

Understanding Democratic Conflicts: The failures of Agonistic Theory

Zunaira Shoukat¹, Jahan Dad Khan², Huma Rao³, Fariha Sabahat⁴

Abstract: The Western societies possess a number of internal contradictions that generate uncertainties about the possibilities of consensual decision-making and social cohesion. Conversely, conflict has been a core element of democracy since time immemorial, but political theory has never focused on the diversity of political dispute, the way it functions or its dynamics. The objective of this research is to deepen our knowledge of democratic strife. This article critically reviews Mouffe's agonistic pluralism, it contrasts it with sociological conflict theory, and gives some initial ideas from which a theory of democratic conflicts should be developed. The work contributes to two areas of research: The paper shows that the agonistic pluralism just does not hold the water because it omits the mechanisms and consequences of conflict dynamics (group cohesion, intra-group conflicts, domination and escalation) and without analyzing all conflict interactions, it does not present a comprehensive theory of conflict. The adherents of agonistic pluralism should draw more attention in expounding the core idea of their theory. (2) This research would therefore consist of multidisciplinary investigation exploring how cognitive ideas interrelate with conflict interactions, employing conflict management techniques and implementing assessing procedural dynamics of conflicts to achieve a comprehensive grasp of democratic conflicts.

Key Words: Democratic conflicts, pluralism, Political theory, Conflict Dynamics, Social Cohesiveness.

Affiliation of authors:

1. Entrepreneur & coordinator at Lodhran Pilot Project LPP,
Email: zunairachaudhary13@gmail.com
2. Executive Distributor at national fertilizer marketing limited, Ministry of industries and production, Pakistan.
Email: J.khan9922@gmail.com
3. PHD Scholar at Department of Social and Cultural Studies. B.Z.U. Multan/Manager Marketing DHA, Multan,
Email: humaao15@gmail.com
4. Lecturer at Emerson University Multan.
Email: fia_saba@hotmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION:

Currently, the Western democracies are plagued by big confrontations that are a cause for concern about increase in division in the society. The latest financial crises triggered the most heated debates concerning migration problems, wealth distribution, environmental policy and women rights issues. Moreover, the pandemic caused numerous issues related to suitable measures, and individual (for example family conflicts) and governmental (e. g. vaccine mandate) levels. Social science is useful in that it plays a role in identifying and exacerbation of conflicts. Furthermore, it can discover the multitude of ways how conflicts are handled in democracy nowadays. Democratic theory has neglected to thoroughly grapple with the specific nature and structures of conflicts, even though conflicts are frequently mentioned as a crucial feature of democracies, except for a couple of studies from the 1990s. Sociological conflict theory contrasts this, with emphasis on disputes in modern societies as early as in the time of Georg Simmel. During that period, the conflict theory status made an appreciable contribution to academic careers, as the biographies of Lewis Coser, Ralf Dahrendorf, and Randall Collins have illustrated. Nevertheless, specific ideas regarding contemporary conflicts diminished shortly thereafter, as noted by Joas and Knöbl: However, a detailed look reveals that from the 1970s no young and progressive sociologists have

continued to advocate for conflict theory as a separate theoretical framework. "(Deitelhoff, N., & Schmelzle, C. (2023).

Moreover, sociological conflict theory is subject to several vulnerabilities. Along with other social changes in the 1970s, deficiencies in particular approaches as well as had an impact on it declining. These transformations were highlighted by the occurrence of the post-industrial economies, lifestyle differentiation, and the advent of new policy issues like environmentalism. Parsons's theory of social systems gradually lost its principal status in social theory and conflict theorists had no one to fight against anymore. Gone by the way side are the foundation of conflict theory epistemology, which was rendered outdated and not relevant in terms of theoretical concepts (like classes) and social progress. This, in turn, has led to a confrontation of the classical theory of modern society and the emergence of modern peaceful and conflict studies. Studies of urban environment, as well as social movement studies have also undergone copious changes because of that. (Cockerham, W. C., & Scambler, G. (2021).

Indeed, since the 1970s there has been a phenomenon in democratic philosophy which is the opposite of the previously held ideas. Together with the appearance of new social movements and the introduction of postmodern theories into our field of vision, "agonistic"

democratic ideologies became more popular by confirming the necessity of conflict. Agonistic democratic theories conflicting with deliberative democratic theories point out that the latter tend to focus on peace and the suppression of conflict. These theories argue that conflict is perpetual and serious, and that a victory in agonistic conflict is beneficial for democratic societies. They were responsible for the creation of new viewpoints in such niche areas as political planning, international politics studies, urban studies, and obviously for contributions to political and social theories. (Welzel, C. (2021).

This research examines the underlying theory of conflict in agonistic theories and evaluates its adequacy for understanding democratic conflicts. In order to accomplish this, the researcher has examined Chantal Mouffe's concept of agonistic pluralism. In the domain of conflict and competition theories, this specific theory exerts the greatest influence on both academia and politics. Fields outside of political theory that deal with agonistic argumentation commonly cite Mouffe's work as a reference. It also had a direct influence on political movements like Podemos. Agonistic pluralism is particularly evident in recognizing conflicts. In contrast to Connolly's or Tully's agonistic approaches, this approach does not demand the critical self-reflection or mutual concession making. Rather than relying upon the existence of conflict, it argues by warning of its danger to develop into the ferocious battles. Hence, we recommend begin with agonistic pluralism as a way of assessing the effects and the realistic design of the existing theories of democratic conflict. (Eckerdal, J. R. (2023).

