits...”⁸ With its emphasis on individual freedom and rights and respect for individual personality a central theme of liberalism is its stress on limiting the state power and controlling the state actions:

The coercive powers of government [are] supposed to be limited to the enforcement of those rules of just conduct. ... [w]hatever other services government might be called upon to provide, it could for such purposes use only the resources placed at its disposal; but could not coerce the private citizen; or in other words, the person and the property of the citizen could not be

⁵ Frederik A. Hayek, “Liberalism” in *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics and the History of Ideas*, (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1982), internet version. <http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion/oldwhig4ever>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

used by government as a means for the achievement of its particular purposes.⁹

This concern with limiting and controlling the powers of the state is closely associated with liberalism’s deep belief in the superiority of the “self-generating or spontaneous order” on the part of the society:

The importance which liberal theory attached to the rules of just conduct is based on insight that they are an essential condition for the maintenance of a self-generating or spontaneous order of the actions of the different individuals and groups, each of which pursues his own ends on the basis of his own knowledge.¹⁰

These main principles of liberalism display a sharp contrast with republicanism. The paramount republican value that distinguishes it from liberalism is *liberty understood as non-domination* which is different from liberal view of *liberty as non-interference*.¹¹ The latter is famously summed up by J.S. Mill: “The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs.”¹² This understanding of liberty as non-interference has been called as “negative liberty” by Isaiah Berlin in his famous lecture on “Two Concepts of Liberty” (1969) in which he contrasted it with “positive liberty.” Philip Pettit, as a forerunner of contemporary republicanism, sees republican liberty as a third form of liberty which is not typically positive or negative and formulates republican view of liberty as “non-domination by others.”¹³ According to this formulation, “domination might still exist in the absence of interference ... Liberty, moreover, might be lost even where there is no interference.”¹⁴ So, this distinction between non-interference and non-discrimination is of great importance in understanding the difference between liberalism and republicanism:

Republicans, therefore, condemn domination even if actual interference does not take place whereas liberals tend to believe that only actual interference matters. ... That view of liberty should not be seen simply in terms of the positive view of liberty

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See Frank Lowett, “Republicanism”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/republicanism/> ; Bill Brugger, *Republican Theory in Political Thought: Virtuous or Virtual?*, (London: Macmillan Ltd., 1999), 5-8.

¹² Quoted in Lowett, 2.

¹³ Quoted in Brugger, 6.

¹⁴ Ibid.

as self-mastery through political participation but should be considered as the absence of mastery by others.¹⁵

Another important difference between republicanism and liberalism is that republicanism attaches a great significance to “a conception of politics in which government is in principle the common business of the citizens” and which “provides the environment –a public space- for human fulfillment.”¹⁶ Hence, instead of dismissing the notion of freedom as personal self-mastery through political participation and active citizenship, Pettit suggests a view that tries to combine the principles of personal self-mastery and of non-domination. This is a necessary move since,

while there certainly can be non-domination without personal self-mastery ... there can hardly be any meaningful form of self-mastery without non-domination.”¹⁷ Interference, on the other hand, might exist without domination, as in the case of non-arbitrary interference to further one’s interests or law based on the common good. Such interference, rather than an infringement of liberty, actually creates it.¹⁸

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This is just the opposite of liberalism’s indifference to power or domination and its adherence to “the assumption that there is nothing inherently oppressive about some people having dominating power over others, provided they do not exercise that power and are not likely to exercise it” as a consequence of which liberalism becomes “tolerant of relationships in the home, in the workplace, in the electorate, and elsewhere, that the republican must denounce as paradigms of domination and unfreedom.”¹⁹ Consequently, republican view of liberty as non-domination has three dimensions closely interrelated with each other: The first dimension is the *role of active citizenship for human fulfillment* i.e. as a virtue.

[The republic] differs from the liberal model in which the constitution provides a formal frame that embraces citizens of diverse moral character and with varied individual pursuits. The republic rests rather on the virtues of its citizens and is oriented toward the common good... Republican life is then thought to be formative of the public spirit on which it rests... The purpose of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Civic Humanism”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/republicanism/>

¹⁷ Pettit quoted in Brugger, 6.

¹⁸ Pettit quoted in Brugger, 6-7.

