**Democracy**

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**Democracy** is a [political](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics) [government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government) either carried out by the people (direct democracy), or the power to govern is granted to elected representatives ([republicanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republicanism)). The term is derived from the [Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): δημοκρατία - (*dēmokratía*) "the power to the people", which was coined from δῆμος (*dêmos*) "people" and κράτος (*krátos*) "power", in the middle of the fifth-fourth century BC to denote the [political systems](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_systems) then existing in some Greek city-states, notably [Athens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_Athens) following a popular uprising in [508 BC](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/508_BC).

Even though there is no specific, universally accepted definition of 'democracy', there are two principles that any definition of **democracy** includes, equality and freedom. These principles are reflected by all citizens being [equal before the law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equality_before_the_law), and having equal access to power. A third common principle, though less measurable, is that all citizens are promised certain legitimized freedoms and liberties, which are generally protected by a [constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution). There are several varieties of democracy, some of which provide better representation and more freedoms for their citizens than others. However, if any democracy is not carefully legislated to avoid an uneven distribution of political power with balances, such as the [separation of powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers), then a branch of the system of rule could accumulate power and become harmful to the democracy itself.

The "[majority rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority_rule)" is often described as a characteristic feature of democracy, but without responsible government or constitutional protections of individual liberties from democratic power it is possible for [dissenting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissenting) individuals to be oppressed by the "[tyranny of the majority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyranny_of_the_majority)". An essential process in representative democracies is competitive [elections](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections), that are fair both substantively and procedurally. Furthermore, [freedom of political expression](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_%28political%29), [freedom of speech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_speech) and [freedom of the press](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_the_press) are essential so that citizens are informed and able to vote in their personal interests.

[Popular sovereignty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_sovereignty) is common but not a universal motivating subject for establishing a democracy. In some countries, democracy is based on the philosophical principle of equal rights. Many people use the term "democracy" as shorthand for [liberal democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy), which may include additional elements such as [political pluralism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_pluralism), [equality before the law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law), the [right to petition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_to_petition) elected officials for redress of grievances, [due process](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Due_process), [civil liberties](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_liberties), [human rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights), and elements of [civil society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society) outside the government.

In the United States, [separation of powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers) is often cited as a supporting attribute, but in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, the dominant philosophy is [parliamentary sovereignty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_sovereignty) (though in practice [judicial independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judicial_independence) is generally maintained). In other cases, "democracy" is used to mean [direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy). Though the term "democracy" is typically used in the context of a political [state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereign_state), the principles are also applicable to private [organizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organization) and other groups.

Democracy has its origins in [Ancient Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece). However other cultures have significantly contributed to the evolution of democracy such as [Ancient Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Rome), Europe, and North and South America. Democracy has been called the "last form of government" and has spread considerably across the globe. The [Right to vote](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suffrage) has been expanded in many Jurisdictions over time from relatively narrow groups (such as wealthy men of a particular ethnic group), with [New Zealand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand) the first nation to grant [universal suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage) for all its citizens in 1893. Suffrage still remains a controversial issue with regard to disputed territories, areas with significant [immigration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration), and countries that exclude certain demographic groups.

**History of democracy**

Main article: [History of democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_democracy)

**Ancient origins**

The term *democracy* first appeared in ancient Greek political and philosophical thought. The [philosopher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosopher) [Plato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato) contrasted democracy, the system of "rule by the governed", with the alternative systems of [monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy) (rule by one individual), [oligarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oligarchy) (rule by a small élite class) and [timocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timocracy). Although [Athenian democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_democracy) is today considered by many to have been a form of direct democracy, originally it had two distinguishing features: firstly the allotment (selection by lot) of ordinary citizens to government offices and courts, and secondarily the assembly of all the citizens.

All citizens were eligible to speak and vote in the Assembly, which set the laws of the city-state. However, the Athenian citizenship was only for males born from a father who was citizen and who had been doing their "military service" between 18 and 20 years old; this exclude [women](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women), [slaves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slaves), foreigners (μετοίκος / metoikos) and males under 20 years old. Of the 250,000 inhabitants only some 30,000 on average were citizens. Of those 30,000 perhaps 5,000 might regularly attend one or more meetings of the popular Assembly. Most of the officers and magistrates of Athenian government were allotted; only the generals ([strategoi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategoi)) and a few other officers were elected.

