

Democracy

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



Democracy is a bi- morphemic word that has been borrowed from the Greek language; Demos meaning many people and Kratos, meaning rule. From this, it can be easily inferred that democracy is the rule by the people, and in a substantive sense, the rule by the majority. Democracy as a form of rulership or governance is known to have started in the ancient Greece. The Grecians are known to have practiced classical democracy whereby the citizens would gather around market places to take part in decision making.

Consensus was arrived at through the counting of hands that were raised, of which the majority had their opinions or will implemented. However, the citizens in the Grecian sense comprised only men aged of eighteen and above. Note that this group comprised the military group. Later on, with the revolutionization of science and knowledge, societies have become more modern, and thereby also reshaping the styles of leadership. This led to the need to redefine the art of political rulership, with modern states taking on representative democracy as opposed to classical form of democracy.

Representative democracy entails the designation (through appointing or electing) individuals to represent the citizens in matters of decision making. The representatives are taken to have come from the masses themselves and therefore able to convey the will of the citizens accurately. The concept of democracy as a form of government was catapulted into near global adoption by the development of political philosophy as people such as Bentham, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau come up to to define what a government and a state is and what a just government portends.

For instance these political philosophers saw the state as an organism with different organs. These group, known as the Utilitarians thereby in a remote

sense ushered in the need to recognize the legislature, the executive and the judiciary as separate parts of the government. The concept of globalization also continues to facilitate the spread of democracy. For instance, it is now possible for the whole world to watch the political developments of each and every nation and to act on the same through partnership, sanctions and/or direct military interventions.

Presently, over 78 % of world's states can be said to have already adopted democracy (Held, 2006). Apart from the above two, there are two other main types democracies- social democracy and liberal democracy. Social democracy involves the mixture of elements of democracy and those of socialism while liberalism on the other hand pose as democracy in a pure sense and is always seen to lean towards capitalism and market laissez faire.

It is on this backdrop that social democracies will always be seen to exercise governance in a manner that will portray the government as a custodian and manager of national resources by these governments observing one sole aim of trickling down the accruals back to the citizens. It is this same reason why social democracies are seen to be providing free opportunities to the citizens. Most states in eastern Europe and Asia have taken the form of social democracy. Liberal democracies are seen to be working towards leaving out space to the citizens to compete in the acquisition of capital.

Nevertheless, it has been observed that it is impossible to run a purely liberal democracy since it inherently merges with capitalism to produce two classes pitted against each other- the rich (the ruling class or the bourgeoisie) and the poor (the citizen). This in turn births class antagonisms which culminates in to a revolution. It is therefore virtually impossible to find

on the face of the earth a purely liberal democracy. Even countries that were staunch opponents of communism and socialism in the Cold War have tampered socialism with democracy.

America offers free education and free food programs (in the form of food stamps) to the less privileged. In America, Britain and Canada, the government channels funds to the bank accounts of those who are unemployed. In Netherlands, health care services and education is virtually free to the citizens. There are basic concepts and principles which gives democracy meaning so that any economy that is seen to be practicing these can be said to be truly democratic. One of the first concepts is the Separation of Powers.

As stated earlier, this doctrine was hatched with the positing of the Utilitarians (John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Hobbes and Bentham) that the state as an organism was made up of different organs. This theory of the the State as an Organism led to the need to divide the executive, the judiciary and the legislature from one another. This should be taken to mean that the executive should not interfere with the operations and decisions of the legislature or the judiciary.

In fledgling democracies (most of them being found in Africa), the head of the executive (usually the president), has excess powers and appoints the chief justice and the head of public prosecutions. The chief justice in turn presides over the appointment of judges. To add salt to the injury, the president has the power to nominate parliamentarians, to dissolve and reconvene parliament and to set up commissions of inquiry. This makes it

possible for the remaining arms of the government to be used by the president as mere appendages.

At the same time, the president who can use his vast power to effect the distribution of resources remains above the law, and can sidestep the law to protect his cronies. Democratic states must also have efficient systems of checks and balances. This portends that in addition to the three arms of the government being separate, there should be other civic bodies such as political parties, pressure groups and interest groups, civil rights watch dogs and non governmental organizations to watch the government so as to ensure that all its undertakings are in tune with the interests and will of the citizens.

States that are said to be democratic are expected to uphold and respect the rights and freedom of its citizen. These rights include the freedom to move, associate with others, to participate in political and religious affairs of a nation, the right to own property and the need to fulfill one's own goals and purpose. On the contrary, autocratic states are always seen to suppress human rights so as to consolidate power. Deep spy networks are always used to frighten people and to keep the people way from talking about or participating in politics.

The tenets of democracy also has it that the majority rules or that the will of the majority must prevail. The will of the majority in modern states is normally ascertained through the exercising of the doctrine of Universal suffrage or voting. In despotic states on the other hand, the majority will is inundated by the whims of the few ruling class. Nevertheless, it must be

taken to stock, the fact that even in the face of majority rule, the minority rights must always be preserved.

The doctrine of the Universal Suffrage is a one key litmus test that distinguishes democratic from totalitarian economies. Not only should consensus be reached through voting, but most importantly, the leadership of a government must have also accessed power through plebiscite, commonly known as voting. The candidates must have obtained majority votes before being considered legible enough to represent the cause of the electorates. Totalitarian regimes on the other hand prefer bullets to ballots to ascend into power.

It is also a fact that democratic states should always respect the rule of law. In democracies, all people are considered equal given the fact that they are all under one law that seeks to protect them. The American Fourteenth Amendments also made this clear, thus completely extirpating cases of slavery and human rights abuses against the African Americans. Lastly but not the least, all democratic states are perceived to be members of the United Nations (UN) and /or to respect its rules and policies (Macpherson, 2001).

This is because the policies and rules of the UN have been formulated to deal with human rights issues (the very core of democracy) at the global level, dealing with key issues such as territorial sovereignty, world peace, the quest to ensure global realization of basic human needs, and the eradication of misanthropic forces such as international conflicts, terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction. In spite of all these accruals, democracy portrays diverse pitfalls.

For instance, having been created on the concept of personal freedom and choice, it allows for a laissez faire condition to prevail in an international sense. This far, democracy is beneficent since it allows the free movement of capital from one country to another through the concept of free market or open market. However, this translates into huge losses for the developing economies that have to open up their markets to the developed world.

The developed world hereby sell to the developing economies superior products at cheaper prices due to the fact that they have a huge pool of surplus produce, having undergone industrial revolution. This kills industrialization of the developing economies (Hans- Herman, 2001). Howbeit, as far as other modes of human government are concerned, the best form of government still remains that which exists for the people, of the people and from the people.