

Democracy

Classical & contemporary theories · the models that decide how “the people” actually rule.

Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.

DEMOCRACY ON THE PAPER 14 PYQs · 2009–2025 | 3×10m 7×15m 2×20m | asked **every year since 2015** — one of the most heavily examined units of Paper 1A.

1 Meaning, Nature & the Moral Core

Etymology: Greek *demos* (people) + *kratos* (power/rule) → **rule by the people**. **Herodotus** called it ‘rule by people’; Athens gave it the earliest political expression.

Two registers

- **Narrow** — democracy as a **form of government**: rulers chosen by election, government by consent, authority accountable to citizens.
- **Broad** — democracy as a **way of life**: equality, fraternity, human dignity, participation, tolerance of dissent, capacity to question power.

James Bryce (*Modern Democracies*): rule of the people expressing their sovereign will, with majority opinion determining legislation.

Democracy as a moral principle

- Every person has worth; no one's opinion or interest carries superior **moral worth** → hence **one person, one vote**.
- A democratic society is an **open society** where unpopular and unconventional voices can be heard; freedom of expression, association and movement protect that openness.
- **Abraham Lincoln**, **Albert Venn Dicey** and **James Bryce** treat democracy as more than a form of government; **Abbott Lawrence Lowell** calls it an experiment in government.
- **B.R. Ambedkar** ties genuine democracy to liberty, equality and fraternity; **Amartya Sen** ties it to public reasoning, development and freedom.

“No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise ... it is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms.” — **Winston Churchill**

Democracy, government & state: a democratic government implies a democratic state, but a democratic state does *not* guarantee democratic government. Democracy weakens where institutions exist formally but social and economic life stays hierarchical.

2 Historical Roots: Direct Democracy

- Democracy first developed in the Greek city-states; **Athens** is the classic case of **direct democracy** — citizens participated directly in decision-making.
- **Plato** and **Aristotle** observed it at work in city-states like Athens.

Aristotle and polity

- **Aristotle** treated democracy as a *perverted* form of **polity**; polity was the best practicable government, resting on active citizen participation.
- Its key democratic mechanism: ‘**all command each and each in his turn all**’.

Preconditions for direct democracy (Rousseau)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau strongly backed direct democracy, but only under: small population · low industrial production · absence of luxuries · public life simple enough for citizens to assemble and decide · civic virtue stronger than private luxury.

Direct democracy becomes unworkable in large, industrial, complex societies — this difficulty later produced **representative democracy**.

3 Values & Functions

Ambedkar — liberty, equality, fraternity

B.R. Ambedkar: liberty (thought, speech, action, association) · equality (equal political status & moral worth) · fraternity (social solidarity, mutual respect). Without these, democracy stays superficial — true democracy needs **social democracy** and **economic democracy**.

Amartya Sen — three values of democracy

- **Intrinsic**: exercise of political rights gives dignity and well-being; participation is valuable in itself.
- **Instrumental**: democracy forces government to attend to public needs; free press, opposition and adversarial politics prevent disasters.
- **Educative**: citizens learn from one another; public debate clarifies priorities and deepens public reasoning.

Democracy as a civic way of life

“The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.” — **Alexis de Tocqueville**

“Participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so.” — **Carole Pateman**

“Democracy needs to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife.” — **John Dewey**

Civic democracy requires active, informed citizens · local self-government · social audit · civic associations · public deliberation · accountability of rulers. Democracy turns **substantive** only when citizens stop being passive voters and act as participants.

4 John Locke & the Foundations of Western Democracy

John Locke is the foundational thinker of modern liberal democracy — natural rights, consent, property, limited government and resistance together shaped constitutionalism.

State of nature

“a state of perfect freedom to order their action, and persons as they think fit within the bounds of the law of nature”. — **John Locke**

A state of freedom and equality, “not a state of licence” — unlike **Thomas Hobbes**’s state of nature where “life was nasty, short and brutish”. No natural superiority; natural law limits arbitrary action.

Natural rights & property

- Rights are prior to government; the state is created to protect **life, liberty and property**.
- Property is used broadly — **life, liberty and estates**, including fundamental human rights; these rights are inalienable.

“lives, liberty and estates which I call by the general name — property”. — **John Locke**

Consent & constitutional government

Authority is legitimate only when based on **consent**; the social contract creates political society. Consent moves in stages: individuals agree to form a community → the community creates legislative and other institutions by **majority** → taxation requires consent, directly or through representatives.

“Government is a contract established to protect individuals’ natural rights, and its authority depends on the consent of the people.” — **John Locke**

Limited government & right of resistance

- Government exists to protect rights, not to rule as an end in itself; power must be limited by law.
- If government violates natural rights, people may **resist or overthrow** it. Separation of legislative, executive and judicial functions protects liberty.

“Wherever law ends, tyranny begins”. — **John Locke**

Locke’s logical chain → from natural freedom to constitutional government

1 **State of nature** — freedom & equality within natural law; not licence.



2 **Natural rights** — life, liberty, property (inalienable, pre-state).



3 **Consent / social contract** — authority legitimate only by consent; majority rule; taxation by consent.



4 **Limited government** — rule of law, separation of powers; “wherever law ends, tyranny begins”.



5 **Right of resistance** — if government violates rights, people may resist or overthrow.



6 **Liberal constitutionalism** — Locke central to consent-based, rights-protecting democracy.

Liberal constitutionalism vs liberal democracy

Two distinct logics — mature liberal democracy needs both

CONSTITUTIONALISM — restrains power

rule of law · individual rights · checks & balances · independent judiciary · constitutional restraint.



DEMOCRACY — authorises power

popular sovereignty · competitive elections · universal adult franchise · consent-based government.



Liberal democracy = both. Without constitutionalism → majority may turn oppressive; without democracy → constitutional limits stay elitist or incomplete.

Fareed Zakaria: “constitutional liberalism is theoretically different and historically distinct from democracy”. **Stephen Holmes:** by restricting officials’ arbitrary powers, a liberal constitution can increase the state’s capacity to mobilise collective resources.

