The Rise
of Authoritarian Liberal Democracy
The Rise
of Authoritarian Liberal Democracy
A Preface to a New Theory of Comparative Political Systems

By

Peter Baofu

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FOREWORD

To say that Dr. Peter Baofu has an entirely new perception of commonly held beliefs is surely an understatement. As in his previous thirteen treatises, he continues to question firmly held tenets, and presents novel viewpoints envisioning outcomes beyond the pale of ordinary expectations.

In this present volume, he examines the long-standing conflict between liberal democracy and authoritarianism. The issue is again prominently on the world's agenda as the U.S. argues its case for initiating liberal democracies in Afghanistan and Iraq. While there is no dearth of reaction from every quarter of the world, there is an amazing absence of solid evidence to support opinions on both sides of the issue.

Dr. Baofu proposes a surprisingly new way of assessing this dilemma. In this volume, he presents ideas that pique the reader's curiosity and simultaneously tender an intellectual satisfaction that hope for a solution remains.

Sylvan Von Burg
School of Business
George Washington University
This book is written to challenge the widely held ideas and values, be they in the past or the present—and, for the spirit of intellectual impartiality, does not receive any external funding nor help from any formal organization or institution, as this is the case for my previous books.

The only reward is the amazing joy of discovering something new about the world and beyond that no one else has ever thought before.

There is a person that I should mention, and he is Sylvan von Burg at George Washington University School of Business, who writes the foreword for this book. I deeply appreciate his support of my intellectual endeavor.

Needless to say, I bear the sole responsibility for all views expressed in this book.
ABBREVIATIONS


• Part One •

Introduction
He who is not with us is against us.
—Vladimir Lenin (D. Balz 2002: A18)

Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.
—George W. Bush (WPO 2001)

An Unnerving Beginning Thought

There is something fundamentally wrong with the conventional wisdom in the field of Comparative Politics, Political Theory, and even Political Science as a whole, which rigidly conceptualize and theorize political systems in terms of different categories (e.g., liberal-democratic vs. authoritarian, just to name two opposing usual suspects), which are supposed to be distinct and separate, without much mixing of each other—certainly not in any major way.

A liberal-democratic political system (like the one in the U.S.), in accordance to this conventional wisdom, is anti-authoritarian. Conversely, an authoritarian political system (like the one in mainland China) is anti-democratic.

The two are opposites and do not mix in any major way, to the extent that a liberal-democratic political system is “good” and an authoritarian counterpart is “bad”—for those in the liberal-democratic camp. Or conversely, an authoritarian political system is “good” and a liberal-democratic counterpart is “bad”—for those in the authoritarian camp.

This book takes the challenging task to show that all political systems—different as each is, for sure, from the rest—have much in common. Under the right conditions (which are quite common), a liberal democracy, as an illustration, not only can be as evil as its authoritarian counterpart, albeit in
different ways—but also can be more authoritarian as it becomes more advanced (or developed) as a liberal democracy.

Vladimir Lenin (1939) once said that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. But I suggest instead that authoritarianism is an advanced stage of liberal democracy, under these conditions (which are quite common)—to become, in the absence of better words, what I originally call *authoritarian liberal democracy*.

In this stage, liberal democracy is neither authoritarian nor liberal-democratic but instead authoritarian-liberal-democratic. Liberal democracy and authoritarianism do not have to be two mutually exclusive opposites as is misleadingly understood in conventional political wisdom of our time. In this way, democracy and non-democracy are much closer to each other than conventionally understood.

What exactly are the implications of this unnerving beginning thought, if it is shown to be true? A short answer is that, although the analysis of liberal democracy is used only as a case study in this book, it will have tremendous implications for altering the way that people think about comparative politics, political theory, and in short, about political science altogether.

**The Definitional Issue**

A good starting point is to provide a workable definition of what is exactly meant by such words like (a) “authoritarian,” (b) “democracy,” and (c) “liberal” as shown in the title of the book, which consists of these three words.

(a) Firstly, the word “authoritarian,” when used in the context of a political system, has two fronts to consider, namely, both domestic and foreign.

On the domestic front, an authoritarian character refers to a high restriction of civil liberties (in civil society) in relation to a dominant exercise of governmental power (in political society), in conjunction with its ever changing allies (e.g., military, corporate, media, academic, and whatnot).

