**Democracy**

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For the use of the term "democracy" as a system involving distribution of political power in the hands of the public which forms the electorate, representative government, and freedom of speech, see [Liberal democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy). For other uses, see [Democracy (disambiguation)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_%28disambiguation%29).

A woman casts her vote in the second round of the [2007 French presidential election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_French_presidential_election).

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[Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom%C3%A1%C5%A1_Garrigue_Masaryk), the first [President](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Presidents_of_Czechoslovakia) of [Czechoslovakia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czechoslovakia), is remembered for his saying "*Demokracie má své chyby, protože občané mají své chyby. Jaký pán, takový krám.*" ([Czech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czech_language): "Democracy has its faults, because people have their faults. Like owner, like store."). He regularly described democracy as "a discussion".

**Democracy** is a [form of government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_of_government) in which all [eligible citizens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizenship) are meant to participate equally – either directly or, through elected representatives, indirectly – in the proposal, development and establishment of the [laws](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law) by which their society is run. The term originates from the [Greek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek) δημοκρατία (*dēmokratía*) "rule of the people", which was found from δῆμος (*dêmos*) "people" and κράτος (*kratos*) "power" or "rule" in the 5th century BCE to denote the [political systems](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_systems) then existing in [Greek city-states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_city-state), notably [Athens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_Athens); the term is an antonym to [ἀριστοκρατία](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%E1%BC%80%CF%81%CE%B9%CF%83%CF%84%CE%BF%CE%BA%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%AF%CE%B1) (*aristokratia*) "rule of an elite". While theoretically these definitions are in opposition, in practice the distinction has been blurred historically. The political system of Classical Athens, for example, granted democratic citizenship to an elite class of 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_French) and [Middle Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Latin) equivalents.

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

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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy), in which all eligible citizens have direct and active participation in the political decision making. 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representative_democracy) or [democratic republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_republic).

**Characteristics**

No consensus exists on how to define democracy, but [legal equality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_equality), [freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_freedom) and [rule of law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law) have been identified as important characteristics since ancient times. These principles are reflected in all eligible citizens being [equal before the law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equality_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 legitimized rights and liberties which are typically protected by a [constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution).

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.

The term "democracy" is sometimes used as shorthand for [liberal democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy), which is a variant of representative democracy that may include elements such as [political pluralism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_pluralism); equality before the 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. [Roger Scruton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Scruton) argues that democracy alone cannot provide personal and political freedom unless the institutions of [civil society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society) are also present.

In some countries, notably in the United Kingdom which originated the [Westminster system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_system), the dominant principle is that of [parliamentary sovereignty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_sovereignty), while maintaining [judicial independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judicial_independence). In the United States, [separation of powers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers) is often cited as a central attribute. In [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), the world's largest democracy, parliamentary sovereignty is subject to a [constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution) which includes [judicial review](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judicial_review). Other uses of "democracy" include that of [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/State_%28polity%29), the principles also are applicable to private [organizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation).

[Majority rule](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majority_rule) is often listed as a characteristic of democracy. Hence, democracy allows for [political minorities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minority_group) to be oppressed by the "[tyranny of the majority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](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 considered to be essential rights that allow eligible citizens to be adequately informed and able to vote according to their own interests.

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. With its emphasis on notions of [social contract](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_contract) and the collective will of the all voters, democracy can also be characterized as a form of political [collectivism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivism) because it is defined as a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in lawmaking.

While representative democracy is sometimes equated with the republican form of government, the term "[republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic)" classically has encompassed both democracies and [aristocracies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristocracy). Many democracies are [constitutional monarchies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy), such as the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom).

**Nondemocracy**

Nondemocracies are governments that are not democratic. Examples include [totalitarian states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Totalitarianism), [autocracies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autocracy), [despots](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Despotism), [autarchies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autarchism), and [dictatorships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictatorship).

**History**

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

**Ancient origins**

See also: [Athenian democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_democracy)

[Cleisthenes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleisthenes), "father of [Athenian democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_democracy)", modern bust

The term "democracy" first appeared in ancient Greek political and philosophical thought in the city-state of [Athens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens) during [classical antiquity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_antiquity). Led by [Cleisthenes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_democracy)."

