


PAPER - I

Democracy

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For representative democracy, which operates under the principles of liberalism, see [Liberal democracy](#). For other uses, see [Democracy \(disambiguation\)](#) and [Democrat \(disambiguation\)](#).



[Nelson Mandela](#) casting his ballot in the [1994 South African general election](#). In the 1990s, the dissolution of [apartheid](#) in favour of [universal suffrage](#) allowed tens of millions of South Africans, including Mandela, to vote for the first time.

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Democracy (from [Ancient Greek](#): δημοκρατία, [romanized](#): *dēmokratía*, *dēmos* 'people' and *kratos* 'rule')^[1] is a system of [government](#) in which [state power](#) is vested in [the people](#) or the [general population](#) of a state.^{[2][3][4]} Under a minimalist definition of democracy, rulers are elected through competitive elections while more expansive definitions link democracy to guarantees of [civil liberties](#) and human rights in addition to competitive elections.^{[5][6][4]}

In a [direct democracy](#), the people have the direct [authority](#) to [deliberate](#) and decide legislation. In a [representative democracy](#), the people choose governing [officials](#) through [elections](#) to do so. Who is considered part of "the people" and how authority is shared among or delegated by the people has changed over time and at different rates in different countries. Features of democracy oftentimes include [freedom of assembly](#), [association](#), [personal property](#), [freedom of religion](#) and [speech](#), [citizenship](#), [consent of the governed](#), [voting rights](#), freedom from unwarranted governmental [deprivation](#) of the [right to life](#) and [liberty](#), and [minority rights](#).

The notion of democracy has evolved considerably over time. Throughout history, one can find evidence of direct democracy, in which [communities](#) make decisions through [popular assembly](#). Today, the dominant form of democracy is representative democracy, where citizens elect government officials to govern on their behalf such as in a [parliamentary](#) or [presidential democracy](#). Most democracies apply in most cases [majority rule](#),^{[7][8]} but in some cases [plurality rule](#), [supermajority rule](#) (e.g. constitution) or [consensus rule](#) (e.g. Switzerland) are applied. They serve the crucial purpose of inclusiveness and broader legitimacy on sensitive issues—counterbalancing [majoritarianism](#)—and therefore mostly take precedence on a constitutional level. In the common variant of [liberal democracy](#), the powers of the majority are exercised within the framework of a representative democracy, but a [constitution](#) and [supreme court](#) limit

the majority and protect the minority—usually through securing the enjoyment by all of certain individual rights, such as freedom of speech or freedom of association.^{[9][10]}

The term appeared in the 5th century BC in [Greek city-states](#), notably [Classical Athens](#), to mean "rule of the people", in contrast to [aristocracy](#) (ἀριστοκρατία, *aristokratía*), meaning "rule of an elite".^[11] [Western democracy](#), as distinct from that which existed in antiquity, is generally considered to have originated in [city-states](#) such as those in Classical Athens and the [Roman Republic](#), where various degrees of enfranchisement of the free male population were observed. In virtually all democratic governments throughout ancient and modern history, democratic citizenship was initially restricted to an elite class, which was later extended to all adult citizens. In most modern democracies, this was achieved through the [suffrage](#) movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Democracy contrasts with forms of government where power is not vested in the [general population](#) of a state, such as [authoritarian](#) systems. World public opinion strongly favors democratic systems of government.^[12] According to the [V-Dem Democracy indices](#) and [The Economist Democracy Index](#), less than half the world's population lives in a democracy as of 2022.^{[13][14]}

Characteristics

Although democracy is generally understood to be defined by voting,^{[1][10]} no consensus exists on a precise definition of democracy.^[15] [Karl Popper](#) says that the "classical" view of democracy is, "in brief, the theory that democracy is the rule of the people and that the people have a right to rule".^[16] One study identified 2,234 adjectives used to describe democracy in the English language.^[17]

Democratic principles are reflected in all eligible citizens being [equal before the law](#) and having equal access to legislative processes.^[18] For example, in a [representative democracy](#), every vote has (in theory) equal weight, and the freedom of eligible citizens is secured by legitimised rights and liberties which are typically enshrined in a [constitution](#),^{[19][20]} while other uses of "democracy" may encompass [direct democracy](#), in which citizens vote on issues directly. According to the [United Nations](#), democracy "provides an environment that respects [human rights](#) and fundamental freedoms, and in which the [freely expressed will of people](#) is exercised."^[21]

One theory holds that democracy requires three fundamental principles: upward control (sovereignty residing at the lowest levels of authority), [political equality](#), and social norms by which individuals and institutions only consider acceptable acts that reflect the first two principles of upward control and political equality.^[22] [Legal equality](#), [political freedom](#) and [rule of law](#)^[23] are often identified by commentators as foundational characteristics for a well-functioning democracy.^[15]

In some countries, notably in the [United Kingdom](#) (which originated the [Westminster system](#)), the dominant principle is that of [parliamentary sovereignty](#), while maintaining [judicial independence](#). In [India](#), parliamentary sovereignty is subject to the [Constitution of India](#) which includes [judicial review](#).^[26] Though the term "democracy" is typically used in the context of a [political state](#), the principles also are potentially applicable to private organisations, such as clubs, societies and [firms](#).

Democracies may use many different decision-making methods, but [majority rule](#) is the dominant form. Without compensation, like legal protections of individual or group

rights, [political minorities](#) can be oppressed by the "[tyranny of the majority](#)". Majority rule involves a competitive approach, opposed to [consensus democracy](#), creating the need that [elections](#), and generally [deliberation](#), be substantively and procedurally "[fair](#)," i.e. [just](#) and [equitable](#). In some countries, [freedom of political expression](#), [freedom of speech](#), and [freedom of the press](#) are considered important to ensure that voters are well informed, enabling them to vote according to their own interests and beliefs.^{[27][28]}

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.^[29] With its emphasis on notions of [social contract](#) and the [collective will](#) of all the voters, democracy can also be characterised as a form of political [collectivism](#) because it is defined as a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in [lawmaking](#).^[30]

[Republics](#), though often popularly associated with democracy because of the shared principle of rule by [consent of the governed](#), are not necessarily democracies, as [republicanism](#) does not specify *how* the people are to rule.^[31] Classically the term "[republic](#)" encompassed both democracies and [aristocracies](#).^{[32][33]} In a modern sense the republican form of government is a form of government without a [monarch](#). Because of this, democracies can be republics or [constitutional monarchies](#), such as the United Kingdom.

History

Main article: [History of democracy](#)



Nineteenth-century painting by [Philipp Foltz](#) depicting the Athenian politician [Pericles](#) delivering his famous [funeral oration](#) in front of the [Assembly](#).^[34]

[Democratic assemblies](#) are as old as the human species and are found throughout human history,^[35] but up until the nineteenth century, major political figures have largely opposed democracy.^[36] Republican theorists linked democracy to small size: as political units grew in size, the likelihood increased that the government would turn despotic.^{[37][38]} At the same time, small political units were vulnerable to conquest.^[37] [Montesquieu](#) wrote, "If a republic be small, it is destroyed by a foreign force; if it is large, it is ruined by an internal imperfection."^[39] According to Johns Hopkins University political scientist [Daniel Deudney](#), the creation of the United States, with its large size and its system of checks and balances, was a solution to the dual problems of size.¹ Forms of democracy occurred organically in societies around the world that had no contact with each other.^{[40][41]}

Retrospectively different polities, outside of declared democracies, have been described as proto-democratic¹

Origins

Greece and Rome

See also: [Athenian democracy](#)

The term *democracy* first appeared in ancient Greek political and philosophical thought in the city-state of [Athens](#) during [classical antiquity](#).^{[42][43]} The word comes from *dêmos* '(common) people' and *krátos* 'force/might'.^[44] Under [Cleisthenes](#), what is generally held as the first example of a type of democracy in 508–507 BC was established in Athens. Cleisthenes is referred to as "the father of [Athenian democracy](#)".^[45] The first attested use of the word democracy is found in prose works of the 430s BC, such as [Herodotus' Histories](#), but its usage was older by several decades, as two Athenians born in the 470s were named Democrates, a new political name—likely in support of democracy—given at a time of debates over constitutional issues in Athens. [Aeschylus](#) also strongly alludes to the word in his play [The Suppliants](#), staged in c.463 BC, where he mentions "the demos's ruling hand" [*demou kratousa cheir*]. Before that time, the word used to define the new political system of Cleisthenes was probably [isonomia](#), meaning political equality.^[46]

Athenian democracy took the form of direct democracy, and it had two distinguishing features: the [random selection](#) of ordinary citizens to fill the few existing government administrative and judicial offices,^[47] and a legislative assembly consisting of all Athenian citizens.^[48] All eligible citizens were allowed to speak and vote in the assembly, which set the laws of the city-state. However, Athenian citizenship excluded women, slaves, foreigners (*μέτοικοι* / *métoikoi*), and youths below the age of military service.^{[49][50][contradictory]} Effectively, only 1 in 4 residents in Athens qualified as citizens. Owning land was not a requirement for citizenship.^[51] 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.^[52]

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.^[53] 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"^[54]), those who were citizens of Athens 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.^[55]

[Range voting](#) appeared in [Sparta](#) as early as 700 BC. The [Spartan ecclesia](#) was an assembly of the people, held once a month, in which every male citizen of at least 20 years of age could participate. In the assembly, Spartans elected leaders and cast votes by range voting and shouting (the vote is then decided on how loudly the crowd shouts). [Aristotle](#) called this "childish", as compared with the stone voting ballots used by the Athenian citizenry. Sparta adopted it because of its simplicity, and to prevent any biased voting, buying, or cheating that was predominant in the early democratic elections.^[56]

