Democracy

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Democracy (Greek: δημοκρατία, *Dēmokratía* literally "rule of the commoners"), in modern usage, is a system of government in which the citizens exercise power directly or elect representatives from among themselves to form a governing body, such as a parliament.[1] Democracy is sometimes referred to as "rule of the majority".[2] Democracy was originally conceived in Classical Greece, where political representatives were chosen by a jury from amongst the male citizens: rich and poor.

A woman casts her vote in the second round of the 2007 French presidential election

According to political scientist Larry Diamond, democracy consists of four key elements: (a) A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; (b) The active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; (c) Protection of the human rights of all citizens, and (d) A rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.[3]

In the 5th century BC, to denote the political systems then existing in Greek city-states, notably Athens, the term is an antonym to aristocracy (ἀριστοκρατία, *aristokratía*), meaning "rule of an elite". While theoretically these definitions are in opposition, in practice the distinction has been blurred historically.[4] The political system of Classical Athens, for example, granted democratic citizenship to free men and excluded slaves and women from political participation. In virtually all democratic governments throughout ancient and modern history, democratic citizenship consisted of an elite class until full enfranchisement was won for all adult citizens in most modern democracies through the suffrage movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. The English word dates to the 16th century, from the older Middle French and Middle Latin equivalents.

Democracy contrasts with forms of government where power is either held by an individual, as in an absolute monarchy, or where power is held by a small number of individuals, as in an oligarchy. Nevertheless, these oppositions, inherited from Greek philosophy,[5] are now ambiguous because contemporary governments have mixed democratic, oligarchic, and monarchic elements. Karl Popper defined democracy in contrast to dictatorship or tyranny, thus focusing on opportunities for the people to control their leaders and to oust them without the need for a revolution.[6]

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Characteristics

No consensus exists on how to define democracy, but legal equality, political freedom and rule of law have been identified as important characteristics.[7][8] These principles are reflected in all eligible citizens being equal before the law and having equal access to legislative processes. For example, in a representative democracy, every vote has equal weight, no unreasonable restrictions can apply to anyone seeking to become a representative, and the freedom of its eligible citizens is secured by legitimised rights and liberties which are typically protected by a constitution.[9][10] Other uses of "democracy" include that of direct democracy.

One theory holds that democracy requires three fundamental principles: (1) upward control, i.e. sovereignty residing at the lowest levels of authority, (2) political equality, and (3) social norms by which individuals and institutions only consider acceptable acts that reflect the first two principles of upward control and political equality.[11]

The term "democracy" is sometimes used as shorthand for liberal democracy, which is a variant of representative democracy that may include elements such as political pluralism; equality before the law; the right to petition elected officials for redress of grievances; due process; civil liberties; human rights; and elements of civil society outside the government. Roger Scruton argues that democracy alone cannot provide personal and political freedom unless the institutions of civil society are also present.[12]

In some countries, notably in the United Kingdom which originated the Westminster system, the dominant principle is that of parliamentary sovereignty, while maintaining judicial independence.[13][14] In the United States, separation of powers is often cited as a central attribute. In India, parliamentary sovereignty is subject to the Constitution of India which includes judicial review.[15] Though the term "democracy" is typically used in the context of a political state, the principles also are applicable to private organisations.

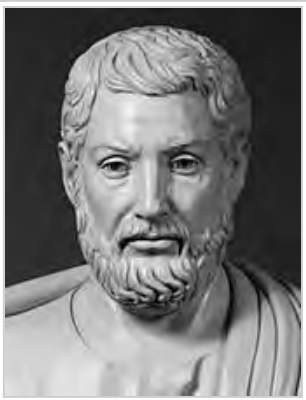
Majority rule is often listed as a characteristic of democracy. Hence, democracy allows for political minorities to be oppressed by the "tyranny of the majority" in the absence of legal protections of individual or group rights. An essential part of an "ideal" representative democracy is competitive elections that are substantively and procedurally "fair," i.e., just and equitable. In some countries, freedom of political expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press are considered important to ensure that voters are well informed enabling them to vote according to their own interests.[16][17]

It has also been suggested that a basic feature of democracy is the capacity of all voters to participate freely and fully in the life of their society.[18] With its emphasis on notions of social contract and the collective will of all the voters, democracy can also be characterised as a form of political collectivism because it is defined as a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in lawmaking.[19]

While representative democracy is sometimes equated with the republican form of government, the term "republic" classically has encompassed both democracies and aristocracies.[20][21] Many democracies are constitutional monarchies, such as the United Kingdom.

History

Ancient origins



Cleisthenes, "father of Athenian democracy", modern bust

The term "democracy" first appeared in ancient Greek political and philosophical thought in the city-state of Athens during classical antiquity.[22][23] The word comes from *demos*, "common people" and *kratos*, strength.[24] Led by Cleisthenes, Athenians established what is generally held as the first democracy in 508–507 BC. Cleisthenes is referred to as "the father of Athenian democracy."[25]

Athenian democracy took the form of a direct democracy, and it had two distinguishing features: the random selection of ordinary citizens to fill the few existing government administrative and judicial offices,[26] and a legislative assembly consisting of all Athenian citizens.[27] All eligible citizens were allowed to speak and vote in the assembly, which set the laws of the city state. However, Athenian citizenship excluded women, slaves, foreigners (μέτοικοι / *métoikoi*), non-landowners, and males under 20 years old.

Of the estimated 200,000 to 400,000 inhabitants of Athens, there were between 30,000 and 60,000 citizens. The exclusion of large parts of the population from the citizen body is closely related to the ancient understanding of citizenship. In most of antiquity the benefit of citizenship was tied to the obligation to fight war campaigns.[28]

Athenian democracy was not only *direct* in the sense that decisions were made by the assembled people, but also the *most direct* in the sense that the people through the assembly, boule and courts of law controlled the entire political process and a large proportion of citizens were involved constantly in the public business.[29] Even though the rights of the individual were not secured by the Athenian constitution in the modern sense (the ancient Greeks had no word for "rights"[30]), the Athenians enjoyed their liberties not in opposition to the government but by living in a city that was not subject to another power and by not being subjects themselves to the rule of another person.[31]

Range voting appeared in Sparta as early as 700 BC. The Apella was an assembly of the people, held once a month, in which every male citizen of age 30 and above could participate. In the Apella, Spartans elected leaders and cast votes by range voting and shouting. Aristotle called this "childish", as compared with the stone voting ballots used by the Athenians. Sparta adopted it because of its simplicity, and to prevent any bias voting, buying, or cheating that was predominant in the early democratic elections.[32][33]

