

1. Democracy Defined

To fix ideas, the term “democracy,” refers very generally to a method of group decision making characterized by a kind of equality among the participants at an essential stage of the collective decision making. Four aspects of this definition should be noted.

First, democracy concerns collective decision making, by which decisions are made for groups and are binding on all the members of the group.

Second, this definition means to cover a lot of different kinds of groups that may be called democratic.

Third, the definition is not intended to carry any normative weight to it.

Fourth, the equality required by the definition of democracy may be more or less deep. It may be the mere formal equality of one-person one-vote in an election for representatives to an assembly where there is competition among candidates for the position.

In the dictionary definition,

“Democracy is government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.” In the phrase of Abraham Lincoln, democracy is a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

Freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous.

Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of a set of practices and procedures that have been molded through a long, often tortuous history.

In short, democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. For this reason, it is possible to identify the time-tested fundamentals of constitutional government, human rights, and equality before the law that any society must possess to be properly called democratic.

The term “democracy” began to be used to refer to the form of the state system that existed in Athens later, approximately from the middle 5 BC. Originally used the word “isonomiya” (equality of all before the law) and related “ideo” (equal for all citizens the right to speak in the people’s congress and cast a vote), “isocracy” (equilibrium). Ancient authors (Plato, Aristotle, Herodotus) viewed this form of government as a polis, in which all citizens and natives have full and equal rights. Meteki (immigrants-semi-citizens) were significantly limited in rights, and slaves had no rights at all.

Waves of Democracy

The first wave of democratization was the longest in terms of years covered (1828–1926). It was argued that the first wave began with the American and French revolutions and transplanted ideas of what democracy was all about and how democracy could be established. This wave of democratization included the spread of the political right to vote to new previously marginalized groups of society and to newly established states around the world, such as in the West, Australia and South America. The historical record showed how the first wave included democracy building in about 30 states after World War I. The wave of democratization did, however, halt and was reversed with the authoritarian and totalitarian ideologies developed in Germany, Italy and Japan during the 1930s and 1940s, which resulted in reverse democratic setbacks and authoritarian regimes in Eastern and Southern Europe, as well as in South America.

The second wave of democratization (1943–1962) lasted for a far shorter time compared to the first wave and was an outcome of the major international political changes of the balance of power that came with the end of World War II and the defeat and collapse of Nazism and fascism. The collapse of antidemocratic systems resulted in the expansion of new democracies in, for instance, West Germany, Austria, Japan, Turkey, Greece, Uruguay, Brazil, Costa Rica, Argentina, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela. The aftermath of the war became a window of opportunity for the new spread of democratic regimes, political rights and civil liberties in greater number of states, though primarily with the deviant cases in the communist states in foremost Eastern Europe and East Asia (China). It was the powerful role of the Soviet Union in a post-World War II context that eventually founded the reverse wave of authoritarianism and resulted in the consolidation of communism in the Eastern European states and in limited democracy in Latin American states and some East Asian states.

The third wave of democratization (1974–1991) was argued to have begun with transitions in Southern Europe in the early 1970s and ended with major democratic transformations in Eastern Europe as a result of a weakened and finally collapsed Soviet Union. Democratization began in Spain, Portugal and Greece and peaked with the transitions in communist ruled Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania and the independence of 15 new states. The third wave of democratic transitions was, however, global in a geographical scope, with numerous new democracies established in Latin America and Asia, outnumbering the previous authoritarian traditions of regimes around the world. The third wave had great global impact on the democratic

political landscape. As stated, “the birth of more than ninety democracies in this period represents the greatest transformation of the way states are governed in the history of the world” and as a consequence, many scholars perceived the twentieth century as the century of progress.

Assumptions of Democracy

Democracy may be defined as the harmonious existence of unity and diversity, freedom and solidarity. Democracy cannot survive where there is no respect for the rule of the majority and the rights of the minority. In other words, basic assumptions of democracy are rule of law, freedom and equality, political representation and political participation.

1. Freedom and Equality

Freedom which is the first assumption of democracy. What is meant by freedom is not what everyone can do whatever she/he wishes anytime anywhere. Freedom in democracy means that everyone remains free within the boundaries of constitutional and legal order. Moreover without limiting the freedom of others can do what she/he wants. In this context, one can talk about the freedom of thought, which is the most inalienable, and the freedom of education, work, protection of health, life, communication, justice, and so on. Where there is democracy, free thought should not be limited; All ideas can be defended in societies where the administration is democratic and those who defend an idea can form associations in line with their thoughts.

