

Research Article

**The Comparative Study of the People's Status
in Theories of Democracy and in Imam
Khomeini's Political Thought**

Mas'ud Mo'ini-pur¹

Received: 2021/03/06 Revised: 2021/06/10 Accepted: 2021/06/20 Published Online: 2021/09/01

Abstract

One of the most important pillars of Imam Khomeini's political thought is the people's role in the Islamic state. Similarly, in theories of democracy, in spite of different perceptions of it, the principle of people's governance has been accepted. By comparing theories of democracy and Imam Khomeini's theory on religious state and its legitimacy, we may find out the similarities and differences of these two views regarding people's role in the government. In theories of democracy, the legitimacy of the political system, the rulers' legitimacy and the legitimacy of the processes of decision-making are all contingent upon people's consent; and accordingly, people play a decisive and effective role in each of those levels. In Imam Khomeini's view, however, the legitimate political system in the Occultation Period is a system based on the [qualified] jurist's authority, and other regimes – even though people are satisfied with it – are instances of the tyrant regime. Accordingly, people's role in the legitimacy of the political system is restricted to accepting it and preparing the ground for its realization; however, they have an important role in legitimizing the ruling jurist and in the process of decision-making, and their right to participation has been considered in these two steps.

Keywords

political legitimacy, political participation, theories of democracy, Imam Khomeini's political thought, people's role.

1. Assistant Professor in Department of Political Sciences; Baqer al-Uloom University, Qom, Iran.
masood.moeini@gmail.com

* Mo'ini-pur, M. (2021). The Comparative Study of the People's Status in Theories of Democracy and in Imam Khomeini's Political Thought. *Journal of Islamic Political Studies*.3(6).pp. 115-139.

doi: 10.22081/jips.2021.72943

* Copyright © 2021, Author (s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits copy and redistribute the material just in noncommercial usages, provided the original work is properly cited. <http://jips.isca.ac.ir>

Introduction

People's status and role in government is one of the important and fundamental issues in politics and has always been discussed and investigated in the history of political thought. Each of the religious and non-religious theories, considering their certain anthropological and epistemological foundations, has presented views in this regard. The early theorizations regarding people's role in government were presented in ancient Greek and Roman civilization and the early institutions for people's participation were created in those lands. In the Greek society, though people's direct participation in the form of democratic states was practically realized and all public decisions would be made through public polling, that method faced with theoretical oppositions by prominent thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle. Plato maintained that democracy was the government of the ignorant and unaware people. Aristotle also maintained that democracy was the government of the majority of poor people that were – like the rich – far from the virtue of moderation (Bashiriya, 1381 SH, p.196). After the collapse of the Greek civilization, people's political participation was realized in the form of the Rome's republic. But with the start of the Middle Ages and emergence of the empires and absolute states, democracy and people's participation were forgotten. Since the 18th century and with the French revolution, people's role and political participation was considered once again, and the thinkers of the new age were theorizing in this regard. This attention to people's role continued so long that today democracy is the most common form of the political system in various societies and many political systems justify their legitimacy on the basis of public opinion and people's participation. In Islamic thoughts, discussion on people's role in the Islamic state in the form of concepts such as allegiance, council, and representation would be put forward. However, due to difference in views of the Islamic thinkers regarding the legitimacy of

the political state in the Occultation Period, no unique answer has been offered regarding the people's role in the Islamic state. Each of the theories of legitimacy has considered a special status for people. Altogether, we may say that the old Shiite and Sunnite opinions were close to some authority and ignoring people, and the new opinions have stressed on democracy and the importance of the political participation (Firahi, 1384 SH, pp. 58-59). Among the new opinions that put a great emphasis on people's role and importance of their political participation are Imam Khomeini's jurisprudential and political views with their special features. In addition to the fact that he could offer an innovative theory regarding the Islamic state in the theorization phase, he could also establish his desired Islamic state and a powerful public government with people's widespread support. Accordingly, special attention has been paid to people's role both in theories of western democracy and in Imam Khomeini's political thought. In this article, we aim at investigating and explaining Imam Khomeini's view in this regard and compare it to the theories of western democracy. The main question in this article is as follows: "What is the status of people and their participation in political processes in Imam Khomeini's political thought and in theories of democracy, and what are the similarities and differences of these two theories?" The hypothesis offered for answering this question is as follows: "Both theories stress on people's political participation. However, in the theories of democracy, people's participation has the legitimizing role in all levels of establishing a regime and decision-making. But in Imam Khomeini's thought, although the political system enjoys divine legitimacy, people have basic role in many other spheres including legitimizing the ruling jurist and affecting the acceptability and efficiency of the political system; and they do their real functions in those spheres".