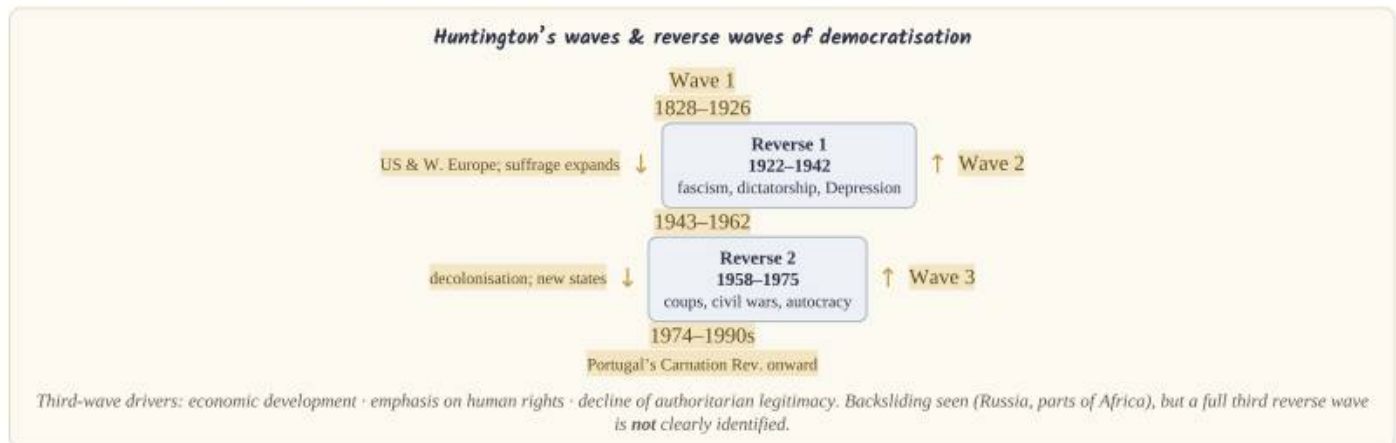
UPSC 2025 · 20m **Locke’s constitutionalism, freedom & property as the base of western democracy.**

UPSC 2009 **Liberal constitutionalism precedes liberal democracy — comment.**

2009 answer-spine: constitutional limits historically appeared before mass democracy in the Atlantic world — **James Madison:** “you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself”. But post-colonial India adopted universal suffrage and liberal constitutionalism *together* → the sequence is not mechanical; where elections precede restraint, democracy may slide into **illiberal democracy**.

5 Waves of Democracy — Huntington

Samuel P. Huntington (*The Third Wave*, 1991): the global spread of democracy came in **three waves and two reverse waves**. A wave = a major movement from non-democratic to democratic regimes across several countries in one historical period.



6 Classical vs Contemporary Theories

Traditional / classical (normative, philosophical)

Focus on liberty, equality, dignity, fraternity, the moral worth of the individual and the ethical justification of democracy → close to **substantive** models.
 Critique: deal with what *ought* to be, overlook the real working of democracy, ignore power, organisation and inequality.

Protective democracy

Thinkers: **John Locke**, **Jeremy Bentham**, **James Mill**. Democracy protects citizens from arbitrary state action; government exists to protect rights, especially property; participation is mainly a protective instrument. *Features*: limited state, rule of law, security of rights. *Critique*: tilted to property owners; defensive and narrow.

Developmental democracy

Thinkers: **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**, **John Stuart Mill**. Democracy develops the individual; participation builds civic virtue, moral capacity and political intelligence; freedom is realised *through* participation. *Critique*: assumes citizens have the time, resources and capacity to participate; may ignore social inequality.

Modern / empirical theories

Deal with the real world of democracy: **elitist**, **pluralist** and **economic** theories — focused on elections, competition, elites, interest groups, political markets, empirical behaviour.

Crawford Brough Macpherson: elitist and pluralist models are *procedural and empirical* — they describe how democracies work but neglect the substantive goal of **human development**.

7 C.B. Macpherson's Theory of Democracy

Crawford Brough Macpherson — the liberal-egalitarian / social-liberal school; one of the most comprehensive 20th-century theories. *Works*: **The Real World of Democracy** (1966) · **Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval** (1973) · **The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy** (1977).

Critique of liberal democracy

Rejects two claims: that liberalism has a *monopoly* over democracy, and that liberal democracy is the *perfect* model. From the 17th–19th centuries voting was largely confined to property owners; workers won the vote and welfare only after socialist pressure → liberalism has often been historically **undemocratic**.

- **Communist model** — democratic if there is intra-party democracy and openness in the bureaucracy.
- **Third World model** — democratic if one-party dominance has genuine mass enthusiasm and reduces mass suffering.
- **Liberal democracy** — valid, but needs a humane, egalitarian correction.

Critique of elitist–pluralist democracy

Against **Joseph Schumpeter** (democracy = competition among elites for votes) and **Robert Dahl** (democracy = competition among groups): both reduce democracy to an empirical, **market-equilibrium** system → a procedure, not emancipation; the humanist aspiration is lost. Classical democracy had a moral foundation — a developmental process and the emancipation of humanity.



Norman Barry criticises Macpherson as idealistic and hard to realise under scarcity. His contribution: reviving democracy as **creative freedom and human development**, not merely elections — combining procedural realism with normative depth.

UPSC 2018 · ISm Critically examine Macpherson's view on democracy.

8 Representative Democracy

Citizens elect **representatives** to make laws and policies on their behalf — the practical form of democracy in large, complex states; the “second-best” form but the most practicable way to apply democratic principles.

Foundations & thinkers

Consent of the governed · regular elections · rule of law · accountability · protection of rights · constitutional limits · political pluralism. **John Locke** gives the first major exposition (contract, consent, trusteeship); **Thomas Hobbes** treats representation as authority granted by the people; **John Stuart Mill** (*Considerations on Representative Government*) calls it the ideal form of modern democratic government.