A serious claim for early democratic institutions comes from the independent "republics" of [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), [*sanghas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sangha) and [*ganas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gana), which existed as early as the sixth century BC and persisted in some areas until the fourth century AD. The evidence is scattered and no pure historical source exists for that period. In addition, [Diodorus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diodorus) (a Greek historian at the time of [Alexander the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great)'s excursion of India), without offering any detail, mentions that independent and democratic states existed in India.

A possible example of primitive democracy may have been the early [Sumerian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumer) city-states. [Vaishali](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaishali_%28ancient_city%29) in what is now [Bihar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bihar), [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) is also one of the first governments in the world to have elements of what we would today consider democracy, similar to those found in ancient Greece. A similar proto-democracy or oligarchy existed temporarily among the [Medes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medes) in the 6th century BC, but which came to an end after the [Achaemenid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire) Emperor [Darius the Great](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darius_I_of_Persia) declared that the best monarchy was better than the best oligarchy or best democracy.

Even though the [Roman Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Republic) contributed significantly into certain aspects of democracy, such as Laws, it never became a democracy. Only Romans citizens had elections for choosing representatives and the votes of the wealthy were given more weight through a system of [Gerrymandering](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrymandering). For that reason, almost all high officials, including members of the [Senate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate), came from a few wealthy and noble families. However, many notable exceptions did occur.

[Democracy Index](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index) as published in January, 2007. The palest blue countries get a score above 9.5 out of 10 (with [Sweden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweden) being the most democratic country at 9.88), while the black countries score below 2 (with [North Korea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea) being the least democratic at 1.03).

**Middle Ages**

During the [Middle Ages](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages), there were various systems involving elections or assemblies, although often only involving a small amount of the population, such as [the election of Uthman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_election_of_Uthman) in the [Rashidun Caliphate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashidun_Caliphate), the election of [Gopala](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gopala_%28Pala_king%29) in [Bengal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengal), the [Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish-Lithuanian_Commonwealth), the [Althing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Althing) in [Iceland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland), certain [medieval Italian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_Italy) city-states such as [Venice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice), the [tuatha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuatha) system in early medieval Ireland, the [Veche](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veche) in [Novgorod](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novgorod_Republic) and [Pskov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pskov_Republic) Republics of medieval Russia, [Scandinavian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandinavia) [Things](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thing_%28assembly%29), [The States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_States) in [Tirol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Tyrol) and [Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland) and the autonomous merchant city of [Sakai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakai%2C_Osaka) in the 16th century in Japan. However, participation was often restricted to a minority, and so may be better classified as [oligarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oligarchy). Most regions in medieval Europe were ruled by clergy or feudal lords.

A little closer to modern democracy were the Cossack republics of Ukraine in the 16th-17th centuries: [Cossack Hetmanate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cossack_Hetmanate) and [Zaporizhian Sich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zaporizhian_Sich). The highest post - the [Hetman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hetmans_of_Ukrainian_Cossacks) - was elected by the representatives from the country's districts. Because these states were very militarized, the right to participate in Hetman's elections was largely restricted to those who served in the Cossack Army and over time was curtailed effectively limiting these rights to higher army ranks.

[Magna Carta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta), 1215, England

The [Parliament of England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_England) had its roots in the restrictions on the power of kings written into [Magna Carta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta), explicitly protected certain rights of the King's subjects, whether free or fettered — and implicitly supported what became English writ of [habeas corpus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habeas_corpus), safeguarding individual freedom against unlawful imprisonment with right to appeal. First elected parliament was [De Montfort's Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Montfort%27s_Parliament) in England in 1265.

However only a small minority actually had a voice; Parliament was elected by only a few percent of the population (less than 3% in 1780.), and power to call parliament was at the pleasure of the monarch (usually when he or she needed funds) and the system had problematic features such as [rotten boroughs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotten_boroughs), of which measures were taken against notably [Reform Act 1832](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Act_1832) that introduced wide-ranging changes to the electoral system of the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), increasing the size of electorate by 50–80%. After [Glorious Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glorious_Revolution) 1688, [English Bill of Rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Bill_of_Rights) 1689 was enacted, which codified certain rights and increased the influence of Parliament. The franchise was slowly increased and Parliament gradually gained more power until monarch became largely a figurehead.