Since both in western theories and in Islamic theories investigating people's role is closely related to the issue of legitimacy, it is essential

to firstly study the political legitimacy from the viewpoint of theories of democracy and then – for assessing the hypothesis – investigate people's role in each of those theories.

1. Political legitimacy in theories of democracy

1-1. The meaning of democracy and its essential elements

'Democracy' is a term derived from the Greek word *demos* meaning 'people' and the word *cratia* or *kratos* meaning 'power'. In Greek or Athenian usage, *demos* meant the community of villagers; and thus, any rural unit was called *demoi* and its inhabitants were called *demotai*. In the 5th century B.C., the meaning of *demos* altered and it was used to refer to the community of all Athenian people gathered for governmental affairs. In 509 B.C., as the result of the reformation done by the Athenian legislator, Cleisthenes, the villagers gained the power for the administration of the society, and the government of Athena would be called *demokrati* or the villagers' government. With the abovementioned conceptual evolution in the meaning of *demos*, democracy gradually turned into a common noun for states administered by the public (Alem, 1381 SH, p. 293).

Thus, the concept of 'democracy' is among the few political concepts with a long political history. Although on the basis of the root of the word 'democracy' it is defined as the 'people's government', and in all theories of democracy this is somehow referred to, the fact is that the concept of democracy has been subject to conceptual and institutional alterations. Today, the spheres of disagreement on democracy are much broad, and this has led to formation of various theories in this regard. This is in a way that according to Cohen, there is a kind of literal and intellectual mess regarding the democracy (Cohen, 2014, p. 14). In its early years of formation in ancient Greece, democracy was in the form of people's direct participation in public affairs, but in the modern age and with more broadening of societies,

people's indirect participation was arisen and, in this way, the Greek direct democracy was replaced by representation democracy. In this type of democracy, people exert their governance by choosing representatives for making public decisions and exerting them. Thus, as far as the form of the state is concerned, some of democracies are based on people's direct interference in the process of political decision-making (the democracy of ancient Greek and democracy of Rousseau) and some others are based on choosing representatives by people (representation democracy). As to the goals discussed by the political philosophers for democracy, there are also different opinions. Some of the theories seek to fulfill the public will and expediency (Rousseau's democracy), some seek to provide individual rights and freedoms (liberal democracy), and some of the theoreticians have a realistic view of democracy and define it according to what it really is (pluralist and elite-centered democracy). Accordingly, various thinkers have offered a variety of models for stating these different opinions. Dr. Bashiriya has distinguished five types of democracy (Bashiriya, 1381 SH, pp. 175-190). In a threefold division, C.B. Macpherson has distinguished three types of democracy: western liberal democracy, non-liberal communist democracy, and non-liberal democracy of underdeveloped regions. He maintains that the real world consists of these three types of democracy (Macpherson, 1964, p.67). Gutmann has enumerated six types of democracy: Schumpeterian, populist, liberal, participatory, social, and deliberative (Qaderi, 1379, p. 50). David Held investigated the historical course of conceptual evolutions in democracy to distinguish two models of democracy as classic and modern. He has inserted various types of democracy into each one (Held, 2006, p. 21). Huntington has classified various definitions of democracy into three main groups: definitions of democracy in terms of sources of power for government, based on goals of government, and democracy as special procedure of government (Huntington, 1991, p. 8).

It seems that posing each of these models for democracy will not cause any change in the concept of democracy and its essential components, because each of these opinions seek to state the goals of democracy or criticize the existing democracies. Thus, in defining it, we must not mix the quiddity of democracy with its goals. Besides, we must not identify democracy with the ideologies combined with it, such as liberalism and socialism. Accordingly, unlike the opinions of some authors who believe that democracy is not a concept with quiddity and one cannot state a certain criterion for it (Haqiqat, 1382 SH, p. 73). As many thinkers have well stated (Beetham, 1999, p. 45; Arblaster, 2002, p. 23), in spite of many differences in perceptions of democracy, one can enumerate some important principles as the essential components of democracy, shared by all theories of democracy. Three basic pillars of democracy shared by all theories of democracy are people's governance, political equality, and political freedom. By the principle of freedom, we mean that in the democracy system, individuals, groups and political parties have no privilege over one another in exerting their right to governance. All people, regardless of ethnic, religious, class identities or political proclivities, have the right to choose or to be chosen. Political equality is a basic principle both in classic and in modern democracies. Thus, regimes such as one-party regimes wherein other parties have legally no right to be active and the rivals are suppressed or omitted or practically have no opportunity to participate and compete, cannot be called democratic. The system that deprives opponents and dissidents from exerting their rights to governance is quite far from ideal democracy. The principle of equal competition is an important index in all theories of democracy. All of them reject the idea that one individual, group or certain class enjoys *a priori* right to rule over others (Bashiriya, 1381 SH, p. 19).

