The Elite Connection: Problems and Potential of Western Democracy

Amitai Etzioni


**DESCRIPTION**

Designed as a textbook for courses in political theory, political sociology and comparative politics, and as a contribution in its own right, this book explores the role of elite relations as a key to understanding democracy.

Following a critical review of the literature on classes, democracy and elites, the author argues that although Western democracy is not `governed by the people' and has not created equality, it is unique in that (more than any other regime) it has generated a relative separation of power holders, or a relative autonomy of elites and sub-elites in the control of resources. Developing this argument the author discloses strengths and weaknesses in democracy's infrastructure.

*The Elite Connection* contains a warning that a major danger to democracy stems from the tendency of elites to make incursions into the autonomy of other elites, and to develop excessively close dependency relations, either in subjugation of them, or in collusion with them, which result in threats to civil liberties and to the very foundations of democracy. It argues, however, that democracy has the built-in potential to counter its own subversions. Although it focuses on elites, the book has an egalitarian perspective: it concludes with the argument that the separation of elites makes possible struggles for greater equality. The still relatively independent elites of social movements have the potential of pushing democracy towards greater participation and equality.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eva Etzioni-Halevy is the author of several previous books including *Bureaucracy and Democracy* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, revised edition, 1985); *The Knowledge Elite and the Failure of Prophecy* (George Allen & Unwin, 1985); and *Fragile Democracy* (Transaction Publishers, 1989).

FEATURES

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