Democracy was also seen to a certain extent in [bands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Band_society) and [tribes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribe) such as the [Iroquois Confederacy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iroquois_Confederacy). However, in the Iroquois Confederacy only the males of certain clans could be leaders and some clans were excluded. Only the oldest females from the same clans could choose and remove the leaders. This excluded most of the population. An interesting detail is that there should be consensus among the leaders, not majority support decided by [voting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting), when making decisions.

[Band societies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Band_societies), such as the [Bushmen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bushmen), which usually number 20-50 people in the band often do not have leaders and make decisions based on consensus among the majority. In [Melanesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melanesia), farming village communities have traditionally been egalitarian and lacking in a rigid, authoritarian hierarchy. Although a ["Big man"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_man_%28anthropology%29) or "Big woman" could gain influence, that influence was conditional on a continued demonstration of leadership skills, and on the willingness of the community. Every person was expected to share in communal duties, and entitled to participate in communal decisions. However, strong social pressure encouraged conformity and discouraged individualism.

**18th and 19th centuries**

Number of nations 1800-2003 scoring 8 or higher on [Polity IV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity_IV) scale, another widely used measure of democracy.

Although not described as a democracy by the [founding fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_fathers), the United States founders shared a determination to root the American experiment in the principle of natural freedom and equality. The [United States Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution), adopted in 1788, provided for an elected government and protected civil rights and liberties for some.

In the colonial period before 1776, and for some time after, only adult white male property owners could vote; enslaved Africans, free black people and women were not extended the franchise. On the [American frontier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontier_Thesis), democracy became a way of life, with widespread social, economic and political equality. However, slavery was a social and economic institution, particularly in eleven states in the American South, that a variety of organizations were established advocating the movement of black people from the United States to locations where they would enjoy greater freedom and equality.

During the 1820s and 1830s the [American Colonization Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Colonization_Society) (A.C.S.) was the primary vehicle for proposals to return black Americans to freedom in Africa. It had broad support nationwide among white people, including prominent leaders such as [Henry Clay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Clay) and [James Monroe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Monroe), who saw this as preferable to [emancipation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emancipation) in America, and in 1821 the A.C.S. established colony of [Liberia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberia), assisting thousands of former African-American slaves and free black people to move there from the United States.

By the 1840s almost all property restrictions were ended and nearly all white adult male citizens could vote; and turnout averaged 60–80% in frequent elections for local, state and national officials. The system gradually evolved, from [Jeffersonian Democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffersonian_Democracy) to [Jacksonian Democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacksonian_Democracy) and beyond. In the 1860 Census the slave population in the United States had grown to four million., and in [Reconstruction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction_era_of_the_United_States) after the Civil War (late 1860s) the newly freed [slaves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolitionism) became citizens with (in the case of men) a nominal right to vote, and full enfranchisement of citizens was not secured until after the [African-American Civil Rights Movement (1955–1968)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_%281955%E2%80%931968%29) which campaigned for freedom of oppression from [white Americans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Americans), gained passage by the United States Congress of the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_Rights_Act_of_1965).

The establishment of [universal male suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage) in France in [1848](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1848) was an important milestone in the history of democracy.

In 1789, [Revolutionary France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_France) adopted the [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Man_and_of_the_Citizen) and, although short-lived, the [National Convention](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Convention) was elected by all males in [1792](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1792). [Universal male suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage) was definitely established in [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) in March [1848](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1848) in the wake of the [French Revolution of 1848](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution_of_1848).

The Australian colonies became democratic during the mid-19th century, with [South Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Australia) being the first government in the world to introduce women's suffrage in 1861. (It was argued that as women would vote the same as their husbands, this essentially gave married men two votes, which was not unreasonable.)

[New Zealand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand) granted suffrage to (native) [Maori](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maori) men in 1867, white men in 1879, and women in 1893, thus becoming the first major nation to achieve [universal suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage). However, women were not eligible to stand for parliament until 1919.

