

TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

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When creating the Constitution, one of the major questions facing the Framers was how to balance a strong central government with the power to rule over its citizens, while not infringing citizens' individual liberties. Foundational documents like the US Constitution, *Federalist No. 10*, and *Brutus No. 1* illustrate the debate over this balance.

TERM	DEFINITION
democracy	a system of government in which the power of the government is vested in the people, who rule directly or through elected representatives
participatory democracy	emphasizes broad, direct participation in politics and civil society, in which most or all citizens participate in politics directly
pluralist democracy	political power rests with competing interest groups so that no one group dominates political decisions.
elite democracy	a small number of people, usually those who are wealthy and well-educated, influence political decision making

KEY DOCUMENTS

- ◆ ***Federalist No. 10*** — An essay written by James Madison, in which he argued that a strong representative government would be able to control the effects of factions.
- ◆ ***Brutus No. 1*** — An Anti-Federalist essay that argued against a strong central government based on the belief that it would not be able to meet the needs of all US citizens.
- ◆ **Constitution (1787)** — The fundamental laws and principles that govern the United States. The document was the result of several compromises between Federalists and Anti-Federalists surrounding the ratification of the Constitution.

Participatory democracy in action: Participatory democracy (sometimes called direct democracy) is the idea that everyone should be, and can be, involved in politics. It emphasizes broad participation in politics and wants ordinary people—not just a small subset of the population—to be responsible for political decisions.

An example of participatory democracy in the U.S. today is the use of referendums in some states. Referendums allow citizens to have a direct vote on a particular law. A referendum is an example of participatory democracy because the citizens themselves (not their government representatives) are the ones who decide whether to enact that law.

Pluralist democracy in action: Pluralist democracy is the idea that policy-making is open to lots of groups who have different interests. Each of these groups has the potential to influence policy-making, but no one group dominates all political decisions.

An example of pluralist democracy in the United States today is the participation of interest groups like the National Rifle Association (NRA) and Global Green USA. Both of these groups raise funds for candidates, promote candidates, and strive to influence current members of Congress on political decisions. Interest groups are an example of pluralist democracy because citizens join groups to influence policy-makers, rather than having direct access to political decisions.

Elite democracy in action: An elite democracy is one in which a small subset of citizens makes political decisions. Those who make policy are usually wealthier and more educated than the average citizen. In an elite democracy, those who are in power are highly qualified to make political decisions.

An example of elite democracy today is the electoral college. The electoral college is used in presidential elections and determines the outcome of most elections. While a candidate might win the popular vote in an election (meaning more citizens voted to elect them than their opponent), they could lose the electoral college vote, and thus the presidency. The electoral college is intended to provide a check on voters and act as a safeguard in case the voters make an unwise decision for president.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Which model of democracy does *Federalist No. 10* describe? How do you know?
2. Which model of democracy does *Brutus No. 1* describe? How do you know?
3. Based on what you've learned, construct an argument for which type of democracy you think creates the most stable form of government that is run by the people.