Athenian democracy took the form of a direct democracy, and it had two distinguishing features: the [random selection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sortition) of ordinary citizens to fill the few existing government administrative and judicial offices, and a legislative assembly consisting of all Athenian citizens. 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman), [slaves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery), foreigners (μέτοικοι *metoikoi*), 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.

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. 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"), 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.

[Range voting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Range_voting) appeared in [Sparta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sparta) as early as 700 BC. The [Apella](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apella) was an assembly of the people, held once a month, in which every male citizen of age 30 could participate. In the Apella, Spartans elected leaders and cast votes by range voting and shouting. [Aristotle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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.

Even though the [Roman Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrymandering), so most 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. 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. Additionally, the Roman model of governance inspired many political thinkers over the centuries, 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. Other cultures, such as the [Iroquis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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, even though much later than the first democracy established in Athens.

**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 part of the population. These included:

* the South Indian Kingdom of the [Chola](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chola) in the [Tamil Nadu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Nadu) region of the [Indian Subcontinent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Subcontinent) had an electoral system 1,000 years ago,
* [Carantania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carantania), old [Slavic/Slovenian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovenes) principality, the Ducal Inauguration from 7th to 15th century,
* the upper-caste election of the [Gopala](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gopala_%28Pala_king%29) in the [Bengal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bengal) region of the [Indian Subcontinent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Subcontinent),
* the [Holy Roman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire)'s [Hoftag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoftag) and [Imperial Diets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Diet) (mostly Nobles and Clergy),
* the [Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish%E2%80%93Lithuanian_Commonwealth) (10% of population),
* the [Althing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Althing) in [Iceland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland),
* the [Løgting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%B8gting) in the [Faeroe Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faeroe_Islands),
* certain [medieval Italian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_Italy) city-states such as [Venice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice), [Genoa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genoa), [Florence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence), [Pisa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pisa), [Lucca](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucca), [Amalfi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalfi), [Siena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siena) and [San Marino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Marino)
* 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 Republics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pskov_Republic) 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_Estates) in [Tirol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Tyrol) and [Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland),
* the autonomous merchant city of [Sakai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sakai%2C_Osaka) in the 16th century in Japan,
* Volta-Nigeric societies such as [Igbo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Nri).
* the Mekhk-Khel system of the [Nakh peoples](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nakh_peoples) of the North Caucasus, by which representatives to the Council of Elders for each [teip](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teip) (clan) were popularly elected by that teip's members.

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

The [Kouroukan Fouga](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kouroukan_Fouga) divided the [Mali Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy) than a [democratic republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_republic). A little closer to modern democracy were the Cossack republics of Ukraine in the 16th and 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.

[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) (1215), which explicitly protected certain rights of the King's subjects, whether free or fettered – and implicitly supported what became the English writ of [habeas corpus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habeas_corpus), safeguarding individual freedom against unlawful imprisonment with right to appeal. The first elected parliament was [De Montfort's Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Montfort%27s_Parliament) in England in 1265. The emergence of [petitioning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_England#The_emergence_of_parliament_as_an_institution) 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.

**Modern era**

**Early modern period**

During the [early modern period](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_modern_period), the power of the Parliament of England continually increased. Passage of the [Petition of Right](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petition_of_Right) in 1628 and [Habeas Corpus Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habeas_Corpus_Act_1679) 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Putney_Debates) of 1647. After the [English Civil Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Civil_War) (1642–1651) and the [Glorious Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glorious_Revolution) of 1688, the [Bill of Rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_of_Rights_1689) 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_absolutism) would not prevail.

In North America, representative government began in [Jamestown, Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamestown%2C_Virginia), with the election of the [House of Burgesses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Burgesses) (forerunner of the [Virginia General Assembly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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; 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puritans) ([Pilgrim Fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilgrim_Fathers)), [Baptists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptists), and [Quakers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quakers) who founded these colonies applied the democratic organization of their congregations also to the administration of their communities in worldly matters.

**18th and 19th centuries**

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

The [first](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Parliament_of_Great_Britain) [Parliament of Great Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_Great_Britain) was established in 1707, after the merger of the [Kingdom of England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_England) and the [Kingdom of Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Scotland) under the [Acts of Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Union_1707). Although the monarch increasingly became a [figurehead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy), 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).

