

**ELITES, POWER SOURCES AND DEMOCRACY**

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**ELITES, POWER SOURCES AND DEMOCRACY**

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*To my parents...*

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **ELITES, POWER SOURCES AND DEMOCRACY**

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This thesis is about elites in general, and the acquisition and maintenance of power in particular. The last concern of the thesis is democracy. For this reason, the classical elite theorists' and the democratic elite theorists' perceptions of the elite were critically analyzed. Moreover, power for becoming a part of the elites and power of the elites were discussed. In addition to these discussions, ideas of classical and democratic elite theorists about the possibility of democracy under elite rule and the compatibility of it with the elite theory were questioned. This inquiry concluded that, according to elite theories there are elite groups in societies. They are powerful and prestigious. However, the power sources for becoming political elites and power sources of the elites are different from one elite theorist to another. Nevertheless, it was claimed that according to democratic elite theorists the power of elites can be restricted thanks to democracy. Furthermore, they argue that democracy is compatible with the theory of elite and it is possible to have democracy under the rule of the elites. Thus, chapter one was designed so as to provide a general view of classical elite theorists' perception of elites. Chapter two provided the basic discussion between classical and democratic elite theorists about power sources and democracy.

**Keywords:** Classical Elite Theories, Democratic Elite Theories, Elites, Power Sources, Power Scope of Elites.

## ÖZET

### ELİTLER, GÜÇ KAYNAKLARI VE DEMOKRASİ

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Bu tez genel olarak elitler, ancak özellikle güç kazanımı ve gücün elde tutulmasıyla ilgilidir. Tezi ilgilendiren bir diğer konu ise demokrasidir. Bu sebeple, klasik elit teorileri ve demokratik elit teorileri eleştirel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Dahası, elit olabilmek için gerekli olan güç kaynakları ve elitlerin güç kaynakları tartışılmıştır. Bunlara ek olarak, klasik ve demokratik elite teorisyenlerinin elitlerin yönettiği demokrasi ihtimaline bakışları sorgulanmıştır. Bu çalışma, elite teorilerine göre toplumlarda elitlerin var olduğu sonucunu çıkarır. Bu elitler güçlü ve prestijlidir. Ancak, elit olabilmek için gerekli olan güç kaynakları ve elitlerin güç kaynakları farklı elit teorilerinde farklılık gösterir. Yinede, demokratik elit teorisyenlerine göre elitlerin güçleri demokrasilerde sınırlandırılabilir. Hatta, onlar için demokrasi fikri elit teorileriyle uyumludur ve elitlerin yönetici olduğu bir demokrasi olanaklıdır. Bu yüzden, birinci bölüm klasik elit teorisyenlerinin elitlere bakışını genel anlamda inceler. İkinci bölüm, klasik ve demokratik elit teorisyenlerinin güç kaynakları ve demokrasi hakkındaki tartışmaları üzerinde durur.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Klasik Elit Teorileri, Demokratik Elit Teorileri, Elitler, Güç Kaynakları, Elitlerin Güçlerinin Kapsamı.



## INTRODUCTION

According to a well-established school of thought in political science, social and political phenomena can ultimately be explained in reference to the activities of a particular group of individuals, i.e. of elites. For example, Heper and Sayarı argue that ‘politics revolve around political leaders,’ and political leaders have ‘an iron rule’ in their party policies.<sup>1</sup> Many other scholars have shown that elites are one of the most important factors in the ruling of a society (e.g., Pareto 1935; Mosca 1939; Aron 1950; Castles 1974; Putnam 1976; Huntington 1984).<sup>2</sup>

Thus, elites are defined as individuals who are able to affect political outcomes. For instance, according to Lijphart, democracies which have a consociational government by elite union require elites who are able to embrace the different interests and demands of subcultures.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Rustow hypothesizes that democratization begins with inconclusive political struggle. After that, deliberate decision is made by elites ‘to accept the existence of diversity in unity.’<sup>4</sup> In more recent studies of ‘democratic breakdowns,’ such as the ones by Linz and Stepan (1978) it is argued that regime volatility is rooted in enduring elite disunity. O'Donnell and Schmitter show a recent attention toward the significance of elites and their alteration. They define an explicit elite pact. However, for them, this pact is not always publicly explicated or justified but it is an agreement among a set of actors. These actors or elites want to define (or to re-define) rules that are important for the exercise of power and that

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<sup>1</sup> Heper, Metin and Sabri Sayarı, *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, (Maryland: Lexington, 2002), vii.

<sup>2</sup> Higley, John and Michael G. Burton. “The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns,” *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 1 (1989), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Lijphart, Arend. “Consociational Democracy,” *World Politics* 21, no. 2 (1969), 216.

<sup>4</sup> Wantchekon, Leonard. “The Paradox of “Warlord” Democracy: A Theoretical Investigation,” *The American Political Science Review* 98, no. 1 (2004), 29.

mutually guarantee the crucial interests of ‘those entering into it.’<sup>5</sup> Last but not least, O'Donnell and Schmitter argue that transition to democracy is mostly caused by a separation between hardliners and soft liners, or between radicals and moderates.<sup>6</sup>

Such theories are best classified as ‘elite’ theories. While the origin of this type of theory could perhaps be traced back to Plato’s writings, it was Pareto who provided the most fruitful version of it for modern times. Nevertheless, it has to be emphasized that the word ‘elite’ was used in the seventeenth century for expressing excellent supplies; later its meaning was broadened to describe social groups like ‘prestigious military units or the higher ranks of the nobility.’ For example, according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, the latter usage appeared in the English language in 1823.

Since late nineteenth century in Europe, and since the 1930s in Britain and America, the term was spread through the sociological theories of elites.<sup>7</sup> Now, according to the contemporary dictionary, ‘elite’ is the outstanding in society, army or like<sup>8</sup>; and the ones that generally signify any group of people who (whether or not knowingly) share positions of social or political privilege, or both. The term is also used for indicating a group of people who are in such a position where they see themselves ‘as chosen, either by others or by nature, to lead or govern.’<sup>9</sup>

This idea of ‘elite’ sometimes includes the notion of leadership, and these words are mostly used interchangeably. However, there are some differences between them. First of all, leader is ‘the one who leads or conducts; one who occupies a chief or prominent place ... to arouse, incite, and direct men in conduct, and achievement.’<sup>10</sup> Hence, the word ‘leader’ refers to individuals who are able to exercise power to mobilize humans for specific goals. The word ‘elite’ refers to a group of individuals holding privileged positions in society or organizations.

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<sup>5</sup> Higley, and Burton “The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns,” 28.

<sup>6</sup> O'Donnell, Guillermo and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1986), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Bottomore, Tom, *Elites and Society*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Funk, Isaak ed. *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language*. (New York: Funk and Wagnals, 1961), 805.

<sup>9</sup> Scruton, Roger ed, *The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 205.

<sup>10</sup> Funk, Isaak, *New Standard Dictionary of the English Language*, 1404.

Thus, elites occupy higher positions in a hierarchy. They might have access to economic, military or political sources, and control them. However, 'leadership' has been preferred to 'elite' by most of the scholars over the last three decades. With the word leader, they refer to an actual exercise of power. Leaders use power on their followers. Between the leader and the followers, there is a dynamic relationship: in a situation of collective action, there are interactions between the two. Yet, there is almost no interaction between elites and non-elites. Finally, an individual belonging to an elite group may be advantageous over others due to his leadership role. This situation is fairly common; not every elite becomes a leader. On the other hand, in specific situations such as leadership in politics, all leaders have to be members of the elite, 'especially in times of revolutionary change.'<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, both the words 'elite' and 'leader' are used in modern political science. They identify people who are, for instance, central in a nation's policy making process. However, in this thesis the basic concern is elites and the elite theories: all elite theories split societies into two groups, 'majority and minority,' where the majority is ruled by the minority. Since there is not a consensus among elite theories, I would like to divide them into two kinds: Elite theories of thinkers such as Pareto, Mosca, Michels and Wright Mills according to which political regimes have almost no differences among them and cannot limit the power scope of elites vs. elite theories of thinkers such as Sartori, Dahl and Schumpeter according to which democracy can limit the power of elites and hence, is possible under elite rule.

Still, the most popular categorization of elite theories is 'classical (mainstream) elite theories vs. democratic elite theories'<sup>12</sup> and I will use this categorization. In general, classical elite theorists view democracies as the regimes in which the occupants of power are the minority; and the majority has little power of its own. For this reason, classical elite theorists do not have much to say on what makes democracy a distinctive regime.<sup>13</sup> Democratic elite theorists, however, argue that in democracies the members of

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<sup>11</sup> Fukai, Shigeo N. and Haruhiro Fukui, "Elite vs. Leader: Elite Recruitment and Political Leadership," *Political Science and Politics* 25, no. 1 (1992), 25.

<sup>12</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, Eva ed., *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization: A Collection of Readings*, (New York: Garland Publishing, INC, 1997), xxx.

<sup>13</sup> Hughes, H. Stuart, *Consciousness and Society*, (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 44.

the majority are subject to the power of the minority, but they can still affect the elites, for instance, by selecting them from a larger group of elites.

Among classical elite theories, Pareto's enjoys an important place since he first used the concept of elite and he has substantial amounts of writings on the subject. In his basic work 'The Mind and Society,' he both defines elite and deals with his theory of the 'circulation of elites' which is a political process. He argues that governing and non-governing elites, all of whom excel, rule the majority in principle.<sup>14</sup> Other elite theorists in this group, such as Mosca, identify the governing elite as the ruling class and Michels as 'dominant class.' While Michels offers the famous 'iron law of oligarchy' which means that 'society cannot exist without a dominant class,' for both of them, there is an organized minority who rules the unorganized majority in every society.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, C. Wright Mills argues that elites rule the society and some of these elites constitute 'the power elite.'

In contrast, Shumpeter is the creator of democratic elite theories. According to him, elites are the minority ruling the society and *entrepreneurs* who create new demands thanks to their policies.<sup>16</sup> For Dahl, the majority is *homo civicus*. It consists of citizens who do not have any interest in politics. The minority is *homo politicus* who are interested in politics.<sup>17</sup> Finally, Sartori believes that since in democracies there is no concentration of power, there is pluralism of elites.<sup>18</sup>

In the first chapter, I analyze the first group in order to have a profound understanding of the rulers in societies. In the second chapter, I evaluate some of the clues among the elite theories to understand how individuals become a part of the elite and how democracy is compatible with elite theory. In addition, I try to compare democratic and classical elite theories while I discuss democratic elite theorists' ideas about elites, power sources and democracy. For instance, about the first power source,

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<sup>14</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, 43 and 50.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>16</sup> Körösenyi, András, "Political Representation in Leader Democracy," *Government and Opposition* 40, no. 3 (2005), 367.

<sup>17</sup> Sandhu, Amandeep, "Political Sociology in Light of Globalization: New Perspectives and Future Directions," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 5, no.1-2 (2006),3.