To be clear, then, the researcher asserts that conflict is the basis of agonistic pluralism but the latter does not lead to a coherent account of conflict. On the other hand, Mouffe does not give a full account of democratic conflicts. A keyword-in-context analysis was performed to identify her notions about the character of conflict. This was done by tracing the way she used the key term "conflict" in her major theoretical works. However, this humanistic redesign discloses that Mouffe's theoretical conflict concept is not in line with the present status of knowledge in sociology. Conflict theory is a vivid example of that the workings of democratic conflicts are much more complex and ambiguous than currently portrayed by agonistic pluralism. Specifically, it does not provide an explanation for the increase in unity among groups that are in conflict; it does not examine the patterns of intensification, standardization, and formation of hierarchies; and it does not fully understand the different ways in which conflicts manifest in democratic societies.

The author provides a significant contribution in two particular areas of research. Initially, the argument captures the idea of war in agonistic pluralism and this, to the best of my knowledge, has not been attempted. It has been a common criticism among scholars that the notion of agonism and antagonism in Mouffe's work is far from

precise, despite the extensive body of literature on agonistic pluralism which occasionally takes this term into consideration. Mouffe's understanding of conflicts and their dynamics is closely examined which discloses the other deficiencies that cast off the analytical and normative authority of agonistic pluralism. Democratic theory of Mouffe builds on conflict but, on the other hand, it does not offer a persuasive explanation of conflict. Advocates of agonistic theories should heavily base on their prime argument. Noteworthy, it has a vital role of unravelling the disagreements concerning the modern democratic systems. This way, we get the first values to consider and make our own understanding of democratic challenges more clear. By juxtaposing agonistic democratic ideas with sociological conflict theory, we can discover certain themes that ultimately build a basis for the future study of cognition, practice, and dynamics of democratic conflicts. Lastly, the paper underscores the significance of a holistic strategy that makes use of social scientific research traditions that traditionally were not integrated and, therefore, aware of each other's contribution in understanding conflicts. (August, V. (2024).

As a result, the article divides into two branches for a closer look at this theme. The reading material also includes a section on Chantal Mouffe's understanding of conflict and that too in detail. There is the case Mouffe's method this fact of the historical determinism is seen so clearly. Yet in the end, it has brought the story of conflict and democracy back to contemporary relevance. Aside from that, it will also incorporate finding out if she now views some specific aspects of conflict transformations differently. Also in section three this article concentrates on the most serious point of view which includes previously mentioned violence theory. Thus, the last part covered a summary of the outcomes and management of the research design taking into account democratization as a key debate. Additionally, I gained some ideas on improvement. **Reconstruction: "Conflict" in Mouffe's agonistic pluralism**

Prior to Mouffe's project of constructing her democratic theory, her perception of conflict was considered against the historical background of the 1970s and a very critical approach to Marxist explanation of social disagreements. The blind spot of Marxism in "the nature of the forces in conflict" is an irreplaceable factor in Hegemony & Socialist Strategy's assessment of theory and politics. Mouffe and Laclau argue against three elements of conflict theory within Marxism. In the beginning, their attitude was that of an outsider to this kind of social unrest, which involved both the very abstract notion of social classes and the concrete example of what was known as the working class. Alongside that, they denounced the Marxist version of history, that stated the proletariat would overcome the unending conflicts and flourish in a harmonious and reconciled society. On the other hand, Mouffe and Laclau believed that conflict cannot be eliminated and they maintained that the specific battles for dominance are dependent on

circumstances: "therefore, there is no absolute or inevitable nature in the different clashes or power". Thus, Mouffe and Laclau rejected the idea of the pre-established main conflict, that is widespread in Marxist narrative. In contrast to them, social conflicts must be made a part of social theory. (Theuns, T. (2021).

This viewpoint is shaped by notable experiences from the 1970s and 1980s, including the emergence of social movements and the discussion surrounding the shortcomings of Marxism in terms of authoritarianism. Mouffe and Laclau emphasized that their main focus is on "the new forms of social conflict" which involve an expansion of social conflict and have the potential to lead to more free, democratic, and equitable societies. As a result, they formulated a comprehensive thesis that explains the existence of many contests for social dominance, along with a more focused argument advocating for a radical form of democracy to fully harness the transformative power of social movements (Morrow, R. A., & Torres, C. A. (2022).

However, these actions were specifically taken in direct reaction to the destructive encounters with 'actual existing socialism' that also plagued many people at the same time. Laclau and Mouffe recognized the presence of an authoritarian inclination within the Marxist concept of a harmonious society as they observed events such as the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian uprisings, the Polish coup d'état, and conflicts in Kabul, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Mouffe is well-versed in the French intellectual discourse, which includes discussions about anti-totalitarianism. Influential works like Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* have sparked intense debates. As a result, many former Marxists have shifted their focus to liberal traditions and have sought to develop a new political stance, often by revisiting the writings of Tocqueville.