Even though the Roman Republic contributed significantly to many aspects of democracy, only a minority of Romans were citizens with votes in elections for representatives. The votes of the powerful were given more weight through a system of gerrymandering, so most high officials, including members of the Senate, came from a few wealthy and noble families.[34] In addition, the Roman Republic was the first government in the western world to have a Republic as a nation-state, although it didn't have much of a democracy. The Romans invented the concept of classics and many works from Ancient Greece were preserved.[35] Additionally, the Roman model of governance inspired many political thinkers over the centuries,[36] and today's modern representative democracies imitate more the Roman than the Greek models because it was a state in which supreme power was held by the people and their elected representatives, and which had an elected or nominated leader.[37] Other cultures, such as the Iroquois Nation in the Americas between around 1450 and 1600 AD also developed a form of democratic society before they came in contact with the Europeans. This indicates that forms of democracy may have been invented in other societies around the world.

Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, there were various systems involving elections or assemblies, although often only involving a small part of the population. These included:

- the Frostating in Norway,
- the Althing in Iceland,
- the Løgting in the Faeroe Islands,
- Scandinavian Things,
- the election of Uthman in the Rashidun Caliphate,
- the South Indian Kingdom of the Chola in the state of Tamil Nadu in the Indian Subcontinent had an electoral system at 920 A.D., about 1100 years ago,[38]
- Carantania, old Slavic/Slovenian principality, the Ducal Inauguration from 7th to 15th century,
- the upper-caste election of the Gopala in the Bengal region of the Indian Subcontinent,
- the Holy Roman Empire's Hoftag and Imperial Diets (mostly Nobles and Clergy),
- Frisia in the 10th-15th Century (Weight of vote based on landownership)
- the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (10% of population),
- certain medieval Italian city-states such as Venice, Genoa, Florence, Pisa, Lucca, Amalfi, Siena and San Marino
- the tuatha system in early medieval Ireland,
- the Veche in Novgorod and Pskov Republics of medieval Russia,
- The States in Tirol and Switzerland,
- the autonomous merchant city of Sakai in the 16th century in Japan,
- Volta-Nigeric societies such as Igbo.
- the Mekhk-Khel system of the Nakh peoples of the North Caucasus, by which representatives to the Council of Elders for each teip (clan) were popularly elected by that teip's members.

- The 10th Sikh Guru Gobind Singh ji (Nanak X) established the world's first Sikh democratic republic state ending the aristocracy on day of 1st Vasakh 1699 and Gurbani as sole constitution of this Sikh republic on the Indian subcontinent.

Most regions in medieval Europe were ruled by clergy or feudal lords.

The Kouroukan Fouga divided the Mali Empire into ruling clans (lineages) that were represented at a great assembly called the *Gbara*. However, the charter made Mali more similar to a constitutional monarchy than a democratic republic. A little closer to modern democracy were the Cossack republics of Ukraine in the 16th and 17th centuries: Cossack Hetmanate and Zaporizhian Sich. The highest post – the Hetman – was elected by the representatives from the country's districts.

The Parliament of England had its roots in the restrictions on the power of kings written into Magna Carta (1215), which explicitly protected certain rights of the King's subjects and implicitly supported what became the English writ of habeas corpus, safeguarding individual freedom against unlawful imprisonment with right to appeal.[39][40] The first representative national assembly in England was Simon de Montfort's Parliament in 1265.[41] The emergence of petitioning is some of the earliest evidence of parliament being used as a forum to address the general grievances of ordinary people. However, the power to call parliament remained at the pleasure of the monarch.[42]

Magna Carta, 1215, England

Modern era

Early modern period

During the early modern period, the power of the Parliament of England continually increased. Passage of the Petition of Right in 1628 and Habeas Corpus Act in 1679 established certain liberties and remain in effect. The idea of a political party took form with groups freely debating rights to political representation during the Putney Debates of 1647. After the English Civil Wars (1642–1651) and the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Bill of Rights was enacted in 1689, which codified certain rights and liberties, and is still in effect. The Bill set out the requirement for regular elections, rules for freedom of speech in Parliament and limited the power of the monarch, ensuring that, unlike much of Europe at the time, royal absolutism would not prevail.[43][44]

In North America, representative government began in Jamestown, Virginia, with the election of the House of Burgesses (forerunner of the Virginia General Assembly) in 1619. English Puritans who migrated from 1620 established colonies in New England whose local governance was democratic and which contributed to the democratic development of the United States;[45] although these local assemblies had some small amounts of devolved power, the ultimate authority was held by the Crown and the English Parliament. The Puritans (Pilgrim Fathers), Baptists, and Quakers who founded these colonies applied the democratic organisation of their congregations also to the administration of their communities in worldly matters.[46][47][48]

18th and 19th centuries

The first Parliament of Great Britain was established in 1707, after the merger of the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland under the Acts of Union. Although the monarch increasingly became a figurehead,[49] only a small minority actually had a voice; Parliament was elected by only a few percent of the population (less than 3% as late as 1780).[50] During the Age of Liberty in Sweden (1718-1772), civil rights were expanded and power shifted from the monarch to parliament. The taxed peasantry was represented in parliament, although with little influence, but commoners without taxed property had no suffrage.

The creation of the short-lived Corsican Republic in 1755 marked the first nation in modern history to adopt a democratic constitution (all men and women above age of 25 could vote[51]). This Corsican Constitution was the first based on Enlightenment principles and included female suffrage, something that was not granted in most other democracies until the 20th century.

The establishment of universal male suffrage in France in 1848 was an important milestone in the history of democracy

In the American colonial period before 1776, and for some time after, often only adult white male property owners could vote; enslaved Africans, most free black people and most women were not extended the franchise.[52] On the American frontier, democracy became a way of life, with more widespread social, economic and political equality.[53] Although not described as a democracy by the founding fathers,[54] they shared a determination to root the American experiment in the principles of natural freedom and equality.[55]

The American Revolution led to the adoption of the United States Constitution in 1787, the oldest surviving, still active, governmental codified constitution. The Constitution provided for an elected government and protected civil rights and liberties for some, but did not end slavery nor extend voting rights in the United States beyond white male property owners (about 6% of the population).[56] The Bill of Rights in 1791 set limits on government power to protect personal freedoms but had little impact on judgements by the courts for the first 130 years after ratification.[57]

In 1789, Revolutionary France adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and, although short-lived, the National Convention was elected by all males in 1792.[58] However, in the early 19th century, little of democracy - as theory, practice, or even as word - remained in the North Atlantic world.[59]

During this period, slavery remained a social and economic institution in places around the world. This was particularly the case in the United States, and especially in the last fifteen slave states that kept slavery legal in the American South until the Civil War. A variety of organisations were established advocating the movement of black people from the United States to locations where they would enjoy greater freedom and equality.

