

FORTIFYING DEMOCRACY IN TODAY'S WORLD

Bende LÁSZLÓ

II year, UMFST Law School

Democracy originates from Greece, where citizens took part themselves, directly, in decision-making processes, thus birthing democracy in its early form. In democratic states, power is exercised by the people, and it is practised directly, or by elected representatives. Safeguarding its principles is achieved by the actions of the people and governmental structures. My paper highlights the aspects of constitutionalism, separation of powers, and the importance of opposition parties in the political system. I also stress principles such as protection of human rights, fair and free elections, and transparency. The aforementioned are all key fundamentals of democracy, and without these, it would cease to exist. Promoting democracy on a global scale is crucial. It promotes peace, the protection of human rights, and fairness altogether.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

Democracy is a form of governance, a system in which power is exercised by the people. It can be divided into two forms: direct democracy and representative democracy. If we want to talk about the origin of democracy, we will have to go back all the way to the ancient Greek period, where it was exercised directly by citizens, who would discuss and debate current issues. That is what we call direct democracy. Furthermore, in a representative democratic system, as we can also tell from its name, power is exercised by elected representatives. They are the “voice of the people”.

One of democracy's core principles is the Rule of Law. The Rule of Law is a durable system of laws, in which all persons, institutions, and entities are equal in the face of law, and they are all to abide by laws that are publicly promulgated.

There is no democracy without political pluralism. Open, free, and nondiscriminatory participation by the people is a key fundamental.

How do we fortify democracy, and safeguard its principles? First off, it is important to note that democratic governance is the beacon of hope in order to achieve world peace, human

dignity, and the protection of human rights altogether. Promoting and protecting democracy should be a common goal, globally.

DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

RULE OF LAW

As mentioned earlier, the Rule of Law is a system of laws, in which both government and citizens are subject to the law. It has been around for centuries, as Aristotle, an ancient philosopher wrote: “It is more proper that law should govern than any one of the citizens: upon the same principle, if it is advantageous to place the supreme power in some particular persons, they should be appointed to be only guardians, and the servants of the laws.”. A commonly used definition would be “no-one is above the law”. It is also a principle of equality, as it fosters fairness, and prevents discrimination, being a framework for a fair and democratic society. It holds those in power accountable and prevents them from exceeding their authority.

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

As we all know, the power is exercised by the people through elected representatives. The concept of free and fair elections is fundamental to democratic governance, as it empowers citizens to choose their leaders freely, hold them accountable for their actions, and make sure that they act based on the will of the people. These elections are periodic, and the people have the power to hold those who were elected accountable by re-electing or removing them from power, based on their satisfaction.¹

POLITICAL PLURALISM

Political pluralism is essential in a democratic system. It recognizes the richness of diverse perspectives and facilitates the idea of freedom of expression. The people can have their voices heard without the fear of reprisal or censorship. It also births a competitive political environment, where different ideas and ideologies can be presented. It celebrates diversity. Furthermore, it is important to mention that it aids in the protection of minority rights and their

¹ Cherif Bassiouni. (1998) Democracy: Its Principles and Achievement. Geneva, Switzerland: The InterParliamentary Union.

representation. Without political pluralism, these may be overshadowed by the majority's preferences, leaving minorities without the representation that they have the right to.

CONSTITUTIONALISM

DEFINING CONSTITUTIONALISM

The boundaries and limits of political power are defined and organized in a constitution, as a system of laws. Every state that has a constitution is a constitutional state. By power, I refer to the three basic government powers: execute, legislative, and judicial power. Democracy, the separation of powers, and state sovereignty are aspects of constitutionalism.³

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR DEMOCRACY?

Constitutionalism promotes the Rule of Law. As mentioned earlier, the Rule of Law is vital in a democratic state. It ensures legal fairness and encourages the citizens to comply with the legal norms and abide to them.

Constitutionalism is the backbone of democracy. It strengthens it, encouraging citizens to actively participate in the state's life, holding authorities and the government accountable. It brings awareness to their rights and responsibilities in their society.

Given the aforementioned, it is a key instrument in safeguarding democratic values and principles, as it as limits governmental power and protects individual rights and liberties.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The essential elements and basics of human life and existence are all protected by human rights. Every member of the human race, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, or political or religious standpoint, is entitled to human rights. By protecting these rights, we uphold principles and elements that are vital for democracy, such as equality, freedom⁴, and justice.

² Nicholas William Barber. (2018) *The principles of constitutionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp. 1-19.