Even though the [Roman Republic](#) contributed significantly to many aspects of democracy, only a minority of Romans were citizens with votes in elections for representatives. The votes of the powerful were given more weight through a system of [weighted voting](#), so most high officials, including members of the [Senate](#), came from a few wealthy and noble families.^[57] In addition, the [overthrow of the Roman Kingdom](#) was the first case in the Western world of a polity being formed with the explicit purpose of being a [republic](#), although it didn't have much of a

democracy. The Roman model of governance inspired many political thinkers over the centuries.^[58]

Ancient India

[Vaishali](#), capital city of the [Vajjika League](#) (Vrijji [mahajanapada](#)) of [India](#), is considered one of the first examples of a [republic](#) around the 6th century BC.^{[59][60][61]}

Americas

Other cultures, such as the [Iroquois](#) in the Americas also developed a form of democratic society between 1450 and 1660 (and possibly in 1142^[62]), well before contact with the Europeans. This democracy continues to the present day and is the world's oldest standing representative democracy.^{[63][64]}

Africa

Main article: [Gadaa](#)

Middle Ages

While most regions in [Europe](#) during the [Middle Ages](#) were ruled by [clergy](#) or [feudal lords](#), there existed various systems involving elections or assemblies, although often only involving a small part of the population. In [Scandinavia](#), bodies known as [things](#) consisted of freemen presided by a [lawspeaker](#). These deliberative bodies were responsible for settling political questions, and variants included the [Althing](#) in [Iceland](#) and the [Løgting](#) in the [Faeroe Islands](#).^{[65][66]} The [veche](#), found in [Eastern Europe](#), was a similar body to the Scandinavian thing. In the Roman [Catholic Church](#), the [pope](#) has been elected by a [papal conclave](#) composed of cardinals since 1059. The first documented parliamentary body in Europe was the [Cortes of León](#). Established by [Alfonso IX](#) in 1188, the Cortes had authority over setting taxation, foreign affairs and legislating, though the exact nature of its role remains disputed.^[67] The [Republic of Ragusa](#), established in 1358 and centered around the city of [Dubrovnik](#), provided representation and voting rights to its male aristocracy only. Various Italian city-states and polities had republic forms of government. For instance, the [Republic of Florence](#), established in 1115, was led by the [Signoria](#) whose members were chosen by [sortition](#). In the 10th–15th century [Frisia](#), a distinctly non-feudal society, the right to vote on local matters and on county officials was based on land size. The [Kouroukan Fouga](#) divided the [Mali Empire](#) into ruling clans (lineages) that were represented at a great assembly called the *Gbara*. However, the charter made Mali more similar to a [constitutional monarchy](#) than a [democratic republic](#).^[citation needed]



[Magna Carta](#), 1215, England

The [Parliament of England](#) had its roots in the restrictions on the power of kings written into [Magna Carta](#) (1215), which explicitly protected certain rights of the King's subjects and implicitly supported what became the English writ of [habeas corpus](#), safeguarding individual freedom against unlawful imprisonment with the right to appeal.^{[68][69]} The first representative national assembly in [England](#) was [Simon de Montfort's Parliament](#) in 1265.^{[70][71]} The emergence of [petitioning](#) is some of the earliest evidence of parliament being used as a forum to address the general grievances of ordinary people. However, the power to call parliament remained at the pleasure of the monarch.^[72]

Studies have linked the emergence of parliamentary institutions in Europe during the medieval period to urban agglomeration and the creation of new classes, such as artisans,^[73] as well as the presence of nobility and religious elites.^[74] Scholars have also linked the emergence of representative government to Europe's relative political fragmentation.^[75] Political scientist [David Stasavage](#) links the fragmentation of Europe, and its subsequent democratization, to the manner in which the Roman Empire collapsed: Roman territory was conquered by small fragmented groups of Germanic tribes, thus leading to the creation of small political units where rulers were relatively weak and needed the consent of the governed to ward off foreign threats.^[76]

In [Poland](#), [noble democracy](#) was characterized by an increase in the activity of the middle [nobility](#), which wanted to increase their share in exercising power at the expense of the magnates. Magnates dominated the most important offices in the state (secular and ecclesiastical) and sat on the royal council, later the senate. The growing importance of the middle nobility had an impact on the establishment of the institution of the land [sejmik](#) (local assembly), which subsequently obtained more rights. During the fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century, sejmiks received more and more power and became the most important institutions of local power. In 1454, [Casimir IV Jagiellon](#) granted the sejmiks the right to decide on taxes and to convene a mass mobilization in the [Nieszawa Statutes](#). He also pledged not to create new laws without their consent.^[77]

Modern era

Early modern period



[John Locke](#) expanded on [Thomas Hobbes's social contract theory](#) and developed the concept of [natural rights](#), the [right to private property](#) and the principle of [consent of the governed](#). His ideas form the ideological basis of [liberal democracies](#) today.

In 17th century England, there was [renewed interest in Magna Carta](#).^[78] The Parliament of England passed the [Petition of Right](#) in 1628 which established certain liberties for subjects. The [English Civil War](#) (1642–1651) was fought between the King and an oligarchic but elected Parliament,^{[79][80]} during which the idea of a political party took form with groups debating rights to political representation during the [Putney Debates](#) of 1647.^[81] Subsequently, [the Protectorate](#) (1653–59) and the [English Restoration](#) (1660) restored more autocratic rule, although Parliament passed the [Habeas Corpus Act](#) in 1679 which strengthened the convention that forbade detention lacking sufficient cause or evidence. After the [Glorious Revolution](#) of 1688, the [Bill of Rights](#) was enacted in 1689 which codified certain rights and liberties and is still in effect. The Bill set out the requirement for regular elections, rules for freedom of speech in Parliament and limited the power of the monarch, ensuring that, unlike much of Europe at the time, [royal absolutism](#) would not prevail.^{[82][83]} Economic historians [Douglass North](#) and [Barry Weingast](#) have characterized the institutions implemented in the Glorious Revolution as a resounding success in terms of restraining the government and ensuring protection for property rights.^[84]

Renewed interest in the Magna Carta, the English Civil War, and the Glorious Revolution in the 17th century prompted the growth of [political philosophy](#) on the British Isles. [Thomas Hobbes](#) was the first philosopher to articulate a detailed [social contract theory](#). Writing in the [Leviathan](#) (1651), Hobbes theorized that individuals living in the [state of nature](#) led lives that were "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" and constantly waged a [war of all against all](#). In order to prevent the occurrence of an anarchic state of nature, Hobbes reasoned that individuals ceded their rights to a strong, authoritarian power. In other words, Hobbes advocated for an absolute monarchy which, in his opinion, was the best form of government. Later, philosopher and physician [John Locke](#) would posit a different interpretation of social contract theory. Writing in his [Two Treatises of Government](#) (1689), Locke posited that all individuals possessed the inalienable rights to life, liberty and estate (property).^[85] According to Locke, individuals would voluntarily come together to form a state for the purposes of defending their rights. Particularly important for Locke were property rights, whose protection Locke deemed to be a government's primary purpose.^[86] Furthermore, Locke asserted that governments were [legitimate](#) only if they held the [consent of the governed](#). For Locke, citizens had the [right to revolt](#) against a

government that acted against their interest or became tyrannical. Although they were not widely read during his lifetime, Locke's works are considered the founding documents of [liberal](#) thought and profoundly influenced the leaders of the [American Revolution](#) and later the [French Revolution](#).^[87] His liberal democratic framework of governance remains the preeminent form of democracy in the world.

In the Cossack republics of Ukraine in the 16th and 17th centuries, the [Cossack Hetmanate](#) and [Zaporizhian Sich](#), the holder of the highest post of [Hetman](#) was elected by the representatives from the country's districts.

In North America, representative government began in [Jamestown, Virginia](#), with the election of the [House of Burgesses](#) (forerunner of the [Virginia General Assembly](#)) in 1619. English Puritans who migrated from 1620 established colonies in New England whose local governance was democratic.^[88] although these local assemblies had some small amounts of devolved power, the ultimate authority was held by the Crown and the English Parliament. The [Puritans](#) ([Pilgrim Fathers](#)), [Baptists](#), and [Quakers](#) who founded these colonies applied the democratic organisation of their congregations also to the administration of their communities in worldly matters.^{[89][90][91]}

18th and 19th centuries



Statue of [Athena](#), the patron goddess of [Athens](#), in front of the [Austrian Parliament Building](#). Athena has been used as an international symbol of freedom and democracy since at least the late eighteenth century.^[92]

The [first Parliament of Great Britain](#) was established in 1707, after the merger of the [Kingdom of England](#) and the [Kingdom of Scotland](#) under the [Acts of Union](#). Two key documents of the [UK's uncodified constitution](#), the English [Declaration of Right, 1689](#) (restated in the Bill of Rights 1689) and the Scottish [Claim of Right 1689](#), had both cemented Parliament's position as the supreme law-making body and said that the "election of members of Parliament ought to be free".^[93] However, Parliament was only elected by male property owners, which amounted to 3% of the population in 1780.^[94] The first known British person of [African](#) heritage to vote in a general election, [Ignatius Sancho](#), voted in 1774 and 1780.^[95]

During the [Age of Liberty](#) in Sweden (1718–1772), [civil rights](#) were expanded and power shifted from the monarch to parliament.^[96] The taxed peasantry was represented in parliament, although with little influence, but commoners without taxed property had no suffrage.