The United Kingdom's Slave Trade Act 1807 banned the trade across the British Empire, which was enforced internationally by the Royal Navy under treaties Britain negotiated with other nations.[60] As the voting franchise in the U.K. was increased, it also was made more uniform in a series of reforms beginning with the Reform Act 1832. In 1833, the United Kingdom passed the Slavery Abolition Act which took effect across the British Empire.

Universal male suffrage was established in France in March 1848 in the wake of the French Revolution of 1848.[61] In 1848, several revolutions broke out in Europe as rulers were confronted with popular demands for liberal constitutions and more democratic government.[62]

In the 1860 United States Census, the slave population in the United States had grown to four million,[63] and in Reconstruction after the Civil War (late 1860s), the newly freed slaves became citizens with a nominal right to vote for men. Full enfranchisement of citizens was not secured until after the African-American Civil Rights Movement (1955 –1968) gained passage by the United States Congress of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.[64][65]

20th and 21st centuries

20th-century transitions to liberal democracy have come in successive "waves of democracy", variously resulting from wars, revolutions, decolonisation, and religious and economic circumstances.[66] World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires resulted in the creation of new nation-states from Europe, most of them at least nominally democratic.

In the 1920s democracy flourished and women's suffrage advanced, but the Great Depression brought disenchantment and most of the countries of Europe, Latin America, and Asia turned to strong-man rule or dictatorships. Fascism and dictatorships flourished in Nazi Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal, as well as non-democratic governments in the Baltics, the Balkans, Brazil, Cuba, China, and Japan, among others.[67]

The number of nations 1800–2003 scoring 8 or higher on Polity IV scale, another widely used measure of democracy

World War II brought a definitive reversal of this trend in western Europe. The democratisation of the American, British, and French sectors of occupied Germany (disputed[68]), Austria, Italy, and the occupied Japan served as a model for the later theory of government change. However, most of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet sector of Germany fell into the non-democratic Soviet bloc.

The war was followed by decolonisation, and again most of the new independent states had nominally democratic constitutions. India emerged as the world's largest democracy and continues to be so.[69] Countries that were once part of the British Empire often adopted the British Westminster system.[70][71]

By 1960, the vast majority of country-states were nominally democracies, although most of the world's populations lived in nations that experienced sham elections, and other forms of subterfuge (particularly in Communist nations and the former colonies.)

A subsequent wave of democratisation brought substantial gains toward true liberal democracy for many nations. Spain, Portugal (1974), and several of the military dictatorships in South America returned to civilian rule in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Argentina in 1983, Bolivia, Uruguay in 1984, Brazil in 1985, and Chile in the early 1990s). This was followed by nations in East and South Asia by the mid-to-late 1980s.

Economic malaise in the 1980s, along with resentment of Soviet oppression, contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the associated end of the Cold War, and the democratisation and liberalisation of the former Eastern bloc countries. The most successful of the new democracies were those geographically and culturally closest to western Europe, and they are now members or candidate members of the European Union.

The liberal trend spread to some nations in Africa in the 1990s, most prominently in South Africa. Some recent examples of attempts of liberalisation include the Indonesian Revolution of 1998, the Bulldozer Revolution in Yugoslavia, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia.

According to Freedom House, in 2007 there were 123 electoral democracies (up from 40 in 1972).[72] According to *World Forum on Democracy*, electoral democracies now represent 120 of the 192 existing countries and constitute 58.2 percent of the world's population. At the same time liberal democracies i.e. countries Freedom House regards as free and respectful of basic human rights and the rule of law are 85 in number and represent 38 percent of the global population.[73]

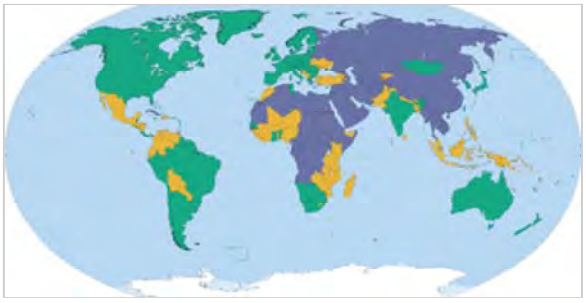
In 2007 the United Nations declared September 15 the International Day of Democracy.[74]

India is the world's largest democracy consisting of a population of 1.24 billion. The electorate added up to 714 million for the 2009 national election.[75]

Measurement of democracy

Several freedom indices are used to measure democracy:

- *Freedom in the World* published each year since 1972 by the U.S.-based Freedom House ranks countries by political rights and civil liberties that are derived in large measure from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Countries are assessed as *free*, *partly free*, or *unfree*.[77]
- *Worldwide Press Freedom Index* is published each year since 2002 (except that 2011 was combined with 2012) by France-based Reporters Without Borders. Countries are assessed as having a *good situation*, a *satisfactory situation*, *noticeable problems*, a *difficult situation*, or a *very serious situation*.[78]
- *Freedom of the Press* published each year since 1980 by Freedom House.
- The *Index of Freedom in the World* is an index measuring classical civil liberties published by Canada's Fraser Institute, Germany's Liberales Institute, and the U.S. Cato Institute.[79] It is not currently included in the table below.
- The *CIRI Human Rights Data Project* measures a range of human, civil, women's and workers rights.[80] It is now hosted by the University of Connecticut. It was created in 1994.[81] In its 2011 report, the U.S. was ranked 38th in overall human rights.[82]
- The *Democracy Index*, published by the U.K.-based Economist Intelligence Unit, is an assessment of countries' democracy. Countries are rated to be either *Full Democracies*, *Flawed Democracies*, *Hybrid Regimes*, or *Authoritarian regimes*. Full democracies, flawed democracies, and hybrid regimes are considered to be democracies, and the authoritarian nations are considered to be dictatorial. The index is based on 60 indicators grouped in five different categories.[83]
- The U.S.-based *Polity data series* is a widely used data series in political science research. It contains coded annual information on regime authority characteristics and transitions for all independent states with greater than 500,000 total population and covers the years 1800–2006. Polity's conclusions about a state's level of democracy are based on an evaluation of that state's elections for competitiveness, openness and level of participation. Data from this series is not currently included in the table below. The Polity work is sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) which is funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. However, the views expressed in the reports are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.
- MaxRange, a dataset defining level of democracy and institutional structure(regime-type) on a 100-graded scale where every value represents a unique regime type. Values are sorted from 1-100 based on level of democracy and political accountability. MaxRange defines the value corresponding to all states and every month from 1789 to 2015 and updating. MaxRange is created and developed by Max Range, and is now associated with the university of Halmstad, Sweden.[84]



