

freedom; as citizens they acquire means for protecting and advancing their most important personal interests; they can also participate in deciding on the laws under which they will live; they can exercise a wide range of moral autonomy; and they possess unusual opportunities for personal development.

If we conclude that democracy provides these advantages over nondemocratic systems of government, several fundamental questions arise: Why should the advantages of democracy be restricted to some persons and not others? Why shouldn't they be available to all adults?

If a government ought to give equal consideration to the good of each person, should not all adults have the right to participate in deciding what laws and policies would best achieve the ends they seek, whether their ends are restricted narrowly to their own good or include the good of all?

If no persons are so definitely better qualified to govern that they should be entrusted with complete and final authority over the government of the state, then who is better qualified to participate than all the adults who are subject to the laws?

From the conclusions implied by these questions, another follows that I would put this way: *Except on a very strong showing to the contrary in rare circumstances, protected by law, every adult subject to the laws of the state should be considered to be sufficiently well qualified to participate in the democratic process of governing that state.*

A FIFTH DEMOCRATIC STANDARD: INCLUSION

The conclusion to which the argument of this chapter now points is that if you are deprived of an equal voice in the government of a state, the chances are quite high that your interests will not be given the same attention as the interests of those who do have a voice. If you have no voice, who will speak up for you? Who will

defend your interests if you cannot? And not just your interests as an individual. If you happen to be a member of an entire group excluded from participation, how will the fundamental interests of that group be protected?

The answer is clear. The fundamental interests of adults who are denied opportunities to participate in governing will *not* be adequately protected and advanced by those who govern. The historical evidence on this point is overwhelming. As we saw in our brief survey of the evolution of democracy, nobles and burghers in England, discontented with the arbitrary way monarchs imposed burdens on them without their consent, demanded and gained the right to participate in governing. Centuries later the middle classes, believing that their fundamental interests were ignored, in turn demanded and gained that right. There and elsewhere the continuing legal or de facto exclusion of women, slaves, poor persons, and manual workers, among others, left the members of these groups poorly protected against exploitation and abuse even in countries like Great Britain and the United States where the government was otherwise largely democratic.

In 1861 John Stuart Mill contended that because the working classes were denied suffrage, no one in government spoke up for their interests. Although he did not believe, he said, that those who participated in the government deliberately intended to sacrifice the interests of the working classes to their own, nonetheless, he asked, "Does Parliament, or almost any of the members composing it, ever for an instant look at any question with the eyes of a workingman? When a subject arises in which the laborers as such have an interest, is it regarded from any point of view but that of employers of labor?"³ The same question could have been asked about slaves in ancient and modern republics; about women throughout history until the twentieth century; about many persons nominally free

but effectively deprived of democratic rights, such as blacks in the southern United States until the 1960s and in South Africa until the 1990s, and elsewhere.

Yes, individuals and groups may sometimes be mistaken about their own good. Certainly they may sometimes misperceive what is in their own best interests. But the preponderant weight of human experience informs us that no group of adults can safely grant to others the power to govern over them. Which leads us to a conclusion of crucial importance.

You may recall that when I discussed the criteria for democracy in Chapter 4, I postponed a discussion of the fifth: inclusion of adults (see figure 4, p. 38). This chapter and the last provide us, I believe, with ample reasons for concluding that to be democratic the government of a state must satisfy that standard. Let me now put it this way: *Full inclusion. The citizen body in a democratically governed state must include all persons subject to the laws of that state except transients and person proved to be incapable of caring for them.*

UNSETTLED PROBLEMS

To reject the argument for Guardianship and adopt political equality as an ideal still leaves some difficult questions.

Don't citizens and government officials need help from experts? Indeed they do! The importance of experts and specialized knowledge for democratic governments to function well is undeniable.

Public policy is often so complex (and may be growing steadily more so) that no government could make satisfactory decisions without the help of highly informed specialists. Just as each of us in our personal decisions must sometimes depend on experts for guidance and must delegate important decisions to them, so, too, must governments, including democratic governments. How best to satisfy democratic criteria, maintain a satisfactory degree of political

equality, and yet rely on experts and expert knowledge in making public decisions presents a serious problem, one that it would be foolish for advocates of democratic government to ignore. But I shall have to ignore it here.

If citizens are to be competent, won't they need political and social institutions to help make them so? Unquestionably. Opportunities to gain an enlightened understanding of public matters are not just part of the definition of democracy. They are a requirement for democracy.

Nothing I have said is meant to imply that a majority of citizens may not make mistakes. They can and do. This is precisely why advocates of democracy have always placed a high value on education. And civic education requires not only formal schooling but public discussion, deliberation, debate, controversy, the ready availability of reliable information, and other institutions of a free society.

