

DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT OF STUDY: DEMOCRACY

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is research on democracies, their characteristics and types, and how they affect functioning, performance, and stability. Beyond discussions of which characteristics are closer to certain democratic ideals, the interest is focused on distinguishing and classifying types of democracies on the basis of institutional characteristics, collective actors and citizens and see their effect on effectiveness, functioning, achievements. and ultimately stability. The discussion of its quality and approach to certain ideals is also underlying, but it is less important.

In this first topic, however, we are interested in defining the object of study of the course: democracy. To do this, it must be conceptualized with a definition of minimums that serves to distinguish it from other non-democratic political regimes (totalitarianism, authoritarianism, sultanic regimes). That definition of minimums is the so-called procedural definition that may have a certain normative burden, but whose real value lies in the fact that it becomes an instrument for comparative analysis and to be able to distinguish between democracy and what is not.

Procedural definition of democracy:

“Legal freedom to formulate and propose political alternatives with concomitant rights * of freedom of association, freedom of expression and other basic freedoms of persons; free and non-violent competition between leaders with a periodic revalidation of their right to govern; inclusion of all effective political positions in the democratic process, and measures for the participation of all members of the political community, whatever their political preferences. ” Juan Linz, *The Bankruptcy of Democracies*. Madrid, Alianza, 1987, p. 17.

* concomitant: appears or acts together with something else

Dahl's concept of polyarchy is very similar. The definition of democracy according to this author must be made on two axes or two basic dimensions that define the existence of democracy: degree of contestation and participation.

Problems with this definition:

- A definition of minimums.
- It lacks the capacity to discriminate between different democracies, although the dimensions of response and participation can help differentiate democracies.
- It has an important normative connotation: Based on essential aspects of modern representative democracies, but very much in line with the liberal, aristocratic elitist tradition (election, lottery is not considered, articulation of interests through political parties, citizen consultation in periods defined by time, and daily politics in the hands of an elite). Schumpeter

Advantages:

- It has the capacity to discriminate between democracies and non-democracies (classification capacity).
- It allows to define and operationalize the concept well and in addition, it offers basic characteristics that can serve to distinguish democracies.

Three basic aspects of contemporary representative democracy can be studied:

- How they arise, create and consolidate. Polyarchy. The procedural definition serves to define the object of research.
- How they break. The procedural definition is used to define the problem and select the cases to study.
- What nature is like and what kind of democracy it is (the theoretical discussion here is an essential framework in the analysis). Not all democracies are the same, there are many varieties depending on the institutions, their social structure, the degree of participation and the type of participation that predominates).

This discussion can be:

- Normative character: which are closer to democratic ideals than others. In this case, it is not a linear and clear process, that is, it cannot be said that there are some models of democracy that are "more democratic than others" (Example: proportional electoral system or direct election of the president, type of voter). However, there are more and more models that offer indicators of the quality of democracy using different procedural definitions and are measured by:

- Competitiveness and alternation in power.
- Levels of participation.
- Shortage of political violence.
- Levels of freedom and respect for political rights (Index of the Freedom House).

- More practical character: effectiveness, achievements, and operation. In this case they move away from procedural ideals and approach achievements and the ability to meet more material goals. In this sense, the variables that define the different democracies can be used, which make some regimes more effective and stable than others:

- Cover the basic rights of citizens in education, health, housing, etc. Human Development Index.
- Create mechanisms for aggregating interests that represent a many citizens (the average voter).
- Ability to solve the economic and social problems of the citizens (a more substantial definition).

In both discussions, there are a set of basic factors that affect the quality, functioning and achievements of democracies:

- Socio-economic factors:

They condition the degree of political equality (depending on political participation) and also the levels of political and social conflict.

- Political factors:
 - Own party system and dynamics.
 - The form of the territorial organization of the State.
 - Strategies and mobilization of other social actors, unions and social movements.
 - Political culture, ideology and attitudes.

- Institutions: Presidentialism-Parliamentarism and Electoral System, mechanisms for the formation of governments and control of powers. Electoral laws.
- Levels of conflict and polarization of the electorate.
- Level and nature of political participation.

All of them will be the subject of the rest of the course and the basis on which it is developed.

Genesis and crisis of democratic systems:

Now, for the time being and before we talk about types of democracies and their characteristics, let's talk about the creation and bankruptcy of democracies.

Factors that favor the emergence and creation of a democracy:

- Socio-economic factors. Theories of modernization (linear and curvilinear relationship). It conditions the levels of social and educational conflict and pro-democratic attitudes. Class B. Moore explanations
- Political factors:
 - Strategies of political elites conditioned by the relative position of the following four types of actors (according to their position with respect to the outgoing regime):

Hard __Soft or Reformers __Moderate __Radical

- Strategies and mobilization of other social actors, unions and social movements
- Nature and duration of the previous regime. (totalitarian-posttotalitarian-authoritarian)
- Institutions of the new regime and the outgoing one (political parties, electoral laws, Constitution — Chile; relationship of powers, etc.).

Factors influencing stability:

- Socio-economic factors. Theories of modernization (linear and curvilinear relationship). It conditions the levels of social and educational conflict and pro-democratic attitudes.
- Political factors:
 - Own party system and dynamics.
 - Strategies of political elites: loyalty, semi-loyalty and disloyalty (Linz).
 - Effectiveness of the political system: economic and social results.
 - Strategies and mobilization of other social actors, unions and social movements.
 - Political culture, ideology and attitudes.
 - Institutions: Presidentialism-Parliamentarism and Electoral System.
 - Levels of conflict and polarization of the electorate.
 - Level and nature of political participation.

Proposed general causality to explain these phenomena:

In general, it is argued that politics and political factors are what explain politics. Previously there has been a domain of sociological explanations, now in all of them political factors have been discarded and given priority.

NO: Society determines regimes, their stability and nature

YES: Political factors and policy influences (does not determine) regimes, their stability and quality and nature. Yes, in interaction with a specific social, economic and INTERNATIONAL context. While politics can change that context.

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