As for the past views, the Left should not give up the faith in liberal democracy that existed but should rather develop and extend the liberal democracy on a more radical and even diverse way. Mouffe's agonistic pluralism is the result of the pluralistic rethinking of liberal democracy. Nevertheless, while developing the theory of democracy, she argues that the extinction of Marxism must not be interpreted as an absolute abandonment of the concept of antagonism. Hence, Mouffe's idea is very significant since it keeps Marxist awareness of class conflict at the forefront. Social conflicts which are inevitable under liberal democracy set her theory apart from alternative perspectives such as Habermas' or Rawls' political liberalism. What is the post-Marxist foundational conflict theory underlying Mouffe's theory of democracy? Throughout her monographs, the author explores the concept of "conflict" and identifies three key characteristics: (1) a socio-cultural dimension of conflict, (2) an emotional characteristic of conflict, and (3) its power to mold identity. (Huang, Q. (2021).

Agonistic pluralism is based on the understanding that

disputes are an inherent and unavoidable aspect of any society. It assumes that negativity is a fundamental and unchangeable element that shapes societies. Therefore, Mouffe's social ontology is not based on the possibility of either consent or conflict arising from contingency. On the other hand, she believes that conflicts are an inherent component of every community. This assumption cannot be disproven by potential counterevidence. According to Mouffe, even if rivals stop disagreeing or come to a settlement, it does not mean that antagonism has been completely eliminated. Instead, compromise or consent functions at a distinct level. The consequences mentioned are a result of dominant formations that momentarily conceal the inherent possibility of the social order being challenged. However, conflict is inherent in any dominant social structure (August, V. (2024).

In addition to this socio-ontological assumption, Mouffe describes conflicts based on two additional characteristics: affectivity and identity formation. She posits that disputes arouse emotions, hence bolstering the internal unity of organizations and fostering collective identities. Affectivity and identity construction are mutually dependent characteristics of disputes. Different factions have rival proposals for identification; however, true identification can only be achieved via intense emotion. Simultaneously, this affectivity arises solely when we differentiate between an actual "us" and a hypothetical "them". The Collective identity can only be achieved by distinguishing oneself from an external factor that is essential to its formation. Consensus is contingent upon the presence of disagreement and the act of excluding some viewpoints.

Mouffe's agonistic theory of democracy relies on conflict dynamics to support the normative quality argument and stab liberal democracy. According to Mouffe, modern liberal democracy excels at recognizing and legitimizing disagreement, rather than suppressing it through authoritarian rule. Democratic politics, unlike authoritarian politics, establishes unity and collective identity while balancing conflict and diversity, rather than overcoming the us/them distinction. Liberal democracy suffers when it lacks platforms for voicing and resolving divergent opinions. Mouffe argues that modern political theory has largely neglected the recognition of conflict and, as a result, has not adequately addressed how liberal democracies can effectively handle the "democratic paradox" of balancing unity with pluralism and variety. Agonistic pluralism posits that liberal democracies achieve this transformation by converting "enemies" into "adversaries," so altering their relationship from a hostile battle for survival to a conflict characterized by competition and disagreement. The primary distinction lies in the fact that agonistic partnerships recognize the validity of the opponent due to their mutual commitment to free democracy. The concept of a "conflictual consensus" on the "institutions of liberal democracy" and its "ethico-political values" is central to agonistic democratic theory, as it lies at the core

of liberal democracy itself. The acceptance of the disagreement over the interpretation of liberty and equality is what gives modern liberal democracy its value, as enemies engage in passionate debates (Chambers, S. (2023).

The second argument builds upon this idea by emphasizing the durability of democratic systems. Mouffe's stability argument posits that the longevity of democracies is contingent upon the presence of ongoing conflict that is integrated into democratic institutions. According to Mouffe, a democratic society necessitates a discourse on potential alternatives and the establishment of political mechanisms that foster collective identification based on distinct democratic stances. According to conflict theory, Mouffe emphasizes the important function of conflict in bringing people together. This leads her to advocate for the establishment of mechanisms to manage conflicts in order to maintain stable democracies. On the one hand, The importance of institutionalization lies in the fact that only with such a system can all the opposing interpretations of liberalism be expressed, hence plurality is guarded and the political order cannot be closed down autocratically. In addition to this, conflicts provide a great variety of platforms to zealously identify with democratic aspirations and parties, which results in continuous rejection of the dictatorial political programs by the citizens. Manifestations of hidden conflicts will emerge as forms that are hostile to liberal democracy, which entail mobilization of emoticons and identities of its supporters if there are no "agonistic outlets for the expression of conflicts" within the political order. (Hirvilammi, T. (2020).

Mouffe contends that the absence of agonistic confrontation in liberal democracies is the cause of the growth of terrorism and right-wing populism.

Mouffe's compelling arguments emphasize the normative and empirical importance of disputes within democratic systems. However, numerous scholars have highlighted the fact that Mouffe is widely criticized for her lack of concrete proposals about agonistic institutions. Undoubtedly, the keyword-in-context analysis substantiates this criticism. Mouffe primarily contends that the left/right dichotomy serves as the means by which legitimate conflict is shaped and established within institutions. If this framework is absent or compromised, the conversion of hostility into competition is impeded, which can result in severe repercussions for democracy. Nevertheless, academics have highlighted that the dichotomy between left and right contradicts the objective of diversifying political disputes. Furthermore, it remains uncertain whether type of institutions is most effective in addressing agonistic conflict. Mouffe typically alludes to representative institutions, specifically parliaments and parties, without providing a clear explanation of the specific changes required for these institutions to fully realize their agonistic capacity (Michelsen, D. (2022).