¹⁹ Brugger, 10.

the common wealth is not so much peace and ensuring the rights of the individuals, as the realization of human potentiality, which is taken to be essentially political. The republic is the necessary medium of self-realization, not merely the condition of possibility of private endeavors.²⁰

The second dimension of the republican view of liberty as non-domination is related with its approach towards the notion of rights and the related public-private distinction different from that of liberals. “For many liberals, the notion of natural rights is important in the affirmation of a private sphere into which the state cannot intrude.”²¹ This is due to the fact that,

...by demarcating a specifically private sphere a government might remove irresolvable questions from the public agenda in the hope of furthering the better functioning of public life; but the result of such action can be domination, as many feminists have observed... the result may be marginalization, which can occur in the absence of domination, and might be more debilitating.²²

The third dimension of the republican liberty, then, very closely related with the first two, is its approach to the state action and law. Republicanism maintains that “non-domination depends on a strong constitutional state because affirming the principle of non-domination in a state which cannot guarantee it may result in either civil war or a culture of perpetual deterrence”.²³ To the contrary, “on the view of negative liberty as non-interference, any sort of public law or policy intervention counts by definition as an interference and, ergo, a reduction in freedom. Being committed to received view of negative liberty, liberals thus tend to be overly hostile to government action.”²⁴ According to Pettit, the crux of the matter “is the argument that whereas the liberal sees liberty as essentially pre-social, the republican sees liberty as constituted by the law which transforms customs and creates citizens.”²⁵ From the republican point of view, “if the law or policy ameliorates dependency, or curtails the arbitrary power’s some

²⁰ “Civic Humanism”, 1-2.

²¹ Brugger, 8.

²² Ibid.

²³ Pettit quoted in Brugger, 7.

²⁴ Lowett, 7.

²⁵ Pettit quoted in Brugger, 7.

exercise over others in the community, the freedom of citizens may be enhanced.”²⁶

How About de Tocqueville?

On this background of the comparative analysis of liberalism and republicanism, I assert that de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (first published in 1835) is indeed an example of what we today call as classical formulation of the liberal-individualist-pluralist conception of individual-society-state relation. This is in large part due to his positive account of nineteenth century associationalism in the United States and his stress on voluntarism and independent associational life as protections against the domination of society by the state, and hence on civil society as a counterforce which helped keep the state accountable and effective. Although he does not specifically use the concept of “civil society” his analysis is an analysis of civil society as associational life since he investigates “associations which are formed in civil life” with direct reference to the notions of pluralism, equality and individualism.

Tocqueville’s account is especially concerned with the danger of despotism and the factors that give rise and consolidate despotism. Thus, he is especially interested in the possible ways of preventing the emergence and consolidation of an over-powered state –which is still the dominant theme in the contemporary literature on civil society, especially in Turkey. Tocqueville argues that a despotic political regime is most secure of continuance when it can keep man asunder.²⁷ It is egoism of human beings, he thinks, that feeds despotic governance:

A despot easily forgives his subjects for not loving him provided they do not love each other. He does not ask them to assist him in governing the State; it is enough that they do not aspire to govern it themselves. He stigmatizes as turbulent and unruly spirits those who would combine their exertions to promote the prosperity of community.²⁸

An interesting claim of Tocqueville is related with the connection between political equality and despotism which are “two things [that]

²⁶ Lowett, 7.

²⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, The Complete and Unabridged Volumes I and II, (New York, Toronto: Bantam Books, 2000), 625.

²⁸ Tocqueville, 625.

mutually and perniciously complete and assist each other.”²⁹ His explanation for this seemingly contradictory pair is also remarkable. In his view, “equality places man side by side, unconnected by any common tie; despotism raises barriers to keep them asunder; the former predisposes them not to consider their fellow creatures, the latter makes general indifference a sort of public virtue.”³⁰ Hence, he thinks of equality as making humans independent and hence distant towards each other. In that he makes an interesting contrast between “aristocratic communities” and “democratic nations.” According to this, “in aristocratic societies men do not need to combine in order to act because they are strongly held together”³¹ [because] “in aristocratic communities all the citizens occupy fixed positions, one above the other [so that] the result is that each of them always sees a man above himself whose patronage is necessary to him, and below himself another man whose cooperation he may claim.”³² There is considerable difference between this type of social organization and a democratic society according to Tocqueville, and at the source of this radical difference there is a “novel expression”, a new “feeling” that he calls as “individualism”.³³ In that respect, Tocqueville argues that a novel idea has given birth to this novel expression and it is a feeling and expression different from egotism:

Egotism is a passionate and exaggerated love of self which leads a man to connect everything with his own person, and to prefer himself to everything in the world. Individualism is a mature and calm feeling which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellow-creatures; and to draw apart with his family and his friends; so that after he thus formed a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself.³⁴

For Tocqueville, this novel idea and expression of individualism, together with its consequences is a byproduct of democracy and it is closely related with the development of the principle of equality in democratic communities. He claims that equality has certain bitter consequences which serve to despotism. What is behind “the evils which equality may produce”³⁵

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 631.