Features

Elected representatives · delegated decision-making · free, fair, regular elections · accountability · rule of law · protection of rights · separation of powers · political pluralism · role of parties, associations & interest groups. **Charles de Montesquieu**'s separation of powers supports checks and balances; **Alexis de Tocqueville** praised civic engagement and voluntary associations.

Models of representation

- **Trusteeship** — representatives are trustees of the people; **John Locke** treats government as a **trust**; they must act for the public good.
- **Enlightened representation** — **Edmund Burke**: Parliament should address larger national issues with independent judgment, not merely reconcile factional interests.

Merits / criticism

Merits: practical & efficient in large societies; representatives specialise; elections create accountability; fixed terms give stability; minority rights may be protected. **Criticism**: limited direct participation; elite capture; weak accountability between elections; under-representation of the marginalised; campaign finance distorts fairness; risk of majoritarian or demagogic drift.

“Democracy ... institutional arrangements for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.” — **Joseph Schumpeter**

“The absence of participation in power by citizens is the first symptom of ... the crisis of democracy.” — **Hannah Arendt**

“Our democracy has sold out to the highest bidder.” — **Lawrence Lessig**

Robert Dahl: a virtually powerless ordinary citizen leaves policy responsive to the privileged. **Iris Marion Young**: inequalities of public voice and access undercut democratic equality. **Maurice Duverger**: “the party in a democracy is the instrument of democracy”. **Benjamin Barber**: strong democracy emphasises debate and active participation. **Pierre Rosanvallon** calls the present a **post-representative democracy** — we cannot live with representative democracy, yet are not ready to move beyond it.

UPSC 2016 · ISm Explicate the features of representative democracy.

UPSC 2020 · ISm People as a body must control the general direction of policy (J.S. Mill) — comment.

2020 spine: J.S. Mill — ideal government is both democratic and representative; good government promotes the common good by improving virtue & intelligence and uses citizens' capacities; universal suffrage lets people control the general direction of policy; participation must exceed voting; local participation educates citizens; yet governance still needs expertise — a balance with capable leadership. Countered by **Schumpeter** (elitism) and by **Rousseau**, **Pateman**, **Barber** (too little direct involvement).

9 Participatory Democracy

Direct, active involvement of citizens in decision-making — the closest approximation of direct democracy. Legitimacy rests on **active participation**; it goes beyond voting and treats democracy as a civic way of life. Also called direct, grassroots and radical democracy.

Major thinkers

Aristotle · **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** · **John Stuart Mill** · **Mahatma Gandhi** · **Hannah Arendt** · **Jürgen Habermas** · **Carole Pateman** · **Benjamin Barber** · **Robert Putnam** · **John Dewey**. Civic republicanism supports it; **Mahatma Gandhi**'s **Gram Swaraj** and **Sarvodaya** rest on collective decision-making.

Rousseau

Sovereignty originates in and is retained by the people; it is inalienable and cannot be represented. Government is only an instrument to execute the **general will**; participation is the only way to grasp it; obeying laws one has made secures freedom; if government ignores the people's instructions it must be replaced.

“We can filter our original will, if we go for participation.” — **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**

J.S. Mill

A developmental justification: democratic institutions are “**schools of political capacity**”; participation protects against autocracy and advances human development; local participation educates citizens.

“The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it.” — **John Stuart Mill**

Three justifications for participation

- **Instrumental** — protects/promotes the participant's interests; citizens weigh benefits, costs, chances.
- **Developmental / educational** — raises moral, social and political awareness (**John Dewey**: education is democracy's midwife).

- **Communitarian** — builds common good, solidarity and shared responsibility.

Mechanisms (modern)

Panchayati Raj

Gram Sabhas

Social audit

Swiss referendum

Participatory budgeting · Porto Alegre

Neighbourhood councils

Factory committees

Digital platforms

“Participatory democracy is a way of life.” — **Carole Pateman**

Contemporary importance / criticism

Liberal school backs Gram Sabhas & social audit; Marxist school stresses grassroots empowerment of SCs, STs, women and the marginalised; civil-rights, feminist, Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and Yellow Vest movements show the demand for wider participation. **Criticism:** hard in large populations; citizens may lack expertise; emotional mobilisation breeds populism; low turnout distorts outcomes; participation stays unequal across class, caste, gender and the digital divide. **Robert Dahl** doubts feasibility at scale; **Joseph Schumpeter** doubts ordinary citizens’ capacity; **Hannah Arendt** warns of unstable mass politics; **Jürgen Habermas** warns of manipulation in communication.

10 Deliberative Democracy

Central importance to **reasoned discussion, dialogue and public justification**. It critiques voting-centric democracy and focuses on the *quality* of participation: laws should emerge from rational debate; citizens give and respond to reasons; legitimacy comes from informed, fair deliberation — priority to **voice over choice, debate over voting**.

Intellectual background

Pericles · **Aristotle** · **Rousseau** · **Edmund Burke** · **Hannah Arendt** (*Vita Activa*) · **J.S. Mill** (free speech) · **John Rawls** (public reason) · **Jürgen Habermas** (communicative action) · **Amartya Sen** (public reasoning). **Joseph Bessette** (*Deliberative Democracy: The Majority Principle in Republican Government*, 1980) coined the term and revived deliberation as it was declining. Distinct from **Jeremy Bentham**’s **aggregate democracy** (which risks majoritarianism & pursuit of individual pleasure).

“Discussion is never a stumbling block. It is an essential pre-requisite for any wise action.” — **Pericles**

“All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility.” — **John Stuart Mill**

Features

Reasoned discourse · public justification · freedom of speech & association · right to dissent · inclusive participation · mutual respect · non-coercive environment · **public reason** · willingness to revise preferences · common-good orientation · legitimacy through deliberation. It reconciles democracy as popular rule with democracy as the bulwark of personal freedom, and rejects politics as a mere struggle of self-interest. **Gutmann** and **Thompson**: free and equal citizens justify decisions through mutually acceptable reasons.