But suppose the institutions for developing competent citizens are weak and many citizens don't know enough to protect their fundamental values and interests? What are we to do? In searching for an answer it is helpful to review the conclusions we have reached up to this point.

We have adopted the principle of intrinsic equality: We ought to regard the good of every human being as intrinsically equal to that of any other.

We have applied that principle to the government of a state: In arriving at decisions, the government must give equal consideration to the good and interests of every person bound by those decisions.

We have rejected Guardianship as a satisfactory way of applying the principle: Among adults no persons are so definitely better qualified than others to govern that they should be entrusted with complete and final authority over the government of the state.

Instead, we have accepted full inclusion: The citizen body in a

democratically governed state must include all persons subject to the laws of the state except transients and persons proved to be incapable of caring for themselves.

Therefore, if the institutions for civic education are weak, only one satisfactory solution remains. They must be strengthened. We who believe in democratic goals are obliged to search for ways by which citizens can acquire the competence they need.

Perhaps the institutions for civic education that were created in democratic countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are no longer adequate. If this is so, then democratic countries will need to create new institutions to supplement the old ones.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND PREVIEW

We have now explored about half the territory laid out in figure 3 (p. 29). Yet we have barely peeked into the other half: the basic institutions that are necessary for advancing the goal of democracy, and the conditions, social, economic, and other, that favor the development and maintenance of these democratic political institutions. We'll explore these in the following chapters.

We turn, then, from goals to actualities.

PART III *Actual Democracy*

What Political Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require?

What does it mean to say that a country is governed democratically?

In this chapter we'll focus on the political institutions of *democracy on a large scale*, that is, the political institutions necessary for a *democratic country*. We're not concerned here, then, with what democracy in a very small group might require, as in a committee. We also need to keep our standard warning in mind: every actual democracy has always fallen short of the democratic criteria described in Part II and shown in figure 4 (p. 38). Finally, we should be aware in this chapter as elsewhere that in ordinary language we use the word *democracy* to refer both to a goal or ideal and to an actuality that is only a partial attainment of the goal. For the time being, therefore, I'll count on the reader to make the necessary distinctions when I use the words *democracy*, *democratically*, *democratic government*, *democratic country*, and so on.

If a *country* is to be governed democratically, what would be required? At a minimum, it would need to possess certain political arrangements, practices, or institutions that would go a long way, even if not all the way, toward meeting ideal democratic criteria.

Words About Words

Political *arrangements* sound as if they might be rather provisional, which they could well be in a country that has just moved away from nondemocratic rule. We tend to think of *practices* as

more habitual and therefore more durable. We usually think of *institutions* as having settled in for the long haul, passed on from one generation to the next. As a country moves from a non-democratic to a democratic government, the early democratic *arrangements* gradually become *practices*, which in due time turn into settled *institutions*. Helpful though these distinctions may be, however, for our purposes it will be more convenient if we put them aside and settle for *institutions*.

HOW CAN WE KNOW?

How can we reasonably determine what political institutions are necessary for large-scale democracy? We might examine the history of countries that have changed their political institutions in response, at least in part, to demands for broader popular inclusion and effective participation in government and political life. Although in earlier times those who sought to gain inclusion and participation were not necessarily inspired by democratic ideas, from about the eighteenth century onward they tended to justify their demands by appealing to democratic and republican ideas. What political institutions did they seek, and what were actually adopted in these countries?

Alternatively, we could examine countries where the government is generally referred to as democratic by most of the people in that country, by many persons in other countries, and by scholars, journalists, and the like. In other words, in ordinary speech and scholarly discussion the country is called a democracy.

Third, we could reflect on a specific country or group of countries, or perhaps even a hypothetical country, in order to imagine, as realistically as possible, what political institutions would be required in order to achieve democratic goals to a substantial degree. We would undertake a mental experiment, so to speak, in which we

FIGURE 6. *What political institutions does large-scale democracy require?*

Large-scale democracy requires:

1. Elected officials
2. Free, fair, and frequent elections
3. Freedom of expression
4. Alternative sources of information
5. Associational autonomy
6. Inclusive citizenship

would reflect carefully on human experiences, tendencies, possibilities, and limitations and design a set of political institutions that would be necessary for large-scale democracy to exist and yet feasible and attainable within the limits of human capacities.

Fortunately, all three methods converge on the same set of democratic political institutions. These, then, are minimal requirements for a democratic country (fig. 6).

THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF
MODERN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Briefly, the political institutions of modern representative democratic government are:

1. *Elected officials.* Control over government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in officials elected by citizens. Thus modern, large-scale democratic governments are *representative*.
2. *Free, fair, and frequent elections.* Elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon.
3. *Freedom of expression.* Citizens have a right to express themselves without danger of severe punishment on political

matters broadly defined, including criticism of officials, the government, the regime, the socioeconomic order, and the prevailing ideology.