Although the critiques of the agonistic approach are valid and have sparked a discussion regarding agonistic institutions, the following chapter presents a distinct critique. This statement suggests that Mouffe's comprehension of conflict is inadequate compared to the knowledge that social science possesses on the intricacies of democratic conflicts. As a result, the argument in favor of agonistic democracy is diminished and our understanding of disputes inside democracies remains inadequate. Democratic theory, particularly when it emphasizes conflict as a central aspect, must acknowledge the intricate nature of conflict and utilize research findings from various academic fields.

2. SHORTCOMINGS OF THE AGONISTIC THEORY OF CONFLICT

According to Mouffe, who is an agonistic theorist, there is a general theory of conflict at the basis of that theory as seen in the reconstruction. This emphasis goes to three main aspects socially understanding conflict, emotional response and form of identity. In her scrutiny of conflict, Mouffe composed a comprehensive theory of democracy that accentuated the fact that such common and ethical collisions are often typical in liberal democracies. The concept of agonistic pluralism is one that uniquely differentiates it from other modern theories of democracy and places it as the dominant theory for understanding contemporary problems of democracy, such as those occurring under right-wing populism or migration. (August, V. (2024).

While Mouffe's agonistic pluralism makes valid arguments, its credibility is based on the assumptions on the way conflict operates and the processes that usually are neglected and that can lead to contradictions with the analytical and normative outcomes. Now, I would like to argue that agonistic pluralism lacks sufficient attention to the complex nature of conflict processes, which is captured in sociological conflict theory. The main focus of this discipline is to investigate the psychology of identity and feelings which has always been present since Georg Simmel. Mouffe agrees with the sociological conflict theory which says conflicts arouse emotions and give rise to identity of social groupings although she does not express it mostly. However, Mouffe's theory misses on depth when it comes to understanding the complex and diverse nature of conflict dynamics as displayed by the conflict theory. (Aytac, U. (2021).

After that, I set the three most important things that I am going to talk about in the following sections. First, I emphasize that Mouffe does not provide an adequate explanation of how cohesiveness is generated through conflict. Namely, her argument is unfinished, and one possible way to fix it is by using sociological theories. Besides, I prove that her concept of intragroup affectivity and the formation of identity is inadequate as it does not fully acknowledge how affectivity and identity may not only promote cohesion within the group but also contribute towards conflicts, power imbalances and escalations of the conflicts. Finally, I would argue that

agonist pluralism overlooks the plethora and the divergent consequences of conflicts.

3. EXPLAINING ASSOCIATION BY DISSOCIATION

Mouffe's conception of internal unity of competing groups (intragroup cohesion) is based on the fact that she views group identification as an important factor for democratic integration. Nevertheless, agonistic pluralists overlook the role of the type of the conflicts for the intergroup solidarity. That is the point where Mouffe's theoretical concept of democracy is connected with, as it derives from the lack of the real process through which the "conflictual consensus" between enemies is born. Conflictual consensus is very significant for liberal democracy and illustrates Mouffe's idea about the integrative feature of conflict. According to Mouffe, "conflictual consensus" stands for common intergroup solidarity, but on the other hand, she does not say much about how it is created. I suggest that conflict theory is an adequate explanatory model which can be applied to uncover a lot of mechanisms causing conflict-based consensus. (August, V. (2024).

Classical conflict theory emphasized the dynamic interaction between association and dissociation in social disputes. According to Simmel, a conflict can be seen as a distinct type of social interaction, known as "Vergesellschaftung," because it combines both separation and connection. He discovered that antagonism is a vital element of the relationship itself. In simpler terms, engaging in conflict with an adversary creates connections that may not have existed previously. In addition to this fundamental connection, Simmel believed that a complex progression occurs, whereby individuals establish groups and the clashes between these groups result in the formation of larger groups (Ozturk, E. (2022).

However, whereas this process facilitates the creation of extensive social collectives, it also concurrently increases the likelihood of conflict inside these collectives. Modern societies subsequently encounter distinct manifestations of conflict, such as legal conflicts and economic competition. Simmel argues that modern cultures utilize institutions to direct the divisive aspects of conflict into a controlled structure that promotes stability in social relationships. This is achieved by managing emotions and minimizing the individual aspects of conflicts (Partelow, S., & Nelson, K. (2020).

The contribution of Simmel to the field of conflict sociology by analyzing the dynamics of conflict is extremely insightful. As Simmel put it, "conflict unites adversaries", Lewis Coser continued and incorporated this into the functionalist theory. Building on Simmel's ideas, he emphasized that conflict has the potential to enhance social cohesion by facilitating engagement with unfamiliar individuals and fostering understanding of the unfamiliar. This typically leads to the establishment of structured relationships governed by widely accepted

norms. In 1957, Coser proposed an additional perspective that highlights the emergence of hidden unity among opponents, suggesting that conflict might lead to the development of new social ideas and practices. Hence, the modern Western institutional structure's capacity to accommodate freedom of conflict proves advantageous, since it enables the adoption of novel institutional arrangements, social norms, or economic innovations that arise from social conflicts. Although disputes can have catastrophic consequences, they also play a crucial role in facilitating social change and ultimately stabilising the social order.