Liberal democracies were few and often short-lived before the late nineteenth century, and various nations and territories have also claimed to be the first with [universal suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage).

**20th century**

Since World War II, democracy has gained widespread acceptance. This map displays the official self-identification made by world governments with regard to democracy, as of March 2008. It shows the [*de jure*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_jure) status of democracy in the world Governments self-identified as democratic Governments not self-identified as democratic: [Vatican City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatican_City), [Saudi Arabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia), [Myanmar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar) and [Brunei](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunei).

[India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) is the largest current democracy in the world.

20th century transitions to liberal democracy have come in successive "waves of democracy," variously resulting from wars, revolutions, [decolonization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decolonization), [religious and economic circumstances](http://www.prc.utexas.edu/prec/en/publications/articles/index.html). [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I) and the dissolution of the [Ottoman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_empire) and [Austro-Hungarian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austria-Hungary) empires resulted in the creation of new nation-states from Europe, most of them at least nominally democratic.

In the 1920s democracy flourished, but the [Great Depression](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression) brought disenchantment, and most of the countries of Europe, Latin America, and Asia turned to strong-man rule or dictatorships. [Fascism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism) and dictatorships flourished in [Nazi Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany), [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy), [Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spain) and [Portugal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portugal), as well as nondemocratic regimes in the [Baltics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltics), the [Balkans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkans), [Brazil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil), [Cuba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba), [China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China), and [Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan), among others.

[World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) brought a definitive reversal of this trend in western Europe. The successful democratization of the [American, British, and French sectors of occupied Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allied_Control_Council) (disputed), Austria, Italy, and the [occupied Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupied_Japan) served as a model for the later theory of [regime change](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regime_change).

However, most of [Eastern Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Europe), including the [Soviet sector of Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Democratic_Republic) was forced into the non-democratic [Soviet bloc](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_bloc). The war was followed by [decolonization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decolonization), and again most of the new independent states had nominally democratic constitutions. [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) emerged as the world's largest democracy and continues to be so.

In the decades following World War II, most western democratic nations had [mixed economies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed_economy) and developed a [welfare state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welfare_state), reflecting a general consensus among their electorates and political parties. In the 1950s and 1960s, economic growth was high in both the western and [Communist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism) countries; it later declined in the state-controlled economies. By 1960, the vast majority of country-states were nominally democracies, although the majority 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.)

This graph shows [Freedom House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_House)'s evaluation of the number of nations in the different categories given above for the period for which there are surveys, 1972-2005

A subsequent wave of [democratization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratization) brought substantial gains toward true liberal democracy for many nations. [Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_democratic_transition), [Portugal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portuguese_transition_to_democracy) (1974), and several of the military dictatorships in South America returned to civilian rule in the late 1970s and early 1980s ([Argentina in 1983](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argentine_transition_to_democracy), [Bolivia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Bolivia), [Uruguay in 1984](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Uruguay), [Brazil in 1985](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Brazil_%281985%E2%80%93present%29), and [Chile in the early 1990s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chilean_transition_to_democracy)). This was followed by nations in [East](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asia) and [South Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Asia) by the mid- to late 1980s.

Economic malaise in the 1980s, along with resentment of communist oppression, contributed to the [collapse of the Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Soviet_Union_%281985-1991%29), the associated end of the [Cold War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War), and the democratization and [liberalization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberalization) of the former [Eastern bloc](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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 liberalization include the [Indonesian Revolution of 1998](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesian_Revolution_of_1998), the [Bulldozer Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5th_October_Overthrow) in [Yugoslavia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Republic_of_Yugoslavia), the [Rose Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rose_Revolution) in [Georgia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_%28country%29), the [Orange Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Revolution) in [Ukraine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine), the [Cedar Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cedar_Revolution) in [Lebanon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon), and the [Tulip Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulip_Revolution) in [Kyrgyzstan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyzstan).

Currently, there are 123 countries that are democratic, and the trend is increasing (up from 40 in 1972). As such, it has been speculated that this trend may continue in the future to the point where liberal democratic nation-states become the universal standard form of human [society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society). This prediction forms the core of [Francis Fukayama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Fukayama)'s "[End of History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_End_of_History_and_the_Last_Man)" controversial theory. These theories are criticized by those who fear an evolution of liberal democracies to [post-democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-democracy), and other who points out the high number of [illiberal democracies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illiberal_democracies).

