

How political institutions can change female representation in politics essay exa...

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



Question 1.

In the history of voting and political representation in the world, women have received little consideration compared to their male counterparts. In most world economies including the east and the west, women did not have the right to vote until after 1920. Following the completion of the Second World War, there were only 3 percent of women representatives in parliaments all over the world. However, this figure increased to 8 percent between 1945 and 1965, and later to 12 and 15 percent in 1985 and 2002 respectively. Despite the different political systems, - democracies and authoritarians - women have been given little opportunities in the government and political positions. Nevertheless, despite this imbalance, political institutions have the responsibility to ensure that there is gender balance and equality in political representations.

There have been varied reactions towards the advocacy for equal rights for men and women. However, even though many people believe that these rights should be equal, they also assert that men should get preference when it comes to good jobs, higher education, and in some cases the simple right to work outside the home. These latter assertions are common with the culturally conservative societies and the highly religious societies of the autocratic systems in the east. Nevertheless, the economic development in the world has generated changed attitude in the society as much as modernization and industrialization have brought women into paid jobs, which has increased the activist activities crusading for gender equality. Political institutions such as political parties, special interest groups, labor unions, and parliaments have the responsibility of carrying out the policies of

competing political leaders as well as their ideas in the society. The society has a responsibility of ensuring that women have equal political representation as men do. However, these political institutions have oppressed the public such that politicians manipulate people in order for them to satisfy their selfish ends. For instance, in Africa, and especially Sub Saharan Africa, most political leaders have oppressed women and the public to ensure that their political interests are accomplished. Special interest groups, particularly have the responsibility changing women political representation because most of them do not support contradicting political sides. In the current world economies, both in the west, in the east and in Africa, women political representation has greatly increased.

Politicians enact legislations through political institutions such as parliaments. The parliament can increase women political representation through enacting legislations that increase women representation in different houses. For instance, different parliaments in different countries have ensured that a specific percentage of the representatives in political positions are women. This minimum threshold must be met in order to ensure that women representations in these political institutions are increased. Political parties also have the responsibility to ensure that they mend their policies to ensure that the compositions and leadership positions are equally distributed between genders. In this regard, these political institutions would ensure that women have equal rights to nominations and elections into different political institutions.

Culture has been very repressive to women political rights as well as their living rights. For instance, in a documentary study conducted in India. It

approximated that because of the increasing birth rates in the country, it would surpass Chinese population by 2030. However, in this study also found that the girl population has greatly reduced because of female feticide, which has seen many mothers abort female fetus for cultural considerations. In this country, most people believe that girls bring much expenses to the family such as increased upkeep of the family as well as dowry payments, which are approximately \$1, 000, a sum that the middle class families would not comfortably afford for more than two girls. This study proposed that government institutions as well as non-governmental institutions have ignored their responsibility of protecting the female feticide. Reducing the female population in the society through such feticide leads to a reduced opportunities for the female gender in political institutions. Institutions such as courts and government departments should ensure that women oppressors such as medical practitioner who practice the illegal abortion are charged and convicted of their crimes in order to reduce vulnerability of these children. Additionally, political institutions should ensure that women are given the opportunity to participate in policy formulation as well as implementation so that they take an active part in lobbying and advocating for women political representation.

Question 2.

Democratic Challenges

There have been different controversial debates on the different political systems in the world. Most countries of the Western World believe that democracy is the best political system to ensure that national development

is a priority. However, most countries of the rebellious East believe in communism, and socialism among other systems that have been witnessed in the communist China among other countries. Additionally, African countries have also taken different standpoints in their governance systems. Nevertheless, these political systems have yielded different success in different countries that have used the varied systems. In the United States and many countries of Europe as well as some African nations, democracies have spurred economic growth making these countries political and economic superpowers in their regions as well as the whole world as in the case of United States. However, in the communist China, they have greatly opposed democratic leadership and their political system has equally produced economic growth that has threatened countries such as the democratic United States and some countries in Europe. In this assignment, I will explain the political, social, and economic challenges that China, Russia, and Nigeria are currently facing that hinder democratic practice and development.