Another perspective for understanding the development of intergroup cohesion involves examining rituals, role-taking, and symbolic absorption. Niklas Luhmann tried to combine elements of symbolic interactionism and cognitive psychology into his system theory. He contended that methods aimed at resolving conflicts, such as trials or elections, generally fail to establish genuine consensus or communal peace. Instead, they engage participants and viewers in ceremonial activities that include assuming roles and using symbolic representation to reshape cognitive expectations and behavior in a manner that garners widespread approval. Therefore, disagreements have the potential to foster unity in the social aspect, even if they do not result in agreement in terms of factual information (Whitehouse, H. (2024).

Processual arguments, like Luhmann's, contend that emotions and cognitive expectations are activated and reestablished during conflict exchanges. Other theorists have also presented such arguments. Richard Sennett advocated for a perspective on community that emphasizes the importance of ongoing processes. Contrary to communitarian notions of communities, Sennett posits that conflicts can engender a feeling of shared purpose, even in the absence of resolution or shared identity among the conflicting parties. Expanding upon the theories of Simmel and Coser, the author posits that individual engaged in conflict develop a deeper understanding of their adversaries' perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors. If this endeavor proves to be effective, disputes serve to establish a connection among individuals who possess divergent or opposing interests, harbor negative sentiments towards one other, or simply lack comprehension of one another. This is the ultimate challenge in conflict management. Instead of developing a detailed formal model of how conflicts evolve, Sennett's (2013) research on cooperation aimed to examine past methods of conflict resolution that could promote intergroup unity (Guy, J. S. (2020).

I mean that sociological conflict theories are not 100% correct and agonistic pluralism should not accept them without extremely careful consideration of all possible consequences. In my opinion, Mouffe overlooks the combined effects of opposing demarcation lines, which should be taken into account when seeking to cultivate a robust 'contentious consensus. "Mouffe says that

'conflictual consensus' expresses the fact that association and dissociation are always present at the same time. "However, she also makes a clear distinction between two contrasting approaches to politics: an associative method and a dissociative method. The "associative view" has ideas of freedom and cooperation in its core, but the dissociative view interprets politics as a field of struggle and conflicts. Furthermore, Mouffe does not make the connection of conflict with isolation the assumed one. She argues that the contestants on either side will consider themselves to be belonging to the same political body and that they will share a common symbolic environment where the contest will be held. (Capizzo, L. (2022).

The quotation demonstrates a clear connection between association and dissociation, not only in conflict theory but also in agonistic pluralism. Although agonistic pluralism may align with some of the aforementioned ideas, Mouffe has not yet clarified the process by which intergroup cohesiveness arises. The assumption of democratic cohesiveness and consensus extending beyond a single group is made, but not elaborated upon. Tambakaki (2011: 580) contended that according to Mouffe's interpretation, a "common practice" establishes and reinforces a democratic "way of living" that transcends differences. This line of reasoning is already approaching processual techniques. The text demonstrates possible points of overlap, but also emphasizes that conflict theory presently provides a superior and more comprehensive explanation of this widespread phenomenon and its consequences.

Conflict theory offers various compelling ideas regarding how conflicts intertwine the affiliation and dissociation of groups. This text provides theoretical frameworks to elucidate Mouffe's argument and validate the concept of "conflictual consensus," which explains the emergence of intergroup alliances through conflict dynamics. However, it also poses a challenge to agonistic theory by highlighting the fact that confrontations often bring opponents together by absorbing, consuming, and depleting their "antagonistic" energy. Conflicts facilitate integration through both liberation and depletion. By including these viewpoints and addressing the questions that emerge from them, we can significantly improve our comprehension of democratic disputes.

4. THE AMBIVALENCE OF CONFLICT DYNAMICS

The first criticism asserts that Mouffe's account of conflictual consensus is flawed because he does not offer any explanation of how inter-group cooperation develops from a conflict environment. To put it differently, she fails to expound on the details of the aspects that lead to the unity of the adversaries. Although Mouffe's analysis of conflict dynamics is very significant, it is not well developed enough. Moreover, Mouffe's description of how the conflicting moment has positive and negative results is also not satisfactory. Actually, she admits the intrinsic uncertainty of conflicts.

The idea of agonistic pluralism, which I have expounded in my analysis, is comprised of two crucial features that lie at the heart of the phenomenon. Based on Schmitt's intensity model, Mouffe sees that any fight in itself has the potential of becoming a "war between enemies" where the liberal democracy is in danger. Nevertheless, as Mouffe notes from post-structuralism, identity formation can take place only through the act of excluding others. The prospect or fact of exclusion is generating new conflicts, and these even possible if the excluded individuals or groups establish a new hegemony, which is an inevitable process of formation a new collective identity. (Nagaiya, R. (2021).