Freedom, whether in its negative sense meaning being free of others' despotic will or its positive sense meaning ability to choose, act

and participate in political life, lies in the nature of democracy. This principle includes freedom of belief and thought, freedom of expression, freedom of press, freedom of communities and freedom of participation in political life. Freedom of expression in all its forms – verbal, written, and conflict of opinion in various media – as well as the citizens' freedom to form societies and communities in line with actualization of political goals without concern about probability of punishment are among the political freedoms. Carl Cohen divides well the freedom of expression into freedom in presenting suggestions and freedom in opposition. Not only democracy necessitates freedom of citizens in opposing the policies and the nominees introduced by the society but also it necessitates freedom in suggesting the alternative methods for action and freedom in effective and efficient participation (Cohen, 2014, p. 120).

Therefore, one can say that democracy is a type of political system wherein public decisions are made by people or their representatives, all people are free and equal in exerting their right to governance, and no certain group or class enjoys privilege or priority. People enjoy, according to the laws they themselves have enacted, the right to appoint, depose, and supervise their rulers, and there is no post in democracy above the people's will and governance; rather, it is just through people's vote that they gain legitimacy (Held, 2006, p. 14).

1-2. Political legitimacy

The word 'legitimacy' is cognate with words such as legal, legislation and legislator. Thus, it means being legal and legitimate. In that sense, the rulers have right to govern people and people must obey them. Therefore, legitimacy is closely related to the conceptions such as commitment and liability to obedience (Vincent, 1991, p. 68). Mattei Dogan, the contemporary French philosopher, defines legitimacy as follows: "legitimacy is a belief that the authority governing any country has the

right to issue commands, and the citizens are obliged to obey" (Dogan, 2000, p. 4). Abdul-Hamid Abul-Hamd also maintains that legitimacy is a belief according to which the right to command for the rulers and the duty to obey for the citizens are realized (Abul-Hamd, 1353 SH, p. 245). Other thinkers have also referred to the same meaning of the word 'legitimacy'. Thus, we may say that legitimacy is, in politics, the result of realization of two things: the right to rule for the rulers and the necessity to identify and accept this right on the part of the subjects. Thus, legitimacy is considered as the basis of governance and a factor in turning the power to authority.

'Legitimacy' in politics is discussed as a philosophical issue in the political philosophy and as an objective and practical issue in political sociology. In the political philosophy, legitimacy has a normative aspect and is explained on the basis of 'must' and 'must not'. That is, the political philosophers seek to state the criteria for legitimate and illegitimate government; but in political sociology, the sociologists' discussion is not focused on the must and must not. Rather, it is focused on the question of how a state can be considered legitimate by the majority of the citizens, and how the states can gain the consent of the majority of their citizens (Hatami, 1384 SH, p. 14).

In the political philosophy, various theories have been mentioned for legitimacy. Some of the political philosophers consider the state as legitimate on the basis of its divine nature. According to that view, the Exalted God is the source for legitimacy of any state and all powers in the universe, including the political power, must gain their legitimacy from God. Obeying the commands of such a state is equal to obeying God's commands and disobeying it is considered as equal to disobeying God. The emergence of Christianity and its diffusion in the Roman Empire prepared the ground for posing such a theory. Saint Augustine posed the idea of divine legitimacy of the state, and that theory continued to dominate all over the Middle Ages up to the 16th

century. That theory created divine rights for the rulers and kings and they were considered as God's agents on the earth, though some societies would consider the king as God of the universe or God's son (Raja'i, 1372 SH, pp. 32-33).

Some of the experts have considered force and dominance as sources of legitimacy of the state. In this theory, they believe that anyone who overcame and made others subordinate to himself, his state is legitimate. Hobbes, the English philosopher of the 17th century, and Machiavelli, the well-known Italian politician, supported that theory. Machiavelli maintained that the state must rely on sword to be able to preserve its power. Thomas Hobbes, considering his particular anthropology, argues that if there was no force, the men would remain the state of perpetual war and, thus, it is inevitable to establish a government based on force and power (Copleston, 1947, vol. 5, p. 54).