Jürgen Habermas

Central figure. Theory of **communicative action**: deliberation works through rational communication; acceptance rests on the **strength of the argument, not power**; the **ideal speech situation** lets free, equal persons communicate without coercion. His model lies between liberal and communitarian.

“Deliberation takes place when the participants in the discourse argue and weigh the validity claims with the intention of reaching a rationally motivated agreement.” — **Jürgen Habermas**

Habermas’s three-tier configuration



Popular sovereignty resides not in a majority or collective citizenry but in “the subjectless forms of communication that regulate the flow of deliberations”.

John Rawls

Links deliberation with justice and **public reason**: principles of justice decided through fair deliberation; citizens use reasons others can reasonably accept; the **veil of ignorance** removes bias. Concepts: burden of judgement · reasonable pluralism · reflective equilibrium · overlapping consensus.

“The principles of justice are the result of public reason, now fully developed, and the result of free and reasoned agreement among equals.” — **John Rawls**

Joshua Cohen

Clear features: an independent, ongoing association expecting continuity · deliberation as the deciding factor · non-coercive environment · respect for pluralism · deliberation as the source of **legitimacy** · political equality · decisions justified in terms accessible to all. Best way to handle moral disagreement and to ground mutually respectful collective action.

Nancy Fraser & James S. Fishkin

Nancy Fraser: a single common public sphere can reproduce inequality → subaltern classes need their own — the **counter-public**. **James S. Fishkin**: model of **deliberative polling** on five criteria — information · substantive balance · diversity · conscientiousness · equal consideration (views judged by evidence, not the status of supporters).

“Deliberative democracy ... offers a way to counter the polarization and paralysis that have come to characterize contemporary politics.” — **James S. Fishkin**

Four generations

- **First** — **Cohen, Habermas**: normative framework, emphasis on reason (critiqued as impractical).
- **Second** — **Dryzek, Gutmann, Thompson**: more practical; shift from consensus to “agree to disagree”; admits storytelling, greeting, rhetoric alongside reason.
- **Third** — **Elstub, Mansbridge, Fishkin, Thompson**: institutional design & empirics — citizen juries, mini-publics, planning cells, consensus conferences, deliberative polls.
- **Fourth** — **Thompson, Mansbridge, Christiano, Parkinson**: deliberation placed inside the wider political system, not an isolated exercise.

Merits / criticism

Merits: best way to deal with disagreement; legitimacy for collective action; informed, aware citizens; better policy; trust; makes democracy substantive; supports consociational outcomes; checks majoritarian excess. **Criticism**: assumes reasonable, cooperative citizens; power inequalities distort discussion; dominant speech styles exclude weaker groups; experts become an **epistemic elite**; time-consuming and hard to scale; outcomes weakly enforced; may dodge real power relations. **Ronald Dworkin**: the virtues of majoritarianism are exaggerated.

“Democracy is government by discussion,” a process that “erects barriers to the calamities that come from unchecked power.” — **Amartya Sen**

UPSC 2019 · 10m Comment on deliberative democracy (150 words). **UPSC 2021 · 15m** Free & fair deliberation is key to the foundation of democracy — explain.

UPSC 2024 · 15m Deliberative democracy seeks to promote democratic decision-making among citizens — discuss.

11 Participatory vs Deliberative Democracy

Aspect	Participatory Democracy	Deliberative Democracy
Main focus	Broad citizen involvement	Quality of reasoning
Nature	Direct, grassroots, radical democracy	Discussion, debate, dialogue
Legitimacy	From active participation	From free & fair deliberation
Citizen role	Co-governors	Reason-givers
Emphasis	Quantity & breadth	Depth & quality
Process	Direct involvement in decisions	Informed discussion & justification
Modern forms	Gram Sabhas, referendum, participatory budgeting	Citizen juries, mini-publics, deliberative polls
Risk	Populism, low expertise, low turnout	Elitism, exclusion, slow decisions
Key thinkers	Rousseau, J.S. Mill, Pateman, Barber	Habermas, Rawls, Cohen, Fishkin

Not rivals. Participation supplies the **demos**; deliberation supplies the **logos**. Participation without deliberation → populist voluntarism; deliberation without participation → elite discourse. Broad inclusion makes deliberation authoritative; reasoned deliberation makes participation credible. **Carson** suggests combining the two through **mini-public deliberation** that weighs participatory results and trims their excesses (deliberative polling, digital platforms, multi-layered citizen assemblies).

UPSC 2015 · 10m Difference between participatory & deliberative democracy (150 words).

UPSC 2017 · 15m Deliberative democracy has no salience without participation, and participatory democracy no credence without deliberation — comment.

12 Elitist Theory of Democracy

Power always lies with a small section of society, whatever the formal type of government. Society splits into **elite (rule)** and **masses (governed)**; democracy does not become rule of the people — it becomes **competition among elites** for power.

Classical elite theorists

- **Gaetano Mosca** (*The Ruling Class*): rulers vs ruled; no society without a minority at the helm; bureaucracy helps elites dominate. “In all societies two classes of people appear ... a class that rules and a class that is ruled.”
- **Vilfredo Pareto** (*The Mind and Society*): first used **elite vs masses**; **circulation of elites** (governing elites and counter-elites replace each other); “lions” and “foxes”. “History is a graveyard of aristocracies.”
- **Robert Michels** (*Political Parties*): the **Iron Law of Oligarchy** — every organisation develops oligarchic leadership; even democratic parties become bureaucratic and leader-dominated. “He who says organisation, says oligarchy.”
- **James Burnham**: popularised the managerial-elite analysis.

Democratic elitism

Accepts elite rule but makes it compatible with democracy: people do not rule directly — they choose among competing elites; elections allow removal/replacement → democracy becomes a **method**, not self-government. **Joseph Schumpeter** (*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 1942): the democratic method is an institutional arrangement in which individuals acquire power through a competitive struggle for the people’s votes; decisions are taken by leadership, the people merely choose rulers.