4. *Access to alternative sources of information.* Citizens have a right to seek out alternative and independent sources of information from other citizens, experts, newspapers, magazines, books, telecommunications, and the like. Moreover, alternative sources of information actually exist that are not under the control of the government or any other single political group attempting to influence public political beliefs and attitudes, and these alternative sources are effectively protected by law.
5. *Associational autonomy.* To achieve their various rights, including those required for the effective operation of democratic political institutions, citizens also have a right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups.
6. *Inclusive citizenship.* No adult permanently residing in the country and subject to its laws can be denied the rights that are available to others and are necessary to the five political institutions just listed. These include the rights to vote in the election of officials in free and fair elections; to run for elective office; to free expression; to form and participate in independent political organizations; to have access to independent sources of information; and rights to other liberties and opportunities that may be necessary to the effective operation of the political institutions of large-scale democracy.

THE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN PERSPECTIVE

Ordinarily these institutions do not arrive in a country all at once. As we saw in our brief history of democracy (Chapter 2), the last two

are distinctly latecomers. Until the twentieth century universal suffrage was denied in both the theory and practice of democratic and republican government. More than any other single feature, universal suffrage distinguishes modern representative democracy from all earlier forms of democracy.

The time of arrival and the sequence in which the institutions have been introduced have varied tremendously. In countries where the full set of democratic institutions arrived earliest and have endured to the present day, the “older” democracies, elements of a common pattern emerge. Elections to a legislature arrived early on—in Britain as early as the thirteenth century, in the United States during its colonial period in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The practice of electing higher lawmaking officials was followed by a gradual expansion of the rights of citizens to express themselves on political matters and to seek out and exchange information. The right to form associations with explicit political goals tended to follow still later. Political “factions” and partisan organization were generally viewed as dangerous, divisive, subversive of political order and stability, and injurious to the public good. Yet because political associations could not be suppressed without a degree of coercion that an increasingly large and influential number of citizens regarded as intolerable, they were often able to exist as more or less clandestine associations until they emerged from the shadows into the full light of day. In the legislative bodies what once were “factions” became political parties. The “ins” who served in the government of the day were opposed by the “outs,” or what in Britain came to be officially styled His (or Her) Majesty’s Loyal Opposition. In eighteenth-century Britain, the faction supporting the monarch and the opposing faction supported by the much of the gentry in the “country” were gradually transformed into Tories and Whigs. During that same century in Sweden, partisan adversaries in parliament somewhat facetiously called themselves the Hats and the Caps.¹

During the final years of the eighteenth century in the newly formed republic of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, the vice president, and James Madison, leader of the House of Representatives, organized their followers in Congress to oppose the policies of the Federalist president, John Adams, and his secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. To succeed in their opposition, they soon realized that they would have to do more than oppose the Federalists in the Congress and the cabinet: they would need to remove their opponents from office. To do that, they had to win national elections, and to win national elections they had to organize their followers throughout the country. In less than a decade, Jefferson, Madison, and others sympathetic with their views created a political party that was organized all the way down to the smallest voting precincts, districts, and municipalities, an organization that would reinforce the loyalty of their followers between and during election campaigns and make sure they came to the polls. Their Republican Party (soon renamed Democratic Republican and a generation later Democratic) became the first popularly based *electoral* party in the world. As a result, one of the most fundamental and distinctive political institutions of modern democracy, the political party, had burst beyond its confines in parliaments and legislatures in order to organize the citizens themselves and mobilize party supporters in national elections.

By the time the young French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in the 1830s, the first five democratic political institutions described above had already arrived in America. The institutions seemed to him so deeply planted and pervasive that he had no hesitation in referring to the United States as a democracy. In that country, he said, the people were sovereign, “society governs itself for itself,” and the power of the majority was unlimited.² He was astounded by the multiplicity of associations into which Americans organized themselves, for every purpose, it seemed. And tow-

ering among these associations were the two major political parties. In the United States, it appeared to Tocqueville, democracy was about as complete as one could imagine it ever becoming.

During the century that followed all five of the basic democratic institutions Tocqueville observed during his visit to America were consolidated in more than a dozen other countries. Many observers in Europe and the United States concluded that any country that aspired to be civilized and progressive would necessarily have to adopt a democratic form of government.