Many of other political philosophers have posed the idea of legal legitimacy for the legitimate political regime. According to this view, any state with which people are content is a legitimate one; otherwise, it is illegitimate. The theory of public legitimacy is based on 'the right to self-determination', which the majority of people must enjoy. Therefore, this theory never considers a sacred and divine aspect for the state. Although this theory has its roots in the democracies of the ancient Greece, it was revived by Hugo Grotius in the 16th century and by the adherents of the social contract in the 18th century. Accordingly, anyone can relegate the right to government to an individual or some individuals through a social contract; and just in that case, the state will be legitimate. Rousseau, the French thinker and one of the adherents of the theory of social contract, writes, "The only thing that can form the foundation of the legitimate power and the legitimate state are the contracts concluded between the ruler and the people with their consent" (Rousseau, 1762, p. 41). Accordingly, the

French declaration of human rights authorized in 1789 inspired by Rousseau's ideas declared that the foundation for the legitimacy of any state is the nation's choice; and the article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declares the nation's will as the foundation of the state's powers. This theory has been dominant over the western world so far and is considered as the foundation of the modern democratic states. Thus, considering the unique and common nature of democracy in all theories, which is the very principle of free and equal governance of the people, the right to exert this governance is specified to people from the viewpoint of democracy and the only legitimate political regime is the one relying upon people's votes. The political regime gains its legitimacy not from the divine source and not through force and dominance, but through people's votes.

3-1. People's role in theories of democracy

As we get from the conceptual analysis of democracy, the essence of democracy and its fundamental principle is the people's governance. People's governance is manifested by two components of "collectivity of authority" and "political participation" (Mir-Ahmadi, 1386 SH, p. 130). In other words, the power and authority in democracy has a collective nature, not individual or group nature. Thus, all theories of democracy have founded their desired model for administering the society on people's votes and participation in politics and have considered people's participation and interference as the basis for formation and legitimacy of the government. Besides, all affairs in a state founded on democracy must be according to people's consent and agreement. Thus, any source other than people's will and consent cannot independently determine the type of the state, the rulers' qualifications and the method of decision-making in it. Therefore, the strength of democracy depends on the principle of people's governance and anywhere this principle is negated, the main basis of democracy –

which is the common point in all theories of democracy – is faded away and democracy would have no sense anymore. Paying attention to this principle is of great importance for assessing the opinions of religious thinkers regarding the democracy. The importance of this principle is such that other components of democracy have positioned in line with it and are considered among its requirements. If the principle of people's governance is negated, there will be no room for other principles such as political equality, freedom, public supervision, principality of law, etc. The spheres of exerting governance by the people include, in addition to determining the form of government, the rulers' qualifications, enacting laws, and supervising the selected rulers. All these tasks that can be done directly or indirectly are manifestations of the people's right to governance, which suggests its importance and special position.

To investigate the people's role in each of these spheres from Imam Khomeini's viewpoint and comparing it with the theories of democracy, it is necessary to have a look at his view on religious state and its legitimacy.

2. Imam Khomeini's political thought

2-1. the legitimacy of the government of the Shiite political jurisprudence has always faced with this basic question: "What is people's duty towards the state in the period of the absence of the Infallible Imam?" "Can we establish a legitimate state in the Occultation Period?" Most Shiite jurists, especially up to the constitutionalism, would regard the Occultation Period as the period of dissimulation, and the existing states as the oppressive and illegitimate states. In that period when the absolute royal system with the kingdom of the Sunnite Muslim kings (1st to 10th century AH.) and the Shiite kings (10th to 14th century AH.) were dominant, the Shiite jurists would take negative positions towards the existing states and would believe that the

existing states were oppressive and usurpers. Thus, in that period, any people's cooperation with and participation in the government would be considered as cooperation with the oppressor and hence illicit (Kadiwar, 1380 SH, p. 70).

In spite of this consensus on negation of the legitimacy of the oppressive rulers, the Shiite jurists disagree on the possibility of establishment of the legitimate state in the Occultation Period. In general, there are two views in this regard: negative and positive. Some of the Shiite jurists not only consider the existing state as illegitimate, but also they believe that the legitimate form of the state is restricted to Infallible Imam's government and all states formed without his permission are illegitimate. This view, known as Sheikh Ansari's school, believes in no political authority of the jurist and maintains that one must be content with dissimulated life in the oppressive states and must avoid making any effort to establish a state (Firahi, 1379 SH, p. 209). Another view accepted by many early and later jurists believes, in addition to negative approach to oppressive states, in the possibility of realization of the legitimate state in the Occultation Period. In the framework of this approach and in the position to offer alternative views as well as theorizing about the legitimate state in the Occultation period, various opinions have been offered. Many of the Shiite jurists, on the basis of the rational or transmitted evidences, believe that administering the society's affairs in the Occultation Period is specified to the qualified jurist and, accordingly, they believe in the possibility of establishing a legitimate state in the Occultation Period. This group of ideas considers the qualified jurists as deputies for the Infallible Imam and regards just the jurist's government – in case of having enough power – as the legitimate government. Accordingly, others' seizure of power would be usurping the right specified to God and His vicegerent, turning the state into an instance of oppressive states. Those who believe in the

jurist's political authority maintain that in the Occultation Period, the jurists are the deputies of the Infallible Imam and enjoy the same authority in political and administrative matter. In this view, the legitimate form of the state is the one under the authority of the qualified jurist, and the ruler governing without the appointment of the legislator is tyrant.

