

Noah Mathews
7th Grade
Law Day Contest
January 2, 2024

Democracy and Dictatorship

“What are we going to do tonight, Brain? The same thing we do every night, Pinky, try to take over the world!” This is a famous quote from the cartoon Pinky and the Brain. The duo tries and fails on repeat to take over the world with their silly schemes. In real life the people who come the closest to doing that aren’t rodent supervillains , but dictators.

This essay will compare and contrast democracy and dictatorships. Two polar opposite types of government. One by the people, the other by the will of one person. Oxford languages defines dictatorship: “A country governed by a dictator, absolute authority in any sphere, and people who hold governmental powers with few to no limitations.” The earliest dictators were from Rome with the rise of the Roman Empire and fall of the republic. Emperors became short term dictators and then no term limit dictators. Some examples of modern dictators include the leaders of Russia and North Korea. “As of 2020, there are 52 nations with a dictator or authoritarian regime ruling the country: three in Latin America and South America, 27 in Asia and the Middle East, and 22 in Africa.” (world population [review.com](http://worldpopulationreview.com))

Alfred Cobban, a historian, wrote about dictatorship, “ This is the government of man , who has not primarily obtained his position by inheritance, but by either force or consent , and normally by a combination of both.” Most dictators seize power rather than earn it through fair elections. They use their control of the military to remain in control and completely silence anyone opposing them. Cobban also writes on the defining characteristics of dictators , “ He must possess absolute sovereignty, that political power must ultimately emanate from his will, and it must be unlimited in scope. It must be exercised by decree rather than law. And finally, it must not be limited in duration to any given term of office.” So a dictator really is unaccountable to his people and has zero oversight. He does what he wants. He is in total control.

In a dictatorship elections are anything but free, and often times there is only one name on the ballot. In certain cases there is no election at all and the dictator rules indefinitely. Another thing that is extremely restricted in dictatorships is religion. If your beliefs don't align with the government, it may be impossible to practice your religion. Additionally, dissenting opinions could result in punishment which could be arbitrary and without recourse. People are ruled by fear and have no access to second sources of information such as the internet and are forced to believe what the government tells them. Many of these countries use limited internet access and censorship to control what the people know. They might even put up favorable propaganda instead of fair news and reports.

In stark contrast, Oxford defines Democracy as a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected

representatives. “ There are 72 countries in the world that are considered full democracies or flawed democracies.” (World population review.com) America has been considered a flawed democracy since 2016. Some of the major and obvious differences between these types of government are the openness and transparency of the government. In a speech to Maryland Republicans in 1809, Thomas Jefferson said, “The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction is the first and only objective of good government.”

Some hallmarks of democracy are just the opposite of the dictatorship. The elections are free and fair. In the United States it is one person , one vote. Citizen moderators oversee the counting of the votes and there is a peaceful transmission of power. Religion is also free and you are able to practice any faith you want to. You also have the right to a free trial and a set code of laws and not the mere whims of a dictator. The press is also free and you have access to multiple sources and can fact check and determine the truth yourself rather than it be determined by the government.

In conclusion, A democracy has much more freedom for its people than dictatorship. Our democracy as U.S citizens is something worth preserving and protecting. I hope that we can regain our status as a full democracy with full trust and transparency. Even an imperfect democracy is so much better for its citizens than a dictatorship. That false idea of strong leadership is just violent bullying and people have no voice in their government. It's not just good for our elections to be free.we have rights that go beyond that and we have the law as well.

Diverse opinions and the freedom to express them makes us better.

“Did you, too, O friend, suppose democracy was only for elections, for politics, and for a party name? I say democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruit, in manners, in the highest forms of interaction between people, and their beliefs-in religion, literature, colleges, and schools-democracy in all public and private life.” -Walt Whitman

Citations

Definitions by Oxford Languages online dictionary

Dictatorship: Its History and Theory by Alfred Cobban, M.A., Ph.D

(London: J. Cape. 1939. Pp.352. Price 12s.6d.net)

Published online Cambridge University Press: 25 February 2009.

Statistics- worldpopulationreview .com