Yet everywhere the sixth fundamental institution—inclusive citizenship—was missing. Although Tocqueville affirmed that “the state of Maryland, which had been founded by men of rank, was the first to proclaim universal suffrage,” like almost all other men (and many women) of his time he tacitly assumed that “universal” did not include women.³ Nor, indeed, some men. Maryland’s “universal suffrage,” it so happened, also excluded most African Americans. Elsewhere, in countries that were otherwise more or less democratic, as in America a full half of all adults were completely excluded from national political life simply because they were women; in addition large numbers of men were denied the suffrage because they could not meet literacy or property requirements, an exclusion supported by many people who considered themselves advocates of democratic or republican government. Although New Zealand extended suffrage to women in national elections in 1893 and Australia in 1902, in countries otherwise democratic women did not gain suffrage in national elections until about 1920; in Belgium, France, and Switzerland, countries that most people would have called highly democratic, women could not vote until after World War II.

Because it is difficult for many today to grasp what “democracy” meant to our predecessors, let me reemphasize the difference: in all democracies and republics throughout twenty-five centuries the rights to engage fully in political life were restricted to a minority of

adults. “Democratic” government was government by males only—and not all of them. It was not until the twentieth century that in both theory and practice democracy came to require that the rights to engage fully in political life must be extended, with very few if any exceptions, to the entire population of adults permanently residing in a country.

Taken in their entirety, then, these six political institutions constitute not only a new type of political system but a new kind of popular government, a type of “democracy” that had never existed throughout the twenty-five centuries of experience since the inauguration of “democracy” in Athens and a “republic” in Rome. Because the institutions of modern representative democratic government, taken in their entirety, are historically unique, it is convenient to give them their own name. This modern type of large-scale democratic government is sometimes called *polyarchal* democracy.

Words About Words

Polyarchy is derived from Greek words meaning “many” and “rule,” thus “rule by the many,” as distinguished from rule by the one, or monarchy, and rule by the few, oligarchy or aristocracy. Although the term had been rarely used, a colleague and I introduced it in 1953 as a handy way of referring to a modern representative democracy with universal suffrage. Hereafter I shall use it in that sense. More precisely, a polyarchal democracy is a political system with the six democratic institutions listed above. Polyarchal democracy, then, is different from representative democracy with restricted suffrage, as in the nineteenth century. It is also different from older democracies and republics that not only had a restricted suffrage but lacked many of the other crucial characteristics of polyarchal democracy, such as political parties, rights to form political organizations to influence or oppose the existing government, organized interest groups, and so on. It

is different, too, from the democratic practices in units so small that members can assemble directly and make (or recommend) policies or laws. (I return to this difference in a moment.)

Although other factors were often at work, the six political institutions of polyarchal democracy came about, in part at least, in response to demands for inclusion and participation in political life. In countries that are widely referred to as democracies today, all six exist. Yet you might well ask: Are some of these institutions no more than past products of historical struggles? Are they no longer necessary for democratic government? And if they are still necessary today, why?

THE FACTOR OF SIZE

Before answering these questions, I need to call attention to an important qualification. As I warned at the beginning of this chapter, we are considering institutions necessary for the government of a democratic *country*. Why “country”? *Because all the institutions necessary for a democratic country would not always be required for a unit much smaller than a country.*

Consider a democratically governed committee, or a club, or a very small town. Although equality in voting would seem to be necessary, small units like these might manage without many elected officials: perhaps a moderator to preside over meetings, a secretary-treasurer to keep minutes and accounts. The participants themselves could decide just about everything directly during their meetings, leaving details to the secretary-treasurer. Governments of small organizations would not have to be full-fledged *representative* governments in which citizens elect representatives charged with enacting laws and policies. Yet these governments could be democratic, perhaps highly democratic. So, too, even though they lacked

FIGURE 7. *Why the institutions are necessary*

In a unit as large as a country, these political institutions of polyarchal democracy . . .	are necessary to satisfy the following democratic criteria:
1. Elected representatives . . .	Effective participation Control of the agenda
2. Free, fair, and frequent elections . . .	Voting equality Control of the agenda
3. Freedom of expression . . .	Effective participation Enlightened understanding Control of the agenda
4. Alternative information . . .	Effective participation Enlightened understanding Control of the agenda
5. Associational autonomy . . .	Effective participation Enlightened understanding Control of the agenda
6. Inclusive citizenship . . .	Full inclusion

political parties or other independent political associations, they might be highly democratic. In fact, we might concur with the classical democratic and republican view that in small associations organized “factions” are not only unnecessary but downright harmful. Instead of conflicts exacerbated by factionalism, caucuses, political parties, and so on, we might prefer unity, consensus, agreement achieved by discussion and mutual respect.

The political institutions strictly required for democratic government depend, then, on the size of the unit. The six institutions listed above developed because they are necessary for governing *countries*, not smaller units. Polyarchal democracy is democratic government on the large scale of the nation-state or country.