

Essay

Write an essay about the following subject. This essay should not be longer than 800 words (+/- 10%).

Subject: is democracy the best form of government for the people?

Abraham Lincoln once said: democracy is “the government of the people, by the people and for the people”. This form of government is a benchmark and an ideal. It was invented to protect the common good of the people, their rights and freedom. The word “democracy” comes from the latin *demos kratos*, which means “the power [of ruling] to the people”. In a democracy, citizens should be given the power to govern. However, demographic challenges make it impossible for millions of people to rule together, so modern democracies are designed around the election of leaders chosen by the people. The USA, France, and the UK are well-known democratic states. Nevertheless, we may wonder if these so-called democratic countries truly respects all principles this form of government implies. This essay has been divided into three parts. The first one deals with fundamental rights and freedoms. Then, I will focus on the separation of powers. Finally, I will emphasize that the people’s control on governments is weak compared to other influences.

To begin with, fundamental rights and freedoms should be respected in democratic states. It means that every man and woman should be equal, every child should have access to education, religion should not interfere with state affairs, the right to have a fair trial should be respected, the government should provide a health care system to its people and all citizens should have the right to vote. Nevertheless, Western champions of democracy are paradoxically violating some of these principles. For instance, women’s salary is 25% lower than men’s in France. In the USA, tuition fees for university can rise up to \$50,000 a year and force students into debts. In Uncle Sam’s country, religion and politics are also not independent: the dollar (“In God we trust”), the pledge of Allegiance (“One nation under God”) and the Presidential Oath (“So help me God”) are a daily reminder of the entanglement of the American government and religion. In the UK, the right to vote is based on citizenship. If a UK-born individual leaves the country for more than 15 years, his voting right will be revoked. It seems to me that France, the UK and the USA, states priding themselves in being democracies, do not respect the most fundamental democratic principles.

Moreover, a democracy should not go against the Separation of powers to protect its people’s rights. The separation of power between legislative, executive and judiciary is a core element of the contemporary democratic system. It is a principle introduced by the French Philosopher of Lights Montesquieu : the power will be shared by a tripartite system of independent entities. However, even in France, this concept is not respected. The executive, legislative and judicial powers are not independent. For instance, the 49-3 article to the Constitution (1958) enables the government to choose the agenda. It also has the right to dissolve the National Assembly. The national assembly has a censure motion on the government. Furthermore, French judges are appointed by the government. All governmental powers interfere with each other and is interdependent.

Finally, so-called democracies go against the people’s choice because they are influenced by powerful individuals and organizations. For instance, if a government introduces new reforms against its people’s will, it take to the street and demonstrate. Nevertheless, demonstrating against a reform does not seem to change anything. In 2011

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the British government increased tuition fees to £12,000 a year and many students demonstrated to show their distress. The government did not change its policy. Some politicians also personally benefit from governing the country and act against democratic values. In the USA, Nixon did spy on his opponents during the presidential campaign of 1972 (the Watergate case). Furthermore, politics and governmental activities are highly influenced by lobbies. Many organizations have power in political affairs such as the NRA (National Rifle Association) concerning issues about the right to bear arms in the USA. Consequently, the way democracies are governed is controversial as powerful people and organizations lead the country to defend their own interests.

To conclude, Winston Churchill once said: "It is said that democracy is the worst form of government except all others that have been tried". Democracies are not perfect, but governing the democratic way seems to be the least harmful to people's rights. This ideal form of government might not be entirely replicable in our world, but it is probably better than dictatorships. Or is it? Did not the USA enthrone the Shah in Iran in 1941? Could it be that democracies are actually the nest in which dictatorship hatch?