



The Theory of Social Democracy

Thomas Meyer

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The ascendancy of neo-liberalism in different parts of the world has put social democracy on the defensive. Its adherents lack a clear rationale for their policies. Yet a justification for social democracy is implicit in the United Nations Covenants on Human Rights, ratified by most of the worlds countries. The covenants commit all nations to guarantee that their citizens shall enjoy the traditional formal rights; but they likewise pledge governments to make those rights meaningful in the real world by providing social security and cultural recognition to every person.

This new book provides a systematic defence of social democracy for our contemporary global age. The authors argue that the claims to legitimation implicit in democratic theory can be honored only by social democracy; libertarian democracies are defective in failing to protect their citizens adequately against social, economic, and environmental risks that only collective action can obviate. Ultimately, social democracy provides both a fairer and more stable social order.

But can social democracy survive in a world characterized by pervasive processes of globalization? This book asserts that globalization need not undermine social democracy if it is harnessed by international associations and leavened by principles of cultural respect, toleration, and enlightenment. The structures of social democracy must, in short, be adapted to the exigencies of globalization, as has already occurred in countries with the most successful social-democratic practices.

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