**Forms**

Main articles: [Varieties of democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varieties_of_democracy) and [List of types of democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_types_of_democracy)

Democracy has taken a number of forms, both in theory and practice. The following kinds 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.

Political ratings of countries according to [Freedom House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_House)’s [Freedom in the World](http://freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=463) survey, 2009:     Free     Partly Free     Not Free The report states that economic freedom, not democracy, leads to political freedom.

**Representative**

[Representative democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representative_democracy) involves the selection of government officials by the people being represented. If the head of state is also democratically elected is also called a democratic republic. The most common mechanisms involve election of the candidate with a majority or a plurality of the votes.

Representatives may be elected or become diplomatic representatives by a particular district (or [constituency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constituency)), or represent the entire electorate proportionally [proportional](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proportional_representation) systems, with some using a combination of the two. Some representative democracies also incorporate elements of direct democracy, such as [referendums](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referendum). A characteristic of representative democracy is that while the representatives are elected by the people to act in their interest, they retain the freedom to exercise their own judgment as how best to do so.

**Parliamentary**

[Parliamentary democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_democracy) is where government is appointed by parliamentary 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.

**Liberal**

A [Liberal democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law), and usually moderated by a constitution that emphasizes 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).

**Constitutional**

*See:* [*Constitutional democracy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_democracy)

**Direct**

[Direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy) is a political system where the citizens participate in the decision-making personally, contrary to relying on intermediaries or representatives. The supporters of direct democracy argue that democracy is more than merely a procedural issue. A direct democracy gives the voting population the power to:

1. Change constitutional laws,
2. Put forth initiatives, referenda 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.

Of the three measures mentioned, most operate in developed democracies today. This is part of a gradual shift towards direct democracies. Examples of this include the extensive use of [referenda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referendum) in [California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California) with more than 20 million voters, and (i.e., voting). in [Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland), where five million voters decide on national referenda and [initiatives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Initiative) two to four times a year; direct democratic instruments are also well established at the cantonal and communal level. [Vermont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vermont) towns have been known for their yearly town meetings, held every March to decide on local issues. No direct democracy is in existence outside the framework of a different overarching form of government. Most direct democracies to date have been weak forms, relatively small communities, usually [city-states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City-state). The world is yet to see a large, fundamental, working example of direct democracy as of yet, with most examples being small and weak forms.

*See:* [*List of direct democracy parties*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_direct_democracy_parties)

**Participatory**

A [Parpolity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parpolity) or Participatory Polity is a theoretical form of democracy that is ruled by a [Nested Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parpolity) 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 can vote differently than their sending council might wish, but are mandated to communicate the wishes of their sending council. Delegates are recallable at any time. Referenda are possible at any time via votes of the majority of 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_economy) *See:* [*Parpolity*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parpolity)

**Socialist**

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

— [Che Guevara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che_Guevara), Marxist revolutionary

[Socialist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism) thought has several different views on democracy. [Social democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_democracy), [democratic socialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_socialism), and the [dictatorship of the proletariat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictatorship_of_the_proletariat) (usually exercised through [Soviet democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_democracy)) are some examples. Many democratic socialists and social democrats believe in a form of [participatory democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_democracy) and [workplace democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workplace_democracy) combined with a [representative democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representative_democracy).

Within [Marxist orthodoxy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_in_Marxist_theory) there is a hostility to what is commonly called "liberal democracy", which they simply refer to as parliamentary democracy because of its often centralized nature. Because of their desire to eliminate the political elitism they see in capitalism, [Marxists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism), [Leninists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leninism) and [Trotskyists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trotskyism) believe in [direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy) implemented though a system of [communes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commune_%28Socialism%29) (which are sometimes called [soviets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_%28council%29)). This system ultimately manifests itself as council democracy and begins with workplace democracy. (See [Democracy in Marxism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_in_Marxism))

**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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism) is [direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy). [Pierre-Joseph Proudhon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre-Joseph_Proudhon) argued that the only acceptable form of direct democracy is one in which it is recognized that majority decisions are not binding on the minority, even when unanimous. However, [anarcho-communist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarcho-communist) [Murray Bookchin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murray_Bookchin) criticized [individualist anarchists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individualist_anarchists) for opposing democracy, and says "majority rule" is consistent with anarchism.

