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POL 215: American Government

19 April 2020

Democracies and Republics: Who Are We?

On July 4th 1776, the American colonies had declared independence from Great Britain and became what we now know as the United States of America. With the political values of liberty, individualism, equality and self government the founding fathers began a long journey of a free country with free men. But as meetings and exchanges began, new ideas arose of how this country would be run. With these new ideas, new questions came to mind in retrospect and this one in particular stands out: The framers of the Constitution understood democracy and republic to mean different things. Explain this difference and identify which concept the framers favored.

According to Patterson (2016), a democracy is a government in which the majority has absolute power whether it is direct or through representation. This implies that if a majority is in favor of any idea or tactic, it's approved to move forward no questions asked. But because of America's political values, a fear of tyranny of the majority arose. This is when the people become to act out irrationally as a mob and override the needs and rights of the minority. These fears are well appropriate since in a democracy there is no limit to the majority's absolute power in the government.

In a republic, the framers desired a government with limited power where the people have rights that are far beyond the government's reach. These rights are then assured by a constitution and protected through carefully designed institutions. These institutions provide a means for considerate contemplations and mediations that enable checks and balances to protect the interest and rights of the minority. Example of this would be the concept of federalism which divides political authority of the national government and the state. This gives the people an opportunity to appeal to either authority if their rights are not being respected. So while the majority still holds power, that power is in submission to constitutional and institutional limits. For both democracies and republics, the people have access to their rights of liberty, individualisms, equality and self government.

But the two concepts don't have equal play fields in the exercise of these rights. While in democracies people may have their values, those values at any moment can be manipulated or are even at risk of expulsion by a majority. Because of their absolute power, a majority can come to any agreement on what is best for a country never minding the needs or rights of its people. This absolute power affirms the possibility of no law being put in place to stop their decision making to be countered by the people. But in a republic, a constitution is set in place so the people's natural political rights will always be protected. Furthermore numerous institutions are set in place like judicial review and elections so if a decision is seen to be unconstitutional, there is mediation and a balance of opinion until justice is given while elections provide checks and balances so there isn't an opportunity of a leader to become oppressive to the minority or its government.

In the end, America's founders found that a republic otherwise a refined democracy is the best way for us to live as a nation. This institution was favored because it is crafted to avoid the possibility of the people not having a voice in the way they are being governed. It in addition filters out popular points of view that reduce the chance of rash, irresponsible policies that put the people in danger.

References

Patterson, T. E. (2019). *We The People: An Introduction to American Government*. McGraw-Hill Education.