<sup>18</sup> Sartori, Giovanni, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited: Part One, The Contemporary Debate*, (New Jersey: Chatam House Publishers, Inc., 1987), 145.

Pareto can be interpreted as the one who believes in talents. He argues that under any political regime people from non-elite with the proper qualities of excellence can become a member of the elite. The majority has to obey them. Conversely, Schumpeter who is a democratic elite theorist claims that although the elite minority rules the majority; in democracies, voters have limited control over the representatives.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, theories of elites may not be the only ones that can reflect facts about the power relations in a society. There might be different determinants explaining power relations in different societies. Thus, as Michael Mann argues, each society may develop according to its own logic.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, theories of elites may be insufficient in the study of power relations in *different* societies. For this reason, questioning whether one can separate an element of a society is an important issue.<sup>21</sup> By remembering such difficulties, in this thesis, I concentrate on the elite theorists alongside historical and political affiliations. I give attention to the perspectives of ‘classical elite theorists’ such as Pareto, Mosca, Michels and Mills, and to the perspective of ‘democratic elite theorists’ such as Schumpeter, Sartori and Dahl.

To conclude, this thesis is about elites. It has the special endeavor to analyze elite theories and their perception of power in a comprehensive way. It can potentially be useful for the contemporary discussions about democracy since elite theories give explanations about who is important in democratic decision-making process, or who has power to govern in democracies.<sup>22</sup> All in all, chapter one is designed so as to provide a general view of the elites in classical elite theories. Chapter two provides the basic discussion about elites’ power sources and elite power under democratic form of government. Besides, in chapter two possibility of democracy under elite rule is critically analyzed.

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<sup>19</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, 45.

<sup>20</sup> Mann, Michael, *The Sources of Social power: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States*, Vol.2, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Mann, Michael. *The Sources of Social power: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*. Vol.1 (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, xxii.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ELITE DISCUSSION

Elite theory research is about power and influence. Elite theorists argue that societies can be divided into the few, whom they call elite, and the many. The elites have power and influence on ruling the many or on decision-making processes at different degrees. The many consists of non-elites who obey the elites and the decisions the elites make. Nevertheless, although elite theorists agree on some of these ideas; they can be divided into two schools of thought: Elite Theories that do not differentiate between political regimes (Classical or Mainstream Elite Theories) and those that do (Democratic Elite Theories). More specifically, democratic elite theorists do not agree with the classical elite theorists on the issue of political passivity of the majority. They claim that democracy is possible and compatible with theory of elites. Additionally, in democracies non-elites have some power and influence on the decision-making process.<sup>23</sup>

In this chapter I will discuss only the ‘classical’ group, that is, the theories of Vilfredo Pareto, Robert Michels, and Gaetano Mosca who are the first and the most famous classical elite theorists<sup>24</sup>; as well as C. Wright Mills who is a contemporary follower of these elite theorists. The basic question that will guide this chapter is: who are the rulers? This part is intended to emphasize the most famous classical elite theories.

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<sup>23</sup> Arslan, Ali, “Elite and Power in Contemporary Turkey in the Context of the EU,” *Entelequia, revista interdisciplinar*, no.2, (2006), 218.

<sup>24</sup> Vergin, Nur, *Siyasetin Sosyolojisi: Kavramlar, Tanımlar, Yaklaşımlar*, (Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2007), 111.

## 1.1 MACHIAVELLI AND HIS FOLLOWERS

Machiavelli is perhaps the most important of the classical elite theorists to understand, since all classical elite theorists, in one way or another, are followers of Machiavelli. They are, in other words, the Machiavellians. The reason that the theorists can be referred to as such is that their theories conform to his basic idea, which is divorcing politics from a particular kind of ethics in order to have value-free theories. Such theories do not contain subjective value judgment.

Before Machiavelli, the prevailing view was that the governments must distribute justice. However, Machiavelli believes that the law of life under which every political organization exists is growth and virtue, especially with force. Thus, force was an integral and essential element in politics.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, politics is primarily a study of the struggle for power among men.<sup>26</sup> For this reason, he aims to separate politics from ethics; then to locate those politics in a world which is real and can be known. This is an important innovation by Machiavelli, effectively separating politics from transcendental or other-worldly ethics.<sup>27</sup>

In order to realize his aim, Machiavelli analyzes things (such as historical events or social phenomena) to find facts (uniformities in these events and phenomena). Machiavelli gleans these facts from historical works and from his experiences during his political career.<sup>28</sup> This method is followed by classical elite theorists who try to show 'what it is but not what ought to be' for having value-free political theories.<sup>29</sup> For

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<sup>25</sup> Edward, Paul et. al., *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol 5-6, (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1967), 120.

<sup>26</sup> Burnham, James, *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom*, (London: Putnam and Company Limited, 1943), 29.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 28.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, according to Pareto, Aristotle discusses what a city ought to be rather than what it is in his work '*Politics*.' Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 1, Ed. Kenneth Thompson, *The Early Sociology of Culture*, Vol. 3 (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 181.

the same reason, the Machiavellians, such as Pareto<sup>30</sup>, derive some of their facts from historical works.

Thirdly, Machiavelli and his followers argue that active political struggle is limited to minority of men<sup>31</sup> who want to increase their power and privilege.<sup>32</sup> Thus, Machiavelli and the Machiavellians claim that humans can be divided into two groups: the minority (rulers) and the majority (ruled), which reflects the basic facts of political life.<sup>33</sup> The majority cannot join the political struggle, and they always obey the decision-makers. Therefore, according to Machiavellians, the most important characteristic of the majority is their political passivity, unless there are exceptional circumstances. For instance, if there is extreme irritation toward the rulers, then the ruled could become interested in power. Otherwise, the ruled want only a small amount of security, as well as a chance to live their own lives, and manage their own small affairs. As a result, they have a great respect for firm authority.<sup>34</sup>

To conclude, Machiavelli will always have followers. There has been widespread improvement of Machiavelli's ideas with the help of deliberation and research done by a number of writers. These writers try to have value-free theories by analyzing things (such as historical events or social phenomena) to find facts. Additionally, they insist on the majority and its political passivity.

## **1.2 THE CLASSICAL ELITE THEORISTS:**

### **1.2.1 Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and the 'Governing Elite:'**

To understand Pareto's elite theory, his reactions to science and sociology must first be understood: Pareto is upset about sociology before him.<sup>35</sup> For instance, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, beliefs about social and material progress, human perfectibility, and

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<sup>30</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 1, 87.

<sup>31</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 37.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 26.



positivism<sup>36</sup> are dominant.<sup>37</sup> So far, almost all thinkers talk about laws in their respective fields of study, such as scientific laws, historical laws, or sociological laws. According to them, these laws exist outside and independently of the observer. Some of these laws are the laws of Euclidean geometry and Marx's dialectical law of social evolution.<sup>38</sup> However, some anomalies occur in their laws in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, contrary to liberal democratic theories, political institutions of liberal democratic states start to disintegrate.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pareto (as well as other classical elite theorists such as Mosca and Michels) attacks theories of progress, perfectibility, and positivism. Pareto questions how people can know that what scientists call laws are really laws<sup>40</sup> and he starts to criticize these laws. According to him, both in social science and natural science there should be logico-experimental (experiments in a logical manner) but not non-logico-experimental (experiments in a non-logical manner) theories. However, Pareto argues that 19<sup>th</sup> century positivism is pseudo-positivism, thus, it is claimed to be positivism but actually it includes non-logico-experimental theories.

Logico-experimental theory is analyzing things to find facts. Moreover, it is about finding out regular relations between facts<sup>41</sup> and questioning whether the proposition is in accord with experience.<sup>42</sup> For instance, according Pareto, principles should be abstract propositions that summarize the traits common to many different facts. This means that principles should depend on facts, but not the facts on the principles. Only in

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<sup>36</sup> '...We must confine ourselves to what is given to us in sense-experience as sources of KNOWLEDGE. Thus positivism rejects all metaphysical speculations and abstract theorizing, and even a critical examination of its own presuppositions...Thus the positivist sees his task in finding the general principles of science starting from experience. In this it is related to the generally empirical temper of the sciences as seeking to proceed by observation and experiment.' Vesey, G. and P. Foulkes. *Collins Dictionary of Philosophy*. (Great Britain: Harper Collins Pubs., 1990), 229.

<sup>37</sup> Pareto, Vilfredo, *Sociological Writings*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1966), 3.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 4-5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>41</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 1, 118.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 11.

this situation, can they ‘hypothetically’ be accepted. Once principles are not in agreement with the facts and the laws of logic; then they should be rejected. The reason is that even in natural sciences laws can be known within the limits of time and space. There is no necessity in them<sup>43</sup> since they are only experimental uniformities.<sup>44</sup>

For example, an engineer constructs bridges (fact). After he knows his aims, he studies the characteristics of his resources (facts), and calculates approximately his means-end relationship. In the end, he actualizes his means-end relationship as he planned in his mind.<sup>45</sup> However, as a result of such regular relations among facts, the engineer should simply observe these uniformities without believing that there is a necessity in these regular relations.<sup>46</sup> Then, this can be experimental science which is established in logical manner.

**a) Logical and Non-Logical Conduct:**

Pareto observes humans’ actions<sup>47</sup> and classifies them as logical vs. non-logical. If an action is objective then it is logical, otherwise non-logical.<sup>48</sup> Thus, man should analyze things to find facts. As a result, if his behavior is motivated intentionally for having a goal which is possible with the steps or ways that are appropriate for realizing this behavior, then it is logical. Logical acts depend on human reason. Beside science and economics, Pareto believes that there are logical acts in the arts, military, politics and crafts as well.<sup>49</sup> However, for elite discussion individuals’ non-logical actions are fundamental. Pareto argues that humans want others to see all of their behavior as logical as in the previous engineer’s example; but according to him, sociology should

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<sup>43</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 1, 51.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 110.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 119.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 77.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 78.

demonstrate that they also have non-logical behaviors.<sup>50</sup> The reason is that human behaviors are determined by sentiments more than reasons and that sentiments are not bound by the laws of logic.<sup>51</sup>

Pareto points to four ways in which the non-logicality of human actions manifests itself. According to him, these are the four key categories of non-logical actions, and they represent subject of the *Treatise on General Sociology (The Mind and Society)*:

1. Taboos and superstitious acts (such as assigning some value to certain numbers like number thirteen carrying bad luck) can be examples of humans' non-logical actions which seem natural to humans; but those which do not necessarily have a point that can be understood rationally.<sup>52</sup> However, Pareto believes that such actions are rare because man is a 'reasoner' and he tries to appoint his absurd actions a reason.<sup>53</sup>

2. If an action carries a purpose which is impossible, then this kind of action is also non-logical.<sup>54</sup> Such an action's result is not logically connected to the aim the actor imagines.<sup>55</sup> According to Pareto, this type of non-logical action is very widespread. For instance, if a goal is a transcendent one; that is, if someone wants to find life outside of the real spatio-temporal world then this is, scientifically, impossible. Knowing something about heaven or God, and reaching to a universal good will or universal consensus in a democracy<sup>56</sup> are some examples of non-logical behaviors.<sup>57</sup>

3. Some actions produce a result which is logically connected to the means employed but which is not related to the actor's imagined means-end relation.<sup>58</sup> Thus, sometimes the purpose of an action is impossible; although the action itself could result in a

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<sup>50</sup> Aron, Raymond, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, Vol. 2. (England: Pelican, 1971), 121.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 123.