The creation of the short-lived [Corsican Republic](#) in 1755 was an early attempt to adopt a democratic [constitution](#) (all men and women above age of 25 could vote).^[97] This [Corsican Constitution](#) was the first based on [Enlightenment](#) principles and included [female suffrage](#), something that was not included in most other democracies until the 20th century.

[Colonial America](#) had similar property qualifications as Britain, and in the period before 1776 the abundance and availability of land meant that large numbers of colonists met such requirements with at least 60 per cent of adult white males able to vote.^[98] The great majority of white men were farmers who met the property ownership or taxpaying requirements. With few exceptions, no blacks or women could vote. [Vermont](#), which, on declaring independence of Great Britain in 1777, adopted a constitution modelled on Pennsylvania's citizenship and democratic suffrage for males with or without property.^[99] The [United States Constitution](#) of 1787 is the oldest surviving, still active, governmental [codified constitution](#). The Constitution provided for an elected government and protected civil rights and liberties, but did not end [slavery](#) nor extend [voting rights in the United States](#), instead leaving the issue of suffrage to the individual states.^[100] Generally, states limited suffrage to white male property owners and taxpayers.^[101] At the time of the first [Presidential election in 1789](#), about 6% of the population was eligible to vote.^[102] The [Naturalization Act of 1790](#) limited U.S. citizenship to whites only.^[103] The [Bill of Rights](#) in 1791 set limits on government power to protect personal freedoms but had little impact on judgements by the courts for the first 130 years after ratification.^[104]

In 1789, [Revolutionary France](#) adopted the [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen](#) and, although short-lived, the [National Convention](#) was elected by all men in 1792.^[105] The [Polish-Lithuanian Constitution](#) of 3 May 1791 sought to implement a more effective [constitutional monarchy](#), introduced political equality between townspeople and nobility, and placed the peasants under the protection of the government, mitigating the worst abuses of [serfdom](#). In force for less than 19 months, it was declared null and void by the [Grodno Sejm](#) that met in 1793.^{[106][107]} Nonetheless, the 1791 Constitution helped keep alive Polish aspirations for the eventual restoration of the country's sovereignty over a century later.



1850s lithograph marking the establishment of [universal male suffrage](#) in France in 1848

In the United States, the [1828 presidential election](#) was the first in which non-property-holding white males could vote in the vast majority of states. Voter turnout soared during the 1830s, reaching about 80% of the adult white male population in the [1840 presidential election](#).^[108] North Carolina was the last state to abolish property qualification in 1856 resulting in a close approximation to universal white male suffrage (however tax-paying requirements remained in five states in 1860 and survived in two states until the 20th century).^{[109][110][111]} In the [1860 United States census](#), the slave population had grown to four million,^[112] and in [Reconstruction](#) after the Civil War, three constitutional amendments were passed: the [13th Amendment](#) (1865) that ended slavery; the [14th Amendment](#) (1869) that gave black people citizenship, and the [15th Amendment](#) (1870) that gave black males a nominal right to vote.^{[113][114][nb 1]} Full enfranchisement

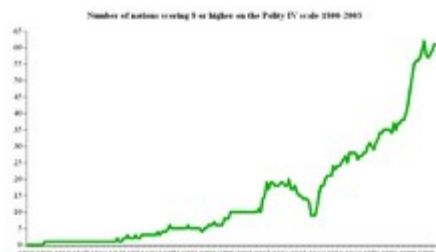
of citizens was not secured until after the [civil rights movement](#) gained passage by the US Congress of the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#).^{[115][116]}

The voting franchise in the United Kingdom was expanded and made more uniform in a [series of reforms](#) that began with the [Reform Act 1832](#) and continued into the 20th century, notably with the [Representation of the People Act 1918](#) and the [Equal Franchise Act 1928](#). [Universal male suffrage](#) was established in [France](#) in March 1848 in the wake of the [French Revolution of 1848](#).^[117] During that year, several [revolutions broke out in Europe](#) as rulers were confronted with popular demands for liberal constitutions and more democratic government.^[118]

In 1876, the Ottoman Empire transitioned from an [absolute monarchy](#) to a constitutional one, and held two elections the next year to elect members to her newly formed parliament.^[119] Provisional Electoral Regulations were issued, stating that the elected members of the Provincial Administrative Councils would elect members to the first [Parliament](#). Later that year, a new constitution was promulgated, which provided for a [bicameral](#) Parliament with a [Senate](#) appointed by [the Sultan](#) and a popularly elected [Chamber of Deputies](#). Only men above the age of 30 who were competent in [Turkish](#) and had full civil rights were allowed to stand for election. Reasons for disqualification included holding dual citizenship, being employed by a foreign government, being bankrupt, employed as a servant, or having "notoriety for ill deeds". Full universal suffrage was achieved in 1934.^[120]

In 1893, the self-governing colony [New Zealand](#) became the first country in the world (except for the short-lived 18th-century Corsican Republic) to establish active [universal suffrage](#) by recognizing women as having the right to vote.^[121]

20th and 21st centuries



The number of nations 1800–2003 scoring 8 or higher on [Polity IV](#) scale, another widely used measure of democracy^[needs update]

20th-century transitions to liberal democracy have come in successive "[waves of democracy](#)", variously resulting from wars, revolutions, [decolonisation](#), and religious and economic circumstances.^[122] Global waves of "democratic regression" reversing democratization, have also occurred in the 1920s and 30s, in the 1960s and 1970s, and in the 2010s.^{[123][124]}



Painting depicting the opening of the first Australian Parliament in 1901, one of the events that formed part of the [first wave of democracy](#) in the early 20th century

[World War I](#) and the dissolution of the autocratic [Ottoman](#) and [Austro-Hungarian](#) empires resulted in the creation of new nation-states in Europe, most of them at least nominally democratic. In the 1920s democratic movements flourished and [women's suffrage](#) advanced, but the [Great Depression](#) brought disenchantment and most of the countries of Europe, Latin America, and Asia turned to strong-man rule or dictatorships. [Fascism](#) and dictatorships flourished in [Nazi Germany](#), [Italy](#), [Spain](#) and [Portugal](#), as well as non-democratic governments in the [Baltics](#), the [Balkans](#), [Brazil](#), [Cuba](#), [China](#), and [Japan](#), among others.^[126]



The [Soviet of Workers' Deputies of Saint Petersburg](#) in 1905: [Leon Trotsky](#) in the center. The [soviets](#) were as an early example of a [workers council](#).

[World War II](#) brought a definitive reversal of this trend in Western Europe. The [democratisation](#) of the [American, British, and French sectors of occupied Germany](#) (disputed^[126]), Austria, Italy, and the [occupied Japan](#) served as a model for the later theory of [government change](#). However, most of [Eastern Europe](#), including the [Soviet sector of Germany](#) fell into the non-democratic [Soviet-dominated bloc](#).

The war was followed by [decolonisation](#), and again most of the new independent states had nominally democratic constitutions. [India](#) emerged as the world's largest democracy and continues to be so.^[127] Countries that were once part of the [British Empire](#) often adopted the British [Westminster system](#).^{[128][129]}

In 1948, the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) mandated democracy:

3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

— [Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21, United Nations, 1948](#)

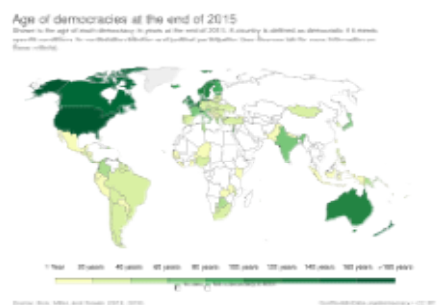
By 1960, the vast majority of country-states were nominally democracies, although most of the world's populations lived in nominal democracies that experienced sham elections, and other forms of subterfuge (particularly in ["Communist" states](#) and the former colonies). A subsequent wave of [democratisation](#) brought substantial gains toward true liberal democracy for many states, dubbed "third wave of democracy". Portugal, Spain, and several of the military dictatorships in South America returned to civilian rule in the 1970s and 1980s.^[nb 2] This was followed by countries in [East](#) and [South Asia](#) by the mid-to-late 1980s. Economic malaise in the 1980s, along with resentment of Soviet oppression, contributed to the [collapse of the Soviet Union](#), the associated end of the [Cold War](#), and the democratisation and [liberalisation](#) of the former [Eastern bloc](#) countries. The most successful of the new democracies were those geographically and culturally closest to western Europe, and they are now either part of the [European Union](#) or [candidate states](#). In 1986, after the toppling of the most prominent Asian

dictatorship, the only democratic state of its kind at the time emerged in the [Philippines](#) with the rise of [Corazon Aquino](#), who would later be known as the mother of [Asian democracy](#).



[Corazon Aquino](#) taking the Oath of Office, becoming the first female president in Asia

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



Age of democracies at the end of 2015^{[130][needs update]}

According to [Freedom House](#), in 2007 there were 123 electoral democracies (up from 40 in 1972).^[131] According to *World Forum on Democracy*, electoral democracies now represent 120 of the 192 existing countries and constitute 58.2 per cent 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 per cent of the global population.^[132] Also in 2007 the [United Nations](#) declared 15 September the [International Day of Democracy](#).^[133]

Meeting of the Grand Committee of the [Parliament of Finland](#) in 2008

Many countries reduced their [voting age](#) to 18 years; the major democracies began to do so in the 1970s starting in Western Europe and North America.^{[134][failed verification][135][136]} Most electoral democracies continue to exclude those younger than 18 from voting.^[137] The voting age has been lowered to 16 for national elections in a number of countries, including Brazil, Austria, Cuba, and Nicaragua. In California, a 2004 proposal to permit a quarter vote at 14 and a half vote at 16 was ultimately defeated. In 2008, the German parliament proposed but shelved a bill that would grant the vote to each citizen at birth, to be used by a parent until the child claims it for themselves.