For the first time, Imam Khomeini spoke of the Islamic state in his book entitled *Kashf al-Asrār* in 1322 SH, taking the scope of the authority of the jurists beyond giving fatwas, judgment and benevolent actions. In 1332, in his book entitled *al-Rasāʾil*, he considered the affairs pertaining to state within the scope of powers of the jurist (Imam Khomeini, 1385 AH, vol. 2, pp. 101-102). Afterwards, in his book entitled *al-Bayʿ*, he pursued his former view and wrote, "In the period of Occultation of the authoritative guardian and the Imam of the time, his general deputies, i.e. the qualified jurists, are his successors in all executive affairs of the state and other powers defined for the Infallible Imam, except in initial jihad" (Imam Khomeini, 1421 AH, p. 625).

Thus, in Imam Khomeini's jurisprudential view, the political authority belongs just to the [qualified] jurist, and any ruler governing without the appointment and permission from the legislator, even though with the consent of the pious people of the society and considering the goals of religion and religious laws, is not legitimate. In this regard, he wrote: "Sultanate, with all its dimensions and subsidiaries is the right belonging to the qualified jurists, and nobody has the right to seize it or take over its main or subsidiary responsibilities, because manipulating it and the related powers is usurping the other's right" (Imam Khomeini, 1415 AH, vol. 2, p. 160). In 1348 SH, when Imam Khomeini would discuss *Kitāb al-Bayʿ* in Najaf, under the topic of *Wilāyat Faqīh*, he did not restrict the scope of the jurist's powers to benevolent actions; rather, he considers it higher and

in the same level as the powers of the Infallibles. In this regard, he wrote: "The same authority that exists for the Prophet and Imam in forming and administering the state exists for the jurist as well" (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, p. 42). After the victory of the Islamic revolution, he maintains – in the agendum for formation of the council for revising the constitutional law – that the powers stated for the jurist in the constitutional law are more and that the clerics have more powers in Islam (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, vol. 11, p. 464). In this regard, he writes:

"The powers of the authoritative jurist are the same as the powers of the Prophet and Imam, and are superior to all subsidiary divine laws. The powers of the state are not just in the framework of the subsidiary divine laws. The state can unilaterally cancel the religious contracts it has concluded with people when those contracts are inconsistent with the benefits of the country; and it can prevent anything – whether ritual or non-ritual – that opposes the expediencies of Islam as long as it is so... this is in the scope of the powers of the [Islamic] state, and there are more issues" (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, vol. 20, p. 452).

Thus, according to Imam Khomeini's jurisprudential foundation, the legitimate state in the Occultation Period is just the state headed by the qualified jurist, appointed by God, who has the same powers as the Infallible Imam. Other pillars of the political system also take their legitimacy from the appointed jurist, and the state without the jurist's headship is tyrant.

2-2. People's role in the Islamic state

One of the important dimensions of Imam's political theory is the discussion on 'people' and their role in the state. People's role in the Islamic state can be studied in three levels. Then, by analyzing and investigating the jurisprudential and theoretical foundations of Imam

Khomeini's view and considering his practical way of life during the establishment of the Islamic state, we may obtain his view on each of those levels.

2-2-1. The level of legitimacy of the political system

The legitimacy of the political system means that if it has been established through a legitimate method, it has the right to govern people, and people have also the duty to obey it. As we stated before, the legitimate political system, in Imam Khomeini's view, is the one based on the jurist's authority; otherwise, even if people are satisfied with it, it is an instance of the tyrant state. Accordingly, people's role in the dimension of legitimacy of the political system is restricted to accepting it and preparing the ground for its realization. That is, the political system takes its legitimacy from the qualified jurist and the jurist takes his authority – based on the evidences for the jurist's authority – from the Infallible Imam (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, p. 42). In that stage, people have no authority to grant to the jurist, nor does their turning away from him negate his authority. Just if people do not cooperate with such a regime, the ground will not be prepared for its realization and, thus, people have an effective role, in this phase, in acceptability of such a regime.

