

# Comparative government



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Ramon N. Cabrera 15 April 2009 Where have all the Democracies gone? The United States of America has been known to for its ardent belief in the political philosophy of Liberal Democracy. The belief of giving people the power to choose and elect their leaders and respecting their individual rights and liberties are values, which became the foundation of this idea in their society. It's a belief they hold so dear that they also promote it to other countries all over the Globe. That's why it is quite surprising that the United States of America, a country whose government is built on this ideology, came at a very poor showing among the list of Democracies in the Economist's Index of Democracy Study. With more than 400 years since they founded their government, they came at only number 17. Uncle Sam's other brothers in faith, the United Kingdom and France—both of which have also been established for centuries as Democracies—were only 23 and 24 respectively (Kekic 2).

To understand this, one has to take into consideration the reality that “there are a thousand ways to skin a cat”. Liberal Democracy as a concept has always been debated upon. Even more complicated is the question on how it is to be measured. For the particular study in question, we have to know that it considered five determinants: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation and political culture (Kekic 2).

According to the study, “America falls down on some aspects of Governance and Civil Liberties” (Kekic 6). Problems on lack of Universal Healthcare, the mismanagement of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the rise in the unemployment and deficit are domestic problems that the United States currently faces. In terms of respect of Civil Liberties, there has been growing

concern on unauthorized wiretapping and torture among prisoners of Guantanamo Bay, in the Government's War on Terror ("Renewing America").

The United Kingdom also came at the near bottom of the list given its poor scores on Political Participation, given that it has the lowest voter turn-out in the whole of the developed world. France, on the other hand, tested low for the functioning of government, political participation and political culture (Kekic 6). The problem of political culture has always been present in France given their differences in the differences in values of the people brought about by aspects of religion, geography, class and education 9 ("French Political Culture").

The case of the United States as well as that of France and the United Kingdom illustrates how complex Democracy is as a political philosophy. It is not as easy as allowing people to vote and respecting their rights. It also has to do with a host of other factors that has to come out, such as a good handling of the government and an established political culture which respects other values.

#### A plan for Democracy

We have to understand that democracy always begins as an ideology, present in the mind of Man. It is only in the firm understanding of something that man gets to actualize that idea into a reality. For us to actualize democracy from being a mere idea to being a culture itself, to being a reality, we first have to be educated in it. That is why any government's attempt to establish a democratic order should begin with its infusion to education.

Acemoglu et. al states: " Education is argued to promote democracy both because it enables a ' culture of democracy' and it leads to greater prosperity, which is also thought to cause political development" (44). That is why the Education in the idea of democracy as well as in the history and development of it should always be included what is being taught to students, so that a country can form a citizenry conscious of it.

Another important issue a government has to address would be Economic Stability and Development, which is very much complimentary to Education. The State has to realize that man can only start caring for the needs of the state when his own needs are already met. Although there is no clear cut correlation between Democratic Rule and Economic Development, one has to take into account that most of the " full democracies" of the world are developed countries (Kekic 1).

These are basically the two important elements that any government should work for in order to establish a stable democratic order. Education and the Economy would always go hand in hand.

#### Work Cited

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