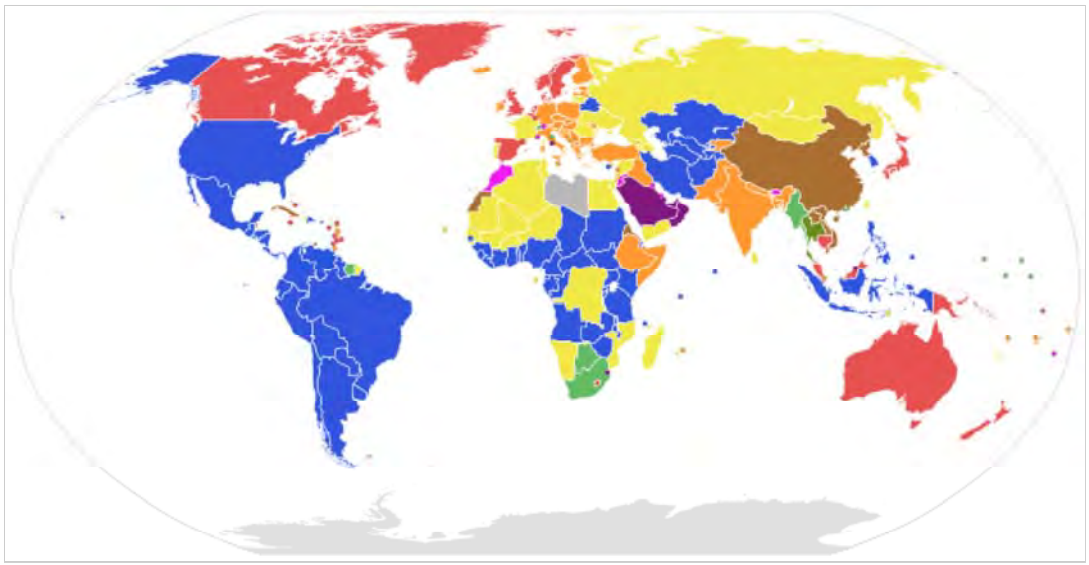
Country ratings from Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2016* survey, concerning the state of world freedom in 2015.[76]

Free (86) Partly Free (59) Not Free (50)

Countries designated "electoral democracies" in Freedom House's 2015 survey "Freedom in the World", covering the year 2014.[77]

Types of democracies

Democracy has taken a number of forms, both in theory and practice. Some varieties of democracy provide better representation and more freedom for their citizens than others.[85][86] However, if any democracy is not structured so as to prohibit the government from excluding the people from the legislative process, or any branch of government from altering the separation of powers in its own favour, then a branch of the system can accumulate too much power and destroy the democracy.[87][88][89]



World's states coloured by form of government[1]

Presidential republics[2]	Semi-presidential republics[2]
Republics with an executive president dependent on a parliament	Parliamentary republics[2]
Parliamentary constitutional monarchies	Constitutional monarchies in which the monarch personally exercises power
Absolute monarchies	One-party states
Countries where constitutional provisions for government have been suspended	Countries which do not fit any of the above systems

[1]This map was compiled according to the Wikipedia *list of countries by system of government*. See there for sources. [2]Several states constitutionally deemed to be multiparty republics are broadly described by outsiders as authoritarian states. This map presents only the *de jure* form of government, and not the *de facto* degree of democracy.

The following kinds of democracy are not exclusive of one another: many specify details of aspects that are independent of one another and can co-exist in a single system.

Basic forms

Several variants of democracy exist, but there are two basic forms, both of which concern how the whole body of all eligible citizens executes its will. One form of democracy is direct democracy, in which all eligible citizens have active participation in the political decision making, for example voting on policy initiatives directly.[90] In most modern democracies, the whole body of eligible citizens remain the sovereign power but political power is exercised indirectly through elected representatives; this is called a representative democracy.

Direct

Direct democracy is a political system where the citizens participate in the decision-making personally, contrary to relying on intermediaries or representatives. The use of a lot system, a characteristic of Athenian democracy, is unique to direct democracies. In this system, important governmental and administrative tasks are performed by citizens picked from a lottery.[91] A direct democracy gives the voting population the power to:

1. Change constitutional laws,
2. Put forth initiatives, referendums and suggestions for laws,
3. Give binding orders to elective officials, such as revoking them before the end of their elected term, or initiating a lawsuit for breaking a campaign promise.

Within modern-day representative governments, certain electoral tools like referendums, citizens' initiatives and recall elections are referred to as forms of direct democracy.[92] Direct democracy as a government system currently exists in the Swiss cantons of Appenzell Innerrhoden and Glarus,[93] and kurdish cantons of Rojava.[94]

A Landsgemeinde (in 2009) of the Canton of Glarus, an example of direct democracy in Switzerland

Representative

Representative democracy involves the election of government officials by the people being represented. If the head of state is also democratically elected then it is called a democratic republic.[95] The most common mechanisms involve election of the candidate with a majority or a plurality of the votes. Most western countries have representative systems.[93]

In Switzerland, without needing to register, every citizen receives ballot papers and information brochures for each vote (and can send it back by post). Switzerland has a direct democracy system and votes are organised about four times a year.

