Regimes

1. **Representative democracy**

DEF: *a democracy is a political system of mass participation, competitive elections, and human and civil rights*

There are many ways to understand the meaning of democracy: generally speaking, it means rule by the people.

Many think that democracy equals freedom, but they are not the same thing. Many illiberal democracies exist that regularly run roughshod over freedoms at the request of the people.

DEF: *illiberal democracies are regimes that are elected but lack democratic qualities such as civil rights and limits on government*

A new form of authoritarian rule has emerged in China and Russia, according to professor Ignatieff, combining single party oligarchy with State capitalism, and public tyranny with private market freedom.

Fareed Zakaria wrote an essay “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy”: thesis was that democracies around the world were surrendering to illiberal reforms, and that the strands holding the traditions of democracy and liberalism together were rapidly eroding. According to him popular participation and liberties became intertwined in what we call liberal democracy, but the two elements in some countries are coming apart, with democracy persisting but absence of liberties. What defines a democracy is a democratic attitude that is coming apart even in the U.S.

Zakaria’s piece made an important distinction between democracy and liberalism, constructs that are often conflated. Democracy is a process for choosing leaders; it is about popular participation. To say that a state is democratic is to say little about how it is actually governed.

Liberalism, by contrast, is about the norms and practices that shape political life. A properly liberal state is one in which individual rights are paramount. It protects the individual not only against the abuses of a tyrant but also against the abuses of democratic majorities.

One form of democracy is direct democracy, where the citizens vote on every issue (ancient Greece)

Many have equated direct democracy with a type of mob rule that is extremely dangerous.

Most modern states use a representative form of democracy because countries have populations in the millions and decision making would be unwieldy. Citizens influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for office.

DEF: *a democracy in which the people do not rule directly but through elected and accountable representatives.*

In a democracy the citizens do not directly set policy; rather, they articulate preferences that government uses as a guideline for developing policy.

* 1. **Popular accountability of government**

Popular accountability requires that policy makers must obtain the support of a majority or a plurality of votes cast, in addition to being accountable directly to citizens (no one has the right to occupy a position of political power)

This means power must change hands and that changeover must be peaceful and legitimate.

* 1. **Political Competition**

Voters must have a choice, either of candidates or parties to indicate democratic stability: one party or one candidate elections are fake. (hence, elections by themselves do not equal democracy)

* 1. **Alternation in Power**

Power must alternate to control corruption: no party or individual should get a lock on executive power.

A system in which there is no alternation are necessarily corrupt and cannot be considered democratic.

* 1. **Uncertain Electoral Outcomes**

Election outcomes must be uncertain: a certain percent of the electorate must be up for grabs to keep politicians worried about their position, which makes them attentive to the nation.

* 1. **Popular Representation**

Popular representation means that those in office must work to protect the voters' interests, since they have been elected as their representatives.

Representatives must act as trustees: carrying out the wishes of constituents but act in the best interest of the whole.

* 1. **Majority Decision**

In the modern concept of democracy, the majority decides but with respect for minority rights.

Most of what is now public policy became law because of conflict between majority and minorities. If minority views are silenced, the will of the majority would become a “tyranny”.

* 1. **Right to Dissent and Disobedience**

Citizens must have the right to engage in acts of protest the policies of the majority in addition to engaging in acts of civil disobedience (ex. Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi)

DEF: *civil disobedience is the nonviolent breaking of an unjust aw to serve a higher law*

In the previous examples, without civil disobedience, minority claims would go unheard, and there would have reformed nothing.

* 1. **Political Equality**

Political equality requires that every adult can participate in politics and that everyone's vote counts the same.

In many democratic states there is a large concern about the influence of wealth in political participation.

* 1. **Popular Consultation**

Popular consultation requires that leaders find out what their constituents want to govern effectively. To do this they have to monitor public opinions polls continuously.

* 1. **Free Press**

A free press and critical is essential to a representative democracy.

It provides one of the best ways to measure democracy, since dictatorships do not tolerate free press.

The American media is often criticized due in part to its automatically taking an adversarial stance against government, and in doing so, they weaken the nation. Even though this could be true, in a democracy there is no way to determine what “too far is”.

1. **Democracy in Practice: Elitism or Pluralism?**

There will always be a struggle over power in society and political power can never be evenly distributed.

For political scientists, the core question then is how much elites in society are accountable to the public and their interests. There are two general theories that follow:

1. Elite theories of politics

These theories maintain that there is little accountability on the parts of elites to the public.

key elite theorists:

* Gaetano Mosca: Italian political scientist who argued that government always ends up in the hands of a few.
* Robert Michels: German sociologist who argued that any organization, no matter how democratic its intent, ends up run by a small elite (Iron Law of Oligarchy)

Elite theorists are radicals, not conservatives.

1. Pluralist theories of politics

These theories maintain that elites are ultimately held accountable to the public through interest groups.

Key pluralist theorist:

* Robert Dahl: American political scientist who argued that in any large society decisions are made by small groups, but those groups are ultimately accountable; like small pyramids capped by an elite. (“Polyarchy Model”)

ELITIST’S ARGUMENTS:

Money gives elites access to political power and those who wield it. This is enhanced by the connections held by the wealthy. A great deal of influence from elites comes in the form of campaign contributions, which make sure no important part of the industry is harmed.