The creation of the short-lived [Corsican Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corsican_Republic) in 1755 marked the first nation in modern history to adopt a democratic [constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution). This [Corsican Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corsican_Constitution) was the first based on [Enlightenment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment) principles and included [female suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female_suffrage), something that was not granted in most other democracies until the 20th century.

In the [American colonial period before 1776](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colonial_history_of_the_United_States), 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. On the [American frontier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frontier_Thesis), democracy became a way of life, with more widespread social, economic and political equality. Although not described as a democracy by the [founding fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_fathers_of_the_united_states), they shared a determination to root the American experiment in the principles of natural freedom and equality.

The [American Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolution) led to the adoption of the [United States Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) in 1787. The Constitution provided for an elected government and protected civil rights and liberties for some, but did not end slavery nor give voting rights to women. This constitution is the oldest surviving, still active, governmental [codified constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codified_constitution). The [Bill of Rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Bill_of_Rights) in 1791 set limits on government power to protect personal freedoms.

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. But after the [Napoleonic Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleonic_Wars) (1803–1815), little of democracy - as theory, practice, or even as word - remained in the North Atlantic world.

During this period, slavery remained a social and economic institution in places around the world. This was particularly the case in the eleven states of the American South. 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.

The United Kingdom's [Slave Trade Act 1807](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slave_Trade_Act_1807) banned the trade across the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire), enforced internationally by the Royal Navy's [West Africa Squadron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Africa_Squadron) under treaties Britain negotiated with other nations. As the voting franchise in the U.K. was increased, it also was made more uniform; many [rotten boroughs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotten_boroughs), with a small number of voters electing a Member of Parliament, were eliminated in a series of reforms beginning with the [Reform Act of 1832](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Act_of_1832). In 1833, the United Kingdom passed the [Slavery Abolition Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_Abolition_Act) which took effect across the British Empire.

[Universal male suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage) was established in [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France) in March 1848 in the wake of the [French Revolution of 1848](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution_of_1848). In 1848, several [revolutions broke out in Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutions_of_1848) as rulers were confronted with popular demands for liberal constitutions and more democratic government.

In the [1860 United States Census](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1860_United_States_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_in_the_United_States) 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)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_%281955%E2%80%931968%29) gained passage by the United States Congress of the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_Rights_Act_of_1965).

**20th and 21st centuries**

The 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.

20th-century transitions to liberal democracy have come in successive "waves of democracy," variously resulting from wars, revolutions, [decolonization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decolonisation), and religious and economic circumstances. [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 and [women's suffrage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_women%27s_suffrage) advanced, 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 [democratization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratisation) 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) fell into the non-democratic [Soviet bloc](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_bloc).

The war was followed by [decolonization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decolonisation), 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. Countries that were once part of the [British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire) often adopted the British [Westminster system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_system).

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 [democratization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratisation) 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 Soviet 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/Liberalisation) 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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), the [Tulip Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulip_Revolution) in [Kyrgyzstan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyzstan), and the [Jasmine Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010%E2%80%932011_Tunisian_revolution) in [Tunisia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tunisia).

According to [Freedom House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_House), in 2007 there were 123 electoral democracies (up from 40 in 1972). 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.

In 2010 the [United Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations) declared September 15 the [International Day of Democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Day_of_Democracy).

**Countries and regions**

The following countries or regions are categorized by the [Democracy Index](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index) 2012, complied by the [Economist Intelligence Unit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economist_Intelligence_Unit), as a *Full democracy*:

1. [Norway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norway)
2. [Sweden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweden)
3. [Iceland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceland)
4. [Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denmark)
5. [New Zealand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand)
6. [Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia)
7. [Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland)
8. [Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada)
9. [Finland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finland)
10. [Netherlands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlands)
11. [Luxembourg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luxembourg)
12. [Austria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austria)
13. [Ireland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ireland)
14. [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany)
15. [Malta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta)
16. [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom)
17. [Czech Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czech_Republic)
18. [Uruguay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruguay)
19. [Mauritius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritius)
20. [South Korea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Korea)
21. [United States of America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_of_America)
22. [Costa Rica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Costa_Rica)
23. [Japan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan)
24. [Belgium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgium)
25. [Spain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spain)