On the foreign front, it refers to such political attributes like nation-state elitism, militarism, and the quest for hegemony, to the extent that a powerful nation-state often uses force and duress towards others (especially in relation to weaker ones) for global (or regional) domination (which I already analyzed in a published article titled “The Rise of the ‘New’ Far Right Foreign Policy” in 2003, which was later incorporated in my 2-volume work titled *Beyond Democracy to Post-Democracy* in 2004, hereafter abbreviated as *BDPD*).

(b) Secondly, the word “democracy” is commonly defined, in the parlance of Abraham Lincoln (2001), a government “by the people,” “of the people,” and “for the people”—especially in the context of a small town.

However, in *BDPD*, I corrected Rousseau’s definition by dropping “fraternity” in the equation, since it is in a mayor way redundant, as the term “fraternity” already presupposes some version of equality.

(c) And the word “liberal,” as is understood in political philosophy, refers more to a “broad-minded” quality, which has different versions, when applied to the context of a political system. (MWD 2007) In *The Future of Human Civilization* (2000), I already analyzed four main versions of liberalism (viz., experimentation, skepticism, autonomy, and modus vivendi).

Since many liberal democracies nowadays make good use of the last version of liberalism, that is, *modus vivendi* (or procedural) liberalism, in which the idea of the right is prior to the idea of the good (as opposed to its ideological rival of communitarian democracy, in which the ideal of the good is treated as prior to that of the right)—the idea of liberal democracy to be used in this book is thus based on this “procedural” view of a political system (as a case study for illustration only).

**The Theoretical Debate**

Now that the definitional issue is taken care of, the next step is to take a close look at the theoretical debate in the literature of Comparative Politics, Political Theory, and even Political Science as whole.

There are three theoretical approaches to be summarized hereafter, namely, (a) the “static” approach, (b) the “transformational” approach, and (c) the “dynamic” approach—as summarized in Table 1.1.

(a) The first theoretical approach can be called, in the absence of better words, the “static” theory of comparative political systems. This theory is pervasive in any standard textbook on the subject, even if it is often called by a different name instead (that is, different from what is labeled here).

As an illustration, Thomas Magstadt (1998) and Peter M. Schotten in their textbook titled *Nations and Governments: Comparative Politics in Regional Perspective* distinguished “democratic” systems (like the “presidential liberal democracy” in the U.S. and the “parliamentary liberal democracy” in the U.K.) from “authoritarian” ones (like the one in Iraq under Saddam Hussein).

But name calling is not my concern here. What is important, however, concerns the theoretical significance, since, in accordance to this “static” approach, a liberal democracy, as an illustration, is not authoritarian, just as an authoritarian political system is not liberal-democratic.
The two opposing categories simply do not mix, certainly not in any major way. As another illustration, a “democratic” fascist political system is regarded as an oxymoron, just as a “fascist” liberal democracy is a contradiction in terms, in accordance to the “static” approach.

(b) The second theoretical approach is a bit more flexible and can be called, again in the absence of better words, the “transformational” theory of comparative political systems.

A good instance is the ancient view by Plato (1987) in The Republic, in which a political system (like “democracy”) can degenerate over time into a form of “tyranny.” The reason is that, “in democracy, individuals lose self-control and all pleasures are treated as equal,” to the extent that “the appetite becomes so out-of control that a tyrant emerges to fool the masses for promoting their ‘insatiable desire for freedom,’ while in reality, he rules for his own interests.” (S. DeLue 2002; L. Baradat 1997)

This “transformational” approach allows the change of a political system (like democracy) over time into something else, but when it changes into something else, it will no longer be what it used to be and will thus become something entirely different altogether (like tyranny in Plato’s analysis—or authoritarianism in the current context).

(c) Finally, the third approach constitutes my original contribution to the theoretical debate and can be called, again in the absence of better words, the “dynamic” theory of comparative political systems.

The Dynamic Theory of Comparative Political Systems

My “dynamic” approach to the study of comparative political systems constitutes my unique contribution to the theoretical debate, in that neither of the first two approaches (namely, “static” and “transformational”) is satisfactory.

Unlike the first two approaches, mine instead suggests that the two contrastive political systems (like authoritarianism and liberal democracy) are not mutually exclusive (as conventionally understood), to the extent that the more advanced (or developed) a liberal democracy is, the more authoritarian it is, under certain conditions (as will be shown in this book). Authoritarianism is an advanced stage of liberal democracy, under these conditions. And liberal democracy is not less evil and good as non-democracy (with authoritarianism as a good case study here).