2-2-2. The level of legitimacy of the ruling jurist

When people accepted the political regime based on the jurist's authority and wanted it to be established in the society by preparing the ground for its realization, it will be incumbent upon the qualified jurists to take measure (Imam Khomeini, 1376 SH, p. 42). In case there is just one qualified jurist, he will have the authority and the right to government; however, since there are numerous jurists in the Occultation Period, assuming that the government of just one jurist is rational, just one jurist can exert the political authority and other

jurists have no right to disturb him. In this regard, Imam Khomeini writes:

“From the evidences of authority, we cannot infer the authority of the jurists over one another; rather, it is not reasonable that a jurist be the guardian and the other be the subordinate...however, if a jurist enters something, the other jurist has no right to disturb him”

(Imam Khomeini, 1421 AH, vol. 2, pp. 691-694).

Now, the jurist who wants to take measure for exerting his authority must have some conditions. One of the conditions stated in religious texts for a ruling jurist is no use of force and not imposing a certain person to people. In this condition, though it may not be inferred from the evidences of jurist's authority, if people – due to any reason – are not satisfied with the government of a certain jurist, the state will be founded on force and, according to many traditions, will not be legitimate. This is an important point on legitimacy of the religious state, not paid much attention to. However, Imam Khomeini has delicately noted it. Early in the time of his entrance to Iran after 15 years of being in exile, Imam Khomeini negated royal system in his speech in Behesht Zahra and stated its destructive consequences, emphasizing that people's support and consent are the foundations of establishing the future state in Iran, saying that, “since the nation accepts me, I determine the government” (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, vol. 6, p. 16).

Elsewhere in those days he said that, “today, all the affairs of the country must be administered by people. People have the right to choose someone as the sultan, the president, or under any other title. This is right. People did this as they wished” (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, vol. 6, p. 197).

After stressing on people's right to self-determination on several occasions, Imam Khomeini refers to the status of people's votes in the state and maintains that the Islamic state is the one completely relying

on people's votes. In this regard, he says, "we comply with people's votes. We follow our nation as they vote. We do not have the right to impose anything on our nation. Almighty God has not granted that right to us. The Prophet has not granted that right to us" (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, vol. 11, p. 34). Here, the nation's votes govern. Here, the nation has the state in its hands. The nation has determined the institutions, and none of us is allowed to disobey the nation's decree (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, vol. 14, p. 165). He considers people's vote involved in choosing the leader of the Islamic society, and in a letter to the Revising Council for Constitutional Law, he writes, "If people voted to the experts to appoint a just jurist for their leadership, and those experts appointed someone to leadership, people would necessarily accept the appointed jurist. In that case, he will be the selected guardian of the people, and his orders are effective" (Imam Khomeini, 1385 SH, vol.1, p. 371).

Thus, in Imam Khomeini's view, based on evidences that regard the government founded on force as illegitimate in Islam, the jurist's government not enjoying people's support is neither accepted. Thus, people can choose, to have a legitimate regime, the jurist they wish from among the existing jurists as their ruler. In this way, people's participation plays the role of legitimizing both the jurist's authority and his government.

2-2-3. The level of decision-making

After people accepted the political system based on the jurist's authority and it was inserted in the constitutional law, and when the jurist chosen by people established the state, it comes to making public decisions and exerting them. The mechanism predicted in Imam Khomeini's political thought regarding the processes of decision-making and exerting it is based on counseling with people or their

representatives. Some of the dimensions and objective manifestations of people's participation in that level are as follows:

- Participation in choosing the members of Islamic parliament, the president, the leader and other officials directly or indirectly;
- Supervision over the officials and having the right to criticize them and demand their accountability;
- Affecting the preservation and continuity of the regime by supporting the regime and the officials.

It seems that the reason for Imam's much emphasis on people's role must be sought in his own effort in establishing and continuing the Islamic state and its related expediency. In Imam's view, exerting Islamic laws and values completely in the society is not possible except by establishing Islamic state, and this obligation has such expediency that it is prior to all other expediences. Thus, existence of the Islamic state with headship of the qualified jurist who enjoys absolute powers entrusted to him by God is among the most important Islamic values. Imam Khomeini, with his complete broad insight and awareness of the defeat and non-continuity of the Shiite and non-Shiite states throughout history, was well aware of the fact that realization of such a value in the society will not be successful without people's support and participation. Thus, whether before the establishment of the IRI when he was facing with numerous questions by foreign reporters or after it, he would always emphasize the importance of people's role and their accompaniment; and strongly believed that without people's support, it is impossible to realize the sublime goals of Islam. In the process of establishing the Islamic regime, whenever he faced with objections and critiques by the political groups inside and outside the country, he would adduce the people's support and accompaniment, speaking of democracy in a polemical way. He would regard this valuable and genuine idea realizable not in the form of democracy but in the form of the Islamic

regime. Accordingly, he offered the Islamic regime and the constitutional law including the principle of the jurist's authority and strengthened it with the public votes. In this way, he both realized his ideal of the Islamic state and made people accompany that sublime ideal.