Therefore, Mouffe's recognition of the ambivalence of conflict dynamics is limited to these reasons and does not extend farther. She does not offer detailed explanations of how the processes of intragroup bonding, which are appreciated by Mouffe, can also intensify disputes to a level that is not supported by agonistic pluralism. Furthermore, she fails to address the specific mechanisms by which the interplay of emotions and the process of individuals identifying with a group lead to the development of internal conflicts, followed by the establishment of hierarchies, centralization, and an ongoing pursuit of internal adversaries. The theory's capacity to analyze democratic conflicts is diminished by the lack of attention given to these mechanisms, and it avoids addressing important normative problems (August, V. (2024).

Conflict theories emphasize that the mechanisms that promote unity within a group also tend to suppress internal problems and intensify conflicts with other groups. Simmel (1904a, 1904b) posited that the formation of groups leads to an escalation in internal disputes, primarily because of (a) the growth in diversity within the group and (b) the group's pursuit of a shared identity. Consequently, the likelihood of in-group conflict significantly increases when different groups unite to establish new coalitions. During times of crisis, parties or alliances frequently rely on enhancing their internal unity.

Mouffe (1993: 70, 2009: 53–55) also argues that hegemonic efforts must create a unifying and emotionally resonant identity in order to acquire influence in conflicts and harness the integrative potential of these conflicts. Enhancing internal unity, such as through the establishment of a cohesive identity, would need the implementation of techniques to manage or suppress internal conflicts.

According to numerous conflict theories, organizations engaged in conflict often exhibit a tendency to display intolerance and even hatred towards differing viewpoints within their own society. They frequently establish clear hierarchical systems and utilize active methods of standardization. Moreover, the processes of strengthening unity within a group and promoting antagonism between different groups mutually reinforce each other, resulting in a harmful cycle. Conflict leads to

the centralization and homogenization of the in-group, causing less committed, neutral, and deviant members of the community to be expelled, resulting in increased antipathy towards the adversary. The act of increasing hostility and employing certain strategies often leads to a heightened sense of unity and animosity within the opposing party. This, in turn, intensifies and solidifies the conflict, creating a cycle of escalation. Within such a circle, the magnitude and scope of a disagreement escalate, leading to a heightened willingness to accept accusations and employ more aggressive strategies.

These inclinations have caused several academics, like Richard Sennett, to publicly reject communal unity. From his viewpoint, considering politics through the lens of united communities with homogeneous identities and moral norms is potentially perilous. Within these societies, the author contends that autocratic systems are more probable, and group members themselves will enforce social control to establish uniformity, such as by the exclusion, suppression, or even elimination of dissenters. By invoking the Jacobin tradition, he reminded his readers that this particular interpretation of fraternity ultimately results in the killing of one's own brethren (Smith, R. D. (2021).

The main reason that agonistic pluralism falls short of resolving these concerns is that it neither discusses the moral issues that arise from these mechanisms and processes nor offers an understanding of how they develop. For example, in terms of agonistic democratic theory https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_blind_men_and_the_elephant, which point raises the question on how far can processes of homogenization, dominance and exclusion go before they become unbearable. This brings to question of what shields a movement operating politically against authoritarian structures? Furthermore, how can or may global conservative democracies shield themselves from the forces of escalation both among as well as between conflict factions maintaining at the same time powerful agonistic conflicts?

This is astounding the non-chalance and definition lessness Mouffe shows rather. This very same argument has been frequently debated against Marxism in the 1970s and 1980s, thus catching our attention amidst early theory writing by Mouffe. "It criticizes the Marx by parties and organizations for their homogenization and dominance tactics. "Other political scholars equally show the possibility of left populist movements sliding into authoritarianism. Consequently, it should change Mouffe's postulate, that the Left form of populism. Furthermore, her theory is very broad making her practical ideas useless, as well, because she doesn't give some more specific answers to these challenges. (Peet, R., & Thrift, N. (2023).

My criticism, thus, has two aspects. From an analytical perspective, it is advantageous to offer a more thorough explanation of conflict dynamics when democratic philosophy prioritizes conflict. In order to comprehend contemporary problems in democratic disputes like

polarization, it is imperative to rely on comprehensive and detailed explanations. While agonistic pluralism did precede and exist before Mouffe's ongoing research, it is the conflict theory that goes beyond agonistic pluralism in its development, which brings us to the study of conflict mechanisms, processes, and possible counter-mechanisms. This approach, however, raises issues of normative democratic theory, especially if the recommendatory theory of democracy is based on the uniting ability of conflict. I would like to add that these questions cannot be easily answered. On the other hand, the conflict theory also overlooks factors affecting the extent and/or intensity of centralization and/or homogenization. This comprise the mediators which in turn help shape the frequency, form and strength of processes being described. This lack of in-depth analysis of conflict dynamic in democratic theory, in turn, undermines its credibility and logical soundness. However, take note that the productivity argument is not refuted by the ambiguity of conflict dynamics. Despite this, the productivity argument is maintained by the majority of conflict theories. Mouffe's democratic theory is quite helpful in reminding us that disagreements are an inevitable and maybe beneficial aspect of democracy, contributing to its stability and excellence. Thus, democratic theories that exclusively take into account harmony, solidarity, or consensus will not adequately capture democratic reality. While agonistic pluralism acknowledges the possible dangers of democratic disputes in general, it does not go into sufficient detail to address them analytically or normatively. Democratic theory's job is to explain the contradictions and variety of conflict trajectories while also dissecting the circumstances of conflict production.