Later elitist thinkers

- **Karl Mannheim** (*Ideology and Utopia*): democracy does not end where elites shape policy — the governed can always act to remove leaders or force decisions in the interest of the many; backs merit-based selection and a smaller elite–mass distance.
- **Raymond Aron**: authoritarian societies have a **monolithic** elite; liberal democracies have **fractured** elites; a competitive party system permits circulation; government becomes a business of compromise (people still relatively passive).
- **Giovanni Sartori** (*Democratic Theory*): democracy is a procedure where leaders compete in elections; a self-governing people is a delusion; leadership is the

core, not a defect, and educates public opinion.

- **C. Wright Mills**: the **power elite** — corporate chiefs, senior generals and presidential insiders dominate industrial democracies. “Insofar as national events are decided, the power elite are those who decide them.”
- **Harold D. Lasswell** (Politics: Who Gets What, When, How): elites are those who take most of the available values — respect, income, safety.

Criticism

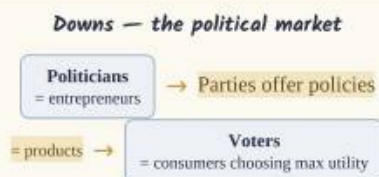
Denies democracy as rule of the people; reduces citizens to choosers between elites; may legitimise oligarchy; neglects the counter-public of the marginalised; underestimates civil society, media scrutiny and horizontal accountability. Pluralists reply that multiple power centres fragment elites and keep them responsive.

“Democracy is the way to give people the greatest illusion of power, while allowing them the smallest amount in reality.” — **Walter Bagehot**

UPSC 2025 · 10m Explain briefly the elite theory of democracy. **UPSC 2022 · 15m** Elitist theory denies the possibility of democracy as rule of the people — elucidate.

13 Economic Theory of Democracy

Closely linked to elitist democracy. **Anthony Downs** treats democracy like a **market**:



Manifestos become instruments of utility calculation; freebies reflect this market logic. Democracy explained by **rational choice** — but reduced to utility-maximisation, weakening moral, participatory and deliberative dimensions; may fuel populist promises.

14 Pluralist & Neo-Pluralist Models

Pluralist model

A response to elitist and classical models: power is **dispersed** among many groups, not held by one elite; interest groups articulate interests and influence policy; the state is a **neutral arbiter / umpire**; democracy works through competition, compromise and consensus. Thinkers: **Robert Dahl** · **David Truman** · **Charles Lindblom** · **Arthur F. Bentley** · **James Madison** · **Elmer Eric Schattschneider**. **James Madison** saw factions as inevitable and backed a large republic to balance them; **Bentley** and **Truman** read democracy as a game played by many groups.

Robert Dahl & polyarchy

Modern representative democracies are **polyarchies** (A Preface to Democratic Theory; Polyarchy): ideal democracy cannot exist in modern states; polyarchy is the practical form; competitive elections block permanent elite domination; organised interests give citizens some voice — rule by **many**, not by all.

Form	Meaning
Democracy	Rule of all / the masses
Oligarchy	Rule of few / the elite
Polyarchy	Rule of many

Features of polyarchy: right to associate · freedom of speech · tolerance of dissent · multi-party system · free press · judicial independence · competitive parties · civil liberties · vigorous civil society · regular competitive elections. Preferred to “liberal democracy” because liberal democracy is a *normative ideal* while polyarchy admits actual regimes fall short.

Neo-pluralist critique

Qualifies classical pluralism. Thinkers: **John Kenneth Galbraith** · **Charles Lindblom** · **Eric Nordlinger**. The modern industrial state is more complex and less responsive than pluralists claim; not all groups are equally powerful; **business enjoys structural advantages** in capitalist economies.

- **Galbraith** (The Affluent Society): business shapes public tastes through advertising; large corporations dominate small firms and influence government.
- **Lindblom** (Politics and Markets): business is the major investor and largest employer, so any government must heed it → capitalist democracies tilt towards corporate interests.
- **Nordlinger** (neo-neo-pluralist): the state monopolises power — especially in the Third World, where the state is the most prominent actor.

Neo-pluralists argue US polyarchy is **deformed** because corporate power exerts disproportionate pressure on government decisions.

Aspect	Pluralist	Neo-Pluralist
Definition	Competition among diverse interest groups	Pluralism modified by power imbalance
Power distribution	Widely distributed	Unequal; some groups stronger
State	Neutral arbiter	Not fully neutral
Business power	One group among many	Structurally advantaged
Policy process	Open competition	Tilted by corporate & state power
Corrective	Group competition	Countervailing power & regulation
Main concern	Elite domination avoided	Corporate domination recognised
Major thinkers	Dahl, Truman, Bentley	Galbraith, Lindblom, Nordlinger

Crawford Brough Macpherson appreciates pluralist realism but faults it for ignoring substantive democracy and human development.

15 Consociational Democracy

A model for **deeply divided societies** — segmented by religion, ideology, language, region, culture, race or ethnicity. Aim: minority representation, power-sharing, political stability and prevention of majoritarian domination. Associated with **Arend Lijphart**.

Four principles

- **Executive power-sharing** — a **grand coalition** of representatives of all significant segments; high offices may be reserved for different groups.
- **Segmental autonomy** — common issues decided jointly; segment-specific issues left to the segment concerned. Where groups are territorially concentrated, **federalism** fits; otherwise autonomy is non-territorial.
- **Proportionality** — political offices, administrative posts and public funds distributed in proportion to population.
- **Minority veto** — ultimate protection for the vital interests of minority segments; invoked when a coalition minority is outvoted on matters touching its core interests.

Example: **Lebanon** operated consociational democracy from 1943 to 1957. **Assessment:** gives workable government in divided societies but needs intellectual and emotional resolution of group differences; **deliberative democracy** can strengthen it by building public reasoning across group boundaries.