According to Freedom House, starting in 2005, there have been 17 consecutive years in which declines in political rights and civil liberties throughout the world have outnumbered improvements,^{[138][139]} as [populist](#) and [nationalist](#) political forces have gained ground everywhere

from Poland (under the [Law and Justice Party](#)) to the Philippines (under [Rodrigo Duterte](#)).^{[138][123]} In a Freedom House report released in 2018, Democracy Scores for most countries declined for the 12th consecutive year.^[140] [The Christian Science Monitor](#) reported that [nationalist](#) and [populist](#) political ideologies were gaining ground, at the expense of [rule of law](#), in countries like Poland, Turkey and Hungary. For example, in Poland, the President [appointed 27 new Supreme Court judges](#) over legal objections from the [European Commission](#). In Turkey, thousands of judges were removed from their positions following a [failed coup attempt](#) during a [government crackdown](#).^[141]

Countries autocratising (red) or democratising (blue) substantially and significantly (2010–2020). Countries in grey are substantially unchanged.^{[142][needs update][relevant? – discuss]}

"[Democratic backsliding](#)" in the 2010s were attributed to economic inequality and social discontent,^[143] personalism,^[144] poor government's management of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#),^{[145][146]} as well as other factors such as manipulation of civil society, "toxic polarization", foreign disinformation campaigns,^[147] racism and nativism, excessive executive power,^{[148][149][150]} and decreased power of the opposition.^[151] Within English-speaking Western democracies, "protection-based" attitudes combining cultural conservatism and leftist economic attitudes were the strongest predictor of support for authoritarian modes of governance.^[152]

Theory

Early theory

[Aristotle](#) contrasted rule by the many (democracy/[timocracy](#)), with rule by the few ([oligarchy/aristocracy](#)), and with rule by a single person ([tyranny](#) or today [autocracy/absolute monarchy](#)). He also thought that there was a good and a bad variant of each system (he considered democracy to be the degenerate counterpart to timocracy).^{[153][154]}

A common view among early and renaissance [Republican](#) theorists was that democracy could only survive in small political communities.^[155] Heeding the lessons of the Roman Republic's shift to monarchism as it grew larger or smaller, these Republican theorists held that the expansion of territory and population inevitably led to tyranny.^[155] Democracy was therefore highly fragile and rare historically, as it could only survive in small political units, which due to their size were vulnerable to conquest by larger political units.^[155] [Montesquieu](#) famously said, "if a republic is small, it is destroyed by an outside force; if it is large, it is destroyed by an internal vice."^[155] [Rousseau](#) asserted, "It is, therefore the natural property of small states to be governed as a republic, of middling ones to be subject to a monarch, and of large empires to be swayed by a despotic prince."^[155]

Contemporary theory

Among modern political theorists, there are three contending conceptions of democracy: *aggregative democracy*, [deliberative democracy](#), and [radical democracy](#).^[156]

Aggregative

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

Different variants of aggregative democracy exist. Under *minimalism*, democracy is a system of government in which citizens have given teams of political leaders the right to rule in periodic elections. According to this minimalist conception, citizens cannot and should not "rule" because, for example, on most issues, most of the time, they have no clear views or their views are not well-founded. [Joseph Schumpeter](#) articulated this view most famously in his book *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*.^[157] Contemporary proponents of minimalism include [William H. Riker](#), [Adam Przeworski](#), [Richard Posner](#).

According to the theory of [direct democracy](#), on the other hand, citizens should vote directly, not through their representatives, on legislative proposals. Proponents of direct democracy offer varied reasons to support this view. Political activity can be valuable in itself, it socialises and educates citizens, and popular participation can check powerful elites. Most importantly, citizens do not 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 a desirable outcome as it represents the action of self-interested and somewhat unaccountable political elites competing for votes. [Anthony Downs](#) suggests that ideological political parties are necessary to act as a mediating broker between individual and governments. Downs laid out this view in his 1957 book *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.^[158]

[Robert A. Dahl](#) argues that the fundamental democratic principle is that, when it comes to binding collective decisions, each person in a political community is entitled to have his/her interests be given equal consideration (not necessarily that all people are equally satisfied by the collective decision). He uses the term [polyarchy](#) to refer to societies in which there exists a certain set of institutions and procedures which are perceived as leading to such democracy. First and foremost among these institutions is the regular occurrence of free and open [elections](#) which are used to select representatives who then manage all or most of the public policy of the society. However, these polyarchic procedures may not create a full democracy if, for example, poverty prevents political participation.^[159] Similarly, [Ronald Dworkin](#) argues that "democracy is a substantive, not a merely procedural, ideal."^[160]

Deliberative

[Deliberative democracy](#) is based on the notion that democracy is government by [deliberation](#). Unlike aggregative democracy, deliberative democracy holds that, for a democratic decision to be legitimate, it must be preceded by authentic deliberation, not merely the aggregation of preferences that occurs in voting. *Authentic deliberation* is deliberation among decision-makers that is free from distortions of unequal political power, such as power a decision-maker obtained through economic wealth or the support of interest groups.^{[161][162][163]} If the decision-makers cannot reach [consensus](#) after authentically deliberating on a proposal, then they vote on the proposal using a form of majority rule. [Citizens assemblies](#) are considered by many scholars as practical examples of deliberative democracy,^{[164][165][166]} with a recent [OECD](#) report identifying citizens assemblies as an increasingly popular mechanism to involve citizens in governmental decision-making.^[167]

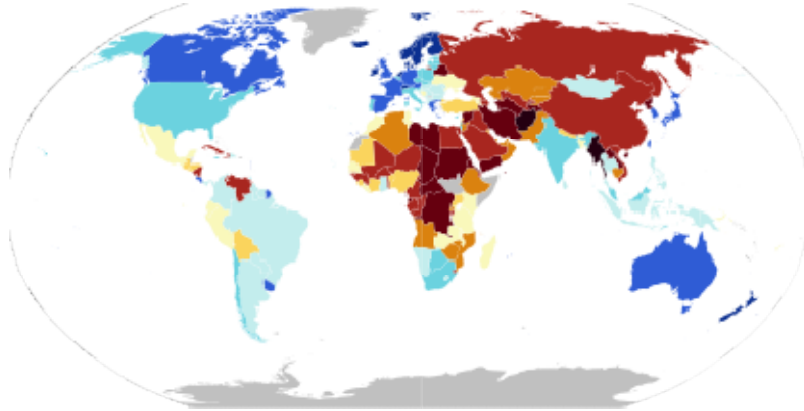
Radical

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

Measurement of democracy

Democracy indices

Main article: [Democracy indices](#)



The 2023 [The Economist](#)

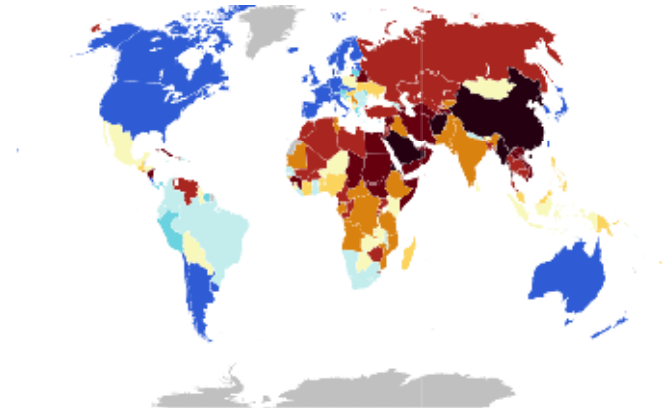
[Democracy Index](#) map

Full democracies	Flawed democracies	Hybrid regimes	Authoritarian regimes
9.00–10.00	7.00–7.99	5.00–5.99	3.00–3.99
8.00–8.99	6.00–6.99	4.00–4.99	2.00–2.99
			1.00–1.99
			0.00–0.99

[Democracy indices](#) are [quantitative](#) and [comparative](#) assessments of the state of democracy^[168] for different countries according to various definitions of democracy.^[169]

The democracies indices differ in whether they are categorical, such as classifying countries into democracies, [hybrid regimes](#), and [autocracies](#),^{[170][171]} or continuous values.^[172] The qualitative nature of democracy indices enables data analytical approaches for studying [causal](#) mechanisms of regime transformation processes.