<sup>52</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 126.

<sup>53</sup> Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 111.

<sup>54</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 1, 126.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 213 and Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 111.

<sup>56</sup> Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 3. Ed. Kenneth Thompson, *The Early Sociology of Culture*, Vol. 5 (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 928.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 216.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 214 and Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 112.

desirable end after the actor stopped to think about it. These kinds of actions are non-logical, since in logical action the formal and the real goals should be identical. This category includes all behaviors ordered by illusions, especially ‘the illusions of political men or intellectuals.’<sup>59</sup> An important example could be trying to limit rulers’ power scope with the help of democracy.

4. Finally, an action is non-logical if the way to reach the goal is badly chosen.<sup>60</sup> For instance, making an effort to pound nails with a sponge would be non-logical action of a carpenter because his means is inappropriate for his end, or democratic electorate’s beliefs about changing incumbent parties by voting is non-logical since they might be guaranteed an era of endless success.<sup>61</sup>

Pareto’s sociology follows two paths by making observations and by using logico-experimental method: one is the inductive path, and the other is deductive path.<sup>62</sup> The inductive path is about realizing non-logical actions and these key categories; the deductive path is about establishing a classification of *residues* that are expression of sentiments and principal causes of non-logical actions.<sup>63</sup> The first path is important for understanding why elite theory is valid under each political regime; the second path is important for explaining the elite theory.

In the second path, Pareto argues that there is always a constant and variable element in human phenomena and in the theories which try to explain them. The constant element (residue) is the expression of mental state (psychology), for instance, instincts, feelings, and desires. The variable element (derivations) is formed by logical and non-logical reasoning that express the need for justification in a rational way.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, according to Pareto, residue is a sociological term which is stable, represents mostly human desires, and leads humans to have non-logical actions. He calls them

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<sup>59</sup> Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 114.

<sup>60</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 1, 214.

<sup>61</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 27.

<sup>62</sup> Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 124.

<sup>63</sup> Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, Ed. Kenneth Thompson. *The Early Sociology of Culture*, Vol. 4 (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 501 and Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 125.

<sup>64</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, 508-509 and Amoroso, Luigi, “Vilfredo Pareto,” *Econometrica* 6, no.1, (1938), 7.

sentiments.<sup>65</sup> However, since Pareto uses the term ambiguously, I argue that according to him, residues are not only sentiments but also states of mind which are intermediary among the sentiments, expressions and acts. Moreover, although residues are related to humans' instincts, they do not cover up all their instincts. The reason is that his theory of residues provides to discover only the instincts that cause rationalizations.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, Pareto uses residues and derivations as analytic concepts created by the observer to explain observable facts for inductive analysis. This analysis begins with concrete data, such as human behaviors; and by repeated analysis, the expression of emotions is found. This expression is residues and different pseudo-rational formalizations (different non-logical actions) are derivations.<sup>67</sup>

#### **b) Residues and Derivations:**

Almost all non-verbal actions of animals and humans are non-logical. Words are distinctive elements between animals and humans. Pareto focuses on non-logical actions which contain or which are related with words in order to find their reasons. He argues that there are vast numbers of examples of verbal non-logical actions which belong to different time, places and cultures. However, constant elements of these examples are small in number, and Pareto calls these constant elements as residues. In addition to that, factors that change rapidly from example to example are called derivations.<sup>68</sup>

For reaching these arguments, he studies for instance humans' expressions, religious love, and practices of magic. These are the things that Pareto analyzes to find facts. Thus, he uses logico-scientific method and concludes that although these things differ on the surface from culture to culture;<sup>69</sup> as a result of careful tests it can be seen that they actually have a certain consistency. For instance, as it was stated before, humans from the most different civilizations assigning some value to certain numbers like number thirteen carrying bad luck can be an example of non-logical action. The

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<sup>65</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 136.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 128.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 130 and 147.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 137.

<sup>69</sup> Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 125.

reason of such a behavior is that in every society there is a constant element (residue) which is humans' tendency to relate things or numbers with some connotations.<sup>70</sup> The variable element (derivation) of such non-logical action is various implications to justify the means-end relations.<sup>71</sup> More clearly, relating numbers with bad luck is a derivation; or talents with privilege is a derivation in order to justify the idea of being elite. In these situations, the constant element (residue) is combination.

There are six classes of residues which function in social action.<sup>72</sup> I think that the first two classes are the main ones and the others can be derived from them. The first class is called 'Instinct for Combination.'<sup>73</sup> According to Pareto, some instincts lead humans to unite various elements that they have found, arbitrarily, with the help of their personal experiences.<sup>74</sup> For instance, he argues that good in his time is believed as 'democratic' or progressive; and everything evil is believed as 'aristocratic.'<sup>75</sup> Desire to control the weather can be a derivation of this residue. For instance, some tribes explain controlling ability of weather with superficial powers and certain activities. They sacrifice a certain animal, or repeat certain formulas. According to them these practices provide to control weather since they comfort gods.

All such different practices and explanatory theories are derivations.<sup>76</sup> However, although many nations, tribes or groups have had such theories and practices; in different times, there is a common nucleus which is the feeling to merge desires with some acts. After understanding the nucleus, the fact can be seen: in many other types of activities, men combine with whatever means for whatever purpose or for no purpose at all. This nucleus is the residue and called the 'Instinct for Combinations.'<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 126.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 127.

<sup>72</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, 516-17.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 516.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 519.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 557.

<sup>76</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 137.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 136.

The second class of residues is opposite of the first class. Pareto calls it 'Persistence of Aggregation.'<sup>78</sup> This class is about forces which come to play after combination has been formed. Additionally, it is about humans' beliefs that are related with 'objective reality and persistence of entities' like family, progress, and justice.<sup>79</sup> These forces and beliefs try to make a combination be stable and persisting.<sup>80</sup> That is, they try to stick with uniformities.<sup>81</sup> Although the first class (Instinct for Combination) is about progressive forces, this second class (Persistence of Aggregation) is about obscurant ones. Family can be an example:<sup>82</sup> as a result of the fact that humans have partners and children, the idea of family is formed. This combination could be counted as a progress. However, after this combination many people start to see it as a permanent and objective entity. Other examples can be seeing class, harmony,<sup>83</sup> democracy,<sup>84</sup> universal consensus,<sup>85</sup> and faith.<sup>86</sup>

Although all other residues can fall into these two classes; Pareto continues with them:<sup>87</sup> The third one, 'Need of Expressing Sentiments by External Acts,'<sup>88</sup> is related with needs of expressing sentiments.<sup>89</sup> The fourth one, 'Residues Connected with Sociality'<sup>90</sup> underlines humans' need to feel conformity with the group that they belong

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<sup>78</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, 517.

<sup>79</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 136.

<sup>80</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, 598.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 635.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 612.

<sup>83</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 137.

<sup>84</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 3, 923.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 929.

<sup>86</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, 637.

<sup>87</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 138-140.

<sup>88</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, 571.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 647.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 518.

to.<sup>91</sup> Social ranking, class uniformity and hierarchy are some examples (derivations) of this class.<sup>92</sup> Moreover the fifth residue, 'Integrity of the Individual and His Appurtenances,'<sup>93</sup> is about guarding one's personal integrity by keeping things and conditions that he identifies himself and by having strong feeling against changes in the social structure.<sup>94</sup> Finally, sex residue is about mere sexual appetite. There are various examples in different societies,<sup>95</sup> such as different sexual taboos.<sup>96</sup>

All in all, humans are influenced mainly by sentiments (residues).<sup>97</sup> Pareto believes that non-logical actions are caused by a number of residues. The right of people,<sup>98</sup> reason, nature, the highest good, democracy, and humanity are some examples (derivations) to such indistinct incoherent sentiments.<sup>99</sup>

c) **The Elites:**

On the basis of this account of sentiments and thus of 'residues,' Pareto constructs his theory of elites: With the inductive path of his sociology, Pareto observes humans behaviors and argues that some behaviors are logical but some are not. The cause of logical actions is human reason. However, the cause of non-logical actions is mostly human mental state. There are residues by which humans derive certain acts, laws and customs. In addition to that, Pareto argues that human beings physically, morally, and intellectually differ from one another.<sup>100</sup> As a result, for example, instinct for combination (Class 1 residue) forces individuals to combine their differences with some

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<sup>91</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, 659.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 624 and 664.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 518.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 727.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 807.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 811.

<sup>97</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol.3, 885.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 972.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 964.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 1419.



important roles in groups. Thus, they combine the highest talent with the right to have prestige and privileged positions in a group. The residue of interest of combinations allows physically or intellectually superior individuals to form and rule a society. As a result, in societies there are elites and non-elites. Nevertheless, this is a non-logical action.<sup>101</sup>

Most importantly in Pareto's theory, talent is a value-free term. For him, a talented individual has highest score 'in scales measuring...power, riches, knowledge.'<sup>102</sup> Pareto says

'Let us assume that in every branch of human activity each individual is given an index which stands as a sign of his capacity, very much the way grades are given in the various subjects in examinations in school. The highest type of lawyer, for instance, will be given 10. The man who does not get a client will be given 1--reserving zero for the man who is an out-and-out idiot. To the man who has made his millions--honestly or dishonestly as the case maybe--we will give 10. To the man who has earned his thousands we will give 6; to such as just manage to keep out of the poor-house, 1, keeping zero for those who get in. To the woman "in politics," such as the Aspasia of Pericles, the Maintenon of Louis XIV, the Pompadour of Louis XV, who has managed to infatuate a man of power and play apart in the man's career, we shall give some higher number, such as 8 or 9; to the strumpet who merely satisfies the senses of such a man and exerts no influence on public affairs, we shall give zero. To clever rascal who knows how to fool people and still keep clear of the penitentiary, we shall give 8, 9, or 10, according to the number of geese he has plucked and the amount of money he has been able to get out of them. To the sneak-thief who snatches a piece of silver from a restaurant table and runs away into the arms of a policeman, we shall give 1. To a poet like Carducci we shall give 8 or 9 according to our tastes; to a scribbler who puts people to rout with his sonnets we shall give zero.'<sup>103</sup>

As a result of this method, Pareto calls a group of the people 'elites' who have the highest scores in their branch of activity.<sup>104</sup> These elites are minority of a society but they rule and influence the whole society. Their high scores separate them from the general public and provide to cluster them into higher classes.<sup>105</sup> For instance, if stealing is an accepted and appreciated social norm in a society; then thieves will be ranked

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<sup>101</sup> Pareto, *Sociological Writings*, 14.

<sup>102</sup> Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Rise and Fall of Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology*, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 8.

<sup>103</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol.3, 1422.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 1423.

