



# The State of Democratic Theory

*Ian Shapiro*

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## **The State of Democratic Theory** Ian Shapiro

What should we expect from democracy, and how likely is it that democracies will live up to those expectations? In *The State of Democratic Theory*, Ian Shapiro offers a critical assessment of contemporary answers to these questions, lays out his distinctive alternative, and explores its implications for policy and political action.

Some accounts of democracy's purposes focus on aggregating preferences; others deal with collective deliberation in search of the common good. Shapiro reveals the shortcomings of both, arguing instead that democracy should be geared toward minimizing domination throughout society. He contends that Joseph Schumpeter's classic defense of competitive democracy is a useful starting point for achieving this purpose, but that it stands in need of radical supplementation--both with respect to its operation in national political institutions and in its extension to other forms of collective association. Shapiro's unusually wide-ranging discussion also deals with the conditions that make democracy's survival more and less likely, with the challenges presented by ethnic differences and claims for group rights, and with the relations between democracy and the distribution of income and wealth.

Ranging over politics, philosophy, constitutional law, economics, sociology, and psychology, this book is written in Shapiro's characteristic lucid style--a style that engages practitioners within the field while also opening up the debate to newcomers.

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