5. THE VARIETIES OF CONFLICT

The agonistic theory differentiates between two forms of conflict: antagonism and agonism. Agonism can be defined as a gradation between the conflict without the degree of antagonism. Unlike adversarial conflicts that are beneficial for democracy, we must have settings that will help us control real wars by creating measures of dispute resolution. While the specificity is considered a cornerstone of her theory, it, however, has met opposition. Putting aside its intellectual prejudice toward Schmitt, which is problematic to many scholars, the systematization of her distinction based on these three significant systematic defects is worth looking into. (Kühn, M. (2021).

Firstly, Mouffe fails to clarify the distinction between agonism and antagonism. Mouffe does not make any effort to clarify the boundary between the two kinds of conflict. Therefore, it is impossible to determine the activities or the degree of intensity that can be considered as valid agonistic conflict. Similarly, it is unclear what falls below this threshold and does not qualify as agonistic conflict, or what surpasses it and qualifies as antagonism. Therefore, a second dilemma arises regarding the authority responsible for determining the

boundary between acceptable agonistic fights and unacceptable antagonistic confrontations. This is significant both in theory and in political implementation, as governments and activists may have divergent reactions. Furthermore, some scholars have expressed criticism towards Mouffe for her failure to provide a detailed explanation of the process by which antagonism is transformed into agonistic confrontations.

If the existing critiques already indicate a systematic issue with the differentiation between agonism and antagonism, it is important to note that there is another significant feature that has not been addressed in the literature: Mouffe possesses extensive knowledge of various conflict modes. However, her conflict theory lacks the ability to recognize and evaluate these modes in relation to the norm of agonistic conflicts. This is due to a lack of understanding regarding the thresholds that define agonistic conflicts (August, V. (2024).

Examining the conflict key in Mouffe's monographs demonstrates her utilization of distinct terminology to indicate various forms of conflict. The phrase "struggle" is the most frequently used, but other terms include "confrontation," "negotiation," or "competition." Mouffe frequently assigns emotions to these forms of conflict, so offering evaluative judgements. Although "struggle" and "confrontation" typically evoke positive emotions, "competition," "dialogue," and "deliberation" are generally associated with negative sentiments. The perception of "negotiation" varies, since it can be viewed positively or negatively depending on the. The rationale for dismissing some forms of conflict often boils down to the assertion that these types of interactions lack a hostile component and do not constitute a genuine confrontation. The issue with this argument is twofold (Lottholz, P. (2022).

(1) Mouffe's work lacks criteria that may be used to assess, even in a general sense, if and why a particular interaction can be classified as agonistic conflict. Even Mouffe herself lacks consistency. At one point, she declines some methods of conflict. Negotiations are sometimes dismissed as being insignificant, lacking any hostile element, while also being recognized as a crucial aspect of liberal democracies. In reality, liberal democratic politics involves the ongoing practice of negotiating and renegotiating. The prevailing research has drawn attention to this type of ambivalence, specifically in relation to Mouffe's utilization of "agonistic conflict." Menga has compiled several enlightening passages that demonstrate Mouffe's employment of several iterations of agonistic conflicts. "Harder," refers to a more confrontational and critical stance taken when criticizing other ways for their lack of consideration for conflict. Conversely, "milder" describes a less confrontational and more moderate approach while describing her own method (Aytac, U. (2021).

Therefore, the assignment of the label "agonist conflict" is done without any specific criteria or justification.

Ultimately, it is Mouffe who has the authority to determine which individuals or entities are bestowed with the esteemed designation. As the term "agonistic conflict" lacks a clear meaning, Mouffe might deliberately employ this name to criticize other theories for their alleged incapacity to truly recognize conflict. Although it is evident in rational-liberal theories (such as those proposed by Habermas and Rawls) and globalization theories (like those of Beck and Giddens), Mouffe also extends this accusation to poststructuralists and, notably, other political theories that prioritize conflict, including Hannah Arendt, Bonnie Honig, and William Connolly. However, the argument for agonistic pluralism proposed by Mouffe loses much of its strength due to the absence of a defined threshold for determining what constitutes agonistic conflict. This lack of clarity undermines the argument's effectiveness.

(2) The omission of evaluation criteria also leads to the exclusion of empirical forms of conflict from agonistic democratic theory. Agonistic pluralism does not see conflict interactions like competitions, negotiations, or legal disputes as "real" conflicts. In contrast, conflict theories do view these interactions as conflicts, with some especially emphasizing the idea of antagonism.

Mouffe does not effectively address or consider this history and its valuable understanding of the diverse conflicts that are institutionalized. It may be argued that she is more focused on other matters rather than on understanding the various types of conflict in contemporary civilizations. Instead, her main objective is to challenge any notion of Eliminating hostile conflicts in democratic societies. By utilizing Carl Schmitt's intensity model of politics, she emphasizes that any conflict, regardless of its cause, has the potential to escalate into an aggressive clash. Nevertheless,

Mouffe's categorization of certain conflicts as "real" conflicts, while disregarding other equally prevalent and transformative conflicts in modern democracies, lacks an explanation for the criteria used to make such distinctions (Walters, D. E. (2022).