Representatives may be elected or become diplomatic representatives by a particular district (or constituency), or represent the entire electorate through proportional systems, with some using a combination of the two. Some representative democracies also incorporate elements of direct democracy, such as referendums. A characteristic of representative democracy is that while the representatives are elected by the people to act in the people's interest, they retain the freedom to exercise their own judgement as how best to do so. Such reasons have driven criticism upon representative democracy,[96][97] pointing out the contradictions of representation mechanisms' with democracy[98][99]

Parliamentary

Parliamentary democracy is a representative democracy where government is appointed by, or can be dismissed by, representatives as opposed to a "presidential rule" wherein the president is both head of state and the head of government and is elected by the voters. Under a parliamentary democracy, government is exercised by delegation to an executive ministry and subject to ongoing review, checks and balances by the legislative parliament elected by the people.[100][101][102][103]

Parliamentary systems have the right to dismiss a Prime Minister at any point in time that they feel he or she is not doing their job to the expectations of the legislature. This is done through a Vote of No Confidence where the legislature decides whether or not to remove the Prime Minister from office by a majority support for his or her dismissal.[104] In some countries, the Prime Minister can also call an election whenever he or she so chooses, and typically the Prime Minister will hold an election when he or she knows that they are in good favour with the public as to get re-elected. In other parliamentary democracies extra elections are virtually never held, a minority government being preferred until the next ordinary elections. An important feature of the parliamentary democracy is the concept of the "loyal opposition". The essence of the concept is that the second largest political party (or coalition) opposes the governing party (or coalition), while still remaining loyal to the state and its democratic principles.

Presidential

Presidential Democracy is a system where the public elects the president through free and fair elections. The president serves as both the head of state and head of government controlling most of the executive powers. The president serves for a specific term and cannot exceed that amount of time. Elections typically have a fixed date and aren't easily changed. The president has direct control over the cabinet, specifically appointing the cabinet members.[104]

The president cannot be easily removed from office by the legislature, but he or she cannot remove members of the legislative branch any more easily. This provides some measure of separation of powers. In consequence however, the president and the legislature may end up in the control of separate parties, allowing one to block the other and thereby interfere with the orderly operation of the state. This may be the reason why presidential democracy is not very common outside the Americas, Africa, and Central and Southeast Asia.[104]

A semi-presidential system is a system of democracy in which the government includes both a prime minister and a president. The particular powers held by the prime minister and president vary by country.[104]

Hybrid or semi-direct

Some modern democracies that are predominantly representative in nature also heavily rely upon forms of political action that are directly democratic. These democracies, which combine elements of representative democracy and direct democracy, are termed *hybrid democracies*,[105] *semi-direct democracies* or *participatory democracies*. Examples include Switzerland and some U.S. states, where frequent use is made of referendums and initiatives.

The Swiss confederation is a semi-direct democracy.[93] At the federal level, citizens can propose changes to the constitution (federal popular initiative) or ask for a referendum to be held on any law voted by the parliament.[93] Between January 1995 and June 2005, Swiss citizens voted 31 times, to answer 103 questions (during the same period, French citizens participated in only two referendums).[93] Although in the past 120 years less than 250 initiatives have been put to referendum. The populace has been conservative, approving only about 10% of the initiatives put before them; in addition, they have often opted for a version of the initiative rewritten by government.

In the United States, no mechanisms of direct democracy exists at the federal level, but over half of the states and many localities provide for citizen-sponsored ballot initiatives (also called "ballot measures", "ballot questions" or "propositions"), and the vast majority of states allow for referendums. Examples include the extensive use of referendums in the US state of California, which is a state that has more than 20 million voters.[106]

In New England, Town meetings are often used, especially in rural areas, to manage local government. This creates a hybrid form of government, with a local direct democracy and a state government which is representative. For example, most Vermont towns hold annual town meetings in March in which town officers are elected, budgets for the town and schools are voted on, and citizens have the opportunity to speak and be heard on political matters.[107]

Variants

Constitutional monarchy

Many countries such as the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Scandinavian countries, Thailand, Japan and Bhutan turned powerful monarchs into constitutional monarchs with limited or, often gradually, merely symbolic roles. For example, in the predecessor states to the United Kingdom, constitutional monarchy began to emerge and has continued uninterrupted since the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and passage of the Bill of Rights 1689.[13][43]

In other countries, the monarchy was abolished along with the aristocratic system (as in France, China, Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Greece and Egypt). An elected president, with or without significant powers, became the head of state in these countries.

Élite upper houses of legislatures, which often had lifetime or hereditary tenure, were common in many nations. Over time, these either had their powers limited (as with the British House of Lords) or else became elective and remained powerful (as with the Australian Senate).

Queen Elizabeth II, a constitutional monarch

Republic

The term *republic* has many different meanings, but today often refers to a representative democracy with an elected head of state, such as a president, serving for a limited term, in contrast to states with a hereditary monarch as a head of state, even if these states also are representative democracies with an elected or appointed head of government such as a prime minister.[108]

The Founding Fathers of the United States rarely praised and often criticised democracy, which in their time tended to specifically mean direct democracy, often without the protection of a constitution enshrining basic rights; James Madison argued, especially in *The Federalist* No. 10, that what distinguished a *democracy* from a *republic* was that the former became weaker as it got larger and suffered more violently from the effects of faction, whereas a republic could get stronger as it got larger and combats faction by its very structure.

What was critical to American values, John Adams insisted,[109] was that the government be "bound by fixed laws, which the people have a voice in making, and a right to defend." As Benjamin Franklin was exiting after writing the U.S. constitution, a woman asked him "Well, Doctor, what have we got—a republic or a monarchy?". He replied "A republic—if you can keep it."[110]

Liberal democracy

A liberal democracy is a representative democracy in which the ability of the elected representatives to exercise decision-making power is subject to the rule of law, and moderated by a constitution or laws that emphasise the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals, and which places constraints on the leaders and on the extent to which the will of the majority can be exercised against the rights of minorities (see civil liberties).

In a liberal democracy, it is possible for some large-scale decisions to emerge from the many individual decisions that citizens are free to make. In other words, citizens can "vote with their feet" or "vote with their dollars", resulting in significant informal government-by-the-masses that exercises many "powers" associated with formal government elsewhere.

Socialist

Socialist thought has several different views on democracy. Social democracy, democratic socialism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat (usually exercised through Soviet democracy) are some examples. Many democratic socialists and social democrats believe in a form of participatory, industrial, economic and/or workplace democracy combined with a representative democracy.

Within Marxist orthodoxy there is a hostility to what is commonly called "liberal democracy", which they simply refer to as parliamentary democracy because of its often centralised nature. Because of their desire to eliminate the political elitism they see in capitalism, Marxists, Leninists and Trotskyists believe in direct democracy implemented through a system of communes (which are sometimes called soviets). This system ultimately manifests itself as council democracy and begins with workplace democracy. (See Democracy in Marxism.)