Nigeria

Democracy involves ensuring that all citizens in an economy have equitable access to resources available in their economy. According to Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way in their article “ Why Democracy Needs a Level Playing Field,” they assert that an uneven playing field is central, yet underappreciated, component of authoritarianism. Levitsky and Way also indicate that in several economies of the world, governments undermine democratic completion by repression and fraud through the biased allocation

of national resources, impaired access to the media as well as the oppression of the latter and state institutions. These governments also oppress the opposition through denying them access to public finance thereby limiting their ability to compete during elections or to survive between election intervals. Nigeria is not an exception of these governments.

Nigeria faces social challenges to democratic practice and development. First, Nigeria is an ethnically diverse economy with between 250 and 400 ethnic groups with different interests. Additionally, there are religious tensions in Nigeria with increasing conflicts between the Muslim north and the non-Muslim south, which have constantly been rebellious against each other. Secondly, Nigeria faces the challenge of regionalism. The northern Nigeria is poor and dry, and has limited access to resources. However, the south has access too many resources as well as abundant access to basic public services. According to these social divisions, which have long history in the Nigerian past, the Nigerian leadership faces a shortfall on democratic practice.

When outsiders look at Nigeria, they see Nigerians, however, when Nigerians look at one another, they are mostly likely to see members of different ethnic groups. Nigerian ethnic communities have been divided along communal interest with neighboring ethnic communities often considering neighbors as enemies instead of fellow citizens. Research studies have concluded that Nigerians are prone to ethnic identity over national identity, especially when they are within their borders. Different ethnic communities have used their tyranny of numbers to oppress the minority ethnic groups.

Hausa-Fulani in the north is the biggest ethnic group in Nigeria comprising 28 to 30 percent followed by 20 percent Yoruba in the south, and the Igbo of the south east, which comprises 17 percent of the total Nigerian's 155 million population.

Nigerian ethnic communities are marked by language, customs, history, myths, experiences, and shared values that make them different from the neighboring communities. Political scientists have also concluded that nationality and ethnicity are subdivisions of race. This therefore implies that the ethnic challenge facing Nigeria is similar to the racial challenges that other countries of the west and United States face. As much as group identity might be important in giving a sense of belonging to members of the specific groups, exclusive group identification such as those witnessed in the ethnic Nigerian economy where some ethnic groups consider themselves superior over the minorities, it leads to a feelings of insecurity.

On the other hand, regionalism and religious segregations have been witnessed in Nigeria, thereby hindering democratic practice. During the election of President Goodluck Jonathan in April 2011, he had enough support from the non-Muslim Nigerian south with very little of the same in the northern Muslim region. Political elections in Nigeria as well as placement of leadership positions have been associated with regionalism and religion. Leaders favor members of their religious groups and people from their regions in appointments. Consequently, resource distribution in Nigeria has favored one region and religion over the other due to the tyranny of numbers. For instance, in the non-Muslim south, Lagos alone has ten times the elementary school enrolments of the northern region, and six times as

much hospital beds. Additionally, the southern Nigerian communities have sufficient agriculturally productive land while the northern region is characterized with the savanna and semi desert, which limit their agricultural potential production. This uneven distribution of resources in Nigeria poses the challenges to democratic practice since the ethnic and religious groups as well as regions feel insecure.

China

The Communist Chinese government has been criticized for its political system, which has however surprised critics. Nevertheless, the latest developments that have made China a possible superpower in the 20th and 21st century have been attributed to the current president Hu Jintao, who has incorporated liberalism, socialism, and democracy in the single party Chinese politics. While political democracy is considered to entail opposition from parties apart from the ruling party, China has maintained the Communist Chinese party (CCP) since its independence and there have been no attempts to form any formal political party. Some of the challenges that the communist China faces concerning political democratic practice include the single party political system and the minorities that form a large composition of the population. Additionally, China is one of the nations of the world that has been shifting from its communism into capitalism following the ascension of President Hu Jintao into the office, who has since changed the policies of his leadership of the party.

According to Andreas Schedler in his article " Authoritarianism's Last Line of Defense," he believes that authoritarian rulers hold constant and definite

multiparty elections in different levels and sections of the government.