The Index assigns 53 countries or regions to the lower category, *Flawed democracy*: [Argentina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argentina), [Benin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benin), [Botswana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botswana), [Brazil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil), [Bulgaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgaria), [Cape Verde](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Verde), [Chile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chile), [Colombia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colombia), [Croatia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croatia), [Cyprus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyprus), [Dominican Republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominican_Republic), [El Salvador](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Salvador), [Estonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia), [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), [Ghana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghana), [Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece), [Guyana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guyana), [Hungary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungary), [Indonesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia), [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel), [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy), [Jamaica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamaica), [Latvia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latvia), [Lesotho](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesotho), [Lithuania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuania), [Macedonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Macedonia), [Malaysia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysia), [Mali](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mali), [Mexico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexico), [Moldova](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moldova), [Mongolia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongolia), [Montenegro](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montenegro), [Namibia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Namibia), [Panama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama), [Papua New Guinea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papua_New_Guinea), [Paraguay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paraguay), [Peru](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru), [Philippines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippines), [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland), [Portugal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portugal), [Indonesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesia), [Romania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romania), [Serbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbia), [Slovakia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovakia), [Slovenia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovenia), [South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa), [Sri Lanka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka), [Suriname](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suriname), [Taiwan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taiwan), [Thailand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thailand), [Timor-Leste](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timor-Leste), [Trinidad and Tobago](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinidad_and_Tobago), [Zambia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambia).

The Economist Intelligence Unit [Democracy index](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_index) map for 2012, with greener colors representing more democratic countries.

Full democracies:

  9.00-10.00

  8.00-8.99

Flawed democracies:

  7.00-7.99

  6.00-6.99

Hybrid regimes:

  5.00-5.99

  4.00-4.99

Authoritarian regimes:

  3.00-3.99

  2.00-2.99

  0.00-1.99

Insufficient information, no rating:

**Types**

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

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. 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_powers) in its own favor, then a branch of the system can accumulate too much power and destroy the democracy.

World's states colored by [form of government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Form_of_government) as of 20111

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|      [Presidential republics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_system)2 |      [Semi-presidential republics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semi-presidential_system)2 |
|      [Parliamentary republics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_system)2 |      [Single-party states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single-party_state) |
|      [Parliamentary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_system) [constitutional monarchies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy) |      [Absolute monarchies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute_monarchy) |
|      [Military dictatorships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_dictatorship) |      Constitutional monarchies in which the monarch personally exercises power |
|      Republics with an executive president dependent on a parliament |      Countries which do not fit any of the above systems |

 |

1This map was compiled according to the Wikipedia [*list of countries by system of government*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_system_of_government). See there for sources. 2Several states constitutionally deemed to be multiparty republics are broadly described by outsiders as authoritarian states. This map presents only the [*de jure*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_jure) form of government, and not the [*de facto*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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**

Representative democracy is a form of democracy in which people vote for representatives who then vote on policy initiatives as opposed to a direct democracy, a form of democracy in which people vote on policy initiatives directly.

**Direct**

A [Landsgemeinde](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landsgemeinde) (in 2009) of the [Canton of Glarus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canton_of_Glarus), an example of direct democracy in [Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland).

In [Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_in_Switzerland), without needing to register, every citizen receives [ballot papers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballot_papers) and information brochures for each vote (and can send it back by post). Switzerland has a [direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy) system and votes are organized about four times a year.

Main article: [Direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy)

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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Initiative), [referendums](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referendum) 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.

Direct democracy only exists in the [Swiss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland) [cantons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantons_of_Switzerland) of [Appenzell Innerrhoden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appenzell_Innerrhoden) and [Glarus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canton_of_Glarus).

**Representative**

Main article: [Representative democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Representative_democracy)

Representative democracy involves the election of government officials by the people being represented. If the head of state is also [democratically elected](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratically-elected_government) then it is called a democratic [republic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic). The most common mechanisms involve election of the candidate with a majority or a [plurality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plurality_%28voting%29) of the votes. Most western countries have representative systems.

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 through [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 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 pointing out the contradictions of representation mechanisms' with democracy.