> Democracy cannot consist solely of elections that are nearly always fictitious and managed by rich landowners and professional politicians.

— Che Guevara, Speech, Uruguay, 1961[111]

Anarchist

Anarchists are split in this domain, depending on whether they believe that a majority-rule is tyrannic or not. The only form of democracy considered acceptable to many anarchists is direct democracy. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon argued that the only acceptable form of direct democracy is one in which it is recognised that majority decisions are not binding on the minority, even when unanimous.[112] However, anarcho-communist Murray Bookchin criticised individualist anarchists for opposing democracy,[113] and says "majority rule" is consistent with anarchism.[114]

Some anarcho-communists oppose the majoritarian nature of direct democracy, feeling that it can impede individual liberty and opt in favour of a non-majoritarian form of consensus democracy, similar to Proudhon's position on direct democracy.[115] Henry David Thoreau, who did not self-identify as an anarchist but argued for "a better government"[116] and is cited as an inspiration by some anarchists, argued that people should not be in the position of ruling others or being ruled when there is no consent.

Anarcho-capitalists, voluntaryists and other right-anarchists oppose institutional democracy as they consider it in conflict with widely held moral values and ethical principles and their conception of individual rights. The *a priori* Rothbardian argument is that the state is a coercive institution which necessarily violates the non-aggression principle (NAP). Some right-anarchists also criticise democracy on *a posteriori* consequentialist grounds, in terms of inefficiency or disability in bringing about maximisation of individual liberty. They maintain the people who participate in democratic institutions are foremost driven by economic self-interest.[117][118]

Sortition

Sometimes called "democracy without elections", sortition chooses decision makers via a random process. The intention is that those chosen will be representative of the opinions and interests of the people at large, and be more fair and impartial than an elected official. The technique was in widespread use in Athenian Democracy and Renaissance Florence[119] and is still used in modern jury selection.

Consociational

A consociational democracy allows for simultaneous majority votes in two or more ethno-religious constituencies, and policies are enacted only if they gain majority support from both or all of them.

Consensus democracy

A consensus democracy, in contrast, would not be dichotomous. Instead, decisions would be based on a multi-option approach, and policies would be enacted if they gained sufficient support, either in a purely verbal agreement, or via a consensus vote—a multi-option preference vote. If the threshold of support were at a sufficiently high level, minorities would be as it were protected automatically. Furthermore, any voting would be ethno-colour blind.

Supranational

Qualified majority voting is designed by the Treaty of Rome to be the principal method of reaching decisions in the European Council of Ministers. This system allocates votes to member states in part according to their population, but heavily weighted in favour of the smaller states. This might be seen as a form of representative democracy, but representatives to the Council might be appointed rather than directly elected.

Inclusive

Inclusive democracy is a political theory and political project that aims for direct democracy in all fields of social life: political democracy in the form of face-to-face assemblies which are confederated, economic democracy in a stateless, moneyless and marketless economy, democracy in the social realm, i.e. self-management in places of work and education, and ecological democracy which aims to reintegrate society and nature. The theoretical project of inclusive democracy emerged from the work of political philosopher Takis Fotopoulos in "Towards An Inclusive Democracy" and was further developed in the journal *Democracy & Nature* and its successor *The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy*.

The basic unit of decision making in an inclusive democracy is the demotic assembly, i.e. the assembly of demos, the citizen body in a given geographical area which may encompass a town and the surrounding villages, or even neighbourhoods of large cities. An inclusive democracy today can only take the form of a confederal democracy that is based on a network of administrative councils whose members or delegates are elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies in the various demoi. Thus, their role is purely administrative and practical, not one of policy-making like that of representatives in representative democracy.

The citizen body is advised by experts but it is the citizen body which functions as the ultimate decision-taker . Authority can be delegated to a segment of the citizen body to carry out specific duties, for example to serve as members of popular courts, or of regional and confederal councils. Such delegation is made, in principle, by lot, on a rotation basis, and is always recallable by the citizen body. Delegates to regional and confederal bodies should have specific mandates.

Participatory politics

A Parpolity or Participatory Polity is a theoretical form of democracy that is ruled by a Nested Council structure. The guiding philosophy is that people should have decision making power in proportion to how much they are affected by the decision. Local councils of 25–50 people are completely autonomous on issues that affect only them, and these councils send delegates to higher level councils who are again autonomous regarding issues that affect only the population affected by that council.

A council court of randomly chosen citizens serves as a check on the tyranny of the majority, and rules on which body gets to vote on which issue. Delegates may vote differently from how their sending council might wish, but are mandated to communicate the wishes of their sending council. Delegates are recallable at any time. Referendums are possible at any time via votes of most lower-level councils, however, not everything is a referendum as this is most likely a waste of time. A parpolity is meant to work in tandem with a participatory economy.

Cosmopolitan

Cosmopolitan democracy, also known as *Global democracy* or *World Federalism*, is a political system in which democracy is implemented on a global scale, either directly or through representatives. An important justification for this kind of system is that the decisions made in national or regional democracies often affect people outside the constituency who, by definition, cannot vote. By contrast, in a cosmopolitan democracy, the people who are affected by decisions also have a say in them.[120]

According to its supporters, any attempt to solve global problems is undemocratic without some form of cosmopolitan democracy. The general principle of cosmopolitan democracy is to expand some or all of the values and norms of democracy, including the rule of law; the non-violent resolution of conflicts; and equality among citizens, beyond the limits of the state. To be fully implemented, this would require reforming existing international organisations, e.g. the United Nations, as well as the creation of new institutions such as a World Parliament, which ideally would enhance public control over, and accountability in, international politics.

Cosmopolitan Democracy has been promoted, among others, by physicist Albert Einstein,[121] writer Kurt Vonnegut, columnist George Monbiot, and professors David Held and Daniele Archibugi.[122] The creation of the International Criminal Court in 2003 was seen as a major step forward by many supporters of this type of cosmopolitan democracy.