16 Cosmopolitan Democracy

Democracy stretched beyond the nation-state, in the context of **globalisation** and transnational challenges. Global problems exceed national borders; international institutions affect citizens but often lack democratic accountability → democracy must move beyond the country sphere. Thinkers: **David Held** · **Jürgen Habermas** · **Daniele Archibugi**.

Features

Global governance through democratic institutions · protection of global and individual rights at the international level · a **transnational public sphere** · democratisation of international institutions · public reasoning beyond nation-state boundaries. **David Held** places it within a global framework; **Jürgen Habermas** stresses democratising international institutions and forming a global public sphere through rational communication.

Allied contemporary concerns

- **Multilateralist** — democratic legitimacy of supra-state institutions.
- **Critical political economy** — material inequalities that weaken participation.
- **Poststructuralist** — democracy beyond nation-based identities.

17 Procedural, Substantive & Social Democracy

Procedural democracy

Focus on **means and mechanisms**: free & fair elections, rule of law, political equality, independent institutions, competitive parties, legal frameworks, fairness of procedure. **Elitist** and **pluralist** theories are largely procedural. **Limit**: citizens may be confined to voting; social and economic inequalities stay untouched; formal equality can coexist with material exclusion.

Substantive democracy

Combines procedures with **socio-economic content** — elections, political equality, independent institutions and legislatures *plus* socio-economic equality, tolerance of comprehensive doctrines, accountability, dignity, equal opportunity and distributive justice. It draws on **Rousseau**'s general will, **Joshua Cohen**'s deliberative democracy, **Lijphart**'s consociationalism, **Macpherson**'s creative freedom and **Amartya Sen**'s capability expansion; **Habermas** adds **ideal speech conditions** and **Rawls** the **overlapping consensus**. It is a **bottom-up** process needing civic sense, health, education, real choice, accountable representatives, a strong judiciary, independent media and an active civil society.

Substantive democracy includes procedural democracy but goes beyond it: it combines representative, participatory and deliberative democracy and turns formal rights into **lived equality**.

Social democracy

"More than democracy, less than socialism."

More than democracy	Less than socialism
Formal voting rights are not enough; poverty, caste and gender restrictions weaken actual choice	Does not abolish private property
Needs public services, workers', women's and minority rights, social justice	Rejects revolutionary class overthrow
A democratic voice must "take everybody's interests into account"	Works through reform, redistribution & welfare; preserves individual freedom

Accepts representative government, private property and the market, but uses **taxation, regulation and welfare** to reduce inequality while keeping civil liberties and electoral competition — combining freedom with fairness. **J.S. Mill's** stress on local bodies as schools of political capacity supports its concern for capabilities; **Schumpeter** reduces democracy to elite competition, but social democrats insist fair competition needs material equality.

UPSC 2018 Comment on substantive democracy.

2018 spine: substantive democracy contains procedural democracy (elections, political equality, independent institutions, legislatures) but adds socio-economic equality, dignity, rule of law, accountability and civic engagement; contrasts with procedural democracy that limits people to electoral participation; combines representative + participatory + deliberative; **Habermas's** ideal speech & **Rawls's** overlapping consensus support it; **Macpherson** links it to equitable power, empowerment and creative freedom; **Sen's** capabilities raise the quality of participation; strong judiciary, media and civil society are essential; a bottom-up process turning formal rights into lived equality.

18 Democracy & Development: Lee Kuan Yew vs Amartya Sen

Lee Kuan Yew thesis

Democracy is not necessarily suitable for Asia: **benevolent despotism** serves Asia better; democracy is a **Western obsession** incompatible with Asian values; developing countries should follow the **Chinese model** over the Indian; democracy breeds indiscipline, populism and corruption; strong leadership and limited freedoms aid growth (**Singapore's** transformation). He saw India as a nation of unregulated potential held back by bureaucratic attitude and democratic constraints. The thesis: **authoritarian capitalism delivers faster development**.

Amartya Sen's reply

- Democracy is **not** a Western value; India has a long **argumentative** and deliberative tradition of public reasoning.
- Asia is not homogeneous — there is no single set of "Asian values".
- East Asian high growth is no proof against democracy; Lee's case rests on **sporadic empiricism**. **Robert Barro** and **Adam Przeworski** find no general conflict between civil-political rights and economic performance.
- That growth tracked literacy, land reforms and capacity-building, not authoritarianism alone; **Botswana** grew strongly as a democracy; the **Kerala model** shows democratic political will improving human development.

No substantial famine has ever occurred in a democratic country with a relatively free press — famine reflects not absence of food but absence of responsible government and free press. — Amartya Sen (famine argument)

Adversarial politics, opposition and a free press prevent disasters; democracy is strong in crisis management. Democracy carries **intrinsic, instrumental and educative** value; political rights cannot be postponed for growth; development itself must be democratised, and sustainable, inclusive growth requires empowerment of the masses.

Dimension	Lee Kuan Yew	Amartya Sen
Focus	Economic growth, stability & Asian values	Democracy as freedom and development
Political preference	Authoritarian capitalism	Democratic public reasoning
Core claim	Strong leadership & limited freedoms aid growth	Democracy protects freedoms & supports sustainable development
Example	Singapore & Chinese model	Kerala model, famine prevention, Botswana
View of democracy	Western value, unsuitable for some Asian societies	Universal value with deep Indian traditions
Main debate	Growth versus individual freedom	Development as freedom and empowerment

Authoritarian regimes may achieve growth in specific contexts, but this does not prove democracy is anti-development. Democracy improves development through rights, public pressure, accountability and crisis prevention — development without democratic empowerment stays incomplete.

19 Democracy, Human Rights & Effective Governance

Human rights are central to democratic governance because democracy treats citizens as **rights-bearing equals**.

"Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing." — Vienna Declaration, 1993

Five reasons democratic governance needs rights

- Ethical core** — civil and political liberties secure consent over coercion; speech, association and voting make authority reversible; equal rights give moral legitimacy.
- Functional value** — rights create public feedback; citizens criticise, organise and litigate; corruption grows costlier; public-goods delivery improves.
- Social peace** — socio-economic rights reduce exclusion; food, education, housing and opportunity weaken extremist mobilisation.
- Protection against majority tyranny** — constitutional courts, information commissions and human-rights bodies protect minorities and dissenters; rights keep democracy from collapsing into majoritarian rule.
- Democratic habits** — workers negotiate, women's groups petition, journalists expose corruption; citizens practise deliberation and accountability.

"Freedoms are not only the primary ends of development; they are also among its principal means." — **Amartya Sen**

"Human rights and human development share a common vision ... to secure, for every human being, freedom, well-being and dignity." — **Human Development Report, 2000**

Rule of law is "the steel frame that keeps elected rulers from becoming elected autocrats." — **Larry Diamond**

Effective democratic governance needs a living architecture of rights that **justifies power, disciplines power and guides power** towards inclusive development.

20 Contemporary Democracy & the Limitation of State Power

The success of contemporary democracies lies in the **state limiting its own power**. Four restraints carry the weight: limited government, rule of law, separation of powers and pluralism.

Limited government

Legalised force is exercised only through delegated authority; government powers are **enumerated**; lawmakers are bound by law; absolute power is denied; the state protects persons and property. **John Locke**: government exists to protect natural rights and power must stay limited by law.

"Wherever law ends, tyranny begins." — **John Locke**

Rule of law & separation of powers

Rule of law: government is subject to law, fairly applied; individuals and institutions are accountable; arbitrary power is checked — protecting liberty, property, due process, minorities and dissenters. **Charles de Montesquieu** (*The Spirit of the Laws*): the **separation of powers** — legislature makes, executive implements, judiciary interprets — each branch limiting the others to prevent concentration.

Pluralism

Robert Dahl's pluralism disperses power: diverse groups coexist, multiple voices influence policy, civil society prevents concentration — working through parties, interest groups, free press, associations, social movements and public opinion.

Contemporary transformations

Democratic practice shifts with social context — transformations in **space, governance, identity, economy, global institutions and collective belonging**. Cosmopolitan thinkers take democracy beyond national borders; multilateralists seek democratic legitimacy for supra-state institutions; critical political economists flag material inequality as a barrier to participation; poststructuralists tie democracy to identities beyond the nation. No democratic instrument has timeless validity — democracy must be reconstructed as contexts change.

UPSC 2023 · 20m Success of contemporary democracies lies in the State limiting its own power — explain.

2023 spine: contemporary democracy succeeds when state power is deliberately limited; **limited government** restricts absolute power and binds lawmakers by law; **Locke** ties legitimacy to rights protection ("Wherever law ends, tyranny begins"); **rule of law** makes all, including government, accountable; **Montesquieu**'s separation of powers prevents concentration; checks and balances guard rights; **Dahl**'s pluralism disperses power across groups and civil society; free press, opposition and judiciary restrain arbitrary rule; transformations demand democracy address global governance, inequality and plural identities; democracy stays meaningful only when the state limits itself.

21 Contemporary Importance & Concerns

1. Crisis of representation

Voter apathy · populism · weak accountability · disconnection between electoral systems and citizens' real needs · **post-representative anxiety**.

2. Rise of participatory & deliberative democracy

Globalisation and inequality raise the demand for direct involvement; **Occupy Wall Street**, the **Arab Spring** and the **Yellow Vest** movement signal pressure for active citizenship; Gram Sabhas, social audits and participatory budgeting deepen democracy.

3. Technology & democracy

Online platforms open new spaces for discussion — **digital democracy**, social-media activism, e-democracy expand participation; risks: misinformation, echo chambers, surveillance and unequal digital access.

4. Democracy promotion & authoritarianism

- **Anne Applebaum** (*Twilight of Democracy*): authoritarianism appeals through simplified narratives, loyalty-based systems and exclusionary politics.
- **Larry Bartels** (*Democracy Erodes from the Top*): backsliding is often **elite-driven** rather than demanded from below.

5. Democracy in post-colonial societies

Former colonies face ethnic identity, social inequality, post-colonial governance and state-legitimacy problems. **Lucian Pye** backed democracy as the ideal form for former colonies; **Edward Shils** prioritised development irrespective of regime form; **Fareed Zakaria** argued constitutionalism should precede democracy; **J.S. Mill** held that democratic culture is needed and democracy may not suit "barbarians" lacking developed political capacity.

22 Linkages with the PSIR Syllabus

Area	Connection
Political Theory & Thought	Locke, Rousseau, J.S. Mill, Schumpeter, Dahl, Macpherson, Habermas, Rawls; classical theories meet deliberative & participatory critiques
Indian Political Thought	Ambedkar (liberty, equality, fraternity); Gandhi (Gram Swaraj, Sarvodaya); Indian democracy as representation + participation + deliberation
Constitutional Framework	Representative democracy via elections, Parliament, federalism, rule of law; constitutionalism restrains majority power; rights, judiciary, civil society
International Relations	Cosmopolitan democracy & global governance; democracy promotion, human rights, authoritarianism; deliberation & global public spheres
Comparative Politics	Representative, participatory, deliberative, consociational, pluralist models compared; Latin American budgeting, Swiss referendum, Panchayati Raj, European backsliding

23 Assessment & Conclusion

Democracy cannot be reduced to one model. Each view carries a strength and a matching weakness.

View	Democracy as...	Strength	Weakness
Classical	liberty, equality, dignity, moral self-rule	ethical depth	limited empirical realism
Representative	elected government	practical for large societies	risks elite capture, weak participation
Participatory	active citizen engagement	civic education & empowerment	hard in large, unequal societies
Deliberative	public reasoning	legitimacy, informed judgement, better policy	risk of exclusion, elite discourse
Elitist	elite competition	empirical realism	denies self-government
Pluralist	group competition	dispersal of power	underestimates business & structural inequality
Substantive	lived equality	combines procedures with justice	demands strong institutions & social transformation

A mature democracy needs **representation** for practicality, **participation** for civic energy, **deliberation** for reasoned legitimacy, **constitutionalism** for limited power, **social democracy** for material equality, **human rights** for dignity, **pluralism** for diversity and **substantive justice** for depth.