<sup>105</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 169.

higher than non-thieves, and stealing will be the determining factor for higher social rank in a society.<sup>106</sup>

Elites are divided into the governing elite and the non-governing elite.<sup>107</sup> Others are the governed (the majority) who do not have high measure of talents. Governing elite is formed by superior individuals who have required talents for taking a part in government. They have highest power in decision-making process.<sup>108</sup> Otherwise, if an individual does not have characteristics that governing elite requires, then although he might have high scores; he cannot be one of governing elite. Pareto exemplifies

‘We are speaking; remember, of an actual, not a potential, state. If at an English examination a pupil says: "I could know English very well if I chose to; I do not know any because I have never seen fit to learn," the examiner replies: "I am not interested in your ability. The grade for what you know is zero." If, similarly, someone says: "So-and-so does not steal, not because he couldn't, but because he is a gentleman," we reply: "Very well, we admire him for his self-control, but his grade as a thief is zero.’<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, according to Pareto all governing elites are not identical since among them there can be a small part which represents a smaller group (a leader, or a committee) that ‘effectively and practically exercise control.’<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, this ruler vs. ruled distinction will not change from one society to another irrespective of their political regime.<sup>111</sup> Only the openness of elites’ group can change.<sup>112</sup> This idea is related with Pareto’s theory of circulation of elites.

The most obvious way of elite circulation happens by death. Members of the elite suffer from attrition over the years and they are replaced by the younger generation who has the necessary talents.<sup>113</sup> For instance, after some governing elites died, talented non-governing elites (lower rank among elites) or non-elites (lowest rank in society) can

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<sup>106</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 152.

<sup>107</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol 3, 1423.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 1424.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 1423.

<sup>110</sup> Pareto, Vilfredo, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 4. Ed. Kenneth Thompson, *The Early Sociology of Culture*, Vol. 6 (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 1575.

<sup>111</sup> Pareto, *Sociological Writings*, 14.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>113</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 4, 1787.

become governing elites.<sup>114</sup> However the elite as a historical grouping (group of rentiers or speculators) would not be damaged by this circulation; only individuals will change.<sup>115</sup> In a second way, which is revolution, the lowest stratum of society tends to supersede old elites and to accumulate new superior abilities<sup>116</sup> which are constrained and prevented from vertical movement by old elites. The highest stratum, for instance the aristocracy or elite, tends to lose its ability due to lack of use. This can lead to tensions and replacement of governing elite by another who is more talented (for that particular society).<sup>117</sup>

Relationship between the governing elite and the governed is settled in a way where Class 1 (instinct for combination) and Class 2 (persistence of aggregates) residues are distributed.<sup>118</sup> For example, if governing elites are dominated by Class 1 residue then they ‘tend to be mercantile materialistic, innovatory;’ and they rule by guile. However, if governing elites are dominated by Class 2 residue then they ‘tend to be bureaucratic, idealistic, and conservative;’ and they rule by force. The first ones are called foxes (speculators) and the second ones are called lions (rentiers).<sup>119</sup>

The distribution of lions and foxes in the society are different from time to time and from place to place. If governing elites are dominated by Class 1 residue (that is, if the governing elite is composed of lions) and Class 2 residue increase among the ruled; then the governing elite will lose its natural tendency to use force. An example is provided by Pareto: athens in antiquity represents a state with a big proportion of Class I residues. The interesting point is unexpected large proportion of Class I in the non-elite portion of this society. For him, usually Class II type of individuals dominates non-elite, but in Athens opposite was the case. This situation led to incredible success of Athens and fast pace of social change. Adventure and innovation was welcomed by every strata

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<sup>114</sup> Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of Elites*, 9.

<sup>115</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 154.

<sup>116</sup> Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of Elites*, 13 and Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 4, 1554.

<sup>117</sup> Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of Elites*, 10.

<sup>118</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 2, 501.

<sup>119</sup> Pareto, *Sociological Writings*, 14.

of society and they dominated every aspect of life including politics and the economy.<sup>120</sup>

In all of these arguments, Pareto assumes a perfect competition which dominates selection of elites in a society. He argues that this provides free circulation between the rulers and the ruled. For him, free circulation is the only way to maintain social equilibrium and well-being of the individuals in a society.<sup>121</sup> However, such a perfect competition and examples like Athens are rather rare in reality, and Pareto is aware of it. Nevertheless as scientists that he criticizes, Pareto obstructs the free competition assumption by ‘ties,’ and he does not change his whole theory in spite of the anomaly. These ties, especially in the second way of circulation, prevent individuals from moving upwards when their abilities allow them to do so and from moving downwards when they are not fit to be in the ruling elite.

For instance, the obvious and most common obstacle against upward social mobility is the institution of aristocracy. All aristocrats can be a member of governing elite. This is their birth right. Individual characteristics are irrelevant for them to obtain this position, but some personal ties are important. As a result, if this is strictly enforced and if there is very little mobility in the society, then the ruling elite will degenerate. Less able and less talented people will dominate the governing elite and more able and more talented people will be among the ruled.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, in politics Pareto argues that governing elites mostly identify their own interests with the ‘interest of the country.’<sup>123</sup> Although this would be harmful and non-logical for a society, it is just logically consistent with their interest.<sup>124</sup> A society is not a person and should not be confused with a person; therefore, it cannot have a scale of preferences. There are many individuals or groups in societies with different hierarchies of preferences. Thus, ‘Social Utility’ is complex and imprecise concept. For this reason, rulers’ act of identifying their own interests with the interest of the country is a non-logical action.

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<sup>120</sup> Pareto, Vilfredo. *The Mind and Society*. Vol. 4, 1764.

<sup>121</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 161.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. 155.

<sup>123</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 3, 948-949.

<sup>124</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 4, 1744.

To conclude, first two classes of residues that describe sentiments causing non-logical actions are the most important classes for Pareto's sociological theory and theory of elite.<sup>125</sup> According to him, all societies are ruled by elites. Most of these elites have natural abilities in forming societies and doing various social activities.<sup>126</sup> I argue that his theory of elite emphasizes inequality of individual innate gifts that provide special advantages in different spheres of social life.<sup>127</sup> The reason he gives is humans' mental state which force them to combine talent with prestige. This is a 'psychological approach' to elite theory and he discusses it in '*The Mind and Society*.'

This work is unsystematic, but includes historical and comparative investigations of human social conduct. All in all, Pareto cannot explain his ideas about residues and derivations systematically and cannot answer questions such as why humans choose to make derivations, or how sentiments differ from interests.<sup>128</sup> Thus, his theory should let him to answer philosophical questions about the nature of logic, but he has problems to answer them.<sup>129</sup>

### 1.2.2 Gaetano Mosca (1858- 1941) and the 'Ruling Class:'

Mosca is one of the elite theorists and followers of Machiavelli who believes that 'even today political science has not yet entered upon its truly scientific period.' The reason is that political scientists lack the talent to see the 'great complexity of the phenomena involved in that subject.'<sup>130</sup> By using Pareto's logico-scientific method, he argues that the ruling elites and their circulation are the basic characteristic of politically organized societies. Mosca outlines his ideas deeply in his major work, *Elementi di scienza politica (The Ruling Class)*.<sup>131</sup> Many different problems are discussed in this

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<sup>125</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 4, 1555.

<sup>126</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol.3, 1430.

<sup>127</sup> Edward, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 46.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 45.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>130</sup> Mosca, Gaetano, *The Ruling Class*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), 6.

<sup>131</sup> First published in 1895 and considerably expanded in the third edition, which appeared in 1923.

work such as problems in philosophy of history; however, the central discussion in it is the 'political class,' or 'ruling class.'

According to him, in every politically organized society there is an organized minority that rules and influences the majority.<sup>132</sup> The minority can rule the majority since it consists of superior people who have organization capability and create organizations of elites with similar talents. Additionally, since it is a small group it can be organized.<sup>133</sup> Thus, Mosca has an organizational approach where elites are organized according to their capacities and rule the whole society because they are superior, small in number and organized (which is a circular idea and does not explain the issue in detail).

By minority, he refers, I believe, to those few who constitute the ruling class. All elites can influence and rule a society but the ruling class is more powerful group in decision-making process. For Mosca, although in every society there are elites and ruling class; some qualities, superiorities and functions that characterize the members of elites or ruling class can differ from one society to another.<sup>134</sup> For instance, in some societies where physical strength is important then physically powerful people organize the elite group. In some other societies, economic functions are important determinant; therefore owners of important companies constitute the ruling class.<sup>135</sup>

Mosca gives some examples for explaining such superiorities of ruling class. According to him, becoming a member of ruling class happens through the use of violent means. Thus, coercion is the most common way to become a ruler. In advanced societies, intellectual capacities, and a perceived concern for the state's interest can also lead individuals to ruling positions.<sup>136</sup> As a result, it can be argued that for Mosca being a part of the ruling class requires different qualities (skills or talents) in different societies. If fishing is the best way to sustain oneself in a particular society, then fishing expertise might provide necessary conditions in that society.<sup>137</sup> However, if one of

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<sup>132</sup> Mosca, Gaetano. *The Ruling Class*, p. 50

<sup>133</sup> Cohen, Mitchell and Nicole Fermon eds., *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, (UK: Princeton University Press, 1996), 514.

<sup>134</sup> Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, 244.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 329.

<sup>136</sup> Edward, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 395.

social forces -which is dominant in a society- declines (i.e. fishing or religion), then ‘the section of the ruling class whose position was dependent upon control of religion likewise, over a period, declines.’<sup>138</sup> The declining force causes elite or ruling class to circulate if the latter does not improve its talents.

Finally, unlike classical Marxist idea in which -roughly- organization of economy leads the ruling class to derive,<sup>139</sup> Mosca claims that the ruling class can derive also from different qualities, functions or talents other than organization of economy. For instance, in modern societies Mosca argues that a great part of the ruling class is always the bureaucrats who are salaried officials and who derive from organized bureaucracy related with ‘administration of the machinery of political, economic, and social life.’

To conclude, Mosca has an organizational approach to the elite theory, and argues that every society is ruled by an elite group.<sup>140</sup> He thinks that some people have organization capability and come together in terms of the ability that seems valuable in a society. They are organized because they are small in number. However, he does not explain his notion of organization deeply. Additionally, both Pareto and Mosca maintain that in all societies there are those who govern and those who are governed. However, there is a significant difference: In Pareto’s elite theory, there is a simple conflict between the governing elites who have power and the non-elites who do not. Gaetano Mosca borrows this conflict and makes a systematic distinction between the elite and the masses in terms of power, influence and organizations of elites.<sup>141</sup> This systematic distinction is an important step to Robert Michels’ theory of elites.

### **1.2.3 Robert Michels (1876-1936) and the ‘Dominant Class:’**

Robert Michels is another follower of Machiavelli and one of the important classical elite theorists. Although it is mostly criticized that some of his works, for instance on political parties, on forms and functions of power, on influence, leadership,

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<sup>137</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 71.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 72.

<sup>139</sup> Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels, *Komünist Parti Manifestosu*, (Istanbul: NK, 2005), 12.

