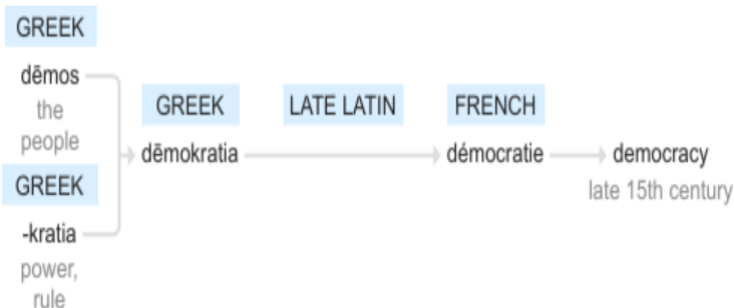


Democracy (origins)

The concepts (and name) of democracy and constitution as a form of government originated in ancient Athens circa 508 BCE. In ancient Greece, where there were many city-states with different forms of government, democracy was contrasted with governance by elites (aristocracy), by one person (monarchy), by tyrants (tyranny).



Democracy in American history

1620: The Mayflower Compact, an agreement among the Pilgrims, on forming a government among themselves, based on majority rule, is signed

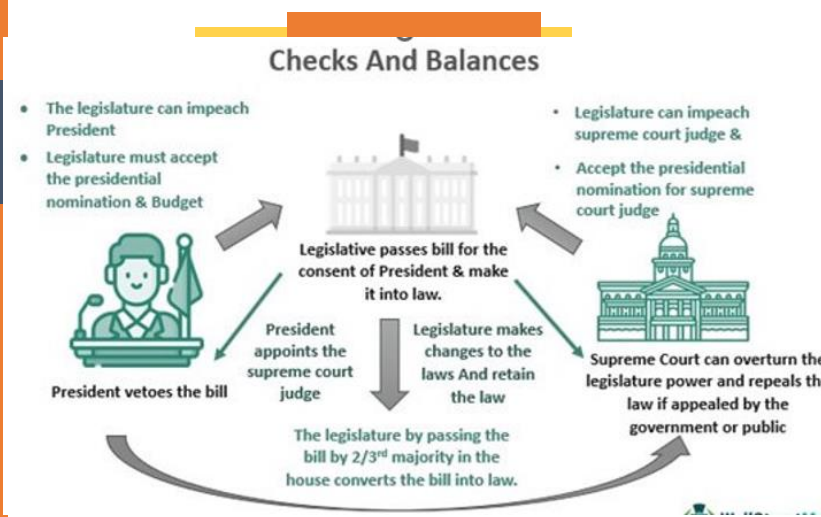
1682: William Penn wrote Frame of Government of Pennsylvania, which gave the colony a representative legislature and granted liberal freedoms to the colony's citizens.

1776: The American Declaration of Independence proclaims that "*All men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*" The Founding Fathers rejected limited 'democracy' run by aristocrats.

The US electoral system: a democracy?

While Americans often think of the United States as a democracy, plain and simple, the electoral process has never been completely democratic. The Founding Fathers designed the Electoral College so that presidential selection would be one step removed from the popular will. Political party and state government rules stop some voters from participating in primaries and general elections. The skyrocketing cost of running a political campaign can allow wealthy individuals and corporations to take leading roles and discourages those with smaller pockets. Even voting machines have prevented ballots from being counted. Sometimes the sense of system failure or that their vote doesn't matter leads to low voter turnout; other times, it leads the citizenry to fight for change.

In 1824, when the Electoral College gathered to elect a new president, none of the four contenders had received the required majority. This left the U.S. House of Representatives to decide between the three top vote-getters: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams and William Crawford. Although Jackson had the greatest number of electoral and popular votes, the House picked Adams, marking the first time that the winner of the popular vote did not win the presidency. Jackson and his supporters were outraged by Congress' decision. In the 1876, 1888, 2000 and 2016 presidential elections, history repeated itself when the winner of the popular vote didn't win the election.



Thinkers of democracy

John Locke – Two Treatises of Government (1689)

Montesquieu – The Spirit of the Laws (1748)

Alexis de Tocqueville – Democracy in America (1835)

John Stuart Mill – On Liberty (1859)

Capitol riots

On January 6, 2021, following the defeat of U.S. President Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election, a mob of his supporters attacked the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The mob sought to keep Trump in power by preventing a joint session of Congress from counting the Electoral College votes to formalize the victory of President-elect Joe Biden.

Five people died either shortly before, during, or following the event. Many people were injured, including 138 police officers. As of July 7, 2022, monetary damages caused by attackers exceed \$2.7 million.

Called to action by Trump, thousands of his supporters gathered in Washington, D.C., on January 5 and 6 to support his false claim that the 2020 election had been "stolen by emboldened radical-left Democrats" and to demand that Vice President Mike Pence and Congress reject Biden's victory. He said, "If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore".

In the days and weeks prior to January 6, the leaders of the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers, two militia groups, conspired to use violence to interfere with the peaceful transfer of power.

A week after the riot, the House of Representatives impeached Trump for incitement of insurrection, making him the only U.S. president to have been impeached twice. On August 1, 2023, following a special counsel investigation, Trump was indicted on four charges.

Democratic tools:

The ability to vote:

The legitimacy of the voting process must be protected in order to guarantee that a democracy functions properly.

Free Press:

A true democracy depends on the free-flowing exchange of ideas. An unrestricted press stands as a vital tool for the introduction and dissemination of political viewpoints. A free press has the ability to openly question candidates and government officials and bring to light the issues that are relevant to the public.

Access to libraries:

An informed population stands as one of the necessary components of a successful democracy. Libraries provide citizens with a access to various ideas, viewpoints and histories pertaining to the government of a democracy. Ensuring that public institutions do not hide unpopular information remains vital to democracy.

Access to the Internet:

The Internet stands as one of the most vital tools in the modern democratic process. The advent of social media means that citizens have a new and expedient means of conversing and participating in the public discourse. Access to the Internet also means that citizens have readily available channels to communicate at the local, state and national levels. The Internet should ideally work to promote democracy.

An ageing presidency?

A recent YouGov survey found that 67% of Americans, including 48% of Democrats, think that Biden is too old for another term, and only 35% believe that Vice President Kamal Harris would be ready to step in as president if it became necessary.

By contrast, only 42% think that former President Donald Trump is too old to run again. In a recent NBC survey, 70% of the respondents said that Joe Biden should not run again, and about half of them said that Biden's age was a "major factor".



AUGUST 29-31, 2022

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MOE: +/- 3.0 PTS

MAJOR THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

TOP ANSWERS AMONG THOSE WHO SAY DEMOCRACY THREATENED