³² Ibid., 621.

³³ Ibid., 620.

³⁴ Tocqueville, 620.

³⁵ Ibid., 629.

is that equality gives an individual the feeling that he can do everything by himself without any help or cooperation of others:

Aristocracy had made a chain of all the members of the community from the peasant to the king: democracy breaks that chain and severs every link of it. As social conditions become more equal the number of persons increases who, although they are neither rich enough nor powerful enough to exercise any great influence over their fellow-creatures have nevertheless acquired or retained sufficient education and fortune to satisfy their own wants. They owe nothing to any man; they acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands.³⁶

Consequently, individuals “entertain a presumptuous confidence in their strength” and since they do not suppose that they will one day have to ask for the assistance of other individuals they do not refrain from showing that “they care for nobody but themselves.”³⁷ This is the way, then, “separation of men from one another”³⁸ takes place and hence Tocqueville comes to claim that “it is commonly at the outset of democratic society that citizens are most disposed to live apart.”³⁹ In his words,

Amongst democratic nations, ... all the citizens are independent and feeble; they can do hardly anything by themselves, and none of them can oblige his fellow-men to lend him their assistance. They all, therefore, fall into a state of incapacity, if they did not learn voluntarily to help each other.⁴⁰

The separation/distance concomitant to individualism that comes out of equality is a great danger for a democratic way of life in Tocqueville’s analysis and this is due to its potential to give rise to a despotic political regime. It is exactly for this reason that he puts forward the importance of “*associations which are formed in civil life.*”⁴¹ This is why he is seen as the founding father of the most dominant usage of the term civil society as voluntary activity through associations with the purpose of having an influence upon the political decision-making processes. In other words, he

³⁶ Ibid., 622.

³⁷ Ibid., 623.

³⁸ Ibid., 623.

³⁹ Ibid., 623.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 631.

⁴¹ Ibid., 630.

sees those associations as barriers to ward off the coming of despotism. Beneath his belief in those associations is his conviction that those associations will contribute to closer relations with other individuals in the society contrary to the expectations of a possible despotic regime that would naturally prefer indifference: “As soon as a man begins to treat of public affairs in public he begins to perceive that he is not so independent of his fellow-men as he had first imagined, and that in order to obtain their support, he must often lend them his co-operation.”⁴² This close relation and cooperation among individuals is the most important tool that they can use in their endeavor to defend themselves against despotism because,

[i]f each citizen did not learn, in proportion as he individually becomes more feeble and consequently more incapable of preserving his freedom single-handed, to combine with his fellow-citizens for the purpose of defending it, it is clear that tyranny would unavoidably increase together with equality.⁴³

Tocqueville clearly expresses his view that these associations are necessary for democratic nations:

Feelings and opinions are recruited, the heart is enlarged and the human mind is developed by no other means than by the reciprocal influence of men upon each other... these influences are almost null in democratic countries; they must therefore be artificially created, and this can only be accomplished by associations.⁴⁴

As an end result of his analysis based upon i) the connections between equality in democratic communities; ii) the resulting sense of individualism and distance of individuals from each other; iii) the consequent threat of despotism that is fed by this indifference; iv) the despot’s preference to keep individuals asunder and to preserve that indifference on the part of the society, Tocqueville reaches the conclusion that “governments therefore should not be the only active powers; associations ought, in democratic nations, to stand in lieu of those powerful private individuals whom the equality of conditions swept away.”⁴⁵ In addition to that it is also important to highlight that he links the level of development of associationalism to the

⁴² Ibid, 625-626.

⁴³ Ibid, 630.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 632-633.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 634.

level of progress of a society and the state of civilization of the people living in that society:

In democratic countries, the science of association is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made. Amongst the laws which rule human societies there is one which seems to be more precise and clear than all others. If men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the equality of conditions is increased.⁴⁶