<sup>140</sup> Mosca, Gaetano, *Siyaset Biliminin Temelleri*, (Ankara: Alter, 2005), 246- 247.

<sup>141</sup> Bottomore, *Elites and Society*, 2.

bureaucracy, and on ruling elites in modern societies are not sufficient and sophisticated then those of other classical elite theorists;<sup>142</sup> his ideas about socialism, working-class and socialist organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are worthwhile to read and discuss. Nevertheless in this thesis, his ideas about elites in societies are presented.

Michels' famous book is called *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwessens in der modernen Demokratie* (translated as *Political Parties*). In this work he wants to have a value-free theory<sup>143</sup> since, like Mosca and Pareto, he has a reaction to science. Moreover, Michels is upset about sociology before him. The reason is that, according to him, there are simplistic and superficial illusions which cause dilemmas in science and which make the masses have false belief, such as the idea of democracy.<sup>144</sup> Michels wants to destroy some of them. His effort is very much like Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca since all of them claim that masses believe mistakenly in the possibility or the actuality of a majority that can rule society.

Michels gives careful examples from the history of European working-class, socialist parties and organizations. He argues that 'organization implies the tendency to oligarchy.'<sup>145</sup> Thus, in every group of people (in each organization) there is an elite group which is the organized minority. For instance, in societies there are political parties. In these organizations rulers are always a small organized minority but the ruled is always a great unorganized majority.

As a result, Michels proposes his famous law which is 'iron law of oligarchy.' He thinks that the dominant class is a necessary phenomenon in every form of political regimes<sup>146</sup> and oligarchy is inevitable in societies.<sup>147</sup> Michels calls the ruling class a 'dominant class.' Similar to Mosca, he has an organizational approach to the theory of elite, and he argues that different qualities, superiorities and functions, such as military

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<sup>142</sup> Edward, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 308.

<sup>143</sup> McClelland, J.S, *A History of Western Political Thought*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 654.

<sup>144</sup> Michels, Robert, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 404.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. 400.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 389-390.



or economic qualities, characterize the members of the dominant class in different societies.

Michels is strongly influenced by Marxist conception of social class and class struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. However, for him, even if there would be two classes, proletariats (working class) and bourgeoisie,<sup>148</sup> some of them would constitute the dominant class. Moreover, he argues that even if some day proletariat could be in power; a dominant class would derive from proletariat. Thus, the working class elites who are organized and form the dominant class would rule the majority.

Hence, Michels argues that there is a struggle only among successively dominant minorities. This struggle is about replacing the old ruling minority by a new one. For instance, the proletariat can create its own oligarchy by having a dominant class (elites) in its organizations. It can resemble the dominant class of the bourgeoisie.<sup>149</sup> However unlike Pareto or Mosca and their ideas about circulation of elites, Michels does not mean that the dominant class is necessarily superseded by another. Rather, he thinks that new ruling elites tend to make a coalition with the existing ruling group on which they often have important effects.<sup>150</sup>

All in all, these are the classical elite theorists; and as a result of their reaction to science and sociology they formulate the theory of elite. Their method is scientific sociology by controlling its concepts with the help of empirical reference. These theorists also want to have inferences that follow logic from empirical data.<sup>151</sup> The reason is that according to Pareto, Mosca and Michels it is possible to have an objective political science and sociology by testing the statements with facts that are accessible to any observer. Therefore explanations and theories about rich or poor, and ruler or ruled will not depend on 'the acceptance of some ethical aim or ideal.'<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Michels, *Political Parties*, 248.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. 248.

<sup>150</sup> Edward, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 308.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 45.

<sup>152</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 164.

### 1.2.4 C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) and ‘The Power Elite:’

Wright Mills’ major work about the elites is ‘*The Power Elite.*’ According to some critics, his theories are still relevant in today’s society.<sup>153</sup> For him, politics is about struggle for power.<sup>154</sup> He agrees with the Machiavellians and argues that societies are ruled by a minority (elites). In his work, he analyzes ruled majority and ruler minority. According to him, the ordinary people do not govern and they cannot influence decision-making process irrespective of different forms of government. For this reason, he can be considered a classical elite theorist.

Mills thinks that ‘as the means of information and of power are centralized, some men come to occupy positions in American society from which they can look down upon, so to speak, and by their decisions mightily affect, the everyday worlds of ordinary men and women.’<sup>155</sup> That is, there is a ruling minority which affects life of the majority. This ruling minority is dominant since it centralizes power and information through institutions. Thus, Mills has an institutional approach to elite theory. The rulers are the elites who are composed of men in institutions of military, political and economic and who can ‘transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary men and women...’<sup>156</sup>

From Mosca, Mills borrows the idea of different elite groups (such as military elites). According to Mills, they depend on different institutions but in Mosca they have different talents; therefore different organizations. From Michels, he borrows the possibility not to replace one elite group by another. In Mills theory, different elite groups from different institutions can cooperate and form the power elite. However on some issues he does not agree with the followers of Machiavelli. For instance, although the Machiavellians believe that there is one harmonized elite group at one point in time; by taking the United States as an example Mills argues that there are different elite groups simultaneously in military, politics and economic corporations.<sup>157</sup> They form

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<sup>153</sup> Norton, Jennifer, “The Power Elite by C. Wright Mills,” *Oeconomicus* 5, (2002), 170.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* 171.

<sup>155</sup> Mills, C. Wright, *The Power Elite*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>157</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 6.

military elites, political elites, and business elites respectively without replacing each other. These elites sometimes come together and form ‘the power elite’ of USA.<sup>158</sup> Additionally, unlike Mosca, Mills thinks that words such as ‘ruling class’ cannot describe the ruling elite since class is an economical construct and rule is a political concept but for instance, the power elite includes military connotations as well.<sup>159</sup>

For Mills, although the instituted elite groups are often in tension, they collaborate on certain overlapping points and on certain time of crisis.<sup>160</sup> Wars can make them collaborate. For instance, politicians are influenced by the military and decide to go war. During time of war, business companies gain some benefits because of military expenses.<sup>161</sup> The military gains funds for improvement of armaments with the help of business companies. This triangle of power<sup>162</sup> (the power elites) can be analyzed only at times when these three sets coincide. The reason is that the power elite are shaped by the interest matches of powerful elites of economy, politics, and military. As a result, Mills neither claims that the real power belongs to the government and the military elites, nor insists that business controls the society. Mills claims that elites’ institutions do not provide unilateral power<sup>163</sup> to elites. They interact and result in the power elite. This power elite is accountable in the decision-making process

Mills analyses the history of the U.S. and argues that in the nineteenth century, neither the military nor the economic men were effective in the high ruling body of state (the power elite).<sup>164</sup> Although they sometimes interfered with the state; they could not join its directorate. During the thirties, however, the elites from the military and the corporate men affect decision making process. The elites of the military, politics and business corporations shape the power elite.<sup>165</sup> Finally, Mills argues that among these

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<sup>158</sup> Vergin, *Siyasetin Sosyolojisi*, 123.

<sup>159</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 277.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>161</sup> Norton, “The Power Elite by C. Wright Mills,” 170.

<sup>162</sup> Vergin, *Siyasetin Sosyolojisi*, 123.

<sup>163</sup> Norton, “The Power Elite by C. Wright Mills,” 170.

<sup>164</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 8.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. 9.

different groups of elites the military benefits the most in its superior power; the professional politician loses the most due to the other groups of elites' gains.<sup>166</sup>

Although this means that elites from different institutions in the power elite interact and this interaction result in power to rule the society; neither groups nor the power elite have absolute power.<sup>167</sup> Similar to Machiavelli who points out the importance of luck,<sup>168</sup> or Pareto, who stresses the importance of external forces; Mills states that humans are not able to direct the outside forces which are causes of everyday events. Some of these forces are history, weather and luck.<sup>169</sup> For example, the elites of one of the biggest companies in California could loose their power and place in the power elite. The reason could be a major natural disaster such as an earthquake that damages the whole company.<sup>170</sup> Thus, the elites are 'neither omnipotent nor impotent.'<sup>171</sup>

In addition, unlike Mosca and Pareto, Mills argues that elite circulation happens when political, economic and military institutions change.<sup>172</sup> Nevertheless, in the economic institution, economic power can be exemplified as satisfaction of material needs 'through the social organization of the extraction, transformation, distribution, and consumption of the object of nature.' Hence, money and product are some of economic power.<sup>173</sup> Military power can be, for instance, institutionalized physical defense and aggression which is about mobilizing violence (the most elementary human

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<sup>166</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 275-276.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>168</sup> Machiavelli, Niccolo, *Prens*, (Ankara: Doruk, 2000), 138.

<sup>169</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 21.

<sup>170</sup> Norton, "The Power Elite by C. Wright Mills," 171.

<sup>171</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 26.

<sup>172</sup> Hess, Andreas ed., *American Social and Political Thought: A Reader*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 244.

<sup>173</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social power: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*, 24.

power).<sup>174</sup> Lastly, political power can be explained as territorial and centralized regulation<sup>175</sup> such as jurisdiction.<sup>176</sup>

Mills observes that even though the elites circulate and constitute three elite groups, they have similar social origins.<sup>177</sup> They have close family and personal relationships among themselves. They have similar education;<sup>178</sup> and they interchange personnel among each other more than other social strata.<sup>179</sup> Mills illustrates this point with following ideas:

The men of the higher circles are not representative men; their high position is not a result of moral virtue; their fabulous success is not firmly connected with meritorious ability. Those who sit in the seats of the high and the mighty are selected and formed by the means of power, the sources of wealth, and the mechanics of celebrity, which prevail in their society. They are not men selected and formed by civil service that is linked with the world of knowledge and sensibility.<sup>180</sup>

In the US, entry of elite groups is open to anybody, at least in theory. For instance, every citizen has right to join the economic elites by accumulating million dollars. In reality, only a handful of individuals succeeded to become millionaires since the First World War.<sup>181</sup> Thus, according to Mills, social mechanism is important for influencing society.

To conclude, Mills defines the power elite by saying that ‘we may define the power elite in terms of the mean of power- as those who occupy the command posts.’<sup>182</sup> The elite theories of Pareto (talented people come together somehow and create

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<sup>174</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social power: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*, 25.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>176</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 9.

<sup>177</sup> Meisel, James ed, *Makers of Modern Social Science: Pareto and Mosca*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965),22 and Mills, *The Power Elite*, 12 and 19.

<sup>178</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 53.

<sup>179</sup> Bottomore, *Elites and Society*, 24.

<sup>180</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 361.

<sup>181</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 155.

<sup>182</sup> Bottomore, *Elites and Society*, 23.

prestigious groups), Michels and Mosca (in all societies, minorities rule majorities because they are superior and organized) are clear. They argue that the elites have some internal unity (special relations) which intensifies its power. However, the postwar elite theorist, Mills, transcends this cliché.<sup>183</sup> That's why it is important to talk about Mills' elite theory in this thesis beside the other classical elite theorists.