Democracy indices differ in scope and weighting of different aspects of democracy, including the breadth of core democratic institutions, competitiveness and [inclusiveness](#) of [polyarchy](#), freedom of expression, various aspects of governance, democratic norm transgressions, [co-option](#) of opposition, [electoral system manipulation](#), [electoral fraud](#), and popular support of anti-democratic alternatives.^{[173][174][175]}



[V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index](#) map for

2023^[176]

0.900–1.000

0.500–0.599

0.100–0.199

0.800–0.899	0.400–0.499	0.000–0.099
0.700–0.799	0.300–0.399	No data
0.600–0.699	0.200–0.299	

Difficulties in measuring democracy

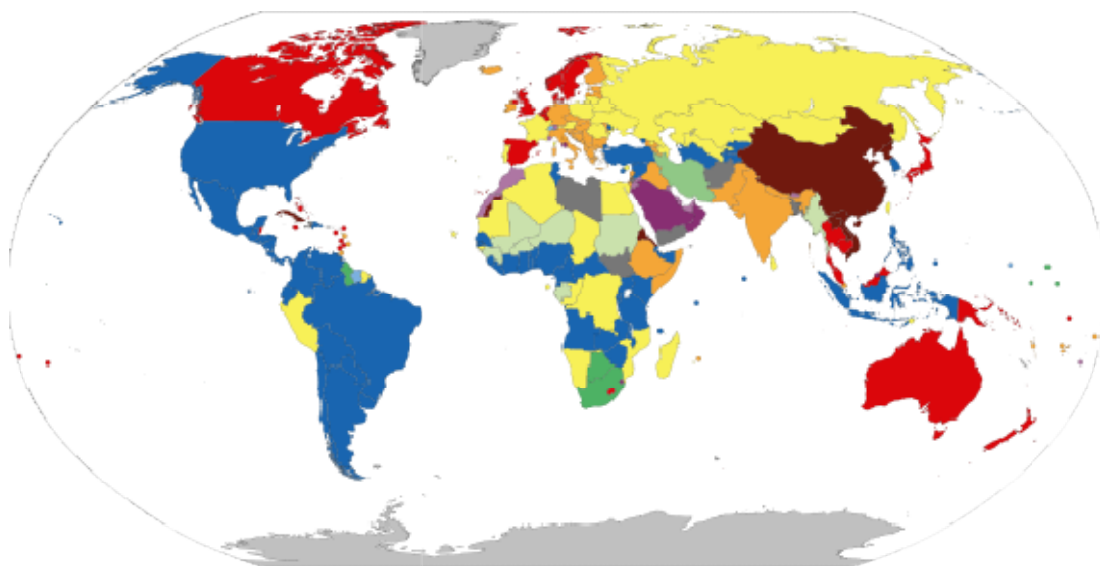
Main article: [Democracy indices § Difficulties in measuring democracy](#)

Because democracy is an overarching concept that includes the functioning of diverse institutions which are not easy to measure, limitations exist in quantifying and [econometrically](#) measuring the potential effects of democracy or its relationship with other phenomena—whether inequality, poverty, education etc.^[177] Given the constraints in acquiring reliable data with within-country variations on aspects of democracy, academics have largely studied cross-country variations, yet variations in democratic institutions can be large within countries. Another way of conceiving the difficulties in measuring democracy is through the debate between minimalist versus maximalist definitions of democracy. A minimalist conception of democracy defines democracy by primarily considering the essence of democracy; such as electoral procedures.^[178] A maximalist definition of democracy can include outcomes, such as economic or administrative efficiency, into measures of democracy.^[179] Some aspects of democracy, such as responsiveness^[180] or [accountability](#), are generally not included in democracy indices due to the difficulty measuring these aspects. Other aspects, such as [judicial independence](#) or quality of the [electoral system](#), are included in some democracy indices but not in others.

Types of governmental democracies

Main article: [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.^{[181][182]} However, if any democracy is not structured to prohibit the government from excluding the people from the legislative process, or any branch of government from altering the [separation of powers](#) in its favour, then a branch of the system can accumulate too much power and destroy the democracy.^{[183][184][185]}



World's states coloured by systems of [government](#):

World's

Parliamentary systems: Head of government is elected or nominated by and accountable to the legislature

[Constitutional monarchy](#) with a ceremonial monarch

[Parliamentary republic](#) with a ceremonial president

[Parliamentary republic with an executive president](#)

Presidential system: Head of government (president) is popularly elected and independent of the legislature

Presidential republic

Hybrid systems:

[Semi-presidential republic](#): Executive president is independent of the legislature; head of government is appointed by the president and is accountable to the legislature

[Assembly-independent republic](#): Head of government (president or directory) is elected by the legislature, but is not accountable to it

Other systems:

[Theocratic](#) republic: [Supreme Leader](#) holds significant executive and legislative power

[Semi-constitutional monarchy](#): Monarch holds significant executive or legislative power

[Absolute monarchy](#): Monarch has unlimited power

[One-party state](#): Power is constitutionally linked to a single political party

[Military junta](#): Committee of military leaders controls the government; constitutional provisions are suspended

[Provisional government](#): No constitutionally defined basis to current regime

Dependent territories or places without governments

Note: this chart represents [de jure](#) systems of government, not the [de facto](#) degree of democracy.

- [v](#)
- [t](#)
- [e](#)

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

Basic forms

Several variants of democracy exist, but there are two basic forms, both of which concern how the whole body of all eligible citizens executes its will. One form of democracy is [direct democracy](#), in which all eligible citizens have active participation in the political decision making, for example voting on policy initiatives directly.^[186] In most modern democracies, the whole body of eligible citizens remain the sovereign power but political power is exercised indirectly through elected representatives; this is called a [representative democracy](#).

Direct

Main article: [Direct democracy](#)



A [Landsgemeinde](#) (in 2009) of the [canton of Glarus](#), an



example of direct democracy in Switzerland. In [Switzerland](#), without needing to register, every citizen receives [ballot papers](#) and information brochures for each vote (and can send it back by post). Switzerland has a [direct democracy](#) system and votes (and elections) are organised about four times a year; here, to [Berne's](#) citizen in November 2008 about 5 national, 2 cantonal, 4 municipal referendums, and 2 elections (government and parliament of the City of Berne) to take care of at the same time.

Direct democracy is a political system where the citizens participate in the decision-making personally, contrary to relying on intermediaries or representatives. A direct democracy gives the voting population the power to:

- Change constitutional laws,
- Put forth [initiatives](#), [referendums](#) and suggestions for laws

Within modern-day representative governments, certain electoral tools like referendums, citizens' initiatives and [recall elections](#) are referred to as forms of direct democracy.^[187] However, some advocates of direct democracy argue for local assemblies of face-to-face discussion. Direct democracy as a government system currently exists in the [Swiss cantons](#) of [Appenzell Innerrhoden](#) and [Glarus](#),^[188] the [Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities](#),^[189] communities affiliated with the [CIPO-RFM](#),^[190] the [Bolivian](#) city councils of [FEJUVE](#),^[191] and Kurdish cantons of [Rojava](#).^[192]

Semi-direct

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

The [Swiss confederation](#) is a semi-direct democracy.^[188] At the federal level, citizens can propose changes to the constitution ([federal popular initiative](#)) or ask for a [referendum](#) to be held on any law voted by the [parliament](#).^[188] 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).^[188] Although in the past 120 years less than 250 initiatives have been put to referendum.^[193]

Examples include the extensive use of [referendums](#) in the US state of [California](#), which is a state that has more than 20 million voters.^[194]

In [New England](#), [town meetings](#) are often used, especially in rural areas, to manage local government. This creates a hybrid form of government, with a local [direct democracy](#) and a representative state government. For example, most [Vermont](#) towns hold annual town meetings in March in which town officers are elected, budgets for the town and schools are voted on, and citizens have the opportunity to speak and be heard on political matters.^[195]

Lot system

The use of a lot system, a characteristic of [Athenian democracy](#), is a feature of some versions of direct democracies. In this system, important governmental and administrative tasks are performed by citizens picked from a lottery.^[196]

Representative

Main article: [Representative democracy](#)

Representative democracy involves the election of government officials by the people being represented. If the head of state is also [democratically elected](#) then it is called a democratic [republic](#).^[197] The most common mechanisms involve election of the candidate with a majority or a [plurality](#) of the votes. Most western countries have representative systems.^[188]

Representatives may be elected or become diplomatic representatives by a particular district (or [constituency](#)), or represent the entire electorate through [proportional](#) systems, with some using a combination of the two. Some representative democracies also incorporate elements of direct democracy, such as [referendums](#).^[198] 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,^{[199][200]} pointing out the contradictions of representation mechanisms with democracy^{[201][202]}

Parliamentary

Main article: [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.^{[203][204][205][206]}

In a parliamentary system, the prime minister may be dismissed by the legislature at any point in time for not meeting 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 with majority support for dismissal.^[207] In some countries, the prime minister can also call an election at any point in time, typically when the prime minister believes that they are in good favour with the public as to get re-elected. In other parliamentary democracies, extra elections are virtually never held, a minority government being preferred until the next ordinary elections. An important feature of the parliamentary democracy is the concept of the "[loyal opposition](#)". The essence of the concept is that the second largest political party (or opposition) opposes the

governing party (or coalition), while still remaining loyal to the state and its democratic principles.

