

HRRC Salon December 7, 2023

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A Human Rights Theory of Democracy: Analyzing Democratic Instability in Class & Identity Politics

Abstract:

Liberal democracies are continuously challenged and increasingly in danger. Instability of democracy has been typically associated with developing countries since democratic regimes in several Latin American countries and democratic systems established in the 1950s and 1960s in newly independent states gave way to military coups and other authoritarian take overs in the 1960s and 1970s. The 1990s' euphoria about Eastern Bloc countries' transition to democracy turned into disappointments. More recently, we see democratic principles and institutions threatened even in "established democracies." The rise of right-wing populism and authoritarianism that employ combinations of anti-women, anti-LGBT+, anti-immigrant and other discriminatory discourses and policies also challenges the already precarious human rights all around the world. This presentation involves a comparative study of the decline of democracies in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods, which can be considered as dominated by class and identity politics, respectively. Noting the close relationship between human rights and democracy, it presents a human rights theory of democracy that explains the decline of democracy by the gap between different types of human rights. On the deterioration or stagnation of social and economic rights, it draws attention to the impact of classical and neoliberal economic paradigms.

Bio:

Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat is Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut. Studying human rights with an emphasis on women's rights, she has published numerous journal articles, book chapters, books, including *Democracy and Human Rights in Developing Countries*, *Human Rights Worldwide*, and *The Uses and Misuses of Human Rights*. She is also the editor of the book series "Power and Human Rights" by the Lynne Rienner Publishers. She has been active in professional organizations and engaged in human rights activism. She is the Founding President of the APSA Human Rights Section and a founding member of the Women's Platform for Equality (EŞİK) in Turkey. For more information, please see <https://polisci.uconn.edu/person/zehra-arat/>.

Respondent: [Christina Binder](#) (International Law and International Human Rights Law, Bundeswehr University Munich)

Christina Binder is Professor for International Law and International Human Rights Law at the Bundeswehr University Munich since April 2017. Before, she was University Professor of International Law at the Department of European, International and Comparative Law at the University of Vienna. Christina was member of the Executive Board of the European Society of International Law (ESIL) 2014-2022 and also served as ESIL's Vice-President. She is member of the Council of the Global Campus of Human Rights since 2019 and Co-Rapporteur of the ILA Committee on Human Rights in Times of Emergency. Her research focuses on a number of public international law issues, including human rights, the law of treaties, international investment law, democracy and political participation as well as

international environmental law. She is She is general editor for the Inter-American system for the Oxford Reports of International Law (ORIL) series, co-editor of the *Zeitschrift für Menschenrechte*, the *European Yearbook of International Economic Law* and of the *Hungarian Yearbook of International and European Law* and has widely published, in edited volumes and in peer-reviewed journals.