Accordingly, in Imam Khomeini's view, if people are not satisfied with the political system based on the jurist's authority and choose another system, their consent or non-consent will not make any disruption in the legitimacy of such a regime. The only result is that people's not accepting the qualified jurist's regime will cause such a divine regime no to realize and the people will be sinful due to being satisfied with the tyrant regime. But if people accept the principle of the jurist's authority and prepare the ground for realizing it, they will have an important role in the legitimacy of the ruling jurist's government.

3. Comparison and contrast

By investigating and comparing Imam Khomeini's jurisprudential and political views with the theories of democracy, we find important and considerable points about the people's role and status in the state.

1. Both in theories of democracy and in Imam Khomeini's political thought, the people's role and their political participation have been much emphasized. To come closer to the ideal principles of democracy and the highest level of their realization, the thinkers of western democracy have put forward other models in addition to the classic and liberal models of democracy, including participatory and deliberative models. In such models of democracy, they have attempted to consider the people's real role and true functions in political processes. People's political participation – as stated before – has a special status in Imam Khomeini's theoretical foundations and his practical way of life;

and indeed, it is one of the important pillars of his political thought. In designing a practical and objective model for Islamic state, he established a deep link between people's participation and religious concepts; and thus, he has emphasized the republic and the Islamic nature of the state simultaneously.

2. Although both theories stress on people's participation, they are different regarding the scope of the influence and impact of people's interference in the governmental processes and its functions. In theories of democracy, the importance of people's interference in public decision-makings is such that the pillars of the states' legitimacy are founded on it, and they regard no legitimacy for the political system without people's interference. Choosing the form of the state, determining the qualifications and conditions of the rulers, participating in various levels of local and national elections as well as enacting laws and many other issues are among the rights and powers of people and their representatives; and without their consent, the legitimacy of the political system is under question. In Imam Khomeini's political thought, however, it is necessary to distinguish three levels of authority, government, and decision-making. Imam Khomeini's foundation in the legitimacy of the political system is the legitimacy based on the qualified jurist's authority and guardianship and his appointment by the Infallible Imam. Indeed, people's consent or non-consent has no effect in legitimacy or illegitimacy of such a regime. However, people's participation has, firstly, an important and a basic role in the acceptability and efficiency of the state, and it is to such an extent that without people's interference and their participation, the Islamic state based on the qualified jurist's authority will not be realized or continued. Secondly, people's participation plays a basic role in the level of legitimizing the jurist's government and making

public decisions. Thus, after being disappointed of realization of the royal constitutionalism, Imam Khomeini criticized the foundation of sultanate and hereditary and despotic regime, stressing on replacing it with a republic regime wherein people play a more effective role and their rights are more emphasized.

3. In the theories of democracy, though people's governance and their legitimizing role are emphasized, it becomes clear – considering the evolutions taken place in the theories of democracy – that those theories are unable to practically implement the principles of democracy and could not establish true democracy in their societies. Besides, the history of democracy is full of theories that have criticized the basic principles of democracy (Arblaster, 2002, p. 48). Some of the elitist and pluralist thinkers such as Schumpeter, Robert Dahl and others have regarded achieving these goals as a defeated project, defining democracy with a realistic approach and considering the realities of the contemporary world. In their view, democracy is just a suitable device for peaceful transference of power among the political rivals, and people are quite far from the political issues and decision-makings. Therefore, some other thinkers, in recent decades, have attempted to highlight people's role and their participation in the form of the participatory and deliberative theories of democracy to resolve this deficiency in the existing democracies. Thus, enumerating principles such as people's governance, freedom and political equality and the like as the basic principles of democracy does not mean that today the western and eastern states claiming to be democratic are quite faithful to those principles or that they have established complete democracy in their societies. This is while in Imam Khomeini's thought, people have found their true value and their fundamental status in government's affairs and exert their true

functions. By democracy of Islam, he means the type of state that is much higher and more valuable than the states claiming to be democratic, and that whatever of freedom, equality and people's governance that they claim to have are really found in Islamic state in a true and practical way. This is the point of superiority of the Islamic state over the democratic states.