Some anarcho-communists oppose the majoritarian nature of direct democracy, feeling that it can impede individual liberty and opt in favor of a non-majoritarian form of [consensus democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_democracy), similar to Proudhon's position on direct democracy. [Henry David Thoreau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_David_Thoreau), who did not self-identify as an anarchist but argued for "a better government" 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.

**Iroquois**

[Iroquois](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iroquois) society had a form of participatory democracy and representative democracy. Iroquois government and law was discussed by Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Though some others disagree, some scholars regard it to have influenced the formation of American representative democracy.

**Sortition**

Sometimes called "democracy without elections", [sortition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sortition) is the process of choosing 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_Democracy) and is still used in modern [jury selection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jury_selection).

**Consensus**

[Consensus democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_democracy) requires varying degrees of consensus rather than just a mere democratic majority. It typically attempts to protect minority rights from domination by majority rule.

**Supranational**

[Qualified majority voting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualified_majority_voting) (QMV) is designed by the [Treaty of Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Rome) to be the principal method of reaching decisions in the [European Council of Ministers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Council_of_Ministers). This system allocates votes to member states in part according to their population, but heavily weighted in favor 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.

Some might consider the "individuals" being democratically represented to be states rather than people, as with many other [international organizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_organization). [European Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament) members are democratically directly elected on the basis of universal suffrage, may be seen as an example of a [supranational](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supranational) democratic institution.

**Cosmopolitan**

[Cosmopolitan democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmopolitan_democracy), also known as [Global democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_democracy) or [World Federalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=World_Federalism&action=edit&redlink=1) is a political system in which democracy is implemented on a global scale, either directly or through representatives. The supporters of cosmopolitan democracy argue that it is fundamentally different than any form of national or regional democracy, because in a Cosmopolitan Democracy, decisions are made by people influenced by them, while in Regional and National Democracies, decisions often influence people outside the constituency, which by-definition cannot vote.

In a globalized world, argue the supporters of Cosmopolitan Democracy, any attempt to solve global problems would either be undemocratic or have to implement cosmopolitan democracy. The challenge of cosmopolitan democracy is to apply some of the values and norms of democracy, including the rule of law, the non-violent resolutions of conflicts, and the equality among citizens, also beyond the state. This requires to reform [international organizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_organizations), first of all the [United Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations), and to create new institutions, such as a [World Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Parliament), which could increase the degree of public control and accountability on international politics.

Cosmopolitan Democracy was promoted, among others, by physicist Albert Einstein, writer Kurt Vonnegut, columnist George Monbiot, and professors [David Held](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Held) and [Daniele Archibugi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniele_Archibugi).

**Non-governmental**

Aside from the public sphere, similar democratic principles and mechanisms of voting and representation have been used to govern other kinds of communities and organizations.

* Many [non-governmental organizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organizations) decide policy and leadership by voting.
* Most [trade unions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_union) choose their leadership through democratic elections.
* [Cooperatives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperatives) are enterprises owned and democratically controlled by their customers or workers.

**Theory**

Voting is an important part of the formal democratic process.

**Aristotle**

[Aristotle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle) contrasted rule by the many (democracy/[polity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity)), with rule by the few ([oligarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oligarchy)/[aristocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristocracy)), and with rule by a single person ([tyranny](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyranny) or today [autocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autocracy)/[monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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).

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 if this is the principle of justice prevailing, the multitude must of necessity be sovereign and the decision of the majority must be final and must constitute justice, for they say that each of the citizens ought to have an equal share; so that it results that in democracies the poor are more powerful than the rich, because there are more of them and whatever is decided by the majority is sovereign. This then is one mark of liberty which all democrats set down as a principle of the constitution. 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. This is the second principle of democracy, and from it has come the claim not to be governed, preferably not by anybody, or failing that, to govern and be governed in turns; and this is the way in which the second principle contributes to equalitarian liberty.