However, '*The Power Elite*' is unsuccessful to predict such a situation where at least one of the elite groups in the power elite could no longer identify its fortune or interest with the other groups in power elite. Let us assume that American life has not much changed; and for instance, military leaders still could have plans about possible wars.<sup>184</sup> However, although the defense department tries to find funds for scientific improvements, America's economic elite give more support to other economic elites in various countries than their country's military elites.<sup>185</sup>

### 1.3 WHO ARE ELITES?

According to elite theory, there is inequality of power in every society. So far, we have talked about classical elite theorists. According to Pareto, human beings have different talents. Since they have non-logical actions they tend to relate talents with more prestigious places in societies. These talented individuals that have prestigious places in societies are elites. Although they have power, the ones who rule the society are the governing elites. Mosca and Michels, on the other hand, have organizational approach: elites can rule since they are small in number and organized. Nevertheless, similar to Pareto, Mosca and Michels argue that elites are organized according to their capacities. All these classical elite theorists believe that there is only one homogeneous elite group at one point in time.

In Mills theory, the elites are the ones who centralize power and information through institutions which are military, political and economic. Unlike the Machiavellians (Pareto, Mosca and Michels), in his theory there are different elite groups simultaneously in military, politics and economic corporations. These elites are

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<sup>183</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, 44.

<sup>184</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 376.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. 379.

in tension. Nevertheless, they can collaborate on certain overlapping points and on certain time of crisis. Therefore, they form the power elites who are the rulers.

Actually, there are various theories that try to explain power relations in societies. One of them is the class theory. Elite theory diverges from it. Roughly, for instance, in Classical Marxist Theory the dominant class members (bourgeoisie) own and control economic sources. Some of them are means of production and capital that establish bourgeoisie's positions in the market.<sup>186</sup> Thus, economic sources are the base of classes (bourgeoisie and proletariat).<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless, they give rise to other sources such as political and ideological sources. Then, classes start to derive from them. However, the elites in the elite theory can derive from various kinds of power sources simultaneously. Some of them are economic and political sources.

Finally, according to classical elite theories, in societies there are elites who are different from non-elites in relation to their power and influence.<sup>188</sup> However, these theories do not exhaust the field of elite theories: unlike the classical account, there are democratic elite theories. In these theories, it is argued that regimes matter in power relations in society. Democratic elite theorists claim, more specifically, that democracies are possible and compatible with the elite theory where the many can affect the decision-making process and limit power sources of elites. In the following chapter, I want to compare ideas of the classical and democratic elite theorists about power sources for becoming a part of elites and power of elites. In addition, I will discuss how democracy is possible and compatible for democratic elite theorists while classical elite theorists reject this idea.

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<sup>186</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, xxx and Marx, and Engels, *Komünist Parti Manifestosu*, 20.

<sup>187</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, xxvii. Marx claims that reality develops from concrete to abstract. In the world, there were first humans, then economical activities which shaped the ideas and consciousness. Then, these ideas and consciousness started to shape economic activities. Thus, the real basis of everything, according to Marx, is the economical structure which is formed by the force of productive power. This process is called as base dependent superstructure. The base consists of the relations of production (i.e. ownership, division of labor) and force of production (i.e. labor, machinery, science). The superstructure consists of, for instance, the ideas of society, philosophy, and politics. Marx, Karl, "Preface to A Critique of Political Philosophy," in *Philosophy 497 Course Book*, (Summer 2005), 389-390.

<sup>188</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, xxv.

## CHAPTER TWO

### POWER SOURCES, POWER SCOPE OF ELITES, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF DEMOCRACY

In this chapter I will focus on the power of elites and the ways in which individuals can become a part of the elites. Additionally, there is a major disagreement among elite theorists about the elites' power scope and the majority's influence in political decisions. Such a disagreement causes a division between elite theorists, as they align with democratic or classical schools of thought.<sup>189</sup> For this reason, the second aim of this chapter is critically analyzing democratic elite theorists' ideas about the elites, power sources and possibility of restricting elites' power in democracies.

According to the elite theorists, power is dispersed throughout society unequally. In society, some elites have higher levels of power than other elites. An individual's capacity for power depends on the specific sources (power bases) he possesses.<sup>190</sup> Thus, the sources, such as talents, institutions, organizations, cause power inequality in societies. Although elite theorists do not necessarily make the distinction, these power sources can be divided into two groups: the first being the group of sources that help individuals to become a part of elite group and the second being the other sources that help elites to become more powerful and influential than other elites. This distinction does not mean that sources of 'power for elites' and 'power of elites' in elite theories are different from each other. Such a division is made only to perform a profound analysis and critique of power relations in a society.

Unlike classical elite theorists, according to the second group, different types of political regimes or systems impact the efficacy or power of elite groups in different

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<sup>189</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, xxx.

<sup>190</sup> Egan, Daniel and Levon A. Chorbajian, *Power: A Critical Reader*, (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 13.



ways. Although democratic elite theorists believe that elites rule societies, they claim that democracy can restrict power of elites. Therefore, these theorists expect the majority to be able to influence the decision-making process. Thus, even if the ideal of democracy is popular sovereignty and in modern democracies this ideal might not be realized, democracy remains a distinctive regime due to some of its features. One of them is elections that limit elites' power.

Thus, the importance of democracy in such elite theories does not come from democracy's ability to provide equal distribution of power to rule society, but instead from its ability to restrain power scope of elites. As a result, for democratic elite theorists, democracy is compatible with elite rule. In the following, I will discuss the acquisition and maintenance of power in society. This issue is fundamentally important to discern the differences between different types of elite theory. Additionally, I will focus on discussions about the possibility and compatibility of democracy under elite rule.

## **2.1 POWER AND DEMOCRACY IN CLASSICAL ELITE THEORIES**

To begin with, as Pareto states, humans differ significantly from one another since they are intellectually or physically dissimilar.<sup>191</sup> These diverse masses form societies, which are typically ruled by elites. Pareto divides elites into two sub-categories: non-governing and governing elites. Upon further observations of individuals' abilities and capabilities, Pareto creates a ten-point scale designed to determine the rank of a certain individual within community in general (non-elites vs. elites) or in an elite community in particular (governing vs. non-governing elites).<sup>192</sup> Hypothetically speaking, for Pareto, if perfect competition were dominant in the selection of elites in a society, then each individual would be ranked exactly where he deserved to be, according to his talents and ambition.<sup>193</sup> Thus, inequality of individual, innate gifts provides special advantages in different spheres of social life, like being a part of elite. For this reason,

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<sup>191</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 152.

<sup>192</sup> Delaney, Sister Joan, "Pareto's Theory of Elites and Education," *Studium*, no.3 (1971), 40.

<sup>193</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 154.

talent can be interpreted as power source for becoming a part of elite in Pareto's elite theory.<sup>194</sup>

Although Pareto assumes that these capabilities are innate, to him they can improve or deteriorate over time.<sup>195</sup> This idea is related to his notion of 'circulation of elites,' which is an explanation of elite flow in society. It implicitly identifies the power source for elites and power of elites.<sup>196</sup> For instance, after some governing elites died, talents of non-governing elites (lower rank among elites) led them to become governing elites.<sup>197</sup> Thus, talents are also power of elites in his elite theory.<sup>198</sup> Nevertheless, Pareto identifies specific 'ties,' such as the institution of aristocracy, which disturb perfect competition. He thinks that being a member of governing elite is given as a birthright to the heirs of aristocrats. Since individual characteristics are irrelevant to obtaining this position, but some personal ties are important; it can be argued that sometimes ties provide the power to become a member of an elite group.<sup>199</sup>

In Pareto's elite theory, the majority is passive in the decision-making process.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore; he does not believe in direct democracy and thinks that the majority are not talented enough to rule society. Moreover, Pareto does not believe in a representative democracy.<sup>201</sup> He thinks that the democratic electorate's belief about changing the incumbent party by voting is a non-logical action since the incumbent party might guarantee an era of endless success.<sup>202</sup> Thus, even in representative democracies ruling power belongs to elites, especially governing elites; and the majority cannot replace the elites by elections. Moreover, representative democracy is oxymoron, since 'the parliamentary game in a democratic regime' expresses only the private interests of parliamentarians but not the interests of public. For him, various individuals

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<sup>194</sup> Pareto, *Sociological Writings*, 52.

<sup>195</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 169.

<sup>196</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 4, 1787.

<sup>197</sup> Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of Elites*, 9.

<sup>198</sup> Pareto, *Sociological Writings*, 14 .

<sup>199</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 155.

<sup>200</sup> Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of Elites*, 63.

<sup>201</sup> Pareto, *Sociological Writings*, 52.

<sup>202</sup> Pareto, *The Mind and Society*, Vol. 4, 1566, 1568, and 1592.

have varied interests. Thus, neither would elites represent the society, nor could the society be accurately represented.

According to Pareto's theory, there is a democratic tendency in the 'circulation of elite.' By democratic tendency, Pareto means having free competition among individuals, in terms of their talents.<sup>203</sup> As a result, democracy is not compatible with the theory of elites; although countries have used the title to describe their regime type. Thus, Pareto claims that there is no difference among various political regimes.

Secondly, for Mosca, elites are the individuals who are talented and organized within a society. The more talented groups among elites in decision-making process are called the ruling class.<sup>204</sup> Similar to Pareto, according to Mosca, talent is a power source providing accessibility to the elite class. Since some elites can be more influential than others, due to their talents; talents are also a power source of elites.<sup>205</sup>

Mosca agrees with Pareto and believes that elite groups can change in structure and composition, for instance, if their abilities lose importance.<sup>206</sup> Moreover, similar to Pareto's theory, Mosca claims that being born into a ruling class is usually the quickest and easiest way to become a member of it.<sup>207</sup> That is, for both Mosca and Pareto some 'social ties' could provide individuals with an avenue to become elites easily.<sup>208</sup> Lastly, according to Mosca, representative democracy is an illusion and majority cannot affect the decision-making process even by electing representatives. One reason is that since majority are not talented; representatives make themselves be elected by manipulating people's consent.<sup>209</sup> However, Mosca argues that 'reloading the ruling class with elements from the lower classes' is a democratic tendency.<sup>210</sup> Thus, any kind of

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<sup>203</sup> Pareto, *Sociological Writings*, 51.

<sup>204</sup> Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, 50.

<sup>205</sup> Edward, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 395.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.* 70.

<sup>207</sup> Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, 61.