To sum up, Tocqueville's approach to state-society-individual relations is a classical formulation of the liberal approach. There are three reasons underlying this argument: The first reason is that his conception of associations as the necessary requirements for democracy is influenced by the possible threat of despotism. His motivation is seeing political action and interest in public affairs as virtues in themselves, which is the most distinguishing characteristics of republicanism. He sees coming together and co-operation of individuals essential for democracy because unless this happens, “it is easy to foresee that the time is drawing near when man will be less and less able to produce of himself alone, the commonest necessities of life.”⁴⁷ This, in turn, will bring the result that “the task of the governing power will therefore perpetually increase and its very efforts will extend it every day.”⁴⁸ Consequently, “the more it stands in the place of associations, the more will individuals losing their notion of combining together require its assistance: these are causes and effects which unceasingly engender each other.”⁴⁹ So, his emphasis on associational life is related with his concern with obscuring the increase and extension of “the task of the governing power” rather than focusing upon these activities as the virtues characterizing humans. “The antistatist core of Tocqueville's preference for voluntary activity rests at the heart of much contemporary fascination with civil society.”⁵⁰ As Ehrenberg points out, what most appealed Tocqueville about America was the weakness of the state and “his explanation made one of the first distinctions between a “strong society, weak state” America and “strong state, weak society” Europe that has had such a powerful influence on

⁴⁶ Tocqueville, 635.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 632.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 632.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 632-633.

⁵⁰ Ehrenberg, 166. See also Edwards, ... and Chris Hann, “Introduction: Political Society and Civil Anthropology” in *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 5.

contemporary theorizing.”⁵¹ Consequently, his views should be considered as the original roots of the dominant use of the term “civil society” as implying the spontaneously evolved realm of voluntary activity outside the state and the institutions and movements in this realm. Tocqueville’s fear of a despotic state and his warnings against the extension of the task of the governing power epitomizes the central principle of the liberal conception of state-society relationship. As John Gray explains, “[t]he *sine qua non* of the liberal state in all its varieties is that governmental power and authority be limited by a system of constitutional rules and practices in which individual liberty and the equality of persons under the rule of law are respected.”⁵²

Secondly, he explains his stress upon co-operation among humans and increasing their ability to do certain things by themselves, in terms of “*the principle of interest rightly understood*.”⁵³ As was shown above, a distinctive feature of liberal understanding of civil society is at the same time what makes it different from the republican conception of the term: Participation in the civil associations and interest in public affairs are encouraged in the liberal conception with a concern to function i) as a checking mechanism upon state and ii) as a means to protect and enhance individual rights but not with a concern with the virtue of being a social or political animal i.e. a virtue through which humans *realize* themselves which is the case in the republican tradition. In accordance with this, Tocqueville argues that it is not the right time anymore for “talking of the beauties of virtue” , “entertaining the lofty idea of the duties of man”, and “professing that is praiseworthy to forget one’s self” because all of these were “the standard opinions” of morals of the time “when the world was managed by a few rich and powerful individuals.”⁵⁴ He adds that the time that he was writing was different due to the extension of the principle of equality and individualism –as was explained above. Hence, Tocqueville argues, it is of no use anymore to hang upon such ideas any more in an age when “man is brought home to himself by an irresistible force.”⁵⁵ He believes

[n]o power upon earth can prevent the increasing equality of conditions from inclining the human mind to seek out what is useful, or from leading every member of the community to be wrapped up in himself. It must therefore be expected that

⁵¹ Ehrenberg, 161.

⁵² John Gray, *Liberalism*, 2nd Edition, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 71-72.

⁵³ Tocqueville, 646-649.

⁵⁴ Tocqueville, 646.

⁵⁵ Tocqueville, 647.

personal interest will become more than ever the principal, if not the sole, spring of men’s actions...⁵⁶

Consequently, Tocqueville expresses his agreement with the “American moralists” who “do not profess that men ought to sacrifice themselves for their fellow-creatures because it is noble to make such sacrifices ... but endeavor to prove that *it is the interest of every man to be virtuous.*”⁵⁷ According to him, this is the only way of thinking appropriate for the times of equality and individualism. Hence, this view of interest is also valid in understanding his approach to coming together and cooperation of the individuals within associations since he also explains them to be in the interest of those individuals since they could prevent a despotic regime with excessive governmental powers. It is in the interest of the individuals to get together through associations and protect their freedom.