**Conceptions**

Among political theorists, there are many contending conceptions of democracy.

* *Aggregative democracy* uses democratic processes to solicit citizens’ preferences and then 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting), where the policy with the most votes gets implemented. There are different variants of this:
	+ Under *minimalism*, democracy is a system of government in which citizens give 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Schumpeter) articulated this view most famously in his book *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. Contemporary proponents of minimalism include [William H. Riker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_H._Riker), [Adam Przeworski](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Przeworski), [Richard Posner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Posner).
	+ [Direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy), on the other hand, holds that citizens should participate directly, not through their representatives, in making laws and policies. Proponents of direct democracy offer varied reasons to support this view. Political activity can be valuable in itself, it socializes 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 his left and the other half to his right. This is not actually a desirable outcome as it represents the action of self-interested and somewhat unaccountable political elites competing for votes. Downs suggests that ideological political parties are necessary to act as a mediating broker between individual and governments. [Anthony Downs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Downs) laid out this view in his 1957 book *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.
	+ [Robert A. Dahl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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. Somesee a problem with the wealthy having more influence and therefore argue for reforms like [campaign finance reform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campaign_finance_reform). Somemay see it as a problem that the majority of the voters decide policy, as opposed to majority rule of the entire population. This can be used as an argument for making political participation mandatory, like compulsory [voting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting) or for making it more patient (non-compulsory) by simply refusing power to the government until the full majority feels inclined to speak their minds.
* [*Deliberative democracy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliberative_democracy) is based on the notion that democracy is government by discussion. Deliberative democrats contend that laws and policies should be based upon reasons that all citizens can accept. The political arena should be one in which leaders and citizens make arguments, listen, and change their minds.
* [*Radical democracy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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.

**Republic**

Main article: [Republicanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republicanism)

In contemporary usage, the term *democracy* refers to a government chosen by the people, whether it is direct or representative. The term [*republic*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic) has many different meanings, but today often refers to a representative democracy with an elected [head of state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_state), such as a [president](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President), serving for a limited term, in contrast to states with a hereditary [monarch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarch) as a head of state, even if these states also are representative democracies with an elected or appointed [head of government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Head_of_government) such as a [prime minister](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister).

The [Founding Fathers of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_Fathers_of_the_United_States) rarely praised and often criticized democracy, which in their time tended to specifically mean [direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy); [James Madison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Madison) argued, especially in [*The Federalist* No. 10](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Adams) insisted, 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 *Sir, what have you given us?*. He replied *A republic ma'am, if you can keep it*

**Constitutional monarchs and upper chambers**

Initially after the American and French revolutions the question was open whether a democracy, in order to restrain unchecked majority rule, should have an elitist [upper chamber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_chamber), the members perhaps appointed meritorious experts or having lifetime tenures, or should have a [constitutional monarch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarch) with limited but real powers. Some countries (as Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Scandinavian countries, Thailand, Japan and Bhutan) turned powerful monarchs into constitutional monarchs with limited or, often gradually, merely symbolic roles.

Often the monarchy was abolished along with the aristocratic system (as in France, China, Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Greece and Egypt). Many nations had elite upper houses of legislatures which often had lifetime tenure, but eventually these lost power (as in Britain) or else became elective and remained powerful (as in the United States).

**Facts**

In practice it may not pay the incumbents to conduct fair elections in countries that have no history of democracy. A study showed that incumbents who rig elections stay in office 2.5 times as long as those who permit fair elections. Above $2,700 per capita, democracies have been found to be less prone to violence, but below that threshold, more violence. The same study shows that election misconduct tends to fall 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.

Governments that have frequent elections averaged over the political cycle have significantly better economic policies than those who don't. This does not apply to governments with fraudulent elections, however.

**Opposition to democracy**

Main article: [Opposition to democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposition_to_democracy)

This is one attempted measurement of democracy called the [Polity IV data series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity_IV). This map shows the data presented in the polity IV data series report as of 2003. The lightest countries get a perfect score of 10, while the darkest countries (Saudi Arabia and Qatar), considered the least democratic, score -10.

