

Government AP

Chapter 2: Overview of Democracy

A Meridian® Study Guide by John Ho and Jason Liu

❖ Views of Democracy

<i>Substantive</i>	vs.	<i>Procedural</i>	<i>Direct</i>	vs.	<i>Indirect</i>
Government policies that are actually passed and how they reflect the population's opinions.		Describes how government should make decisions, especially the inclusion of all citizens.	Also <i>participatory democracy</i> , where all members of the group meet to make decisions and supervise the policies.		Also <i>representative democracy</i> , where citizens elect officials to govern. The government must be <i>responsive</i> to citizen demands.
<i>Principles:</i> Universal participation, political equality, and majority rule.					

❖ Majoritarian and Pluralist Models:

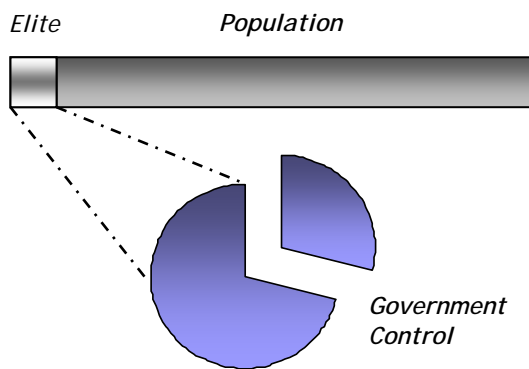
<p>Majoritarian: <i>def.</i> Classical model democracy where the government is ruled by the majority of the people.</p>	<p>Pluralism: <i>def.</i> An interpretation of democracy where the government is controlled by people operating through competing special interest groups.</p>
<p><i>Example of Majoritarian Democracy</i></p>	<p><i>Example of Pluralism</i></p>
<p>Characteristics: The majority decides the policies of the government. It relies on intuitive, elemental notion of what is fair, government by the "majority". This model contends that citizens can control their own government, given adequate mechanisms.</p>	<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed citizens • Government responsiveness • Participating citizens • Clear choices (as with political parties)
<p>Characteristics: The focus is shifted from the mass electorate to <i>organized groups</i>. In order to allow access to the government, the structure must be <i>decentralized</i>. It may allow a minority to gain power and also allows wealthy groups an advantage over the poorer, less organized ones.</p>	<p>Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided authority • Open access • Citizen special interest group participation • Broad representation of interests
<p>Process:</p>	<p>Process:</p>

❖ Elite Theory:

Elite Theory:

def. The theory that a small group of people make the important decisions in the government, as opposed to the majority.

- Few individuals control key financial or industrial institutions, and influence government policies in their favor.
- Holds the United States is not a *democracy* but an *oligarchy*.
- Theorists believe that their power is not so much deciding policies, but keeping issues from being voted upon in the first place.



- **Difference from pluralism:** Pluralism is a competitive system where different interest groups are vying for policies, whereas elite theory pits the minority against the majority.

❖ Globalization and Democracy:

Democratization:

def. Process at which a country tries to move from an authoritarian government to a democratic one.

- There are a large number of countries in the process of democratization; however, not all are successful.
- Ethnic conflict and split populations make the process difficult. The transition period is also vulnerable to revolts.

American Democracy:

- Considered more *pluralist* than *majoritarian*.
- The government is considered highly democratic despite low levels of participation from the citizens.
- The system favors the well-organized and often leaves the poor out.