<sup>208</sup> Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, 72.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.* 154.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.* 395.

democracy is not possible and not compatible with reality of elite rule. Therefore, there is no such distinctive regime as democracy and it cannot limit power scope of elites.<sup>211</sup>

There is also some credit given to power sources in Michels' theory of the elite. For him, each organization is ruled by an organized minority (elites or dominant class) since they are talented, small in number and organized.<sup>212</sup> For instance, according to Michels, some oratorical skills are needed to become a member of this minority.<sup>213</sup> Thus, similar to Mosca and Pareto, Michels surmises that talents provide the power needed to become a member of the elite, and oratorical skill can be counted as an example of talents. In addition, since wealthy individuals can become elites (dominant class) more easily than others lacking financial resources, wealth could be interpreted as another power source in Michels' theory.<sup>214</sup>

Additionally, in Michels' elite theory there is the remarkable necessity of oligarchy.<sup>215</sup> Nevertheless, unlike Pareto and Mosca, for Michels, ideals of democracy should always be followed.<sup>216</sup> Some of these ideals are having a high degree of equality among all citizens and citizens' full and constant participation in the policy-making process.<sup>217</sup> These ideals of democracy can be followed by representation of citizens in parliament which, nonetheless, will have an oligarchic structure.<sup>218</sup> However, these characteristics can guarantee societies and social movements 'to be less oligarchic rather than more.'<sup>219</sup>

Finally, Mills argues that there are three principal elites (political, military and economy) which sometimes are combined to represent a cohesive group (the power

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<sup>211</sup> Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, 51 and 153.

<sup>212</sup> Michels, *Political Parties*, 400.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* 69.

<sup>214</sup> Michels, Robert, *First Lectures in Political Sociology*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 92.

<sup>215</sup> Michels, *Political Parties*, 32.

<sup>216</sup> Edward, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 308.

<sup>217</sup> Michels, *Political Parties*, 389.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>219</sup> Edward, *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 308.

elite).<sup>220</sup> For him, these elites are the ones who centralize power and information through the institutions of economic, political and military rule. Thus, he stresses the importance of institutions; for this reason power sources of elites can be interpreted as economic, political or military institutions.<sup>221</sup> However, the base power to form the power elite and power sources of the power elite is cooperation among economic, political and military elites.<sup>222</sup> In addition to that, according to Mills, elite groups have similar social origins and the advantageous social mechanism is power to become a part of the elites.<sup>223</sup> As a result, for Mills, talent is less important than social mechanisms allowing an individual to reach influential positions.

Mills agrees with these three classical elite theorists and claims that societies are ruled by elites and this is true also for democracies. By democracy, Mills means mass democracy. According to him, in democracies there is struggle between powerful and large-scale interest groups and the will of individual citizens.<sup>224</sup> These interests groups are between the power elite and the majority. They are middle-level associations and citizens' only link to decision-making process. However, elites rule them in terms of their interests and citizens cannot affect these elites. Therefore, democratic ideal such as representing majority or majority rule is impossible and incompatible with elite rule.

In summary, Pareto's main argument about democracy is that it cannot be realized.<sup>225</sup> Only a small group can govern society, and the majority will always be subordinate. Even though a country's political regime seems to be democratic, governing elites rule majority. The same idea can be seen in Mosca's work, Michels' iron law of oligarchy<sup>226</sup> and Mills' power elite. On the whole, mainstream (classical) elite theorists from Pareto onwards have been cynical about democratic regimes.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Bottomore, *Elites and Society*, 24.

<sup>221</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 9.

<sup>222</sup> Hess, *American Social and Political Thought*, 244.

<sup>223</sup> Meisel, *Makers of Modern Social Science*, 22 and Mills, *The Power Elite*, 15, and 19.

<sup>224</sup> Mills, *The Power Elite*, 248.

<sup>225</sup> Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, 47.

<sup>226</sup> Engelstad, Friedrik, "Introduction: Social and Political Elites in Modern Democracies," *Comparative Studies of Social and Political Elites* 23, (2007), 1.

<sup>227</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, xxix.

To conclude, even if elites can circulate; classical elite theorists agree upon the inevitability of an elite minority in every society. This minority consists of people who are entitled to influence society or who have an impact on the decision-making process.<sup>228</sup> Although a discussion about power sources is implicit in classical elite theorists' ideas, it can be argued that for them, power sources determine the fate of individuals. Similar to classical elite theorists' ideas, each democratic elite theorist has different explanation about power sources. However, democratic elite theorists challenge the view of classical elites and argue that democracies are possible under elite rule; and in democracies people can restrict power of elites. That is why democracy can be classified as a distinctive regime.

## **2.2 A NEW APPROACH TO ELITES, POWER SOURCES AND DEMOCRACY**

First of all, Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) is the originator of an elite conception of democracy. For him, minority is the elite ruling of society. The power to become one of the elites stems from individual talents.<sup>229</sup> In this manner, he agrees with classical elite theorists and claims that minority rules over the majority. Moreover, according to Schumpeter, power for minority is due to political and cognitive abilities such as taking 'purposeful responsible action' in politics.<sup>230</sup>

Furthermore, in his major work 'Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (1942)' he thinks democracy as a political 'method',<sup>231</sup> which is an 'institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.'<sup>232</sup> That is to say, as a result of political competition in elections, this method provides the ability for elite groups to take the

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<sup>228</sup> Bottomore, *Elites and Society*, 5-6.

<sup>229</sup> Perry, Geraint, *Political Elites*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969), 145-146.

<sup>230</sup> Medearis, John, "Schumpeter, the New Deal, and Democracy," *The American Political Science Review* 91, no.4 (1997), 828.

<sup>231</sup> Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1976), 269.

<sup>232</sup> Medearis, "Schumpeter, the New Deal, and Democracy," 828.

chair.<sup>233</sup> This is Schumpeter's response to the 'classical' theory of democracy by 'which he means a theory of how the people could act collectively so as to be sovereign.'<sup>234</sup>

Additionally, Schumpeter agrees with Mills about intermediate groups and their position between elites and citizens in democracies. These groups (such as interest groups and unions) are organized and compete with one another. These intermediate groups, however, are also controlled by smaller elite groups. They restructure the aims of their organization for political consideration, but their interests are dominant in this respect.<sup>235</sup> However, unlike Mills, Schumpeter believes that these small elite groups have to be sufficiently high quality, and perhaps possess special abilities. Thus, power of these elites can be interpreted as talents.<sup>236</sup>

Moreover, Schumpeter argues that 'effective range of political decision should not be extended too far.' This spread of power can be controlled by a general power limit and each individual case can and should provide some other solutions to a specific issue, as well.<sup>237</sup> The general limiter, according to Schumpeter, is self control and tolerance for different opinions.<sup>238</sup> For this reason, self control and tolerance are other necessary talents from which elites may draw power.

Unlike classical elite theorists, according to Schumpeter, democracy makes a difference in elites' power maintenance. He thinks that power of elites is different in democracies since the majority has the ability to restrict, or limit, supposed power: elites can become a part of the ruling elite as a result of political competition where majority chooses ruling elites. In order to be chosen, there is competition among elites. This competition forces them to limit their actions to gain support from the majority. Thus, elites trade and obtain power from majority votes. If they have a better combination of policies than their elite peers, they can obtain more votes, and consequently, more power. In this way, they can achieve control over 'a wider section of the political market.'

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<sup>233</sup> Medearis, "Schumpeter, the New Deal, and Democracy," 820.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid. 828.

<sup>235</sup> Perry, *Political Elites*, 146.

<sup>236</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, 79.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. 82.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. 84.

This is Schumpeter's minimalist democracy that has similarities with a representative democracy. His political system involves candidate elections, through a plurality or majority of votes. To be re-elected and to gain further political advantage, representatives offer society some civil liberties, thus restricting their own power. By self-limiting their power, elites compete for popular support to become more influential in decision-making process.<sup>239</sup>

However, he uses the term 'entrepreneur' to describe the role of elites 'in the process of political will-making.' In democratic countries, politicians (political elites) are not only 'producers' who answer to existing demand of majority but also political entrepreneurs who create new demand as a result of their new policies.<sup>240</sup> Thus, Schumpeter has very pessimistic ideas about public choice by believing that individuals' preferences can be manipulated by elites. Therefore, according to him, democratic political competition occurs where elites, especially political elites, control the agenda-setting. Nonetheless, Schumpeter thinks that the elites who are granted the authority to decide, deliberate and act in a responsible manner can become ruling elites.<sup>241</sup> According to him, his minimalist view of democracy 'would emerge only where there is political tolerance and a strong state.'<sup>242</sup>

On the one hand Schumpeter is aware of the possibility of unfair elections.<sup>243</sup> On the other hand, he thinks that such a method can provide freedom, human rights or some other ideals to the majority but these ideals are not necessary indicators of the end of democracy. Thus, similar to other political regimes, democracy does not guarantee these ideals<sup>244</sup> but Schumpeter claims that competitive struggle of elites for people's vote can be advantageous for the majority.<sup>245</sup> At least in principle, everyone is free to compete for ruling society and to present himself to voters. With this formula, Schumpeter

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<sup>239</sup> Sniderman, Paul M., et. al, "The Fallacy of Democratic Elitism: Elite Competition and Commitment to Civil Liberties," *British Journal of Political Science* 21, no. 3 (1991), 350.

<sup>240</sup> Körösenyi, "Political Representation in Leader Democracy," 367.

<sup>241</sup> Perry, *Political Elites*, 145-146.

<sup>242</sup> Wantchekon, "The Paradox of "Warlord" Democracy: A Theoretical Investigation," 17.

<sup>243</sup> Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 253.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.* 272.

<sup>245</sup> Sniderman, "The Fallacy of Democratic Elitism," 350.



argues that even though elite minority rules the majority, democracy is possible and compatible with elite rule.

To conclude, similar to classical elite theorists, Schumpeter believes ignoring elites in ruling societies is not realistic. For this reason, he is an elite theorist and claims that these elites are political factors.<sup>246</sup> However, for him there are differences among political regimes since he believes that democracy can restrict power of elites. All in all, like classical elite theorists, Schumpeter claims that the majority is always ruled by elites. According to him, in democracy the main actors of politics are not the voters, but the elites (political elites) who have the possibility to be voted into positions of power. Nonetheless, democracy is a distinctive regime thanks to its features, such as electoral competitions in which the majority chooses (or is forced to choose) some elites, among others characteristics. Thus, it can be concluded that democracy is possible and compatible with elite rule.

Another famous democratic elite theorist is Robert Dahl (1915-...). He has similar ideas as Schumpeter. As an elite theorist, Dahl claims that minority rules the majority and that there is competition among elites itself.<sup>247</sup> Dahl terms the majority in the society as 'homo civicus.' These individuals are citizens who are not much interested in political affairs. The minority is called 'homo politicus,' and this group has an active interest in politics. As a result, Dahl divides the society into two parts: apolitical and political.

According to Dahl, for the second strata, homo politicus, obtaining power does not require any special qualifications. This means, unlike Pareto, Mosca, Michels and Schumpeter, for Dahl, the acquisition of power does not depend on talents. Elites have to be people that have interest in politics. In addition to that, power sources for becoming elite are mostly wealth and education.<sup>248</sup> Dahl argues that these elites are the ones who are guided by their beliefs, and have more influence over political events. For him, beyond their direct power over events or decisions they have a fundamental role 'in shaping political culture and in signaling what kind of behavior is proper or improper.'

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<sup>246</sup> Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, 79.

<sup>247</sup> Perry, *Political Elites*, 146.

<sup>248</sup> Sandhu, Amandeep. "Political Sociology in Light of Globalization: New Perspectives and Future Directions," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 5, no.1-2 (2006), 3.