Democracy in modern times has almost always faced opposition from the existing government. The implementation of a democratic government within a [non-democratic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-democratic) state is typically brought about by [democratic revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_revolution). [Monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy) had traditionally been opposed to democracy, and to this day remains opposed to [its abolition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolition_of_monarchy), although often political [compromise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compromise) has been reached in the form of [shared government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shared_government).

Currently, opposition to democracy exists in [communist states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_state), absolute [monarchies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy), and [Islamic governments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_government), which appear to have various reasons for opposing the implementation of democracy or democratic reforms.

**Criticism of democracy**

Main article: [Criticism of democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criticism_of_democracy)

Economists since [Milton Friedman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milton_Friedman) have strongly 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.

**Mob rule**

[Plato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato)'s [*The Republic*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Republic_%28Plato%29) presents a critical view of democracy through the narration of [Socrates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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." 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kallipolis), an aristocracy lead by the unwilling philosopher-kings (the wisest men) is a [just](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justice) form of government.

**Moral decay**

Traditional [Asian cultures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_culture), in particular that of [Confucian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism) and [Islamic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic) thought, believe that democracy results in the people's distrust and disrespect of governments or religious sanctity. The distrust and disrespect pervades to all parts of society whenever and wherever there is [seniority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seniority) and juniority, for example between a [parent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parents) and a [child](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child), a [teacher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teacher) and a [student](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Student).

**Political instability**

More recently, democracy is criticized 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 priority.

**Short-termism**

Democracy is also criticized for frequent elections due to the instability of coalition governments. Coalitions are frequently formed *after* the elections in many countries (for example [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India)) and the basis of alliance is predominantly to enable a viable majority, not an ideological concurrence.

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.

**Slow governmental response**

Democratic institutions work on consensus to decide an issue, which usually takes longer than a unilateral decision.

**Vote Buying**

This is a simple form of appealing to the short term interests of the voters. This tactic has been known to be heavily used in north and north-east region of Thailand.

Another form is commonly called [Pork barrel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pork_barrel) where local areas or political sectors are given special benefits but whose costs are spread among all taxpayers.

**Illiberal democracy**

Mere elections are just one aspect of the democratic process. If one examines the central tenets of democracy, i.e., equality and freedom, these are frequently absent in ostensibly democratic countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Moreover, in many countries, democratic participation is less than 50% at times, which makes them democracies only in name. The Election of individual(s) instead of ideas is the primary disrupter of democracy.

**Volatility/unsustainability**

The new establishment of democratic institutions in countries where the associated practices have as yet been uncommon or deemed culturally unacceptable, can result in institutions, that are not sustainable in the long term. One circumstance supporting this outcome may be when it is part of the common perception among the populace that the institutions were established as a direct result of foreign pressure.

**Popular Rule as a Facade**

The 20th Century Italian thinkers Pareto and 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.

**See also**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | [***Politics portal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3APolitics) |

* [List of types of democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_types_of_democracy)
* [Parliamentary democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_democracy)
* [Cosmopolitan democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmopolitan_democracy)
* [Crowdsourcing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crowdsourcing)
* [Community of Democracies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_Democracies)
* [Democracy Index](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index)
* [Democratic Peace Theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Peace_Theory)
* [Democratization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratization)
* [Direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy)
* [List of direct democracy parties](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_direct_democracy_parties)
* [E-democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-democracy)
* [Election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election)
* [Foucault/Habermas debate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foucault/Habermas_debate)
* [Freedom deficit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_deficit)
* [Freedom House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_House), Freedom in the World report
* [Liberal democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy)
* [Majority rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority_rule)
* [Media democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_democracy)
* [Netocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netocracy)
* [Poll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opinion_poll)
* [Polyarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyarchy)
* [Sociocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociocracy)
* [Sortition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sortition)
* [Subversion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subversion_%28politics%29)
* [Voting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting)

"Model Government Charters: A City, County, Regional, State, and Federal Handbook," published by McFarland and Co., Inc., Jefferson, NC, USA; and London, UK, edited by Roger L. Kemp, Ph.D.

The [United Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) has declared [Sept. 15](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_15) as the [International Day of Democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Day_of_Democracy).

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