Thirdly, Tocqueville reflects the liberal pluralist conception of equality which presupposes an equality of conditions among various elements of civil society. This equality is considered in the form of *equality before the law*. The state is supposed ideally in the liberal tradition to guarantee the impartiality of these rules, laws etc. It is in this sense that the plurality, seen as a necessary requirement of civil society, is celebrated. There is no questioning about if there are certain factors that cause differences in the ability and potential of the groups and associations within civil society to make their voices heard by the public at large. This is related with liberalism’s approach to equality. As Gray points out, it is a central premise of liberalism to take it for granted that “*power cannot by its nature be distributed equally.*”⁵⁸ Hence, it is in this context that the liberal view approaches to the phenomenon of the competitiveness of civil society and so it is thought of as an autonomous sphere of voluntary activity where the citizens (individuals and groups) exercise their political freedoms within the framework of legal equality that the state ensures. Liberalism does not assume a natural harmony of interests but rather contends that “the divergent interests of the different individuals could be reconciled by the observance of appropriate rules of conduct” so it “[leaves] the individuals free to pursue their own purposes whether these were egoistic or altruistic.”⁵⁹ It is thought to be

⁵⁶ Tocqueville, 649.

⁵⁷ Tocqueville, 647.

⁵⁸ Gray, *Liberalism*, 57. Emphasis added. Far from such questioning, Diamond for instance suggests that civil society “provides traditionally excluded groups –such as women and racial or ethnic minorities- access to power that has been denied them in the “upper institutional echelons” of formal politics.” Diamond, 8.

⁵⁹ Hayek, “Liberalism”, web source. Emphasis added.

possible for the society to manage the life by itself. It is presupposed that the recognition of those particularities, plurality and diversity provides that “the diversity [of men’s] wants and the diversity of talents in different men reciprocally accommodat[e] the wants of each other...”⁶⁰ In other words, harmony is expected once the control of the state by the society is ensured and once the pluralism of civil society is guaranteed through the principle of equality before the law.

Such views on state–society relationship are clearly reflected in more recent liberal studies on the concept of civil society. The most prominent representative of this approach is Larry Diamond who at the same time seems to be the author of the most quoted definition of civil society. He defines it as the

*realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from “society” in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable. Civil society is an intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and the state.*⁶¹

The parallelism between this definition and Tocqueville’s approach is quite clear. Similar to Tocqueville’s formulation, Diamond also considers civil society as serving the development and consolidation of democracy by containing the power of governments. He explains “the first and most basic democratic function of civil society”, as that of providing “the basis for the limitation of state power, hence for the control of the state by society, and hence for democratic political institutions as the most effective means of exercising that control.” According to Diamond, “this function has two dimensions: to monitor and restrain the exercise of power by democratic states, and to democratize authoritarian states.”⁶² Apart from this basic function, there are several other functions that comprise Diamond’s conception of civil society. These include “stimulating political participation, increasing the political efficacy and skill of democratic citizens”;

⁶⁰ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Men, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 215.

⁶¹ Larry Diamond, “Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation”, *Journal of Democracy*. Vol.5. No.3, 1994, 5. Emphases in the original.

⁶² Diamond, 7.

“development of other democratic attributes such as tolerance, moderation, a willingness to compromise, and a respect for opposing viewpoints”; “creating channels other than political parties for the articulation, aggregation and representation of interests”; “generating a wide range of interests that may cross-cut and so mitigate the principal polarities of political conflict”; “recruiting and training new political leaders”; “dissemination of information”; “achievement of economic reform in a democracy by creating support through political coalitions in society and legislature.”⁶³

Conclusion

Expressions like “glocal”, “unity within difference”, and “coexistence of differences” are central to today’s political agenda both in Turkey and in the world. This is especially so at the face of rising tides of populist right in both Europe and in the US. Indeed, the debates symbolized in those phrases all draw attention to the centuries-old question of finding the ideal way of connecting the individual to the community she is living in. Of course, there have been different schools suggesting withdrawal from socio-political life and defending instead a state of individual self-sufficiency such as Cynicism and Epicureanism; but they remained rather peripheral within the tradition of political thought. Majority of Ancient Greek thinkers, the social contract theorists, the Enlightenment writers, the historical figures behind the French Revolution in declaring the ideals of humanity as “liberté, égalité, and fraternité”, the theorists of the nation-state and national identity of the 20th century, the theories of globalization and contemporary theories of democracy (including communitarians, pluralists and radical democrats) have all been concerned with this big issue of how to find the best way of relating the individual human being to the community surrounding him/her. This article aimed to introduce the multifaceted relationship between two of these traditions, namely, liberalism and republicanism. This is a multi-dimensional relation because some see these two traditions as rivals while some talk about a common denominator. Consequently, an analysis of this complex relation provides fertile ground for those who are eager to hunt their own answers. This is what this article hopes to have done with an eye on one

⁶³ Ibid, 7-11.

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of the most influential political theorists, de Tocqueville, whose ideas
comprise an invitation to think about both liberalism and republicanism.

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