

The flaws of democracy essay sample

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



Explain two challenges faced by a system of government. Which do you think is more important? Explain your answer. Among the many forms of government in the world, democracy has gradually gained traction over the years as a generally effective and ideal method of governance, due to its widespread usage in the relatively well developed and influential western world. As a result of this, many of the fundamental flaws of democracy are easily ignored or glanced over, making democracy an ideal candidate for this essay. It is my belief that the two largest flaws of democracy are that of its exploitability, and its propensity for polarization. The exploitability of democracy stems from the vastly divided power over the government that is given to the people of a state. The problem that exists here is that while a government is created to take care of the greater needs of a society, the people of the society tend to be more concerned about their own private desires and benefits. While it is arguable that the private desires of the people are balanced by the fact that the mandate of an elected government is validated by the needs of all the people, hence allowing the government to create policies that care for all of society, such an argument is based on the assumption that the private desires of the people are generally reasonable.

The reality, however, is that the people, being relatively short-sighted in comparison to the government, are unpredictable, and tend to want more than what is reasonable. While this is normally countered by appropriate government intervention to direct the desires of the people, it is at times more popular for a government to relax such regulations, and allow for relatively short-sighted policies. Such a scenario is clearly reflected in the 2008 economic crisis of the United States of America, and more recently,

that of the European Union. In both cases, the economic crisis was derived from overspending and borrowing by companies and individuals, resulting largely from governmental tax cuts with the direct purpose of increasing spending, such as the Bush tax cuts in USA and the McCreevy tax cuts in Ireland. The propensity for polarization in democracy is a result of the strong political bases in the populace formed around the manifestos and ideals of large and opposing parties over time. In many large countries, the ballot tends to be cast by ideology because policies covering the intricacies of such large areas tend to be overly complex to use as a political rallying point.

As a result of this, most voter bases are formed around such ideologies, forcing the parties to entrench their ideologies and manifestos within the policies they advocate, and hence making it hard for different parties with very different ideologies to come to a compromise. The key difference between this and policy-based politics is that policies are very much contextual and hence far more transient and easier to change and compromise upon, as compared to ideologies, which can be applied to policies for all kinds of situations, hence making them harder to go back upon. As such, there is a great incentive for political parties in large countries to centre their voter bases around their ideologies, because such voter bases are equally less transient. While it is true that plenty of democracies have more than simply a few parties, and hence will in theory have more diverse view points, the reality is that the staying-power generated by ideologies tends to create large parties that dominate the political scene, hence forcing smaller parties to pick sides, and form coalitions with the larger parties so as to remain relevant. The problem is

further exacerbated by the fact that any ambitious politician wishing to make a difference would have to join one of the large parties, hence draining diversity, and limiting voter choices.

The situation of polarisation is especially evident in the USA, where the two major political parties, the Republican Party and the Democrat Party have dominated the political scene, and created deep fault-lines in American politics within many major issues, including, rather pertinently, the issue of federal debt, where compromises are famously difficult to achieve. In my opinion the second of these two problems with democracy is the most important problem. The reason for this is that the shortcomings of human self-centeredness, the issue behind the first problem, is best corrected in times of urgent crisis, when people come together in rare agreement to prevent mutual downfall. However, the second problem is rooted in stubbornness with regard to the method to solve problems and crises, and hence is not as easily solved even when in times of great need, simply because of the strong belief held on both sides that the other side is the cause of the problem.

Such deep-seated disagreement is a paralysis, and the resulting incapability to solve problems is the likeliest precursor to downfall, hence making the second problem within democracy the most important and damaging problem. In conclusion, all forms of government have their flaws, democracy notwithstanding. This does not mean that democracy is a bad system of governance on the whole, indeed, the very facet of democracy – the power it gives the people – that leads to the two problems discussed in this essay is

also one of the greatest selling points of democracy, because it ensures that a tyrannical government can be torn down with relative ease by the people. Instead, the problems this essay highlights are truly a result of human imperfection facilitated by the attributes of a largely well-meaning system that is nonetheless a human creation, and hence flawed.