³ Will Waluchow. (2001) *Constitutionalism*. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p. 1.

⁴*Ibidem*.

As we know, democracy is highly based on the participation of the people. This is because of the relation between human rights and democracy itself.

The right to participate and associate are the rights which make democracy possible. When our rights are protected, we can freely participate in the democratic process, and express our ideas.

Also, democracy was built on the idea of equality. By protecting our human rights, we ensure that each individual is valued, and can benefit from their basic rights.

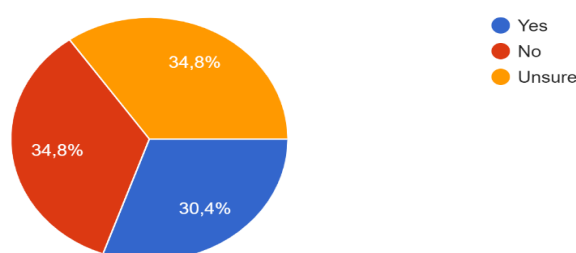
GLOBAL IMPACT

What global impact does democracy have? Crucial. It is the lifeblood of stability and peace. It promotes human rights and liberties.

Democracies are the backbone of global peace, as they tend to have more peaceful relations with each other. Peaceful resolution of international conflicts prevents the disruption of peace and are instruments of de-escalation. However, on the other hand, it also aids in the cooperation and collaboration in order to solve global issues, such as climate change, economic development, or public health. Individual freedom, liberty, and dignity is prioritized, providing a model for non-democratic societies or states, which can improve and advance.

3. Do you feel that democratic principles are well-protected in your country?

23 válasz



CORRUPTION

The base of democracy consists of transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. One of the biggest dangers that democracy could ever face would be corruption. Corruption goes against the core values of democracy. In order to protect democracy from corruption,

systemic reforms, and civic engagement is a must. But what does that mean? First, we should start off by strengthening our democratic institutions. That includes independent judiciaries, functioning anti-corruption agencies, and transparency. Civic engagement: free press and active civil organizations can fight off corruption, expose it, and advocate for reform.

HOW DO STUDENTS FEEL ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF DEMOCRACY?

In order to gain more insight on the public opinion on democracy, I conducted a survey among college and university students. In total, 23 students completed the survey and shared their opinions on democracy.

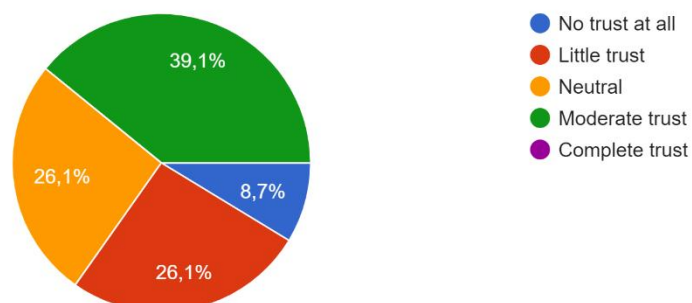
As you can see, none of the participants of my survey are completely satisfied with the current state of democracy in their country. This raises serious concerns because our youth are the backbone of our country.

Furthermore, I also discovered that 34,8% of the participants do not feel that democratic principles are well-protected in their country. This is an erosion of trust and may lead to serious consequences. It undermines both the stability and legitimacy of the democratic system. The citizens of the country should have faith in their government, and feel that it represents their interests.

In addition, none of the participants seem to have complete trust in public institutions

8. How much trust do you have in public institutions to uphold democratic values?

23 válasz



to uphold democratic values. Public institutions shall thrive for more civic engagement, and to fulfill the citizens' needs.

CONCLUSION

Democracy is essential in order to achieve global peace and global well-being. It is our job to make sure that its principles are safeguarded through active participation and engagement, as citizens. The Rule of Law, political pluralism, protection of human rights, and free and fair elections are all instruments in the fortification of democracy. We must hold our leaders and government accountable, and ensure that they all act on the will and needs of the people.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Cherif Bassiouni. (1998) „*Democracy: Its Principles and Achievement.*” Geneva, Switzerland: The Inter Parliamentary Union
 2. Will Waluchow. (2001) „*Constitutionalism. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*” pp. 1
 3. Nicholas William Barber. (2018) „*The principles of constitutionalism.*” Oxford: Oxford University Press
 4. Peter G. Kirchsclaeger. (2014) *The Relation between Democracy and Human Rights. Globalistics and Globalization Studies: Aspects & Dimensions of Global Views*
-