

ACHIEVEMENTS of DEMOCRACY

by Elif Çepni

Many forms of Government have been tried and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.... Winston Churchill, House of Commons, 1947.

Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people. (A. Lincoln)

The ballet is stronger than the bullet. (A. Lincoln).

Democracy is the subject of broad consensus and its promotion is high on the agenda of international institutions. It is only form of government that guarantees many freedoms and it has been accepted widely as the right way of governance. Democratic societies achieved higher per capita income and better social indicators.

No consensus exists on how to define democracy, but legal equality, freedom and rule of law have been identified as important characteristics since ancient times. Furthermore, freedom of political expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press are considered to be essential rights that allow eligible citizens to be adequately informed and able to vote according to their own interests.

Democracy is a universally recognised ideal as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples through- out the world community irrespective of cultural, political, social and economic differences. It is thus a basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and in the interest of the polity (Democracy: Its Principles and Achievement,1998).

As a form of government, it is a political system that has a capacity for self-correction.

Its main achievements could be summarized as follows;

The diversity of experiences and cultural particularities without derogating from internationally recognised principles, norms and standards.

Preserving and promoting the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice, foster the economic and social development of the community, strengthen the cohesion of society and enhance national tranquillity, as well as to create a climate that is favourable for international peace.

A genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.

No one is above the law and all are equal.Equal, open and transparent political competition-free and fair elections based on universal equal secret suffrage.

Civil and political rights to vote and to be elected, the rights of expression and assembly.

Access to information and the right to organize political parties. Everyone can take a part in the management of public affairs.

Public accountability, checks and balances, independent judicial institutions.

“Freedom of Choice” and more.....

A wide variety of regime types exist. Monarchy, dictatorship, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy, totalitarian, autocratic, authoritarian, constitutional, anarchist could be listed.

Within democratic systems there could be direct democracy, representative democracy, parliamentary democracy and presidential democracy.

There is no consensus on which one performs better in terms of providing better well-being and stability.

But it is known that the political and social Structure of a country may block or distort the normal economic processes. The definition of “institutions” is a broad one reflecting the “rules of the game” in society.

These institutions are not limited to Government organizations existing in building but extended to a wide range of social behaviour and influences.

Many researchers focus on a narrower concept relating to the role of Government institutions concerning: Property Rights, Regulatory Institutions, Macroeconomic Stabilization, Social Insurance, Conflict Management, Political Rights.

Today, the basic achievements of democratic regimes are valued and accepted by almost all members of the international world order with some exceptions although there are some nonignorable problems of it.

QUESTIONS TO BE EXAMINED

1. How the interdependence between peace, development and respect for the rule of law and human rights can be examined?
2. How the relationship between “strong economy” and “good democracy” can be explained?
3. What is the role of democracy and its institutions to keep the balance between diversity and uniformity, individuality and collectivity to improve social cohesion and solidarity?
4. What is the relationship between “welfare state” and “democracy”.

5. What is the role of education and social capital in the (The UNDP defines “human development” as a “process of enlarging people’s choices”) spread and better performance of democracy?
6. How the causality relations between “the health of democracy” and “the level of educational attainment” can be explained?