Presidential

Main article: [Presidential system](#)

Presidential democracy is a system where the public elects the president through an election. 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. The legislature often has limited ability to remove a president from office. Elections typically have a fixed date and aren't easily changed. The president has direct control over the cabinet, specifically appointing the cabinet members.^[207]

The executive usually has the responsibility to execute or implement legislation and may have the limited legislative powers, such as a veto. However, a legislative branch passes legislation and budgets. This provides some measure of [separation of powers](#). In consequence, however, the president and the legislature may end up in the control of separate parties, allowing one to block the other and thereby interfere with the orderly operation of the state. This may be the reason why presidential democracy is not very common outside the Americas, Africa, and Central and Southeast Asia.^[207]

A [semi-presidential system](#) is a system of democracy in which the government includes both a prime minister and a president. The particular powers held by the prime minister and president vary by country.^[207]

Typology

Constitutional monarchy

Main article: [Constitutional monarchy](#)



King [Charles III](#), a constitutional monarch

Many countries such as the [United Kingdom](#), [Spain](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Belgium](#), [Scandinavian countries](#), [Thailand](#), [Japan](#) and [Bhutan](#) turned powerful monarchs into constitutional monarchs (often gradually) with limited or symbolic roles. For example, in the predecessor states to the United Kingdom, constitutional monarchy began to emerge and has continued uninterrupted since the [Glorious Revolution](#) of 1688 and passage of the [Bill of Rights 1689](#).^{[24][82]} Strongly limited constitutional monarchies, such as the United Kingdom, have been referred to as [crowned republics](#) by writers such as [H. G. Wells](#).^[208]

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

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

Republic

Main article: [Republicanism](#)

The term [republic](#) has many different meanings, but today often refers to a representative democracy with an elected [head of state](#), such as a [president](#), serving for a limited term, in contrast to states with a hereditary [monarch](#) as a head of state, even if these states also are representative democracies with an elected or appointed [head of government](#) such as a [prime minister](#).^[209]

The [Founding Fathers of the United States](#) often criticised [direct democracy](#), which in their view often came without the protection of a constitution enshrining inalienable rights; [James Madison](#) argued, especially in [The Federalist No. 10](#), that what distinguished a direct *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.^[210]

Professors Richard Ellis of [Willamette University](#) and Michael Nelson of [Rhodes College](#) argue that much constitutional thought, from Madison to Lincoln and beyond, has focused on "the problem of majority tyranny". They conclude, "The principles of republican government embedded in the Constitution represent an effort by the framers to ensure that the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness would not be trampled by majorities."^[211] What was critical to American values, [John Adams](#) insisted,^[212] 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 US Constitution, [Elizabeth Willing Powel](#)^[213] asked him "Well, Doctor, what have we got—a republic or a monarchy?". He replied "A republic—if you can keep it."^[214]

Liberal

Main article: [Liberal democracy](#)

A liberal democracy is a representative democracy which enshrines a [liberal political philosophy](#), where the ability of the elected representatives to exercise decision-making power is subject to the [rule of law](#), moderated by a constitution or laws that such as the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals, and constrained on the extent to which the will of the majority can be exercised against the rights of minorities.

Socialist

Main articles: [Socialist democracy](#), [Social democracy](#), and [Democratic socialism](#)

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

[Trotskyist](#) groups have interpreted socialist democracy to be synonymous with [multi-party socialist](#) representation, [autonomous union organizations](#), [worker's control of production](#),^[215] internal party democracy and the [mass participation of the working masses](#).^{[216][217]}

Marxist

See also: [Democracy in Marxism](#)

Within [Marxist orthodoxy](#) there is a hostility to what is commonly called "liberal democracy", which is referred to as parliamentary democracy because of its centralised nature. Because of orthodox Marxists' desire to eliminate the political elitism they see in capitalism, [Marxists](#), [Leninists](#), and [Trotskyists](#) believe in direct democracy implemented through a system of communes (which are sometimes called [soviets](#)). This system can begin with workplace democracy and ultimately manifests itself as [council democracy](#).

Anarchist

[Anarchists](#) are split in this domain, depending on whether they believe that a [majority-rule is tyrannic or not](#). To many anarchists, the only form of democracy considered acceptable is direct democracy. [Pierre-Joseph Proudhon](#) argued that the only acceptable form of direct democracy is one in which it is recognised that majority decisions are not binding on the minority, even when unanimous.^[218] However, [anarcho-communist Murray Bookchin](#) criticised [individualist anarchists](#) for opposing democracy,^[219] and says "majority rule" is consistent with anarchism.^[220]

Some anarcho-communists oppose the majoritarian nature of direct democracy, feeling that it can impede individual liberty and opt-in favour of a non-majoritarian form of [consensus democracy](#), similar to Proudhon's position on direct democracy.^[221]

Sortition

Main article: [Sortition](#)

[Sortition](#) is the process of choosing decision-making bodies via a random selection. These bodies can be more representative of the opinions and interests of the people at large than an elected legislature or other decision-maker. The technique was in widespread use in [Athenian Democracy](#) and [Renaissance Florence](#)^[222] and is still used in modern [jury selection](#) and [citizens' assemblies](#).

Consociational

Main article: [Consociational democracy](#)

Consociational democracy, also called [consociationalism](#), is a form of democracy based on power-sharing formula between elites representing the social groups within the society. In 1969, Arendt Lijphart argued this would stabilize democracies with factions.^[223] 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. The [Qualified majority voting](#) rule in [European Council of Ministers](#) is a consociational democracy approach for supranational democracies. This system in [Treaty of Rome](#) allocates votes to member states in part according to their population, but heavily weighted in favour of the smaller states. A consociational democracy requires consensus of representatives, while consensus democracy requires consensus of electorate.^[needs update]

Consensus

Main article: [Consensus democracy](#)

Consensus democracy^[224] requires [consensus decision-making](#) and [supermajority](#) to obtain a larger support than [majority](#). In contrast, in [majoritarian democracy](#) minority opinions can potentially be ignored by vote-winning majorities.^[225] [Constitutions](#) typically require consensus or supermajorities.^[226]

Ethnic

These paragraphs are an excerpt from [Ethnic democracy](#).^[edit]

The term [ethnic democracy](#), as used by some [political scientists](#), purports to describe a political system that combines a structured ethnic dominance with democratic, political and civil rights for all. Both the dominant [ethnic group](#)—typically an [ethnic majority](#)—and the [minority ethnic groups](#) have citizenship and are able to fully participate in the political process. However, critics of the "ethnic democracy" model argue it is a contradiction in terms, and thus conceptually inadequate or confusing; these critics allege that purported ethnic democracies, most notably [Israel](#), are not democratic at all, or are at best a sort of [semi-democracy](#).^[227]

Inclusive

Main article: [Inclusive democracy](#)

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

Participatory

Main article: [Participatory politics](#)

A [parpolity](#) or participatory polity is a theoretical form of democracy that is ruled by a [nested council](#) structure. The guiding philosophy is that people should have decision-making power in proportion to how much they are affected by the decision. Local councils of 25–50 people are completely autonomous on issues that affect only them, and these councils send delegates to higher level councils who are again autonomous regarding issues that affect only the population affected by that council.

A council court of randomly chosen citizens serves as a check on the [tyranny of the majority](#), and rules on which body gets to vote on which issue. Delegates may vote differently from how their sending council might wish but are mandated to communicate the wishes of their sending council. Delegates are recallable at any time. Referendums are possible at any time via votes of 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](#).

Religious

These paragraphs are an excerpt from [Religious democracy](#).^[edit]

[Religious democracy](#)^[228] is a form of democracy where the values of a particular religion or [state religion](#) are preferred. The term applies to all democratic countries in which religion is incorporated into the form of government.

Cosmopolitan

Main article: [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.^[229]

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

Cosmopolitan democracy has been promoted, among others, by physicist Albert Einstein,^[230] writer Kurt Vonnegut, columnist [George Monbiot](#), and professors [David Held](#) and [Daniele Archibugi](#).^[231] The creation of the [International Criminal Court](#) in 2003 was seen as a major step forward by many supporters of this type of cosmopolitan democracy.

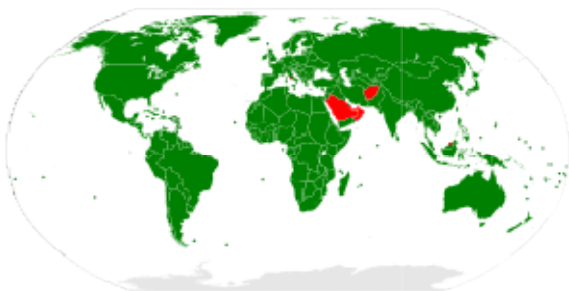
Creative

Main article: [Creative democracy](#)

Creative democracy is advocated by American philosopher [John Dewey](#). The main idea about creative democracy is that democracy encourages individual capacity building and the interaction among the society. Dewey argues that democracy is a way of life in his work of "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us"^[232] and an experience built on faith in human nature, faith in human beings, and faith in working with others. Democracy, in Dewey's view, is a [moral ideal](#) requiring actual effort and work by people; it is not an institutional concept that exists outside of ourselves. "The task of democracy", Dewey concludes, "is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute".

Guided

Main article: [Guided democracy](#)



Green: countries that claim to be a democracy **Red:** countries that do not claim to be democratic (only [Saudi Arabia](#), [Oman](#), the [UAE](#), [Qatar](#), [Brunei](#), [Afghanistan](#), and the [Vatican](#) do not claim to be democratic as of 2022)^[citation needed]

Guided democracy is a form of democracy that incorporates regular popular elections, but which often carefully "guides" the choices offered to the electorate in a manner that may reduce the

ability of the electorate to truly determine the type of government exercised over them. Such democracies typically have only one central authority which is often not subject to meaningful public review by any other governmental authority. Russian-style democracy has often been referred to as a "guided democracy".^[233] Russian politicians have referred to their government as having only one center of power/ authority, as opposed to most other forms of democracy which usually attempt to incorporate two or more naturally competing sources of authority within the same government.^[234]

Non-governmental democracy

Aside from the public sphere, similar democratic principles and mechanisms of voting and representation have been used to govern other kinds of groups. Many [non-governmental organisations](#) decide policy and leadership by voting. Most [trade unions](#) and [cooperatives](#) are governed by democratic elections. [Corporations](#) are ultimately governed by their [shareholders](#) through [shareholder democracy](#). Corporations may also employ systems such as [workplace democracy](#) to handle internal governance. [Amitai Etzioni](#) has postulated a system that fuses elements of democracy with [sharia law](#), termed [Islamocracy](#).^[235] There is also a growing number of [Democratic educational](#) institutions such as [Sudbury schools](#) that are co-governed by students and staff.