Another indispensable condition of democracy is equality. The aim in equality is not the equality of everyone in all aspects. The meaning of equality here is the equality of all citizens before the law. All applications must be administered equally to all the citizens when the state takes services and when laws are implemented, irrespective of differences in language, religion, race, ethnicity, philosophical belief, education, age, gender, political view or ideology.

2. Political Representation

The aim in political representation is to make possible the participation any kind of thought and ideology by forming association in a state. It makes the parliament to articulate the demands of voters and their rights to be defended. Otherwise, the race for political power falls into the hands of only people of specific political and ideological views or their organizations; And in this kind of administration, where only the voices of certain segments of the society are heard.

3. Political Participation

Political participation is one of the assumptions of democracy, which makes it possible for people to participate in decision-making while electing their representatives. Democracy ensures participatory political culture for giving space to all the segments of the society. Under democratic rule people make their rulers accountable for their legislative procedures and policies outcomes. Democratic values generate a conducive environment for transparency and meritocracy.

4. Human Rights

When the relationship between democracy and human rights is analyzed, it is seen that they are interconnected and mutually supportive. International community today has gained the awareness that the protection of human rights can be secured and the rule of law can be attained only by adherence to the principles of democracy, not only in developed countries but also in the developing world. Besides, it is also widely accepted that the use of human rights and fundamental freedoms is a necessity for the proper functioning of democracy.

Types of Democracy

1. Direct Democracy

Under this system people take direct in the affairs of the state. The people themselves are the rulers and they are the ruled at the same time. They themselves make the laws, enforce them and decide cases according to these laws. Such a democracy existed in City States of ancient Greece and Rome. Some practices of direct democracy are still observed in Switzerland and in some states of the USA.

2. Indirect or Representative Democracy

After the creation of large nation states, it became impossible for all the people directly to participate in the affairs of the state. Under this form of government the people elect a small number of representatives or delegation and give them the authority to run the government. Since the people rule through these representatives, we give the system the name of indirect or representative democracy. Today in almost all the countries of the world there is indirect or representative democracy.

3.Participatory democracy

Participatory democracy is a model of democracy in which citizens have the power to make policy decisions. In a participatory democracy, there is an emphasis on the broad participation of people in politics. However, this is not a direct democracy in which citizens are directly responsible for making policy decisions. In a participatory democracy, citizens can influence policy decisions, but do not make them. Politicians are still responsible for implementing those policy decisions. The United States does not have a pure participatory democracy, but at some level of government, we can see examples of a participatory democracy playing out.

4.Pluralist democracy

Pluralist democracy is a model of democracy in which no one group dominates politics and organized groups compete with each other to influence policy. We see examples of pluralist democracy at both the state level and the federal level. As in a participatory democracy, anyone can participate in influencing political decisions, but in a pluralist democracy, individuals work through groups formed around common causes. Theorists who back pluralist democracy argue that people self-select which causes they want to spend their time on and then support those groups. Those groups then compete over gaining support from notable politicians who will advocate their interests.

5. Elite democracy

Elite democracy is a model of democracy in which a small number of people, usually those who are wealthy or well-educated, influence political decision making. Advocated by some of the Framers, like Alexander Hamilton, the elite democratic model argues that participation in politics should be limited to a small group of highly-informed individuals. By having a small group of

people make political decisions, the arguments are that those few people will be highly informed and make the best decisions for all citizens.

Islam and Democracy

Islam is the most recent of the Abrahamic religions to emerge on the world stage. Monotheism in general and specifically as it developed in the Dark and middle Ages, in principle reflects extremely authoritarian regimes.

Christianity and Judaism, being monotheistic, are no less inheritors of this stratified and centralized power paradigm, but unlike Islam these religions were effectively secularized and toned down during the century of the European Enlightenment.

However the key features of Islamic governance in a democratic state are found in Islamic sources – Quran and Sunnah

Constitution

Consent

Consultation

Muslims who seek to implement the *Shariah* are obliged to emulate the Prophet's precedence and, given the rather narrow definitions of *Shariah* and *Sunnah* that most Islamist operate with, there is no escape for them from the three key principles identified here. While these principles

need to be explored and articulated in the specific socio-cultural context of different Muslim societies, it is important to understand that they are essential.

