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978-1-107-04387-9 - The People's Government: An Introduction to Democracy

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The People's Government

The People's Government is premised on the idea that democracy is based on two fundamental rights: freedom and liberty. Many believe these rights are synonymous, but they are actually complementary opposites. Liberty is the right to be left alone, whereas freedom is the right to participate in a political community. How people view democracy depends on which of these two rights they think is more important. Liberal democrats place a higher value on liberty; free democrats see freedom as the primary right.

From this starting point, the author adds five dimensions to define and distinguish democratic societies: rights, participation and representation, inclusion, equality, and power. Liberal democracies tend to emphasize individualism, negative rights, representative government, inclusive citizenship, equal opportunity, and limited government. Free democracies stress community, positive rights, direct participation, exclusive citizenship, equal outcomes, and robust government.

Next, the book examines the most important arguments for and against democracy and explores the life cycle of democracies – how countries democratize, mature, and fail. Finally, the author uses the five dimensions established earlier to evaluate and grade American democracy.

Del Dickson is a professor of political science and international relations at the University of San Diego. He especially enjoys teaching Introduction to Political Science, Constitutional Law, Judicial Behavior, and Comparative Law. He has earned numerous teaching awards and was recently named one of the 300 best professors in the United States by Princeton Review. He received his BA in Political Science at Humboldt State, his JD at UCLA, and his PhD in Political Science at USC. He clerked for Chief Justice Robert Gardner of the California Court of Appeal and practiced law at Sherman and Howard in Denver, Colorado. His book, *The Supreme Court in Conference (1940–1985)*, earned the Association of American Publishers award as the best book in Government and Political Science in 2001.

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Prologue</i>	xi
1 Liberty and Freedom	I
<i>Key Terms</i>	2
Liberty and Freedom	2
Power, Politics, and State	3
<i>Who Should Rule?</i>	5
The Tyranny of Scarce Resources	5
The Merry-Go-Round of Politics	6
Getting off the Merry-Go-Round	7
Equal Rights as a Birthright	8
Beautiful Choices	8
Democracy	9
2 Freedom or Liberty?	10
<i>Free Democracy</i>	10
<i>Liberal Democracy</i>	17
<i>Reprise: Freedom or Liberty?</i>	26
<i>Two Styles but Many Flavors</i>	28
3 Rights	29
<i>Where Do Rights Come From?</i>	29
<i>Balancing Rights and Duties</i>	31
<i>Negative and Positive Rights</i>	32
<i>Individual Rights</i>	33
<i>Group Rights and Responsibilities</i>	34
4 Participation and Representation	39
<i>Participation and Direct Democracy</i>	39

	How It Works	40
	<i>Representation and Representative Democracy</i>	46
	<i>The Selection of Public Officials</i>	48
	Random Selection	49
	Elections	49
5	Inclusion	57
	<i>Elite and Inclusive Democracies</i>	57
	<i>Citizenship and Foreign Residents</i>	59
	<i>Other Limits on Political Rights</i>	62
6	Equality	64
	<i>Political and Legal Equality</i>	65
	Equal Representation: Egalitarian and Weighted Systems	65
	Weighted Voting in Government: The Votes That Count?	68
	Benign Weighting	70
	Qualified Democracies	71
	An Equal Political Voice: Access and Influence	71
	Legal Equality	73
	<i>Social and Economic Equality</i>	74
7	Power	80
	<i>Water or Smoke</i>	81
	<i>Narrow or Broad Responsibilities</i>	81
	<i>Concentrated, Divided, and Diffused Power</i>	82
	Concentrated Power and Unitary States	83
	Guided and Advisory Democracies	84
	Divided and Diffused Power	86
	<i>Who Decides? Majoritarianism, Isocracy, and Consensus</i>	88
8	The Case against Democracy	92
	<i>The Virtues of Elite Rule</i>	93
	<i>The Long View</i>	95
	<i>Reliable Partners</i>	96
	<i>Economic Development</i>	97
	<i>The Foibles and Failures of the Many</i>	99
	Human Nature	99
	<i>The Weaknesses of Democratic Government</i>	101
	Amateur Hour	101
	Democratic Leaders	103
	Democratic Laws	104
	Tyranny of the Majority	105
	Emergencies	105
	No Democratic Decision Making in Business	106
	The Illusion of Democracy: Mosca and Marx	106
	<i>Summary</i>	108

<i>Contents</i>	vii
9 The Case for Democracy	109
<i>Political Theory and Moral Arguments in Favor of Democracy</i>	109
Human Nature	109
We Do the Work, We Deserve Power	111
<i>Practical Benefits</i>	113
The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number	113
Aligning Self-Interest and the Common Good: Progress, Prosperity, and a Stake in the System	113
Inclusion and Moderation	114
Democratic Peace Theory	119
Democracies Attract Interesting, Eclectic, and Creative People	120
Democratic Corruption < Authoritarian Corruption	121
Crisis and Patriotism	122
What Seems Like a Weakness Is a Strength	123
People Might Not Be Idiots After All	125
Experiential Education	126
The Wisdom of Crowds and Aristotle’s Golden Mean	126
Deliberative Wisdom	128
Other Checks on Popular Passion, Mistakes, and Stupidity	129
<i>Post-Materialist Benefits</i>	129
10 Building a Stable Democracy	130
<i>Paths of Democratization</i>	130
<i>Individual Level</i>	133
The First R: Reason	133
The Second R: Reasonableness	134
The Third R: Responsibility	135
Education	137
<i>Societal Level</i>	139
Civil Society	139
Social Checks on State Power	146
Elites	149
International Civil Society	150
Culture	151
Institutional Level	158
Checks and Balances	158
The Rule of Law	165
An Open, Fair, and Competitive Electoral System	172
A Professional Civil Service	174
Government Transparency	179
A Secular State	182
A Civilian State	186
A Commonwealth	190

viii	Contents
11	Three Misconceptions about Democratization 193
	<i>Claim #1: Poor Countries Will Not Become Democratic</i> 193
	<i>Claim #2: Societies Without Democratic Traditions Will Not Become Democratic</i> 196
	<i>Claim #3: Islam Is Fundamentally Incompatible With Democracy</i> 197
12	How Democracies Die 203
	<i>External Crisis</i> 203
	<i>Internal Crisis</i> 203
	<i>Apathetic Decay, Corruption, and Creeping Authoritarianism</i> 204
	<i>Bowling Alone and the Big Split</i> 207
13	How Democratic Is the United States? 210
	<i>Freedom</i> 211
	<i>Liberty</i> 215
	<i>Rights and Duties</i> 217
	<i>Participation and Representation</i> 219
	<i>Inclusion</i> 221
	<i>Political and Legal Equality</i> 222
	<i>Social and Economic Equality</i> 228
	<i>Power: Checks and Balances, Separation of Powers, and Federalism</i> 229
	<i>Power: The Rule of Law</i> 231
	<i>The Final Scorecard</i> 234
	<i>Glossary and Biographies</i> 239
	<i>Bibliography</i> 255
	<i>Index</i> 261

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Prologue

The premise of this book is that liberty and freedom are the two source rights from which other political rights are derived, and democracy is the only form of government that gives both of these rights their due. But what sort of democracy best promotes liberty, freedom, and other associated rights? That is an interesting question, and it has more than one good answer.