Democracy began as direct rule in ancient city-states, became representative government in modern states, and now faces demands for deeper participation, deliberation, rights, equality and global accountability. Its enduring value lies in combining **consent with freedom, equality with dignity, and power with accountability**. Elections are necessary but not enough — democracy turns meaningful only when citizens participate, deliberate, question authority, enjoy rights and possess the social and economic capacity to act as equals.

Political democracy must be supported by social and economic democracy; without that, formal democracy remains thin. — B.R. Ambedkar (warning)

★ Power Quotes — learn these cold

"No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise ... it is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms." — Winston Churchill

"Wherever law ends, tyranny begins." — John Locke

"The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it." — John Stuart Mill

"All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility." — John Stuart Mill

"Participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so." — Carole Pateman

"Democracy needs to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife." — John Dewey

"Deliberation takes place when the participants in the discourse argue and weigh the validity claims with the intention of reaching a rationally motivated agreement." — Jürgen Habermas

"Discussion is never a stumbling block. It is an essential pre-requisite for any wise action." — Pericles

"Democracy is government by discussion," a process that "erects barriers to the calamities that come from unchecked power." — Amartya Sen

"In all societies two classes of people appear ... a class that rules and a class that is ruled." — Gaetano Mosca

"History is a graveyard of aristocracies." — Vilfredo Pareto

"He who says organisation, says oligarchy." — Robert Michels

"Insofar as national events are decided, the power elite are those who decide them." — C. Wright Mills

"Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing." — **Vienna Declaration, 1993**

Rule of law is *"the steel frame that keeps elected rulers from becoming elected autocrats."* — **Larry Diamond**

□ Scholar Index — can you place each one?

Daniele Archibugi · Hannah Arendt · Aristotle · Raymond Aron · Anne Applebaum · B.R. Ambedkar · Walter Bagehot · Benjamin Barber · Robert Barro · Larry Bartels · Arthur F. Bentley · Jeremy Bentham · Joseph Bessette · James Bryce · Edmund Burke · James Burnham · Joshua Cohen · Winston Churchill · Robert Dahl · John Dewey · Albert Venn Dicey · Larry Diamond · Anthony Downs · James S. Fishkin · Nancy Fraser · John Kenneth Galbraith · Mahatma Gandhi · Amy Gutmann · Jürgen Habermas · David Held · Herodotus · Thomas Hobbes · Samuel P. Huntington · Harold D. Lasswell · Lee Kuan Yew · Arend Lijphart · Abraham Lincoln · Charles Lindblom · John Locke · Abbott Lawrence Lowell · C.B. Macpherson · James Madison · Karl Mannheim · Robert Michels · James Mill · John Stuart Mill · C. Wright Mills · Charles de Montesquieu · Gaetano Mosca · Eric Nordlinger · Vilfredo Pareto · Carole Pateman · Pericles · Plato · Adam Przeworski · Robert Putnam · Lucian Pye · John Rawls · Jean-Jacques Rousseau · Giovanni Sartori · Elmer Eric Schattschneider · Joseph Schumpeter · Amartya Sen · Edward Shils · Dennis Thompson · Alexis de Tocqueville · David Truman · Fareed Zakaria

■ How UPSC Asks It — every PYQ in this chapter

Year · Marks	Theme	Question (as set)
2009	Locke / Constitutionalism	Liberal constitutionalism precedes liberal democracy — comment.
2015 · 10m	Participatory vs Deliberative	Difference between participatory & deliberative democracy (150 words).
2016 · 15m	Representative	Explicate the features of representative democracy.
2017 · 15m	Participatory & Deliberative	Deliberative democracy has no salience without participation, participatory none without deliberation — comment.
2018 · 15m	Macpherson	Critically examine Macpherson's view on democracy.
2018	Substantive	Comment on substantive democracy.
2019 · 10m	Deliberative	Comment on deliberative democracy (150 words).
2020 · 15m	Representative (J.S. Mill)	People as a body must control the general direction of policy — comment.
2021 · 15m	Deliberative	Free & fair deliberation is key to the foundation of democracy — explain.
2022 · 15m	Elitist	Elitist theory denies the possibility of democracy as rule of the people — elucidate.
2023 · 20m	Limited State	Success of contemporary democracies lies in the State limiting its own power — explain.
2024 · 15m	Deliberative	Deliberative democracy seeks to promote democratic decision-making among citizens — discuss.
2025 · 10m	Elitist	Explain briefly the elite theory of democracy.
2025 · 20m	Locke	The foundational base of western democracy has been shaped by Locke's ideas of constitutionalism, freedom and property — elucidate.

Pattern: deliberative democracy is the single most-set theme (2019, 2021, 2024) · elitist returned twice in a row (2022, 2025) · Locke bookends the set (2009, 2025) · the unit appears every year since 2015.

✓ Today's Practice — write these three

UPSC 2025 · 20m *Locke's constitutionalism, freedom & property as the base of western democracy — elucidate.*

UPSC 2022 · 15m *Elitist theory denies democracy as rule of the people — elucidate.*

UPSC 2019 · 10m *Comment on deliberative democracy (150 words).*

One from each mark-band, spanning a foundational thinker, a critique of democracy and a contemporary model — a full spread of the chapter in three answers. Write the 20-marker first, while you are fresh.

From the class → Model answers to all three drop tonight on [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Blank on a point above — Lijphart's four principles, Sen's famine argument, Macpherson's extractive vs developmental power? It is covered in full in your Foundation / OGP class notes and handouts. Revise the note, then write the answer — recall hardens only when you put it on paper.

Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.

Comprehensive coverage today — come back tomorrow and keep the streak alive.