Conclusion

Among the theories well-known in the western political thought, the theories of democracy are among the theories emphasizing people's role. In the political thought of Islam, especially in the new ones, this has been emphasized too. Since investigating the way people play their role in the state and the extent of its importance is closely related to the legitimacy of the political system, we have inevitably studied the foundations of legitimacy in the theories of democracy and in Imam Khomeini's theory. In Imam Khomeini's political thought, the legitimacy of the state has a divine origin and the political system is legitimate due to the fact that a qualified jurist as the deputy of the Infallible Imam presides over it. In the theories of democracy, however, the people's governance is the principle and the political system has no legitimacy without people's consent. Thus, in theories of democracy, people's participation has the legitimizing role for the political system, but in Imam Khomeini's political thought, the legitimate political system is restricted to the political system based on the [qualified] jurist's authority, and other forms of state are illegitimate. Accordingly, people's participation is effective just in the establishment and efficiency of such a regime. After preparation of the ground for realization of such a regime by the people, the jurist who has established the state must be subject to people's consent. Otherwise, his government is no legitimate for the same reason as the one for illegitimacy of the state based on force. Accordingly, in Imam

Khomeini's thought, people have three important and basic roles: (1) preparing the ground for realization of the Islamic regime based on the jurist's authority; (2) legitimizing the ruling jurist's governance (participation in creating the regime); and (3) affecting the efficiency and continuity of the Islamic regime (participation in decision-making).

Thus, the importance Imam Khomeini gives to the people's political participation and their support of the Islamic regime and its officials, which secures the efficiency of the regime with people's support and their participation, makes this theory different from the theories of democracy. He believes that the political system of Islam is the highest and most efficient political system and is prior to other forms of state including democratic forms; thus, he has criticized that form of state with a full insight.

References

1. 'Alem, 'A. (1381 SH). *Bunyādhāyi Ilm Siyāsāt*. Tehran: Ney Publications.
2. Firahi, D. (1384 SH). *Nizām Siyāsī wa Dowlat dar Islām* (3rd ed.). Tehran: Samt Publications.
3. Kadiwar, M. (1380 SH). *Nazariyahāyi Dowlat dar Fiqh Shī'a*. Tehran: Ney Publications.
4. Mir-Ahmadi, M. (1386 SH). "Imāmat wa Mu'allifahāyi Dimukrāsī" in *Qabasāt* (45), pp. 125-152.
5. Cohen, C. (2014). *Democracy* (Trans. Mokhber, A). Ney Publications.
6. Macpherson, C.B. (1964). *The Real World of Democracy* (Trans. Ma'nawi, A). Tehran: Agah.
7. David, H. (2006). *Models of Democracy* (Trans. Mokhber, A). Tehran: Roshangaran.
8. Huntington, S. (1991). *Democracy's Third Wave* (Trans. Shahsa, A.). Tehran: Rowzana.
9. Beetham, D. (1999). *Democracy and Human Rights* (Trans. Delafrouz, M.T.). Tehran: Tarh Now.
10. Arblaster, A. (2002). *Democracy* (Trans. Mortazawi, H.). Tehran: Ashiyan.
11. Vincent, A. (1991). *Theories of the State* (Trans. Bashiriya, H.). Tehran: Ney Publications.
12. Dogan, M. (2000). "Testing the Concepts of Legitimacy and Trust" in *Political-Economic Information*. 97-98 (pp. 4-10).
13. Copleston, F. C. (1946). *A History of Philosophy* (Trans. Amir A'lam, J.). Tehran: Soroush.
14. Rousseau, J. J. (1762). *Social Contract* (Trans. Zirak-zada, Gh.). Tehran: Adib.
15. Abul-Hamd, A. (1353 SH). *Mabānī Siyāsāt*. Tehran: Tus.
16. Bashiriya, H. (1381 SH). *Darshāyī az Demukrāsī Barayi Hama*. Tehran: Nigah Mo'asir.

17. Haqiqat, Ş. (1382 SH). “Dar Bāb Nisbat Snajī Dīn wa Dimukrāsī” in *Surūsh Andīsha* (7 & 8), pp. 72-87.
18. Hatami, M. R. (1384 SH). *Mabānī Mashrūʿīyyat Ḥukūmat dar Andīshayi Siyāsī Shīʿa*. Tehran: Majd Publications.
19. Imam Khomeini, R. (1385 AH). *Ar-Rasāʿil*. Qom: Ismaʿiliyan.
20. Imam Khomeini, R. (1385 SH). *Şaḥīfa Imām*. Tehran: Institute for Compiling and Publishing Imam Khomeini’s Works.
21. Imam Khomeini, R. (1415 AH). *Al-Makāsib al-Muḥarrama*. Tehran: Institute for Compiling and Publishing Imam Khomeini’s Works.
22. Imam Khomeini, R. (1421 AH). *Al-Bayʿ*. Tehran: Institute for Compiling and Publishing Imam Khomeini’s Works.
23. Raja’i, F. (1372 SH). *Taḥawwul Andīsha dar Sharq Bāstān*. Tehran: Qūmis.