

What is Democracy?

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| 1. Voting
(Universal Suffrage) and
ability to run for
office | 2. Free
and fair
elections | 3. System
of checks
and
balances |
|---|----------------------------------|---|

Increased Democratisation after 1945

Almost all wealthy, industrialised countries adopted Democracy

As well as most of the poor Asian, Eastern European, African and Latin American countries

Less Democratic breakdown compared to 1920/30s, Greece, Chile, Pakistan

Liberal Rights and Democracy

Must Democracy be Liberal? Individual freedom and human rights

Liberal Democracy - Is it Democratic? How Liberal is it? How stable is it?

The Backslide of Democracy

Freedom House's Freedom In The World 2018

US withdrawal from the protection of global democracy

Pointing to events such as the fall of Robert Mugabe's democratically elected regime in Zimbabwe

Rise of authoritarian influence of China and Russian aggression challenging Democratic powers

Challenges to Democracy

It has not all been smooth sailing - challenges to transition successfully from regimes

Early 2000s Orange revolution in Ukraine, where elections were shown to be rigged, massive protests and the eventual violent riots after the next regime change

Rise of Populist, Authoritarian leaders such as Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil

Challenges to Democracy (cont)

Specifically right-wing populism which tends to challenge Liberalism with elements of xenophobia and racism which directly contradict the liberal rights of the individual

Unsustainable debt-financed democracy leads to high social costs for minority groups, more spending on debt than social infrastructure for those who need it. eroding trust in the system

2019 UN report COVID-19 and the Looming Debt Crisis, showed that 1 in 8 countries spend more on debt than social infrastructure like healthcare and education

What Democracy has come to mean

Original Greek interpretation of direct male political suffrage, and further developed by thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau (directly led to French Revolution)

French Revolution, democratic despotism of Napoleon when the people favoured authoritarian leaders

Propaganda, rule of law, violence, counter to freedom of speech

Reflecting the tendency of illiberal democracy, liberalism originally meant to contain democracy by making sure only the politically educated citizenry should have participation, public rights and institutions, freedom

Prosperity does not equal freedom, Thomas Mann said we should not teach the classical definition of Democracy

Liberalism

Adam Smith classical economic liberalism

State should only enforce the economic side, while protecting values and institutions

Free, fair, contested elections

Liberalism (cont)

Separation of powers and branches of government

Market economy, rule of law

Protection of human rights and freedoms

Limits on the authority of government through constitution

Illiberal Democracies

Fareed Zakaria in 1997, where governments are democratically elected but proceed to violate the rule of law, freedom of speech and basic rights and liberties

Nominal democracy on the rise, only surface level democratic standards, eg North Korea, Russia, Cuba,

Allows them to hold onto power eg Russia where political opponents and dissidents are openly persecuted

Specific form of Populism that adheres to the heteronormative and protects the majority and the elite

Possesses democratic principles on the surface, some might even have democratic institutions, but freedom, rule of law, rights and liberties become secondary or unimportant

More of a threat to representative vs nominal democracy

Eg of Viktor Orban, Hungarian president

Tension between democracy and freedom, Liberalism as an ideology allows minorities to challenge/interfere in the running of the country, they are not needed

Allowing market liberalism to provide welfare for minorities but ok for majority working class, don't need migrants

Democracy as Participation

Rousseau underscored the idea that a good political system allows its citizens the freedom to participate in political life (social contract, political will)

People were free only when they were actually voting to choose their leaders or actively discussing proposed legislative changes

Dahl (1989) defends participatory democracy (Polyarchy and necessary institutions)

To replicate in the modern world the virtues of the political system invented in Athens in classical times where the assembly of all full citizens were encouraged to attend, participate and vote (come together in a republic and discuss)

Participation is good for both the individual and society, thus we should seek it out

To choose the rules and people that govern us, expression of human desire and need for civic equality

French revolution as a clear and extreme example of participation and equality

Fukuyama (1992) and Hegel argue that the radical ideas of the French revolution secularised the need for political equality

A need for some formal way to enshrine and institutionalise the concept of equality of the people's will, which does not belong exclusively to religion, as civic equality meant everyone possessed the understanding and desire to congregate and debate issues for the common good

Dahl

In Dahl's 1961 *Who Governs*, he analysed the political system of his community, New Haven, he construed it as a reflection of the US, 2 strong parties with a long history and a similar historic progression from the aristocracy to party rule with people of varying economic and ethnic backgrounds

A variety of leaders in different fields, social, political, economic, with goals that did not overlap

The economic difference prevented equal political participation from all citizens, and led to a questioning of whether any government could be fully democratic, along participatory demo lines, but he still believed it was important to have free market as opposed to full govt control

in 1989 *Democracy and its Critics*, he noted how fully participatory democracy was only possible in a small community such as Athens, and even then women and slaves could not vote

Political thinkers came to accept that representation was the only way to sustain democracy in a larger country (elections)

Though Dahl appreciated the rise of many democracies in the latter half of the 20th century, from Eastern Europe to South America, he doubted whether any country could meet all of democracy's goals, nonetheless he was impressed that the vision of equal political governance between people

In 1971 *Polyarchy*, he described the 'ideal' democracy in the form of necessary institutions, where political power was held by different social organisations and civil groups that were able to work independently

Dahl (cont)

Universal suffrage and the right to run for public office • Free and fairly conducted elections for all adults • Availability and observance of the right to free speech and protection to exercise it • The existence of and free access to alternative information (not controlled by government) • The undisputed right to form and to join relatively autonomous organizations—in particular, political parties (and, crucially, parties in opposition) • Responsiveness of government (and parties) to voters • Accountability of government (and parties) to election outcomes and government.