Politics is essentially a single pyramid with the elites sitting at the top of it.

PLURALIST’S ARGUMENTS:

Politics functions through interest groups that compete for access to government and bargain with each other.

This is what Dahl called polyarchy and Lijphart called consociational democracy.

Interest groups collide with each other like billiard balls in their attempts to influence policy and it is through their efforts that citizens are heard, because any citizen can form a group to try and influence politics.

1. **Totalitarianism**

DEF: *totalitarian systems are political systems in which the state attempts total control of its citizens and elites are completely unaccountable. Emphasis is placed on brainwashing and worship of the State.*

Today, there are very few totalitarian systems left.

It is a relatively modern phenomenon and it started with Lenin's seizure of power in Russia.

Today North Korea is the last place on earth to showcase the kind of totalitarian fervour on display at the huge rally in Pyongyang.

* 1. **What is Totalitarianism?**

Totalitarian states pursue a special goal, and all resources are directed at its achievement; the obsession spawns an ideology that explains everything in terms of its goal. The gal can never be achieved because the only reason to justify totalitarian state it the goal itself, and the failure of attainment is often attributed to classes of people.

AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING IDEOLOGY:

Totalitarians push an official theory of history and presents the world in black and white images.

Everyone must believe in the ideology that asserts the state is working toward the perfect society.

A SINGLE PARTY:

There can be only one party and that party is usually built around a cult of personality of the totalitarian leader. The membership to the party is an honour.

ORGANIZED TERROR:

The system is based on organized terror, both psychological and physical, as a means for eliminating resistance to the regime. The police have no judicial restraints, and often acts against a whole social class (ex. Jews, socialists etc)

MONOPOLY OF COMMUNICATIONS:

The media is strictly censored, this allows them to control and shape the state's message in addition to promoting the official ideology. Only good news is spread to share the image of a working society under wise leaders, spread by new means of communication.

MONOPOLY OF WEAPONS:

Government has a complete monopoly on weapons to eliminate armed resistance.

CONTROLLED ECONOMY:

The economy is heavily controlled and put in service to the state to make sure the party can allocate resources to whatever cause they wish.

* 1. **Image and Reality of Total Control**

Despite outside perceptions, totalitarian states never have complete and total control over society.

The perfect model of totalitarianism never match reality, it is always an attempt to impose total control, not the achievement of it.

* 1. **Right-Wing Totalitarianism**

Right-wing totalitarianism differs from communist totalitarianism in that it does not seek revolution but rather wants to block it by strengthening the existing order.

It developed in industrialized nations plagued by economic depression, social upheaval and political confusion, an in general in situations in which democracy was weak.

It glorifies the state, and the state permeates all aspects of social life as well as political and economic.

It seeks to eliminate any within the state who are foreign or are deemed inferior (basis for the Holocaust)

1. **Authoritarianism**

Authoritarian states differ from totalitarian states in that they do not seek to control all aspects of society.

DEF: *nondemocratic government but not necessarily totalitarian*

A small group runs the regime and minimizes popular input. There are heavy limits on individual freedoms in exchange for order in society and control.

Dissent is stifled and resistance is generally exterminated through brute force and imprisonment.

Some authoritarian states will have trappings of democracy, but they are only for show and really have no meaning (ex. elections with only one party)

According to Jeanne Kirkpatrick, the main difference between authoritarian states and totalitarian states is that an authoritarian state can reform, but once it slips into totalitarianism there is no way for the system to reform itself.

* 1. **Authoritarianism and the Developing Nations**

One trend that manifested after decolonization is that despite democratic impulses many of the states became authoritarian instead of democratic.

why did this happen?

Political scientists posit some of the following arguments.

* The colonial systems imposed upon these states never encouraged the traditions and habits of democracy necessary to help sustain a democratic transition.
* Democracy is a western tradition that did not fit well with the political culture of many of the former colonial states.
* The post-colonial leadership was heavily influenced by socialist ideologies that led to a commitment to a strong and centralized state.
* The leaders claimed that they knew what the people wanted more than the people themselves and rigged elections to make sure that the people got it.

1. **The Democratization of Authoritarian Regimes**

Since the 1970s many countries have seen waves of new democracies emerge, while abandoning authoritarian or totalitarian regimes

These were the product of two types of states.

* Authoritarian states with strong economies
* Communist regimes with weak economies

Economics plays a critical role in the democratic transition:

As economies improve, so do the prospects for democracy. Economic growth creates a middle class with a stake in the political system. Rising education levels make the people less susceptible to demagogues and extremist ideas. People are more aware of their interests and express them.

This transition does not work with petrostates, as oil wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few and ends up retarding democracy.

UCLA Professor Ross, says that around three dozen developing countries around the world have a lot of oil wealth, and these tend to be the countries that are the least democratic because the few people in power are the ones that benefit from the oil wealth to keep themselves in a position of power.

These countries also fund themselves on oil revenues and not through citizens taxes, which allows them to not be held accountable and are not demanded to pay more attention to citizens needs (taxation leads to representation)

But economics can also have a negative effect:

Poor economic conditions can lead to a push for liberal reforms, but Communist countries do not tolerate change well, and the system collapses as a result.

It is not clear whether democracy will take root in any of the states that have experienced recent transition.

Political scientists hope they do because the more democracies there are, the more peaceful the world seems to be, as suggested by the democratic peace thesis.