**Parliamentary**

Main article: [Parliamentary system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_system)

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.

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. 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 favor 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**

Main article: [Presidential system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential_system)

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.

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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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.

A [semi-presidential system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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.

**Hybrid or semi-direct**

See also: [Politics of Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Switzerland) and [Voting in Switzerland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_in_Switzerland)

Some modern democracies that are predominately 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*, *semi-direct democracies* or *participatory democracies*. Examples include Switzerland and some [U.S. states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state), where frequent use is made of [referendums](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referendum) and [initiatives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Initiatives).

The [Swiss confederation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swiss_confederation) is a semi-direct democracy. At the federal level, citizens can propose changes to the constitution ([federal popular initiative](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_popular_initiative)) or ask for a [referendum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Optional_referendum) to be held on any law voted by the [parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Assembly_%28Switzerland%29). 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). 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), no mechanisms of direct democracy exists at the federal level, but over half of the [states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state) 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Referendum) in the US state of [California](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California), which is a state that has more than 20 million voters.

In [New England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_England) [Town meetings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Town_meeting) are often used, especially in rural areas, to manage local government. This creates a hybrid form of government, with a local [direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy) and a state government which is representative. For example, most [Vermont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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.

**Variants**

**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, often without the protection of a Constitution enshrining basic rights; [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 "Well, Doctor, what have we got—a republic or a monarchy?". He replied "A republic—if you can keep it."

**Constitutional monarchy**

Main article: [Constitutional monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy)

Queen [Elizabeth II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II), a constitutional monarch.

Initially after the American and French revolutions, the question was open whether a democracy, in order to restrain unchecked majority rule, should have an élite [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 with limited but real powers. Some countries (such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, [Scandinavian countries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandinavia), 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 élite upper houses of legislatures which often had lifetime tenure, but eventually these lost power (as in Britain) or else became elective and remained powerful.

**Liberal democracy**

Main article: [Liberal democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_law), and moderated by a constitution or laws that emphasize 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_liberties)).

In a liberal democracy, it is possible for some large-scale decisions to [emerge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emergent_democracy) 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](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/or [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 implemented through 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).)

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), *Speech, Uruguay, 1961*

**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. [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.

[Anarcho-capitalists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarcho-capitalism), [voluntaryists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voluntaryism) and other [right-anarchists](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right-libertarianism) oppose [institutional](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institutional) democracy as they consider it in conflict with widely held [moral values](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_value) and [ethical principles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_principle) and their conception of [individual rights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individual_rights). The [*a priori*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_priori) [Rothbardian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murray_Rothbard) argument is that the [state](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_%28polity%29) is a coercive institution which necessarily violates the [non-aggression principle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-aggression_principle) (NAP). Some right-anarchists also criticize democracy on [*a posteriori*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_posteriori) consequentialist grounds, in terms of inefficiency or disability in bringing about maximization of [individual liberty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individual_liberty). They maintain the people who participate in democratic institutions are foremost driven by economic self-interest.

**Demarchy**

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

Sometimes called "democracy without elections", demarchy uses [sortition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sortition) to choose 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).

**Consociational**

Main article: [Consociational democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consociational_democracy)

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**

Main article: [Consensus democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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-color blind.

**Supranational**

[Qualified majority voting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualified_majority_voting) 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.

**Inclusive**

Main article: [Inclusive Democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inclusive_Democracy)

Inclusive democracy is a political theory and political project that aims for [direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_democracy) in all fields of social life: political democracy in the form of face-to-face assemblies which are confederated, [economic democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_democracy) in a [stateless](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stateless_society), moneyless and marketless economy, democracy in the social realm, i.e. [self-management](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workers%27_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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takis_Fotopoulos) in "Towards An Inclusive Democracy" and was further developed in the journal [*Democracy & Nature*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_%26_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 neighborhoods 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**

Main article: [Participatory politics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_politics)

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 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_economy).

**Cosmopolitan**

Main article: [Cosmopolitan democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmopolitan_democracy)

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.