While it is true that there has been authoritarianism in human history well before the existence of liberal democracy, my point here is that there can be a
hybrid political system which is is neither (traditional) liberal-democratic nor (classical) authoritarian, but a mixed child—which I want to call, in the absence of better words, authoritarian liberal democracy, as an advanced stage of liberal democracy under certain conditions.

Also, if liberal democracy becomes authoritarian on the Right wing of the political spectrum, under certain conditions—non-liberal democracy can be authoritarian on the Left instead, under certain conditions. Whether liberal or non-liberal, democracy can become authoritarian in its advanced stage of development, under certain conditions, albeit in different ways.

With this in mind—there are six main theses here in my dynamic theory of comparative political systems, namely, (a) the first thesis on the partiality-totality principle, (b) the second thesis on the softness-hardness principle, (c) the third thesis on the evolution-transformation principle, (d) the fourth thesis on the same-difference principle, (e) the fifth thesis on the regression-progression principle, and (f) the sixth thesis on post-democracy and the post-human supersession—to be analyzed in the rest of the book and summarized in Chapter Six.

Theory and Meta-Theory

But a theory presupposes a certain understanding of (a) methodology and (b) ontology, which constitute its meta-theory.

As is the case in my previous books, I make good use of my distinctive approach to methodology (viz., “sophisticated methodological holism”) and my unique kind of ontology (viz., “existential dialectics”), which will be introduced and summarized in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, respectively—that is, in Part II of this book on meta-theory, for the convenience of the reader (although this book is not specifically on meta-theory).

Chapter Outline

With this distinction between theory and meta-theory in mind—this book is then organized in four main parts, namely, (a) Part I on the introduction of this book, (b) Part II on meta-theory, (c) Part III on theory, and (d) Part IV on the conclusion of this book.

In Part I (on the introduction) is the introductory chapter, namely, Chapter One.

Chapter One, titled Introduction: The Rise of Authoritarian Liberal Democracy, starts with the unnerving beginning thought that authoritarianism is an advanced stage of liberal democracy, under certain conditions—together with
the theoretical debate in the literature, my unique dynamic theory of comparative political systems, my distinction between theory and meta-theory, and some qualifications about the book project (as will be described shortly).

In Part II (on meta-theory) are two chapters, namely, Chapter Two on methodology and Chapter Three on ontology.

Chapter Two, titled *Authoritarian Liberal Democracy and Methodology*, analyzes my unique methodology, that is, sophisticated methodological holism, in relation to the varieties of reductionism and reverse-reductionism, in understanding the nature of authoritarian liberal democracy.

Chapter Three, titled *Authoritarian Liberal Democracy and Ontology*, then examines my unique ontology, that is, existential dialectics, from the vantage point of its conception, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, in understanding authoritarian liberal democracy.

In Part III (on theory) are four chapters, namely, Chapter Four on nature, Chapter Five on the mind, Chapter Six on society, and Chapter Seven on culture.

Chapter Four, titled *Authoritarian Liberal Democracy and Nature*, explores the world of geopolitics in understanding the origins of authoritarian liberal democracy.

Chapter Five, titled *Authoritarian Liberal Democracy and the Mind*, examines the psychological and biological dimensions of the mind in relation to the masses and elites in understanding the origins of authoritarian liberal democracy.

Chapter Six, titled *Authoritarian Liberal Democracy and Society*, studies the social dimensions of organizations, institutions, structure, and systems in understanding the origins of authoritarian liberal democracy.

Chapter Seven, titled *Authoritarian Liberal Democracy and Culture*, accounts for the cultural dimension on the tradition of conquest and the rationalization of unreason in understanding the origins of authoritarian liberal democracy.

In Part IV (on the conclusion) is the concluding chapter, namely, Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight, titled *Conclusion: The Future of Authoritarian Liberal Democracy*, summarizes the analysis so far presented in the book with the six theses in my dynamic theory of comparative political systems, namely, (a) the first thesis on the partiality-totality principle, (b) the second thesis on the softness-hardness principle, (c) the third thesis on the evolution-transformation principle, (d) the fourth thesis on the same-difference principle, (e) the fifth thesis on the regression-progression principle, and (f) the sixth thesis on post-democracy and the post-human supersession.