

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE II

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MODULE: VII Totalitarian State

Democratic and Non-Democratic forms of Government

Government is the means by which state policy is enforced, as well as the mechanism for determining the policy of the state. A form of government, or form of state governance, refers to the set of political institutions by which a government of a state is organized (synonyms include “regime type” and “system of government”). Governments consist of two broad interplaying elements that generally determine how a government is coded: the power source and the power structure. Power source refers to the individuals and institutions that exercise governing authority over a state and the means by which they obtain their power, while power structure refers to the system by which they are organized.

In the case of its broad definition, government normally consists of legislators, administrators, and arbitrators. Government is the means by which state policy is enforced, as well as the mechanism for determining the policy of the state. States are served by a continuous succession of different governments. Each successive government is composed of a body of individuals who control and exercise control over political decision-making. Their function is to make and enforce laws and arbitrate conflicts. In some societies, this group is often a self-perpetuating or hereditary class. In other societies, such as democracies, the political roles remain, but there is frequent turnover of the people actually filling the positions. Democracy is a form of government in which all eligible citizens have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives.

Democracy allows people to participate equally—either directly or through elected representatives—in the proposal, development, and creation of laws. It encompasses social, economic, and cultural conditions that enable the free and equal practice of political self-determination. The term originates from the Greek word: δημοκρατία (*dēmokratía*), which translates to “rule of the people”. This term was used around 400 BCE to denote the political systems then existing in Greek city-states, notably Athens.

A democratic government contrasts two forms of government where power is either held by one, as in a monarchy, or where power is held by a small number of individuals, as in an oligarchy or aristocracy. Nevertheless, these oppositions, inherited from Greek philosophy, are now ambiguous because contemporary governments have mixed democratic, oligarchic, and monarchic elements. Several variants of democracy exist, but there are two basic forms, both of which concern how the whole body of citizens executes its will: direct democracy and representative democracy.

Unlike democracy, authoritarianism and totalitarianism are forms of government where an individual or a single-party concentrates all power.

Direct Democracy

Direct democracy is a form of democracy in which people vote on policy initiatives directly. This is different from a representative democracy, in which people vote for representatives who then vote on policy initiatives. Depending on the particular system in use, it might entail passing executive decisions, making laws, directly electing or dismissing officials, and conducting trials. Two leading forms of direct democracy are participatory democracy and deliberative democracy.

The earliest known direct democracy is said to be the Athenian Democracy in the 5th century BCE, although it was not an inclusive democracy; women, foreigners, and slaves were excluded from it. In the direct democracy of Athens, the electorate did not nominate representatives to vote on legislation and executive bills on their behalf (as in the United States Congress), but instead voted on these items in their own right. Participation was by no means open, but the in-group of participants was constituted with no reference to economic class and they participated on a large scale. The public opinion of voters was remarkably influenced by the political satire performed by the comic poets at the theaters.

Also relevant is the history of Roman republic, beginning circa 449 BCE. The ancient Roman Republic's "citizen lawmaking"—citizen formulation and passage of law, as well as citizen veto of legislature-made law—began about 449 BCE and lasted the approximately 400 years to the death of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE. Modern-era citizen lawmaking began in the towns of Switzerland in the 13th century CE. In 1847, the Swiss added the "statute referendum" to their national constitution. Currently in Switzerland, single majorities are sufficient at the town, city, and canton level, but at the national level, double majorities are required on constitutional matters. The intent of the double majorities is simply to ensure any citizen-made law's legitimacy.

Representative Democracy

Direct democracy was very much opposed by the framers of the United States Constitution and some signatories of the Declaration of Independence. They saw a danger in majorities forcing their will on minorities. As a result, they advocated a representative democracy in the form of a constitutional republic over a direct democracy. For example, James Madison, in Federalist No. 10, advocates a constitutional republic over direct democracy precisely to protect the individual from the will of the majority. Representative democracy is a variety of democracy founded on the principle of elected people representing a group of people. For example, three countries which use representative democracy are the United States of America (a representative democracy), the United Kingdom (a constitutional monarchy) and Poland (a republic). It is an element of both the parliamentary system and presidential system of government and is typically used in a lower chamber such as the House of Commons (UK) or Bundestag (Germany).

NON DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Authoritarianism is a form of social organization characterized by submission to authority as well as the administration of said authority. In politics, an authoritarian government is characterized by highly concentrated and centralized power maintained by political repression and the exclusion of potential challengers. It uses political parties and mass organizations to mobilize people around the goals of the regime. Authoritarianism emphasizes arbitrary law rather than the rule of law, including election rigging and political decisions being made by a select group of officials behind closed doors. Authoritarianism is marked by “indefinite political tenure” of an autocratic state or a ruling-party state.

An autocracy is a system of government in which a supreme political power is concentrated in the hands of one person, whose decisions are subject to neither external legal restraints nor regularized mechanisms of popular control. By contrast, a single-party state is a type of party system government in which a single political party forms the government and no other parties are permitted to run candidates for election. Typically, single-party states hold the suppression of political factions, except as transitory issue oriented currents within the single party or permanent coalition as a self-evident good. The Communist Party of China’s single-party rule of the People’s Republic of China is a prominent contemporary example.

Totalitarianism an extreme version of authoritarianism. Authoritarianism primarily differs from totalitarianism in that social and economic institutions exist free from governmental control. By contrast, totalitarianism is a political system where the state holds total authority over the society and seeks to control all aspects of public and private life wherever necessary. The term ‘an authoritarian regime’ denotes a state in which the single power holder – an individual ‘dictator,’ a committee or a junta or an otherwise small group of political elite – monopolizes political power. However, a totalitarian regime attempts to control virtually all aspects of the social life, including economy, education, art, science, private life, and morals of citizens. The concept became prominent in Western anti-communist political discourse during the Cold War era in order to highlight perceived similarities between Nazi Germany and other fascist regimes on the one hand, and Soviet communism on the other.

Political scientists Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski were primarily responsible for expanding the usage of the term in university social science and professional research, reformulating it as a paradigm for the Soviet Union as well as fascist regimes. For Friedrich and Brzezinski, the defining elements were intended to be taken as a mutually supportive organic entity composed of the following: an elaborating guiding ideology; a single mass party, typically led by a dictator; a system of terror; a monopoly of the means of communication and physical force; and central direction, and control of the economy through state planning. Such regimes had initial origins in the chaos that followed in the

wake of World War I, at which point the sophistication of modern weapons and communications enabled totalitarian movements to consolidate power.

A **dictatorship** is defined as an autocratic form of government in which the government is ruled by an individual: a dictator. In contemporary usage, dictatorship refers to an autocratic form of absolute rule by leadership unrestricted by law, constitutions, or other social and political factors within the state.

For some scholars, a dictatorship is a form of government that has the power to govern without consent of those being governed (similar to authoritarianism), while totalitarianism describes a state that regulates nearly every aspect of public and private behavior of the people. In other words, dictatorship concerns the source of the governing power and totalitarianism concerns the scope of the governing power. In this sense, dictatorship (government without people's consent) is a contrast to democracy (government whose power comes from people) and totalitarianism (government controls every aspect of people's life) opposes pluralism (government allows multiple lifestyles and opinions).

The wave of military dictatorships in Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century left a particular mark on Latin American culture. In Latin American literature, the dictator novel challenging dictatorship is a significant genre. There are also many films depicting Latin American military dictatorships.