Moreover, similar to Mills and Schumpeter, Dahl thinks that there are intermediate level organization, such as unions or movements, between citizens and elites in democracies. These intermediate groups are also ruled by small elite groups. They have their own defined norms, beliefs and values.<sup>249</sup> Nevertheless, unlike classical elite theorists, Dahl claims that in democracies there is no concentration of power; therefore it is hard to understand which elites are most powerful in the decision-making process.

This distinctly pluralist view is found in his work, 'Who Governs: Democracy and Power in an American City.' Thus, according to him, in every political community and regime, there is inequality in political resources. These resources can be interpreted as power of elites. However, unlike Mills or other classical elite theorists, Dahl does not think that in democracies political elites hold all the resources. Elites have non-cumulative political powers.<sup>250</sup>

Dahl calls democracies 'polyarchy,' which is defined as a distinctive regime with seven characteristics.<sup>251</sup> One of the characteristics of polyarchy is having the right to seek out alternative information sources which must be protected by laws.<sup>252</sup> Thanks to these characteristics; polyarchy does not necessarily provide equality of the power share, but offers non-centralization of power.<sup>253</sup> As a result, elites would have limited power. Additionally, similar to Schumpeter, he talks about elections and elite competition in democracies.<sup>254</sup> According to him, these institutions are sufficient to guarantee pluralism<sup>255</sup> which is important for polyarchy.

Dahl argues that polyarchy is essentially the base of modern democracy.<sup>256</sup> Polyarchic societies are industrial societies. Individual interests are diverse and power is

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<sup>249</sup> Diamond, Larry, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 66.

<sup>250</sup> Sandhu, "Political Sociology in Light of Globalization," 3.

<sup>251</sup> Dahl, Robert, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 10.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>253</sup> Perry, *Political Elites*, 67.

<sup>254</sup> Sandhu, "Political Sociology in Light of Globalization," 4.

<sup>255</sup> Hayward, Jack, "The ECPR Venture into Retrieval," *Political Studies Review* 5, (2007), 49.

dispersed throughout them.<sup>257</sup> However, Dahl refuses to think that departing from equality necessarily causes one group to dominate over another. He argues that this is not true and there can be 'inequality, greater inequality, and lesser inequality.'<sup>258</sup> Thus, Dahl agrees with classical elite theorists and claims that having equal share of ruling power throughout the society (as well as popular sovereignty) is a Utopia.<sup>259</sup> Moreover, self-governance in a complex, crowded modern society is difficult.<sup>260</sup> However, unlike classical elite theorists, Dahl believes that democracy is possible to be realized.<sup>261</sup>

Finally, according to Dahl, countries can be classified 'according to the extent to which their political institutions approximate these criteria.' The major institutions of government are the chief executive, the bureaucracies, the parliament, and the judiciary branch. These institutions are independent one another and ruled by elites.<sup>262</sup> Nevertheless, he thinks that political parties could make it impossible for citizens 'to coordinate their efforts in order to nominate and elect their preferred candidates and thus would violate the criteria of voting equality and effective participation.' However, he still argues that his theory of pluralist democracy is possible under elite rule.<sup>263</sup>

Last in the list of democratic elite theorists is Giovanni Sartori (1924-...). According to him, the minority rules the majority. However, Sartori chooses to focus mainly on the position of elites in democracies. Similar to Dahl, Sartori believes in the pluralism of elites in democracies. Unlike other political regimes, in democracies there is no concentration of power but instead a 'multiplicity of crisscrossing power groups engaged in a coalition maneuvering.' Sartori attributes this multiplicity of power to the diffused power inequality.

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<sup>256</sup> Bailey, Michael and David Braybrooke, "Robert A. Dahl's Philosophy of Democracy, Exhibited in His Essays," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6, (2003), 101

<sup>257</sup> Dahl, Robert, "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," *The American Political Science Review* 52, no. 2, (1958), 465.

<sup>258</sup> Bailey and Braybrooke, "Robert A. Dahl's Philosophy of Democracy," 103.

<sup>259</sup> Dahl, "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," 465.

<sup>260</sup> Bailey and Braybrooke, "Robert A. Dahl's Philosophy of Democracy," 100.

<sup>261</sup> Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy*, 10.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.* 11 and 29.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.* 36.

In this manner, he criticizes classical elite theorists. For instance, Mosca assumes that there is one ruling class which holds the necessary sources for power of elites.<sup>264</sup> However, according to Sartori, various elites intersect one another to rule society through reconciliation strategies. The reconciliation strategies can be experienced in the election period, in which elites promise benefits and advantages to their followers. The reason is that elites want to lead and influence the society, which is complex and multifaceted due to the diversity of the power inequality.

Sometimes the elites try to be elected alone and sometimes they try to build winning coalitions.<sup>265</sup> In this way, the elites compete for supporters, since their power comes ‘from the numbers that follow them.’ Therefore, followers can be interpreted as the power sources of elites. However, after obtaining support of the followers, elites should act responsibly, in order to retain their following. Thus, unlike Schumpeter, Sartori argues that although the majority might not have the *knowledge* for governing, they could have *opinions* that allow them to make retrospective judgments about the outcome of government policy. Therefore, they cannot be manipulated, as Schumpeter argues. Moreover, opinions of majority will be reflected on votes. By knowing this reality, representatives will try to act more responsible to the society and they cannot follow only their interests.<sup>266</sup>

For example, political elites need support of the electorate, since the electorate can expel them in the next election.<sup>267</sup> For this reason, these elites will try to make decisions that are advantageous to the electorate. As a result, they can be elected and remain in power, by restricting their own power scope. This means, democracy prevents elites from doing just whatever they want and provides a watchful majority to influence decision-making processes. This is similar to Dahl's electoral polyarchy. However, for Sartori there is more reciprocal control of elites upon elites in democracies. Moreover, unlike apolitical people in Dahl's theory, Sartori argues that majority must ‘retrain, control and influence elites for their full and unfettered power.’ As a result, for him democracy is a procedure or a mechanism that creates an open polyarchy. In this

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<sup>264</sup> Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, 145 and 147.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid. 148.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. 156.

<sup>267</sup> Körösiényi, “Political Representation in Leader Democracy,” 378.

polyarchy, elite competition on the electoral market, limited power of the people and responsive elites are possible.<sup>268</sup>

All in all, for Sartori, democracy is a form of government<sup>269</sup> which is possible to be realized and which is compatible with elite rule. He explains his ideas by ‘decision-making theory of democracy.’ As it was stated, this theory is about how various elites’ power intersects one another through reconciliation strategies.<sup>270</sup> Sartori especially criticizes Mosca, Michels and Pareto and thinks that ‘reality does not contradict with democracy.’<sup>271</sup> For instance, he claims that Michels is wrong about his critiques of democracy. According to him, Michels’ field observation is too limited since he only observes German Social Democratic Party.<sup>272</sup> Sartori concludes that it is possible to have a practical democracy which depends upon a judicious mix of political participation and cautious government of elites.

To conclude, democratic elite theorists accept elites’ rule. For instance, Sartori and Schumpeter agree with Pareto, Mosca and Michels. All of them claim that elites need specialized competency for ruling society.<sup>273</sup> However, for democratic elite theorists, powers of elites are limited in democracies. For instance, according to Schumpeter and Sartori, the function of electoral competition is to decide on and legitimize elites who will rule the society. For this reason, elites will make some promises in order to be elected and will offer their constituents some benefits in order to be re-elected. However, a government that derives its authority from public opinion will still be influenced by its ruling elites even more than being influenced by the majority.<sup>274</sup>

Thus, similar to classical elite theorists, democratic elite theorists argue that elites are influential group in the decision-making process. However, unlike classical elite

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<sup>268</sup> Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, 156.

<sup>269</sup> Vergin, *Siyasetin Sosyolojisi*, 121.

<sup>270</sup> Higley, John et. al, “Elite Integration in Stable Democracies: A Reconsideration,” *European Sociological Review* 7, no. 1(1991), 36.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>272</sup> Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, 149.

<sup>273</sup> Putterman, Ethan, “Rousseau on Agenda-Setting and Majority Rule,” *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003), 459.

<sup>274</sup> Hayward, “The ECPR Venture into Retrieval,” 48.

theorists, for democratic elite theorists, the majority can retain some degree of power and influence in democracies. Therefore, they argue that democracy is a distinctive regime since any real source for the power acquisition of elites might be restricted by democracy. Thus, due to the arrangement of democracy, elites' power is not absolute, but instead relative. Last but not least, for classical elite theorists, the idea of democracy is neither possible to consider, nor compatible with the 'reality of elite rule.'<sup>275</sup> Moreover, they argue that all political regimes are the same. However, democratic elite theorists, who question the relation between political regime and elites, insist that democracy is compatible with the theory of elites.

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<sup>275</sup> Bendix, Reinhard and Seymour Martin Lipset eds., *Class, Status, and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective*, (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 201.

## CONCLUSION

According to the elite theory, certain groups have a dominant role in the politics of societies. Thus, they have more power and prestige than the rest. In the elite theory these are called 'elites'. Elites are the minority which rules the majority. Accordingly, elite theories divide societies into two groups: the majority and the minority. However, these theories can be categorized according to their focus. In this thesis they were separated into two kinds: Elite theories (Pareto, Mosca, Michels and Wright Mills) in which political regimes have almost no difference among them and cannot limit power of elites vs. Elite theories (Sartori, Dahl and Schumpeter) in which democracy is accepted as a distinctive political regime which is possible under elite rule and can limit the power of elites. In the literature, elite theories are divided into classical elite theorists vs. democratic elite theorists.

In this thesis, firstly the classical group and their ideas about elites were critically analyzed. The second aim of the thesis was to discuss how individuals can become a part of the elite; and which power sources help elites to become more powerful among elites. For this aim, power sources were categorized. Finally, how democracy is possible to be realized and how it can limit elites' power were questioned. For this reason, while elite perception of democratic elite theorists was discussed, classical and democratic elite theories were compared and critically analyzed.

Both groups have some similarities about elites and elites' power; although their ideas about power sources are mostly different. For the second group, democracy as a distinctive way of government is perfectly compatible with elite rule. Thus, it is possible to have elite rule with a limited power scope. On the contrary, for the first group, the power scope of elites cannot be restricted by democracy and there is no difference among different political regimes.

To sum up, this thesis is a theoretical discussion of elites. While elite theories were analyzed, the question of elites was critically discussed. This discussion let the

thesis to ask how individuals become a member of the elite and what the elite powers are. It is important to study whether elites' power can be restricted and whether democracy is possible under the shadow of elites. Thus, chapter one was designed so as to provide a general overview of the elites according to the classical elite theories. Chapter two provided the basic discussion about the elites' power sources and the power sources that individuals need to become members of the elite. Moreover, in the second chapter, the democratic group's elite theories were critically analyzed; and the elite power scope and the possibility of a democratic form of government were discussed. The importance of this thesis stemmed from its contribution to an opportunity to expand the elite discussion which is crucial for contemporary deliberations about democracy.



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