Shareholder democracy

Main article: [Shareholder democracy](#)

Shareholder democracy is a concept relating to the governance of corporations by their shareholders. In the United States, shareholders are typically granted voting rights according to the [one share, one vote](#) principle. Shareholders may vote annually to elect the company's [board of directors](#), who themselves may choose the company's [executives](#). The shareholder democracy framework may be inaccurate for companies which have different [classes of stock](#) that further alter the distribution of voting rights.

Justification

Several justifications for democracy have been postulated.^[236]

Legitimacy

[Social contract theory](#) argues that the [legitimacy of government](#) is based on [consent of the governed](#), i.e. an election, and that political decisions must reflect the [general will](#). Some proponents of the theory like [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#) advocate for a [direct democracy](#) on this basis.^[237]

Better decision-making

[Condorcet's jury theorem](#) is logical proof that if each decision-maker has a better than chance probability of making the right decision, then having the largest number of decision-makers, i.e. a democracy, will result in the best decisions. This has also been argued by theories of [the wisdom of the crowd](#). Democracy tends to improve [conflict resolution](#).^[238]

Economic success

Main article: [Democracy and economic growth](#)

In [Why Nations Fail](#), economists [Daron Acemoglu](#) and [James A. Robinson](#) argue that democracies are more economically successful because undemocratic political systems tend to limit markets and favor [monopolies](#) at the expense of the [creative destruction](#) which is necessary for sustained [economic growth](#).

A 2019 study by Acemoglu and others estimated that countries switching to democratic from authoritarian rule had on average a 20% higher GDP after 25 years than if they had remained authoritarian. The study examined 122 transitions to democracy and 71 transitions to authoritarian rule, occurring from 1960 to 2010.^[239] Acemoglu said this was because democracies tended to invest more in health care and human capital, and reduce special treatment of regime allies.^[240]

A 2023 study analyzed the long-term effects of democracy on economic prosperity using new data on GDP per capita and democracy for a dataset between 1789 and 2019. The results indicate that democracy substantially increases economic development.^[241]

Democracy promotion

This section is an excerpt from [Democracy promotion](#).^[edit]



[Peacekeeping](#) is conducive to democracy promotion and building in the developing world. Here, facilitator and former MICAH Police Commissioner Yves Bouchard shares mission experience with senior military and police officials in mission management to contribute to [African Union](#) peacekeeping missions. The Planification Avancée des Missions Intégrées (APIM), or Advanced Mission Planning Course, was held by the [Pearson Centre](#) at [Bamako](#)'s Ecole de maintien de la paix.

[Democracy promotion](#), also referred to as democracy building, can be domestic policy to increase the quality of already existing democracy or a strand of foreign policy adopted by governments and international organizations that seek to support the spread of democracy as a [system of government](#). In practice, it entails consolidating and building democratic institutions

International democracy promotion typically takes three forms: assistance, monitoring, and [conditionality](#).^[242] In financial terms, democracy promotion grew from 2% of [aid](#) in 1990 to nearly 20% in 2005.^[243] More controversially and rare, it can also take the form of [military intervention](#).^{[244][245]}

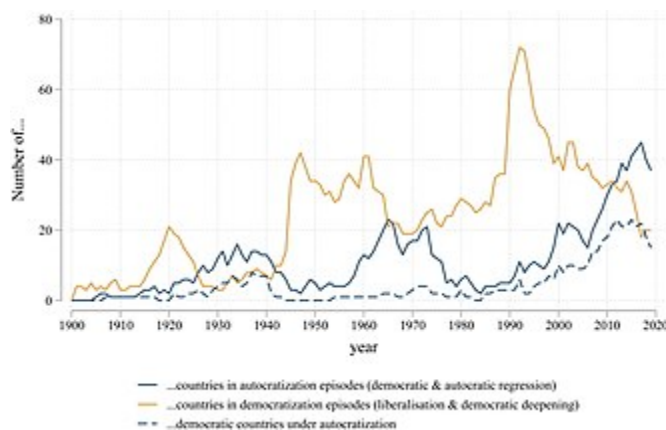


Banner in Hong Kong asking for democracy, August 2019

Democracy promotion can increase the quality of already existing democracies, reduce [political apathy](#), and the chance of democratic backsliding. Democracy promotion measures include [voting advice applications](#),^[246] [participatory democracy](#),^[247] increasing [youth suffrage](#), increasing civic education,^[248] reducing [barriers to entry](#) for new political parties,^[249] increasing [proportionality](#)^[250] and reducing [presidentialism](#).^[251]

Democratic transitions

Main article: [Democratic transition](#)



Since c. 2010, the [number of countries autocratizing](#) (blue) is higher than those [democratizing](#) (yellow).

A democratic transition describes a phase in a countries [political system](#), often created as a result of an incomplete change from an [authoritarian](#) regime to a democratic one (or vice versa).^{[252][253]}

Democratization

Main article: [Democratization](#)

[Democratization](#), or democratisation, is the structural government transition from an [authoritarian government to a more democratic](#) political [regime](#), including substantive political changes moving in a democratic direction.^{[254][255]}

Several philosophers and researchers have outlined historical and social factors seen as supporting the evolution of democracy. Other commentators have mentioned the influence of economic development.^[256] In a related theory, [Ronald Inglehart](#) suggests that improved living-standards in modern developed countries can convince people that they can take their basic survival for granted, leading to increased emphasis on [self-expression values](#), which correlates closely with democracy.^{[257][258]}

Douglas M. Gibling and Andrew Owsiak in their study argued about the importance of peace and stable borders for the development of democracy. It has often been assumed that [democracy causes peace](#), but this study shows that, historically, peace has almost always predated the establishment of democracy.^[259]

[Carroll Quigley](#) concludes that the characteristics of weapons are the main predictor of democracy.^{[260][261]} Democracy—this scenario—tends to emerge only when the best weapons available are easy for individuals to obtain and use.^[262] By the 1800s, guns were the best personal weapons available, and in the United States of America (already nominally democratic), almost everyone could afford to buy a gun, and could learn how to use it fairly easily. Governments could not do any better: it became the age of mass armies of citizen soldiers with guns.^[262] Similarly, Periclean Greece was an age of the citizen soldier and democracy.^[263]

Other theories stressed the relevance of [education](#) and of [human capital](#)—and within them of [cognitive ability](#) to increasing tolerance, rationality, political literacy and participation. Two effects of education and cognitive ability are distinguished:^{[264][need quotation to verify][265][266]}

- a cognitive effect (competence to make rational choices, better information-processing)
- an ethical effect (support of democratic values, freedom, human rights etc.), which itself depends on intelligence.

Evidence consistent with conventional theories of why democracy emerges and is sustained has been hard to come by. Statistical analyses have challenged [modernisation theory](#) by demonstrating that there is no reliable evidence for the claim that democracy is more likely to emerge when countries become wealthier, more educated, or less unequal.^[267] In fact, empirical evidence shows that economic growth and education may not lead to increased demand for democratization as modernization theory suggests: historically, most countries attained high levels of access to primary education well before transitioning to democracy.^[268] Rather than acting as a catalyst for democratization, in some situations education provision may instead be used by non-democratic regimes to indoctrinate their subjects and strengthen their power.^[268]

The assumed link between education and economic growth is called into question when analyzing empirical evidence. Across different countries, the correlation between education attainment and math test scores is very weak (.07). A similarly weak relationship exists between per-pupil expenditures and math competency (.26). Additionally, historical evidence suggests that average human capital (measured using literacy rates) of the masses does not explain the onset of industrialization in France from 1750 to 1850 despite arguments to the contrary.^[269] Together, these findings show that education does not always promote human capital and economic growth as is generally argued to be the case. Instead, the evidence implies that education provision often falls short of its expressed goals, or, alternatively, that political actors use education to promote goals other than economic growth and development.

Some scholars have searched for the "deep" determinants of contemporary political institutions, be they geographical or demographic.^{[270][271]}

An example of this is the disease environment. Places with different mortality rates had different populations and productivity levels around the world. For example, in Africa, the [tsetse fly](#)—which afflicts humans and livestock—reduced the ability of Africans to plough the land. This made Africa less settled. As a consequence, political power was less concentrated.^[272] This also affected the colonial institutions European countries established in Africa.^[273] Whether colonial

settlers could live or not in a place made them develop different institutions which led to different economic and social paths. This also affected the distribution of power and the collective actions people could take. As a result, some African countries ended up having democracies and others [autocracies](#).

An example of geographical determinants for democracy is having access to coastal areas and rivers. This natural endowment has a positive relation with economic development thanks to the benefits of [trade](#).^[274] Trade brought economic development, which in turn, broadened power. Rulers wanting to increase revenues had to protect property-rights to create incentives for people to invest. As more people had more power, more concessions had to be made by the ruler and in many^[quantify] places this process led to democracy. These determinants defined the structure of the society moving the balance of political power.^[275]

Robert Michels asserts that although democracy can never be fully realised, democracy may be developed automatically in the act of striving for democracy:

The peasant in the fable, when on his deathbed, tells his sons that a treasure is buried in the field. After the old man's death the sons dig everywhere in order to discover the treasure. They do not find it. But their indefatigable labor improves the soil and secures for them a comparative well-being. The treasure in the fable may well symbolise democracy.^[276]

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 from a non-democratic state is typically brought by peaceful or violent [democratic revolution](#).