Constitution

The compact, or constitution, of Medina that Prophet Muhammad adopted provides a very important occasion for the development of Islamic political theory. After Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, he established the first Islamic state. For ten years, Prophet Muhammad was not only the leader of the emerging Muslim community in Arabia, but also the political head of the state of Medina. As the leader of Medina, Prophet Muhammad exercised jurisdiction over Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The legitimacy of his sovereignty over Medina was based on his status as the Prophet of Islam, as well as on the basis of the compact of Medina.

As Prophet of God, he had sovereignty over all Muslims by divine decree. But Muhammad did not rule over the non-Muslims of Medina because he was the messenger of Allah. He ruled over them by virtue of the compact that was signed by the *Muhajirun* (Muslim immigrants from Mecca), the *Ansar* (indigenous Muslims of Medina), and the *Yahud* (several Jewish tribes that lived in and around Medina). It is interesting to note that Jews were constitutional partners in the making of the first Islamic state.

The compact of Medina can be read as both a social contract and a constitution. A social contract, a model developed by English philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, is an imaginary agreement between people in the state of nature that leads to the establishment of a community or a State. In the state of nature people are free and are not obliged to follow any

rules or laws. They are essentially sovereign individuals. However, through the social contract they surrender their individual sovereignty to a collective one and create a community or a State.

The second idea that the compact of Medina manifests is that of a constitution. In many ways, the constitution is the document that enshrines the conditions of the social contract upon which any society is founded. The compact of Medina clearly served a constitutional function, since it was the constitutive document for the first Islamic state. Thus, we can argue that the compact of Medina serves the dual function of a social contract and a constitution. Clearly the compact of Medina by itself cannot serve as a modern constitution. It would be quite inadequate, since it is a historically specific document and quite limited in its scope. However, it can serve as a guiding principle to be emulated, rather than a manual to be duplicated.

Today, Muslims worldwide can emulate Prophet Muhammad and draw up their own constitutions, historically and temporally specific to their conditions.

Consent

An important principle of the Constitution of Medina was that Prophet Muhammad governed the city-state of Medina by virtue of the consent of its citizens. He was invited to govern, and his authority to govern was enshrined in the social contract. The constitution of Medina established the importance of consent and cooperation for governance.

The process of *bayah*, or the pledging of allegiance, was an important institution that sought to formalise the consent of the governed. In those days, when a ruler failed to gain the consent of the ruled through a formal and direct process of pledging of allegiance, the ruler's authority was not fully legitimised. This was an Arab custom that predates Islam, but, like many Arab customs,

was incorporated within Islamic traditions. Just as Prophet Muhammad had done, the early Caliphs of Islam, too, practiced the process of *bayah* after rudimentary forms of electoral colleges had nominated the Caliph, in order to legitimise the authority of the Caliph. One does not need to stretch one's imagination too far to recognise that in polities that have millions rather than hundreds of citizens, the process of nomination followed by elections can serve as a necessary modernisation of the process of *bayah*. Replacing *bayah* with ballots makes the process of pledging allegiance simple and universal. Elections, therefore, are neither a departure from Islamic principles and traditions, nor inherently un-Islamic in any form.

The Quran, too, recognises the authority of those who have been chosen as leaders, and in a sense extends divine legitimacy to those who have legitimate authority.

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you. [Quran 4:59]

Consultation

The third key principle of Islamic governance is consultation, or *Shura* in Arabic. This is a very widely known concept, and many Islamic scholars have advanced the Islamic concept of *Shura* as evidence for Islam's democratic credentials. Indeed, many scholars actually equate democracy with *Shura*.

...and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision put thy trust in Allah. [Quran 3:159]

[righteous are those] ...who conduct their affairs through [shura baynahum] mutual Consultation. [Quran 42:38]

Muslim scholars dispute whether the Quranic injunction for consultation is advisory or mandatory, but it nevertheless remains a divine sanction. Pro-democracy Muslims see it as necessary, and those who fear democratic freedoms and prefer authoritarianism interpret these injunctions as divine suggestions and not divine fiats. The Prophet himself left behind a very important tradition that emphasised the importance of collective and democratic decision making. He said that “the community of Muhammed will never agree upon error.” Consultative governance, therefore, is the preferred form of governance in Islam, and any Muslim who chooses to stay true to his faith sources cannot but prefer a democratic structure over all others to realise the justice and wellbeing promised in Islamic sources.