Creative Democracy

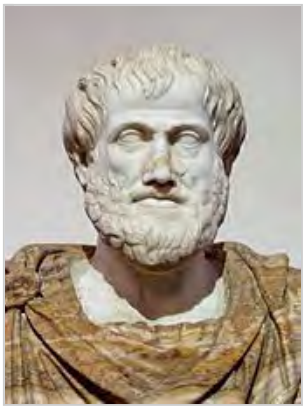
Creative Democracy is advocated by American philosopher John Dewey. The main idea about Creative Democracy is that democracy encourages individual capacity building and the interaction among the society. Dewey argues that democracy is a way of life in his work of "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us" [123] and an experience built on faith in human nature, faith in human beings, and faith in working with others. Democracy, in Dewey's view, is a moral ideal requiring actual effort and work by people; it is not an institutional concept that exists outside of ourselves. "The task of democracy", Dewey concludes, "is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute".

Non-governmental

Aside from the public sphere, similar democratic principles and mechanisms of voting and representation have been used to govern other kinds of groups. Many non-governmental organisations decide policy and leadership by voting. Most trade unions and cooperatives are governed by democratic elections. Corporations are controlled by shareholders on the principle of one share, one vote. An analogous system, that fuses elements of democracy with sharia law, has been termed *islamocracy*.[124]

Theory

Aristotle


A marble statue of Aristotle

Aristotle contrasted rule by the many (democracy/polity), with rule by the few (oligarchy/aristocracy), and with rule by a single person (tyranny or today autocracy/absolute monarchy). He also thought that there was a good and a bad variant of each system (he considered democracy to be the degenerate counterpart to polity).[125][126]

For Aristotle the underlying principle of democracy is freedom, since only in a democracy the citizens can have a share in freedom. In essence, he argues that this is what every democracy should make its aim. There are two main aspects of freedom: being ruled and ruling in turn, since everyone is equal according to number, not merit, and to be able to live as one pleases.

> But one factor of liberty is to govern and be governed in turn; for the popular principle of justice is to have equality according to number, not worth, ... And one is for a man to live as he likes; for they say that this is the function of liberty, inasmuch as to live not as one likes is the life of a man that is a slave.
>
> — Aristotle, *Politics* 1317b (Book 6, Part II)

Rationale

Among modern political theorists, there are three contending conceptions of the fundamental rationale for democracy: *aggregative democracy, deliberative democracy,* and *radical democracy.*[127]

Aggregative

The theory of *aggregative democracy* claims that the aim of the democratic processes is to solicit citizens' preferences and aggregate them together to determine what social policies society should adopt. Therefore, proponents of this view hold that democratic participation should primarily focus on voting, where the policy with the most votes gets implemented.

Different variants of aggregative democracy exist. Under *minimalism*, democracy is a system of government in which citizens have given teams of political leaders the right to rule in periodic elections. According to this minimalist conception, citizens cannot and should not "rule" because, for example, on most issues, most of the time, they have no clear views or their views are not well-founded. Joseph Schumpeter articulated this view most famously in his book *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*.[128] Contemporary proponents of minimalism include William H. Riker, Adam Przeworski, Richard Posner.

According to the theory of direct democracy, on the other hand, citizens should vote directly, not through their representatives, on legislative proposals. Proponents of direct democracy offer varied reasons to support this view. Political activity can be valuable in itself, it socialises and educates citizens, and popular participation can check powerful elites. Most importantly, citizens do not really rule themselves unless they directly decide laws and policies.

Governments will tend to produce laws and policies that are close to the views of the median voter—with half to their left and the other half to their right. This is not actually a desirable outcome as it represents the action of self-interested and somewhat unaccountable political elites competing for votes. Anthony Downs suggests that ideological political parties are necessary to act as a mediating broker between individual and governments. Downs laid out this view in his 1957 book *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.[129]

Robert A. Dahl argues that the fundamental democratic principle is that, when it comes to binding collective decisions, each person in a political community is entitled to have his/her interests be given equal consideration (not necessarily that all people are equally satisfied by the collective decision). He uses the term polyarchy to refer to societies in which there exists a certain set of institutions and procedures which are perceived as leading to such democracy. First and foremost among these institutions is the regular occurrence of free and open elections which are used to select representatives who then manage all or most of the public policy of the society. However, these polyarchic procedures may not create a full democracy if, for example, poverty prevents political participation.[130] Similarly, Ronald Dworkin argues that "democracy is a substantive, not a merely procedural, ideal."[131]

Deliberative

Deliberative democracy is based on the notion that democracy is government by deliberation. Unlike aggregative democracy, deliberative democracy holds that, for a democratic decision to be legitimate, it must be preceded by authentic deliberation, not merely the aggregation of preferences that occurs in voting. *Authentic deliberation* is deliberation among decision-makers that is free from distortions of unequal political power, such as power a decision-maker obtained through economic wealth or the support of interest groups.[132][133][134] If the decision-makers cannot reach consensus after authentically deliberating on a proposal, then they vote on the proposal using a form of majority rule.

Radical

Radical democracy is based on the idea that there are hierarchical and oppressive power relations that exist in society. Democracy's role is to make visible and challenge those relations by allowing for difference, dissent and antagonisms in decision making processes.

Criticism

Inefficiencies

Some economists have criticized the efficiency of democracy. They base this on their premise of the irrational voter. Their argument is that voters are highly uninformed about many political issues, especially relating to economics, and have a strong bias about the few issues on which they are fairly knowledgeable. A common example often quoted to substantiate this point is the high economic development achieved by China (a non-democratic country) as compared to India (a democratic country).

Protests

Popular rule as a façade

The 20th-century Italian thinkers Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca (independently) argued that democracy was illusory, and served only to mask the reality of elite rule. Indeed, they argued that elite oligarchy is the unbendable law of human nature, due largely to the apathy and division of the masses (as opposed to the drive, initiative and unity of the elites), and that democratic institutions would do no more than shift the exercise of power from oppression to manipulation.[135] As Louis Brandeis once professed, "We may have democracy, or we may have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both."[136]

Mob rule

Plato's *The Republic* presents a critical view of democracy through the narration of Socrates: "Democracy, which is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequaled alike."[137] In his work, Plato lists 5 forms of government from best to worst. Assuming that *the Republic* was intended to be a serious critique of the political thought in Athens, Plato argues that only Kallipolis, an aristocracy led by the unwilling philosopher-kings (the wisest men), is a just form of government.[138]

James Madison critiqued direct democracy (which he referred to simply as "democracy") in Federalist No. 10, arguing that representative democracy—which he described using the term "republic"—is a preferable form of government, saying: "... democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths." Madison offered that republics were superior to democracies because republics safeguarded against tyranny of the majority, stating in Federalist No. 10: "the same advantage which a republic has over a democracy, in controlling the effects of faction, is enjoyed by a large over a small republic".