Autocratization

Further information: [Democratic backsliding by country](#)

Democratic backsliding^[a] is a process of [regime change](#) toward [autocracy](#) in which the exercise of political power becomes more arbitrary and [repressive](#).^{[283][284][285]} The process typically restricts the space for [public contest](#) and [political participation](#) in the process of government selection.^{[286][287]} Democratic decline involves the weakening of democratic institutions, such as the [peaceful transition of power](#) or [free and fair elections](#), or the violation of individual rights that underpin democracies, especially [freedom of expression](#).^{[288][289]} Democratic backsliding is the opposite of [democratization](#).

Disruption

Some democratic governments have experienced sudden [state collapse](#) and [regime change](#) to an undemocratic form of government. Domestic military coups or rebellions are the most common means by which democratic governments have been overthrown.^[290] (See [List of coups and coup attempts by country](#) and [List of civil wars](#).) Examples include the [Spanish Civil War](#), the [Coup of 18 Brumaire](#) that ended the [French First Republic](#), and the [28 May 1926 coup d'état](#) which ended the [First Portuguese Republic](#). Some military coups are supported by foreign governments, such as the [1954 Guatemalan coup d'état](#) and the [1953 Iranian coup d'état](#). Other types of a sudden end to democracy include:

- [Invasion](#), for example the [German occupation of Czechoslovakia](#), and the fall of [South Vietnam](#).
- [Self-coup](#), in which the leader of the government extra-legally seizes all power or unlawfully extends the term in office. This can be done through:

- Suspension of the constitution by decree, such as with the [1992 Peruvian coup d'état](#)
- An "electoral self-coup" using [election fraud](#) to obtain re-election of a previously fairly elected official or political party. For example, in the [1999 Ukrainian presidential election](#), [2003 Russian legislative election](#), and [2004 Russian presidential election](#).^[290]
- Royal coup, in which a monarch not normally involved in government seizes all power. For example, the [6 January Dictatorship](#), begun in 1929 when King [Alexander I of Yugoslavia](#) dismissed parliament and started ruling by decree.^[291]

[Democratic backsliding](#) can end democracy in a gradual manner, by increasing emphasis on [national security](#) and eroding [free and fair elections](#), [freedom of expression](#), [independence of the judiciary](#), [rule of law](#). A famous example is the [Enabling Act of 1933](#), which lawfully ended democracy in [Weimar Germany](#) and marked the transition to [Nazi Germany](#).^[292]

Temporary or long-term [political violence](#) and government interference can prevent [free and fair elections](#), which erode the democratic nature of governments. This has happened on a local level even in well-established democracies like the United States; for example, the [Wilmington insurrection of 1898](#) and African-American [disfranchisement after the Reconstruction era](#).

Debates on democracy

This section is an excerpt from [Criticism of democracy](#).^[edit]



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[Criticism of democracy](#), or debate on democracy and the different aspects of how to implement democracy best have been widely discussed. There are both internal critics (those who call upon the constitutional regime to be true to its own highest [principles](#)) and external ones who reject the values promoted by [constitutional democracy](#).^[293]

Criticism of democracy has been a key part of democracy, its functions, and its development throughout history. [Plato](#) famously opposed democracy, arguing for a 'government of the best qualified'; [James Madison](#) extensively studied the historic attempts at and arguments on democracy in his preparation for the [Constitutional Convention](#); and [Winston Churchill](#) remarked that "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."^[294]

Critics of democracy have often tried to highlight democracy's inconsistencies, paradoxes, and limits by contrasting it with other forms of government, such as a less democratic [epistocracy](#) or a more democratic [lottocracy](#). They have characterized most modern democracies as democratic [polyarchies](#)^[295] and democratic [aristocracies](#);^[296] they have identified [fascist](#) moments in modern democracies; they have termed the societies produced by modern democracies as [neo-feudal](#);^[297] and they have contrasted democracy with [fascism](#), [anarcho-capitalism](#), [theocracy](#), and [absolute monarchy](#).

Importance of mass media

Further information on the role of the mass media in the democratic process: [Mediatization \(media\)](#)

The theory of democracy relies on the implicit assumption that voters are well informed about [social issues](#), policies, and candidates so that they can make a truly informed decision. Since the late 20th century there has been a growing concern that voters may be poorly informed because the [news media](#) are focusing more on entertainment and gossip and less on serious journalistic research on political issues.^{[298][299]}

The media professors Michael Gurevitch and [Jay Blumler](#) have proposed a number of functions that the mass media are expected to fulfill in a democracy:^[300]

- Surveillance of the sociopolitical environment
- Meaningful [agenda setting](#)
- Platforms for an intelligible and illuminating advocacy
- Dialogue across a diverse range of views
- Mechanisms for holding officials to account for how they have exercised power
- Incentives for citizens to learn, choose, and become involved
- A principled resistance to the efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence, integrity, and ability to serve the audience
- A sense of respect for the audience member, as potentially concerned and able to make sense of his or her political environment

This proposal has inspired a lot of discussions over whether the news media are actually fulfilling the requirements that a well functioning democracy requires.^[301] Commercial mass media are generally not accountable to anybody but their owners, and they have no obligation to serve a democratic function.^{[301][302]} They are controlled mainly by economic [market forces](#). Fierce economic competition may force the mass media to divert themselves from any democratic ideals and focus entirely on how to survive the competition.^{[303][304]}

The [tabloidization](#) and popularization of the news media is seen in an increasing focus on human examples rather than statistics and principles. There is more focus on politicians as personalities and less focus on political issues in the popular media. Election campaigns are covered more as [horse races](#) and less as debates about ideologies and issues. The dominating media focus on [spin](#), conflict, and competitive strategies has made voters perceive the politicians as egoists rather than idealists. This fosters mistrust and a [cynical](#) attitude to politics, less [civic engagement](#), and less interest in voting.^{[305][306][307]} The ability to find effective political solutions to social problems is hampered when problems tend to be blamed on individuals rather than on [structural causes](#).^[306] This person-centered focus may have far-reaching consequences not only for domestic problems but also for foreign policy when international conflicts are blamed on foreign heads of state rather than on political and economic structures.^{[308][309]} A strong media focus on fear and [terrorism](#) has allowed military logic to penetrate public institutions, leading to increased [surveillance](#) and the erosion of [civil rights](#).^[310]

The responsiveness^[311] and [accountability](#) of the democratic system is compromised when lack of access to substantive, diverse, and undistorted information is handicapping the citizens' capability of evaluating the political process.^{[302][307]} The fast pace and trivialization in the competitive news media is [dumbing down](#) the political debate. Thorough and balanced investigation of complex political issues does not fit into this format. The political communication is characterized by short time horizons, short slogans, simple explanations, and simple solutions. This is conducive to political [populism](#) rather than serious deliberation.^{[302][310]}

Commercial mass media are often differentiated along the political spectrum so that people can hear mainly opinions that they already agree with. Too much controversy and diverse opinions are not always profitable for the commercial news media.^[312] [Political polarization](#) is emerging when different people read different news and watch different TV channels. This polarization has been worsened by the emergence of the [social media](#) that allow people to communicate mainly with groups of like-minded people, the so-called [echo chambers](#).^[313] Extreme political polarization may undermine the trust in democratic institutions, leading to erosion of [civil rights](#) and [free speech](#) and in some cases even reversion to [autocracy](#).^[314]

Many media scholars have discussed non-commercial news media with [public service](#) obligations as a means to improve the democratic process by providing the kind of political contents that a free market does not provide.^{[315][316]} The [World Bank](#) has recommended public service broadcasting in order to strengthen democracy in [developing countries](#). These broadcasting services should be accountable to an independent regulatory body that is adequately protected from interference from political and economic interests.^[317] Public service media have an obligation to provide reliable information to voters. Many countries have publicly funded radio and television stations with public service obligations, especially in Europe and Japan,^[318] while such media are weak or non-existent in other countries including the US.^[319] Several studies have shown that the stronger the dominance of commercial broadcast media over public service media, the less the amount of policy-relevant information in the media and the more focus on [horse race journalism](#), personalities, and the peccadillos of politicians. Public service broadcasters are characterized by more policy-relevant information and more respect for [journalistic norms](#) and [impartiality](#) than the commercial media. However, the trend of [deregulation](#) has put the public service model under increased pressure from competition with commercial media.^{[318][320][321]}

The emergence of the [internet](#) and the [social media](#) has profoundly altered the conditions for political communication. The social media have given ordinary citizens easy access to voice their opinion and share information while bypassing the [filters](#) of the large news media. This is

often seen as an advantage for democracy.^[322] The new possibilities for communication have fundamentally changed the way [social movements](#) and [protest movements](#) operate and organize. The internet and social media have provided powerful new tools for democracy movements in developing countries and [emerging democracies](#), enabling them to bypass [censorship](#), voice their opinions, and organize protests.^{[323][324]}

A serious problem with the social media is that they have no truth filters. The established news media have to guard their reputation as trustworthy, while ordinary citizens may post unreliable information.³¹ [32] In fact, studies show that false stories are going more [viral](#) than true stories. The proliferation of false stories and [conspiracy theories](#) may undermine public trust in the political system and public officials.

Reliable information sources are essential for the democratic process. Less democratic governments rely heavily on [censorship](#), [propaganda](#), and [misinformation](#) in order to stay in power, while independent sources of information are able to undermine their legitimacy.^[327]