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 organizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_organisations), e.g. the [United Nations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations), as well as the creation of new institutions such as a [World Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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, writer Kurt Vonnegut, columnist [George Monbiot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Monbiot), and professors [David Held](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Held) and [Daniele Archibugi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniele_Archibugi). The creation of the [International Criminal Court](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Criminal_Court) in 2003 was seen as a major step forward by many supporters of this type of cosmopolitan democracy.

**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 organizations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organisation) decide policy and leadership by voting. Most [trade unions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_union) and [cooperatives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooperatives) are governed by democratic elections. [Corporations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporation) are controlled by [shareholders](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shareholder) on the principle of [one share, one vote](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_share%2C_one_vote).

**Theory**

A marble statue of [Aristotle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle)

**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 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle), [*Politics*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_%28Aristotle%29) *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*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliberative_democracy)*,* and [*radical democracy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radical_democracy)*.*

**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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](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).

According to the theory of [direct democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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 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 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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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*.

[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.

**Deliberative**

[*Deliberative democracy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliberative_democracy) is based on the notion that democracy is government by [deliberation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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 aggregations 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. If the decision-makers cannot reach [consensus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus) after authentically deliberating on a proposal, then they vote on the proposal using a form of majority rule.

**Radical**

[*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.

**Criticism**

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

Protests.

**Inefficiencies**

Economists like [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.

**Popular rule as a façade**

The 20th-century Italian thinkers [Vilfredo Pareto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vilfredo_Pareto) and [Gaetano Mosca](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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. As [Louis Brandeis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Brandeis) once professed, "We may have democracy, or we may have [wealth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wealth) concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both."

All political parties in [Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada) are now cautious about criticism of the high level of [immigration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_to_Canada), because, as noted by *The Globe and Mail*, "in the early 1990s, the old [Reform Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Party_of_Canada) was branded 'racist' for suggesting that immigration levels be lowered from 250,000 to 150,000." As Professor of Economics Don J. DeVoretz pointed out, "In a liberal democracy such as Canada, the following paradox persists. Even though the majority of respondents answer yes to the question: 'Are there too many immigrant arrivals each year?' immigrant numbers continue to rise until a critical set of economic costs appear."

**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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato%27s_five_regimes) 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.

[James Madison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Madison) critiqued direct democracy (which he referred to simply as "democracy") in [Federalist No. 10](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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 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 priorities.

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. In countries with income above per capita, democracies have been found to be less prone to violence, but below that threshold, more prone violence. 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.

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 that hold fraudulent elections.

**Opposition**

Main article: [Anti-democratic thought](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-democratic_thought)

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](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 [the abolition of its privileges](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolition_of_monarchy), although often political compromise has been reached in the form of [shared government](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy).

Post-Enlightenment ideologies such as [fascism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fascism), [Nazism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazism) and [neo-fundamentalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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 outlined historical and social factors 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).

Others mentioned the influence of *wealth* (e.g. S. M. Lipset, 1959). In a related theory, [Ronald Inglehart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Inglehart) suggests that the increase in living standards has convinced people that they can take their basic survival for granted, and led to increased emphasis on [self-expression values](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-expression_values), which is highly correlated to democracy.

[Carroll Quigley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carroll_Quigley) concludes that the characteristics of weapons are the main predictor of democracy: Democracy tends to emerge only when the best weapons available are easy for individuals to buy and use. By the 1800s, guns were the best weapon 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 Similarly, Periclean Greece was an age of the citizen soldier and democracy.

Recently established theories stress the relevance of *education* and [*human capital*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_capital) and within them of [*cognitive ability*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence) 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.

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 modernization 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. Neither is there convincing evidence that increased reliance on oil revenues prevents democratization, despite a vast theoretical literature called "[The Resource Curse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Resource_Curse)" that asserts that oil revenues sever the link between citizen taxation and government accountability, the key to representative democracy. The lack of evidence for these conventional theories of democratization have led researchers to search for the "deep" determinants of contemporary political institutions, be they geographical or demographic.

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 criticized as "the reigning dogma of our time". The argument is 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, which is a truth-based discipline, is particularly corrupted by the idea that the correct conclusion can be arrived at by popular vote.

Robert Michels asserts that although democracy can never be fully realized, 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 symbolize democracy."

Dr. Harald Wydra, in his book *Communism and The Emergence of Democracy*, 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". 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 has analyzed how [peak oil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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".

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