Political instability

More recently, democracy is criticised for not offering enough political stability. As governments are frequently elected on and off there tends to be frequent changes in the policies of democratic countries both domestically and internationally. Even if a political party maintains power, vociferous, headline grabbing protests and harsh criticism from the mass media are often enough to force sudden, unexpected political change. Frequent policy changes with regard to business and immigration are likely to deter investment and so hinder economic growth. For this reason, many people have put forward the idea that democracy is undesirable for a developing country in which economic growth and the reduction of poverty are top priorities.[139]

This opportunist alliance not only has the handicap of having to cater to too many ideologically opposing factions, but it is usually short lived since any perceived or actual imbalance in the treatment of coalition partners, or changes to leadership in the coalition partners themselves, can very easily result in the coalition partner withdrawing its support from the government.

Fraudulent elections

In representative democracies, it may not benefit incumbents to conduct fair elections. A study showed that incumbents who rig elections stay in office 2.5 times as long as those who permit fair elections.[140] Democracies in countries with high per capita income have been found to be less prone to violence, but in countries with low incomes the tendency is the reverse.[140] Election misconduct is more likely in countries with low per capita incomes, small populations, rich in natural resources, and a lack of institutional checks and balances. Sub-Saharan countries, as well as Afghanistan, all tend to fall into that category.[140]

Governments that have frequent elections tend to have significantly more stable economic policies than those governments who have infrequent elections. However, this trend does not apply to governments where fraudulent elections are common.[140]

Opposition

Democracy in modern times has almost always faced opposition from the previously existing government, and many times it has faced opposition from social elites. The implementation of a democratic government within a non-democratic state is typically brought about by democratic revolution.

Post-Enlightenment ideologies such as fascism, nazism, and neo-fundamentalism oppose democracy on different grounds, generally citing that the concept of democracy as a constant process is flawed and detrimental to a preferable course of development.

Development

Several philosophers and researchers have outlined historical and social factors seen as supporting the evolution of democracy. *Cultural factors* like Protestantism influenced the development of democracy, rule of law, human rights and political liberty (the faithful elected priests, religious freedom and tolerance has been practiced).

Other commentators have mentioned the influence of *wealth* (e.g. S. M. Lipset, 1959). In a related theory, Ronald Inglehart suggests that improved living-standards can convince people that they can take their basic survival for granted, leading to increased emphasis on self-expression values, which is highly correlated to democracy.[141]

Carroll Quigley concludes that the characteristics of weapons are the main predictor of democracy:[142][143] Democracy tends to emerge only when the best weapons available are easy for individuals to buy and use.[144] By the 1800s, guns were the best personal weapons available, and in America, almost everyone could afford to buy a gun, and could learn how to use it fairly easily. Governments couldn't do any better: it became the age of mass armies of citizen soldiers with guns[144] Similarly, Periclean Greece was an age of the citizen soldier and democracy.[145]

Recent theories stress the relevance of *education* and of *human capital* - and within them of *cognitive ability* to increasing tolerance, rationality, political literacy and participation. Two effects of education and cognitive ability are distinguished: a cognitive effect (competence to make rational choices, better information-processing) and an ethical effect (support of democratic values, freedom, human rights etc.), which itself depends on intelligence.[146][147][148]

Evidence that is consistent with conventional theories of why democracy emerges and is sustained has been hard to come by. Recent statistical analyses have challenged modernisation theory by demonstrating that there is no reliable evidence for the claim that democracy is more likely to emerge when countries become wealthier, more educated, or less unequal.[149] Neither is there convincing evidence that increased reliance on oil revenues prevents democratisation, despite a vast theoretical literature on "the Resource Curse" that asserts that oil revenues sever the link between citizen taxation and government accountability, seen as the key to representative democracy.[150] The lack of evidence for these conventional theories of democratisation have led researchers to search for the "deep" determinants of contemporary political institutions, be they geographical or demographic.[151][152]

In the 21st century, democracy has become such a popular method of reaching decisions that its application beyond politics to other areas such as entertainment, food and fashion, consumerism, urban planning, education, art, literature, science and theology has been criticised as "the reigning dogma of our time".[153] The argument suggests that applying a populist or market-driven approach to art and literature (for example), means that innovative creative work goes unpublished or unproduced. In education, the argument is that essential but more difficult studies are not undertaken. Science, as a truth-based discipline, is particularly corrupted by the idea that the correct conclusion can be arrived at by popular vote. However, more recently, theorists have also advanced the concept epistemic democracy to assert that democracy actually does a good job tracking the truth.

Robert Michels asserts that although democracy can never be fully realised, democracy may be developed automatically in the act of striving for democracy: "The peasant in the fable, when on his death-bed, tells his sons that a treasure is buried in the field. After the old man's death the sons dig everywhere in order to discover the treasure. They do not find it. But their indefatigable labor improves the soil and secures for them a comparative well-being. The treasure in the fable may well symbolise democracy."[154]

Dr. Harald Wydra, in his book *Communism and The Emergence of Democracy* (2007), maintains that the development of democracy should not be viewed as a purely procedural or as a static concept but rather as an ongoing "process of meaning formation".[155] Drawing on Claude Lefort's idea of the empty place of power, that "power emanates from the people [...] but is the power of nobody", he remarks that democracy is reverence to a symbolic mythical authority as in reality, there is no such thing as the people or *demos*. Democratic political figures are not supreme rulers but rather temporary guardians of an empty place. Any claim to substance such as the collective good, the public interest or the will of the nation is subject to the competitive struggle and times of for gaining the authority of office and government. The essence of the democratic system is an empty place, void of real people which can only be temporarily filled and never be appropriated. The seat of power is there, but remains open to constant change. As such, what "democracy" is or what is "democratic" progresses throughout history as a continual and potentially never ending process of social construction.

In 2010 a study by a German military think-tank analyzed how peak oil might change the global economy. The study raises fears for the survival of democracy itself. It suggests that parts of the population could perceive the upheaval triggered by peak oil as a general systemic crisis. This would create "room for ideological and extremist alternatives to existing forms of government".[156]

See also

- Constitutional liberalism
- Democracy Ranking
- Democratic peace theory
- E-democracy
- Empowered democracy
- Foucault–Habermas debate
- Good governance
- Parliament in the Making
- Shadow government (conspiracy)
- Spatial Citizenship
- Statism

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