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Assignment 1.3 — Definitions

Introduction:

Dear Writing Team,

In this assignment, I will explain the term *democracy* to non-technical readers through three definitions: (1) parenthetical, (2) sentence, and (3) expanded. This relatively complex term is used throughout history to describe governance. I hope my group members can fully understand what *democracy* is.

Term: Democracy

Reading Situation: A historian is explaining this term as a form of government.

Parenthetical definition:

Democracy (a system of government) is typically run by elected representatives through the concept of *majority rules* (greater number exercises greater power).

Sentence definition:

Democracy is a representative system of government where people elect representatives to govern in the people's name.

Expanded definitions:

Etymology:

Democracy is a system of government governed by the people or by elected officials. The word *democracy* derives from the Greek words “demos” and “kratos”. “Demos” means “common people; district” while “kratos” means “rule, strength”.

What is the History?:

The term democracy was invented by the Greeks during the classical age, meaning “rule of the people.” In ancient Athens, the Greeks (only free men, excluding women, children, and slaves as they were not considered citizens at the time and therefore could not vote) were the first political people in history to create States purely as communities of citizens in which the administration and the making of policy were the right and the duty of these citizens. The establishment of democracy in Greece is generally associated with the original founding of the Western civilization. In fact, individuals attempted to leverage these early democratic experiments into a new template for post-monarchical political organization. The establishment of democracy in the United States in the 18th century is considered the world’s first constitutional democracy. Today,

there are democratic governments in many parts of the world including North and South America, Australia, and Europe.

Democracy Goals and Functioning:

There are many ways democracy manifests itself locally and nationally. For example, the local or national government may hold a public gathering in which citizens can discuss their opinions on current or emerging policies and proposals. Another example is the government holding a referendum (a general vote by the electorate). When the government proposes a constitutional amendment or a new law, the citizens are allowed to vote for or against it. Essentially, democracy gives power to the people.

The goals of democracy are listed:

- Effective participation
- Citizen control of the agenda: citizens control what the government concerns itself with
- Maintain order and balance
- Provide for the common good of society
- Protect life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
- Inclusion: include and extend rights to all people subject to its laws
- Free and fair elections
- Civil liberties
- The rule of law guaranteeing rights to all

Common Misconceptions of Democracy:

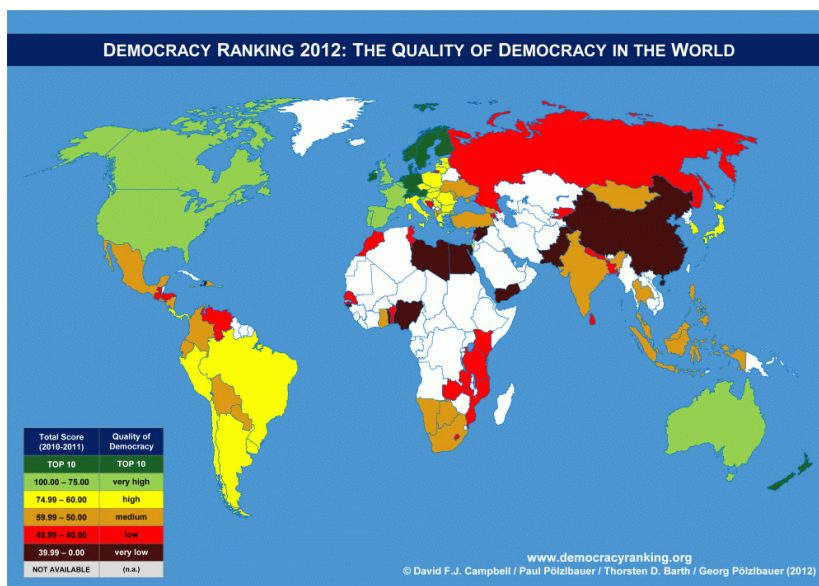
There are many other types of systems of government in the world other than democracy. Some other common types of governance include monarchy, dictatorship, anarchy, totalitarianism, and more. In this section, I will briefly explain these forms of government to clear any misunderstandings. Monarchy was historically one of the most common forms of government. In this system, a king or queen rules the country for as long as they are alive. The crown is inherited, usually passed down through generations of the family. Dictatorship, on the other hand, is the opposite of democracy. In a dictatorship, a single individual has gained power through force and everyone has to follow their policies (the people have little to no voice in this system). Similar to dictatorship is a totalitarian government where a group of people has control of the people. The regime maintains complete control of the country by not allowing any other people to form a political party. Lastly, anarchy is a type of governance that does not *actually* have a functioning government. A country that has anarchy typically experiences civil unrest and war. All of these are other types of government systems that could be misunderstood as democracy. Democratic countries stand in opposition to nations that are either ruled by a monarchy, dictatorship, anarchy, or totalitarianism.

A common misconception of democracy is that once a civilian government is elected by the people the political system has reached its end. However, many elements are needed to form a democratic government — how the government effectively promotes public good, which consists of freedom and good governance. Without the former proper governance, democracy could relapse into despotism (tyranny, absolute power). Without the latter it degenerates into mobocracy (ruled by the mass).

Visuals & Examples of what Democracy is:

Figure 1 highlights how democratic a country is on a 100-point scale. Notable countries in the 2012 data show that the United States and Canada are both highly democratic.

Figure 1:



Works Cited

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Ehrenberg, Victor. “Origins of Democracy.” *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1950, pp. 515–48. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4434319>. Accessed 6 Jun. 2022.

(Figure 1) Longley, Robert. "Representative Democracy: Definition, Pros, and Cons."
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[thoughtco.com/representative-democracy-definition-pros-cons-4589561](https://www.thoughtco.com/representative-democracy-definition-pros-cons-4589561).