Similarly, a theory of democracy (agonistic or not) should be capable to cover two roots of the modes of conflict in contemporary democracy at. In point of fact, the various schools of conflicts oscillate feelings and entangle with emotions. That is very important because groups can vary in how much they use these strategies from one generation to the next. In the line of work of social psychology and communication science there are research on the ways the conflict is perceived as a game, fight, negotiation or a debate is not the point that count. —on one hand, they can result in complete rupture of negotiations; on the other hand, they may bring about further fragmentation of the conflicting parties. They do not only determine the result and the content of the conflict but also lay down the essential character of exactly what democracy for various actors and viewers.

In picking up on divergent data on democratic conflicts and their political implications, one contributes to the

clarity of the understanding and the debate concerning democratic conflicts and polarization in general. Such as: now, the conflict depictions may have a role in directing emotions, polarized or not, in a way that does not involve the participant. Apart from the social scientists, a concept of polarization is also presented, of course, a division of the world into the "winners" and "losers" or the "cosmopolitans" and "communitarians" is made. Scientists are supposed to think well over the ways to decrease negative effects of their studies and narratives. Secondly, considering that the politics of democracy may be based on the mixture of some conflicts like having venues for both combat- and dialogue-focused conflicts (for example, parliamentary committees and citizens' assemblies) may be important.

The mix of conflict modes may be an empirical problem (are all democracies open for a variety of conflict mode?), yet it could also emphasize the stability concept (democracies must be open for several conflict modes to survive) or form the normative theory (democracies are better with a range of conflicts that encourages citizens to exercise freedom or equalizes citizens participation in the process).

So, the range and the amalgam of conflict types justify Mouffe's primary thesis. It gives focus on its promise, but does not provide the details that may be important. The issue in Mouffe's conception of agonistic pluralism is that it recognizes only one type of conflict as the "real" one and rejects the analysis of the effects of different approaches to conflict on the stability and quality of democracies. Nevertheless, deciding what is a "real" disputation cannot be found which makes it almost impossible to give such things as boundaries, establishments, or procedures. Moreover, if she had missed the variety of problems, she obviously did not give any explanations or didn't see the difference herself. Although it does make her conflict theory, at least as presently formulated, lacking from both an internal and an external perspective.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, western countries have grown more divided, indicating the importance of focusing on the core factors involved: polarization, social cohesion, and stability of democracies as a whole. Agonistic ideas denote the importance of disputes in liberalism, which agonistic liberalism emphasizes. Chantal Mouffe's concept of agonistic democracy is gaining the attention of the society by the virtue of the value of political conflicts as the basis of democracy for the society. This paper does a critical analysis of Mouffe's 'core theory of conflict' and evaluates its strengths as well as its level of relevance to a sociological tradition of conflict theory. Being guided by this study, I indicated points that may help us to further develop democratic issues.

To be brief, I argued that the agonistic democratic theory had some reasonable grounds for a rational view of the mostly constructive conflict in the democratic systems.

Nevertheless, the author wouldn't do anything to clarify the democratic problems at all.

Mouffe doesn't present the complete picture of democratic disputes. As a result, in her view, conflict is the main obstacle to Democracy but she gives no clear definition of the conflict. However, this might probably serve as a driving force for her theory of conflict. Accordingly, she does not understand the theory of conflict from the point of view which is quite different from that of sociological position. This research encompasses the different relationships and the distinction of the disputes that arise in the democratic systems. As a result, these two ideas are as valuable to the descriptive and normative aspects of agonistic pluralism as each other. The consequences of these results are very important for the further agonistic theory studies and for widening understanding of democratic conflicts in the general context. The proponents of the agonistic theorists who want to substantiate their claims that the central role of conflict in keeping stability can do it.

For improving the democracy, we have to develop the basic theory of conflict. This also involves the restoration and the forming of the place. To begin with, one should define and contrast the conflict theories of other agonistic democratic thinkers, such as James Tully and William Connolly. Proponents of these conflict resolution models should employ social psychology findings and insights from sociological conflict theory to come up with an integrated theoretical explanation of conflicts as an integral part of their democratic theory.

On the other hand, the conflict between agonistic pluralism and sociological conflict theory can result in the competition and struggle only in the non democratic society.

1. A multifaceted approach is essential in order to make researchers get ahead with democratic conflict. We can definitely cover a long distance through the inclusion of the conflict sociology, social psychology, political theory, and communication. Because the humanities areas, especially the ones which deal with the history and the history of ideas. These disciplines which are the democratic conflict science and conflict management history background are separately from one another.

4. Besides the concepts and practices of conflicts, the processes and mechanisms of conflicts are influenced by the elements of time and timing of events. There are those conflict theories in sociology which emphasize the dynamics and the outcomes of conflict as it is developing. Particular outcomes and the contribution of timing to the conflict. Moreover, a series of conflicts have implications for the development of path dependency as observed in social psychology. Consequently, understanding the character of conflict requires an approach that is process oriented.

The research should be carried out in detail and systematically. This method fits into the growing acceptance of the processual approaches in political

science and sociology field, such as process tracing, social mechanisms, and processual sociology. It adds the unique perspective of the narrator.

Finally we can develop democratic conflict theory by employing interdisciplinary research on cognitive notions with the specified starting points. Intertwined social traditions and dynamic conflict. Through the combination of well-known democratic theory with these novel concepts, analysis and assessment of current conflicts can be enhanced.

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