These regimes cannot be easily differentiated from liberal democracies in their operational forms. Yet dictatorial leaders invariably recompense for these formal indulgences with firm organization. Even though the Communist China does not have the multiparty elections, the hereditary and elitist government leadership selections have emulated Schedler assertion. The government exercises political control over resources and the economy, thereby favoring the communities that it considers prioritized.

Democratic governments serve the interest of the citizens and not the interest of the political leaders. However, in China, the Communist People's party has been criticized for its poor human rights consideration and changes in the administration that are determined more by decisions within the party as opposed to the wishes of the citizens. People that the party officials consider relevant for these positions and not those that the citizens consider appropriate fill the influential political positions in China. President Hu Jintao is not only the president of the People's Republic of China, but also the General Secretary of the Communist Party. Therefore, as a double-faced leader of the nations and the party, he has been criticized for favoritism in his selections. On the other hand, the Chinese People's Party is known for its communism, authoritative, and bureaucratic leadership. However, following President Hu Jintao's ascent to office in 2003, he has since changed the leadership of the party towards democratic-like leadership, which has elicited internal tensions within the party. This hinders democratic practice since the conservative members of the party stick to the initial policies of the Chinese Communist party.

The second challenge to democratic practice in China is the relative homogeneity of the population. The Chinese population has a little about seven percent of the population belonging to the ethnic minority. However, given the large population of the Chinese community estimated at about 1.3 billion, some of the ethnic minorities are big enough to make up the population of medium sized countries. The Thais comprise about 17 million, the Tibetans about 5 million, and Mongols about 6 million. The Chinese ethnic minority comprise the poor population of China despite living in areas rich in mineral resources. The government is faced with the challenge equitable distribution of national resources to these ethnic minorities since they have very little command on the Communist Chinese party, to which it they have very few representatives.

Russia

Russia is one of world's economies that has faced drastic changes similar to China in the recent decades. Russia was one of the most influential partners of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), a state that most westerners not only feared, but also distrusted and misunderstood. Nevertheless, in the recent past, the Russian political system has made efforts to transform into democratic as opposed to its initial socialism. In the Russian history as well as its current political position, the challenges to democratic practice include its political history and values, and the economic challenges.

Politically, Russia has only been exposed to monarchy, one-party rule, totalitarianism, and oligarchy. The Russian political leaders have been resistant to transition into democracy because they have held onto soviet

traditions of centralized and strong authority. These leaders have ensured that political leadership is centered at one point and the means of communication in these economies is unidirectional. The important leadership positions have only been filled with the composition that the government feels necessary. Additionally, this mentality has downplayed opposition in Russia. For instance, following President Vladimir Putin's end of presidency, he was still made the Russian Prime Minister, and he was very instrumental in the election of his successor, Dmitry Medvedev, in which the opposition played no key role.

According to Freedom House, Freedom House is a United States based non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on political freedom, democracy, and human rights, it recently downgraded Russia from Partly Free to Not Free. Additionally, Fareed Zakaria argued that democratically elected governments are routinely ignoring constitutional limits on their power and depriving their citizens' basic rights and freedoms in many parts of the world. Zakaria describes illiberal democracies as the democratic economies that limit basic freedoms and rights of the citizens. In Russia, even though the government has endeavored to provide democratic leadership, the minorities, which are about 90 communities, still face deprivation of basic rights.

Economic development is another challenge to Russian democratic practice. The transition from the military to a free market system inclined towards the consumer has faced several challenges. The political system in Russia has been depressive towards investment with the property owners accumulating more wealth at the expense of the working class who only receive little

payments. Despite the rich economic resources including gold, vast land, natural gas, oil, iron and coal, the Russian economy has limited technical expertise as well as the capital to fully exploit these resources. Additionally, the Russian nation offers little encouragement for external investors to exploit its resources. The challenge in achieving economic stability associated with the greed of the political leaders pose a challenge to the democratic practice and transition of the Russian economy.

Conclusion

The political systems in Russia, Nigeria and China have faced challenges of democratic practices including the ethnic and religious diversities of the population, the political histories of these nations, regionalism, economic transitions from military to free market systems, and single party systems as well as large populations and vast geographical area. Nevertheless, several economies have faced these challenges, but have changed their policies to inclusivity, thereby yielding democracy. Considering the current efforts in these countries, they will certainly achieve democratic governments and practices in the future.

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